



# Whole Academy Curriculum Policy

Version:	5.0
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Date issued:	September 2022
Review date:	July 2024
Target audience:	ALL ACADEMY STAFF MEMBERS

## Introduction

At Tees Valley Education Trust, all curriculum policies are developed in close communication with academy and trust stakeholders and support the overall trust policies. All policies are shared between academies to ensure cohesion and continuity while allowing each individual academy to personalise these in order to best support the unique learning journey of their pupils.

The following policy has been written to support the ethos, vision and values of both Discovery Special Academy and Tees Valley Education Trust. As a special academy, the policy reflects the unique character of the academy and needs of the pupils while continuing to uphold the overall identity of the Trust.

At Discovery Special Academy, the curriculum is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and including pupils with SEND, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. The curriculum plan is founded in the belief that pupils with severe and complex SEND are as able as other pupils to access learning if it is presented at the right stage and through the right medium. Therefore, the core academic curriculum is based on the early years foundation stage (EYFS) for pupils joining in nursery/Reception and Curriculum 2014 (revised national curriculum) for all other pupils. These frameworks set out the nationally recognised learning and development stages for all pupils in EYFS and all key stages. This curriculum framework is understood by external stakeholders and therefore offers both a recognisable and applicable programme of study as well as supporting the universal language of education.

From KS1, pupils are taught through either an informal or semi-formal curriculum.

An informal curriculum supports those pupils who have significant sensory needs and who require an ongoing sensory based pedagogical approach. They are likely to have specific needs in the areas of communication and interaction with a potential diagnosis of ASD. These pupils require a less structured environment incorporating movement and access to a range of spaces. They benefit from 1:1 and very small group activities rather than whole class learning. Within this informal grouping, pupils will have 1:1 teaching to develop skills in specific subjects.

Within an Informal Curriculum, pupils will have learning intentions taken from a range of sources including, but not limited to, MAPP learning intentions, the Engagement Model, speech and language programmes, Autism Education Trust Framework and sensory integration programmes. Decisions made about the curriculum content for individuals at each key stage are continually reviewed and revised through assessment of skills using MAPP and/or PIVATS. (see Assessment Recording and Reporting policy for more detail). Alterations are monitored and adjusted to ensure each individual has an appropriate and productive learning experience.

A semi-formal curriculum incorporates an early year's approach to the environment with the opportunity for some subject-specific learning in small groups or through 1:1 teaching activity. The timetable in these classrooms is more subject specific but will not mirror a traditional mainstream lesson approach. Pupils may engage in brief whole class activities but also have access to area provision designed to develop key social, emotional and communication skills as well as independence. It may be that there are some pupils who are developmentally ready for a more formal approach to teaching in some subjects as they reach the upper end of KS2 and move into KS3. Therefore, the curriculum overview at the academy incorporates the opportunity for a more formal approach, this is called semi-formal plus at TVEd. This may be delivered to a whole class group if appropriate or a discrete teaching group taken from across upper KS2 and KS3

classes for specific subjects. Planning of the semi-formal plus curriculum will be undertaken by teachers but may be delivered by the teacher or level 3 teaching assistants to small groups.

Throughout KS1, 2 and 3, learning continues to be delivered through a multi-sensory, experiential pedagogy focussed on repetition and over-learning of key skills, key facts and subject knowledge. Staff scaffold concrete experiences to underpin learning of new concepts presented in different contexts and to aid generalisation. Engagement, motivation and thinking skills are at the heart of the primary phase curriculum. As the pupil progresses, learning becomes increasingly abstract and will allow the pupil to apply learning to a range of contexts and subjects. Scaffolding at all stages is carefully planned to support the pupil to become more independent and maximise potential.

Thus, at Discovery Special Academy, pupils' access a highly personalised and differentiated curriculum; with planned learning reflecting their developmental stage but embodying age appropriate content. Consequently, pupils will use programmes of study from earlier key stages.

While emphasis is placed on the progression of all pupils and their academic achievement, this is realised through a holistic approach delivered through the following three areas of development:

- academic curriculum;
- therapeutic input and offer; and
- social and emotional curriculum

While these three areas are discretely referenced at the academy for the purposes of assessment, planning and development of strategic documents, each area is interlinked. Successful provision depends on the symbiotic and mindful use of the three together, woven into the overall curriculum offer.

Hence, the curriculum at the Discovery Special Academy is ambitious and focused on the development of the individual pupil encapsulating the academic, therapeutic and social emotional support they need to make progress across the curriculum and to prepare them for adulthood. It will also support the physical development of children using movement programmes and drawing on the principles of sensory integration therapy. Staff and therapists work together in assessing need to develop the most appropriate curriculum and targets for pupils so that the holistic need of the child is woven into the fabric of daily practice and pedagogy. This transdisciplinary approach, which is underpinned by collaboration from different professionals, is essential to the holistic ethos of the academy.

## **Aims**

The overall aims of Discovery Special Academy are to motivate, educate, innovate and celebrate the development of each individual. We aim to:

- provide a broad and balanced curriculum;
- provide a safe, caring and stimulating learning environment, with a variety of educational experiences, that increases the range of pupils' educational achievements and cultural capital and prepares them for adulthood;
- provide a personalised approach to learning that caters for all needs and learning styles;
- ensure a cross curricular and flexible approach to curriculum planning underpinned by developmental and sensory curriculum foundations;

- develop a learning journey based on personal outcomes and intentions drawn from a range of sources and expertise to ensure progression for each pupil according to their needs;
- use of a wide range of academic and therapeutic areas both inside and outside and a range of state of the art resources that support learning and emotional wellbeing; and
- promote equal opportunities and provide access to all areas of the curriculum.

## **Objectives**

- To promote pupils' academic, therapeutic and emotional wellbeing using sensory spaces, alternative therapies such as massage and sensory integration therapy, and a variety of communication aids including Makaton, Intensive Interaction and PECS.
- To promote social language and independent skills throughout the day including mealtimes.
- To develop self-esteem, resilience and confidence in learning.
- To promote cultural capital, life-skills and knowledge.
- To develop independence.
- To develop an atmosphere for learning and promote learning behaviour.
- To develop and encourage links with parents and the community to enhance curriculum opportunities.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to make choices and decisions.
- To give pupils the opportunity to plan and to use their own initiative.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The Head of Academy has the following responsibilities:

- To lead the review of the academy curriculum.
- To ensure that the activities planned resources used are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the children.
- To lead on the evaluation of the curriculum policy and programmes of study.
- To ensure that staff have the necessary skills, confidence, knowledge, and resources in order to deliver an effective curriculum.
- To ensure that the three areas of academic, therapeutic and social/emotional learning are incorporated into the everyday curriculum offer.

Trustees have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that an up-to-date curriculum policy is in place and is made available to parents and for inspection;
- To ensure that the curriculum is in line with the non - statutory guidance in Development Matters and National Curriculum 2014;
- To ensure that the curriculum policy and programme reflect a whole academy approach particularly in relation to consultation.

Teachers have the following responsibilities:

- To produce appropriate programmes of work that take into account the wide range of abilities and individual needs of the pupils.

- To prepare differentiated lesson plans and materials.
- To have high expectations of all pupils.
- To evaluate their curriculum and weekly plans making revisions as appropriate.
- To understand the academic, therapeutic and social/emotional needs of pupils.
- To ensure the three areas of academic, therapeutic and social/emotional learning are incorporated into the everyday curriculum offer.
- To ensure that they, or anyone working in their classroom to deliver/support the curriculum, are doing so in line with the academy curriculum and assessment, recording and reporting policy, and other relevant academy and trust policies.
- To contribute to the evaluation of the curriculum.
- To assess pupils' progress against the agreed learning outcomes.
- To communicate with parents when appropriate/necessary.

### **Curriculum provision and delivery**

Curriculum provision at Discovery is dependent on the needs of the child. Our philosophy is that pupils with SLD can make great progress and that they can take control of their own learning when provision is tailored to suit need and ability. We have high expectations of every child academically, physically and therapeutically. Therefore, we do not prescribe to one specific delivery approach or pedagogy as what works for one child may not work for another. This means that we draw on a variety of pedagogies, including traditional teaching methods for those pupils who are able to access subject specific learning. This allows a holistic approach centred on personalised learning with developmental learning intentions drawn from a variety of sources including (but not limited to) Development Matters, the National Curriculum Frameworks, Treetops Occupational Therapy programmes and Speech and Language interventions. In order to demonstrate learning has been sequenced and knowledge is secure, teachers planning will indicate whether a personalised learning intention is new, being consolidated, generalised or applied and there has been an opportunity for spaced learning and retrieval.

In addition, the nature of complex and co-existing difficulties for pupils with SLD requires a learning pathway that recognises the pupil's unique, often atypical and changing profiles. Therefore, we recognise that our pupils may not follow a developmentally typical trajectory and the curriculum framework attached to this policy allows for both typical and atypical development and approaches. Within the framework, subjects are mapped out into which teachers will plan learning and development intentions drawn from relevant sources in a stage appropriate manner. Thus, whilst working in a phase group with shared long-term planning, experiences and social opportunities, personalised pathways are developed. These pathways are not static, but are regularly reviewed by all those involved in the academic, therapeutic and social emotional provision for the child. The planning and implementation of pupils' pathways is managed by skilled and specialist teachers, supported by a range of teaching assistants which ensures the curriculum is delivered in ways that respond to children's needs and interests and evolves to acknowledge the community, society and world in which we live.

Within the Discovery curriculum there is a deliberate use of repetition, over learning, planned transfer of skills and knowledge as well as the teaching of generalisation. This supports children to build up knowledge and skills over time so that by the time they leave to begin the next stage in their education or employment journey, they know more, can do more and remember more.

In this way, the curriculum is designed around the child rather than trying to fit the pupil into a given curriculum. This means that the pedagogical approach chosen at any given time in the pupil's educational journey is entirely fit for purpose.

### **Assessment**

For a detailed understanding of the assessment, recording and reporting arrangements for the academy please see the relevant policy. Assessments take place at the end of each term with focused pupil progress meetings and updates completed (See ARR policy for a full assessment timetable). A baseline assessment will be completed by the end of the pupil's first four weeks at the academy. This will determine the best assessment and curriculum route moving forward for each individual pupil.

### **Enrichment**

The curriculum is enriched in various forms; these include enrichment activities that are organised by subject leaders to enhance their curriculum. Evidence for these activities can be found within our academy website, newsletters and portfolios such as Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural.

### **Additional Enrichment activities**

- Charity days
- Residential visits
- Business & Enterprise themed weeks (upper KS2)
- Out of hours learning (After academy clubs, holiday clubs, sports events, etc)
- Community projects/festivals
- Cultural Visits e.g. theatre trips
- Competitive sports events

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to ensure continuity and progression, it is necessary to monitor the teaching of the curriculum across the academy. This should be done through liaison with staff to be able to observe lessons, through CPD sessions, monitoring planning and coverage and carrying out pupil interviews.

The result of any monitoring should be discussed with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and any actions resulting from this should be acted upon within a given time frame.

### **Staff Development:**

The SLT, along with the subject coordinators, will identify staff development needs and arrange whole academy and individual staff training opportunities as required. The outcomes of training are disseminated during staff meetings.

### **Health, Safety and Well-Being**

Visits to places of interest are encouraged as an important part of developing a pupils' understanding of the world around them. Prior to all visits, staff carry out a formal risk assessment, if necessary, visiting the venue prior to creating the risk assessment. Staff follow the Trust policy for trips and visits using the EVOLVE framework.

## **Equal Opportunities**

All children have equal access to the curriculum regardless of their gender, ethnicity or learning difficulty. This is monitored by analysing pupil performance throughout the academy to ensure that there is no significant disparity between groups.

## **Links to other relevant policies**

The Curriculum policy links to the following academy policies:

- Equality
- Curriculum overview
- Trips and visits policy
- Assessment, recording and reporting
- Feedback policy
- Accessibility plan
- Behaviour policy
- Communication with parents
- Home academy agreement
- EYFS policy
- SEND policy