Curriculum Policy

Elm Tree Primary Academy aspires to become a centre of excellence, serving autistic pupils with learning needs, not only in our school but the wider community.

Our mission is to provide an inclusive, holistic provision that will enable all members of the school community to attain their full potential in an encouraging and supporting environment which is happy, safe and secure, caring and positive. It aligns with the Vision and Values of Victoria Academies Trust 'to make our people the best they can be'.

The specific aims of the school are:

- To embed a neuro-affirming practice that encompasses a strength and rights-based approach and affirms neurodivergent identity.
- To provide a warm and safe environment in which everyone is valued and enabled to develop as happy and confident individuals who appreciate their own worth
- To develop skills, personal qualities, knowledge and understanding for life
- To ensure the pupils have a voice in all aspects of school life
- To prepare our pupils for the next phase of education – becoming caring, confident and responsible, independent citizens in the community and experiencing a good quality of life
- To support through use of appropriate, personalised learning and teaching styles and practice

- To offer at an appropriate level a stimulating, challenging and enriching curriculum in a variety of environments that enables development and achievement
- To create acurriculum offer based on individual needs and personalisation, that is meaningful and purposeful to the individual.
- To promote a climate of high expectation in which the achievements and successes of all are celebrated
- To create an environment in which individuals are empowered to advocate for, and take ownership of their learning and development
- To encourage mutual respect and understanding of others so that our pupils become caring and responsible individuals both within school and the wider community
- To have an inclusive and shared leadership and management that respects and takes account of the views of all
- To continually evaluate current working practices to ensure work/life balance, staff wellbeing and good continuing professional development
- To encourage individuals to participate in the growth and development of the school environment

Curriculum Strategy

Our curriculum will not only focus on academic outcomes but also on developing communication and interaction, emotional and sensory regulation, independence and self-care and quality of life.

This includes enhancing skills and interests to enable our young people to prepare for the next phase of education from early years onwards.

Our curriculum will incorporate the Equals multi-tiered curriculum approach, recognising that differentiation from the National Curriculum is not sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils and students, There fire our curriculum will need to be different. This is because the way many of our pupils learn is different, and often very, very different from neuro-typical, conventional developing learners for whom the national curriculum was designed.

Underpinning this will be a focus on the SCERTS approach.

SCERTS – Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports

SCERTS provides guidelines for supporting individuals to become a confident communicator who are able to advocate for their needs and actively engage in their environment in meaningful ways.

It is designed to help autistic individuals, families, educators, and clinicians collaborate in a carefully coordinated manner to select objectives that are research-based and are designed to match the preferences of an individual, developmental needs and the environment.

Our curriculum will be personalised and multisensory. There will be the need for continued opportunities for overlearning, application and generalisation, supported by staff with the skills and expertise to assess the correct level of support required.

Through thorough assessment, monitoring and tracking we will ensure every child has their individual needs met and can be the best they can be.

Our Curriculum

Intent

The intent of our curriculum is to equip all pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to be effective learners and have a happy, fulfilled and successful future. Our curriculum will be developmental, and personalised and provide progression pathways from individual starting points.

Pupils may begin their learning within pre-subject specific areas, focusing on engagement, interaction and communication and sensory experiences. They will then progress to subject specific learning and national curriculum.

Curriculum will:

• Meet the needs of autistic children with additional language and learning needs
• Be broad and balanced
• Included an emphasis on communication, wellbeing, sensory processing, independence and life skills
• Included methods and approaches that meets the needs of each individual child
• Support the outcomes described in each child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our curriculum model aims to:

- Maximise each pupil's engagement
- Support progress across all areas of learning
- Provide motivating and relevant learning opportunities
- Adopt a personalised approach that allows staff to plan in response to a pupil's individual needs and interests
- Promote the development of self-care and life skills to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education
- Lay the foundations for pupils to have a meaningful and independent adult life and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to life beyond school
- Base learning opportunities on real-life experiences in engaging, cross-curricular, innovative, and stimulating and inspiring ways
- Provide children with the learning opportunities to achieve and progress at their own pace

Curriculum planning should:

- Be highly focused on communication and interaction through a language-rich, total communication environment
- Be responsive to the child's needs

- Focus on play and cross-curricular learning opportunities to embed essential early learning skills in an inclusive and holistic way
- Provide opportunities to generalise skills across a range of contexts through a learning challenge approach which links cross-curriculum experiences, working towards a challenging outcome.
- Provided well-planned sessions using multidisciplinary approaches that maximise engagement, achievement and progress
- Use outdoor learning experiences so that children learn within real-world contexts
- Use educational visits or external visitors to motivate and engage learners.

Core Areas

The curriculum will be based upon four core areas:

1. Achievement

This covers physical development, social development, subject-specific learning or the five areas of engagement (pre-subject-specific learning). The five areas of engagement are realisation, anticipation, persistence, initiation and exploration.

2. Communication

This includes initiation, interaction, friendships, social opportunities, alternatives and augmentative methods of communication (AAC)

3. Wellbeing

This includes self and mutual regulation, celebrating diversity, physical and emotional health, identity, community belonging, pupil voice, special interests, and understanding of autism as appropriate, and quality of life.

4. Independence

This includes being part of the school and wider community, life skills, making choices, safety (personal, online, road and travel) and accessing services.

Preparing for adulthood

The curriculum focuses on developing key skills within independence, self-care, and understanding the world. The Code of Practice (2015) makes it clear that preparation for adulthood should start in the earliest years. The foundations for success in moving into adulthood are laid early, through a planned and deliberate approach to what is taught and learnt and how it is taught and learnt.

This approach includes ensuring we provide children with the cultural capital to prepare them for future successes through opportunities to engage in a wide range of experiences beyond the classroom.

Learning environment

Underpinning the school environment and approach will be a 'Total Communication Environment' utilising signs, symbols and language individually tailored to need. Each child's personalised communication preferences will be incorporated into every aspect of school life from lunch time, to lesson time, to independent travel and all staff will be trained to support these systems effectively.

The sensory environment is paramount and the school and teaching takes into account sensory profiles, ensuring low-stimulus environments. A low arousal approach will mean pupils are able to access learning to their full potential and will promote well-being and reduce anxiety.

Teaching is structured at small group and individual levels with a high level of personalisation within classes. The curriculum will be delivered to ensure that children make the best possible progress. Consistent structure and routine in embedded to promote understanding of their school day and provide predictability, security and safety.

The curriculum is planned to ensure the pupils have a broad range of experiences throughout each key stage appropriate to their level of learning.

Implementation

At Elm Tree, learning will be broken down into small steps and scaffolded by a team who know each child's targets extremely well and are able to support and scaffold as required. This will be through a sequenced and holistic approach applied in a range of contexts in order to ensure depth of knowledge and skill before moving on.

Engagement model, Towards Independence Hierarchy, Tapestry and/or Skills Ladders, SCERTS and National curriculum are used to underpin every child's learning journey. Through a precise understanding of each child's attainment, next steps can be planned that precisely supports progress and achievement. Lessons are planned to target communication, life skills, and subject specific learning through learning challenge related opportunities and activities that allow children to practice, develop and learn in a range of subject areas simultaneously. We believe that this approach supports each child to maximise progress, make links and to become independent learners.

Our curriculum approach focuses on project-based learning, with learning challenges designed to be real, immersive and purposeful. Learning Challenges will be set each term. Families and communities will be involved in the process and outcome to make the learning more contextualised and transferrable to outside of school.

Sessions will be planned carefully to the individual learning pathways of the children. They will include whole class teaching and individual learning targets linked where appropriate to the learning challenge.

Transition between sessions will be carefully planned, where pupils are prepared for change and able to take part in activities to enable them to regulate and be ready for the next session. Sensory breaks and regulation opportunities will be provided at key times throughout the day to enable pupils to be regulated and to access learning.

We understand that the importance of routine, consistency and predictability for autistic children and so our approach will carefully consider these. Within everyday lessons and learning experiences, children will be supported to manage change and new experiences.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor and physical learning will be used to develop fine and gross motor skills, balance and coordination and core strength. Outdoor learning will also encompass other areas of the curriculum such as science, geography, sensory integration and linked to learning in English and maths as appropriate. Wellbeing and regulation will also be supported through outdoor learning and we will make use of other outdoor learning spaces within the community.

Multi-agency working

Support from children's therapies (Speech and Language SALT, Occupational Therapy OT) will be an integral part of our curriculum. Class teams will have opportunity to receive support and training from therapists as will our parents and carers. Therapy teams will be able to ensure classroom practice meets the specific needs of individuals on a day-to-day basis.

Progression

Progression for pupils is not simply the attainment of knowledge and skills and therefore must be viewed as a broader picture. Some children make progress through the acquisition of attainment – vertical progression. However, for some children, progression can be viewed horizontally, whereby a skill needs to be generalised and reinforced through a repeated series of planned and varied contexts, thus broadening and widening the experiences presented to a child to embed their learning.

The pace of learning can be very varied from pupil to pupil and makes the individual and personalised journey of learning even more important.

Progression may be seen in the following ways and needs to be credited for each child:

- Vertical, linear progression
- Horizontal, lateral progression- including levels of engagement in their learning.
- Progress in one particular area
- Maintenance of skills
- Significant reduction of staff support
- Generalisation of skill
- Sustainability of a skill

- Reduction of regression
- Length of time to make progress
- Increased length of concentration and persistence in learning tasks.

Progression Pathways

Pathway		**This pathway provides opportunities for sensory exploration, and holistic learning approaches, with a focus on engagement and joint attention**	**This pathway is focused on more skills-based and subject-focused learning, whilst incorporating a multi-sensory holistic approach**	**Subject-specific learning that includes National Curriculum levels, whilst maintaining a holistic approach**
Approaches	❖ Intensive interaction (and additional AAC) ❖ Multi-sensory learning ❖ Early phonological Awareness ❖ Independence skills ❖ Preparing for adulthood ❖ Play-based learning ❖ SCERTS ❖ Total communication environment	❖ Intensive interaction (and additional AAC) ❖ Multi-sensory learning ❖ Early phonological Awareness ❖ Independence skills ❖ Preparing for adulthood ❖ Play-based learning ❖ SCERTS ❖ Total communication environment	❖ Early phonics ❖ Book and story concepts ❖ Number concepts ❖ Multisensory learning ❖ Independence ❖ Preparing for adulthood ❖ Play-based learning ❖ Personalised communication and interaction strategies ❖ SCERTS ❖ Total communication environment	❖ Blending and segmenting skills ❖ Comprehension ❖ Thinking and problem-solving skills ❖ Number concepts ❖ Recording ❖ Multisensory learning ❖ Independence ❖ Preparing for adulthood ❖ Play-based learning ❖ Personalised communication and interaction strategies ❖ SCERTS ❖ Total communication environment
Assessment	❖ Tapestry ❖ Engagement Model ❖ Development matters ❖ SCERTS ❖ Towards Independence Hierarchy	❖ Engagement Model ❖ Tapestry ❖ SCERTS ❖ Towards Independence Hierarchy	❖ Tapestry ❖ Skills Ladders ❖ SCERTS ❖ Towards Independence Hierarchy	❖ National curriculum statements ❖ SCERTS ❖ Towards Independence Hierarchy

Impact

Pupil information is gathered, moderated and analysed in a number of ways using various measures. Tapestry, Engagement Model, Skills ladders, Towards Independence Hierarchy, EHCP targets, SCERTS and other individualised approaches are used to capture and demonstrate the impact of our curriculum approach.

All pupils have individual outcomes in the areas of learning, communication and independence working towards achieving their long-term outcomes set within their Education Health and Care plans (EHCP). This is used to provide rich information about the progress of individual pupils, cohorts and the whole school. Senior leaders use this information to inform school developments and plan future provision. Individual teachers and therapists also use this information to inform teaching and learning and therapeutic interventions. Progress against targets is tracked termly.

Assessment should be accurate, precise and used to clearly identify:

- Attainment and progress of engagement, communication, self-care, life skills and subject-specific learning
- Pupils' stages of development and learning
- Appropriate next steps that allow pupils to access meaningful, appropriate, personalised learning opportunities

Regulation for Learning

Staff will encourage and support pupils to:

• Engage in learning opportunities and maximise progress and achievement

• Follow basic rules and expectations by using a consistent and positive approach

• Develop mutual-regulation and self-regulation strategies

• Develop self-esteem and confidence across all areas of learning

• Develop each child's resilience and thinking skills

• Achieve and succeed with a 'can do' attitude that reduces barriers to learning.

Communication

Staff will encourage and support pupils to:

• Develop enjoyable, meaningful connections and interactions

• Develop personalised communication methods and approaches

• Develop receptive and expressive communication skills

- Develop social communication and interaction
- Develop shared attention and listening skills

Personal Independence

Staff will encourage and support pupils to:

- Develop life skills including self-care and personal organisation
- Understand personal safety and how to stay safe in a range of environments
- Access formal and informal learning opportunities as independently as possible.

Relationships and Social Communication

Staff should encourage and support pupils to:

- Develop play skills and social communication with peers and adults
- Build trusting positive relationships, including friendships
- Understand social contexts and environments
- Share and build upon their interests

Through the Elm Tree curriculum approach, our pupils will have the opportunity to thrive, and leave Elm Tree with an improved quality of life that enables them to,

be the best they can they can be.