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## Curriculum Policy

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Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
Reviewed September 2025
For review - Annually - Review targets annually

## Curriculum Policy

### School Overview

#### **Our Vision**

A learning experience where children feel happy, safe, and create lasting memories, surrounded by people who appreciate their uniqueness, support their success, and foster their personal growth.

#### **Our Mission**

We balance the academic and personal development outcomes of students based on their individual needs and aspirations. Utilising parental engagement to ensure that each student is appropriately prepared for adulthood.

#### **Our Ethos**

Our school ethos of being accessible, approachable, and aspirational empowers staff to go above and beyond in supporting students' development, fostering strong relationships that drive exceptional progress.

#### **Values**

Resilience, respect, kindness, and responsibility are the core principles woven throughout our curriculum to ensure students are prepared to meet the demands of life in modern Britain.

#### **Essential Skills**

Problem solving, communication, teamwork, motivation, adaptability, and independence are fundamental skills we believe every student should embody to thrive both in school and in the wider world.

### Introduction

Utopia is an independent special school for students aged 13-16, providing a nurturing, calm, and highly personalised environment for students with social, emotional and mental health needs, autism, and speech, language, and communication difficulties. Our small setting, with capacity for up to 20 students, enables us to offer intensive support, tailored interventions, and meaningful vocational opportunities. Our curriculum blends core academic subjects, vocational qualifications, and preparation for adulthood, ensuring each student develops the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in education, employment, and independent life.

### Curriculum Intent

At Utopia School, our curriculum is designed to meet the needs of every student through four interconnected strands:

1. **Core Academic Curriculum** - English, Maths, and Science form the foundation, delivered through small-group and personalised teaching to close gaps, build confidence, and enable progress for all students.
2. **Vocational Curriculum** - Practical, accredited pathways provide opportunities to apply knowledge and develop employability skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication.

3. **Preparation for Adulthood** - A coherent PSHE and Careers programme, including independent living skills, relationship and sex education, and guidance for post-16 destinations, ensuring students are ready for adult life.
4. **\*Personal Development** - Embedded across the curriculum, promoting resilience, respect, kindness, and responsibility, as well as physical activity, healthy lifestyles, diversity, and British values.

\*More information on our Personal Development Curriculum can be found in the Personal Development Overview

Our curriculum is broad, balanced, and ambitious. It is coherently planned and sequenced, builds on prior learning, and adapts to the needs, interests, and abilities of our students. Through practical, relevant, and engaging learning, we equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities necessary to thrive in school, their communities, and the wider world.

### Curriculum Implementation

At Utopia, our curriculum is delivered through four interconnected strands: Core Academic, Vocational, Preparation for Adulthood, and Personal Development. Teaching is highly personalised, SEND-focused, and adapted to meet the needs of each student.

#### **Curriculum Planning**

- All planning reflects the principles of *Every Child Matters* and supports the four key areas of SEND: cognition and learning, communication and interaction, social and emotional development, and good health.
- Lessons are sequenced to ensure progression from each student's starting point, with short- and long-term plans adapted regularly in consultation with senior leaders.
- Schemes of work are mapped to ensure clear progression, address gaps in knowledge and skills, and embed literacy, numeracy, and speaking and listening skills across all subjects.
- Baseline assessments (e.g., Star Reading, Star Maths, bespoke subject assessments, quizzes, and discussion-based checks) inform personalised learning frameworks with realistic yet challenging targets.

#### **Key Stage 3 / Nurture Curriculum**

Provides a broad and balanced foundation to address knowledge gaps and develop essential skills through:

- **Core Academic** - English, Maths, Science, ICT, Functional Skills
- **Vocational Curriculum** - Sport, Land-Based Studies, Art, Vocational Studies.
- **Preparation for Adulthood** - Independent Living Skills, PSHE, Duke of Edinburgh.

#### **Key Stage 4 Curriculum**

Combines core qualification-based subjects with pathways that build personal, social, and employability skills:

- **Core Academic** - English Language, Maths, Science, Functional Skills
- **Vocational Curriculum** - BTEC Sport, BTEC Animal Care, BTEC Media, BTEC Art, BTEC Childcare, GCSE History, Music, BTEC Hair and Beauty, BTEC Home Cooking Skills, First Aid, Food Hygiene, Health & Safety.
- **Preparation for Adulthood** - Independent Living Skills, PSHE, Duke of Edinburgh, Careers

### Teaching Approaches

- Small group or one-to-one teaching to maximise engagement and progress.
- Adaptations to meet diverse needs, informed by assessment and regular review.
- Cross-curricular links are explicitly planned, for example, numeracy in cooking and literacy in media analysis.
- Frequent opportunities for speaking and listening, both in lessons and through informal daily interactions.
- Practical application of numeracy and literacy across all subjects, supported by Functional Skills interventions where required.
- Overlearning
- New learning in small steps
- Visuals/Dual Coding
- Scaffolds to support learning
- Self & peer assessment
- Providing templates and structures for learning
- Targeted questioning
- A low pressure, high expectation approach

### Pathway Decisions

Curriculum pathways are determined through collaboration between subject leads, the SENDCo, parents/carers, and students, taking into account:

- Starting points and baseline assessments.
- Time available before post-16 transition.
- Student aspirations and interests.
- Appropriate examining body registration.

All pathway and qualification decisions are discussed and agreed with parents during yearly parents' meetings or annual reviews.

### Curriculum Impact

At Utopia, we measure the impact of our curriculum through continuous assessment, staff collaboration, student feedback, and formal data collection. We aim to ensure every student makes good or accelerated progress from their starting point, develops the knowledge and skills outlined in our curriculum intent, and is fully prepared for the next stage of their education, training, or employment.

### Assessment Approach

- Regular formative assessment and student discussions give students visibility over their progress and next steps.
- Baseline assessments on entry inform personalised targets; these are reviewed at key points throughout the year.
- Teachers provide ongoing feedback in line with our Assessment Policy, ensuring students know how to improve.

### Monitoring Progress

- Senior leaders monitor delivery and progress through lesson observations, work scrutiny, student voice, and feedback from staff meetings.
- Student progress is a standing agenda item at staff meetings, ensuring the timely identification of students who require additional support or intervention.
- Data is collected at six key points each year – and is used to evaluate progress, plan interventions, and inform curriculum adjustments.

### **Intervention and Support**

- Where students are not making expected progress, targeted 1:1 support is provided.
- If progress remains limited, referrals are made to external professionals for further assessment, with reasonable adjustments made in school where possible.
- External services are accessed where required.

### **Quality Assurance and School Improvement**

- Assessment data and curriculum monitoring feed directly into the School's Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- The Managing Directors review the SEF and SIP annually, identifying action points informed by monitoring and emerging priorities.
- Senior leaders review policies annually to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

### **Literacy Across the Curriculum**

Utopia recognises that strong literacy skills are fundamental to accessing the curriculum and building confidence in learning. We adopt a whole-centre approach to reading, writing, and communication, embedding literacy in all subjects and providing targeted interventions where needed. Our 'Read, Reflect, Relay' approach supports students in engaging with texts, discussing meaning, and communicating their understanding. Whole-school strategies such as dedicated reading time, book clubs, and vocabulary development activities promote a culture of reading. Targeted literacy interventions, coordinated by the SENDCo and English Leader, are tailored to individual needs and monitored for impact.

### **Numeracy Across the Curriculum**

We promote numeracy as an essential life skill, integrated across all subjects to develop students' confidence in applying mathematical knowledge in real-life and vocational contexts. Opportunities for numeracy are embedded in lessons beyond Maths – for example, measuring and calculating in cooking, analysing data in science, or budgeting in independent living skills. Functional Skills Maths and targeted interventions support students in securing core mathematical concepts, while curriculum planning ensures the progression and practical application of numeracy for every student.

### **Inclusion**

We set high expectations for all students, ensuring access to a broad and balanced curriculum regardless of starting point, prior attainment, or background. Lessons are adapted so that our students with SEND can fully participate. We use assessment to set ambitious but achievable targets and remove barriers to learning through appropriate adjustments, specialist interventions, and close collaboration with external agencies.

### **Enrichment and Community Engagement**

Enrichment is embedded within our curriculum to broaden experiences and promote personal development. We work closely with community groups, invite visiting specialists, and provide educational visits that extend learning beyond the classroom. All activities are carefully planned and risk assessed to ensure they enhance the curriculum and support our preparation for adulthood aims.

### **Engagement and Transition Support**

Students with additional needs (mental health, anxiety, emotional-based school avoidance, or 1:1 support needs) receive a graduated approach to engagement. This may include:

- Home-based 1:1 support
- Community-based sessions
- Online learning
- Small-group socialisation
- Off-site activities

Transitions are bespoke, planned collaboratively with students, parents/carers, and professionals. Curriculum access is initially adapted and then expanded over time, with termly reviews ensuring continual progress and challenge.

### **Safeguarding and PSHE**

Safeguarding is embedded throughout our curriculum. Students are supported in understanding personal safety, healthy relationships, mental and physical well-being, and how to seek help when needed. Our PSHE curriculum is responsive to emerging issues, includes e-safety, and delivers Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in line with statutory guidance. Workshops from external partners such as Brook enrich this provision.

### **Protected Characteristics**

Across the curriculum, we actively promote respect and tolerance for difference. We ensure no teaching or materials encourage negative perceptions of any of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Diversity is celebrated and reflected in lessons, enrichment, and community engagement.

**Appendix****1.1 KS3/Nurture Curriculum**

	<b>Awarding body</b>	<b>Level</b>
<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

**1.2 KS4 Curriculum**

Academic Level: Entry Level - Level 2

	<b>Awarding body</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Core</b>		
Mathematics	Edexcel	GCSE
English Language	Educas	GCSE
Functional Skills English	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
Functional Skills Maths	Edexcel	Entry 1 - L2
Science	Edexcel	GCSE
Functional Skills Science	Edexcel	Entry 3
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
GCSE History	Edexcel	GCSE
BTEC Home Cooking Skills	Edexcel	1-2
Duke of Edinburgh	DofE	Bronze, Silver, Gold
Work Experience	N/A	N/A

