



# Curriculum Policy

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## Adoption of the Policy

This Policy has been adopted and reviewed by the Courtlands Interim Academy Board, part of Transforming Futures Trust.

**Signed:**

**Date: 19.11.25**

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## Introduction

### Context

All pupils attending Courtlands School have an Educational & Health Care Plan (EHCP). Most pupils are working below or significantly below age related expectations with a range of social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) issues and mild (MLD) to severe learning disabilities (SLD).

The curriculum is differentiated to accommodate for this, and we teach “stage not age.” This means that teaching groups often comprise of mixed age groups, with a wide range of abilities from ages 4 – 11.

In deciding on the curriculum at Courtlands School, we ask three questions;

1. Why are we teaching what we're teaching?
2. What might we expect pupils to be able to do and be by the time they leave our school?
3. How might our curriculum enable this?

The curriculum is created with an understanding that the individual needs of the pupils, requires a broad and holistic approach. Our aim is for every pupil to reach his/her fullest potential, to become an independent and thriving member of society.

The SEN Code of practice states ‘professionals across education should support children and young people with special educational needs to prepare for adult life, and help them to go on to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health and community participation.’ In order to achieve this, we must provide a pupil-centred curriculum based around their needs, interests and aspirations as early as possible within their education. In practical terms, this means that at Courtlands School, we focus on developing skills that will enhance theirs and their families lives rather than focussing on lessons on Shakespeare for example.

The Equals curriculum has been adapted into our teaching approach, providing a framework from which it is combined with EHCP outcomes to form a holistic learning pathway for each pupil.

At Courtlands School, pupils are placed in either Pathway 1 or Pathway 2, with their allocation determined by an evaluation of various assessments and key factors eg;

- Baseline speech and language formal language assessment CELF-5 UK (Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals- Fifth UK Edition)
- Baseline Sandwell Early Numeracy Test
- The age and dynamics of a particular class

Each pathway has a unique overarching pedagogical approach designed to address the collective needs of the pupils within that pathway. This approach is further personalized to a greater extent to cater to the specific needs of individual students.

There are a number of principles which are common to both of the Pathways, namely, a recognition that:

1. The pupil is always at the centre of the curriculum.
2. The curriculum is underpinned by a Total Communication and Learning Through Play approach.

3. The curriculum is designed to be holistic, and learning is not compartmentalised.
4. It is impossible for the National Curriculum to fulfil the educational needs of children with mild to severe learning difficulties.
5. Pathway groupings are formed by taking into consideration the key stage of the pupils and the dynamics of individuals within the group.

Each Pathway has defined curriculum areas that are closely matched to the developmental needs of the learners accessing that Pathway. This in some cases enables pupils to develop the appropriate baseline level of knowledge, understanding and the skills required to access the next Pathway and to prepare them for the next stage of their life and education.

### Pathway 1

All pupils in Pathway 1 are working significantly below age-related expectations across all areas of development. They require highly specialized teaching and learning experiences to reach their full potential. Pupils may have additional sensory or communication needs and are still 'learning how to learn.' They require a tailored curriculum that prioritises life skills.

Evidence suggests that learners with severe learning disabilities (SLD) beyond the age of 8 or 9 do not thrive within the confines of the National Curriculum. As a result, Courtlands School has chosen to explore alternative approaches that better meet their needs. The structured, subject-specific nature of the National Curriculum excludes many students on this pathway, as their significant learning needs mean they are not neurotypical or conventionally developing learners.

In the recommendations of the Rochford Review, it states that schools have the freedom to adopt a curriculum that best supports their pupils. The review specifically states that schools can determine the most appropriate curriculum for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific learning. Courtlands School has chosen to follow the advice of the Rochford Review. In practice, this means that Pathway 1 pupils do not receive subject specific learning in English and Maths, however, opportunities to practice functional literacy and numeracy are provided eg. pouring big and small jugs of liquid.

Pupils in Pathway 1 may only make small steps of progress, remain at the same level, or may even regress in their learning. The curriculum across Pathway 1 is designed with this in mind, ensuring that learning is reinforced and applied across different contexts to promote skill transfer.

In addition to education support, Pathway 1 pupils will often need support with personal care and behaviour management. Many benefit from sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into small, manageable steps. Their attainments typically remain within the early P-scale range (P1–P6) throughout their school careers.

Pathway 1 is predominately underpinned by the Total Communication Approach scheme of work. There are four key curriculum focuses of Independence, The World About Us, Physical Wellbeing, Outdoor Schooling with access to a range of creative opportunities alongside this.

### Pathway 2

In Pathway 2, the majority of the pupils have either a moderate to mild learning disability. They will be working significantly below age related expectations. There are some pupils in Pathway 2

who's main need is SEMH, although these are a minority of pupils. These pupils tend to be working at or just below age related expectations.

Generally, pupils in Pathway 2, demonstrate that they are ready to learn with some pupils showing curiosity to acquire new knowledge. Although, these pupils will be able to access learning in a more formal teaching environment, developing life skills and independence is still a large focus. One key difference between the Pathway 1 and Pathway 2, is that pupils in Pathway 2 are moving towards learning English and Maths via subject specific lessons as opposed to Pathway 1, where it is embedded throughout the delivery.

Pupils in Pathway 2 who are working closer to age related expectations, receive English and Foundation Subjects via the Oak National Academy curriculum and Maths is delivered via "White Rose Maths". Both of these curriculums are aligned with the National Curriculum.

The curriculum at Pathway 2, builds on the four key areas in Pathway 1 with additional focus on; Art, Music, Structured Play & Dance, Drama, Relationships & Sex Education. Skills such as number, reading and writing are taught through an active learning approach.



**C**

**Communication**



**O**

**Opportunity**



**U**

**Understanding Safety**



**R**

**Ready**

**T**

**Thinking**



**L**

**Love of Learning**



**A**

**Aspiration**



**N**

**Numeracy**



**D**

**Doing it for ourselves**



**S**

**Social Responsibility**

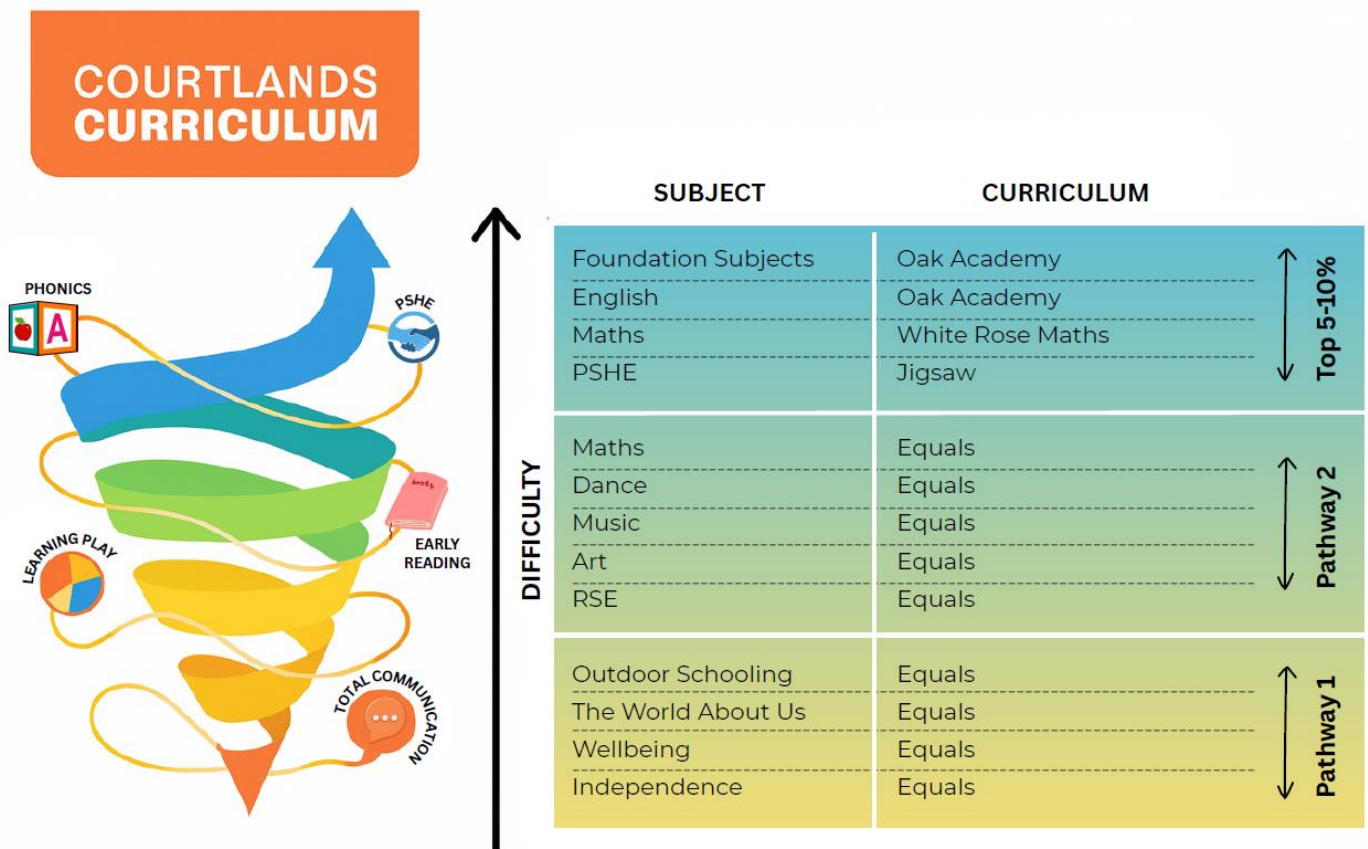
## Implementation

The core ratio for teaching groups is 9 children to 4 adults, however some pupils will have additional 1:1 support as determined by their EHCP. At Courtlands School, we focus on abilities rather than disabilities and therefore the aim for all pupils is to be able to move away from dependency on support to become as independent in their own learning as possible.

### Planning

At Courtlands School, we have combined the Equals Semi-Formal and the Formal curriculum, so that the planning of the curriculum is “spiralled” and builds on prior learning. Key concepts and topics are presented and repeated throughout the curriculum. Each time a topic is returned to, layers of knowledge and understanding are built up, providing deepening complexity.

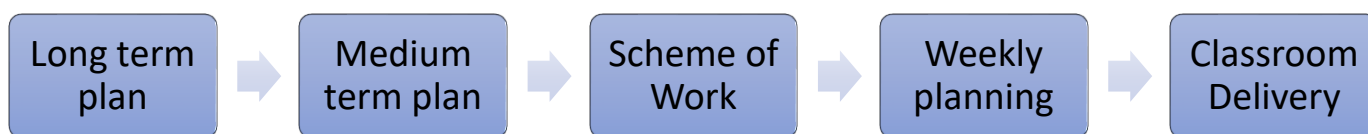
A spiral curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to consolidate their prior learning and use it to unlock the next phase of learning. It highlights to the pupils that all learning is important and topics are interwoven and connected. As pupils ‘spiral upwards’, a rich breadth and depth of knowledge is achieved. In saying this, we also acknowledge that pupils within Pathway 1 and 2 will typically have a “spiky” profile and that whilst the planning of the curriculum is spiralled, we also understand that pupils can move up and down the continuum of the spiral.



There are a small minority of pupils in Pathway 2 who are working at or close to age related expectations. These pupils access specific skills in Phonics, Maths via subject specific learning in accordance with the National Curriculum. They also have the opportunity to engage in English, Science and foundation subjects via the Oak National Academy curriculum.

Whilst in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils will be assessed using the Early Years Framework and Birth to Five Matters guidance. Most pupils starting in EYFS will be placed in a Pathway 1 class and will have access to the Pathway 1 curriculum. Where appropriate, an EYFS pupil may be placed in or moved to Pathway 2. At the end of their Reception year, a decision will be made about the best suited curriculum Pathway for the individual child.

Planning takes place in layers and builds from an annual overview of the long term plan through to the delivery in the classroom.



## Phonics

At Courtlands we aim to nurture meaningful understanding of spoken word, printed text, signs or symbols to provide our pupils with fundamental skills to access the world around them. Courtlands School celebrates the diversity of the school community and acknowledge that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to phonics for our pupils. Each half-term pupils are assessed using a pre-phonics skills progression tool (teacher judgement) or a Read Write Inc. (RWI) phonics assessment.

Pupils within Pathway 1 may not be developmentally ready for a systematic synthetic approach to phonics, therefore, they will be supported to advance their fundamental skills of learning, developing their attention and emotional regulation. These skills are developed through Attention Autism Curiosity Programme, Attention Autism Bucket Time, TacPac, Intensive Interaction, workstation tasks and consistent use of symbols and core boards. When children are developmentally ready for a systematic synthetic approach to phonics, they will take part in short 1:1 Read Write Inc. sessions, daily if their emotional regulation allows.

Pathway 2 pupils who have the learning skills needed to attend to daily timetabled phonics lessons, are taught 1:1 or within homogenous groups. Groupings are determined by half-termly Read Write Inc. assessments combined with teacher professional judgement.

Read Write Inc. Phonics allows for repetitive sound retrieval with scaffolded opportunities for applying phonic knowledge in both reading and writing. As pupils progress through the scheme, they move through the Story Book collection reading fiction and non-fiction texts. Through Story Book Get Writing! activities they develop skills in handwriting, sentence structure, proofreading, punctuation and grammar.

Some children progress beyond RWI phonics and on to RWI comprehension. RWI comprehension lessons are taught daily building on literacy skills and widening breadth of reading.

All pupils are exposed to high quality stories and texts through the curriculum. Pupils within Pathway 1 and lower Pathway 2 access a whole class Sensory Story daily. Higher ability pupils within Pathway 2 are encouraged to Drop Everything and Read to spend time looking at a book of their choice.

### Therapeutic offer

The SENCO works to ensure that the holistic needs of each child are met with effective and ongoing monitoring and tracking of holistic progression and attainment. It is Courtland Schools duty of care to identify the holistic needs of all pupils, working in collaboration with commissioned therapists to address and meet the EHCP outcomes for every child.

There are two Pathway Leads for each Pathway. These roles are teachers with additional responsibilities and report into the SENCO. The roles are responsible for leading on planning and monitoring quality assurance within their Pathway.

The majority of pupils at Courtlands School have a Communication and Interaction need.

The whole school communication friendly environment and timetable is set up to maximise and value opportunities to develop communication in a variety of forms: non-verbal, speech, signing, dual coding, body language etc. We aim for our pupils to form connections, ensure successful interactions and communicate needs.

### Internal Support

The Pupil & Family Support Team are a highly skilled and proactive resource dedicated to providing early support to both families and individual children. Weekly Pupil Panel meetings with the SENDCo and DSL ensure that safeguarding and supporting our children underpin everything we do. and preventing potential issues. The team actively engages with parents, encouraging their involvement in school life through initiatives such as coffee mornings. They also assist with form filling and guide parents to relevant external agencies when needed.

For pupils, the team provides tailored support, including behaviour management, role-modelling positive play during break times, and running targeted clubs and interventions. Staff are trained in de-escalation and specialist supportive strategies for students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs e.g. PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy), PRRR (Protect, Relate, Regulate, Repair), limit setting language, emotional attunement, therapeutic rapport.

At Courtlands, the team brings extensive experience in a range of therapeutic approaches, including:

- Filal
- Family
- Drawing & talking
- Girls club
- Elsa

- Pastoral
- Lego
- Sand tray therapy

### External Support

Speech & Language Therapist Our Total Communication approach is supplemented with advice and support from our HCPC registered Speech and Language Therapist. This may be through discrete sessions delivered by the SALT or a programme of class based interventions delivered by the class team.

The Occupational Therapist provides both individual and group sessions, offering essential support for transitions, daily living skills, mealtimes, and recreational activities. Following a referral process aligned with EHCP needs, the therapist conducts school-based sensory assessments to develop tailored sensory diets, recommend appropriate sensory breaks, and equip staff with a deeper understanding of each child's unique sensory profile. Additionally, the Occupational Therapist plays a vital role in designing and optimizing the physical environment at Courtlands, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of all students.

Educational Psychologist Educational Psychology plays a vital role in shaping our curriculum and supporting the holistic development of our pupils. The Educational Psychologist works collaboratively across the school, providing targeted input for individual children, small groups, and whole-class settings. Their expertise informs curriculum planning, differentiation strategies, and approaches to emotional wellbeing and learning.

The SENCO maintains regular contact with the Educational Psychologist to review pupils on the caseload, discuss emerging needs, and coordinate support. Outcomes from these consultations are shared with class teams to ensure consistent, informed practice. In addition, the Educational Psychologist contributes to staff development by delivering training sessions that enhance understanding of learning profiles, behaviour support, and inclusive pedagogy.

This partnership ensures that our curriculum remains responsive, evidence-informed, and aligned with the needs of our learners.

### English as an Additional Language

we meet the curriculum needs of EAL (English as an Additional Language) students by adapting both the Equals Formal and Semi-Formal curriculums to promote communication, understanding, and language development. Within the Formal curriculum, we integrate Read Write Inc. (RWI) to explicitly teach phonics, reading, and early writing skills in a structured and multisensory way, supporting EAL pupils to build confidence in decoding and understanding English. Lessons are differentiated with visual aids, repetition, and scaffolded vocabulary to ensure that language learning is accessible and meaningful. In the Semi-Formal curriculum, we emphasise communication and interaction through practical, play-based, and sensory experiences, allowing EAL pupils to develop functional language skills in real-life contexts. A total communication approach, including signs, symbols and visuals, is embedded across all areas of learning. Collaboration between class teams, speech and language therapists ensures consistent support,

while regular assessment informs personalised targets that help each child progress in both language and cognitive development.

### Preparation for Adulthood

For pupils in Pathway 1 we support preparation for adulthood by:

- Focusing on Communication using visual supports, signing, and alternative communication systems to help children express themselves.
- Promoting Independence through structured play, self-help routines, and guided exploration.
- Embedding Life Skills in everyday activities such as snack preparation, dressing, and tidying up.
- Supporting Emotional Development through sensory play, calming strategies, and relationship-building with trusted adults.

For pupils in Pathway 2 we support preparation for adulthood by:

- Building Functional Skills in reading, writing and maths to help children understand and manage everyday tasks.
- Encouraging Independence through routines, classroom responsibilities, and early problem-solving activities.
- Introducing Aspirations by exploring jobs, roles in the community, and personal interests through play and topic work.
- Developing Social Skills with a focus on turn-taking, sharing, and understanding emotions in themselves and others.

Both pathways are personalised to meet each child's needs and are closely aligned with their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

### Careers

- Early Awareness and Aspiration We introduce pupils to a wide range of people, roles, and environments through stories, play, themed days, and community visits. This helps broaden their understanding of the world and begin to form early aspirations.
- Curriculum Integration Careers-related learning is embedded across the curriculum through topics that explore real-life contexts, such as transport, shops, helping professions, and local services.
- Encounters with the Community Pupils engage with visitors from different professions and explore local places of interest to develop social communication and community awareness.
- Personal Development and Independence Through life skills, communication, and PSHE lessons, we nurture the personal qualities, such as confidence, decision-making, and resilience, that underpin future preparation for adulthood.
- Individualised Pathways All activities are tailored to the cognitive and sensory needs of our learners, ensuring that careers-related learning is meaningful, accessible, and aligned with their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

By embedding the Gatsby Benchmarks into our provision, we ensure that our pupils begin their journey toward adulthood with curiosity, confidence, and a growing sense of self.

## Impact

### Progress

Our assessment of pupils is ipsative ie. we compare our pupils with themselves at a previous point in time, describing what they can do now compared to what they could do before. There are no quantitative comparisons, no expectations of numbers of stepping stones to be achieved. To ensure we have the highest expectations of each pupil's progress, we rigorously monitor our input to them, believing that if the input to each child's learning is the very best it can be, then the progress made by that pupil, will be the very best that can be expected.

At Courtlands School, individual curriculum progress is tracked and recorded termly against the following frameworks:

Subject	Assessment Framework
Reading	Pre-Key Stage Standards / National Curriculum RWI Assessment
Mathematical Development	Pre-Key Stage Standards / National Curriculum
Writing	Pre-Key Stage Standards / National Curriculum

### Formative Assessment

Ongoing assessment using a range of strategies such as targeted questioning, in the moment feedback, checking for understanding. Responding to needs including emotional and sensory regulation needs. Learning is captured using EFL and shared with families.

### Summative Assessment

A range of summative assessment packages are used throughout the academic year to provide a clear, measurable picture of pupils' overall attainment and progress at a specific point in time, helping leaders evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum.

- Pre-Key Stage Standards/National Curriculum

Formal Assessments: Phonics Screening, SATS, Year 4 Multiplication Check

MAPP (Personalised Learning Goals)

Annual Reviews (EHCP)

### Personalised Learning Goals

Alongside the assessing of core curriculum subjects, each pupil has Personalised Learning Goals. These are short-term, termly targets based on long-term EHCP outcomes. These targets are assessed using MAPP across four key areas:

- Fluency
- Maintenance
- Independence

- Generalisation

Each target is baselined in these areas using a scale from 1 to 10, and then progress is reviewed at the end of term using the same scale. Good progress is indicated by improved score across all four areas, looking for scores to be consistently above 7 to indicate a target has been achieved.