



# Curriculum Policy



# **Southampton Hospital School**

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### **Our Aims and Vision**

At Southampton Hospital School we are extremely proud of our approach towards curriculum design and implementation, an approach that leads to substantial and meaningful gains in students' knowledge and skills. At the heart of our curriculum lies high academic standards and a desire to create intellectual curiosity, growing resilience, a genuine thirst for knowledge and a love of learning for all of our young people, some of whom may have lost this for a period of time, due to personal challenges and adversity.

Southampton Hospital School offers all learners a high quality educational experience which enriches and builds upon the skills and knowledge of every young person referred to us. We pride ourselves on providing a curriculum offer that is bespoke to each individual learner and is fully tailored in response to the unique context of our school and the privileged position we hold when working with our children in small groups or 1:1 learning contexts. We view what others may judge to be limitations – short admissions, reduced learning time, lack of control over past educational experiences – as opportunities to provide a unique and powerful learning experience for every learner that truly makes a difference to their life, one which will continue to bring benefits even after their stay with us.

As our young people are often unwell or unable to access full time schooling, we make every lesson and learning interaction meaningful, enjoyable, challenging and relevant. We follow the national curriculum and expected standards in all areas, yet we tailor individual programmes of learning for every child. We understand that every child comes to us at a different stage in their development and therefore we create a unique structure and narrative for each one, taking into account and bringing together the context of where they have arrived from educationally, socially and emotionally with the institutional context of our school.

### **Curriculum Structure**

When young people enter the school, they are assessed through quality first teaching interactions which rapidly identify prior skills and knowledge as well as identify any gaps that have occurred due to particular medical needs or periods of non-attendance at school. Each pupil's bespoke curriculum offer is then be carefully planned and sequenced, working towards challenging and ambitious end points that build on existing knowledge and promote aspirational outcomes for every student.

Our curriculum design and structure is organised into learning units that can be structured, adapted and delivered for each student to suit their particular needs whether they be cognitive, developmental, health related, emotional or physical. By working closely with each child in this way we unlock any difficulties or barriers that may be impeding progress in their mainstream setting and ensure that they leave us with those areas 'unlocked' and the barriers reduced. This can mean a focus on the most fundamental of building blocks in literacy and maths, blocks that may be missing and not only preventing further progress being made, but which may be adversely affecting children's desire to attend school. Our staff work hard in the limited time they have with students, to build confidence, resilience and a determination to function fully in school life and beyond.

The individual end points for each learner demand high academic achievement secured through engaging lessons delivered in a compassionate, unthreatening way, thereby equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully access their next steps, whether that be a return to mainstream education or moving into the world of work and adulthood. We are fully committed to providing equality of access and provision to all students and ensure that no pupils are unfairly disadvantaged due to circumstance, needs or medical status.

We provide as broad a curriculum as possible within the obvious constraints that a stay in hospital or period of being unwell can bring. However, for children who are with us for a short period of time, we also believe that working in depth on particular tightly focused areas of learning in the core subjects of maths, English and science may be more appropriate, helping children to unlock their understanding and reduce anxieties around areas they find challenging. By working closely with every child and unlocking the schema around different skills and knowledge, we are able to identify and support progress more effectively.

All phase leaders and teachers are fully active in this process; they are constantly checking pupils' understanding, identifying misconceptions and correcting these with expert and skilled teaching. Through our CPD programme staff are encouraged and supported to become experts in cognition and how children learn and are given the opportunities to apply this understanding when designing lessons that connect pupils with new knowledge and skills. Where teachers are required to teach outside of their specialism, we provide opportunities for peer support, extra external training and collaboration with our mainstream practitioners within and beyond the Trust.

## Organisation of learning

For Key Stage 1-3, our curriculum consists of 3 teaching and learning units of study, each of which outlines the expected learning in English, maths, science and at least 2 foundation subjects. The units of study are:

- Community
- Time and place
- Journeys

Each unit specifies clearly the learning and progression expected in each subject for every year group, and clearly maps progress, targets and desired end points. A progression map for each unit, derived from national curriculum expected standards, creates our core curriculum offer. This core offer is then adapted and modified to suit the needs of each individual student and the length of their expected stay. If a child has special educational needs, a flexible curriculum offer will be created by the class teacher and Senco to identify ambitious and appropriate learning programmes and goals.

For students in Key Stage 4, we will create a curriculum plan based upon their GCSE options and syllabus requirements.

## Breadth of Curriculum Offer

As part of each learner's bespoke curriculum offer, we make judgements about which skills and areas of knowledge each child would benefit the most from learning with us. We believe that for our children, the idea of breadth does not necessarily mean the coverage of many different subjects, but the breadth and depth of knowledge we can develop around selected key concepts. If we have a limited number of learning sessions with young people, it may not be the best use of this time to deliver lessons in a number of foundation subjects, without the ability to then follow this up and ensure substantial progression is made. We do not want our learners to leave us with lesson content having been spread too thinly. This does not allow children to remember and master skills. Whatever the length of time with us, children leave us knowing more and being able to do more. We provide this variety and breadth in the activities provided in a sequence of teaching around areas where children need to learn how to master skills 'backwards, forward and inside out'. This is especially true where young people have clear gaps in their numeracy and literacy abilities. We have a duty to ensure that every session results in cognitive gain at a time when they may be facing cognitive overload through their particular health situation and emotional needs. We take the time to find out what interests and excites each child, allowing us to build engaging and enjoyable learning experiences for them, but ones that remain focused on key skills and gaps.

## Assessment

Assessment is used at SHS to help pupils embed knowledge and use it fluently. It is used to identify pupils' next steps and ensure that they are suitably challenged and provided with relevant curriculum content. We do not use formal tests or assessments to establish our initial baseline as we believe close interaction between teachers and children allows professional judgements to be made quickly and more reliably. When young people are facing a stay in

hospital, they are often understandably anxious and this is not the appropriate time to be testing their ability. Their levels of cognition may be affected by their illness and we know that building a trusting relationship quickly will allow us to assess their abilities and identify gaps more reliably and rapidly.

The exception to this is for our Key Stage 1 learners, who we screen sensitively to assess their phonics knowledge and allow us to identify gaps. As a school we prioritise the importance of reading in all phases and understand that learners' access to the whole curriculum will be seriously impeded if reading is a struggle. We therefore include a variety of opportunities to assess reading skills and promote fluency and a love of reading wherever we can.

We also support mainstream schools if they wish learners to take internal or external examinations during their stay.

## Independent Learning

At SHS we encourage learners to be as independent and self-reliant as possible. We know this is particularly vital if children are to return to a mainstream setting successfully after a sustained period of absence. This is more challenging in a context such as ours where learners are working much more closely with adults than they might in a mainstream setting. However, we challenge learners whenever possible to take responsibility for furthering their own understanding and acquisition of knowledge. This may involve an increased emphasis on challenging problem solving activities, with teachers providing timely and sensitive support when needed.

The completion of homework and independent study can also be a challenge when children are ill and have restricted access to private and quiet spaces to work in the evenings. Therefore, our approach is again individual to suit the needs of each young person and we often collaborate with our medical colleagues when devising programmes.

## Learning Partnerships

For our young people to get the very most out of their time in our school, we welcome the opportunity to work in close partnership with their schools. The information we request from schools can help inform our personalised curriculum offer for each child and we can try to ensure that they do not return to school with new gaps in their skills and knowledge compared to their peers.

One area that we see as vitally important is the work we do around reintegration back to school, or in some cases supporting a transition to a new specialist setting. At the heart of this work is our desire to see all young people accessing school safely, successfully and with high expectations shared by all for their continued educational journey. All children deserve the very best experience of schooling, regardless of any health challenges they may have faced or still be facing.

## Learning Beyond the Classroom

We provide as many opportunities for learning outside of the classroom environment as we can. There are obvious restrictions around this for many of our children, yet we see this as a crucial part of their personal development and building of cultural capital. This includes:

- An outdoor learning area in Bursledon House
- Weekly PE lessons delivered by Team Spirit, a professional coaching company. This is also available to children on the hospital wards who are unable to leave their beds
- Weekly cooking sessions for children in Bursledon House and Piam Brown ward. For children who have suffered cognitive injuries, this is also attended by Occupational Therapists and is designed to aid the re-learning of life skills and tasks
- STEM activities delivered by external trainers
- Use of UHS LifeLab to deliver hands on science sessions
- Learning visits to the haematology labs in UHS
- Visits to local theatres, centres of faith, museums and art galleries to increase young people's experiences of the diversity and richness of the local area

- Annual science days at Intech and Paulton's Park
- Music sessions delivered by Southampton Music Hub, including a focus on music technology
- Visiting poets and authors
- Story teller and book sessions provided by ReadWise
- Personal defence and safety sessions
- First aid instruction
- Stop motion animation classes
- Outreach teaching will always aim to expose children sensitively and gradually to learning environments beyond children's family homes. This is often part of a phased school reintegration plan. All trips are also offered to our young people in the outreach provision.

## Quality Assurance

The Headteacher and Director of Teaching and Learning are responsible for creating a quality assurance process that complements our particular context. In a setting such as ours, prolonged lesson observations have proved to not be the most effective way of giving a true picture of teaching and learning standards, as well as creating an unnecessary and unhelpful level of stress for both students and staff. The process is designed to ensure learning opportunities for our children are as rich and productive as they can be and that their knowledge and skills are being progressed sequentially and effectively. It is not a process that is about pre-conceived judgements of teaching methods or particular ways of delivering content.

Therefore, we visit lessons frequently and in a manner that is non-judgemental and non-threatening for both students and staff. Looking at the work produced by students and having high quality conversations about their learning and acquisition of knowledge is a far more appropriate way to assess the quality of the experiences we are giving them. Teachers will also be engaged in these conversations, allowing us to ascertain if the aims of each children's curriculum offer is being met. We are also then, as leaders, able to appreciate the challenges faced by each student and by each area of the school and crucially be able to share ideas as to how these can be overcome.

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