

Beacon Hill Academy

Curriculum Policy



24th November 2024

Beacon Hill Academy has developed its own personalised curriculum model "Beacon Hill Adventures Curriculum" which sits alongside our Learning adventure assessment information model.

The information below is included and expanded on within our Adventures Curriculum Handbook.

Context and rationale

Beacon Hill Academy is a small special school (75 places), which caters for pupils aged 2-19 with severe and complex learning difficulties but not those with a primary diagnosis of ASD. Most of our current students can be described as having Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. There are an increasing number of pupils applying for places who live outside of Thurrock, whose parents are choosing Beacon Hill as it caters predominantly for this cohort.

The Salt review 2010 describes Pupils with PMLD can be defined as having: -

"Profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as complex learning needs. In addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition. Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language."

In designing and shaping the curriculum for pupils at Beacon Hill we recognise that all our pupils have unique abilities and ways of learning. There is no one set curriculum pathway that will work for all, and each of our students will be making differing rates of progress which could be intermittent or working to maintain skills.

We have therefore designed this framework to be completely personalised and focus on the holistic needs of each individual.

We aim to offer each pupil a broad and balanced curriculum that is matched to their individual needs. We believe that our pupils learn by supporting and developing their strengths and abilities through engagement with the world around them including social interactions and relationships. Our curriculum is delivered in a completely integrated approach. We believe that every part of the pupils' day

should be seen as an opportunity for learning, including times needed to meet their physical, care and medical needs. Everything that happens throughout the pupils' day is important.

Communication underpins the curriculum for all our students and for most of them their personalised curriculum will be delivered in a very sensory based way. Pupil engagement is the starting point of our curriculum.

There are a few pupils at Beacon Hill who can engage in more structured approach to learning and for these small numbers, the principles of personalised learning continue to apply but there will be evidence of more formal and some subject based learning seen within their individual programmes. With this small cohort there is an emphasis on functional numeracy and literacy and opportunities for transference of skills. Independence within school and community is also key to enabling them to succeed. We do not currently have any pupils for whom formal literacy or numeracy qualification even at entry 1 would be appropriate.

Aims:

As a starting point in designing our “Adventures” curriculum, we identified the following shared aims across the whole school.

The Curriculum at Beacon Hill Academy:

- Is personalised and pupil led using their interests
- Provides safe opportunities for pupils to excel with high aspirations for all
- Is ambitious and challenging for all pupils
- Provides a range of age appropriate, meaningful and exciting opportunities to develop pupils' strengths and functional skills from Early Years through to Post 16 and into adult life
- Provides an immersive, holistic, physical, multi-sensory approach to meet all learners' needs
- Involves a Total Communication approach to ensure the highest levels of engagement and achievement
- Is outward looking giving students' confidence, making them ready to embrace the world around them

- Encourages all staff to work closely with other professionals, parents, multi agencies and the local community to ensure learning is a continuous process
- Encourages all stakeholders to be as creative as possible in meeting the needs of all current and future learners
- Is fun and exciting!

Organisation and Delivery model:

The design of personalised learning for each pupil starts from the content and needs identified within their Education, Health and Care Plan. At Beacon Hill, this process is well supported by families, health and social care providers and includes input from everyone who works with and is important to the pupil. The pupil voice is at the heart of the EHCP and families and professionals identify the next steps together. The objectives identified from the EHCP are the starting point for the personalised curriculum and are used to plot each pupils "Learning Adventure". Evidence and feedback generated from the Learning Adventure forms the basis of the school's assessment process using Earwig software.

Using all areas of the EHCP to generate the Learning Adventure will ensure that every pupil will be at the centre of their own personalised, holistic, broad and balanced curriculum.

We recognise that the majority of our pupils are at very early stages of development and will all progress in different ways and at different rates. We have designed a focused curriculum which starts with their individual needs rather than a curriculum written for typically developing children. Pupils need to develop positive and secure relationships with familiar adults, to explore the world around them using their sensory and physical abilities and establish ways in which they can communicate with other people. Each pupils' Learning Adventure is continually evolving and next steps are identified as they make small steps of progress. Skills progression will be different for each pupil.

Teachers produce a "Curriculum Map" for each pupil per term which shows the curriculum provision personalised to each pupil. The "Curriculum Maps" form the basis for teachers termly planning which show how the personalised learning adventure targets are embedded in each session. The content of each pupils Curriculum Map and the activities used to facilitate their Learning Adventure are designed around what motivates and engages each pupil. Each Learning Adventure target is delivered within all 4 curriculum areas shown on the pupils' Curriculum Map. (See page 10 in the Curriculum handbook to show how the 4 curriculum areas flow through the school).

We do not teach a subject based curriculum. For pupils at Beacon Hill, we have adapted the following model from the work of Nick Sheffield: -

- **Maths** is problem solving
- **Reading** is gathering information
- **Writing** is sharing information.

Details of what this and “**Phonics**” mean to our students can be seen on pages 58-73 of the Curriculum handbook and on our curriculum wall in the school foyer. Each pupils “Curriculum Map” shows how this is being delivered, linked to their Learning Adventure targets.

Teachers will then further break down the provision content from the individual Curriculum Maps in their planning and show how each pupils Learning Adventure targets are being worked on within each session, activity or part of their day. A topic-based approach is used (as outlined in the Learning Adventures handbook) and this is seen in the teachers planning and matched to the pupils Learning Adventure targets.

The delivery of teaching will look different for each pupil throughout the day. Some lessons are delivered to whole or small groups whilst focusing on different outcomes for each pupil. Others are individual and focused on a very particular small step target.

Retrieval practice is embedded throughout the school. We recognise that most of our pupils need activities to be repeated multiple times to develop awareness, anticipation, engagement and consolidation of learning. This approach supports our pupils unique learning needs and pacing.

Once learning is secure, we will look at transferring skills into different contexts. Pupils develop different skills as the activities are repeated allowing for gradual progress and re-enforcement. The curriculum is pupil led and learning is negotiated and changed to reflect pupils likes, talents and interests and their engagement. If something is not working, we change it!

We recognise that with our cohort of pupils it is not always possible to remain within the boundaries of SMART targets and we may also refer to the thinking behind the Scruffy targets approach (courtesy of Penny Lacey): -
Student led, Creative, Relevant, Unspecified, Fun, For Youngsters
At Beacon Hill the targets are referred as a Learning Adventure

A large number of our pupils have complex medical and degenerative conditions. We recognise that that for these pupils there may be a focus on maintaining skills

rather than an expected level of progress. Their Learning Adventures will be sensitively adjusted to reflect this.

Rigorous induction and ongoing CPD enables all to staff understand the thinking behind the holistic curriculum and forms an integral part of recognising that every interaction is a learning opportunity. Care and medical needs are seen by all as an integral part of pupils learning.

We use Earwig as the basis for our personalised assessment and this is matched to the pupils' learning adventures and linked to the engagement model.

Although pupils may be working at the same developmental level throughout the school, the delivery style will vary as they go through the school, with a greater emphasis on community-based learning and experiences as they get older. There are 4 colour coded curriculum learning areas across each Team within the school.

These 4 areas develop and change in focus to reflect the different age-related needs as pupils move through the school, particularly embedding Preparing for Adulthood and enabling pupils to have as much choice and control over their lives as possible so that they are ready for new adventures when they leave Beacon Hill. The diagram on page 10 of the curriculum handbook shows the 4 curriculum areas across each different school Department, these are colour coded to show the linkage and flow as pupils move through the school starting in EYFS and ending at Post 16.

Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 in the curriculum handbook describe in more detail how each team works and their topic-based provision. Section 7 describes in more detail what, why and how specialist learning activities take place across the whole school.

Curriculum Organisation

Beacon Hill has an assessment nursery offering part time, full time and split placement places for children from the age of 2 1/2.

Stay and play sessions are initially offered, where parents are invited to join their child for their first few sessions whilst we get to know them.

New children are offered 2-3 sessions. These can be morning/afternoon sessions or a combination of both. The number of sessions will vary depending on individual need and will increase as they become more settled and confident.

Children usually move into the Primary Team in Reception or Year 1, depending on what is appropriate to their needs. Most of the learning is class based and the primary classes are roughly grouped into similar learning needs.

When they complete Year 6 in Primary, pupils move into the Secondary Team in the school. Pupils are grouped into base groups but there are lots more opportunities for students to choose activities that they are more interested in and to learn in mixed groups across the Key Stages. They become familiar with a wider range of staff and peers and there is a greater emphasis on learning beyond the classroom.

All pupils complete the Asdan New Horizons course at the end of KS3 and pupils begin to link into Post 16 for 2 days a week when they reach year 10.

Some pupils may move on full time to Post 16 either in or during year 11.

In Year 10, pupils begin a personalised accreditation route and aim to complete an award sized qualification at the end of Year 11, this is currently delivered using the Asdan Personal Progress qualification.

Secondary pupils continue to follow a topic-based curriculum, but this is on a three-year cycle, with those in Year 10 and 11 revisiting previous topics but accessing them at a different level with new content.

Beacon Hill Post 16 Unit is located on a separate site in Grays.

Pupils begin to link for 2 days a week in year and will move to Post 16 full time by the end of Year 11. The focus of learning changes significantly to look at preparation for adult life, however the principles of the curriculum remains the same and are personalised based on the EHCP. We work extremely closely with partners who provide opportunities for students beyond school.

All of the Post 16 and KS4 students spend one day a week linking into activities which are sustainable beyond school.

They are encouraged to try a variety of different things and identify their preferences so that post school options can be designed to meet individual need.

Most of the learning on the Post 16 site takes place in much smaller groups or could be individual. It could be led by a teaching assistant, HLTA or teacher. Families are supported to prepare for adulthood, including understanding how services change and the implications of the Mental Capacity Act.

Further details on curriculum content for all teams within the school can be found in the Beacon Hill Adventures curriculum handbook.

Wider curriculum opportunities and entitlement

Offsite Opportunities and Outdoor learning:

At Beacon Hill, we regard opportunities for learning in different environments, both outdoors onsite and through visits off site as an integral part of our curriculum and an entitlement for all.

We try to build these opportunities in for all pupils across the year, linked to the topic-based themes and their individual learning adventures.

This offers the chance to develop skills such as play, collaborative-working, communication, gross and fine-motor development in real life contexts and are an impactful way to engage with the real world. We actively seek daily opportunities to get our students out and about accessing their local community and using their learning in the real world, such as shopping, visiting cafes, green spaces, libraries and arts venues.

The opportunities for off-site learning for all pupils increase as they go through the school, linked to the Preparing for Adulthood agenda, with the aim that they are able to achieve maximum choice and control over their lives and play a meaningful part in their community when they leave school.

Opportunities offered can include extended day and residential experiences.

Cultural enrichment

We provide access to a wide variety of different cultural experiences, linked to the topic-based themes, both through off site visits and invitations to cultural partners to lead activities on site. All pupils will be given the opportunity to access these throughout their school career and through our Trailblazer links we aim to give all pupils the opportunity to share in activities alongside their peers from mainstream schools.

We meet our requirements for a daily act of worship through class reflection times including circle time and our weekly whole school celebration assembly.

Things that are important to each individual pupil are reflected in this and all celebrations are shared. We have held whole school themed days and weeks that also help to celebrate and reflect our cultural diversity.

In addition, we hold whole school events to recognise other citizenship events such as Red Nose Day, Children in Need and World Book Day.

Inclusion and Accessibility

Equality is a fundamental right that must be allowed to all children regardless of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation or special educational needs.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all children will play a full and active part and that no child will be excluded from accessing the curriculum on the grounds of race, culture, gender or special educational needs or disability. Despite the complex nature of the pupils at Beacon Hill, we are committed to finding a way to deliver this entitlement to all.

Professional Development

The curriculum offer is enhanced and supported by regular training and professional development for staff. This is delivered through a Beacon Hill “Teacher Development Model”. This is adapted annually to build on best practice, encourage staff collaboration and develop exciting learning conversations. Beacon Hill aims to be at the front and a leader in new developments and curriculum approaches for our pupils.

We work closely with special school colleagues regionally and nationally to achieve this.