



Belong. Believe. Achieve.



LINWOOD
TRAINING, SUPPORT & ADVICE

Executive Headteacher: Gemma Talbot

Linwood School

Belong. Believe. Achieve.

Vita Curriculum Handbook



A curriculum to meet the diverse learning needs of our students, to ensure that each individual has access to a relevant and meaningful curriculum pathway that effectively prepares them for a fulfilling and purposeful adult life.

“Our vision is to create a community where everyone achieves and thrives so that all our students succeed through their education years and beyond. Everyone is valued within a safe and nurturing environment. All our students have full and equal access to an ambitious curriculum, rich learning experiences and high-quality personalised support. “

This handbook shows how the Vita pathway aligns with the Linwood School Vision.

Our Curriculum Vision

We take into consideration the diverse learning needs of our students. From their earliest days with us, we work collaboratively to uphold high aspirations and ensure that each individual has access to a relevant and meaningful curriculum pathway that effectively prepares them for a fulfilling and purposeful adult life.

We strive to ensure that the input to each student's learning is the very best it can be so that the progress made, whatever that is, is the very best that the child or young person could have made.

We aspire to meet the continually evolving challenges in education, ensuring that our practice is based on current developments in research and sound pedagogy.

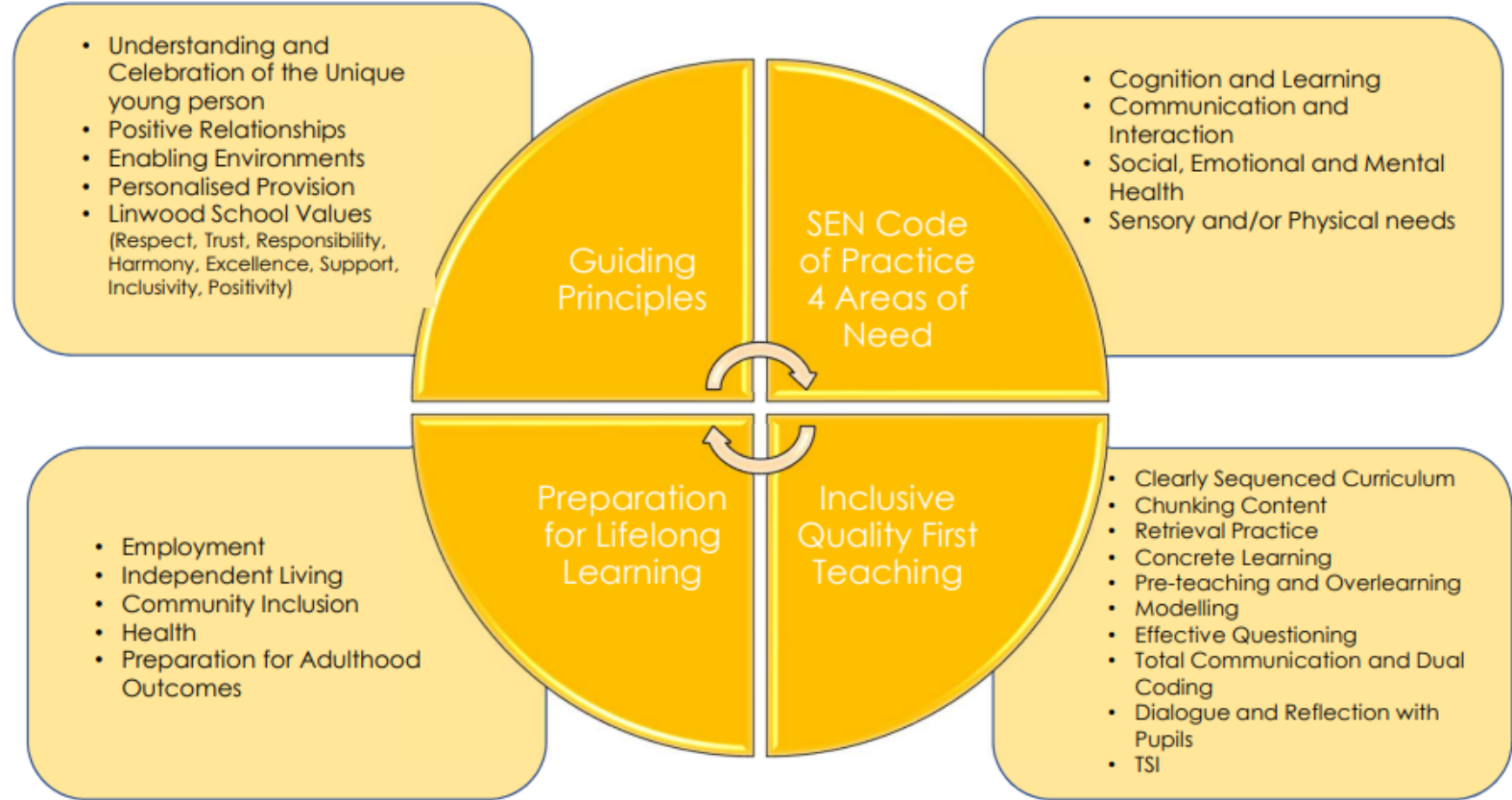
In order to meet our vision, we:

- Promote a happy, caring, respectful community in which all students feel valued and successes are celebrated.
- Aim for all learning opportunities to be motivating, engaging and inclusive.
- Facilitate dynamic, challenging and personalised learning pathways that build on prior learning and prepare students for their lifelong learning journey.
- Build the attributes of effective learners and emphasise the importance of developing metacognition to equip our students with the skills they need to be life-long learners.
- Provide an environment and resources that encourage curiosity and responsiveness, and opportunities for active learning through investigation and exploration.
- Equip our children and young people to be independent, responsible, respectful, active citizens who have a place in their community.
- Collaborate with education, health, social care and the voluntary sector to work within a culture of high expectations and a proactive drive to narrow the gaps in outcomes, attainment and progress.
- Promote values of inclusive education by ensuring that all learners have access to appropriate curriculum pathways to learning (Alma, Early Years, Vita, Lumos, P16).
- Embrace equality of opportunity and promote positive attitudes towards sexual, cultural, ethnic, religious and social diversity.
- Provide relevant, meaningful and purposeful learning opportunities, including through regular access to the local community.
- Deliver a strong commitment to developing skills of Literacy, Language, Number and ICT within a consistent Total Communication environment.
- Explore young people's ambitions, aspirations and goals with them, their families and carers; set young people on a learning pathway toward achieving their goals; and review their goals with them.
- Promote aspiration by setting ambitious, challenging and achievable targets and learning objectives that enable learners to make progress.
- Promote strong links with learners' families and carers, communicating them regularly about our curriculum and their children's learning.
- Refer to national models of expectation and progression, ensuring we deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Keep abreast of new research, understanding and developments in educational practice and keep our practice under review.

Central to every curriculum pathway are the Golden Threads. They are fundamental to our practice across the school, in every campus, in every classroom and in every learning opportunity.



GOLDEN THREADS



Early Years Foundation Stage

Ages 3 - 7
Pupils with SLD, ASD, MLD
Usually working at a level lower to their chronological age

Assessed against the areas of learning set out in Development Matters

Curriculum content:
Communication and Language
Physical Development
Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Understanding of the World
Expressive Arts and Design
Literacy
Maths
RSE

Vita Curriculum

Ages 5 - 16
Pupils with SLD, SpLD, ASD & MLD who are not yet working at a National Curriculum level

Assessed against 9 Domains of Learning: incorporating the Engagement Model in Stages 1-3.

Curriculum domains:
Communication
Physical & Mental Wellbeing
Personal and Social Development
Understanding of the World
English
Maths
Expressive Arts and Design
Literacy
Maths
Independence
Thinking, Problem Solving and Engagement
RSE

Alma Curriculum

Ages 5-19
Pupils with PLMD or CLDD not able to access subject specific learning

Assessed against 8 Domains of Learning: incorporating the Engagement Model

Curriculum domains:
Communication
Orientation, Movement and Mobility
Social Relationships and Emotional Development
Understanding of Time and Place
Sensory Responses
Conceptual Development
Ownership of Learning
Responses to Routine and Change
RSE

Lumos Curriculum

Ages 7-19
Pupils with SLD, ASD & MLD Usually working at a level lower to their chronological age

Assessed against Domains which link to Core & Foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, Functional Skills & ASDAN

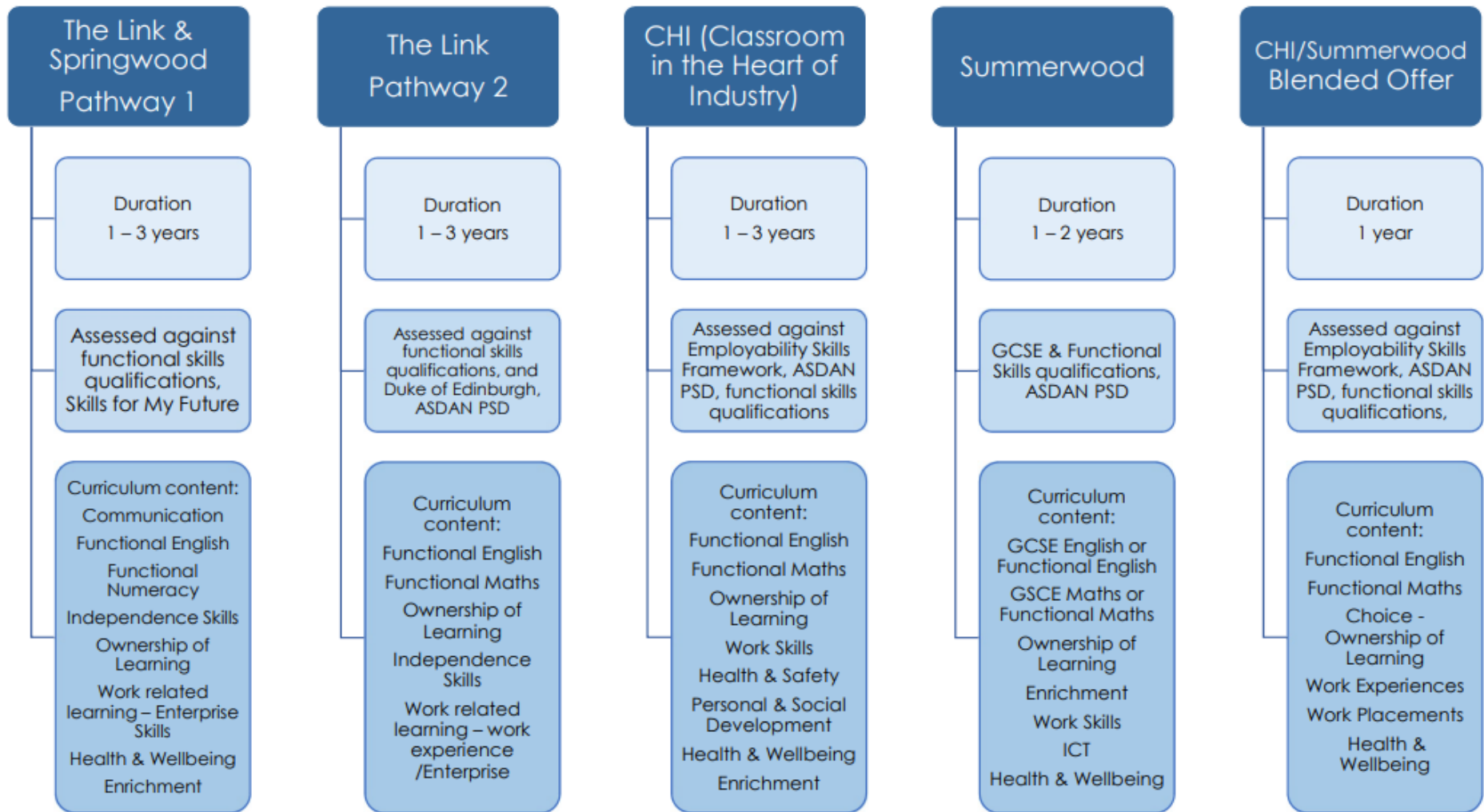
Curriculum content:
English
Maths
The Wider World
Health & Wellbeing
World of Work
Personal and Social Development
Science and Technology
Ownership of Learning
Creative Arts
RSE

Nexus Curriculum

Ages 7-18
Pupils with SEMH needs in addition to their learning needs

Assessed against the Domains of the curriculum pathway most suited to their needs

Curriculum content:
Impacts Trauma through 5 Levers
Relationships
Community
Transparent Curriculum
Metacognition
Space
Strong focus on individual interests and areas of strength in order to engage in learning and social participation



Rationale

Our mission:

To provide a curriculum to meet the diverse learning needs of our students and ensure that each individual has access to a relevant and meaningful curriculum pathway that effectively prepares them for a fulfilling and purposeful adult life.

Rationale:

The Vita curriculum, as with all other Linwood Curriculum pathways, is built around the individual student; the starting point being their four areas of need as described in their Education and Health Care Plan. All students have a personalised learning plan; outcomes which are embedded into their provision and curriculum offer.

The new Ofsted framework has challenged us to focus on the substance of students' learning, with a strong focus on the provision and quality and education and of the curriculum offer.

The Vita curriculum is centred around the child/young person and that the starting point would be their four areas of need as described in their Education and Health Care Plan. Our curriculum is designed to develop crucial skills that would enable our young people to be independent, purposeful, life-long learners. Equal value is to be given to areas of learning such as self-care, social skills, engagement, problem solving and wellbeing as is given to more academic learning such as English and maths. Our intention is for the small steps of progress in these areas, that make the most significant difference to our students' lives, and that of their families, to be recognised and celebrated with equal emphasis as their academic learning.

The process:

The Vita curriculum has been developed from the solid foundation of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and builds upon the good practice and ethos of the Alma curriculum. A sound understanding of how students learn and develop, along with a knowledge of their individual needs, underpins the Vita curriculum.

“Pedagogy is the understanding of how children learn and develop, and the practices through which we can enhance that process. It is rooted in values and beliefs about what we want for children, and supported by knowledge, theory and experience.”

From Stewart, N. and Pugh, R. (2007) *Early Years Vision in Focus, Part 2: Exploring Pedagogy*, ©Shropshire County Council. Used with kind permission.

The merging of the National Curriculum subject areas into the nine domains and development of each assessment map has been designed in close collaboration with subject leaders, drawing from their expertise. Statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 are embedded in the domains.

Who:

The Vita curriculum is designed for learners with moderate, severe and complex learning needs. They are working below Key Stage 1 expectations for the majority of their learning. It is designed to meet the diverse needs of a large cohort and feeds into the Lumos Curriculum so that the most able learners within the phase can access some of their subjects through the National Curriculum offer at Linwood. The students who access the Vita curriculum present with varied learning profiles, demonstrating a wide range of strength in some areas and significant challenges in others. The curriculum supports this by enabling students to access their learning across and demonstrate progress across different stages in each domain. The four levels of mastery reflect progress as learners move from engaging in their learning opportunities, to developing skills with support, to achieving these in specific contexts, and then to generalising these in a range of real-life scenarios. We anticipate that for our students with autism (and for many others), the process of generalising their skills is the most challenging and progress may slow at this point.

The Vita curriculum is offered at Linwood, Springwood and Woodford Campuses from KS1 – KS4, at which point young people are supported to achieve accreditation through ASDAN. Vita is embedded within enabling learning environments. At Springwood, Vita is delivered through autism specific approaches.

Vita Curriculum Overview

The 9 domains are:-

 <p>Personal and Social Development (PSD)</p>	 <p>Communication (C)</p>	 <p>Thinking, Problem Solving and Engagement (TPSE)</p>
 <p>Understanding of the World (UW)</p>	 <p>Physical and Mental Wellbeing (PMW)</p>	 <p>Independence (I)</p>
 <p>Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)</p>	 <p>Maths (M)</p>	 <p>Literacy (L)</p>

Vita Domains Overview



Communication

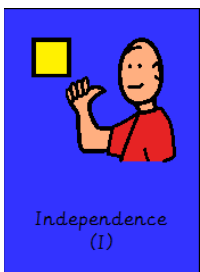
The focus of this domain is to help learners to develop the skills they need for effective communication. This includes the development of receptive and expressive communication, language skills, listening and attention. Through a Total Communication approach, we support students to communicate in different contexts. Our students may communicate using speech, signing, picture exchange or through technology. This domain is the foundation upon which all other learning is built, and therefore it is essential that incidental opportunities to develop communication skills are capitalised. The development of narrative skills is crucial to this domain, enabling students to tell their stories and share their experiences.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Speech and Language plans
- Communication groups
- Play and leisure
- Circle times
- Total Communication approach
- Daily routines
- Attention and Listening groups

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- English
 - Drama
 - PSHE
-



Independence

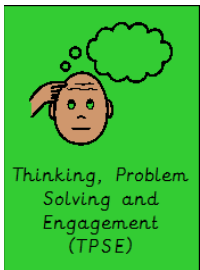
Students are supported to develop the skills they need to be as independent as possible in their adulthood. They are equipped to become more self-directed, make choices, organise and plan tasks. They develop skills to manage their own self-care through overlearning of daily routines. Through opportunities for work related learning, students develop the skills needed for the workplace and future pathways. Students develop the skills they need to access their communities through regular opportunities to learn and rehearse these in the contexts they will be used. For example, learners may access travel training so that they are able to shop for the ingredients they will cook when learning to prepare a meal.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Educational visits
- Work related learning
- Routines throughout the day (i.e. unpacking bags, snack, lunch, changing for swimming)
- Travel training
- Food technology

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- PSHE
- Food Technology (DT)
- Preparation for Adulthood agenda
- Gatsby Benchmarks



Thinking, problem solving and engagement

Students are engaged in active learning through meaningful opportunities to generalise and apply their skills. This focus on metacognition, explicitly supporting the process of learning, helps learners to sequence, order, classify, compare and predict. Activities are designed to support learners to make links between cause and effect, investigate, generate possible solutions, make choices and try out alternative approaches. Students are given opportunities to make connections between learning in different contexts. They are supported to develop ownership of their learning and are encouraged to self-advocate. As they become more self-directed, they can manage their learning in new situations and in the longer term.

Independent Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Schools have a duty to provide independent, impartial and relevant advice to their students in regard to future options including careers and future employment opportunities.

At Linwood School we deliver this through the role of Careers and Employment Support Co-ordinators, who provide Independent Advice and Guidance (IAG) to students and parents on education and non-educational options for post 16 education and future careers.

The IAG team work closely with students, teachers, parents and carers to make sure that the young people at Linwood feel supported in regards to their future options, once they have finished school. These options also include other social provisions that students might be able to engage with once they have completed their education.

From year 9 onwards the IAG team will meet with students throughout the year. The students will have 1:1 meetings with a member from the team. They will discuss likes and dislikes with the student as well as what aspirations the students have for when they finish Key Stage 4.

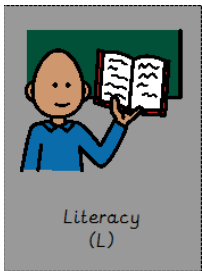
Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Educational visits
- Lego therapy
- ICT (programming)
- Work related learning

- Enterprise
- School council
- Science week

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- ICT
- Design Technology
- Maths
- Science
- Engagement Model



Literacy

Through language- rich classroom environments where staff engage and communicate with students, students acquire and build on early language skills and comprehension. A love of reading and books is prioritised and immersive story- telling experiences are a part of the classroom culture. All students access a structured reading scheme which includes a wide range of fiction and non- fiction. Enjoyment of literature is encouraged through stories,

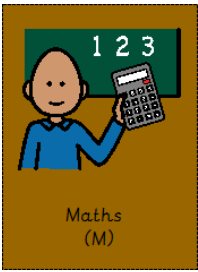
rhymes, poetry, drama and songs. Early reading and writing skills are developed throughout the curriculum but also through discrete and systematic teaching of phonics and spelling which are delivered through personalised multi-sensory experiences. We ensure that students are provided with meaningful contexts in which to write. It is important that learners have a purpose for writing and therefore we ensure they have rich first- hand experiences from which to draw.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- SaLT groups
- Interventions
- e.g Fisher Family Trust, Breakthrough to Literacy and Turnabout
- Library
- RWI (read, write, inc)
- Booster phonics
- Spelling
- Daily reading
- PECs
- Signalong
- Book week
- Read, Write Inc

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- English



Maths

Learning opportunities ensure that a concrete understanding of number concepts is consolidated and generalised in different contexts. This forms the foundation for future learning, moving from concrete to abstract. Overlearning secures mathematical knowledge and it is deeply embedded across the curriculum.

The teaching of Numeracy should incorporate the use of a wide range of multi-sensory practical resources ensuring that learning is meaningful.

Problem solving and reasoning are vital skills that are developed in learners through hands-on practical experiences. Where student are actively engaged, they begin to make connections. This supports their generalisation of mathematical skills in real life contexts, for example working with money and cooking.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Food tech/ cooking
- Shopping on education visits
- Class tuckshop
- Play and leisure
- Enterprise
- Work related learning
- Daily routines, ie snack time
- White Rose

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- Maths
- Food Technology (DT)
- Science



Understanding of the world

This domain is focused on developing a holistic understanding of everyday events, activities and experiences. Learning opportunities support students to make connections between events, activities and experiences, and extend their understanding beyond that which is immediately apparent.

Topics are relevant, current and local with extensive opportunities to get out and about in the community so that learners directly encounter and engage with the topic. A key part of all topics selected for study, is their potential for developing skills in narrative. The out-of-classroom learning opportunities within the local community support and enrich the development of cultural capital, ensuring that students participate in common shared experiences.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Educational visits
- Assemblies
- Topic

- Themed days/ weeks
- Science week

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- Science
 - Geography
 - History
 - Religious Education
 - Modern Foreign Languages
 - ICT
-



Expressive Arts and Design

This domain knits together the expressive and creative aspects of learning. Creativity uses the right side of our brain which deals with emotion and feelings. When we are fully engaged in a creative process our ability to play, have fun, and further explore is increased, thus boosting positivity and well-being.

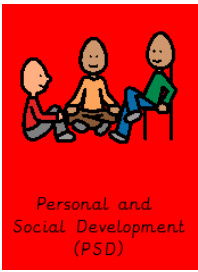
Expressive Arts stimulates creativity and imagination. It provides multi- sensory experiences and an outlet for individual expression and realisation. Students use different medium and processes to communicate what they see, feel and think. Expressive Art offers opportunities for students to explore, take risks, inquire, persevere and learn to make practical decisions. Expressive Arts is a vehicle to explore the world around us; learning about the diversity in different times and cultures is an important aspect of this domain.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Art and Design
- Music
- Dance
- Music therapy

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- Art and Design
 - Music
 - Dance
 - Drama
 - Design Technology
-



Personal and Social Development

Through this domain, we support our students to develop self-awareness and an understanding of their place in the different social groups in which they find themselves.

Daily routines support students to acknowledge, identify and name their emotions. Approaches enable students to develop strategies to begin to manage their own regulation in a range of situations. Opportunities for self-reflection are an important part of every day.

A focus on developing social skills is aimed at supporting students to understand how their actions and words affect others. Developing skills of turn-taking, sharing and co-operating are embedded in our daily routines.

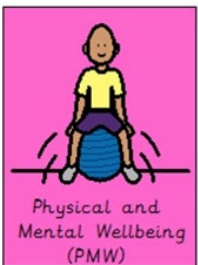
The British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs are deeply embedded in this domain.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- SEAL- Rainbow scheme
- Relationships and Sex Education scheme (discrete teaching)
- E-Safety (discrete teaching)
- Anti-bullying, keeping safe, Prevent strategy (discrete teaching)
- Social skills groups
- Play and leisure
- Circle times
- Snack and lunch times
- Zones of Regulation

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- Personal Social Health Education
- Relationships and Sex Education
- Citizenship
- ICT (e-Safety)
- British Values



Physical and Mental Wellbeing

Physical wellbeing incorporates the skills needed for movement, awareness of the body, gaining a sense of space and understanding the components of a healthy lifestyle.

We aim to establish good habits from an early age so that there is a long-term positive attitude towards healthy lifestyle choices and enjoyment of the intrinsic benefits of physical activity.

Building confidence, self-esteem and resilience is an important part of our wellbeing programme.

Students are offered opportunities to engage in activities that support them to learn to self-regulate, calm and relax. Recognising their own emotional state and being equipped to implement strategies to manage this is an important life skill.

Provision and interventions that contribute to the coverage of the domain

- Swimming
- Dance
- Horse riding
- Yoga
- PE
- Mindfulness sessions (inc Go Noodle)
- Fun with Foods groups
- Sensory circuits
- Play
- Health week
- Zones of Regulation

National Curriculum Links/ statutory requirements

- Physical Education
- PSHE

Overview of Intent, Implementation and Impact in Vita

Intent

- **Curriculum vision and aims**
- **SEN code of practice**
- **Areas of Need as outlined in EHCPs**
- **Effective Learning Attributes**

Implementation

- **Engagement Model principles**
- **9 Domains and 4 levels of Mastery**
- **Components:**
 - **Planned lessons:** a range of approaches, teaching styles, differentiation, personalisation
 - **Learning beyond the classroom:** accessing the community, generalising learning in real life contexts
 - **Child-initiated learning opportunities:** play and meaningful leisure opportunities
 - **Therapies:** Speech and Language therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physio, care plans
 - **Total communication:** Sign-along, PECS, PODD, tablets, intensive interaction, Peic-D, Attention Autism
 - **Personalised learning:** EHCPs, PLPs, Learning Journals, accreditations
 - **Positive approaches to behaviour:** Personalised Regulation and Engagement Plans support students who require additional support and measures to self-regulate. Zones of Regulation are used widely. Sensory diet plans and provision support students to be regulated and ready for their learning, , anti-bullying policy, Trauma Informed Schools practice and PACE
 - **Enabling environments:** fostering independence, invitation to engage, reflects classroom practice, sensory circuits, physical and emotional environment
 - **Structures and routines:** Opportunities for SMSC (Social, moral, spiritual, cultural), TEACCH approaches
 - **Work related learning:** Enterprise, life skills teaching, travel training, ASDAN accreditations, Gatsby Benchmarks, Preparation for Adulthood, employability skills

Measuring Impact

- **Basket approach to Assessment:** Evidence for Learning (online learning journal and assessment books), EHCP outcomes and Personalised Learning Plans, PREP (Personal, regulation & engagement plan), SaLT reviews, Attendance, physio programmes, sensory profiles, evaluations of interventions e.g Fun with Foods,
- **Learning and Achievement reviews** (dialogue between class teams and phase leaders)
- **Pupil outcomes and future pathways**

- **Engagement with parents, professionals and other stakeholders**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Data analysis through Insights for Learning (EFL) used to identify learners' achievements and inform next steps. Identifies areas for support/development.** Termly progress reviews with phase leaders
- **Peer to peer mentoring and moderation**

Evidencing Learning: a “basket approach” to assessment

Ongoing assessment is an important part of the Vita curriculum. It is imperative that we closely monitor the progress that each child/young person is making so that we can offer early intervention and adapt teaching to meet their individual needs. Assessment of progress and attainment is an evidence-based process that considers more factors than simply analysing academic outcomes. It is important that we know whether learners are making or exceeding expected progress, and this is measured on a personalised scale. In order to know what “expected progress” should look like for each of our students, we consider their learning profile and unique context; considering the unique learning profile, personal circumstances, and 4 key areas of need as described in the EHCP of each learner. We also take into consideration specific features of the child/young person’s diagnosis. For example, it is common for many of our learners with autism to make rapid progress in developing early number or reading skills, but for progress to slow significantly once they move toward generalising and applying these skills, ie in problem solving and inferential interpretation of text.

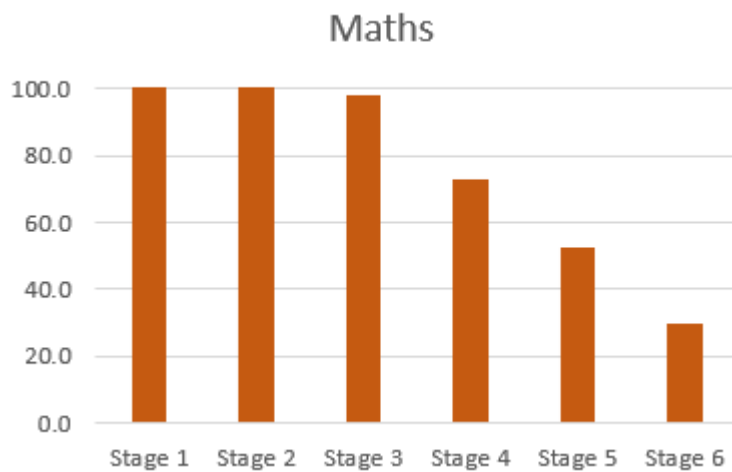
Levels of Mastery

We assess our students's learning in each of the 9 domains of the Vita curriculum and RSE using four levels of mastery. Each of the four levels has equal weighting when analysed to monitor progress. This enables our students to make progress by demonstrating their skills in a wider range of contexts, embedding these and developing deeper understanding and ownership of their learning. Our students benefit from opportunities for overlearning and rehearsing their skills; moving from a willingness to engage to working with scaffolded support, towards greater independence and mastery of skills. The expected % progress for a learner will be made up of a combination of the levels of mastery; ie one young person may make 20% progress with a willingness to engage in new learning experiences, while another may make 20% in developing and achieving skills in specific contexts, and even generalising some of their existing skills, building on from prior learning.

Willingness to engage	The learner co-operates with adult's prompt to experience an activity and shows awareness of the stimuli. This is a willingness to explore and tolerate experiences presented to them.
Developing	The learner is beginning to make steps in developing this skill, with support or specific scaffolding.
Achieved in specific contexts	The learner consistently uses this skill in some but not all of the situations in which it could be used, within a structured setting (student is not dependent on an adult/staff member leading them through the steps of the task).
Generalised	The learner consistently uses this skill in all appropriate situations, although s/he may need prompting in unfamiliar settings or activities

It is important to remember that the statements on assessment maps are steps of development and not a checklist of skills to be taught.

Below is an example of a learner's attainment of developmental steps in maths. The bottom table shows the learner's attainment across all 6 stages.



The Engagement Model

The Engagement Model is the statutory assessment (replacing P scales 1 to 4) for student working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study. This is applicable for students working in Vita stages 1 and 2. Teachers must use the engagement model to assess student working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study at key stage 1 and key stage 2.

How will student be assessed?

The engagement model has 5 areas of engagement that represent what is necessary for student to fully engage in their learning and reach their potential:

- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

Teachers assess student' level of engagement in developing new skills, knowledge and concepts as disengaged, fleeting, partly sustained, mostly sustained or fully sustained.

The data gathered using the Engagement Model:

- enables us to effectively engage our student on an individualised level;
- allows insight that improves the provision that we provide;
- uses a pupil-centred approach that focuses on their abilities rather than disabilities;
- values and shares all sources of knowledge;
- and promotes consistency and a common language amongst schools and all those working with the student.

Evidence for Learning

Evidence for Learning is the digital program we use to enable us to effectively evidence, assess, review and plan for meeting the unique needs of our learners in the Vita Phase.

It allows all stakeholders in a student's learning and development to quickly and easily gather photo and video evidence, linked to the individual's learning goals, set out in their Personalised Learning Plan. This includes outcomes from the pupil's Educational Health Care Plans, SALT, O.T, and Physio plans, as well as the Vita Curriculum. Observations are annotated and links are made to relevant plans and curriculums. They are tagged using a range of tags that enables us to identify further links in the students' learning e.g. if the learning captured in the observation is helping them prepare for adulthood or there are links to the Engagement Model or British Values. The targets and goals on Evidence for Learning (EFL) can be amended and added to in order to respond to a learner's ongoing needs and development.

Evidence can be shared with parents, governors and other relevant stakeholders. Photos, videos and notes can be easily shared by the school and parents/carers can capture and submit their own photos, videos and notes to reflect the learner's development and experiences at home enabling us to see when learning is being generalised.

"Basket" of Indicators that evidence progress:

The following indicators contribute to the assessment process and support our judgment about whether a child/young person had made expected progress:

- EHCP outcomes met, reflected at Annual Review
- Personalised Learning Plan (PLPs) targets achieved on EFL
- Speech and Language plans/ OT/ Physio plans
- Evidence for Learning online Learning journals and assessment book
- RSE assessment map
- Insights for Learning (EFL)
- English/Math Once a Term book
- Dialogue with teachers following Learning and Achievement Reviews (LARS)
- Termly Progress Reviews
- Phonics assessment (KS1)
- Annual reading tests
- External accreditations: ASDAN "My Independence" for KS3 and KS4
- Attendance
- Personal Regulations and Engagement Plans could reflect progress made in developing self-regulation
- Engagement model: students make progress in developing the characteristics of effective learners; Exploration, Realisation, Anticipation, Persistence, Initiation
- Evaluations of specific interventions, for example Fun with Foods

Enabling Environments in Vita

*“Children feel your energy before they even hear your words” **The Curiosity Approach.***

Within Vita we are creating an approach which reflects our vision and our purpose. From the moment you walk into our classrooms you should feel our curriculum.

We have taken inspiration from a range of evidence-based approaches and sound pedagogy; and together with our own knowledge, values and experiences have created our curriculum and learning environments.

The environment reflects the school values and vision. Staff create a calm and positive atmosphere where they are present and ready to respond in the moment. There is a strong sense of togetherness where all staff and children are valued equally. Relationships in the classroom are built on mutual respect, trust, and support. We value parents and carers and work together to establish a successful partnership in order to facilitate their child's learning and development.

We know that students learn best when they are actively engaged; demonstrating high levels of interest, energy, enthusiasm and motivation. This comes from the individual following their own interests and the staff joining them; building relationships, teaching new skills, sharing resources and having fun at each learner's own level. Having opportunities to initiate their own pathway enables learning to take off with purpose in a meaningful direction. Staff are skilled in supporting the students to achieve their personal targets through observations, careful guidance and scaffolding of skills. Incidental opportunities are built upon and the environment supports this by providing rich and varied resources and activities.

Our young people, following the Vita curriculum...

*“are experiencing and learning in the **here and now**, not storing up their questions until tomorrow or next week. It is in that moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort or interest – the **‘teachable moment’** – that the skilful adult makes a difference. By using this cycle on a moment-by-moment basis, the adult will be always alert to individual children **(observation)**, always thinking about what it tells us about the child's thinking **(assessment)**, and always ready to respond by using appropriate strategies at the right moment to support children's well-being and learning **(planning for the next moment)**”*
Learning playing and interacting, Good practice in the Early Years Foundation stage.

The indoor environment contains resources which are meaningful, well maintained and appropriately accessible for students. Indoor spaces are planned so that they can be used flexibly and a carefully considered range of activities is provided. Colours are carefully chosen to complement the calm, rather than over stimulate, helping the children to focus on the relevant sensory stimuli.

The outdoor environment encourages students to be active and supports learning in different ways. Similar to an indoor learning environment, the outdoor space should be safe,

organised and include planned activities as well as a wealth of opportunities for making choices. Outdoor learning lends itself towards appropriate risk-taking and problem solving, and to opportunities to develop social communication skills. Learning and playing outdoors can enhance physical health and mental well-being.

We provide a physical routine for the students so they understand where they need to be and the related expectations for that part of the day. The activities and resources used within these sessions will change but the learners feel safe and secure knowing where they need to be. The students who access the Vita curriculum benefit from the security provided by the structures and routines in the setting.

'Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.' **Early years inspection handbook. January 2019, No. 180040. pg 32.**

Vita at Springwood campus

All students at Springwood have autism and moderate or severe learning difficulties. They also have significant sensory and communication needs. As such, they benefit from specialist approaches and a low arousal environment, which are provided at Springwood and can be different to provision at other campuses. Autism-specific approaches such as those recommended by the Autism Education Trust and TEACCH are commonplace at Springwood; Total Communication strategies are deployed, including use of *SignAlong*, PECS, PODD, objects of reference and other visual support. Small classes in which organisation with access to sensory spaces and equipment support students' regulation and engagement.

Springwood offers a highly structured environment within a secure setting. The physical environment supports the behaviour of students, some of whom lack a sense of danger and have a history of absconding. The maglock doors placed intermittently along the corridors enable students to move freely in secure sections of the campus, ensuring their safety while allowing them space from other people.

Due to difficulties with flexible thinking, many of the students at Springwood find unstructured environments and activities stressful. They find it challenging to consider how they could meaningfully access equipment or activities that are 'open ended', often resorting to repetitive behaviours. For this reason, 'child-initiated learning' is particularly challenging for them. They may find it difficult to explore and make choices. Child/ Student-initiated learning looks different at Springwood campus: options of resources may be limited to prevent overwhelming them, and presented in a way that supports students to make sense of how they may be used. Staff carefully model appropriate use of equipment, scaffolding the way in which a learner moves from noticing, engaging, exploring to meaningfully using it for an intended purpose. Similar activities and resources are used in a range of contexts to support learners in generalising their skills.

Factors that make our environments enabling for students may be different from what is in place at Linwood main campus. A low arousal environment reduces distraction and sensory input, supporting students to feel calm. The typical "busy" classroom environment that is traditionally considered to be stimulating for learners is overwhelming for our learners and adds to their anxiety. They experience overload and are unable to focus on and process relevant information in such settings. Therefore, our classrooms are free from clutter and resources are kept in trays or cupboards until they are required for use. Visual information is intended to support the learners' independence and displays are kept to a minimum. The transition spaces (corridors) at Springwood are free from distraction; the wide corridors have consistent flooring throughout and the walls are painted a calm light blue.

In order to facilitate and promote independence, principles of structured teaching approaches are embedded into the provision at Springwood. This includes the way in which tasks are presented, daily routines are supported with visual instructions and explicit teaching of independent working through personalised work systems. Students follow individualised

visual timetables which are presented with photos, objects of reference, symbols or words. These enable the child/ young person to understand the expectations of the day and support them through transitions, reducing anxiety. Ironically, it is these structured approaches which enable our learners to develop flexibility and learn to cope with change, as these can be communicated to them through the systems they have learnt to rely on, instead of rigidly relying on internal routines. It is within these evidence-based autism specific approaches that the Vita curriculum is personalised and delivered to the students at Springwood Campus. They access their learning through whole class, 1:1 and small group interventions and teaching. Within these structures, our learners are able to engage with the curriculum and develop the life skills they need for their future pathways.

References:

The Vita curriculum and assessment tools have been developed after careful research of existing good practice in SEN pedagogy and curriculum. The following documents have been referred to in this process and adapted to support the provision of a personalised and aspirational life-skills based curriculum for our students.

- Equals Semi-formal Curriculum units
- Equals forum - Peter Imray's Basket of Assessment Approach
- National Curriculum 2014
- SEN code of practice 2014
- P scales: attainment targets for student with SEN. DfE descriptors
- Pre-Key stage 1 and 2 standards
- Rochford Review 2016
- Rochford Review 7 Aspects of Engagement
- New Ofsted Inspection Framework 2019
- AET Progression Framework
- EYFS Development Matters
- Linwood I Can statements
- Employability Framework (Karen Taylor)
- Swiss Cottage School Curriculum information training day