



Home Tree School

Curriculum Policy for Teaching and Learning

Everyone has a personal best

Curriculum Intent:

Context

Cambian Home tree School is an independent, co-educational, DfE registered day school for up to 25 pupils aged 12 – 18 years, who have social, emotional and mental health needs, often presenting with behavioural issues. Large percentage of students have disassociated from learning having suffered trauma and/or bad experiences within education. Many have had significant periods out of the education systems due to hospitalisation and ill health.

Pupil profile:

- All students have a diagnosis of mental health needs and other emotional neurological requirements.
- All students have had several educational placements before coming to us. As a result, they are likely to have gaps in learning and to be working below age related expectations (ARE)
- For the vast majority of students, their previous experiences of school, learning and the curriculum have all been quite negative. They are often disengaged or exhibit poor learning behaviours as a result.
- The vast majority of our students (80%) have an Education Health Care Plan/Statement of Educational Needs with Trauma and mental health difficulties as their main presenting area of special needs.
- Our students often have issues with subjects being taught in a traditional manner. The curriculum is therefore adapted to reflect a bespoke approach to students' needs.
- In-year referrals mean that the size and dynamics of every teaching group change during the year.
- Our students need dependable, trusting and appropriate relationships in a nurturing environment that guide, reward, motivate and inspire them. They require fair and consistent boundaries to help them engage appropriately with staff and peers and to make positive choices and become responsible citizens in the future.

Rationale:

At Home Tree School we have designed our curriculum with students' learning at the centre. We recognise that a curriculum needs to be broad, balanced and offer students opportunities to grow as

individuals as well as learners. We recognise that it is our responsibility to optimise learning opportunities throughout the school day – our students are learning all the time.

Through a combination of learning techniques, we aim to ensure students enjoy learning and feel prepared for life after school. We also offer our students new and exciting experiences through a range of classroom based and therapeutic activities, that are designed to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

We recognise that students should be challenged in their education – learning from failures and celebrating successes. We have designed our curriculum to be empowering, enabling students to develop their interpersonal skills, creativity, independence and emotional literacy.

All teachers and professionals engaged in teaching and learning activities are partners in learning and strive to continuously develop their skills and competencies for providing an appropriate range of strategies to inspire all our learners.

Due to the vulnerability of our students we recognise the importance of ensuring their safety. For this reason, the curriculum is designed to allow staff to engage in conversations and discussions around a wide range of specific safeguarding issues, such as online safety and bullying, imparting the necessary tools and understanding to keep themselves safe.

Aims: At Cambian Home Tree School we:

- Keep the student at the heart of everything we do.
- To safeguard all students and staff.
- To develop understanding of their individual mental health needs and develop coping strategies to manage everyday life.
- To reengage disaffected learners
- Provide exciting, motivational and ambitious experiences for students that enable rapid and sustained engagement.
- Address students' learning barriers and needs in order to prepare them for the next stage of their education, wherever that may be, their life outside school and ultimately their adult life.
- Provide appropriate learning experiences, as well as breadth and depth of subject matter, adapting this and creating bespoke learning where appropriate.
- Ensure real-life learning situations to facilitate preparation for future life situations, as well as making our curriculum as practical as possible where we can.
- Ensure we are equipping our students with key area development such as literacy, numeracy and Science with the understanding that this is likely to be from the perspective of filling gaps, and providing catch up due to our students' previous educational history, as well meeting their age-related needs.
- Support and challenge our students by intervening where appropriate in a timely and supportive manner that creates progression and growth.
- Explore our students' talents and aspirations and enable them to experience a wide range of opportunities.
- Build confidence, self-esteem and resilience to inspire a love of learning.
- Develop portable and transferable skills for all students in communication, social interactions, independence, personal safety, self-regulation of sensory needs, self-regulation of behaviour, Literacy, Numeracy and using IT as a tool.
- Provide a personalised curriculum that meets the needs, interests, abilities and aspirations of all students, ensuring SEND and mental health needs are fully met and also provide

ongoing support for the next phase of their lives to allow them to make a positive contribution to society.

- Provide ongoing support for the next phase of education for each student, including options at the end of Key Stage 3 and preparing them for post-16 experiences.
- Ensure that our students know how to make a positive contribution to their community and wider society.
- Promote positive mental health, supporting social and emotional well-being for every member of our school community including, staff, pupils and families
- Deliver Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) sessions around explicit safeguarding strategies to support students in keeping themselves safe.
- Promote equal opportunities to all of our pupils in line with the Equality Act 2010 throughout our practices.
- Become critical thinkers and independent learners.
- Find a sense of belonging to the school and its community to promote the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- Learn how to cooperate with their peers and tolerate and respect one another in school and in the wider community.
- Promote Fundamental British Values and Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) development throughout our curriculum delivery.
- Seek the input of students, parents/carers, other stakeholders and the wider community with regards to the planning and delivery of the curriculum through questionnaires and consultation.

Concept

At **Home tree school** we give particular emphasis in our curriculum to the development of the following skills:

- ***Linguistic (including English and MFL, but encompassing all areas of the curriculum)***
This area is concerned with developing pupils' communication and interaction skills and increasing their command of language through listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading for pleasure is encouraged and modelled. These skills are most overtly brought into focus in English, and also in modern languages. The teaching of literacy and literary skills is not, however, confined to these subjects, and the policy of the school is that teachers of all subjects will encourage good linguistic and literary standards in all pupils' work.
- ***Mathematical (including Maths, Science and Food Technology)***
This area helps pupils to make calculations, to understand and appreciate relationships and patterns in number and space and to develop their capacity to think logically and express themselves clearly. Their knowledge and understanding of mathematics should be developed in a variety of ways, including practical activity, exploration and discussion.
- ***Scientific (including Science and Food Technology)***
This area is concerned with increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding of nature, materials and forces and with developing the skills associated with science as a process of enquiry: for example, observing, forming hypotheses, conducting experiments and recording their findings.
- ***Technological (including Art and Design, IT and Food Technology)***

These skills include information and communication technology (IT); developing, planning and communicating ideas; working with tools, equipment, materials and components to produce good quality products and evaluating processes and products.

- **Human and Social** (including Geography, History and Religious Studies, PSHE, SRE, careers, independent learning)

This area is concerned with people and with their environment, and how human action, now and in the past, has influenced events and conditions. In most schools, the subjects of history and geography make a strong contribution to this area. In our school our topic based Personal, Social and Health and Economic (PSHE) education alongside our knowledge and understanding of the world makes a strong contribution to this area.

- **Physical** (PE)

This area aims to develop the pupils' physical control and co-ordination as well as their tactical skills and imaginative responses, and to help them to evaluate and improve their performance. Pupils should also acquire knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of fitness and health.

- **Aesthetic and creative** (including Art, Drama, Photography, Music, vocational)

This area is concerned with the processes of making, composing and inventing. There are aesthetic and creative aspects of all subjects, but some make a particularly strong contribution, including art, music, dance, drama and the study of literature, because they call for personal, imaginative, and often practical, responses.

Implementation

Subject leadership and knowledge

Although it is not always possible, due to the small size of our schools, we aim to provide specialist teachers particularly for the core subjects. We ensure that all non-specialists are provided with relevant training and support through networking.

Subject leads are responsible for the planning, delivery, assessment and monitoring of their curriculum areas, including self-evaluation and action planning. They are required to evaluate and reflect on the learning taking place and make relevant changes to improve the quality of teaching, learning and engagement across the subject area. Subject standardisation and moderation taken place with other schools.

It is the responsibility of subject leaders to contribute to the subject related policy and to provide appropriate training in their area of specialism in order to ensure consistency in quality across the school.

Equal opportunities

Our curriculum is designed to provide equal access and opportunities for all students in the school. We adapt the curriculum to meet the needs, aspirations and abilities of individual students. Across the curriculum, provision is made to stretch the most able students, to address gaps in knowledge and skills and facilitate the learning of students with SEND needs.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Our school complies with all legislative and best practice requirements to meet the special educational needs of students. The majority of the students within our settings arrive with a history of special educational needs and individual requirements already identified. If a student displays signs of having additional special needs, the teacher makes an assessment in consultation with the Headteacher and/or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and in most instances is able to provide resources and educational opportunities that meet the students' requirements. If a student's need is deemed as requiring additional support, consideration is given to involving appropriate external agencies, stakeholders and special support teachers. We always provide additional resources and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Where a student has a Statement of Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) the SENCO liaises with the student's teachers to ensure that the education he or she receives fulfils its requirements and participates fully in the Annual Review. We ensure that all objectives in the Statement/EHCP are monitored and evaluated (please refer to SEND policy). The school provides an **Individual Learning and Support Plan (ILSP)** for each student. This sets out the nature of the special needs, and outlines how the school will address these needs. It also sets out targets for improvement and progression, informed by the Statement or EHCP objectives so that we can review and monitor the progress of each student. The plans are reviewed at regular intervals (Half termly/termly) to inform improvement and progression.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

For students with English as an additional language, we are committed to providing the necessary support and resources so they can fully access the curriculum. There is a policy and established practices within the school to provide progression in line with other learners (see EAL policy).

High achieving students (more able learners)

We aim to create opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential. Our curriculum provides the challenge and stretch to enable all students to achieve outcomes in line with their abilities. Where a student shows exceptional ability or talent in a particular area, the school will support the student by providing additional differentiated resources and opportunities to focus on the development of this particular expertise. This may mean additional tutoring, advanced courses, trips and activities to stretch the individual and cater to his/her needs.

Mental Health and our curriculum

Due to the increasing number of students with mental health difficulties nationally, it is clear that students in all settings will face a myriad of undiagnosed mental health issues such as stress and anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, sleep deprivation, disruptive situations at home, and lack of nutrition. We recognise that a consistent, whole-school approach is needed to support our students with their well-being and mental health, regardless of the level of needs or vulnerability. If necessary, they start on an enrichment-based timetable, to support an increased engagement with academic lessons. We monitor their mental health closely and align the curriculum to match their needs.

We encourage the use of a range of strategies to build resilience and coping skills throughout the curriculum and beyond and adapt teaching styles and the environment to support students' well-being in line with government guidance.

Our students have access to therapeutic based sessions which are overseen by a psychologist. These practises are fed out through a reflection time daily where students are given an opportunity to reflect on their mental health and develop robust emotional literacy skills.

Organisation

We aim to follow the curriculum for each Key Stage with consideration to the broad areas of SEND need. We link subjects to the following criteria:

- Academic subjects
- Health and well-being, Mental health support, Enrichment and Life skills
- PSHE and sex and relationship education
- Careers guidance – Please refer to career guidance policy
- Vocational - please also refer to our vocational policy
- Extra-curricular – trips, activities, clubs

Pathways available

At **Home Tree school** we offer a range of pathways dependent on ability and SEND requirements. This includes; **Entry level, Certificate, AQA unit awards, Functional skills, BTEC, GCSE, A' level, Vocational, enrichment.** We ensure all students have an appropriate pathway that prepares them for success in future life and ensures the greatest impact on self-development.

Timetabling

Where possible we ensure a full timetable. We do however have students at various stages of illness, recovery and need who benefit from a phased integration. This may mean that these individuals have a reduced timetable or attendance improvement plan. This may be stated in the EHCP or have been agreed during the PEP process. This is always a short-term plan with an agreed time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time.

'All pupils of compulsory age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.' DfE August 2020

Timetables are individualised where possible, dependent on the pathway and individual needs of the student.

Planning

Differentiated planning is carried out for each student to promote support for all abilities through individualised targets and work.

In planning the curriculum and putting this policy into practice, **Home Tree school** aims to ensure that:

- Lessons are challenging and have pace, rigour and direction for each of the students.

- A range of relevant teaching styles are employed to ensure that we meet pupils' individual needs and learning styles.
- On-going assessment informs planning.
- Student's learning progresses smoothly through the school
- Students are prepared for life beyond school.
- Bloomes taxonomy is used to push knowledge development through outcomes

It is the teachers' role to ensure that they provide a variety of relevant experiences for students that serve to develop knowledge, skills and understanding and enable students to value themselves as learners.

This is implemented through 3 stages of planning: long term, medium term and short term.

Teaching

We offer high quality teaching at **Home Tree School**. Our small classes and 1-1 support offer the advantages of student focused teaching with a high level of resources and technological support for all students. The structure of a lesson is a 3-part approach with a starter, main teaching and plenary which encourages pace and assessment for learning. Our robust behaviour management reduces the negative impact of behaviour on the learning.

Students are set realistic but challenging goals and are involved in setting their targets. We intervene to support students who underachieve and we seek opportunities to stretch the most able. This is based on a clear assessment of learners' needs; intervention programmes are tightly focused on improving the progress and outcomes for learners. Staff regularly engage students in conversations about their learning and time is set aside for students to reflect upon where they are and where they would like to be. The emotional and learning needs of every child are at the heart of everything we do and the school promotes high aspirations in order that all learners succeed.

Marking, Feedback and Assessment

In formulating processes around marking and assessment, consideration is given to teachers' work-life balance as well as the individual learning needs of students, taking opportunities to mark face-to-face where appropriate. Marking and feedback relates to learning objectives and the individual targets for each student. At **Home Tree school** we give recognition and praise for achievement and clear strategies for improvement. We allow specific time for individuals to read, reflect and respond to marking where appropriate and encourage pupils to strive to improve by giving help, encouragement and constructive comments that direct pupils to what they need to do to improve their work.

Our assessments have a range of summative and formative approaches which are planned in order to ensure we have accurate tracking in place. Our assessment for learning is embedded within each lesson. We use past papers and GL assessments to give us accurate attainment data for the core areas of English, Maths and Science. For other areas of the curriculum we use past papers, practical assessments and end of unit assessments (summative assessments) or learning descriptors. For practical subjects a portfolio of evidence may be used as assessment.

Specialist assessments, such as Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT5), Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT) and Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH), provide enhanced information, which is standardised. We also assess behaviour and emotional literacy through specialist tests, such

as Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and QCA (Behaviour Scales). This gives us a holistic overview of the student.

- To further improve the teaching and learning in the school we track and analyse data using excel spreadsheets. This allows us to look at whole school progress and attainment data. We carefully assess the barriers to our students' ongoing education and plan effective support strategies to overcome these barriers, addressing vocabulary deficits, retrieval skills and helping them to close the gap between their current performance and where they want to be. We check understanding and use this to inform our planning to help embed knowledge and develop understanding further, making explicit links between different parts of the curriculum and across curriculum areas to make knowledge transferable and practical.

Assessment For learning

We aim to use our cycle of assessment to ensure that we check learners' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. This allows us to respond and adapt teaching as required.

Teachers make on-going assessments of the students' progress each lesson and use this information to plan subsequent lessons to facilitate further development of knowledge and skills. We strive to ensure that all tasks set are appropriate to each student's level of ability.

Assessment for Learning improves students' performance through encouraging them to become more involved in the learning process and from this gain confidence in what they are expected to learn and to what standard. The aim is to close the gap between a student's current attainment and where they want to be with regard to their learning. Techniques used are:

- *Questioning* – this enables the student, with teacher support, to find out what level they're working at.
- *Feedback* - each student is given targeted written and/or verbal feedback about how to improve their learning.
- *Modelling* – teachers will work on an exemplar with students, so they understand what successful work looks like for each task they are doing.
- *Self-assessment/Peer assessment* – this encourages students to become more independent in their learning.
- *Summative assessments* – end of unit tests, portfolios and exams are used formatively to help students improve.

Differentiation

We use a range of strategies to differentiate learning. The use of these strategies is dependent on the students' requirements and the knowledge and skills being taught:

- **Dialogue:** All students are encouraged to develop high levels of verbal and written literacy. Higher order questioning, related to Bloom's Taxonomy, supports this development, with questions being suited to individuals' needs.
- **Task:** differentiated tasks are set in order to challenge all students, whatever their level.

- Choice: students can choose from a selection of activities to ensure interest and engagement. At times this can mean that students plan a topic, with teacher guidance, setting their own targets and tasks.
- Resources: resources, carefully tailored to students' needs, are differentiated to scaffold learning and provide levels of challenge suited to all levels of attainment.
- Support: Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs) may at times withdraw direct support to encourage greater independence.
- Pace: More able students, working through at a faster pace than lower ability peers, may be given extension activities to further challenge their learning.
- Outcome: Differentiation by outcome on its own is inadequate. However, when combined with other strategies (as listed above) and clear expectations of outcomes suited to the individual students, learning is promoted.

Homework

Homework is set to extend the coverage of the curriculum, through integrated planning of class work and homework. It gives opportunities for the students to work independently and to take responsibility in organising their work, whilst also recognising the link to good study habits and higher achievement.

Therapeutic approach – see behaviour policy

We support students to develop and improve their emotional literacy skills, enabling them to:

- express their own feelings and their reasons for feeling that way.
- tolerate others and to begin to develop empathetic behaviours towards others.
- understand the impact of their behaviours on themselves and on others
- know that certain behaviours are not acceptable and that alternative actions are possible.

We do this through regular reflection and discussions, either in tutor groups or with Keyworkers. Target setting focuses on behaviours and the teaching of alternative strategies. We encourage the use of tools and strategies such as time out of lessons, distraction toys and regulation techniques, to help students to adjust their behaviours and actions and to positively impact their emotional state. We also offer therapeutic coping strategies to regulate emotions, such as mindfulness, breathing techniques and distraction techniques.

Progression (see curriculum model)

Curriculum models show coverage in each key stage. Our aim is to ensure progression that develops knowledge, understanding of concepts, acquisition of skills and for students to be able to choose and apply these in relevant situations. Our curriculum is based around the National Curriculum and follows the required progression through each subject. Our long-term plans evidence the coverage of the identified knowledge, concepts and skills required to achieve the goals of academic qualifications, relevant experiences, life skills, emotional literacy and social skills in order to be successful in life. We ensure that students progress smoothly from one level to the next through ensuring teaching is sequenced in lessons, subjects, term, year and key stages, with each step

building on prior knowledge. Students often come to us with significant gaps in their education, due to having missed education. Teachers in the school are adept at identifying the relevant gaps in education. It is not appropriate that all gaps perceived are addressed and teachers use their professional judgement and knowledge of the curriculum to judge which skills and knowledge are required to support students in reaching their targets and to access the curriculum content.

Breadth and Depth

At **Home Tree School** we ensure that our curriculum has breadth and depth by maintaining coverage of national curriculum subjects and an appropriate range of experiences. We promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural development by making sure that areas of enrichment, emotional literacy and behaviour support are also implemented throughout the curriculum. We prepare our students for later life by teaching social responsibility and behaviour, supporting each student to be a successful member of society.

The following principles are all taken into consideration when writing schemes of work to ensure the breadth and depth of the curriculum:

- Challenge and enjoyment – encouraging high aspirations and ambitions for all through being active in their learning and having opportunities to develop and demonstrate their creativity.
- Coverage - all students have the opportunity to experience a broad range of experiences. Learning is planned and organised to encourage learning and development through a variety of contexts within the classroom and other aspects of school life.
- Progression - each lesson is designed to build upon earlier knowledge and achievements.
- Personalisation - the learning planned for our students responds to their individual needs and supports particular aptitudes and talents. It also provides opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice.
- Complexity - opportunities for students to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning, exploring and achieving more advanced levels of understanding.
- Coherence - learning activities are designed to form a coherent experience, with clear links between different aspects of learning.
- Relevance - students understand the purpose of their learning and related activities through discussion, thereby seeing the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

Safeguarding

‘Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.’

Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2020

Safeguarding is an extremely important part of what we do in school every day. All staff are vigilant and well trained. It is also part of our curriculum to deliver understanding about safeguarding issues – encouraging our students to adopt safe practices and to recognise when they could be in an unsafe situation. Part of this education involves helping students to recognise support services and how to access them.

Through each area of the curriculum we work to develop our students' character, defining and modelling positive traits, temperaments and qualities to guide their conduct so that they are able to adopt dispositions that will allow them to flourish in society.

Curriculum Impact

At each stage of their education our students are prepared for appropriate qualifications as well as for the next stage of education, employment or training. We recognise that qualifications are vital outcomes, to ensure positive destinations and we work hard to support our students in achieving well; it is equally important to recognise the impact our curriculum has on developing resilient, caring, well-rounded, culturally aware citizens who understand the contribution they can make to society.

The way in which we measure the impact of our curriculum goes beyond national outcomes. These are useful indicators of the impact of the education our students have received, but only represent a part of what they have learned. The purpose of education is not just to support our students in obtaining these qualifications, but to fully and holistically prepare them for what comes next.

Our curriculum provides for students' broader development, encompassing their interests and talents; it develops their confidence, independence and resilience – their very character. We prepare our students, through providing a broad and balanced curriculum that is ambitious for all, for success in what follows, equipping them with the knowledge, cultural capital and skills to be responsible citizens, whatever their disadvantages.

The curriculum enables our students to recognise the dangers inherent in the inappropriate use of social media and mobile technology, to recognise unsafe situations and how to avoid these. Students are taught about online and offline risks to their wellbeing and safety: criminal and sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, domestic abuse, substance misuse, gang activity, radicalisation and extremism and are aware of the support available to them to enable them to keep safe and to recognise and form healthy relationships.

Through our curriculum design we develop young people with an understanding and appreciation of diversity, of social justice issues and of fundamental human values. In addition, our curriculum develops and deepens students' understanding of the fundamental British Values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance. This allows students to thrive together and be able to recognise and respect the differences that make each one of use unique.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.
Reviewed September 2022

Melanie Higgs



