KS3 Curriculum (Middle School)

KS3- Curriculum Journey

Until recently the key stage three curriculum was a formal, subject specific model with adapted, differentiation for all needs and separate PMLD planning and delivery within an age not stage class groups. As the needs of our young people changed we decided to adapt our curriculum from a more MLD, (Moderate Learning Needs) model, with differentiation for the young people with SLD, (Severe Learning Needs), ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities).

The research used was from a number of documents developed by Penny Lacey, Dr. Joni Holmes and McGuiness. In this research it looked at young people with a range of complex learning difficulties and disabilities. The Semi – Formal Curriculum focuses on young people who have two or more challenges regarding disability and learning abilities. It is a very personalised approach based on

- Becoming literate communicators
- Becoming mathematical thinkers
- The acquisition of early learning skills

Which encompasses

The development of thinking skills

- Play (emotional, cognition and social dimensions
- Creative learning
- Movement

Young people within the semi and pre-formal stages have difficulties with:

- Cognition (thinking and understanding)
- Problem solving (acting upon understanding)
- Metacognition (thinking about thinking)

For example, these young people will have difficulties with sensory processing and perceiving sensory patterns, memory, generalising and problem solving.
We have organised our curriculum this year with the aid of research and it is explained in the next few pages, this addresses our young people’s needs as formal, semi and pre-formal learners.

Key Stage 3 comprises of young people from year groups 5 to 9 and we have 52 students currently.

Middle School has the upper KS2 students joining us but we are mainly KS3 with some year fives. We have five class groups based on the young person’s stage of development and individual needs plus age of the student if a year 5. Each class has a class team consisting of one teacher and two or three teaching assistants depending on the students needs. In Middle School we also have specialist teachers delivering Science, Music, PE, Outdoor Pursuits, JASS and Forest School.

Within the Middle School department there is also P.E. inclusion with the local High School and some young people do all of their PE, with their class group, there.

The curriculum is constantly being reviewed to meet the changing needs of our students and government initiatives. This has created new profiles of learning that our curriculum is constantly developing and addressing. The KS3 curriculum team are currently reviewing and evaluating the Intent, Implementation and Impact of our curriculum.

The Intent of our Curriculum

The Intent of our curriculum is to suit the needs of all our students and improve their learning skills through interesting, fun and inclusive activities. Part of our intent is to involve parents/carers and the local community in delivering our learning opportunities and being part of our students learning journeys. Our residential students work together on improving their life and citizenship skills through many activities outside of the school day and implementing these in the classroom and at home.

The Implementation

Organisation of the Curriculum currently.

In the KS3 department we have re-designed part of our curriculum to address the young people who are unable to follow a more formal pathway, that is subject specific. These young people follow a more sensory curriculum, highly personalised in a class base, with some of these students accessing a few lessons in the more formal, subject specific classes.

From September 2019 the new key stage curriculum will be altered to pre-formal, semi-formal and subject specific. Young people will be grouped according to their preferred learning styles, ability and sensory needs. This will consist of subject specific groups following the traditional class based learning. With the pre and semi-formal groups following a more topic based themed approach with separate Maths, English and Science delivery. All students will receive well being sessions as part of the curriculum including an element of mental health education. The Key stage 3 students will
receive sessions in communication devised by SALT and teaching staff. The young people will take part in a variety of sporting activities in school and outside in the local community. The Arts will be delivered weekly and Music will take the form of class lessons and individual instrument tuition and some one-to-one music interaction sessions. There will be a weekly middle school assembly celebrating different cultures and a range of diverse and relevant topics.

Pupils following the pre formal and semi formal curriculum have access to the sensory room – where they can experience and consolidate skills learnt in the classroom. This environment embraces new technology and encourages pupils to work in small groups. Some of this cohort of pupils also access the messy play room where focus is on pre-writing activities and science skills. It provides pupils the opportunity to work on their sensory diet, which is invaluable for tactile defensiveness.

At the Vale of Evesham school we appreciate that many of our pupils need consideration given to the style of learning prior to accessing the curriculum. Many of our pupils need consideration given to their sensory diet – in terms of exercises / activities prior to learning and also seating during lessons. After a trial in 2 classes this is on the school development plan to consider different forms of seating such as wobble stools, rocker chairs and gym balls that provide sensory feedback. Some of our pupils have ear defenders, weighted equipment and movement breaks to help with their regulation and arousal levels.

**Curriculum coverage**

**English**

English is taught as subject specific in the Formal and Semi Formal groups.

For the formal learners the following coverage is taught and the topics are different every half term as seen in the long-term plans.

**Literature**: Fictional Tales with a moral

**Writing**: Creative Writing moral stories

**Speaking and listening**: gaining and sharing information

**Grammar**: words and sentences.

In the semi-formal curriculum English is taught in conjunction with the topic but with a focus on colourful semantics, comprehension, Individual work boxes to practice handwriting. Story-telling, for example, journey into space communicating about what it feels like linking to the theme. The students will also use colourful semantics to create stories that are scaffolded to enable the pupil to succeed.
Each student in the semi and formal curriculum will have individual targets for reading, writing, and speaking and listening. These are shared with parents/carers.

**Colourful semantics** is an approach created by Alison Bryan. It is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar but it is rooted in the meaning of words (**semantics**). **Colourful semantics** reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then **colour** codes them.

**Reading**

In Middle school we have a thirty-minute reading session each day for the class groups to work on their reading targets and these skills will be embedded throughout the curriculum. These groups will work on a programme of phonics, reading in the form of guided and paired reading, word and picture recognition, symbols, shared class text read by adults, Precision -Reading, Word Awareness, Letter and Sounds, Action Words and Comprehension. The students have individual targets and these are shared with parents and carers. Some students with dyslexia are offered extra support and some technology programmes to help them. Students as identified as not making expected progress will be given extra sessions as part of the reading intervention programme.

**Maths**

Maths is taught as subject specific in all areas of Middle School and differentiated according to the needs of the group. The data is used to identify the students who are not making expected progress and they will be put on an Intervention Programme and taught one to one or in small groups. Parents /carers will be informed of this and can discuss the targets if they want to with the specialised intervention member of staff.

In **Key stage 3** pupils have maths at least four times a week. The lessons are taught separately in the semi-formal curriculum and are not part of the term’s Theme. In the Formal Curriculum students are taught in their class group with a differentiated approach and individual targets that are key to the progression of these young people.

Units provide opportunities for pupils to develop maths fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils have opportunities to explore, understand and generalise maths skills through a range of practical and sensory activities.

Lessons focus on groups may vary in their approach to teaching, for example some pupil’s use the T.E.A.C.C.H approach that supports youngsters with ASC.

The vocabulary used within planning and teaching is “The Vale of Evesham Maths Vocabulary Checklist” to ensure there is progression in terms of understanding of key concepts. Key mathematical concepts and vocabulary are taught using signs and symbols alongside the completion of visual and practical tasks.

**Science**
Science is taught by a specialised science teacher and all students have access to this and it includes a PMLD curriculum.

The formal Science curriculum takes place in a specialised science laboratory and is taught in a progressive way, with a very visual approach using real objects, moving to the more abstract and formal approaches as students progress through the key stages. The skills of working scientifically are taught throughout all of the topics and in all discovery activities, investigations and experiments.

The semi-formal science curriculum focuses on practical skills, developing curiosity and broadening horizons by being outward facing and exposing pupils to the world around them. Delivered through a topic-based approach, this area of learning encompasses Science, Sense of Place (Geography) Sense of Time (History) and the use of technology for access and communication.

Pupils will be taught to use the following practical scientific methods, processes and skills:

- asking simple questions and recognising that they can be answered in different ways
- observing closely, using simple equipment and measurement
- performing simple tests
- identifying and classifying
- using their observations and ideas to suggest answers to questions
- gathering, recording and communicating data and findings to help in answering questions.
- use scientific language and read and spell age-appropriate scientific vocabulary
- begin to notice patterns and relationships.

**Computing**

Computing takes the form of a formal lesson or is done in a cross curricular way. Middle School has access to laptops and they are booked out by individual classes.

**Humanities**

Humanities are taught through topics or in the Formal Curriculum as individual subjects with theme days.
**Design and Technology**

Design and Technology is taught as separate subjects in the Formal Curriculum and teachers use the Design and Technology and Food Technology Room including access to the School Flat for Life Skills. In the Semi Formal curriculum Design and Technology will be part of the topic themes.

**Physical Education**

P.E. is taught by a specialised P.E. teacher and includes a PMLD Curriculum. Middle School also has outdoor pursuits, bell boating, forest school, trampolining and swimming weekly on a rota system. These areas of the physical activity programme are taught by specialised staff. The older KS3 students take part in an Inclusion Project at the local High School doing all of their P.E. there with the other year 8 and 9 students.

**Religious Education**

R.E. is taught as a separate subject or as part of a topic. We celebrate different religions, beliefs and arts through assemblies and celebrations. Middle School has an assembly once a week. Classes also have reflection time in their classes.

**P.S.H.E.**

Many topics are covered in P.S.H.E. to address Anti Bullying, Respect, Self Esteem and Good Citizenship. The area of extremism in the curriculum is discussed according to the understanding of the students.

**Modern Foreign Languages**

MFL is taught throughout Middle School as part of a theme link, experiencing other cultures, foods and music of different countries. In the Formal classes in Middle School MFL is taught as a subject and covers Spanish, German and French.

**Parliament**

A new strand running through our curriculum is that of parliament and democracy. Through assemblies, School Council and coverage in the P.H.S.E. curriculum we introduce the young people to democracy. Each class votes for their School Councillor and ECO Warrior.

**Environmental Projects**

Through themes we address Climate Change and how students can make a difference to their world. We marked Climate Change Day with the whole school and a flag was raised to demonstrate our compassion and actions to help our planet.

**Citizenship and Life Skills**

In KS3 we have departmental events and attend whole school occasions that include celebrating the school with parent/carers and friends of the school and community. At these events our Middle
School students develop their ability to practice social skills and develop their self-esteem through performance or helping to plan and help with a variety of events. Some of the events celebrate and inform our students about the beliefs and arts different cultures practice and we have visiting artists to run workshops and deliver these sessions.

Middle School takes the lead on whole school celebrations a couple of times a year and work hard to present music, art or dance at these events.

We also take part in local art projects and display our work at Worcester Cathedral and the Number 8 Gallery in Pershore.

**Interventions**

Within the class groups a selection of interventions take place during the school day to address the more complex needs of our young people.

These interventions include Math’s Catch up sessions (1:1 or in small groups), Speech and Language sessions with the SALT therapist or as a differentiated Communication group. Other interventions include personalised timetables for individuals within a class group and different programmes advised by specialist therapists, e.g. Sensory diet, physiotherapy programmes.

In Middle School we have an emotional well being programme. This approach is used in all teaching and learning and is used to develop the emotional well being of our students individually and in class groups.

We are involved in developing staff’s awareness of young people’s mental health issues and how staff can address these issues.

SRE (Sexual Relationship Education) Is delivered to identified small groups of students throughout the year and by teachers as part of the PSHE curriculum.

KS3 has developed a new programme called JASS which is an active learning curriculum that develops skills such as teamwork and self-esteem. This is going very well and engages the KS3 learners excellently.

**Carers**

In Middle School we address careers more formally in Year 9, with liaisons with local employers, Department of Works and Pensions and a WorkRelated Learning Curriculum. Other young people within the department have employer encounters and make sure they address the area of employment with their young people in a suitable way.

**Community**

KS3 is a highly motivated department with expertise staff who reflect and evaluate their practice. We use the local community to enhance our real life curriculum skills and introduce our young people to different cultures, nature and life skills.
The department also links with local businesses and places of worship and has a number of community links with local cinemas and other leisure providers.

**Clubs**

Middle School Students have a choice of many lunch time clubs which include Choir, Cheer Leading, Art and Design, Cycling, Rugby, Tennis and Football.

**Residential**

The department works very closely with the residential provision within the school and students accessing the five-day weekly provision have some joint targets so the skills are transferred outside of the school day.

**The Impact of our curriculum**

**Key impact indicators are:**

- Students enjoy their learning experiences and maintain good or outstanding progress
- Students that are not meeting their targets are given interventions that will help them achieve their aims.
- All students have an inclusive, broad and balanced curriculum that is stage not age based and is tailored to their individual needs.
- Students experience activities and experiences that equip them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to have the best chance of a fulfilling life.
- Students are given opportunities to develop in the Arts and learn an instrument or dance skills to enrich their lives.

In 2019/2020 Middle School is trialling a new curriculum that has considered the changing needs of our students and relevant research was used as a pilot to look at stage not age. This developed into three groups of students working together but in a thematic way or more subject specific. We also decided to develop a PMLD Curriculum that ran alongside the Semi Formal and separately for Science, some English and music. This is been trialled at the moment and we are evaluating the impact of the progress of our young people.

In Middle school we use a total communication approach and use a variety of strategies including Sign-along, symbols, photos and objects of reference alongside spoken or written word to support the curriculum. This enables all of our students to communicate with their preferred method.

In 2019/2020 we looked at our assessment data and decided to develop our own systems in line with the government guidelines of the changes that had to take place. We are also trialling this alongside our new curriculum.

We are hoping the impact of the new developments will be evaluated by students and parent/carers over the year.
Please don’t hesitate to contact me to find out more about Key Stage 3.

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