



Teaching and Learning at Breakspeare School

Teaching and learning

1. Implementation

Breakspeare School has an extremely complex and diverse student population with a wide range of learning and other complex needs. The depth and breadth of the curriculum seeks to provide the right teaching and learning combination that meets the requirements of our students. Each area of the curriculum is personalised to meet individual need and ability yet with high expectations and targets focussed on extending and developing each student.

Each phase, lower, middle and upper follow a topic based approach to the curriculum which promotes, interest, curiosity and engagement. This termly structure enables all the strands of the different areas of the core curriculum to be covered throughout the year. The foundation subjects can be designed to give students access to a broad and enriching curriculum. Teachers in each phase meet regularly to plan together and develop ideas to complement and extend the learning according to the topic for the term. (See example Appendix Middle School Topic Plan)

Our curriculum in all key stages benefits from cross curriculum links through the teaching of topics. Teaching and learning is delivered in whole class groups, small groups and in 1:1 settings. It is taught inside the school building and within the school grounds as well as in the local and wider community.

2. Planning

Planning implementation of curriculum ensures that in all key stages teaching and learning is designed considering

- Careful assessment of individual student's learning starting points (baseline assessment)
- Information of individual students' progress over a period of time (KS, academic year, term)
- Setting realistic yet challenging individual targets (high expectations)

Planning ensures delivery of our broad, rich, motivating, individualised and balanced curriculum in line with Breakspeare School's programmes of learning at different key stages.

We expect our teachers to be able to present their plans to ensure high quality teaching in their class. The curriculum planning documents outline how our teachers ensure that individual students' teaching and learning needs are met.

They do this by planning 'a termly coverage' document that summarises the sequence within different programmes of learning and differentiated learning opportunities for the students in their class. The teachers then may use either medium term plan or individual lesson plan documents to describe differentiated learning activities, resources and methodological decisions to summarise their planned actions for consistent and successful teaching for the students' to achieve their targets.

At Breakspeare School we give our teachers freedom to design their own planning documents. It is noted that the outcome of effective planning is not necessary a lengthy planning document. The teachers are able to use their personal style to plan their teaching in the way that is helpful for them.

The planning process incorporates classroom assessment documents for measuring students' progress towards their targets. This information informs necessary adaptations in the planning implementation of curriculum. (See Breakspeare Assessment Document)



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3. Teaching Strategies

3.1 Personalisation and Differentiation

Every student's learning is personalised according to individual need and ability. Some learners are able to learn successfully in group based teaching contexts and they will have more of their teaching and learning delivered via group lesson plans with individual lesson plans supporting their access to group teaching.

This will not be appropriate for all learners. Some will need individually planned timetables and learning opportunities based on the students learning style in order to grow in skills and knowledge. This may be required for a variety of reasons relating to AS, behaviour, physical, medical and other impairments that necessitate a tailored approach.

We pride ourselves on differentiating to the level of the students ability (not there disability) and curriculum and lesson plans are modified accordingly so that students can learn at their level and with age appropriate learning.

It is hoped that all students should be enabled to participate alongside peers and in small group settings as their skills develop and the acquisition of group skills forms part of the learners personalised curriculum.

3.2 Relationships and Routines

We believe that the relationships between staff and students are vitally important and underpin the quality of the learning that is delivered. We invest time in developing positive interactions, understanding interests and motivations as well as recognising and acknowledging individual moods and behaviours.

Relationships strengthen through routines and a consistency of approach. All students at Breakspeare benefit from a timetable that is structured and reliable so that they can learn the connection between an object of reference and the lesson they are travelling to or that they can prepare for a horse riding lesson by reading a social story with an adult.

3.3 Curriculum in Context

Teaching and learning takes place throughout the whole school day in structured lessons, lunch time or in the playground. Staff support students learning in a variety of contexts and 'make the most of every opportunity' to reinforce learning. This for example could be a student introducing his friends to visitors or a student lifting their legs to support their changing routine.

Learning is at its most powerful when practised in context. We want students to develop skills and knowledge in a safe class setting but recognise that learning is made secure or permanent when completed in context e.g. a student learns to exchange a coin with a peer for a snack in class and then completes the same learning to pay the cashier for a food item in the village shop.

3.4 Repetition and Response Time

For our complex and diverse student population it is vitally important that students repeat learning. Repetition reinforces the physical movements required by some of our PMLD students to complete a simple task or learn a simple sign. Repetition reinforces the learning of those counting up to five objects or learning to write their name. Repetition develops the learning needed to reproduce those skills in a new context or with a different person.

All our students can learn but we need to be aware that they may need a longer time to respond to our request or to process the learning. Classrooms are full of distractions and can be busy environments and it is important that we value and respect students and focus on their responses however small and give them the time they need to be successful.



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4. Extending Students Learning Experiences.

4.1 Links with other schools

We have links with three secondary schools which provides joint projects during the school year that extend our students learning experiences. These range from a week long Art and Music based project called 'Create' where students from both schools work together and perform a show to portray their learning – to a Christmas concert where the orchestra and choir from a local school come to perform alongside our Sunflower Federation choir. The school is linked with the other Hertfordshire SLD Schools through the PE Coordinators who organise competitions throughout the year including swimming, football, athletics, primary and secondary panathlon and boccia.

4.2 Enrichment

The teaching and learning at Breakspeare is supported by a wide ranging amount of enrichment opportunities for the students. These include literacy and numeracy interventions, horse riding, dog therapy, music therapy, drama therapy, and yoga. In addition there are performances by musical artists, theatre productions and bespoke performances by companies such as Bamboozle for AS and PMLD students.

4.3 Clubs

The school has a number of lunchtime clubs that run on a weekly basis during the year. We have an Eco Club that is well established and students spend time in our Eco garden planting, weeding and watering herbs, flowers and vegetables and learning about the natural environment. We also have a Student Council, a school choir and a wheelchair dance club.

4.4 Community visits

Learning in the local and wider community is a significant part of the school curriculum. The Geography, History, and RE subjects provide opportunities for students to visit places of interest in the area that are relevant to the topic. Students learn how to access and be part of the wider community by visiting the library, local shops, park and café. In the process of accessing these places students learn about personal safety, social skills, transitions and self- regulation skills. Deep learning occurs in context as students experience the real world. As students move through the school there are more opportunities to develop their functional skills as well as road crossing and travel training. Visits will also take place to leisure and sporting venues to widen students' experiences and give opportunities to develop physical skills and discover new interests.

4.5 College / Work Experience

On a weekly basis, some students attend the local college either via public transport or by school minibus. This experience not only enhances their presence in the local community but also provides an opportunity for integration with mainstream peers. It also serves to prepare some students for their final transition from school to college. There are opportunities for work experience both in the school setting by shadowing various jobs such as site manager or PE teacher or going to outside placements such as 'Sunnyside' Horticulture or a local supermarket.

4.6 Multi agency approach

The school maintains strong partnerships with different agencies in order to get the best outcomes for students. This involves regular communication with parents both in home school books and at parents evening and EHCP meetings so that consistency and clarity can be established. Links with therapists in school provide the expertise for physiotherapy, speech and language and occupational therapy needs and requirements. We also work with a Family Support Worker who we employ to support families in areas such as behaviour, access to support services, housing and general wellbeing. In



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addition we work with social workers, family practitioners, transition support workers, Mental Health Support Team workers and educational psychologists where support for the wider family situation is required.

5. Supporting the Students Communication

The school sees the development of students' communication as one of its core priorities. We recognise the development of an individualised communication method is essential and a 'Total Communication' environment supports this. This approach sees us using a wide variety of systems such as PECS, objects of reference, symbols, photographs, signing and communication books to meet the individual needs of the student. We also use communication aids where appropriate ranging from switches to iPads and Grid Player.

6. Autistic Spectrum (AS)

The School has achieved an Advanced AS Quality Mark. Our AS-lead oversees the education of all pupils with autism and acts as the in house advisory team. The staff are trained in strategies for working with children on the Autistic Spectrum. It is a key part of the induction programme for all a new staff. We provide our AS students with a sensory assessment that helps us to respond accordingly to their sensory processing differences. Where required pupils will also have Sensory Diets planned for them. We base our autism practice on the principles of SCERTS with a focus on transactional supports such as routines and visual support, whilst having a flexible approach looking to accommodate individual needs. We incorporate SCERTS priority goals with the Myself curriculum and incorporate the AET framework into the assessment system. The strategies that are commonly used with our AS students are the use of an individual work station, the provision of a quiet space, visual support such as a 'now and next' timetable. All pupils with AS will have their work devised and presented to take account of their specific related needs. (see Appendix - AS handbook).

7. Homework

We work in collaboration with parents to set and send homework home where appropriate to reinforce learning. Many opportunities for this type of homework occur within the context of parents agreeing with teachers to work on curriculum or EHCP targets together and symbols, social stories, work sheets, reading books or practical examples of the learning are practiced at home.

8. Mobility

We have a significant number of students who are either wheelchair-users or are developing their independent walking. The school curriculum provides our students with integrated opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills as well mobility. Our 'Moving and Handling trainers' ensure that all staff are trained in the correct procedures and the students to whom it is relevant 'Moving and Handling Plans and Risk assessments' are in place. This ensures safety of the students and the staff.

9. Environment

9.1 Physical environment: The building is uncluttered, with wide corridors, classroom doors have tactile/auditory markers, and classrooms have windows and blinds enabling the use of natural light and the control of glare. Other areas of the school can be identified by different flooring, such as the sports hall, doors leading outside have mats so that learners are aware that they are moving into a different environment.

The mobility and habilitation specialist from the Visual Impairment Team or Guide Dogs' Charity visits regularly and has audited routes around school outlining any hazards, advising on any changes that are necessary. This ensures that we provide safe routes around school for learners with a visual impairments.

Different areas of the school have specific names and labels to provide consistent language and orientation for our students.



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Physical environment provides our students with a safe space to learn about independence, social skills and communication. The health and safety aspects of our school environment are regularly inspected and audited.

9.2 Auditory environment: We support our students with significant auditory sensitivity for example by installing special 'acoustic panels' in the classrooms. When planning teaching groups we group the sound sensitive students appropriately and provide them with differentiated learning activities and physical aids as appropriate.

We take into account the regulation BB93 and total mean mid - range frequency of speech (500hz to 2000hz) used for children with hearing impairments and children with SEND.

9.3 Socio-emotional environment: All staff provide the students with consistent positive learning environments where individual students educational and welfare needs are met. This includes use of positive behaviour strategies, consistent communication strategies and allowing our students to practice their communication, independence and social skills with all adults in the school community.

9.4 Visual environments: Environment audits are completed and monitored with Equality Plan with adaptations for the students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, visual impairment or ASD.

We ensure that we have predictable classroom environments and reduce clutter to support our students. We provide objects of references, destination photos or individual visual trails to support the students' orientation in the school environment.

10. Visual Impairments

All learners identified as having a visual impairment have a baseline assessment during their first term at school. This informs their visual passport which provides the class team with information and strategies.

Lessons are planned to include differentiation for learners with visual impairments, targeted sessions are included in the timetable to focus on the development of functional vision. Our MSI-lead teacher is the liaison person for work with the Advisory Teachers for Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment and Dual Sensory Impairment. She also monitors specialist programmes for our VI students and provides in-house advice for class staff. We have a specially designed programme for our VI students that includes VI-programmes, mobility programmes and a modified learning environment. Students with VI have access to 1:1 support sessions as appropriate.

11. Behaviour

At Breakspeare we use the Hertfordshire Steps approach to behaviour.

Steps Aims are;

- To support settings with developing a therapeutic approach to behaviour
- To promote the inseparable link between teaching, learning and behaviour
- To improve staff confidence and safety
- To support the inclusion of those with difficult or dangerous behaviours
- To reduce exclusions

The team consists of two Herts Steps trainers. Their remit is to help support classes to manage the behaviour of students who present challenges to themselves, other students, the staff or the environment. The support team provides guidance and supervision for teachers when preparing individual Behaviour Management Plans, Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Strategies. The team also provides training for all staff in behaviour management.

12. School improvement Plan SIP



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The Sunflower federation is committed to the following priorities:

Priority 1. To keep the best interests of the students and staff at both schools at the heart of the working practice.

Priority 2. To utilize the unique qualities and knowledge at both schools.

Priority 3. To carefully implement systems and processes at both schools to ensure best practice.

Priority 4. To establish the federation of schools that is innovative, secure and ambitious in all elements of school practice providing the highest quality of teaching and learning for all students.

Breakspeare School's School Improvement Plan (SIP) is designed with the Sunflower Federation governors and executive leadership team in liaison with the staff. It is based on our rigorous school self-evaluation (SEF) document that identifies the next steps in delivering consistently excellent teaching and learning for our students.

The SIP comprises objectives and actions in the following areas:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Quality of Education
3. Behaviour and Attitude
4. Personal Developments
5. School Environment

Design and implementation of SIP is organised using a distributed model of leadership. This means that our SIP is comprised of development plans of all leaders in the school who have a specific area of responsibility.