

Teaching and Learning Policy

To be read in conjunction with: Curriculum Policy, SMSC Policy

REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

EDUCATION

PART 1 and PART 2: Quality of Education and Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

WRITTEN

07.07.16 Reviewed 08.05.18

BLUEBELL is a Special School catering for pupils with severe social, emotional and mental health and cognition difficulties. It provides for children and young people from diverse social and emotional backgrounds who have a wide variety of complex learning and behavioural needs.

Our whole school approach: consistency and high expectations

We believe that children learn best when there is consistency and continuity in our approach. We hold common expectations of our practice and through mutual challenge and support we ensure that it is of a consistently high quality.

We expect each teacher to take a full and determined responsibility for the progress of all of the pupils in their class. We expect teachers to have consistently high expectations of all pupils in all areas of their learning and school-life.

Subject knowledge

We believe that children learn best when teachers are well-informed, knowledgeable and confident about what they are teaching. Our curriculum planning; our use of subject leaders; our CPD programme and our staffing patterns ensure that all learning is led by staff with excellent subject knowledge.

Planning

Our planning is based on systematic and accurate assessment of our pupils' prior learning. We plan teaching strategies carefully, creatively and imaginatively, based on our knowledge of our pupils' needs. We choose, design and adapt tasks that will challenge all pupils, whatever the level at which they are working.

BLUEBELL believes that the school curriculum comprises of all learning and other experiences that are planned for its pupils and that the National Curriculum is an essential part of this. Furthermore, Bluebell believes that a well-planned and robust curriculum is a fundamental route to the social, emotional and behavioural development, and overall well-being and mental health of its pupils.

In fully adopting the National Curriculum, BLUEBELL supports its two fundamental aims: to provide opportunity for all pupils to learn and achieve; and to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

In making this commitment BLUEBELL also expects to secure pupil entitlement, raise and maintain standards, and promote continuity, coherence and public understanding.

Inclusion

At Bluebell school, we are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible progress for all of our pupils whatever their needs or abilities. Not all pupils with disabilities have special educational needs and not all pupils with SEN meet the definition of disability. In addition, a clear distinction is to be made between English as an Additional Language and Special Educational Needs. Most pupils who have English as an additional language, who require additional support, do not have Special Educational Needs. This policy however, covers all of these pupils.

BLUEBELL recognises its responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all its pupils and in so doing acknowledges that teachers will need to modify, as necessary, the National Curriculum to provide pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage.

To achieve this BLUEBELL endeavours at all times to apply the principles for inclusion, as set out in the National Curriculum in England: Framework (2014), for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Many BLUEBELL pupils have large gaps in their education due to long periods out of school. As a consequence, programmes of study will need to fill these gaps but at the same time remain suitably challenging.

For less able pupils who may have other special educational needs, work will invariably need to be drawn from earlier key stages so that pupils can show what they can achieve. In some cases, this may mean pupils not being able to receive all their age related programmes of study.

Of particular concern for pupils who have moved schools regularly or have been excluded, is continuity and progression. There is a danger that pupils in these circumstances find themselves repeating previous learning which, although offers some immediate success and is 'safe', provides little challenge with no evidence of progression. It is important, therefore, that programmes of study for these pupils are monitored and reviewed regularly to provide both regular opportunities for success as well as suitable challenges and progression routes.

Responding to pupils' diverse needs

Pupils from diverse and vulnerable groups are significantly over represented in the category of special education provided by BLUEBELL. These include children looked after by the local authority, ethnic groups including travellers and refugees as well as those with other special educational needs including autism and language difficulties and English as an additional language. Based on this understanding BLUEBELL staff continually adapt and modify their teaching to ensure all pupils can take part in lessons fully and effectively.

Additionally, significant numbers of pupils become the responsibility of BLUEBELL following their disengagement with 'mainstream' learning often citing its lack of relevance. Through the world of work and other vocationally based experiences BLUEBELL seeks to redress this issue for disaffected pupils particularly at key stage 4. At BLUEBELL, children are taught in small classes of up to eight pupils, and are supported by a high ratio of staff to pupils.

Learning tasks are kept deliberately short and focused, in order to maximise concentration and quality of learning.

BLUEBELL believes that to respond to the diverse needs and backgrounds of its pupils it needs to personalise, as much as possible, the target setting and assessment processes. To this end each pupil has the opportunity to participate in their own planning and assessment

process at regular intervals throughout the year, which includes self-assessment and the opportunity to ask questions about what they have learnt, are about to learn and its relevance to them.

Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individual and groups of pupils

For pupils whose needs are not adequately supported through the teaching strategies outlined above, more intensive approaches may be necessary to overcome potential barriers. For some pupils with severe and often extreme behavioural difficulties these may include further intervention sessions, in addition to their personal therapy programme.

BLUEBELL also recognises that in some more intractable cases support may also be required from other agencies such as Educational Psychology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Speech and Language Therapy and Learning Support.

In all cases, specialists from within BLUEBELL or from external agencies, liaise closely with the class teacher and SENCO to take account of the impact on the pupil's learning and on the preparation of programmes of study.

Interventions

We plan interventions that will support pupils and will move them on in their learning and behaviour. These are determined by our accurate knowledge of pupils' previous learning and behaviour, and by our high expectations of their progress. We know the impact that we expect these interventions to have and we evaluate them with regard to the individual or collective difference they have made to pupils' progress.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Baseline Assessment

When a pupil is admitted to BLUEBELL steps are taken to collate a range of baseline information covering academic attainment and social, emotional and mental health issues. To complete this task, information is used from parents/carers, previous schools and services such as Educational Psychology, Social Care and Health. Inevitably there will be gaps in the information available, and where this is the case, BLUEBELL aims to complete the appropriate assessments internally to achieve a full profile.

Upon completion, all baseline information is then recorded. This information is then used to formulate appropriate short, medium and long term targets for development. For pupils at BLUEBELL these targets focus on behavioural and social improvement and academic development.

Assessment for Learning

We use a range of techniques to systematically check our pupils' understanding throughout each stage of lessons. We anticipate the most likely areas of misunderstanding and we prepare planned interventions and support that will address these. However, we are also ready to adapt our approach spontaneously when we meet unexpected misconceptions or difficulties.

BLUEBELL recognises that in a positive and progressive school, assessment should be continuous and multi-levelled. As a school dedicated to the social and emotional development of pupils as well as their academic improvement, assessment is viewed very much as an enabling process that should be encouraging to pupils and not condemning of their efforts. It is also recognised, however, that assessment should be honest and accurate and that frequent over-generous evaluations of skills and abilities will inevitably lead to disappointment.

To this end staff at BLUEBELL are concerned with using a range of assessment techniques that provide pupils with accurate feedback on their successes and clear targets for the areas they need to improve. These techniques include:

Questioning – The use of ‘open’ questions in particular are seen as an effective way to develop pupils’ thinking skills, particularly if they are given time and support to answer. Pupils need to understand that a considered ‘wrong’ answer can be as informative as a ‘right’ answer and that all pupils are expected to give a response even if it’s, ‘I don’t know’.

Marking and Feedback

We have agreements about our approach to marking: its frequency; content and depth. We plan regular routines for pupils to verbally and academically respond to marking, so that it improves their learning.

We give on-going oral feedback to individuals and to groups of pupils throughout lessons. Our feedback is more often positive than negative. It is sharply focused on the learning and aptitudes that we want to improve.

The purpose of all our feedback: in marking, in target-setting and orally is to give pupils precise and motivating information about how well they are doing and what they should do next to improve.

Marking Work – It is considered important by staff at BLUEBELL to provide pupils with constructive comments when marking work that identifies areas of success, what needs to be improved, how to improve, and opportunities to improve.

Self-Assessment– Pupils are regularly provided with the opportunity to assess their own work against success criteria. This is seen as very important in gaining a greater understanding of what is required to improve. Self-assessment, however, needs careful support from staff to enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to accurately reflect on their own actions. This is of particular relevance when reflecting on behaviour and social interaction. Where possible, pupils are also encouraged to engage in peer assessment.

Summative Assessment – Summative exams and tests are known to present a particular challenge to pupils at BLUEBELL and as a consequence are generally kept to a minimum. However, it is accepted that summative assessment remains a key and important aspect of education and as a consequence BLUEBELL staff are committed to helping pupils develop the necessary skills to perform as well as they can in these areas. Wherever possible, pupils complete SATs at the end of year six, and key stage four pupils have the opportunity to gain accreditation through a range of GCSEs, BTECs and Entry Level Certificates.

Externally marked progress tests are also administered annually at the end of each school year, in order to further strengthen the accuracy of teacher assessment.

Formative Assessment

Bluebell uses Classroom Monitor as an assessment tool for all National Curriculum subjects. It enables us to evidence progress, and set targets in small steps, comparing with national end of year expectations. By working on individual targets rather than a curriculum year as a whole, we are able to show progression through the curriculum. When discussing pupil progress with the pupil or parents/carers, this breakdown gives them a greater understanding of what has been achieved and where the pupil's weaknesses are. Teachers use Classroom Monitor as a constant and continuous mode of assessment, which informs every aspect of their teaching. The Senior Leadership Team uses Classroom Monitor to consider pupil progress and attainment throughout the year, to ensure that resources are effectively deployed thus maximising pupil progress. This also highlights potential negative patterns with respect to progress and attainment across vulnerable groups, and helps to monitor the effectiveness of teaching.

Internal and external moderation of core subjects add a further layer of rigour to our assessment system.

SECL Framework (additional needs) /Behaviour for Learning (SEMH)

A personal development framework is used to assess the social, emotional and behavioural progress made by pupils, along with their suitability to integrate with the wider community or mainstream school. The applicable framework is completed and reviewed by the team of staff that consistently work with a pupil and in conjunction with a pupil's previous setting in order to record a realistic baseline. Key behaviour data is also collected daily and provides a very clear picture of the progression (or otherwise) of pupils.

Teacher Planning and Recording

In normal circumstances teachers at BLUEBELL are expected to develop plans for individual lessons from schemes of work drawn from the National Curriculum. Detailed schemes of work represent the intended delivery to individual or groups of pupils for a given period. Similarly learning outcomes represent the intended achievement for pupils who take part in the planned lessons. However, as in all educational settings and particularly at BLUEBELL, what is planned for pupils and what they actually take part in is not always the same. For this reason it is important that teachers record accurately what actually takes place so as to provide the explanation and evidence for inconsistent progress and possible changes to provision.

To achieve this, all teachers at BLUEBELL are expected to maintain a planning and recording document either in the form of a traditional 'teacher planner' made available through the school or via an alternative approved method.

By completing these records, maintaining and delivering up to date schemes of works and setting relevant learning outcomes for all pupils, it is believed that (at least) good levels of teaching and learning can be maintained.

Reporting

BLUEBELL is required to report on pupils at a variety of levels according to the provision a pupil is receiving and who the report is for.

The parents/carers of full-time pupils, for example, receive a detailed 'academic' report once a year including performance in public exams. This focuses mainly on academic progress. Pupil IEP review and target setting meetings occur termly in conjunction with pupils, parents/carers and teachers and usually take place in the pupil's home. Parents/carers receive a written weekly progress report for their child and a weekly progress update phone call.

Annual review - This process provides an opportunity to look at and modify the medium to long term targets in the statement or EHC plan that should also be reflected in the IEP. The annual review also provides an opportunity to reflect and discuss reports and assessment information from throughout the year and so represents a more formative process.

Outcomes: basic skills, classroom climate, pupil attitudes

Basic skills

We recognize the centrality to learning of the core basic skills. We have organised our teaching programmes for reading, writing, communication and maths, so that there are clear lines of progression; consistent teaching approaches; high expectations of pupils at every stage and a rigorous assessment of pupils' learning and progress.

We design our whole curriculum to afford every opportunity for pupils to apply and so consolidate these core basic skills. Our expectations of their cross-curricular work are as high as those we hold in subject-specific lessons.

We use time very carefully, minimising waste and taking every opportunity to practise and reinforce core basic skills.

Classroom climate

Through careful and imaginative planning; our high quality teaching; good relationships and high levels of teacher responsibility, we generate high levels of enthusiasm from our pupils. We expect pupils to be active participants in their learning and we structure routines and rewards to support them. We want our pupils to show commitment to their learning. We give positive feedback when we see examples of this and we take measured and thoughtful action when it is absent.

Pupil attitudes

We are developing the aptitudes of resilience, confidence and independence. We ensure that the tasks we choose give regular opportunities for pupils to develop these aptitudes. We explain their importance to learning. We notice and comment positively when pupils demonstrate these aptitudes and we model them in our own actions. We work with individual pupils to build these aptitudes where they are lacking.

Protection of pupil from Partisan Political Views

Teaching and learning at Bluebell MUST NOT and DOES NOT undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Teaching and learning at Bluebell MUST NOT and DOES NOT discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the 2010 Act.

Where political issues are required to be brought to the attention of pupils in any subject, teachers are required to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views. This must be adhered to while in attendance at Bluebell, during extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of Bluebell, and through the distribution of promotional material including that for extra-curricular activities taking place at Bluebell or elsewhere.

All staff are required to sign an agreement appertaining to the above.