



Downlands Community School Curriculum statement - January 2024

Introduction

Downlands Community school is a maintained school within Dorset Local Authority. As such, it adheres to the primary national curriculum. Nevertheless, like all schools, Downlands is unique in terms of context, setting and the community which it serves. Therefore, this curriculum statement describes the intent and implementation strategy which has been agreed by staff and governors. It should be read in conjunction with the following linked policies: Teaching and learning; Assessment and Feedback; subject specific.

Context of the school



Downlands Community School is situated 'behind the wire' of Blandford Camp - the headquarters of the Royal Corps of Signals. It is also proudly located on the outskirts of Blandford Forum - a Georgian town within the beautiful landscape of North Dorset. The school grounds are extensive and lined with a variety of established trees and important habitats in the form of rare grasses. Mobility within the school is high given that 95% of children are from services families and are subject to frequent deployments both nationally and internationally. As a result, the school enjoys

a rich diversity of national and international cultures, languages and accents, with the Nepalese community making up the second most significant ethnic population.

What do we believe makes a good curriculum?



What is special about our curriculum offer?

We believe that woven within our delivery of the national curriculum should be aspects of our school’s philosophy of education and other important threads which reflect our uniqueness and local context. This ‘hidden curriculum’ can be described in terms of the following:

School values

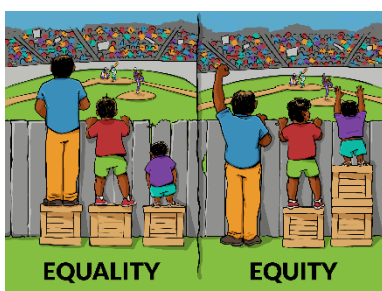
The school’s motto encapsulates the values we all adhere to: We care. We share. We believe. We achieve. It also underpins our sense of community and belonging. In promoting these values, the school seeks to promote an environment where children feel safe and cared for, knowing that they are valued and strengthening their self-esteem.

Therapeutic Thinking

The school has defined a relationships policy underpinned by Therapeutic Thinking - an approach to behaviour that prioritises the pro-social feelings of everyone within the dynamic. Therapeutic thinking is a philosophy which focuses on how all children and young people are to be supported, particularly in terms of their emotional health and wellbeing.

School ethos

Ours is an inclusive school which applies an equitable approach to meeting children’s needs as summarised here:



Growth Mindset

The teachings of Carol Dweck are an important underpinning philosophy for our children, many of whom face unusual barriers to learning. Therefore, the importance of learning from mistakes, responding to feedback and valuing practice can help children to overcome the barriers caused by high mobility.

I Can Problem Solve (ICPS)

Formerly called Cognitive Problem Solving, ICPS is an evidence-based program which helps children as young as four to learn. It seeks to teach children how to think rather than what to think, enhancing social adjustment and promoting prosocial behaviours. We feel that this is particularly important in our school given the interrupted friendships and peer relationships faced by many of our pupils.

Appreciating our environment

Some of our pupils arrive on camp in a bit of a whirlwind, sometimes staying at the school for months rather than years. As such, we think that our children should be given the opportunity to learn within the rich local context on offer. Our school is situated next to a protected natural habitat, so it is well placed to hook children in to protecting the environment on a local, national and global scale. It also enjoys important geographical and historical contexts on its doorstep: a great fire which swept through the local town; WW1 training trenches; a museum charting the progression of communications used by The Royal Signals; The Jurassic Coast.

How do we plan our curriculum?

Alongside the national curriculum, teachers use the following to help them make short term decisions about lesson design:

1. Long term curriculum plans

Providing an overview of the curriculum in brief detail. Ensuring that learning is sequential and thoughtfully timed, allowing stakeholders to see the big picture of curriculum delivery.

2. Subject Intent

Each subject to have a '**Subject Intent**'. These documents will show the progression of skills (disciplinary knowledge) and knowledge (substantive knowledge). Each unit for each year group will be mapped out in some detail (e.g. the composite and the components needed to get there). This will then be used by individual teachers as a starting point for their Medium Term Plans so they know what the expectations are for that topic.

3. Medium Term Plans (MTP)

Medium Term Plans ensures consistency and progression from EYFS through KS1 and KS2 within a particular subject. Each half term will come under an umbrella topic name, with some foundation subject learning organised within related topics. Medium Term Plans will also demonstrate where adaptations are made for different learning needs and detail which key words should be introduced. They are the detailed precursor to teachers' short-term planning based on the knowledge of their classes.

How do we assess impact across the curriculum?

A range of assessment strategies are used across the curriculum and different phases of the school. Fundamentally, formative assessment strategies or 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) methods are the most frequent and commonly applied - further information can be sought from our whole school Assessment and Feedback policy. However, in essence **AfL methods** will include:

- Judging the quality of learning outcomes linked to learning objectives. This will be led by the teacher/teaching assistant or sometimes be pupil or peer assessed, especially when accompanied by careful scaffolding and success criteria
- Skilful and planned questioning and gauging of pupils' verbal responses

Other **summative assessments** may include:

- Regular retrieval practice through a variety of low stakes testing and recall games
- Mind map activities
- Rich, open-ended assessment opportunities which elicit independent pupil outcomes, focussed on a narrow range of the curriculum. For example a 'big write' task in English or part of an investigation report in science
- Reading comprehension questions
- Practical tasks or performance. For example, performing a song practised in music lessons or performing a dance at the end of a unit in PE
- Summative topic tests used commonly in mathematics (White Rose Maths)
- NFER tests in reading, maths and GPS
- Practice and actual national tests to judge performance against age related expectations in reading, GPS and maths, in Y6

Reporting to parents

All parents received two written reports and have the opportunity to attend to separate parent consultations whereby their child's achievement in relation to all areas of the curriculum will be reported. A baseline report aims to provide parents with key indicators in relation to literacy and numeracy in order to highlight where there are gaps and generate an ongoing conversation about the support needed in school and at home. Both the baseline and summative report will provide grade descriptors in relation to the following student skills:

- Independence
- Growth Mindset
- Peer relationships and problem-solving
- Creativity

They will also indicate reasonable adjustments and interventions from school staff and external support agencies where relevant.

Summative reports will indicate a child's attainment in reading, writing and maths. The possible outcomes are: Greater Depth (GD); Age related expectation+ (EXP+); Age related expectation (EXP); Working towards+ (WT+); Working towards (WT); Working below age related expectations (BLW).