

CURRICULUM POLICY

Rationale

Courtlands Independent Special School is committed to providing an excellent all-around education within a caring, happy environment.

We believe that students' self-esteem and confidence are improved through meaningful academic achievement alongside a curriculum that encourages personal growth, self-management, and life skills.

Courtlands offers a curriculum that is holistic, educating and supporting students to grow into happy, healthy, and functional members of society with the ability to work, socialise and contribute to their communities.

Courtlands offers a wide range of subjects, taught discretely and through project-based learning, enabling all students to experience a broad and balanced curriculum whilst receiving the specialist support they need.

Courtlands is future-facing. We acknowledge that the world of learning and work has changed enormously in recent years and review our curriculum regularly to ensure that our students are prepared for today's complex world.

Courtlands Curriculum: The basics

We offer full-time, supervised education for students of compulsory school age and both part-time and full-time education for those beyond this age.

Where appropriate, we offer part-time education and home support to students where it has been identified in their EHCPs and agreed with the relevant local authority.

We operate a full-time teaching day from 8.45 am - 3.30 pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45 – 2.30 on Friday.

All teaching and learning activities are supervised by an appropriately qualified or experienced member of staff.

The curriculum at Courtlands Independent Special School promotes the spiritual, intellectual, personal, social, and physical development of our students. It is based on the requirements of the National Curriculum and the principal language of instruction is English.

Curriculum Aims

- To provide a relevant, realistic, and responsive curriculum and pedagogy that enables all students to achieve, grow and develop.
- To provide a curriculum and pedagogy that is therapeutic as well as academic.
- To provide a curriculum and pedagogy that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual and the requirements of their EHCP.
- To provide a curriculum and pedagogy that provides a broad, balanced, and meaningful learning experience for all students, regardless of need.

- To provide subject matter that is age-appropriate and accessible for all students, regardless of need.
- To develop awareness within each individual that they are unique and have strengths and talents which can be nurtured to prepare them for the future.
- To provide appropriate careers guidance for students and prepare students for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life

Teaching Responsibilities: Teachers

Courtlands recognises that students may have had negative experiences in school and may have struggled to engage with traditional approaches to learning.

Alongside subject and skill-based training and education, teachers at Courtlands School understand and receive training in Emotion Coaching and have regular input from therapists and psychologists. In this way, our teaching staff offer lessons that engage the whole child where personal growth and therapeutic input are embedded into teaching and learning, alongside bespoke interventions.

Teachers at Courtlands School:

- believe that every child can achieve, regardless of their starting point, differences or difficulties
- are relentless in their determination to support the learning of every individual student
- provide a challenging and stimulating program of study designed to enable all students to reach their highest potential of personal achievement
- recognise and are aware of the needs of each individual student
- ensure that learning is progressive and continuous
- are good role models, punctual, well-prepared, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable.
- have a positive attitude to change and development of their own professional practice
- work collaboratively with a shared philosophy and commonality of practice
- ensure students are protected and safe from harm or abuse

Learning Responsibilities: Students

- are punctual and ready to begin lessons on time.
- conduct themselves in an orderly manner in line with the classroom code of discipline
- take responsibility for their learning and behavior.
- accept that teachers choose how to teach a lesson and what is taught, for good reason.
- recognise that most classes are comprised of individuals with different needs and skills

Supportive Responsibilities: Parents

- are realistic about their child's progress and offer encouragement and praise.
- participate in discussions concerning their child's progress and attainments.
- ensure early contact with Courtlands to discuss matters which affect their children's happiness, health, progress, and behaviour.
- Support their child where additional work or activity is required to meet assessment or personal development goals outside the classroom or standard school day

Number of hours in education per year

The Department for Education views the provision of more than 20 hours per week to be full-time education. DCSF circular 7/90 (non-statutory guidance) suggests the minimum amount of time for a School year for children aged 5 to 16 within a mainstream College setting to be 950 hours per year. Students at Courtlands Independent Special School receive 1034 hours per year.

Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Students at Courtlands Independent Special School have a learning difficulty and an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Courtlands aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to every student, taking into account the requirements of their EHCP, if they have one. The SENCo ensures that all EHCPs are reviewed annually and that the student's Local Authority is invited to the annual review meeting.

Equal opportunities

Courtlands Independent Special School aims to make the curriculum accessible to all students, including those with SEN and/or disabilities. Entry to all programs of study is based on appropriateness regardless of sexuality, race, disability, religion, or belief.

Supervision of students

Students are supervised appropriately at all times. At least two adults will be present in lessons, no matter the class size.

During lunch, break times and home time the students are supervised by a team of staff lead by a teacher. Duty staff are allocated places to be on duty to ensure adequate supervision of students during communal times. Staff members ensure the adequate supervision of students during off-site activities. Details of supervision levels are contained within the planning for each off-site activity and its inherent risk assessment for more information see off-site activities policy. Prior to any off-site activity being offered, the Head will ensure there is adequate cover available.

Careers guidance

SEE CAREERS POLICY

Strategy for Communication

Communication in familiar and unfamiliar circumstances is essential. Being able to communicate our needs, wants, thoughts, feelings and during interactions is essential.

At Courtlands, we work with young people to develop their communication skills through an emphasis on oracy, public speaking, and real-life interactions. Where a child struggles to communicate orally, bespoke approaches will be developed alongside differentiated oracy tasks.

At Courtlands, we acknowledge that communication and interaction for many students is challenging. When communication and interaction are required, either as a learning activity or implicitly within the lesson, these activities will be scaffolded according to the individual's needs.

We are communication champions. We understand the need for a variety of communication tools. Signs and symbols are used across the school. All written communication is in plain English and easy read formats of documents will be made available.

Speaking and listening are precursors to reading and writing. All curriculum areas will have structured speaking and listening tasks within them. All teachers will be responsible for recording and tracking progress in communication (including speaking & listening) and interaction.

Alternative communication approaches (e.g. PECS, written communication, eye gaze) will be included as appropriate, depending on the needs of individual pupils. Where a pupil is subject to SALT intervention, therapists will train teachers and TAs to make the curriculum accessible and develop the student's skills.

Strategy for Reading and Literacy

Please refer to the Reading and Literacy strategy for more information

The ability to engage with the printed word is an essential skill for adult life and gaining individual independence.

All Courtlands education staff are trained in the mechanics of reading and literacy, understand specific literacy difficulties, and are dyslexia aware. All staff are responsible for developing students' literacy skills and ability to engage and navigate text.

All Courtlands education staff are trained to be aware of the reading/literacy demands inherent within their lessons and to make accommodations and reasonable adjustments to tasks to ensure all students are able to access learning.

Courtlands acknowledges that, for some students, reading and literacy difficulties may have created an emotional barrier to learning. All staff will work with the child to offer opportunities for success in all subject areas regardless of their reading or literacy abilities.

Courtlands uses reading age to monitor and assess reading development. The SENCO will coordinate testing.

All students have focused literacy interventions at a stage-appropriate level. These literacy interventions are run in accordance with the requirements of that intervention and coordinated by the SENCO.

Students are aware of their levels and their continuing improvement is a motivating factor. If a student fails to show improvement, then an appropriate intervention is sought and actioned by the coordinator.

Strategy for Numeracy

All students have focused numeracy intervention tasks for 20 minutes twice weekly. This is coordinated by the SEN and mathematics departments.

Numerical understanding and mathematics levels are tested annually and the tasks used are appropriate to the level of each student. Students are aware of their levels and their continuing improvement is a motivating factor. If a student fails to show improvement, then an appropriate intervention is sought and actioned by the numeracy coordinator.

Strategies for Teaching

The curriculum is based on a structured subject-based framework, with periods of time during the school year dedicated to project-based learning. Project-based, cross-curricular periods allow students to develop their ability to transfer skills and apply them to a range of scenarios and topics.

The predominant mode of working is class teaching, individual work, and a degree of group work where appropriate.

In key stage 3, classes are mixed according to ability or need to enable an increasingly personalized approach.

Courtlands Independent Special School does not specify teaching styles; each member of staff is encouraged and supported to discover a style with which he/she is comfortable, which is effective in promoting students learning and achievement, and which is in line with the aims and ethos of Courtlands.

Staff understand that children learn best when they are happy and feel safe and secure. All staff are trained to use emotional coaching and coaching techniques to support learning.

INSET training is provided in a variety of strategies, teaching/learning styles, etc. The effectiveness of a teacher's individual style within the environment of Courtlands usually forms part of the discussion during staff supervision and teacher/SLT meetings.

Strategies for learning

Feedback to students about their own progress is achieved through verbal feedback and the marking of work and Learning Journeys that enable students and stakeholders to see the progress and growth over time.

As well as this, formal reports are produced at the end of each term. There is also a program of parents and carers afternoons throughout the year.

Annual testing by the SENCo is used to inform teachers of individuals' levels and learning styles. This allows subject teachers to use the most appropriate teaching strategies for individual learning. Students have access to various assistive technology devices such as reader pens and laptops. These are allocated either by the SENCo or by subject teachers. Students with special needs are given extra support as required by their statement/ EHCP or as directed by the SENCo.

Lessons are all approximately 50 minutes long. This is appropriate for the needs of our students. Some subjects such as art, cookery, and PE have double lessons.

Teaching and learning resources

Classroom resources are the responsibility of the subject teachers who ensure that:

- there is a range of appropriate and accessible resources available from which students can select materials suitable to the task at hand
- students are encouraged to act independently in choosing, collecting, and returning resources where appropriate

The outdoor space at Courtlands is accessible to everyone and its use in day-to-day teaching is encouraged. Using outdoor spaces outside of the fenced area requires risk assessment and should be planned in advance, with agreement from the relevant senior leadership team member.

Using the beach is encouraged and forms part of the natural history curriculum. Visits must be planned in advance, with notification and agreement from the relevant senior leadership team member.

Each subject has a budget to ensure there are suitable resources available to deliver their area of the curriculum.

School stationery is ordered by administration staff and is stored centrally. The purchase of large or expensive items can be planned via annual budget requests or departmental improvement plans.

Adaptive Teaching

All teaching staff ensure that tasks are matched to the capabilities of the individual students to allow for continuity and progression. This is achieved through differing teaching and learning styles, tasks, student outcomes, and responses. Schemes of work reflect the needs of our students. Learning objectives are made explicit to students and they are aware of the targets that have been set for them. The SENCo advises on using the most appropriate teaching and learning style for the task and on adapting resources. This allows staff to challenge students sufficiently in order for them to reach their potential whilst maintaining their feelings of success.

Homework

Homework is not compulsory but the Learning+ tasks for every subject give the students and their parents the opportunity to extend their knowledge of each subject through tasks associated with the medium-term plans.

Specific literacy and numeracy home learning tasks are made available with agreement from the child, parent, and SENCO.

Appendix 1

Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Life skills

Appendix 2

Fundamental British Values

Appendix 3

Curriculum overview

Appendix 1 - Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Life skills

The Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development of students forms a significant part of Courtlands' PSHE/life skills program.

Within the PSHE curriculum, we aim to enable and encourage students to:

- develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence
- distinguish right from wrong and respect the civil and criminal law
- accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working both in their local area and to society more widely
- recognise their own responsibilities for their health and what is available to support their choices and decisions
- feel more confident in understanding positive relationships and equipped to identify if a relationship has a negative impact on their or others well-being.
- become confident and positive contributors to their community and effective users of its services and facilities
- develop a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England
- acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony and gain insights into the origins and practices of their own cultures and those of the wider community
- respect the Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- recognize that individuality and diversity should be celebrated, so long as civil liberties and the law are followed
- appreciate cultural diversity and avoid and resist racism, homophobia, and other bigoted views
- encourage respect for all other people, particularly in relation to age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity, race, religion, or belief

In all aspects of school life, staff will avoid any activity which promotes partisan political, religious, or other views and will ensure that, where any such issues are brought to the attention of students, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

Courtlands is wholly committed to the social, moral, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of our students' education. We recognise the importance of these dimensions of learning and understanding in our increasingly global environment. SMSC is therefore embedded in both our curriculum and our pastoral care, which offers our young people the tremendous opportunity of exploring values in a supported setting, whilst endorsing and insisting upon the active promotion of fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and belief systems. The curricula delivers SMSC in a variety of ways: it is embedded within PSHE, as well as being inherent within much of our classroom learning e.g. Geography - a discussion of the ethics of poverty, Science - the ethics of research, RE – world religions. Tutor time gives an opportunity for students to learn, discuss and understand British Fundamental Values in a more personal space. SMSC is also underpinned via our assembly program: including Headteacher's assemblies, and specialist assemblies e.g. mock elections and themed assemblies.

Appendix 2 - British Fundamental Values

Courtlands Independent Special School is committed to serving its community. It recognises the multi-cultural, multi-faith, and ever-changing nature of the United Kingdom and the wider world. It also understands the vital role it has in ensuring that groups or individuals within Courtlands are not subjected to intimidation or radicalisation by those wishing to unduly, or illegally, influence them.

Through our SMSC development we help our students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence; distinguish right from wrong and respect English law; encourage them to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and contribute positively to society; enable them to acquire a broad general knowledge of, and respect for, English public institutions and services and to appreciate and respect their own and other cultures. We follow our equal opportunities policy that enforces that there will be no discrimination against any individual or group, regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political, or any other protected status. We are dedicated to preparing students for their adult life beyond exams and finishing School and we aim to ensure that we promote and reinforce British Values to all our students.

The Government emphasises that schools are required to ensure that key 'British Values' are taught in all UK schools. The government set out its definition of British Values in the 2011 Prevent Strategy.

The five British Values are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs

The examples that follow show some of the many ways we seek to embed British Values.

Democracy

The principle of democracy is consistently being reinforced, with democratic processes being used for important decisions within Courtlands community, for instance, elections being held of School council and whole School mock elections held. The principle of democracy is also explored in the History and RE curriculum as well as in tutor time and assemblies.

The rule of law

The importance of laws, whether they are those that govern the class, Courtlands, or the country, is consistently reinforced. Students are taught Courtland's rules and our expectations of how they can abide by them. Students are taught the value and the reasons behind laws that govern and protect us, the responsibilities that this involves, and the consequences when laws are broken. Visits from authorities such as the Police reinforce this message.

Individual liberty

Students are actively encouraged to make independent choices, with the knowledge that they are in a safe, secure, and supportive environment. Staff aim to educate and provide opportunities for them to make informed choices, through a safe environment and an understanding of individual needs. Students are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights and personal freedoms and are advised on how to exercise these safely, for example through e-safety or through the debating club.

Mutual respect

Respect is a strong part of our school community. Students learn that their behaviours have an effect on their own rights and those of others. All members of the Courtlands community are encouraged and supported to treat each other with respect and this is reiterated through its teaching and learning environments.

Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs

We aim to equip students with the ability to understand their place in a culturally diverse society by giving them opportunities to experience such diversity within the Courtlands community. Students benefit from a number of international visitors including students from other continents and cultures. Additionally, students are actively encouraged to share their faith and beliefs within Courtlands and celebrate festivities throughout the calendar year. The Religious Education curriculum, which is compulsory for all students up to the end of KS3, provides a broad and balanced education on a range of faiths, religions, and cultures.

Appendix 3 – Curriculum overview

For all students in key stages 3, the curriculum provides broad experiences in the following learning areas:

Linguistic

Students develop communication skills and increase their command of the language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All students receive lessons in written and spoken English.

Mathematical

Students make calculations and develop an understanding and appreciation of relationships and patterns in number and space. They have the opportunity to develop their capacity to think logically and to express themselves clearly. Knowledge and understanding of mathematics are developed in a variety of ways, including practical activity, exploration, and discussion.

Scientific

Students develop their knowledge and understanding of nature, materials, and forces. They are encouraged to view science as a process of inquiry and to develop associated skills such as observing, forming hypotheses, conducting experiments, and recording their findings.

Technological

Students develop a range of technological skills, including the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT); developing, planning, and communicating ideas; working with tools, equipment, materials, and components to produce good quality products; and

evaluating processes and products.

Human and Social

Students develop an understanding of society and people and how they interact with their environment; and how human action, both now and in the past, has influenced events and conditions.

Physical

Students develop physical control and coordination as well as tactical skills and responses. They are encouraged to evaluate and improve their performance across a range of individual and team sports and activities. They acquire knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of fitness and health.

Aesthetic and Creative

Students have an opportunity to make, compose, experience, and invent across a range of disciplines and through a variety of media and genres.

Key Stage 3

The curriculum is made up of the following subjects:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Natural History including beach and forest school
- Humanities
- Life
- Creative Arts
- Food technology
- Physical Education
- Computing
- Duke of Edinburgh

EAL Statement

Students arrive at Courtlands Independent Special School from a very diverse linguistic and cultural background. The role of EAL is to help them adjust to a new environment while improving their competency in English so they can access their other academic subjects more easily.

They will be tested on entry to give the pathway for their progression, they will follow a course designed to increase their level of skill in four main areas; Listening, reading, speaking and writing. The lessons will take place in their timetable while their peers study another subject. Each half term the EAL teachers will set targets for and to monitor progress made by the students.