



Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

Curriculum Rationale Policy

Introduction

It is the purpose of this document to explain the rationale behind the curriculum at Archers Brook School, evaluate its success and propose any changes that would improve the success of the school.

In September 2010 the school changed its curriculum focus to enable pupils to access the Foundation Learning qualifications. This was followed a year later (September 2011) by changes in the timetable.

The starting point pre September 2010 was a timetable that consisted of 4, 45 minute lessons in the morning, two half hour lunch breaks with half the school being in lunch while the others went into clubs or supervised free time on the playground, followed by two, one hour lessons in the afternoon, pupils either earned a reward trip or took part in activities on a Friday afternoon. In key stage 4 only a minority of pupils gained close or improved upon their FFT estimates. Although many other curriculum areas offered pupils qualifications these were often lower than the pupil's academic abilities. It was felt amongst staff that for some pupils in key stage 3, 45 minute and one hour lessons were too long and that giving pupils half an hour at lunchtime of unstructured time led to a more unsettled afternoon.

In the spring term of 2009 the wider school management team looked at different curriculum models and made the decision to change to foundation learning.

Foundation Learning enables the school to offer the pupils a more personalised learning experience through a wide range of programmes comprised of smaller, flexible skill based qualifications, responding to the needs of the pupils. Government reforms during the past two years and in the future are changing the way that schools performance are being measured. However the government's guidance has continued to say that '*schools should act in the way that judge to be in the best interest of their students, regardless of whether a particular qualification or course will be recognised for the purpose of performance points*'.

We also had the challenge to design a curriculum where the majority of pupils have parents who have no desire to improve or are unsure how to improve either the quality of their own life or for their children to have a better quality of life than their own. The aim of the curriculum is to respond to the individual needs of the pupils by designing an engaging curriculum that recognises success in small steps.

The recent changes in the national curriculum (the removal of the national curriculum levels at key stage 3 and changes to both the key stage 3 and key stage 4 curriculum and external assessment and how the pupils attainment and progress is now measured) has not significantly changed the needs of the pupils or what they need to achieve to be successful in the next stage of their education.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum

Pupils in key stage 3 follow a timetable that is very similar to many local schools within the CH postcode this enables new pupils who enter into the school and any pupils who are returning to a main stream school a more supportive and easier transition. The majority of lessons are in 30 minute sessions; these are doubled for the more practical subjects.

Pupils have timetabled lessons for:-

English

Mathematics

Science

ICT

Humanities (which includes History, Geography and Religious Education)

Art

Design and Technology (Resistant Materials and Cooking)

Physical Education

Music

Spanish

Performing Arts

Careers

Horticulture

PSD

There are also some days every year where the normal timetable is disapplied and pupils are taught about different topics, these days cover aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum

The curriculum comprises of 3 main areas:-

Core

- Qualifications are taken in Literacy, Numeracy, ICT and Science, in each of these subjects all pupils take these qualifications according to their ability e.g. GCSE's, Entry level and in ICT a suite of qualifications developed around the European Computer Driving License (ECDL). Those in year 10 are taught the new GCSE core Science curriculum and in year 11 all are taught GCSE Science and Additional Science.

Vocational/ Optional Qualifications

- In year 9 following a comprehensive option programme of events, pupils can choose from a suite of qualifications. This has meant that those in year 10 could choose 2 from 7 subjects.

Personal and Social Development

- PSD is taught in discrete blocks by the PSD/Careers teacher. This allows it to be easier for groups of pupils to attend other planned activities and visits (e.g. employment fairs, work place visits and work experience) which also promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. This is then recorded towards their ASDAN PSD Award.

All pupils are taught PE.

All pupils can therefore gain the following qualifications

Subject	Qualification
English Language	GCSE
English Literature	GCSE
Mathematics	Entry level, GCSE
ICT	ECDL and E.Safety
Science	GCSE
PSD	ASDAN level 2

Pupils can gain qualifications in 2 of the subjects below, some of which are equivalent to more than one GCSE.

Level 2 Sport
Level 2 Hospitality
Level 2 GCSE Art
Level 1 BTEC Construction
Level 1 Horticulture
GCSE Additional Science

An Evaluation

The half hour timetable periods have allowed easier timetabling and made any changes required easier to administer, pupils and staff appreciate how the half hour sessions allow for a sharper focus on the lesson aims and pupil targets.

The removal of lunch clubs has given pupils more structured time within the school and has allowed us to finish a little earlier in the afternoon. It has also enabled pupils from different year groups to socialise more together.

With some lessons being doubled, movement at the end of lesson times has been reduced which has led to a quieter school.

Pupils find the new timetable easier to understand particularly those on the Aspergers spectrum.

All of these advantages and other work within the school have seen pupil attendance improve, greater overall pupil success with more pupils gaining better qualifications and this trend continuing when the data from CASPA and teacher pupil targets are analysed. Pupils continue to be better at gaining qualifications by showing what they can do rather than what they know, they are also more highly motivated as it is these subjects they wish to continue with post Archers Brook School, they are also being assessed in exactly the same way which makes the transition into post 16 education easier, which is why particularly at key stage 4 these occupy a significant part of the timetable.

Possible Future Changes

We are proud to offer our pupils a wide range of vocational subjects in house at Archers Brook but this is expensive in terms of staff cost and may not be sustainable and therefore choices may be more limiting in the future. Alternatives such as placing our pupils in local colleges or schools for these vocational subjects is also being considered, these pupils would need to be supported in their studies by staff from Archers Brook School to improve their chances of success. As a residential school we continue to look at ways that the teaching and care staff can continue to be supportive of each other and it may be possible that some pupils teaching sessions could be after the traditional school day.

It is planned to continue establishing working links with West Cheshire College and so provide an easier transition for the most popular post 16 destination for our pupils.

T Boram
Reviewed September 2016

Signed:
Mrs Myers-Whittaker
Headteacher

Date:

Signed:
Mr R Crompton
Chairman of Governors

Date:

Next review September 2017