

Derrymount Curriculum Overview

At Derrymount School our pupils have a range of special educational needs including Autism, PDA, ADHD and Attachment Disorder. All of our pupils are able to achieve accredited qualifications at an appropriate level for their stage including Entry Level, Functional Skills, Aim Awards and GCSEs. In addition pupils have access to other opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The nature of our pupils' special needs means that although academically many of our pupils may be functioning close to their chronological age, they experience particular difficulties in their communication, social and emotional development, their ability to manage anxiety, change and sensory issues. These factors have a significant impact on their ability to function and manage independently in the community and in some cases may act as barriers to their learning.

Some of our pupils have experienced serious trauma in their lives and operate in a heightened state of anxiety with difficulties in understanding and managing their emotions. These pupils often find learning in class very challenging and are likely to demonstrate "fight or flight" responses to perceived threats around them. These pupils may have a more individualised programme which might include a play and therapeutic based curriculum with a nurturing ethos.

Some of our pupils have experienced gaps in their education when they have not been in school. For these pupils the first step in their learning is to integrate them back into a school environment and working alongside others and this might include an individualised curriculum and timetable with a mix of onsite / offsite activities with an element of choice built in.

At Derrymount we provide a curriculum which fulfils our pupils' academic needs and which encompasses a broad range of subjects and activities which are offered at an appropriate level and stage.

Our pupils need opportunities to develop and enhance their communication, social and emotional development. They need support to develop their resilience and their independence and to develop positive attitudes to their learning. Regular educational visits, offsite trips and residential visits are an important part of the curriculum and help to equip pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

Our curriculum therefore includes therapeutic, sensory, physical and social activities and experiences which are intended to equip the pupils to regulate their own emotions so that they are able to use appropriate responses in different situations, to develop their resilience and willingness to accept challenge in their lives and to accept being with others who have different interests and opinions to their own.

Our curriculum is intended to allow pupils to identify and follow the next steps in their learning from their starting points along their pathway to adulthood, to do this with maximum independence and to play a positive role in society.

The formal curriculum Churchmoor Site

Primary

In the Primary department there is an emphasis on Literacy; on speaking and listening, reading, writing and Maths with opportunity for them to transfer these important skills across other subjects. We use No Nonsense Spelling to build on pupils' phonic knowledge and to create pathways to reading. We use the underpinning practices of "Maths No Problem" which enables the pupils to use a variety of strategies to improve their understanding of Maths.

Pupils study Science, PE, Art, Design and Technology, Computing, Music, RE, History, Geography and PHSE. Our Lower KS2 group is made up of pupils from Y3 – Y5 and our Upper KS2 group is a Y6 class. Occasionally the organisation of these cohorts may vary depending on the ages and stages of individual pupils.

Keystage 3

In Y7 and Y8 the curriculum continues to have an emphasis on developing English and Maths skills and we continue using interventions to support phonics and maths skills. The pupils study Science, History, Geography, Art, Design and Technology, PE, RE, Computing and PHSE. Pupils who enjoy languages can access MFL through our World Travel Activity.

There are usually 2 classes of each year group organised by ability or characteristics of the individual pupils.

In Year 8 the pupils begin a program of transition visits to the Sherbrook Site ready for their move in July. Occasionally a minority of pupils may not be ready for this move and they may spend another term or year at the Churchmoor site. Occasionally some pupils may begin their transition early depending on their stage or needs.

Activity Afternoons

On two afternoons a week the classes access a different curriculum which widens their experiences and is intended to address their special educational needs in a holistic way in the areas of Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social, Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing, Physical and Sensory and Independence The pupils rotate around activities which may include:

Enterprise, Forest Schools, Gardening, Independent Travel, World Culture, Techy, Cooking, Animal Care and Individual Travel Training.

These sessions lead on to the “Strand Activities” and Options available at a greater depth as the pupils move up to the Sherbrook site.

The pupils are assessed using AET targets which are linked to their EHC Plan outcomes.

Pupils have access to therapeutic sessions including Theraplay and Lego Therapy. We also have pets in school which may be used in a therapeutic way and contribute to the pupils’ understanding of responsibility.

Pupils have access to swimming, ice skating and horse riding as well as their regular PE lessons.

Some pupils have music lessons with a peripatetic teacher, learning to play the guitar, keyboard and drums.

The formal curriculum Sherbrook Site.

All pupils through Y10 – Y11 continue to study English and Maths at an appropriate level for their ability. Some pupils study at GCSE level whilst others study for Functional Skills or Entry Level. In Y9 all pupils study Science at Entry Level.

Pupils study Social Studies (RE), RSE /PHSE and have a weekly session of Independent Travel training and Preparing for Adulthood (careers based) lessons.

Some pupils use strategies devised by a Speech and Language Therapist to support their understanding and use of language in English and other subjects. They are encouraged to read books and other materials in “Reading Time”.

Options

All pupils are able to choose Options from Year 10 onwards. The current Options are:

GCSEs: in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science and History.

Aim Awards: in Art and Design, Health and Social Care including Basic First Aid, Home Cooking, Landbased, Animal Care and Sport and Leisure.

Adventure School (leading to) Duke of Edinburgh Award which also includes qualifications in Canoeing and Climbing.

Work Experience Pupils have the opportunity to participate in work experience and this is planned to support the pupils in identifying and working towards their career choices. Work experience may be organised in blocks of a week or some pupils may access a more frequent weekly work based placement.

Our work experience has included venues such as Center Parcs, Wilkos, Sainsburys, a local garage, Theatre Royal, John Lewis, Tree Tops Restaurant and a range of other settings.

As part of their Home Cooking some pupils have been able to use the catering kitchen at the Town House, Arnold.

P16

Pupils in Post 16 follow a curriculum which is based on Preparing for Adulthood and Careers and this is intended to help pupils identify and prepare for their next steps whether at college or work, whilst also developing their independent life skills. There is an emphasis on independence and opportunity for pupils to improve their grades with resits or to complete courses they began in Y11, widening the range of their experience and qualifications. They participate in college visits and further develop the skills needed for a college or work environment. Pupils may continue with their independent travel training if they have not yet achieved it.

“Strands”

At Sherbrook all pupils access our new “Strands” Curriculum which builds on from the Activity based afternoons at Churchmoor at a greater depth.

Activities are intended to address the pupils’ SEND in a holistic way around the areas of Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social, Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing, Physical and Sensory and Independence. These are assessed using AET targets which have links to the pupils’ EHC Plan outcomes.

Strand Activities may include:

Art, Board Games, Creative Writing, Fun Science, Community, Home Cooking, Gardening, History Walks, Textiles, Outdoors, BSL, Well Being Walks and Head Space.

GCSE booster sessions are available for pupils in English, Maths and Science.

Sensory sessions are available for small groups or individual pupils.

We have pets in school which may be used therapeutically and which contribute to their understanding of responsibility.

Sensory Curriculum

At Derrymount many of our pupils have sensory needs and may be either hypo or hyper sensitive to a range of sensory stimuli i.e. visual, auditory, tactile, vestibular and proprioceptive. This can have an impact on their anxiety levels and readiness to learn. We encourage pupils to develop a range of strategies to help them address these needs and to help them to regulate themselves.

We carry out a sensory audit for pupils which we then use to plan a programme of activities and strategies where appropriate and also liaise with other professionals regarding individual pupils' sensory needs. Some of our pupils may follow a "Sensory Diet" devised by Occupational Therapists and used in school.

Our sensory activities may be offered as 1:1 sessions, within small groups, as timetabled slots or when needed.

Sensory items are available in the classroom for pupils to use and may include :

- Wobble cushions
- Weighted blankets
- Fidget toys
- "Chewy" toys
- "Peanuts"
- Other sensory experiences such as using slime, putty, cornflour paste.
- The use of music either through listening to music or playing instruments.

The Physical Environment

We have areas in school that are designed to encourage pupils to self-regulate for their sensory needs. These include:

- Quiet areas alongside classrooms where pupils can spend time in a low stimulus environment away from others.
- Spaces where pupils may have movement breaks.

- Outdoor gyms on both sites to encourage physical activities which pupils may use to work off excess energy and to engage in different physical sensations.
- At Churchmoor there is a Soft Play Room and Ball Pool which offer experiences to help pupils release energy, stretch, hide and squeeze themselves into small spaces. At Churchmoor there is a Sensory Room which offers light and sounds, soft furniture, foot spas and massage.
- Outdoor activities such as Forest School and Adventure School offer experiences that encourage pupils to explore natural materials such as soil, sand, bark chippings, leaves, stones, plants and leaves including in different weather conditions.
- We have recently developed a sensory garden including smells, textures, visual and auditory experiences at our Churchmoor Site.
- At Sherbrook there is a small sensory room where pupils are able to relax in a calming atmosphere. They are also encouraged to use outdoor spaces to help them to regulate their emotions. There is a quad area and garden and various spaces to encourage movement or to be in a more natural environment.

At Derrymount we are very flexible to the needs of our pupils and so the subjects, Options, Strands, and Activities may change according to the needs, strengths and interests of our pupils from year to year.