

Curriculum Policy



Date: April 2024

Review Date: May 2026

Responsible Person: Karen Holmes

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.

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

Our curriculum is delivered:

- ✚ In small, manageable chunks of no more than 30 minutes
- ✚ Maths, English, PE, and PSHE are delivered discretely
- ✚ Science is introduced to our students through Biophilia, Horticulture, PSHE and Food Technology – EYFS Developing Matters learning goals are used.
- ✚ Humanities (History and Geography) are introduced through off-site/outdoor learning – EYFS Developing Matters learning goals are used.
- ✚ 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, and always 1:1 or 1:1.5
- ✚ Each young person has a dedicated team around them, delivering both their academic and therapeutic curriculum
- ✚ Executive Functioning Skills is taught as an explicit subject, as is Growth Mindset
- ✚ 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 Entry Level 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
-  Shape and Measure
-  Time

Core topics covered in English are:

-  Reading
-  Word reading
-  Comprehension
-  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 Hertfordshire 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 the functional skills criteria and is set out in long term plans to meet this criterion. Due to the student's low level and resistance to engage in English/Reading we have always encouraged this by writing for a purpose. We encourage reading by allowing the children the choice in reading materials.








To allow full coverage of all aspects of English we have a focus day for each area

- ✓ Monday: Spelling
- ✓ Tuesday: SPaG
- ✓ Wednesday: Writing Stamina
- ✓ Thursday: Handwriting
- ✓ Friday: Word games/Vocabulary

To engage children in writing we use themes that students have previously engaged in, or that we can easily adapt to a topic of interest.

The student's engagement in reading varies considerably, we take every opportunity to allow the students to develop reading and comprehension skills by effective questioning throughout.











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 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) session.
-  Students read at their own pace at a time that is flexible around their daily needs.
-  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.
-  Students have their own library cards and can visit local libraries to select their own books.
-  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/Level 2 Functional Skills. This is due to the fact that all students enter at significantly below Age Related Expectations and working at approximately 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.

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 shape and space and develop measuring skills in a range of contexts.
-  To develop knowledge of money and how to use it
-  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). 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, and often risky behaviours.

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 particular abuses 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 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, and swimming are all utilised to deliver PE in a non-threatening and fun way.

Sensory Circuits are an important part of physical activity within our school, and all students take part in a sensory activity each morning before commencing with learning. This sensory diet is also included in PE for many students.

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) by the EYFS Development Matters criteria. This curriculum design allows our students to develop awe and wonder, and an intrinsic connection to the world around them.

Humanities are incorporated into bespoke off-site/outdoor learning opportunities which allow students to visit local historical sites, places of interest, museums, libraries etc.

Science is incorporated in Food and Nutrition, Horticulture, Biophilia, PSHE, and ICT

As students develop their fundamental skills in learning, literacy, emotional literacy and regulation, we will begin to widen and deepen their learning of Humanities and Science based on progression through NC objectives tailored to their own interests and abilities.

2.6 RSE

Due to the trauma that our students have suffered, many being the victims of sexual abuse, we do not feel qualified to offer RSE personally. We do, therefore, employ a specialist provider, Big Talk, who deliver RSE on 1:1 basis to all our students. Teachers from Big Talk are highly qualified to deliver sessions to students with SEN, Traveller backgrounds, LGBTQ, and any other protected characteristic.

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 daily. 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 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 incredibly 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 will enjoy off-site learning once or twice a week, and the timetable is carefully planned to include such activities as:

- ✚ Visiting heritage sites and buildings
- ✚ Visiting interactive museums (Aircraft Museum, National Coal-mining Museum, Elsecar Heritage Museum)
- ✚ Taking a train journey
- ✚ Visiting nature reserves
- ✚ Forest school activities in woods and open spaces

All educational visits have a purpose, and students will have a particular objective to achieve. This planning allows for sequential learning, as students will revisit the venues a number of times throughout the year. Each visit will provide an opportunity for a greater depth of knowledge to be gained.

2.9 SMSC

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.

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.

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

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
- ✚ 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

