POLICY – The Forum School
Whole School Curriculum Policy- Teaching & Learning

Policy Author	David Horton Head of Education
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Policy Approver	Tracey Wilson Principal
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Staff groups affected	All Education

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the service's established governance and quality assurance systems. The principal, in their capacity for school governance, acting on behalf of the proprietor, undertakes a formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than two years from the date shown above, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Related Documents:

- SEND Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy

Availability:

This policy is made available to parents/guardian/carers, carers, staff and students from the school office and website

David Horton

Head of Education

Tracey Wilson

Principal

1. School/College Profile

The Forum School is an independent specialist day school providing education for pupils aged 7-19 years with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), associated communication and interaction needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs. The school provides a highly structured, therapeutic learning environment that promotes emotional wellbeing, independence, resilience and positive relationships.
Many pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and benefit from personalised learning programmes, therapeutic support and reasonable adjustments to enable them to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. The school works closely with families, local authorities, therapists and other professionals to ensure pupils receive coordinated support. The Forum School promotes a culture of kindness, respect and acceptance where differences are celebrated and every pupil is supported to feel safe, valued and included.

Key features include:

- Trauma-informed and relational approach to behaviour
- Strong integration of education, therapy and care
- Personalised curriculum including AQA accreditation
- Focus on employability, life skills, and community engagement
- High staff-to-learner ratios to ensure support and safety

2. Purpose

This policy applies to The Forum School, Shillingstone and sets out the school's approach to Curriculum and Teaching & Learning for the whole school

It provides a clear framework for:

- Consistent teaching & learning practice across the school
- Supporting learners with complex needs
- Promoting safe, structured and supportive environments
- Curriculum rationale; intent, implementation and impact of academic and personal development

It applies to:

- The whole school inclusive of activities outside of the normal school hours.
- All staff (teaching and support staff), the proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

3. Regulatory Requirements

Part 1, paragraph 2 and parts of paragraph and 4, Quality of Education Provided (curriculum) (teaching), and aspects of Part 2, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development, of The Education (Independent School Standards Compliance Record) (England) (Amendment) Regulations.

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1. Curriculum Intent

The Forum School provides a broad, balanced, ambitious and highly individualised curriculum designed to meet the diverse learning needs of our young people.

Our curriculum recognises that young people may have very different starting points, developmental profiles, communication needs and rates of progress. Consequently, curriculum progression cannot be determined by chronological age or year group alone.

Our approach is founded on three principles:

- **Individual progression:** Learning is planned from each young person's existing knowledge, understanding and skills, using the school's progression framework.
- **Meaningful learning:** Skills and knowledge are developed through relevant, engaging experiences that support communication, independence, personal development and preparation for adulthood.
- **Breadth and opportunity:** Young people experience a varied curriculum that introduces new knowledge, environments and experiences, while providing opportunities to revisit, consolidate and generalise previous learning.

The curriculum is designed to enable young people to develop confidence, resilience and independence, make choices, participate in their communities and achieve the greatest possible degree of autonomy.

Our approach reflects the principles of STEP, the school values, and promotes positive risk-taking, appropriately supported challenge and high expectations for every young person.

The Forum School Values:

Respect **Kindness** **Creativity**

- Respect - understanding and valuing other's feelings, rights, and traditions.
- Kindness - a core value that emphasises being friendly, generous, and considerate towards others. **It involves actions that reflect affection, gentleness, warmth, concern, and care.**
- Creativity - the ability to think outside the box and come up with new and innovative ideas. It involves using imagination to solve problems, express oneself, and explore new possibilities.

2. Curriculum Structure

The curriculum is organised through a progressive framework of subject-specific skills and knowledge, supported by individual EHCP outcomes and Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) priorities.

The framework provides a common structure across the school while allowing teaching to be personalised.

It consists of three interconnected elements:

- **Curriculum progression**
  - The TFS progression framework identifies the knowledge and skills to be developed within each curriculum subject.
  - Progression is described through TFS levels and, where appropriate, phases within those levels. These enable teachers to identify starting points, select appropriate next steps and recognise incremental progress.
  - The framework is supported by the TFS Curriculum Descriptor Handbook, which provides the reference statements for planning and assessment.
- **Seasonal and festival contexts**
  - An annual calendar provides shared opportunities to explore seasons, festivals, celebrations and significant events.
  - These contexts create variety, cultural awareness and opportunities for shared experiences across the school. They also allow previously acquired skills to be revisited in different situations.
- **Teacher-selected topics**
  - Teachers select termly topics that reflect the interests, abilities and learning priorities of their class and that develop learning across the whole curriculum.
  - Topics provide engaging contexts for teaching curriculum skills and introducing relevant knowledge. They may connect several subjects and can be adapted for individual young people working at different levels.

The progression framework determines what is taught. Seasonal contexts and selected topics help determine how that learning is experienced.

Neither seasonal events nor class topics replace the subject-specific progression framework.

Individual Learning Journeys and accreditation opportunities, including AQA Unit Awards, operate alongside these three elements. They ensure that curriculum delivery remains responsive to individual outcomes and that achievements are meaningfully evidenced and recognised.

3. Progression and Curriculum Sequencing

Curriculum sequencing is determined primarily by the progression of knowledge and skills rather than a fixed sequence of age-related topics.

Teachers identify each young person's current level of attainment and plan the next appropriate steps within the progression framework.

For some young people, this will involve progression through increasingly complex subject knowledge and concepts. For others, progress may involve developing emerging skills, increasing independence, reducing prompting, improving consistency or applying established skills in unfamiliar contexts.

Progression may therefore be demonstrated through:

- Acquisition of new knowledge or skills.
- Increasing mastery and accuracy.
- Reduced levels of adult support or prompting.
- Greater consistency and reliability.
- Application of learning in different settings and situations.
- Increasing complexity, independence or challenge.

The curriculum uses a **spiral approach to the development of skills**, with young people revisiting and strengthening learning through varied experiences.

This does not require every subject or topic to follow a repeating annual cycle. Rather, teachers deliberately return to relevant skills, providing opportunities for consolidation, extension and generalisation.

For example, a young person developing counting, measurement or communication skills may practise these through cooking, gardening, seasonal celebrations, practical science and community activities. The underlying learning objective remains coherent, while the context changes.

This enables the school to demonstrate clear curriculum progression without imposing an inappropriate common sequence of content on all young people.

4. Curriculum Breadth and Subject Coverage

All young people have access to a broad range of curriculum subjects and learning experiences, appropriately adapted to their individual needs.

The TFS progression framework and associated mark book provide the common structure for tracking subject-specific learning.

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that planning offers appropriate breadth across the curriculum, rather than allowing individual topics or preferred activities to dominate.

Curriculum coverage includes opportunities for English and communication, mathematics, science, technology, creative learning, physical development, personal development, understanding the wider world and practical independence.

Subject learning may be delivered discretely, through integrated topics or through practical experiences. Where teaching combines several subjects, the intended learning in each subject should remain identifiable.

The school's specialist facilities, outdoor environment and wider community provide opportunities for practical, experiential learning, including Forest School, physical activity, creative work and preparation for adult life.

Curriculum breadth is reviewed through planning scrutiny, learning walks, assessment information and discussions with teaching staff.

5. Curriculum Planning

Planning follows a consistent process across the school while allowing teachers professional discretion over learning activities, resources and contexts.

The planning model brings together three elements:

- **Progression of skills and knowledge – what needs to be learned**
  - Teachers begin with the TFS progression framework, using current assessment information to identify appropriate next steps for the young people in their class.
  - These form the principal learning intentions and provide continuity between planning periods.
- **Seasons and festivals – shared opportunities and contexts**
  - Teachers consider the school's annual calendar of seasons, festivals and significant events.
  - Relevant events are incorporated where they provide meaningful opportunities to teach, practise or extend identified skills, alongside opportunities for cultural and personal development.
  - Not every event needs to be included by every class.

- **Class topics – engaging contexts for learning**
    - Teachers select a topic for each term, informed by the interests and needs of their young people and the opportunities available.

A shared bank of suggested topics and associated resources supports planning, but teachers retain discretion to select and adapt topics.

Topics should create opportunities to teach identified curriculum skills, introduce appropriate subject knowledge and make meaningful connections across learning.

5.1 Long-term planning

Long-term planning is provided through:

- The TFS progression framework and descriptor handbook.
- The annual calendar of seasons, festivals and significant events.
- An overview of curriculum subjects and expectations for breadth.
- Individual EHCP/PfA priorities and identified learning pathways.
- Planned opportunities for AQA Unit Award Scheme accreditation and other appropriate qualifications.

This establishes the school's curriculum entitlement and progression expectations without prescribing identical content or attainment targets for every class.

5.2 Medium-term planning

Teachers prepare medium-term plans that identify:

- The class topic and relevant seasonal or festival contexts.
- The curriculum subjects and progression skills being addressed.
- The intended learning and relevant prior knowledge.
- Appropriate activities, experiences and resources.
- Individual adaptations, including communication, sensory and support requirements.
- Relevant EHCP/PfA targets drawn from individual Learning Journeys.
- Opportunities for AQA accreditation, where appropriate.
- Opportunities for consolidation, generalisation and assessment.

Planning should show how learning develops over time and how activities relate to the progression framework.

A single activity may contribute to several curriculum areas, but the intended learning should be clear.

5.3 Short-term planning and delivery

Teachers translate medium-term plans into suitable lessons, activities and individual learning opportunities.

Teachers lead the planning and direction of learning, with teaching assistants supporting delivery, observation and assessment.

Planning should remain responsive to young people's engagement, wellbeing, communication and progress. Adaptations may be necessary, but the intended curriculum learning should remain clear.

Learning Journey targets and opportunities to gather evidence for accreditation should be considered as part of normal teaching, rather than as additional activities disconnected from the curriculum.

5.4 An example of the planning model

A class may select **Growing and Changing** as its spring topic, alongside seasonal opportunities linked to Easter and the arrival of spring.

Within this context, young people might develop:

- **Science:** Observing changes in plants and identifying conditions needed for growth.
- **Mathematics:** Counting seeds, comparing quantities or measuring growth.
- **English and communication:** Making choices, following instructions, developing vocabulary or recording observations.
- **Independence:** Using tools safely, following routines and taking responsibility for caring for plants.
- **Creative learning:** Exploring colour, texture and natural materials.

Individual young people may be working at substantially different levels within the same activities.

For one young person, the activity may provide an opportunity to demonstrate progress towards an EHCP communication target. For another, it may contribute towards an AQA Unit Award relating to horticulture or practical independence.

The planned progression skills, rather than participation in the topic itself, provide the basis for curriculum assessment.

6. Individual Learning Pathways and EHCP Outcomes

Individual Learning Journeys are a central component of curriculum planning, delivery and assessment at The Forum School.

They ensure that progress towards each young person's EHCP outcomes and Preparation for Adulthood priorities is actively planned, supported and evaluated.

While the TFS progression framework establishes the school's subject curriculum, Learning Journeys provide the individualised pathway through which wider developmental and personal outcomes are addressed.

These two elements are complementary:

- **Curriculum progression** identifies the subject knowledge and skills being developed.

- **Learning Journeys** identify individual EHCP/PfA priorities, the steps towards achieving them and the evidence of progress.

6.1 Setting individual targets

Learning Journey targets are informed by EHCP outcomes, annual reviews, assessment information and contributions from families and the multidisciplinary team.

Targets are broken down into meaningful, achievable steps, appropriate to the young person's starting point and developmental needs.

They should provide appropriate challenge while recognising that progress may be incremental, variable or dependent upon the context in which learning takes place.

6.2 Embedding targets within teaching

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that Learning Journey targets are reflected in curriculum planning and everyday learning experiences.

Targets should be addressed through lessons, practical activities, daily routines, specialist provision and opportunities for independence.

Where appropriate, the same target may be practised across different subjects, environments and situations to support consolidation and generalisation.

Teaching assistants and other staff contribute to delivery and provide observations and evidence, under the direction of teachers.

6.3 Recording and evaluating progress

Learning Journeys provide a structured record of progress towards individual targets.

Evidence may include observations, photographs, examples of work, records of practical achievement and contributions from staff working with the young person.

Assessment considers not only whether a skill has been demonstrated, but also:

- **Mastery:** The extent to which the skill has been acquired.
- **Support and prompting:** The assistance required to demonstrate the skill.
- **Reliability:** How consistently the skill can be demonstrated.
- **Context and generalisation:** Whether the skill transfers to different people, environments or activities.
- **Challenge:** The increasing complexity or independence involved.

This provides a more meaningful picture of individual progress than a simple achieved/not achieved judgement.

6.4 Reviewing and using Learning Journeys

Learning Journeys are reviewed regularly to identify progress, barriers and appropriate next steps.

They inform teaching adaptations, target reviews, EHCP annual reviews and communication with families and the wider multidisciplinary team.

Where applicable, relevant PEP targets are incorporated into the individual planning and review process.

The school is developing the use of Evidence for Learning to support electronic Learning Journeys, improve accessibility of evidence and reduce duplication of recording.

Learning Journeys are intended to be active working documents, informing what happens in the classroom, rather than retrospective records completed solely for review meetings.

7. Assessment and Recording Progress

Assessment is an ongoing process used to identify starting points, inform teaching, recognise achievement and determine appropriate next steps.

The school uses two complementary assessment systems, alongside formal recognition of achievement through accreditation.

Curriculum mark book

The TFS curriculum mark book provides a consistent record of subject-specific attainment.

Teachers establish a baseline and review progress at the agreed assessment points across the academic year.

Assessment is informed by the TFS Curriculum Descriptor Handbook, including the relevant levels and phases of progression.

The mark book enables teachers and leaders to identify progression over time, recognise gaps and review the effectiveness of teaching.

Individual Learning Journeys

Learning Journeys capture evidence of progress against EHCP/PfA targets and other identified individual outcomes.

They provide a detailed picture of individual achievement, including progress in independence, application, reliability and generalisation.

Learning Journeys also support professional discussion about the effectiveness of provision and the next steps required for each young person.

Accreditation and achievement

AQA Unit Awards and other appropriate qualifications provide additional evidence of learning and recognise specific achievements.

These awards complement the curriculum mark book and Learning Journeys, but do not replace either system.

Together, these approaches provide a balanced understanding of what young people know, understand and can do, and how effectively they apply their learning.

Assessment should be proportionate and purposeful. Teachers should not be required to duplicate evidence unnecessarily or produce records that do not contribute to understanding or improving learning.

8. English, Communication and Phonics

English and communication are fundamental to the curriculum and are developed through discrete teaching and meaningful opportunities across school life.

Approaches are adapted to each young person's communication profile and may include spoken language, visual communication, symbols, signing and augmentative and alternative communication.

Where appropriate, young people access systematic phonics teaching using **Little Wandle**, adapted to their developmental and learning needs.

Phonics teaching is informed by individual assessment, with progress monitored to identify appropriate next steps.

Young people who are not accessing systematic phonics continue to receive appropriate reading, communication and literacy opportunities matched to their needs.

Reading for pleasure, access to books and meaningful engagement with written and visual information remain important across the curriculum.

9. Personal Development, PSHE, RSE and Preparation for Adulthood

Personal development is embedded throughout the curriculum and wider school experience.

The school provides planned PSHE and Relationships, Sex and Health Education, using **Brook RSE resources** to support appropriately differentiated provision.

RSE follows its own planned programme rather than being dependent upon the spiral progression model used for other curriculum skills. Teaching is adapted to young people's age, developmental understanding, communication and individual needs.

Preparation for Adulthood is incorporated throughout the curriculum, with increasing emphasis on independence, community participation, relationships, employment-related learning and adult-life skills as appropriate.

Individual PfA priorities are identified and monitored through Learning Journeys, enabling the school to demonstrate how wider curriculum experiences contribute towards meaningful outcomes.

Learning opportunities extend beyond the classroom through practical activities, enrichment, community access, outdoor education and accreditation.

10. Accreditation and Recognising Achievement

Accreditation is an important and established element of curriculum provision at The Forum School.

The school makes extensive use of the **AQA Unit Award Scheme (UAS)** to recognise and celebrate the knowledge, skills and achievements of young people across a wide range of curriculum and personal development activities.

The scheme is particularly valuable because it enables achievement to be recognised in manageable, clearly defined units, including for young people whose learning pathways do not currently lead towards conventional qualifications.

10.1 Purpose of accreditation

AQA Unit Awards provide opportunities to:

- Recognise meaningful achievements and celebrate success.
- Build confidence, motivation and a sense of accomplishment.
- Provide tangible evidence of learning and skill development.
- Support progression through practical, vocational, academic and independence-related activities.
- Develop a record of achievement that can contribute to transition planning and preparation for adulthood.

Accreditation should be accessible to young people at different stages of learning, with appropriate units selected to reflect their individual abilities and aspirations.

10.2 Planning for AQA Unit Awards

Teachers identify suitable AQA units through medium-term planning, considering the curriculum progression skills, class topics, practical activities and individual learning priorities being addressed.

Where appropriate, units are selected in advance so that the required learning and evidence can be incorporated naturally into planned teaching.

AQA awards may relate to subject-specific knowledge, practical skills, creative activities, community participation, personal development or independence.

The selection of units should support and enrich the curriculum rather than narrow teaching to the requirements of accreditation.

Teachers remain responsible for ensuring that the required learning has taken place and that evidence meets the relevant unit criteria.

10.3 Recording and celebrating achievement

Evidence is gathered through normal curriculum activities wherever possible, using appropriate records, observations and examples of completed work.

Completed units are submitted and recorded through the school's established accreditation arrangements.

Achievements are recognised and celebrated with young people, supporting confidence, motivation and pride in their progress.

The school monitors participation in accreditation, the number and range of awards achieved, and opportunities to extend access across different classes and learning pathways.

10.4 Progression beyond Unit Awards

AQA Unit Awards form part of a wider approach to recognising achievement.

For young people working towards more formal qualifications, teachers identify appropriate progression routes, including Entry Level and other suitable qualifications where relevant.

Accreditation decisions take account of each young person's abilities, interests, aspirations and likely future destinations.

AQA Unit Awards recognise achievement within the curriculum; they are not a substitute for the curriculum itself.

11. Quality Assurance and Curriculum Development

The Head of Education, supported by the Assistant Head of Education (Curriculum), oversees curriculum implementation and improvement.

Monitoring includes:

- Review of medium-term planning and curriculum coverage.
- Learning walks, observations and professional discussion.
- Scrutiny of mark books and Learning Journeys.
- Evaluation of young people's work, experiences and demonstrated learning.
- Review of progress against EHCP/PfA outcomes.
- Monitoring of AQA Unit Award Scheme participation, achievement and breadth.
- Identification of training, resources and curriculum development priorities.

The effectiveness of the curriculum is judged not simply by whether activities have taken place, but by the progress young people make in acquiring, retaining and applying knowledge and skills.

Findings inform staff development, resource allocation, curriculum refinement and the school's improvement planning.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Education is responsible for strategic oversight, curriculum quality assurance and ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of the school community.

The Assistant Head of Education (Curriculum) is responsible for coordinating curriculum development and implementation, supporting teachers with planning and assessment, monitoring curriculum coverage and progression, and contributing to quality assurance and professional development.

Teachers are responsible for identifying individual starting points, planning coherent learning, directing classroom provision, maintaining curriculum mark books and Learning Journeys, identifying appropriate accreditation opportunities and evaluating progress.

Teaching assistants support the delivery of planned learning, provide appropriate individual support and contribute observations and evidence under the direction of teachers.

The wider multidisciplinary team contributes specialist knowledge and supports the integration of relevant therapeutic, communication and developmental priorities.

13. Review and Continuous Improvement

The curriculum is reviewed through an ongoing cycle of planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation.

The revised framework is being implemented through a planned process of development and refinement, building upon existing good practice while establishing greater consistency in progression, planning and assessment.

The school will evaluate the impact of the curriculum through subject progression, individual Learning Journeys, accreditation outcomes and the wider achievements and experiences of young people.

The school's central expectation is that every young person experiences a curriculum that is ambitious, accessible, purposeful and demonstrably progressive.

The measure of curriculum success is the difference learning makes to each young person's knowledge, skills, independence and opportunities for adult life.