



CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK AT RADLETT LODGE SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Radlett Lodge School is part of the National Autistic Society (NAS) whose ethos, policies and procedures all influence the learning environment. Alongside the NAS we share a common vision where 'we want a world where autism is understood and people with autism have the support they need to ensure that their rights are upheld and that they have the same opportunities as others in society.' In order to achieve that 'we champion the rights and interests of all people with autism and aim to provide individuals with autism and their families with help, support and services that they can readily access, trust and rely upon and which make a positive difference to their lives.'

At Radlett Lodge School the curriculum followed by each pupil is in line with MyProgress™. MyProgress™ is The National Autistic Society's overall strategy for working with children and young people with autism. It encompasses the way we assess each pupil, the way we plan the support we give them, the way we work with each pupil day to day and over the long term, and the way that we make sure we are giving each pupil the best possible opportunities to thrive and progress by checking, monitoring and recording what we do.

The philosophy of Radlett Lodge School is to put the needs of its pupils first and believe it is the right of our pupils to be treated with dignity and respect, just like any other children. Our curriculum and teaching approach is pupil-centered and although access to the National Curriculum is in place we believe its principal focus should be on the special learning difficulties associated with autism. The importance of the 24-hour curriculum is supported through working, supportive partnerships with our residential unit, parents/carers and the community.

We place a high priority on Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic (PSHCE) Education to maximize opportunities for personal autonomy and to enhance quality of life. We believe that structure and positive intervention with built-in opportunities for change and risk-taking achieve the best results for pupils with autism. Pupils learn best when teaching approaches allow for generalization and concentrate on real-life situations rather than abstract concepts. We recognise that many of our pupils have very special difficulties but believe that compassion, tolerance and positive intervention effect change. The culture and ethos of our school is open and non-judgmental.

STATUTORY CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with the vision and philosophy of Radlett Lodge School, one of our principal aims is to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all pupils/students with autism, whilst promoting equality and diversity.

In line with general government guidelines; planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, this curriculum will set out clear learning outcomes with provision for lateral and vertical progression; acknowledge the widening

experience of pupils as they move through education and present learning opportunities in age-appropriate contexts.

Pupils across all key-stages are given access to the National Curriculum at the appropriate level with activities planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils, providing a broad and balanced curriculum across each key-stage and year-on-year.

It is recognised that work will be differentiated according to pupil ability – some of whom will be able to cover the programme of study in more depth than others. All schemes of work are designed and differentiated to meet the needs of learners working from early P Levels to National Curriculum Level 8.

For Pupils in the Reception year, the school will follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance to deliver and assess the curriculum. Pupils in EYFS will access Schemes of work that are devised taking account of the EYFS documentation. Pupils will have individual EYFS Assessment profiles that will be monitored weekly, reviewed termly and inform planning of activities and individual programmes of work. Underpinning the EYFS curriculum at RLS are the four key principals taken from the EYFS Documentation:

- A unique child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling environments
- Learning and Development

Play is seen as an essential component of the EYFS curriculum and this is continued throughout the Primary Department. The teaching in EYFS and KS1 in particular (whether this includes Reception children or not) has a central focus on Radlett Lodge's 'Learning to Learn Curriculum' (see Autism specific curriculum) and the facilitation of play.

In light of autism-specific difficulties and barriers to learning, all schemes of work contain references to autism-specific issues.

Working with all 7 NAS schools, Radlett Lodge School is in the process of reviewing and re-writing all Schemes of Work to meet the requirements of the 2013 National Curriculum. The Schemes of Work for all subjects will be devised under year groups from Yr 1 to Yr 11 and will have 2 cycles to make sure pupils repeating any year group will build on their learning.

In line with government guidance 2013, in our Further Education department (16-19 year old learners) individualised Programmes of Study (POS) are devised for each student taking into account the long term goals for each young person in the areas of:

- Education
- Living
- Employment
- Leisure

Subjects taught within each key-stage vary according to need with the following schemes of work available in each:

Key-stage	EYFS	KS1 and 2	KS3	KS4	FE
Subjects	Communication & Language Literacy	English	English	English	Functional Literacy
	Mathematics	Maths	Maths	Maths	Functional Numeracy
	Understanding the World	Science History Geography RE	Science Humanities (inc. History & Geography) RE	Science Humanities (inc. History & Geography) RE	RE
	ICT	Computing	Computing	Computing	Functional ICT
	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Citizenship & PSHCE	Citizenship & PSHCE	Citizenship & PSHCE Life skills ASDAN Transition Challenge Careers Education	Personal & Social Development (PSE)
	Expressive Arts & Design	Art Design & Technology (inc cookery) Music	Creative arts (Art, DT, Cookery) Expressive Arts (Music, Dance, Drama)	Creative arts (Art, DT, Cookery) Expressive Arts (Music, Dance, Drama)	Vocational Skills (based on interests of student)
	Physical Development	PE	PE	PE	Sport & Leisure (based on interests of student)
	Community Based Education	Community Based Education	Community Based Education	Community Based Education	Community Based Education
	+ MFL (currently through cultural days)				

The percentage of time allocated to each curriculum area is frequently reviewed in order to maintain balance and breadth, whilst meeting the highly individual needs of our pupils and class groups, identified through the outcomes of their EHCP Annual Reviews, MyProgress™ EHCP Outcomes (6 monthly targets), other information and advice from an external advisor.

Each subject of the formal curriculum is supported by a scheme of work which details items such as learning objectives, areas of study/suggested activities, Computing, SMSC and community cohesion links. Teachers use these schemes of work to differentiate the objectives in their Medium Term Planning (half termly) in order to tailor the teaching and learning to meet the needs of our pupils. In the Medium Term Planning this information is broken-down further to be learner specific in literacy and numeracy. Copies of Schemes of Work and Medium Term Planning can be found with the Deputy Principal (Education) and is accessible to all staff on our shared drive.

Teachers are encouraged to provide feedback on schemes of work or topics that need development and the whole curriculum is monitored, evaluated and developed by the Deputy Principal (Education) and Subject Coordinators on an ongoing basis through observations, reviews and meetings, which is discussed with SLT and fed into the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

It is recognised that the National Curriculum is only part of the curriculum required by children and young people with autism. Many other skills are required to be taught to pupils at the school and the other areas specifically addressed in the curriculum include communication, social, behavioural, personal, citizenship and self-help skills. Therefore, as with many areas of the curriculum, these skills are taught in a range of “real” situations, in order to make them more relevant to our pupils and to allow for generalisation. The curriculum is weighted towards physical, multisensory and practical activities to meet the widest range of learning needs and thus to maximise the learning opportunities.

Due to the nature of the learning difficulties of pupils with autism there are specific areas of the curriculum that are more challenging and as such it is likely that our learners will never make significant progress in these areas e.g. Modern and Foreign Languages which is currently taught through access to cultural events on a regular basis. We use cultural days in the residential unit and school to focus and concentrate on sharing and expanding our pupil’s knowledge, understanding and experiences of other cultures, and try where possible, to reflect the diverse nature of our school community population within those events. It is through the medium of cultural days/weeks that we deliver MFL to our pupils and we develop and enhance the RE curriculum. Religious education is taught to all pupils (including those in FE) through directed curriculum time and assemblies alongside informal curricula opportunities.

The school provides a high staff ratio to allow for opportunities for individual teaching, as well as small group activities. All aspects of a pupil’s day are seen as learning opportunities. Joint planning by school staff, parents and, where relevant, residential staff, aims to provide a consistency of approach throughout the day.

There is a cross-curricular approach to delivering Every Child Matters, and Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural and Physical (SMSCP) education with Schemes of Work highlighting their contribution to this part of the curriculum, alongside incidental learning opportunities which arise throughout the 24-hour curriculum. We recognise that many pupils at Radlett Lodge School may never independently achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes, but strive towards each child fulfilling their maximum potential and participating actively in their lives as independently as possible.

AN AUTISM-SPECIFIC CURRICULUM

Pupils with autism experience significant difficulties with 3 distinct areas:

1. difficulty with social communication
2. difficulty with social interaction
3. difficulty with social imagination

Pupils with autism often also have issues around sensory processing and a lack of awareness of danger. Each of these areas needs to be considered when planning and delivering the curriculum to the pupils at RLS alongside other common characteristics of autism such as:

- difficulties with generalisation
- difficulties with executive functioning
- impairment of theory of mind
- no innate preferences for faces
- poor self-awareness and sense of others
- lack of empathy for others

A variety of teaching approaches are used including individual and small group sessions. All learning tasks are analysed and broken down into small achievable steps. The opportunity to solve problems and to reflect on their work, at a level relevant to the individual, is apparent in every aspect of the curriculum. Regardless of ability level it is the philosophy of RLS that lessons should be delivered using age appropriate materials and resources.

English and Maths are mainly taught through the literacy and numeracy strategy/NC. An English/literacy scheme of work gives detailed plans for all class groups in addition to developmental steps in the strand areas. A similar scheme of work has been devised for Maths.

Many of our pupils with autism have difficulty making connections about the world and can be unaware of the relationship between one thing and another; some have organisational problems and are unable to respond selectively to elicit information. We therefore provide a predictable and structured learning environment as is offered by the SPELL approach. This structure also reduces the amount of verbal stimuli (often seen as a barrier to learning for many of our pupils) and reduces the need for adult dependence.

The difficulties our pupils face mean that Citizenship & PSHE, including aspects of SEAL, will play a core role in the development of a person with autism. The curriculum at Radlett Lodge School supports young people with autism to develop emotionally and socially, encouraging their participation in increasing personal awareness, social skills and independence. Sex and relationships education is delivered through all learning at RLS with specific objectives built into the Citizenship, PSHE & Science schemes of work.

Similarly there is a strong emphasis on community cohesion with all pupils accessing community-based activities within the school and residential settings. Classes spend a minimum of half a day per week in the community on educational visits, providing real, practical experiences related to everyday living, which helps to equip them with skills for life whilst promoting an awareness and familiarity of autism within our local communities. In our FE department this is considerably higher and can be addressed through as much as 50% of their POS.

Research has shown that high levels of physical activity can help to focus and motivate pupils with autism whilst enabling the opportunity for self-calming, thus a high emphasis is placed on learning through a physical curriculum.

For some pupils this may involve a physical activity between each learning activity, for others specific areas of the curriculum are delivered through a more physical medium, or some classes build in a daily physical activity session before focusing on learning.

Specialist schemes of work have been developed including the 'Learning to Learn' curriculum, which focuses on teaching the basic pre-requisite skills for learning including sitting, attending and focusing; and schemes such as 'Understanding Autism' and 'Anger Management' which are available for use with individual pupils where appropriate.

An important aspect of the organisation at Radlett Lodge School is the compatibility of individual pupils within class groups, especially when we consider the specific behavioural and high sensory needs of our pupils. For example, it would be inappropriate to group Pupil X with particular noise sensitivities to high-pitched screaming with Pupil Y who frequently communicates using such sounds. This is further compounded by the small number of pupils and class groups which limits alternative provisions. This issue presents challenges and can result in pupils being taught with peers outside of their key-stage. Regardless of the class group pupils are in, each pupil receives an individualised curriculum which seeks to address each pupil's main barriers to learning.

For a very small number of pupils, individualised sensory-specific curricula focussing on maximising inclusion and opportunities to tolerate being in proximity to others is prioritised over all other learning.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

All pupils at Radlett Lodge School have the right to an inclusive education that offers excellence and choice, and all parts of the curriculum are accessible to all pupils. The health and safety takes precedence which may result in activities being amended to allow participation within the activity for some pupils. Radlett Lodge School believes that all pupils with special educational needs are entitled to the best possible education and the same opportunities as their peers; education which is suited and adapted where necessary to their particular needs.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Where deemed appropriate, risk assessments are carried out for specific activities or the use of specific equipment. This is in addition to pupil-specific risk assessments.

RELATED POLICIES

Assessment, Recording & Reporting
Teaching & Learning

REFERENCES:

MyProgress™
NAS curriculum policy
National Curriculum 2013
EYFS Curriculum 2014
Individual subject policies

See also Early Years and Post 16 Policies.