

Curriculum Policy



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1. Intent

Our curriculum is underpinned by five theoretical principles, ensuring we maximise the opportunity for cognitive, emotional and social learning and embeds nurture and therapeutic practice in everything we do

- underpinned by **Social-Emotional learning (SEL)**
- placing the child and their mental health at the centre of the learning experience
- guided by the **6 Principles of Nurture**
- grounded in **Mindset Theory**
- delivered using attachment aware and trauma-informed practice
- inclusive of the **3 principles for improving outcomes for children**. (*Harvard Centre for the developing child 2017*).
- inclusive of **Bourdieu's Theory of Capital**



Our data clearly identifies that all our students are functioning significantly below their chronological age in all these areas, making academic learning extremely difficult for them.

We personalise pathways to suit learner need and offer flexibility within each approach. This is crucial in building trust and relationship foundations for personalisation to be effective.

When initially designing our curriculum, we first had to identify the endpoints we wished our students to reach. We then had to consider the special education needs of our students, the effects their severe trauma had previously had on their life and learning, their significant gaps in knowledge and skills, and their very low literacy and communication levels. Our desire to design a curriculum that offered our students the best opportunity of success in learning and life has been a journey of constant reflection and adaptation. The curriculum we now believe will meet the needs of our young people is very different to the one we envisaged when More Than Ed opened in September 2021.

According to Ofsted (*September 2019*), “new knowledge and skills do not exist in isolation, but rather build on what pupils already know and can already do. The order in which knowledge and skills are taught is therefore important. Since knowledge exists in rich schemata, an effective curriculum ensures that pupils are taught concepts and skills in an order that enables them to make useful connections that are not misapprehensions. This is what Ofsted understands by appropriate sequencing in the curriculum...There are serious consequences for pupils when a curriculum is not sequenced or designed effectively.”

For our young people, a serious lack of stability in their school/home environments, and the resulting SEMH difficulties they suffer due to toxic stress, abuse etc. has caused them to have extremely compromised Executive Functioning Skills, few mental hooks (schemata), and significant and inconsistent gaps in knowledge, vocabulary and communication. “Gaps in pupils’ knowledge accumulate as they become layered on top of one another in a curriculum sequence. This accumulation of gaps, known as *dysfluency*, limits pupils’ ability to acquire the complex skills that depend on them, and may even prevent them entirely from gaining those skills. This problem is sometimes called ‘*cumulative dysfluency*’”. (*Ofsted, 2019*)

In line with recommendations from the SEND Code of Practice, we strive to ensure that all provision is underpinned by high quality teaching. By utilising appropriate and specialist assessments, we know precisely where students are in their learning and development. We always:

- ✚ *ensure decisions are informed by the insights of parents and those of children and young people themselves*
- ✚ *have high ambitions and set stretching targets for them*
- ✚ *track their progress towards these goals*
- ✚ *keep under review the additional or different provision that is made for them*
- ✚ *promote positive outcomes in the wider areas of personal and social development, and*
- ✚ *ensure that the approaches used are based on the best possible evidence and are having the required impact on progress”*

(SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years – Jan 2015)

The aim of More Than Ed’s multi-faceted curriculum design is to address three key areas of deficit that we identify in our students; executive functioning skills, mental hooks (schemata) and literacy. We have aimed to address these deficits by developing our own unique curriculum.

2. Implementation:

Subject Leads create Long-term Plans to provide guidance on how each subject should be taught.

Teaching each subject considers the differing SEMH needs of each student, allowing them to learn at their own pace, following their interests where possible. Teaching is either 1 to 1 or in small groups, allowing students the opportunity to build positive learning relationships with key adults. (Positive relationships form a solid foundation from which children and young people with SEMH needs can grow and learn.)

Our curriculum is delivered:

- ✚ In small, manageable chunks
- ✚ Maths, English, PE, Science, Humanities, ICT, Art, RSE and PSHE are delivered discretely
- ✚ Humanities (History and Geography) are enhanced through off-site/outdoor learning
- ✚ Sensory breaks are implemented as necessary
- ✚ All planning is tailored to the interests and needs of the individual student
- ✚ There is flexibility to collapse a student’s timetable during periods of crisis
- ✚ Staffing is flexible, however never more than 2 students to 1 member of staff, dependent on student needs.
- ✚ Each young person has a dedicated team around them, delivering both their academic and their pastoral care.
- ✚ Executive Functioning Skills is taught as an explicit subject acknowledging that trauma can have significant impact on students’ executive functioning skills.
- ✚ Trauma-informed Practice underpins all planning, teaching, and assessment

Maths and English Curriculum

As students join More Than Ed at various different stages of their academic journey, we are forced to be flexible with the breadth and depth of content taught.

It is always a priority for any students to achieve as higher qualification as possible in the limited time available. This will serve to increase not only their knowledge, but also their confidence and self-efficacy regarding life-long learning. It is essential that we equip all our students with the basic English and Maths skills necessary for them to live an independent life in the future and make a positive contribution to Society.

Any student joining in **Years 10 or 11** will embark on the appropriate Functional Skills scheme of learning.

Any student joining the school between **Years 4 and 9** will study all appropriate content necessary to embark on the appropriate Functional Skills scheme of learning in Year 10.

The ability of each student, their prior knowledge, their specific SEN, and their academic year upon entry to the school, will dictate the breadth and depth of the content being delivered.

Core topics covered in Maths are:

-  Number
-  Money/Data
-  Shape
-  Measure
-  Time

Core topics covered in English are:

-  Reading
-  Word reading
-  Comprehension
-  Speaking and listening
-  Writing

2.1 English and Reading

Data is gathered by the students undertaking a range of assessments such as GL baseline, Dyslexia screener, SALT assessments, The Salford Reading age test, phonics screening test and independent writing. Once we have collated this data we can gauge where a child is best placed. All our students will work towards leaving with a functional skills qualification. If any added support is required students will receive phonics sessions or Toe by Toe.

The independent writing is tracked against an adapted Primary National Curriculum (for KS2 and 3 students) and the Functional Skills criteria (for KS4). Due to the students' low levels and resistance to engage in English, we have always encouraged this through writing for a purpose. We encourage reading by allowing the children the choice in reading materials. Reading for purpose is also encouraged across the curriculum

To allow full coverage of all aspects of English focus objectives are included in the medium-term plans. There is no expectation that all of these must be covered each term, however using these as a guide will ensure that all aspects of the English curriculum are covered across the year.

The medium-term plan is themed to encourage cross curricular working and thinking. Writing for purpose is included in each theme, for example, writing a letter to the council about protecting our local wildlife.

The students' engagement in reading varies considerably. We therefore take every opportunity to allow the students to develop reading and comprehension skills using effective questioning in lessons across the curriculum.

Reading

-  At More Than Ed we celebrate reading in all its forms. Students access a range of reading materials to suit their needs and interests.
-  Daily reading session.
-  Students read at their own pace but there is an allocation for reading each day on students' bespoke timetables. Timings may be adjusted to suit the needs of each student.

- ✚ Students are encouraged to read information and texts to support their learning across the curriculum and adults encourage students to embrace every opportunity to grow and develop their reading skills.
- ✚ A range of fiction and non-fiction reading material is available for children to borrow and read in school.
- ✚ At More Than Ed, reading is promoted and celebrated as a key skill in students' pathway to adulthood.

2.2 Maths

Our Maths curriculum is to enable students to work towards Entry Level/Level 1/Level 2 Functional Skills. This is due to the fact that all students enter at significantly below Age Related Expectations and are often working from Year 2. We strive to teach as much breadth and depth as possible, however, the ultimate goal must be to equip our students with the highest level of functional Maths possible based on their starting point and barriers to learning.

Our bespoke curriculum is a blend of national curriculum and functional skills criteria which includes the essential aspects of what our students need to learn as a priority.

The Aims of Maths within our school are:

- ✚ To promote enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning through practical activity, exploration and discussion.
- ✚ To promote the use of concrete objects to help students develop the building blocks of mathematical learning
- ✚ To develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of numbers and the number system.
- ✚ To develop a practical understanding of the ways in which information is gathered and presented.
- ✚ To develop a practical understanding of geometry, shape and space.
- ✚ Develop measuring skills in a range of contexts.
- ✚ To develop knowledge of money and how to use it.
- ✚ Further develop use of data.
- ✚ To develop knowledge and understanding of time and sequencing
- ✚ To encourage the use of current mathematical language.
- ✚ To understand the importance of mathematics in everyday life.
- ✚ To provide meaningful experiences which reflect the Functional Skills Maths criteria

2.3 PSHE

For our students especially, PSHE and related subjects are incredibly important. As vulnerable individuals, it is essential that our young people receive as much information, guidance and support regarding keeping themselves safe as possible. It is essential that they develop an understanding of not only their rights with regard to equality, diversity and inclusivity, but also the rights of others (EDI), giving special regard to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). These protected characteristics are covered further in Philosophy for Children and Focussed Friday sessions.

It is essential that our students recognise what healthy relationships, friendships and family dynamics look like. They must understand the importance of the Rule of Law, and British Values, as they may face additional challenges to their future success and safety due to their adverse childhood experiences.

From the initial planned activities, further conversations and research may develop in older students, and these will be recorded on Conversation Logs. It is, however, essential that initially we approach these extremely delicate topics with a light touch, always mindful of the abuse and trauma our young people may have experienced.

2.4 PE

Physical activity is regarded as a very high priority for our young people's physical and mental wellbeing. Physical activity is not only good for their body, but also for their mind. Being active releases chemicals in our brain that makes us feel good - boosting our self-esteem and helping us to concentrate as well as sleep well and feel better. Many of our students find physical activity anxiety provoking due to their lack of self-confidence and most feel uncomfortable about their appearance. Long periods of time indoors as a result of school exclusions etc, followed by the Pandemic, has meant that some of our young people have spent many hours playing computer games or watching TV, and this has served to reduce their levels of fitness even further, and increase their sense of isolation.

Competitive sports are extremely difficult for our students, as their lack of resilience, and often aggressive reaction to losing, make it inappropriate to put these young people in direct competition with each other, or allow them to take part in contact sports, however, our qualified PE teacher ensures that physical activity is achieved in many different guises; obstacle courses, trim-trails, gym sessions, squash and golf are all utilised to deliver PE in a non-threatening and fun way.

Students have two timetabled PE sessions each week. One lesson is their choice from a range of activities such as golf or going to the on-site gym. The second session is introduced each week by a short underpinning theory lesson followed by a small group practical PE session which allows students to put their theory into practise. Sports include football, racket sports, cricket, basketball and orienteering. Skills are built gradually throughout the term and revisited each year.

2.5 Humanities and Science

Due to the vast lack of experience our children have regarding the world around them, and their extremely low and varied ability to sequence, draw inference, retain information, we have chosen to underpin the Humanities (History, Geography) with adapted Primary National Curriculum criteria. This curriculum design allows our students to develop awe and wonder, and an intrinsic connection to the world around them.

Teaching of History and Geography follows a carefully mapped pathway throughout Key Stages 2 and 3, serving to reengage students back into broader curriculum learning and providing key learning experiences to build a foundation from which to study AQA units in these subjects at KS4.

Humanities include bespoke off-site/outdoor learning opportunities where students visit local historical sites, places of interest, museums, libraries etc.

Science is taught discretely and also incorporated into Cooking, PE, PSHE, Executive Functioning and ICT.

Science for KS2 and 3 students follows a clear journey through key KS1 and 2 National Curriculum objectives with the aim of inspiring curiosity and interest for students in the world around them, allowing them to ask and answer their own questions and those of others. The aim is to build a firm foundation of scientific skills and knowledge, providing hooks for further study.

At KS4, students are able to follow their own interests further through a range of bespoke AQA units at Entry Level.

2.6 RSE

RSE is taught 1:1 or in small groups.

Lessons provide opportunities for students to ask questions and explore topics that help prepare them for relationships of all kinds in the modern world.

We recognise that, due to students' personal trauma, many topics covered in RSE can be challenging for them. Staff always approach RSE teaching in a trauma informed way and allow students space and time to digest the materials covered. Parents and families are informed of when these lessons will take place to enable them to prepare their child in advance as they see fit.

2.7 Executive Functioning

Underpinned by The 3 Principles for Improving Outcomes for Children and Families, we understand the importance of our young people developing Executive function and Self-Regulation skills. These are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. The brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritise tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

Executive Functioning is delivered weekly. The areas we focus on are:

attention, inferencing, memory skills, problem-solving and sequencing.

These skills have been highlighted as barriers to learning in all our young peoples' Speech and Language Assessments and are, therefore, a high priority in our unique curriculum offer.

Initially, we want our young people to be able to identify and name the various executive functioning skills, and to understand how the acquisition of these skills will support them in their daily lives. Executive Functioning sessions are delivered through interactive and engaging tasks and each student has their own workbook. As these skills develop, staff encourage students to recognise when they are using them in a range of situations; the ultimate aim being that they can intentionally apply these skills in their learning and future life.

2.8 Off-site learning

Opportunities to visit off-site places of interest is an important part of our students' curriculum for a number of reasons. Students can:

-  develop Cultural Capital
-  develop an understanding of the world they live in (History and Geography)
-  learn important life skills
-  enjoy new experiences
-  develop their social-emotional learning
-  connect with nature (biophilia) (Science)
-  develop survival skills and learn to map read etc (Geography)
-  understand the importance of protecting our planet and the animals that inhabit it (Science)
-  encounter fauna and flora

Students regularly enjoy offsite learning as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The timetable and curriculum are carefully planned to include such activities as:

-  Visiting heritage sites and buildings

-  Visiting interactive museums (Aircraft Museum, National Coal-mining Museum, Elsecar Heritage Museum)
-  Visiting nature reserves
-  Forest school-style activities in woods and open spaces

All educational visits have a purpose, and students will have a particular objective to achieve. Each visit will provide an opportunity for a greater depth of knowledge to be gained.

2.9 SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) Development

SMSC is essential for students' individual development, as well as the development of society as a whole. We believe the importance of SMSC is central to the development and growth of our students' understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. Sadly, many of our young people can present as extremely prejudiced towards people from other cultures, and women. This is why we take every opportunity to educate our students in EDI and SMSC, ensuring that SMSC is embedded across the curriculum.

Key themes of SMSC development are addressed further through weekly small group and 1 to 1 Philosophy for Children sessions. Focussed Friday themes incorporate important dates and events from the cultural calendar (including religious festivals, foods from around the world, mental health awareness, Age Concern, Pride etc) and address further issues surrounding the protected characteristics within real life contexts.

We do, however, understand that much of their prejudice is borne out of their previous isolation and anxieties, where they have rarely had the opportunity to see the world from another's viewpoint. The sexism we often encounter may be due to the large number of our students who have witnessed domestic violence against women.

All teaching is underpinned with regard for the British Values.

What are British values?

-  democracy
-  the rule of law
-  individual liberty
-  mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith

Students are encouraged to link their learning across the curriculum to their understanding of British Values. Our whole school overview specifically links lessons across the curriculum to each of the British Values to ensure each value is represented.

3. Impact:

Impacts are measured by both quantitative and qualitative progress at More Than Ed. For our students, progress must be identified as part of their whole journey and should be reflected both in and out of school.

Students show:

-  progress towards EHCP targets through the Assess, Plan Do, Review cycle.
-  improved behaviours and relationships at home
-  progress in line with SEL targets

- ✚ increasing ability to self-regulate – both in and out of school
- ✚ increasing ability to identify and understand their emotions
- ✚ improved confidence and self-esteem
- ✚ increased participation with others – both in and out of school
- ✚ improving engagement with learning
- ✚ awareness of British Values and their impacts on an individual and community
- ✚ improving literacy and numeracy
- ✚ progress towards examinations

3.1 Tracking and monitoring progress

More Than Ed track and monitor progress rigorously, as it is essential that we respond quickly to the learning needs of our students. Having missed significant periods of time in school, and having the additional barriers of poor communication skills, compromised executive functioning skills, and few mental hooks, our students' targets are bespoke, and must be adjusted frequently based on regression or progression at any particular time. Our tracking and assessment procedures are explained in the Teaching and Learning Policy.

