

# Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy

**Policy Owner:** Deputy Head  
**Policy Date:** September 2018  
**Policy Review:** September 2019

## Introduction

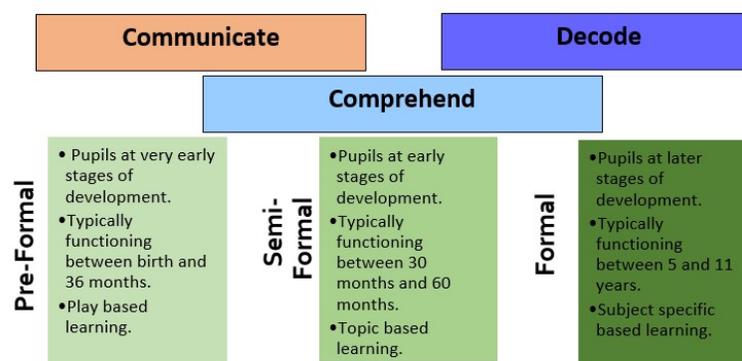
Brackenfield Special School caters for a wide range of pupils with varying levels of need of communication and cognition. We recognise the importance of personalised outcomes for each of our young people and supporting all pupils to have as independent life as possible.

## Pathways and Classes

In order to achieve this Brackenfield School adopts a Pathway Approach. The Pathways are designed to allow each pupil to become their best version of themselves. Each Pathway aims to develop functional lifeskills so that pupils leave Brackenfield ready to transition to the next stage in their lives. Pupils are placed in a pathway dependant on their cognitive, social/emotional and sensory needs. Each Pathway has 3 classes which are not necessarily in age groups. Pupils may remain in a pathway during their time at Brackenfield or may move between Pathways dependant on their needs and development. Each Pathway is overseen by a middle leader (Pathway Lead), classes are all teacher led with a team of STLAs (Specialist Teaching and Learning Assistants). All classes are classed based with access to toilets and their own kitchenettes, this is to remove the need for transition around the school buildings which our young people find challenging.



Children with severe learning difficulties learn very differently from neuro-typical children (Imray 2018) and therefore require a different pedagogical approach. Our curriculum is designed with the understanding that each pupil will have unique starting and destination points. In order to effectively meet all the needs of the pupils within Brackenfield we have implemented a new curriculum structure. This has 3 broad levels that complement our Pathways and is based on the work of Dr Penny Lacey and Peter Imray at Swiss Cottage School (Challenge Partners, 2017). Movements between pathways and variations in pedagogical approach are possible as our curriculum is supportive of the needs of all our pupils whilst having a commonality of approach across the school.



## Curriculum and Assessment Model

Curriculum		
Content What they are learning?	Approach What is required to learn?	Method How is it taught?
Themes Subjects SMSC British Values Safeguarding and Online Safety	Pre-Formal Semi- Formal Formal Accredited Multi-Sensory Positive behaviour support Total communication Multiple approaches to teaching phonics	Intensive interaction TEEACH Play Attention Autism Role Play Visits Teacher led tasks Pupil led tasks Discussion Question and answer Written tasks Exploring and investigating



Assessment	
Content What is being Assessed?	Method How it is being Assessed?
Learning Objectives Personalised Learning Outcomes EHCP Outcomes	Assessment Grids MAPP

### Curriculum Content

All our pupils receive a broad and balanced educational offer whilst providing opportunities for progression by giving access to experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging. Curriculum delivery is centred around opportunities for online safety and safeguarding so these skills and knowledge are fully embedded. See the Safeguarding Policy for more information. Our curriculum content is drawn from the Early Years Foundation Stage, EQUALS Semi-Formal Curriculum, The National Curriculum and the Preparation for Adulthood Framework. The curriculum content has been designed in order to facilitate progression at all levels. However, this with the understanding that some pupils may remain at a developmentally early stage throughout their life and therefore may not progress to formal learning.

Our curriculum is completely based around functional lifeskills for our pupils. For that reason it is carefully structured to ensure that we teach and fully embed the skills needed for our pupils to be as independent as possible in adulthood. For example it may be important for a pupil to know that some objects will attract each other and these are called magnets. This is a functional Lifeskill that will be required in adulthood in order to functionally navigate the world. However, it may not be functionally required for a pupil to know about magnetic fields, poles and the specific metals that a magnet will be attracted to. In short a pupil needs to know about basic scientific principles but they are not preparing to be scientists. It is for this reason that science and scientific investigations are embedded across the

Lifeskill areas but are not taught discretely during KS1, KS2 or KS3. In KS4 science may be taught as a discrete subject if this appropriate for the needs of pupil in adulthood.

Although our curriculum is laid out in terms of specific subjects it is not necessarily the expectation that these subjects are taught in isolation – particularly at the pre-formal and semi-formal level. It is however, the expectation that communication, maths and literacy are embedded across all curriculum areas. For more information about how the curriculum is mapped out and how this relates to assessment please see Appendix 1.

		CURRICULUM CONTENT								KS4
Pre-Formal (developmentally 0 – 36 months)	Subject Areas									
	Literacy	Maths	Learning to Learn						Communication and Language	
			Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development						
Semi-Formal (developmentally 30 – 60 Months)	Subject Areas									
	Literacy	Mathematics	Lifeskill Subjects				Physical Education	Expressive Art & Design		
			Independent Living	Community Participation	Employment	Good Health				
Formal (developmentally 5– 11 years)	Subject Areas									
	Literacy	Mathematics	Lifeskill Subjects				Physical Education	Expressive Art & Design	Additional College D of E Forest Schools	
			Independent Living	Community Participation	Employment	Good Health				

Preparation for Adulthood

Aim Awards - PSED

### Lesson Allocation and Timetable

All pupils at Brackenfield School are in receipt of an EHCP which states their individual needs in the areas of: Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social Emotional and Mental Health and Sensory. In order to provide a curriculum that is structured enough to provide depth and breadth balanced with the flexibility to allow for individualised learning Brackenfield do not detail a specific amount of lessons per subject. Instead we specify the minimum and maximum parameters per subject area (Appendix 2). It is the expectation that class teams tailor their curriculum and therefore timetable to effectively meet the needs of their class and are able to provide a rationale for their timetable design. It is also not the expectation that every lesson on the timetable has a subject name. For example, even though Teamwork is not an identified subject it may be appropriate to have this lesson in a timetable if staff can provide a rationale for how it is meeting the academic, EHCP or J2L outcomes of the class or pupils.

The school day is split into 5 lessons of 50 minutes and 1 lesson of 90 minutes (Lesson 4). In Lesson 4 pupils have a 30 minute lunch break within this lesson. In classes where the learning is predominantly formal it is more likely that lessons will be clearly defined and start and finish on the school bell. However in classes where the learning is more towards the semi and pre-formal level it is possible that their timetable would not follow this structure. Again the expectation is that class teams provide a clear rationale for their structure of the day. Where pupils are “Learning to Learn” in pre-formal settings it is unlikely that their timetable will fit into the specific parameters. Again this is appropriate if the curriculum and timetable is effectively meeting the needs of the pupils.

## Thematic Approach to the Curriculum

As a school we recognise the importance of embedding learning and supporting our pupils to be able to contextualise and generalise information. We use a thematic approach to support this and our themes are based on the four lifeskill subjects. The theme provides the context of the learning but the delivery supports pupil's being able to generalise and embed their understanding. For example: The Great Fire of London falls under the Independent Living area as the primary lifeskill function of this theme is that fire is hot and dangerous. However this theme can also be used to teach about: the history and geography of London at this time; people who can help us when there is a fire; how fire can be represented through Expressive Arts & Design and Dance and how communities respond to fire. SMSC and British Value annual events are also covered within the curriculum; it is not the expectation that every SMSC & British Value event is taught or celebrated each year; rather that the SMSC & British Value events are taught to best suit the needs of our population and to give them a depth and breadth in the curriculum. For the 5 year overview of the themes and SMSC & British Value events please see Appendix 3. Staff work collaboratively to map learning activities for each area and this is a live document updated and discussed via Planning Collaboration and Standardisation meetings.

## Supporting Communication across the Curriculum

All of our pupils have significant communications needs due to their learning difficulties. Being able to communicate is one of the most important functional lifeskills. Brackenfield adopts a total communication approach (see Total Communication Approach Policy) to effectively support all our pupils. Dependent on need this may be in the forms on signs and symbols such as Makaton Communication or augmentative communication such as PECs or hi-tech aids.

Makaton is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech, in spoken word order. With Makaton, children and adults can communicate using signs and symbols. Many learners drop the signs or symbols naturally at their own pace, as they develop speech. Makaton Symbols can also be used to support Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Makaton is extremely flexible as it can be personalised to an individual's needs and used at a level suitable for them.

## Play within the Curriculum

Play is an essential part of a child's development. Play is a critical aspect of a child's development as it provides them with opportunities for social interaction, to think creatively and allows them to make sense of the world around them.

"Nearly everything the growing child needs to learn is developed and practiced in play, including concrete skills, such as counting, motor co-ordination, speech and abstract skills, including imagination, problem-solving, planning, and 'learning how to learn'" (Goldstein 2003).

From birth almost all neurons are present but most are not connected in networks. The synapse formation (connecting process) is rapid during the first 12 months; with the greatest growth areas being sensorimotor, visual cortex and later the frontal lobes. For our pupils many early developmental stages have been delayed or restricted by the nature of their needs in those early months and years. Therefore "we have to help these children learn to play for without our interventions they do not develop those communication, social and emotional skills typically developing children acquire through play" (Hirstwood). We have to create the opportunities through our learning environments, interactions and activities for pupils to play; they will not learn to play passively.

We play an important role in facilitating play for our pupils. We need to be aware of the needs of each and know how to adapt the environment so it encourages the pupil to explore and learn through play. There must be opportunities for self-initiated play and active play. Although some adult modelling may be required before the child is able to play independently or with peers it is important that the adult doesn't guide their hands, help, demonstrate or otherwise do it for them. We must be careful it does not become an approach that incorporates overly structured adult intervention strategies that robs the child of the vital essence of learning through exploration. Vicki Liske & Lynn Bell argue that the greatest risk is not a physical or sensory disability 'but the loss of spontaneity and joy in discovery and learning.'

By enabling play we mean the creation of the opportunity to play; the setting up of the environment to enable active play. To ensure that we offer appropriate facilitation of play we need to ensure the continual observation and assessment of that play; it also requires continual adaptation by the adult in response to the child. We need to be aware of the levels of engagement a pupil exhibits in order to support their development.

The facilitation of spontaneous play begins with what a child is already involved in. Play can occur with any materials, situations or persons. The play partners need to blend in with the experiences of the child with new activities or toys being gradually introduced to encourage the child to explore and develop. Children learn best when they are actively engaged in doing something. We recognise that whilst pupils may have difficulty accessing, staying focussed and sustaining play it is our role to provide an environment that enables them to learn in their own time and space. It is our responsibility to adjust our behaviours and interactions to the functional level the child is operating at in order to establish a relationship with them. For more information see Appendix 4.

### **Assessment of Progress**

Progress is tracked and measured in several ways at Brackenfield in order to provide a holistic view of the child and to be able to focus on the needs and strengths of each individual. Our assessment method reflects the recent changes regarding statutory reporting for children with SEND as a result of the Rochford Review.

Traditionally in the UK progress has been measured by linear progression. This presupposes a fixed hierarchy of skills which have a fixed starting point and end point; progress is then measured in terms of number of skills mastered (Sissons, 2018). Our assessment of progress predominantly uses neuro-typical age-equivalency development milestones as a basis. This is to be able to have a common language that all can understand.

We measure linear progress using Brackenfield Levels. Learning objectives have been created from EYFS Outcomes, Preparation for Adulthood Outcomes and End of Year Expectations. These are arranged in Assessment Grids that enable effective tracking of pupil progress. Each pupil has an individual Assessment Grid for each subject area. This is kept electronically and is a live document in that is updated continuously through the marking and feedback process. This allows live data to feed effectively into the planning process. At the end of each MER point the information from the Assessment Grid is used to decide which Brackenfield Level a pupil is working at in each subject. Due to the RAG system of the Assessment Grids it is also possible to measure smaller steps of progress and target any areas that require additional intervention. The table below shows the judgement made in relation to the assessment objective on the Assessment Grid.

	Objective is securely and consistently met independently
	Pupil is working towards meeting objective securely and independently
	Objective is not met but pupil has begun to attempt it
	Pupil has not begun this objective
	Objective judged to be secure through the baseline assessment.

Staff use their professional judgement to decide when an objective is securely met. This judgement is based on annotations. When a Brackenfield Level is achieved staff record on the Assessment Grid the rationale for this judgement and the location of any corresponding evidence.

At KS4 we measure linear progress through the completion of units in Accredited Awarding bodies such as AIM Awards.

		School Year	EYFS	National Qualifications Framework
<b>Pre-formal</b>	B1		0 – 11 months	
	B2		0 – 11 months	
	B3		8 – 20 months	
	B4		8 – 20 months	
	B5		16 – 26 months	
	B6		16 – 26 months	
	B7		22- 36 months	
<b>Semi-Formal</b>	B8	Reception	22 – 36 months	Vocational Pathway Qualifications (Entry 1 Continuum)
	B9		30 – 50 months	
	B10		30 – 50 months	
	B11		30 – 50 months	
	B12		40 – 60 months	
	B13		40 – 60 months	
	B14		40 – 60 months	
	B15		Early Learning Goal	
<b>Formal</b>	B16	1		Entry Level 1 Aim Awards: PSD
	B17	1		
	B18	1		
	B19	2		
	B20	2		
	B21	2		
	B22	3		Entry Level 2 Aim Awards: PSD
	B23	3		
	B24	3		
	B25	4		
	B26	4		
	B27	4		
	B28	5		Entry Level 3 Aim Awards: PSD
	B29	5		
	B30	5		
	B31	6		
B32	6			
B33	6			

We recognise in our population there are children that may never developmentally acquire certain skills; i.e. they may not progress in a linear manner. In order to facilitate a well round picture of a child's progress we also assess progress laterally. Lateral Progress is concerned with the refinement and strengthening of skills over time (Sissons, 2018). For example a pupil may have 4 Makaton signs at the start of the year and 4 Makaton Signs at the end of the year.

If progress was only considered at a linear level then this would be zero progress. However, if over the course the of the year the pupil has begun to use these signs in context, with a greater degree of fluency and to more people this represents a great amount of lateral progress. The purpose of the Assessment of Lateral Progress (ALP) is to take qualitative data, in the form of observations, and distil meaningful quantitative data from them. This is possible because any skill can be assessed as a whole by making judgements on the ALP rating scale in relation to the four aspects of independence, fluency, maintenance and generalisation (Sissons, 2018). Brackenfield School use the MAPP Assessment Tool to measure lateral progress. Personalised Learning Intentions are set for each child where it is more useful to measure progress in that are laterally.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS				KS4 Outcomes
<b>Pre-Formal</b> (developmentally 0 – 36 months)	<b>Working Towards</b>	<b>Levels B1 – B7</b>	<b>Personalised Learning Intentions</b>	EHCP Outcomes
	<b>Subjects</b>	Literacy Mathematics	EHCP Outcomes	
	<b>Assessment Tool</b>	Subject Specific Assessment Grid	MAPP	
<b>Semi-Formal</b> (developmentally 30-60 months)	<b>Working Towards</b>	<b>Levels B8 – B15</b>	<b>Personalised Learning Intentions</b>	EHCP Outcomes AIM Awards College Qualifications
	<b>Subjects</b>	Literacy Mathematics Lifeskill Subjects Physical Education Expressive Art & Design	EHCP Outcomes	
	<b>Assessment Tool</b>	Subject Specific Assessment Grid	MAPP	
<b>Formal</b> (developmentally 5 – 11 years)	<b>Working Towards</b>	<b>Levels B16 – B33</b>	<b>Personalised Learning Intentions</b>	EHCP Outcomes AIM Awards College Qualifications
	<b>Subjects</b>	Literacy Mathematics Lifeskill Subjects Physical Education Expressive Art & Design	EHCP Outcomes	
	<b>Assessment Tool</b>	Subject Specific Assessment Grid	MAPP	

### Accreditation Opportunities

We recognise the importance of accreditation and vocational qualifications for all of our pupils. Brackenfield School follows the Aim Awards Employment, Vocational and Personal Development Qualifications. These are designed to enable linear and lateral progress towards a range of vocational areas, with a focus on preparation for adulthood; T levels and apprenticeships.

These qualifications are available from Entry 1 to Level 2 and in a range of sizes from Awards to Diplomas, and are suitable for learners of all abilities. Pupils can achieve the qualifications from the essential vocational group which are skills and knowledge content. In addition to this there is the opportunity to complete employability skills, including maths, Literacy and ICT. The Aim Awards continue to support our pupils' functional lifeskills within the Personal and Social Development Qualifications.

In order to support adulthood to transition we have close links with Broomfield, Derby College and other post 16 Special School in the area. Our KS4 pupils have the opportunity to attend college and gain qualifications in vocational areas such as construction, hospitality and animal care.

Brackenfield recognises the importance of team work, communication and developing social skills in our young people. Some of our pupils can explore The Duke of Edinburgh Award, Forest Schools and other outdoor education opportunities.

### **Marking and Feedback**

Brackenfield School recognises the importance of quality marking and feedback in all aspects of Teaching and Learning. Staff provide verbal and written feedback to pupils as appropriate.

Annotations are used for:

- To capture pupil voice and provide a structure for staff - pupil dialogue
- To inform practice and feed into the planning process
- To provide information to the class teacher on what the pupils have learnt (decoded and comprehended) and to comment on how staff know this (how the pupils have communicated this)
- To provide written feedback to pupils as appropriate
- To evidence when an assessment criteria or PLI has been securely met
- To track and evidence progress in Attention Autism sessions

Please see Appendix 5 for examples of annotations.

### **Planning**

Long term planning is done using Appendix 7 and is completed collaboratively between classed and mapped out at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> MER window in June. Medium Term Planning is completed using Appendix 8. Teaching staff prepare a skeleton plan of the intended objectives and learning activities at the start of each MER window. The marking and feedback process then feeds into the planning process in order to effectively support pupil learning. Short term lessons are available if staff require them to support but are not a requirement. STLA's use Appendix 9 to effectively plan for activities that will enable pupils to work towards their PLIs.

### **Quality Assurance and the Monitoring Evaluation Review Cycle**

Brackenfield quality assures Teaching and Learning and Personal Development Behaviour and Welfare in several ways to ensure that all students are making good progress. The QA cycle utilises the use of four Monitoring Evaluation Review (MER) points spread equally throughout the school year, approximately 10 school weeks apart. Our school year runs from June to June as opposed from September to July. This is in order to support transition of new pupils into the school and to settle pupils into new classes prior to the summer holidays. The rationale for this is to reduce pupil anxiety by limiting the amount of changes to routine at one time and to shift the school year closer to the financial year in order to support with effective budget setting for Teaching and Learning. All other systems such as performance management and appraisal also follow this pattern. Each stage of the Quality Assurance Cycle forms development points feeding into the teaching, learning and assessment action plans for pathways each half term. This information also gives individual development points in teacher appraisals and interim reviews. Appendix 6 gives information about each aspect of the QA cycle and the frequency and occurrence happens. All aspects of quality assurance are referenced into

the SEF, to validate the performance judgements of school; teaching, learning and curriculum, pupil outcomes and PBDW.

### Tracking Pupil Progress

The following table shows the judgement made on pupil progress in the data spreadsheets.

	More than expected progress
	Expected progress
	Below expected progress

Feedback is shared at the end of each MER window as a whole school, with focus areas for the following half term. Individual feedback is given during data dialogues and through appraisal meetings. NQTs, UQTs and HLTAs are assigned a mentor. Mentors are also assigned to staff members requiring additional support to meet performance expectations.

Regular development meetings are held to support any areas of development highlighted through the quality assurance cycle and any personal areas of interest which will support the school improvement plan.

### Learning Walks

Learning walks take place in order to collect evidence about teaching and learning, evidence of progress and areas for school development. They are intended to be developmental and constructive rather than judgemental and are a whole-school improvement activity.

They are not used as part of capability procedures or for appraisal purposes. Feedback from the learning walks will be shared through each pathway with staff teams however, individual feedback is available if requested.

Learning walks are also a professional development strategy that allows teachers to observe other teachers and to use strategies observed in their own practice.

### Lesson Observations

Lesson observations are developmental and supportive and take place for all staff with teaching responsibility. In order that classroom observation is kept to a minimum, and to support efforts to deliver the school's commitment to streamlining data collection and minimising workload burdens on teachers, the information gathered will be used for multiple purposes, including informing school self-evaluation and school improvement strategies. This will enable senior leaders to evaluate the standards of teaching and learning and to ensure that proper standards of professional performance are established and maintained.

Teachers being observed for all purposes will be notified at least five working days in advance and there will be a limit of a total of three observations for all purposes. The total time occupied by all observations will not exceed three hours per year. Verbal feedback will be given as soon as possible

after the observation and no later than the end of the following working day. It will be given during directed time in a suitable, private environment.

Written feedback will be provided within five working days of the observation taking place. If issues emerge from an observation that were not part of the focus of the observation, these will be covered in the written feedback and the appropriate action discussed with the teacher. The written record of feedback will include the date on which the observation took place, the lesson observed and the length of the observation. The teacher has the right to append written comments on the feedback document. No written notes in addition to the written feedback and teacher's comments will be kept. Teachers will have access to all written accounts of the observation after their lessons and, if they request, copies will be provided.

### Lesson observation and formal capability procedures

For teachers on a formal capability procedure an important part of the support offered to the teacher will be a clearly defined amount of classroom observation with structured oral and written feedback. The amount of classroom observation will be discussed with the teacher and their union representative who is supporting and advising them in the formal process.

### Reporting to Parents

Brackenfield staff report informally to parents on a daily basis through home school diaries and phone calls. Staff report to parents on a formal basis through an Annual Review of an EHCP, an interim school report at the end of the MER 2 and an end of year report at the end of MER 4. For examples of the reports please see appendix 10. In addition to this there is an Open Evening during MER 1 and a Parents Evening during MER 4.

### Resources

Brackenfield School has a variety of resources to support Teaching and Learning:

- Education City is an interactive online tool that can be used whole class, teacher led or independently. Education City allows teachers to further embed knowledge and skills through; activities, topic tools, videos, quizzes, learning screens, online arenas and songs. All pupils have an individual log in which allows staff and pupils to track their own pupils. Due to its fully personalised approach teachers can easily make curriculum links and resources.
- Twinkl allows teacher to download and create bespoke resources to support curriculum delivery.
- Communication in Print
- iPADS
- Laptops
- Fully immersive sensory rooms
- A comprehensive range of educational resources and games that are stored centrally

### Homework

Due to the cognitive abilities of our population, homework can be stressful for our pupils. Therefore, if homework is given it is completely bespoke to the needs of the pupil. However, we provide all of

our pupils with the opportunity to access Education City at home allowing them to work independently and / or with their families.

### **Enrichment**

Many of our pupils cannot access after school clubs as they are transported to and from school by SEN transport. However, we believe extra-curricular activities promote independence, relationships, creativity and are enriching for our pupils. We therefore offer whole school enrichment Friday afternoons which are based on pupil voice. Activities include sport, tap dancing, rock band, Lego and many more.

### **Staff Mentoring Programme**

#### Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

NQTs follow the Derbyshire best practice model of NQT support and mentoring. Additional study time is built into their timetable (20% of time is non-contact). Each NQT has a separate mentor, of whom will feedback after quality assurance, complete observations and complete reports of developmental progress.

#### Unqualified Teachers (UQTs)

UQTs are quality assured using the same robust and developmental methods as qualified teaching staff. Mentors will form an action plan of meetings if required for an area of development. UQTs receive an additional non-contact session to support their teaching and learning delivery.