



Cherry Tree  
EDUCATION

# CHERRY TREE SCHOOL CURRICULUM POLICY

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2022, SEPTEMBER 2023

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2024

HEADTEACHER SIGNATURE:

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR SIGNATURE:

ALL STAFF MUST HAVE ACCESS TO THIS POLICY, AND SIGN TO  
CONFIRM THAT THEY HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND WILL  
ADHERE TO ITS CONTENTS.

# Cherry Tree Curriculum Policy

## Introduction

Square pegs do not fit into round holes so why keep trying the same? For some children, the traditional classroom setting does not work and can create even further barriers to their learning. This can often become a revolving door which adds to the loss of crucial real education time for the pupil. Cherry Tree is a detached building in a quiet residential area and has a warm homely feel and can cater for up to 10 pupils. The rooms are spacious and comfortable, and pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their school. The property also has a large safe garden area with working spaces where various 'hands on' projects can be carried out e.g. gardening and upcycling. At Cherry Tree our aim is to provide an excellent education for all our pupils. Our commitment for an engaging and bespoke curriculum is rooted in a desire to bring out the best in all pupils and prepare them for success in life. Our data gathering is constantly evolving to ensure we capture the personal achievements and personal development steps pupils take so they can celebrate their progression. Recognising positive change highlights and encourages their personal growth, self-esteem and individuality. For pupils who need an integrated plan to allow them time to settle into school life, a variety of environments can be accessed including classrooms without walls using the spacious outdoors of either the local beach or the Kent countryside. In our experience, pupils who have a history of sporadic education respond well when a variety of these learning environments are available. Through this flexible and adaptable approach, pupils have the time and space to discover their strengths and the way they learn best, which in turn creates the best possible environment 'fit' for the pupil to achieve their potential. We intend to ensure that our pupils are ready for the move to post 16 education or employment, with the ability to show resilience and the competence to interact with peers within society post 16 and beyond.

## The Working Memory Challenge

The focus of our whole school curriculum intent is to ensure that all pupils have a balanced, rounded and appropriate education, which meets their individual needs, ensuring it remains flexible to meet their ongoing mental health challenges. There are many mental health difficulties that our pupils have to learn to manage and or live with that affect everything they do, every day of their lives. These difficulties include depression, severe levels of anxiety, PTSD, self-harming, complex trauma, attachment disorders, ASD and many other learning difficulties. Severe levels of anxiety can overtake and consume our pupils on a daily basis not only linked to various diagnosis, but also when they are presented with new and stressful life situations they need to navigate their way through. When young people are under the influence of stress, trauma and or high levels of anxiety, the memory will often be working at a lower level than that of normal memory functioning. One part of the body affected by anxiety and stress is the nervous system, which plays a primary role in basic functions like memory and learning. As a result, persistent anxiety and memory loss can be overly affected. Working memory, or the short term memory, is critical for solving problems

effectively and for managing chunks of information in the 'now'. There is a plethora of evidence which shows that young people with elevated anxiety are either unable to complete task, or take a long time to shift from one cognitive set to another during working memory tasks e.g. listening to a sequence of events in a story while trying to understand what the story means. When the working memory is not working properly, it will often present as the inability to complete tasks properly, difficulty concentrating, inability to multi task and often, errors are made. Our pupils often present with these difficulties in their lessons and so our challenge is to enable pupils to develop and move into new subjects and chunks of learning, while acknowledging that they may not be able to recall their previous learning on a regular basis. As a school we balance the need for overlearning with the need to ensure pupils do not get 'bored' by constantly revisiting information or topics. This also presents the challenge for Cherry Tree to constantly evolve ways to ensure accurate, reliable and valid assessments methods are in place to measure individual pupils progress and achievements, which takes their working memory difficulties into account.

### **Meeting Individual Needs**

To ensure the individual needs of Cherry Tree pupils are met we will:

- provide for individual needs; responding to age, aptitude and additional educational needs
- provide access, at an appropriate level, to a relevant curriculum
- promote learning and personal growth and development within the context of the extremely complex lives the pupils have so far experienced
- meet the needs of young people, promoting care and respect and expecting high standards in all aspects of school life which continues into their home life
- prepare pupils for their adult and working life both with skills and knowledge but most importantly with their personal development and independence skills
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The focus on meeting individual needs is based on the context of each pupil's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum set within developing positive relationships and improving behaviour.

### **Moving On When Ready**

Some pupils need more time than others to catch up, work through their learning barriers and to be ready to engage in bigger groups and / or mainstream schools. However, some pupils may be ready to move on faster than others. To ensure that Cherry Tree continues to be the right provision for pupils, discussions will take place at every PEP and EHCP review to identify and start planning any future potential moves. This will not only ensure that there is a smooth transition plan in place but that everyone including the child, is involved in the decision making about their future.

All individual Curriculum Intents are available on request and can be accessed via the 'Our Curriculum' section on the website.

### **The Subjects**

Cherry Tree is committed to providing our pupils with the best education possible and gaining the qualifications they need to move on. Core subjects at the heart of our curriculum include:

- English
- Maths
- Science and Technology
- Personal and Social Development
- Relationship and Sex Education
- Physical Education
- Humanities
- Vocational Studies

Each subject has their own particular intent and implementation outlined below. Each core subject is mandatory for each pupil unless it is otherwise agreed in an individual education plan. The number of timetabled lessons for each subject will depend on the needs of the individual, however core subjects are considered a priority for all pupils.

### **English Curriculum**

Our English curriculum is designed to provide all of our pupils with the core knowledge, skills and an appreciation of English that will underpin their ability to access the whole curriculum and what their future world holds for them. We aim to create confident and independent learners who can apply the knowledge and capabilities gained from school, to all aspects of their future. We consider the individual interests, experiences and diverse backgrounds of our pupils in our planning to promote engagement. Our curriculum is differentiated for the individual student, whilst ensuring that each student is taught what is needed to achieve their full potential. A key aim for teaching English: to develop our pupils' confidence, enjoyment and fluency with English.

We provide Gateway Qualifications in English from Entry Level 1 to Level 2 and the pupils work towards creating a portfolio of evidence. Our curriculum is structured upon the Units outlined within these qualifications. This is taught through the framework of Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening from Pre-Entry Level up to Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE). The pupils' Reading development is demonstrated by them being able to: read for information and to read for purpose and meaning. Their development in Writing can be seen through the pupils' ability to write to communicate and to write accurately. Communication is a key skill which is supported and encouraged throughout the school on a daily basis. In their English classes, the pupils learn how to listen and respond, engage in discussion and to speak to communicate.

ICT will play a significant role in the pupils' futures and hence, in addition to their core Units in English, the pupils will learn how to use Word Processing Software. This is a key functional skill which shall enable pupils to create, edit and check different documents to suit a given audience and purpose. Teaching the pupils different functional skills in English,

means that there is a focus on the pupils being able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of English by applying it to real-world scenarios.

When pupils join Cherry Tree, they are assessed by the English Lead Tutor using an assessment tool designed to effectively identify any gaps in their learning. All pupils read on a weekly basis independently and to a staff member. Reading materials vary from storybooks, news articles and comprehension tasks depending on each pupil's individual needs and interests. Pupils are taught to spell words taken from high frequency spelling lists that contain words which are appropriate for each pupil's level. Different strategies to learn spellings are employed such as a spelling book, kinaesthetic tasks and key word cut outs. Pupils are also taught a more challenging keyword vocabulary to allow our pupils to be stretched. During their reading lessons, pupils extract "tricky words" from their given text. Pupils are prepared for spelling and reading assessments and encouraged to take ownership of their own learning by practicing at home and taking part in self-directed learning tasks.

## **Maths Curriculum**

The Maths 2022 – 2023 curriculum at Cherry Tree Education aims to fulfil the potential of all of our pupils regardless of the level they are working at. The overall purpose of the maths curriculum is for our pupils to be able to demonstrate and apply a sound grasp of the underpinning skills and basics of maths appropriate to their level, and for them to be able to apply mathematical thinking to solve simple problems in familiar situations and relate it to everyday life. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified early on by assessing each pupil in all areas of the maths curriculum to ensure a broad and detailed individual plan can be targeted and taught effectively. It is structured following criteria from Gateway Qualifications covering five different units for Entry Levels 1 – 3, including making calculations, money, time and temperature, numbers, decimals, fractions & percentages, using shape, size and measure and using and communicating data. Levels 1 and 2 progress knowledge with further topics, including using probability and numerical relationships, algebra and ratios.

Our intent for Entry Level pupils is for them to become confident in using fundamental mathematical knowledge and skills and enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding by applying this to solve simple mathematical problems or carry out simple tasks. Progressing to Level 1 and 2, pupils will be able to demonstrate clear understanding and application of mathematical skills at the appropriate level and the ability to apply mathematical thinking effectively to solve problems successfully in the workplace and in other real-life situations. Our intent for Level 1 and Level 2 is to enable pupils to demonstrate their ability with mathematical skills through appropriate reasoning and decision making, to solve realistic problems of increasing complexity and introduce pupils to new areas of life and work so that they are exposed to concepts and problems which enable pupils to develop an appreciation of the role played by mathematics in the world of work and in life general.

Our maths curriculum supports and encourages pupils to develop their number skills and interpret mathematical information presented in a variety of forms using visual, kinaesthetic, and audio teaching methods suitable for each pupils' individual learning styles. Teaching is

implemented in an efficient, specific and targeted way so that pupils can absorb methods, techniques and problem solving effectively at their respected level. Encouragement and engagement come from using a range of resources and teaching methods which are all used to further pupils understanding and enrich their experience. All learning styles are catered for, and all classes have pupils of varying abilities studying together. Pupils are encouraged to learn by any mistakes made, not to become anxious when making them and to celebrate success when overcoming difficulties in the classroom.

ICT is embedded in the maths curriculum focusing on spreadsheet software and coding. Topics covered include number systems, handling information and data and solving mathematical problems. Many areas of spreadsheet software and maths are intertwined, meaning dual learning can take place between two topics in lessons. This will broaden the pupil's awareness of maths by incorporating ICT and using it to produce detailed graphs, tables and charts.

### **Personal and Social Development Curriculum**

Personal and Social Development (PSD) at Cherry Tree is a present and important part of our Ethos and approach by all staff throughout the entire school day. We are aware pupils who present with attachment difficulties, trauma based mental health issues, high anxieties and specific learning difficulties to have the time and space to firstly feel safe, secondly engage in learning and thirdly enjoy the feeling of learning and change. We provide an engaging and stimulating curriculum that encourages the enjoyment of learning and growth and allows time for pupils to take ownership of their own development. Our aims for all of our pupils are for them to become functional members of modern British society, and to be able to make friends and access all opportunities in life without barriers.

The PSD curriculum at Cherry Tree focuses on what our pupils can do, not just what they know and recall. To truly show personal and social development, knowledge and skills must be put into action. We strive to help our pupils become well rounded young people who can manage social situations, make friends and socialise, behave appropriately and manage their own mental health issues. By having an applied approach to PSD this will give tangible results to real world applications, not just work within a book.

PSD sessions are designed to include different types of activities and tasks for different pupils and groups. PSD sessions may include the gym, music, sewing, crafts, swimming, communication games etc. Each activity has its own unique set of skills needed to engage in it, whether social skills or personal skills. Cherry Tree also facilitate 1-1 sessions with pupils with key members of staff to help them with their personal goals or difficulties they wish to overcome. Each pupil's timetable will cater for their individual needs and can be adapted should this be required.

### **Relationship and Sex Education Curriculum**

At Cherry Tree in Relationships and Sex Education we understand the importance of educating pupils about relationships, sex and their health. The core focus is to prepare our

learners to be able to go on to make the right and well-informed choices in their future. We intend on giving pupils the correct tools to have healthy lifestyles and successful relationships with others. Our pupils are able to explore RSE in a comfortable and safe environment, supported by ground rules that the pupils are encouraged to create together, therefore instilling unity and expectations within the classroom.

The Relationships and Sex Education curriculum has been developed from the contents of the statutory guidance published and last updated by the Department for Education in September 2021. Our curriculum covers: families, respectful relationships including friendships, the media, being online and being safe, and intimate and sexual relationships (including sexual health). Our highly enriched curriculum shows clear progressions through levels (Entry level 1-Level 2), the entry level steps pupils will take are designed to prepare pupils to ultimately work towards the opportunity of achieving a NCFE CACHE qualification at Level 1 for Relationships and Sex education. This allows us to provide and give all pupils access to an age appropriate RSE education geared towards their individual levels. We are able to implement differentiation and stretch pupils learning to the best of their abilities.

Cherry Tree believes in dedicating time to the personal development of its pupils. This includes the encouragement for our pupils to engage in positive and healthy Relationships. This is demonstrated not only in Relationships and Sex Education lessons but also throughout the school day with their peers which is encouraged and guided by all staff. These healthy skills are continuously developed and we as a school believe they are crucial to growth of our pupils and the success of their future and relationships.

## **Science Curriculum**

Science at Cherry Tree employs a great emphasis on practical application and curiosity for the subject. We feel that learners at varying levels should not be penalised and miss out on experiments that enrich the learning experiences that science has to offer. Instead, Cherry Tree adopts an approach of varying application of knowledge and ability in different topics. This gives the learners the benefit of accessing kinesthetic and visual experiences in experimenting and viewing the potential of science in the real world.

The science curriculum has been developed from the contents of KS1-KS4 contents mapped out against national standards from Entry Level 1 – Level 2, with clear progressions through these levels. Classes could be varied learning levels, and with the method of a shared topic for all learners with differentiated tasks, extensions and assessments learners can access a highly enriched curriculum and stretch their learning to the best of their abilities. The science curriculum also gives achievable stepping stones for learners to progress onto the ‘Gateway Applied Science and Technology’ qualifications, where more in depth learning, analysis and assessment takes place.

Science in the modern world is ever changing and developing. In the space of 20 years we have transitioned to the information age of the internet, smart technology and much more. This progression will not stop. Humans are an ever advancing race, always seeking out scientific truth and technological development. Cherry Tree believes learners should be

curious of the wider scientific world, ask why things happen the way they do, and understand that science will continue to advance and humans must adapt to technological changes to overcome future issues and crisis's, such as energy and the environment.

## **Physical Education Curriculum**

Exercise and fitness are essential parts of a healthy lifestyle. For adults to enjoy and regularly take part in physical exercise and improve fitness, it is essential as young people we take part in sports and physical activities and enjoy doing it. At Cherry Tree we believe that all pupils should be encouraged to take part in various sports with others and learn to love exercise.

P.E. at Cherry Tree is taught through various sports which are changed termly to expose pupils to different options. We all gravitate towards different sports or activities, which is natural, so being exposed to different sports will give our pupils opportunities to learn and enjoy something new. If a pupil enjoys sports and physical activity, it will never feel like work, and they will likely continue feeling this into adult life. As exercise is regularly cited as one of the best treatments for mental wellbeing, engaging and exciting lessons will have a real-world impact now and later on in their lives.

Some pupils come to Cherry Tree struggling to work in a group, or with anxieties about exercising around others. In lessons pupils will be encouraged to work as a team, communicate with others, push their abilities, learn new skills, and challenge themselves to achieve more. These will all be encouraged at each pupil's own pace. Staff will actively participate in lessons where required to help pupils with teamwork, however participating with peers instead of staff will always be promoted. Learning to participate in teamwork will translate to the real world for all pupils, helping them for working life as well rounded and productive members of the community.

## **Vocational Studies Curriculum**

The Vocational Skills curriculum is designed to enable the recognition of sector specific vocational learning in addition to encompassing generic employability skills. The curriculum is designed to allow pupils to discover new knowledge and develop their personal growth and progression and explore their interests through Gateway EL3 Vocational Skills units and to be able to progress into Level 1 and Level 2 if and when they are ready. We encourage the development of the pupils' values, personal attributes and their inter-personal skills that will contribute to their future success in the workplace.

Through the curriculum we will give pupils a range of vocational experiences that will help them explore their interests and skills and cultivate positive attitudes through the development of essential work skills and behaviours such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. Pupils will study a variety of units including cookery, craft, upcycling and gardening, that will allow them to become creative thinkers and produce a portfolio that will culminate in the gateway qualification. Employability Skills units are an integral part of the Vocational Skills qualification and units will be chosen on a needs basis to enable pupils to



be ready for the world of work. When pupils are able to, they will also be supported to attend independent advice meetings with a careers advisor and take part in local college visits and taster days. Through our vocational skills curriculum we aim to give all our pupils the tools they need to make informed choices for employment, further education, and other opportunities for life beyond Cherry Tree.

Most of our pupils live in a world that is different from most other teenagers. They often have multiple professionals and agencies making decisions and structuring their lives and often have various diagnosis which can make their lives difficult to manage and navigate. This can culminate in young people feeling disempowered and out of control, which in turn has a huge impact on the ability of young minds being open to discover their creativity and explore who they are. At Cherry Tree we embed a culture of learning while healing where 'Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing' (Public Health England 2021) is securely in place. Many pupils, through various emotional and social difficulties have missed valuable time to explore what they like in the world, how to give back to the community and what their career path might be. Pupils have often missed life experiences where they could discover their strengths, talents, and creativity. We ensure that all pupils have maximum opportunities to be able to explore their creativity and learn how to use their imagination and resourcefulness and take this forward into long term goals.

The therapeutic curriculum allows staff to adapt the learning to meet the individual needs on the day. The sessions are less structured and are led by the pupil. Staff will maximise socialisation opportunities and work together so pupils can mix with others for those who are able to do so and want to. All pupils have various options and have their own projects that they can choose from. This approach enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills, develop confidence and be able to express their creative and artistic independence using a variety of resources and materials. Various creative projects will allow pupils to become independent problem solvers and gain the confidence to tackle new and difficult tasks. Having time to be creative, artistic and to share this with others is imperative for pupils to develop good mental health and cultivate an ability to enjoy, explore and contribute to a creative world and will also enable them to reflect critically on their own work and that of others. The Therapeutic Curriculum is for pupils to engage in a subject that they can find aesthetically pleasing, which helps them to explore their senses and who they are while they are learning to engage in and explore aesthetic subjects. Our pupils often have attachment and trauma difficulties and sometimes subjects like art, craft, gardening and community projects can enable them to express themselves without the need for words.

## **Humanities Curriculum**

Humanities at Cherry Tree Education has been designed to meet the needs of the pupils and give them monitored control of what topics they would like to cover in the academic year. Following whole school evaluations, it was very apparent that pupils were not enjoying the traditional humanities curriculum and often found it irrelevant to their lives. Following further discussions with the pupils about what they would like to understand about humanities, they were very clear in that they wanted the curriculum to represent a more modern take on the subjects. From this, they decided that in geography, they would like to

learn about what is happening around the planet now. They also identified that they would like a more holistic look at religion and so the curriculum will look at the annual calendar of religious festivals and celebrations for our RE curriculum. History will be pupil led in that they will pick an important event / time in history and study the time they choose. This will culminate in pupils combining their research / knowledge by producing either posters, leaflets and or a power point presentation to teach the other pupils in their class about their findings. Our humanities curriculum therefore aims to inform pupils about global and significant topics and or events, as well as encouraging independent research and learning. This also ensures that pupils have the opportunity to develop and incorporate a variety of other vital skills into their work including time management, teamwork and presentation.

Topics to be covered over the next year will each have a main focal subject arching over two terms, for example in terms 1 and 2 Geography will be implemented and pupils will be learning about the Blue Planet and Planet Earth. Pupils will study documentaries and conduct their own research into these topics. Pupils will also gather information from applications on the iPads and combine this to produce a final piece of work based on their understandings. In terms 3 and 4 pupils will learn about R.E. through a religious festival calendar. Pupils will be able to research these religions and festivals and develop a final piece of work based on what has been learnt. Pupils will engage in class discussions with the teacher and peers about these festivals and then choose one to study. They will be encouraged to think creatively and asked to produce not only substantial understandings of their work but also an artistic piece to accompany it, such as a painting, print or sculpture. British History will be taught in terms 5 and 6, this is vast in options so an overview of all different eras will be explained so that the pupils will have an overview of what has happened in our country and be given the opportunity for them to focus on a specific era of interest to them. Pupils will work both independently and within a team to discuss and research their chosen area in depth. Pupils will embed their learning by producing either a poster, a leaflet and or produce a power point presentation at the end of the term to inform the rest of their class.

**This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher  
and or the Management Committee**