

# Great Oaks School

## Curriculum Overview

April 2020

Working with staff, governors, students and parents – we made the decision to change from formal curriculum headings (based on the National Curriculum) to curriculum strands which allow for formal and semi-formal curricula to be planned depending on the needs of the students and where in their learning journey they are. Our curriculum is centered on 7 Strands each led by a designated lead teacher and planned to meet the needs of all learners across the school. The areas are very much interlinked and are based on our key mission and values expressed in the Great Oaks tree.



Working together to encourage, inspire and develop confidence in our pupils in a supportive learning environment.

### **1 – Core skills – English, Mathematics and Communication**

At Great Oaks we believe that core communication, literacy and numeracy skills are key to our students' futures. Through the English and Maths curriculums we help students develop essential life skills to best enable them to communicate effectively, problem solve and become lifelong learners. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught primarily through the Maths and English curriculums but are also embedded across the whole school curriculum. Communication is developed through the teaching of reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. A range of approaches and resources are used across the school to support students who are non-or pre-verbal including Objects of reference, symbols and signing. All staff and students in the school are taught signing to enable them to communicate with their peers. English lessons encompass discrete reading skills lessons, phonics, SPaG and drama while making links between these to encourage creativity, innovation and independence. The Maths curriculum develops discrete skills for number, geometry, statistics and measurement while fostering logical thinking, the ability to form concepts, learn facts and problem solve. Through both core subjects students develop character traits such as independent thinking, resilience, perseverance and tenacity. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves, be kind to others and work hard in every lesson.

### **2 – Technology – Computing, Food technology and design technology**

Technology as a curriculum area encompasses Design Technology, Food Technology and Computing. The Computing curriculum also reinforces and expands many of the areas of Internet Safety which are covered within the schools PSE programme.

We aim to make sure that Technology is fun and an awesome subject to both study and teach, and that it is a subject which has creativity, challenge and the development of key life-skills and a growth in independence at the heart of the curriculum

Technology provides our students with communication skills, knowledge of how to stay safe online and resilience, so if things don't go as planned the first time, to try and try again until they achieve their goals. We use a range of assistive technology to support students working in our Pathway 1 and 2 classes

### **3 – World Studies: - Science, History, Geography and Religious Education**

Our World studies area of the curriculum comprises of Science, Humanities and Religious Studies. Each of the disciplines has a place to play and is significant in providing a complete and balanced educational opportunity well adapted to meet the requirements the learning needs of our children and with careful consideration to all backgrounds, beliefs and cultures. At Great Oaks we equip students with the knowledge and skills to be successful global citizens. Our curriculum is not about students leaving with a long list of facts

about the world; we want our students to appreciate the ever-evolving nature of our world and this is best experienced by delivering through our learning pathways.

#### **4 - Leisure.**

At Great Oaks School the Leisure Skills area of our curriculum ensures that our students are given opportunities to experience a wide range of activities that promote positive health and wellbeing. Students develop their leisure skills through P.E lessons, swimming lessons, minibus outings, Friday activities, lunchtime and after school clubs. At Great Oaks we educate our students on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle to give them confidence to work on improving their own physical abilities. We try to give our students as many opportunities as possible to try new activities they may not have encountered before, encouraging them to achieve their personal best and create a fulfilling lifestyle where they make and build positive relationships within school and their community. The leisure activities that we offer aim to build self-esteem and confidence by providing the opportunities for students to express themselves in a safe, fun and inclusive environment.

#### **5 – Arts**

The “Arts” contribute to the development of the whole child emotionally, aesthetically, spiritually, intellectually and socially. It creates in the child a sense of enjoyment and a sense of purpose. We believe that the arts can be a crucial vehicle for promoting independence and self-worth for students with complex learning needs. The arts are particularly important in offering our students a means of communication that is outside the confines of the written or spoken word.

The arts can also play a fundamental role in the students’ understanding of and response to the world around them. We intend to provide creative and challenging experiences for all students which give opportunities to individuals own ideas and their personal and diverse interests. Students are encouraged to become as independent as possible through learning skills and knowledge of the arts in both Music and art. They become more resilient by reflecting on their own practice and making changes to their work. We encourage individual growth through various accreditation paths such as Bronze and Silver Arts award, Entry level and Asdan. Students learn to communicate their ideas and develop these to produce final outcomes.

#### **6 – Skills for Life**

The teaching of PSHE and Citizenship is central to the development of all our students. It enables students to become healthy, independent and responsible members of our school community and the wider society. Developing good well-being a positive mindset is important to future health and happiness.

Values and skills are taught in discreet PSHE and Citizenship lessons across the school. An emphasis is placed on active learning through planned discussions, circle-time,

investigations, role-play activities, puppets, group-work and problem-solving. Teachers endeavour to provide a safe learning environment through the establishment of clear Ground Rules which are made explicit to the children and reinforced consistently. This allows students to discuss feelings and sensitive issues within a non-threatening and supportive environment. Beyond timetabled PSHE and Citizenship lessons, students are supported in applying the skills they are learning, in real-life situations as they arise: e.g. resolving conflicts, feelings, working as part of a group on a project. Visiting speakers such as the police and health workers also contribute to the taught curriculum.

Our PSHE Curriculum already takes the impending changes to the RSE statutory requirements into account. Sex and relationships education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health, diversity and personal identity.

Citizenship is based on a 3 year rolling programme and is planned weekly to be explored during the week in tutor sessions first thing each morning. This includes the Citizenship Programme of student and special events; themed weeks and national and international events e.g. Sporting Events, Charity weeks, Red Nose Day, International week etc Events, which happen throughout the year and may not be planned for annually e.g. a general election or a royal wedding; or news stories as they arise, are added as soon as we are aware and whole school planning will be shared prior to these events and shared in order to increase students understanding of national, International and global events. For example the General Election was covered by an election for the opportunity to be Headteacher for the day. When covering real life events these activities give students a much clearer understanding of events.

We also encourage throughout our curriculum life skills; these include independence skills which are a necessity for our students as they move on from Great Oaks. An example of this is independent travel where we work with SCC and an independent travel trainer to support our PW2 /3 students to use the local bus network independently.

## **7 – Personalised Learning**

Although we aim to create a personalised learning environment for all students at Great Oaks we have developed personalised curriculum pathways for a number of our students with more complex needs. They are given a tailored curriculum with key interventions designed to take into account their individual difficulties and enabling them to be ready to learn. This is generally delivered through smaller and more nurturing environments where the students experience a high level of care and support to enable them to achieve. At Great Oaks we endeavour to prepare all of our students for a fulfilled life beyond school. We strive to provide a suitable learning environment for those students who struggle to cope with the demands of the usual school curriculum and structure of the day. Ensuring that they engage

readily in meaningful activities which will allow them in the medium term to interact with and build positive relationships with staff and peers, and in the longer term eventually within their communities is of paramount importance. Individual personalised curriculums aim to encompass the entire core learning needs within a holistic and more easily accessible format for some of our students. In addition some students have been found to benefit from additional experiences and activities away from their peers that enable them to reach their potential. Building self-esteem and confidence in this way and providing opportunities to express themselves in a safe, fun and when appropriate inclusive environment is key to their progress and success.