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# Curriculum Policy

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Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
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Reviewed September 2024
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For review - Annually - Review targets annually
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# Curriculum Policy

## Background

Utopia is an independent special school that provides specialist support for boys and girls aged 13-16. Our curriculum supports those with social, emotional and mental health needs, speech language and communication difficulties and those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. We are a small setting for up to 20 learners providing intensive and personalised support for those with emotional based school avoidance who benefit from a nurturing and calm environment. Our curriculum provides tailored intervention in Maths, English and Science, addressing skill gaps on a 1-1 basis by boosting confidence to accelerate learning. Our vocational qualifications provide practical opportunities for learners to become critical thinkers, developing key skills to boost employability, communication and teamwork skills. In addition our outstanding mental health and wellbeing support is delivered via our PSHE curriculum with weekly personal development opportunities, groupwork and 1-1 counselling all on offer for learners to access. We believe so much can be learned through practical and physical activities that take place outside of the classroom, and we facilitate this learning by providing challenging activities that encourage young people to try new things and test their comfort zones.

The Utopia curriculum prides itself on being innovative, providing unique learning experiences that stretch and support young people to reach their full potential. Based on key performance indicators the Utopia model is designed to enhance all aspects of individual learners' education and wellbeing.

The Utopia ethos places particular emphasis on;

- High levels of parent/carer engagement
- High levels of professional's engagement (i.e. Social workers, Therapists, Education Psychologists )
- Effective communication links with external agencies
- Diverse curriculum offer
- Community partnerships/involvement
- Age appropriate/relevant practical "life based" activities
- Supported transition to FE, work placements or Traineeships
- Supporting the mental and physical wellbeing of its young people

Using this holistic approach to learning, our young people achieve accelerated engagement and progression, ultimately increasing their future life chances.

## Curriculum Intent

At Utopia our curriculum aims to:

- provide a broad and balanced education that is coherently planned and sequenced. Providing practical, relevant, and interesting lessons that motivate and engage students.
- enable learners to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.
- fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
- understanding the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
- ensure that a framework is in place to assess learners' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress
- include an enhanced focus on; personal, behavioural, emotional and social development.
- build upon previous skills and experience to extend the knowledge of young people, using practical activities.
- offer progression, through small steps, for the development of skills and concepts.
- develop effective speaking and listening skills for learners across all subjects areas
- Provide timetabled opportunity for physical activity
- adopt a whole centre approach to improving reading for all learners
- provide an appropriate PHSE curriculum that encourages respect and tolerance for others, with particular regard to the protected characteristics and includes careers, sex and relationship education.
- promote healthy lifestyles and lifestyle choices.
- promote diversity and British values within our community
- provide a clear pathway to post-16 education, training or employment.
- ensure equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, religion or class.
- be presented in the most appropriate way for groups and individuals to access, to enable maximum participation and progress.
- prepare young people for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.
- take into account individual differences and additional difficulties, using specialist input from external agencies where necessary.
- present opportunities for working in a range of groupings, which could include individual, paired or small group participation and whole group where possible.
- make use of the immediate and wider environment by conducting visits to sites of educational value.
- assess learner progress regularly and robustly
- regularly review and modify as appropriate to learners' needs and in the light of research and developments.

## Curriculum Planning

To support the planning of lessons the following procedures are in place:

- All curriculum planning seeks to support Every Child Matters outcomes of being Safe, Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve, Economic Well Being, Positive Contribution.
- All curriculum planning is SEND focused and specific care is given to developing the 4 key areas of cognition and learning, communication & interaction, social and emotional and good health.
- Lessons are planned based upon individual needs to provide progression at each level.
- Adaptations to long-term plans are made by tutors to meet the needs of their particular group. These adaptations are discussed and reviewed regularly with senior leaders to maximise their affect.
- Short term plans identifying learning objectives, appropriate activities to deliver these and specific vocabulary to be used.
- Teacher planning will ensure appropriate resources are in place to deliver education effectively. Processes are in place to ensure resources are of a sufficient quality, quantity and range to support learners.

## Curriculum Implementation

The year 9 curriculum comprises a range of subjects designed to give learners access to a broad range of subjects to address gaps within their knowledge. These are;

- English
- Maths
- Science
- ICT
- Sport
- Humanities
- Art
- Vocational Studies
- Independent Living Skills
- PHSE
- Duke of Edinburgh

The KS4 Curriculum adopts a blend of core qualification based subjects in addition to subjects that learners complete to develop personal and social skills. At KS4 the core curriculum comprises of;

- English Language
- Maths
- Science
- Independent Living Skills
- Duke of Edinburgh
- PHSE

Optional Qualifications include:

- BTEC Sport
- BTEC Animal Care

- BTEC Media
- BTEC Art
- BTEC Home Cooking Skills
- BTEC Childcare
- BTEC Esports

Additional subject of interest options that are not linked to qualifications include;

- Music
- Beauty
- Cooking

The curriculum is also supplemented by functional skills English and Maths and additional short courses such as First Aid, Food Hygiene or Health and Safety where appropriate and identified based on individual learner needs.

All subjects seek to exploit cross-curricular links and opportunities to develop numeracy, literacy and speaking and listening skills. Teacher adopt and adapt schemes of work devised by the examination governing body where possible and use them as a framework for planning. In the first instance the curriculum is mapped over a two-year cycle.

Baseline testing is a fundamental aspect of the induction process at Utopia. Staff use a range of assessment tools for assessing the individual needs of learners, some of which include;

- Star Reading Assessments
- Star Maths Assessments
- Bespoke subject specific assessment
- Knowledge checkers and quizzes
- Informal discussion based assessment

The initial assessment enables staff to create bespoke learning frameworks for students ensuring that personalised pathways are clear with realistic but challenging targets set.

Schemes of work are designed to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately mapped, sequenced and planned to ensure that learners can maximise their progress from whatever their start point. It allows staff to ensure that skills gaps are addressed and interventions are in place to support learners' development.

A range of factors will inform scope and breadth of an individuals curriculum, these factors will include learner starting points, timescales available and projected outcomes. This process informs the curriculum level we focus on for individuals and ensures registrations with appropriate examining bodies can be made. Decisions on a learners curriculum pathway will be made in conjunction with subject leads, the SENDCO, parents and learners themselves.

Literacy and numeracy are taught across all aspects of the curriculum, for example, where learners must calculate the price or weight of ingredients during cooking sessions, or are analysing the purpose of adverts during media. Opportunities for

developing speaking and listening skills are practiced daily on an informal basis by staff encouraging conversation and questioning throughout the day.

Personal and Social Development (PSD) is a core part of what we offer as a school supporting learners with SEND. Learners will have opportunities for taking part in PSD on a regular basis. These sessions will enable students to develop personal learning and thinking skills, informs part of the interventions for meeting the outcomes identified in the EHCP and feeds the targets for meeting these outcomes identified in the Individual Pathway Plan.

In this way PSD informs the development of key skills across the 4 key areas identified in the EHCP;

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social & Emotional
- Good Health

PSD sessions are mapped termly and the focus of sessions is to effectively prepare all learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain. These sessions may include but are not limited to;

- visits to local colleges and employers
- accessing local services such as libraries and gyms
- using public transport
- visits to local museums or establishments of educational value
- practicing social skills such as eating in restaurants
- building resilience in challenging activities such as rock climbing
- appreciating local nature on walks or in parks

Utopia has an ever-changing approach to this aspect of the curriculum, in order to adapt to individual learner needs. Therefore we continue to develop our own behavioural, emotional and social curriculum using engagement activities and other techniques to teach strategies and skills to promote appropriate behaviour.

### **Learner Progress and Assessment (Impact)**

Regular formative assessment and discussion with learners enables them to have visibility over their learning and progress. Utopia staff work closely with each other to ensure that learning is triangulated and moderated throughout the year. Targets are set according to baseline data.

- Assessments of work should be ongoing with regular feedback provided to learners. (See Assessment Policy)
- Senior leaders will monitor the delivery of sessions and learner progress in a number of ways. These will include
  - receiving feedback from colleagues informally
  - requesting feedback during the staff meeting
  - work scrutiny
  - seeking the views of learners
- All staff will be encouraged to reflect and comment on how appropriate the planning was, what they managed to cover, additions, alterations and

omissions and the availability and suitability of resources. They will also seek learners' view on a regular basis.

- **Data Collection:** The purpose of collecting any data about an individual/cohort at Utopia is to understand and use it to make informed and evidence-based decisions about next steps and interventions that will lead to the best outcomes for each young person and to then compare data sets to ensure these have had the desired impact, supporting in signposting what further action is needed.
- At Utopia we complete this so that staff can create actions from their analysis to maximise learning and outcomes; this is quality assured internally by SLT and external quality assurance is provided by examination governing bodies. There are 2 key data collection points within the academic year at Utopia: At learner induction and at the end of the academic year.
- 'Learner progress' is a standing agenda item in Utopia staff meetings. Feedback about individual learners discussed at meetings helps to determine if they are reaching the required milestones in relation to their own ability and national and school indicators. Where learners are not making adequate progress, they will be identified for close monitoring and further 1:1 intervention as appropriate.
- If it is determined that the young person is still not making adequate progress, they may be referred to external professionals for further investigation into their needs. Where specific needs are identified and can be met with 'reasonable adjustment' by Utopia there will be no additional costs for support. Where it is deemed most appropriate for there to be intervention from an outside resource, the cost for these services will need to be negotiated with the local council/funding partner.
- Ongoing curriculum monitoring will inform the schools Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Managing Directors should write and review annually the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- identifying action points. This will be informed by their monitoring activity and take account of new initiatives.
- Senior leaders should review policies annually and update or rewrite as necessary.

## Literacy

Utopia recognise the importance of developing literacy skills. Access to the curriculum and confidence in learning stems from sound reading and writing skills. As such, we adopt a whole centre approach to improving literacy alongside targeted intervention.

Our whole centre ethos embeds reading across all subjects by adopting a triple 'R' approach, involving opportunities for learners to 'Read, Reflect and Relay'

**Read-** In lessons teachers will encourage the use of the most appropriate strategy for reading, which may include; shared reading, reading out loud or independent reading.

**Reflect-** Learners will be supported in understanding what they have read through classroom discussion.

**Relay-** Learners will display their comprehension of the task by relaying what they understand to teachers and peers within the lesson.

Additional whole school literacy strategies include monthly book club, word of the week and dedicated timetabled reading time 3 times per week where students access Accelerated Reader to track their reading progress and engagement with texts.

### **Targeted intervention**

All learners will be assessed upon induction for reading using the Star Reading Assessment Tool. Targeted interventions in literacy will support the development of phonics, develop fluency in reading and improve vocabulary and comprehension. Where appropriate a range of interventions will be used to support learners in developing confidence and making measurable progress, these may include

- Precision Teaching
- Fresh Start Phonics
- NESSY
- Maths for Life.
- 1-1 Catch up support

Targeted interventions will be coordinated by the SENDCO and recorded via the whole school Intervention tracker.

Interventions that support the development of communication and interaction, social, emotional and health progression will be mapped within the whole centre intervention tracker. Interventions to support in these areas may include but are not limited to;

- Counselling
- Socially Speaking intervention
- Zones of Regulation
- PSD activities
- Fine motor skills support
- Solution Focused Therapy
- Bazaar- CBT informed therapy
- Primal-
- Equine Therapy
- SALT Assessments and associated interventions

### **Extra Curricular Activities / Enrichment / Community Cohesion**

Opportunities to link with the wider community are an essential part of the Utopia programme. We regularly link with community groups and have visitors to the centre offering a wide range of activities and expertise. Visits to external activities and to the wider community are carefully risk assessed and planned to enhance the curriculum.



## **Inclusion**

Utopia staff set high expectations for all learners. We use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able learners
- Learners with low prior attainment
- Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Learners with SEN
- Learners with English as an additional language (EAL)

Utopia staff will plan lessons so that learners with SEN and/or disabilities can study every aspect of the curriculum, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every young person achieving their potential.

Utopia staff will also take account of the needs of learners whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help them to develop their English, and to support learners to take part in all subjects. Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy.

## **Engagement and Transition Support**

Utopia will work with learners with a number of additional needs that may include but not be limited to; Mental health needs, emotional based school avoidance, anxiety related to large environments and other additional need requiring 1:1 support. Therefore it may be necessary for a graduated approach to engaging learners, in which case we will adopt an exposure and habituation approach.

Strategies for this may include,

- Working on a 1:1 basis within the family home
- Working on a 1:1 basis within the community
- Working on a 1:1 basis online
- Completing engagement and socialisation sessions in a 1:1 or small group
- Exploring hobbies and interests within the community to build confidence
- Building positive relationships with key staff in an offsite environment to work towards engaging onsite.

As such transition to Utopia will be bespoke for all learners, recognising the fact that not all children are school shaped, therefore we must shape our curriculum offer accordingly. This transition support will be identified during the induction process in conjunction with learners and their parents as well as any other relevant professionals. Utopia will use the flexible and diverse nature of the curriculum to provide the best offer for individuals unable to access all of it's content in the first instance. This may include accessing BTEC short courses such as Teamwork and Personal Skills or Home Cooking, in addition to working at an appropriate level in English and Maths. This graduated approach will support the development of an increased curriculum offer over time with termly reviews of provision ensuring that learners are continually being challenged and progressed.

### **Safeguarding and PSHE:**

Within our curriculum, we build in opportunities for our young people to understand safeguarding issues which may affect them and to ensure they feel safe and supported at Utopia. More broadly, our curriculum takes account of and promotes our young peoples' mental and physical health and development in order to prevent any impairments that would affect the best possible outcomes. The inclusion of opportunities within lessons to address and promote positive relationships, health, mental well-being and resilience is adopted by all staff at Utopia when considering adaptations to schemes of work and by practitioners in their day-to-day practice as part of our broad and balanced curriculum offer.

Additionally, our embedded PSHE curriculum affords opportunities to be responsive to arising issues, and E-safety awareness is taught throughout the curriculum. Relationship Education and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is provided as appropriate for the learners' ages and stages of development and in line with statutory guidance effective September 2020 (and implemented from Summer 2021). Workshops and visits delivered by our partners at Brook support the delivery of this aspect of the curriculum.

The principles underpinning our PSHCE curriculum development are with the aim of supporting our young people to develop the skills they need to be happy, successful, and productive members of society; to be able to respond positively to the increasing challenges they experience; to develop the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and to know how and where to seek support if problems arise. Central to this is our young peoples' ability to believe that they can achieve goals, both academic and personal; to stick to tasks that will help them achieve those goals, even when the reward may be distant or uncertain; and to recover from knocks and challenging periods in their lives. This is complemented by development of personal attributes including kindness, integrity, generosity, and honesty.

### **Careers Information Provision**

Careers information provision is compulsory for providers of secondary education. At Utopia we meet this by: -

- Providing independent careers advice and guidance by a suitably qualified person.
- Offering careers carousels and events with local, national and international businesses to inform learners of career opportunities and inform them about entry requirements
- Organising trips and visits to organisations and businesses to educate learners about career opportunities
- Running ED Talks which allow business and education leaders to come into Utopia and deliver a presentation about pathways of opportunity designed to lead to career success
- Offering work experience placements
- Visiting local universities to show young people what it is like to go to university and study at that level

- Providing lessons designed to improve cv and letter writing skills and opportunities to learn the theory and then practice interview techniques that include full and detail feedback
- Providing opportunities to apply job application skills
- Providing information about local and national apprenticeships
- Providing information about post-16 options
- College and sixth form open events

### **British Values**

At Utopia, we actively promote positive, inclusive values. These include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. We believe British values are those values expected of anyone living in Britain, regardless of their nationality, culture or religious belief. Our ethos reflects these values. We place great emphasis on building positive relationships in school, amongst the students themselves and between staff and students. We strongly believe students should not merely be taught such values but that they are embedded into school life.

We strive to support our students to develop into confident, happy, successful young adults who have empathy towards and an understanding of those less fortunate than themselves.

The information below reflects how Utopia works to promote positive values through the ethos and life of the school, for example through a broad and balanced curriculum, and through social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Our PSHE and Enrichment curriculum sets our approach to teaching British values at Utopia. If you require additional information about promoting British values and preventing extremism/radicalisation please explore the following link.

<https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/procedures/6-31-safeguarding-children-young-people-radicalisation-violent-extremism/>

### **Protected Characteristics**

Across all aspects of the Utopia curriculum, learners are taught the value of respect and tolerance for difference in others. This includes ensuring that no part of the curriculum encourages a negative perception of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

**KS3 Curriculum**

	Awarding body	Level
<b>Core</b>		
Maths (Including Functional Skills)	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
English (Including Functional Skills)	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
Science (Including Functional Skills)	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
BTEC Sport	Edexcel	1
BTEC Art	Edexcel	1
BTEC Vocational Studies	Edexcel	1
BTEC ICT	Edexcel	1
Duke of Edinburgh	DofE	Bronze
Humanities	N/A	N/A
Independent Living Skills	N/A	N/A
Personal Social, Health Education	N/A	N/A
Personal Development	N/A	N/A

**KS4 Curriculum**

Academic Level: Entry Level - Level 2

	Awarding body	Level
<b>Core</b>		
Mathematics	Edexcel	GCSE
English Language	Educas	GCSE
Functional Skills English	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
Functional Skills Maths	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
BTEC Applied Science	Edexcel	Level 1-2
Personal Social, Health Education	N/A	N/A
Personal Development	N/A	N/A
Independent Living Skills	N/A	N/A

<b>Options</b>		
English Literature	Educas	GCSE
BTEC Animal Care	Edexcel	1-2
BTEC Sport	Edexcel	1-2
BTEC Art	Edexcel	1-2
BTEC Digital Media	Edexcel	1-2
BTEC Child Care	Edexcel	1-2
BTEC Esports	Edexcel	2
BTEC Home Cooking Skills	Edexcel	1-2
Duke of Edinburgh	DofE	Bronze, Silver, Gold
Work Experience	N/A	N/A