

Curriculum Policy



COOMBE HOUSE
SCHOOL

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Dorset
Centre of
Excellence

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1. Introduction

Coombe House School (the School) is committed to providing a holistic education that supports every aspect of a pupils development. The curriculum is built around three equally valued areas of learning:



Coombe House School believes that for pupils to truly thrive in their adult lives, they need a well-rounded, equitable and balanced education that equips them with the skills, confidence, and understanding to succeed in a complex and changing world.

Personal & Social Development	Given the needs of pupils that attend Coombe House School, they are likely to require a more prominent focus on their personal and social development than some of their peers. Understanding how they understand themselves and develop skills to positively interact with others, opens the additional learning opportunities of the School and the world.
Academic and Vocational Learning	The focus on other areas of learning does not detract from the commitment to exceptional academic and vocational learning. It is recognised that to transition to a happy and fulfilled adult life, gaining academic skills and accreditation is critical.
Community	It is critical that the pupils at Coombe House School are able to practice their newly acquired knowledge, skills and experience in the real world. Too often, pupils learn these in the context of school but go on to struggle with the application in their communities thereafter.

This policy complies fully with part 1 of the Independent School Standards, which can be found here: [The Independent School Standards - Guidance for Independent Schools \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-school-standards-guidance)

2. Values

This policy is underpinned by the School's core values:

- **A Culture of Kindness** – Ensuring that pupils are supported with the highest regard and positivity distinguishing between the person and the presentation.
- **A Sense of Belonging** – Providing a space for pupils to be themselves, feel a sense of community and feel secure in making mistakes and learning from them.
- **A Belief in Ambition** – Providing pupils with the opportunities to succeed in all aspects of their life and become positive contributors to their own communities and of those around them. There is no ceiling for achievement for pupils at Coombe House School.

3. Relational Learning

At the heart of everything at Coombe House School is the building of positive and lasting relationships, underpinned by the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) approach.

Building these relationships ensures that pupils feel safe and secure in their environment. Through attuned relationships, they can access and thrive with their curriculum.

All staff are encouraged to build individual relationships by connecting with pupils in ways that best meet their needs. Central to this is getting to know each other as individuals; their likes, dislikes and triggers, and then applying the best strategies to support.

4. A Graduated Approach

The School accepts pupils for where they are and will seek to understand their thoughts, feelings, experiences, emotions and build their individual curriculum accordingly. It is recognised that a typical mainstream style approach may not have worked previously and therefore something different must be offered to all pupils in order to achieve positive results.

Dependent on individual needs, pupils will require a varying amount of support and personalisation in order to successfully access the curriculum.

This graduated approach includes:

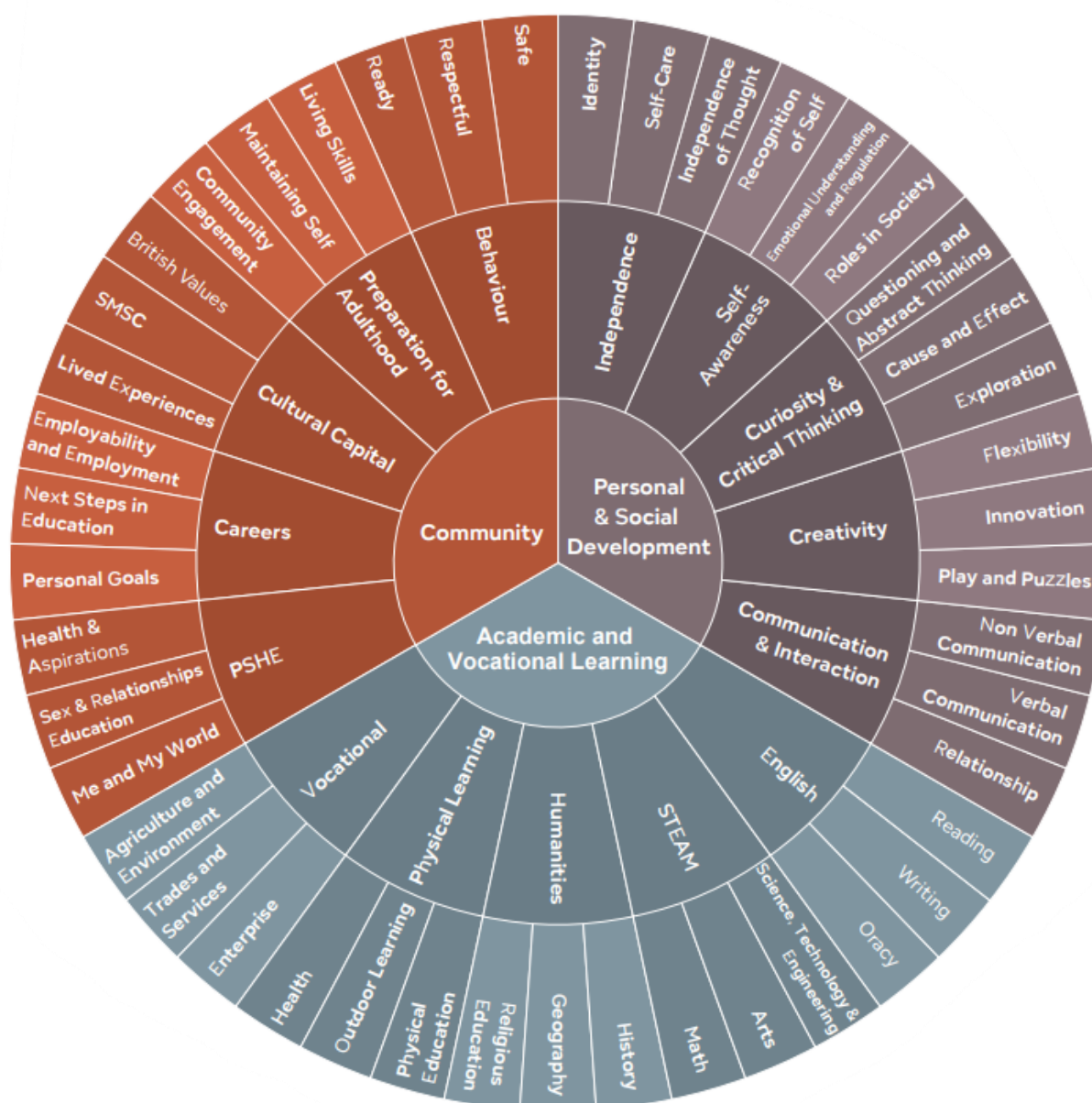
Universal	The foundational offer available to all pupils.
Targeted	An enhanced offer beyond the universal approach, often including additional focus and intervention.
Specialist	A detailed and specialist offer, often involving significant multi agency support.

5. The Curriculum Wheel

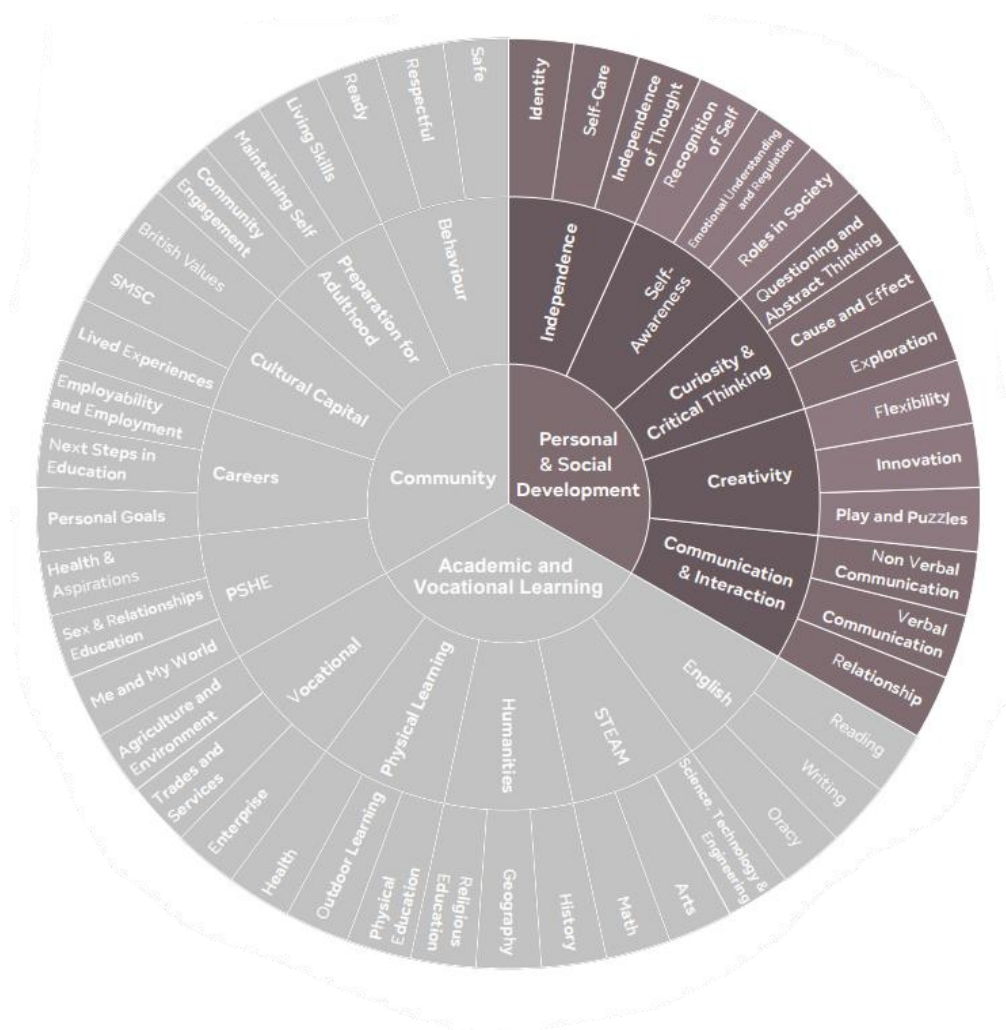
The Coombe House School Curriculum Wheel provides the overarching structure for all learning. It demonstrates the commitment to a holistic approach, where to transition to a happy and fulfilled adult life, pupils must make progress in all three areas of learning.

The Curriculum Wheel is a universal approach used across all year groups and covering all subject areas. Every pupil will experience all the areas of learning during their educational journey at Coombe House School.

The Curriculum Wheel is split into three areas:



6. Personal and Social Development



6.1. Independence

Identity

Self-Care

Independence of
Thought

Using age-related milestones, teaching staff within the School assess and nurture a pupil's evolving sense of self and encourage exploration of identity. Self-care skills, from basic hygiene in early years to managing emotional well-being in adolescence, are tracked and monitored. As pupils move through the School, the curriculum helps pupils to form independent viewpoints and navigate complex social and moral landscapes.

6.2. Self-Awareness

Recognition of Self	By supporting pupils to develop a clear sense of identity and self-worth from admission, foundations are laid for confident and resilient individuals. Emotional understanding and regulation are taught to help manage stress, build healthy relationships, and make positive choices. Pupils are taught how to reflect on their role in society which subsequently encourages empathy, responsibility, and active citizenship. Together, these areas promote individual growth and positive social impact.
Emotional Understanding and Regulation	
Roles in Society	

6.3. Curiosity and Critical Thinking

Questioning and Abstract Thinking	Questioning and abstract thinking sees the progress from exploring objects through tactile approaches to discussions and decisions around morals, ethics and politics alongside other widely abstract concepts.
Cause and Effect	Cause and effect stem from simply recognising that a physical reaction results in an effect such as, if they push a button a sound plays, to understanding the impact they can have on the thinking of others and the impact others can have on them.
Exploration	Exploration is driven by curiosity, impulse and sensory input, through to the latter years, exploring metacognition (thinking about one's thinking) and developing a critique of others and themselves in a more sophisticated way.

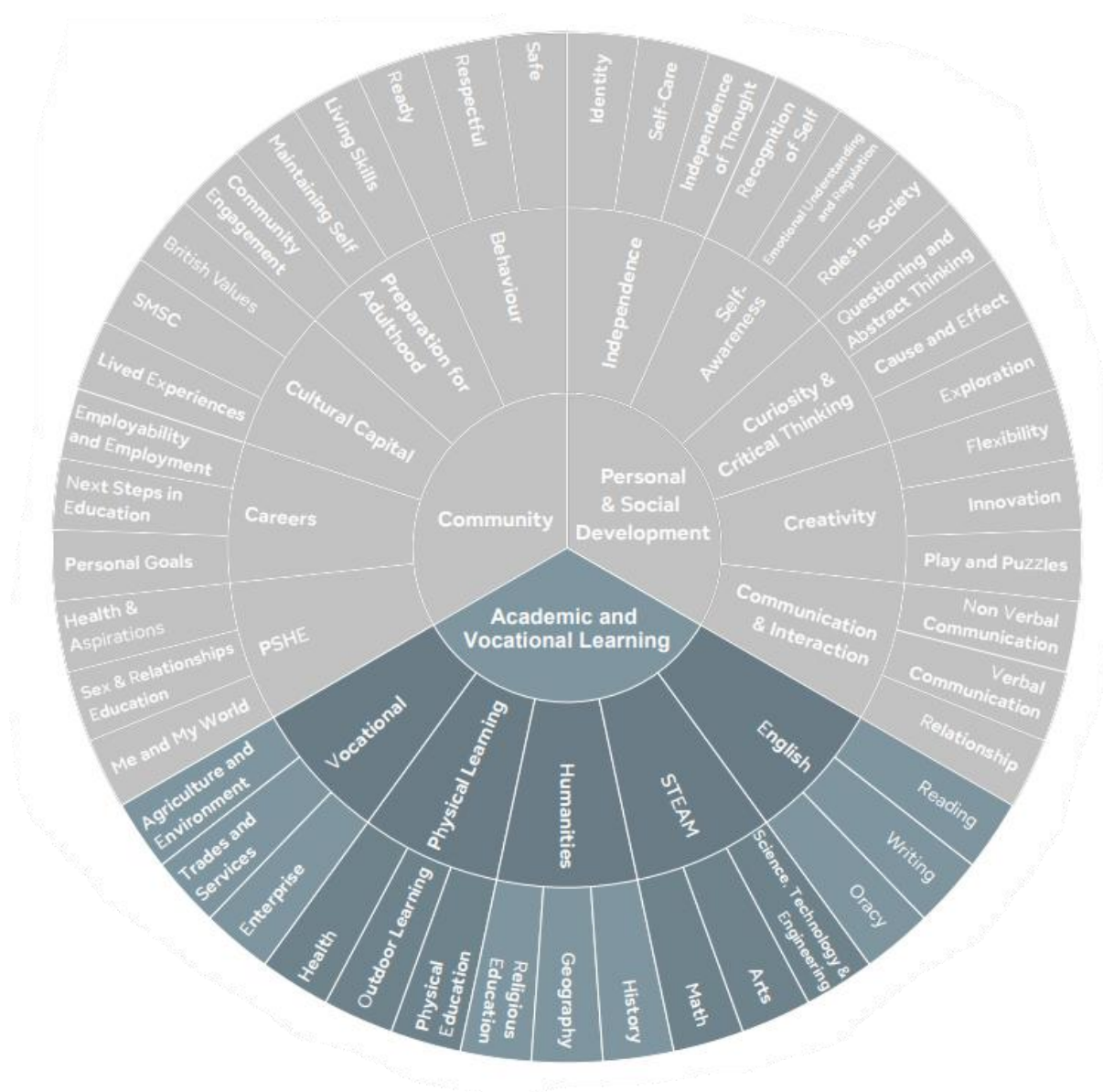
6.4. Creativity

Flexibility	The School curriculum for creativity nurtures and develops the creative potential of pupils throughout their formative years. The framework provides structured yet adaptable pathways that encourages flexibility, allowing learners to think beyond conventional boundaries and adapt to new challenges. By fostering innovation, it supports the generation of original ideas and imaginative solutions across various contexts. The importance of play and puzzles is recognised, which stimulates curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Together, these key areas help develop resilience and resourcefulness.
Innovation	
Play and Puzzles	

6.5. Communication and Interaction

Non-Verbal Communication	Non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, and body language, lay the foundation for social interaction and emotional understanding. Verbal communication builds on this by developing language skills essential for expressing needs, thoughts, and feelings clearly. As both forms of communication progress, so too does the ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships, which are vital for emotional well-being and social inclusion.
Verbal Communication	
Relationship	

7. Academic and Vocational Learning



7.1. English

Reading

Writing

Oracy

The English curriculum is underpinned by the national curriculum framework and focuses on the key aspects of Reading, Writing and Oracy. The School uses Read Write Inc, Fresh Start and other appropriate strategies to support their phonics programme to teach early reading and to support learners that require a phonetic based intervention at a later stage. At Coombe House School, the focus is enabling access to a purposeful curriculum with reading as a life skill. Staff ensure pupils have the skills and strategies to access reading to enable them to lead fulfilling and successful lives. Each pupil understands the importance that reading holds in their ability to navigate adulthood.

7.2. STEAM

Science, Technology and Engineering

Arts

Math

STEAM learning follows the national curriculum framework and provides learning that is bespoke and tailored to individual needs and interests of the pupils, taking into account the wide array of mediums within each subject category. For Maths, the White Rose scheme of learning provides the over-arching structure but is adapted to individual and group needs.

7.3. Humanities

History

Geography

Religious Education

The Humanities curriculum provides pupils with a deep understanding of the world around them, how this came to be and their personal impact on it. It teaches acceptance, tolerance and understanding of those different to themselves. Parents / Carers are provided with the opportunity to withdraw their child from Religious Education. The School are responsible for ensuring that parents / carers are fully informed about the content of the curriculum, in order for them to make an informed decision.

7.4. Physical Learning

Health

Outdoor Learning

Physical Education (PE)

The Physical Learning curriculum follows the national curriculum statements for progression; however, it is not limited to these. Every pupil is provided with the opportunity to follow the Swim England curriculum for swimming. The curriculum aims to provide exposure and opportunity to participate in a range of activities to enable a lifelong approach to a healthy body and mind. Outdoor learning opportunities are embraced to enhance the progress made by pupils.

7.5. Vocational

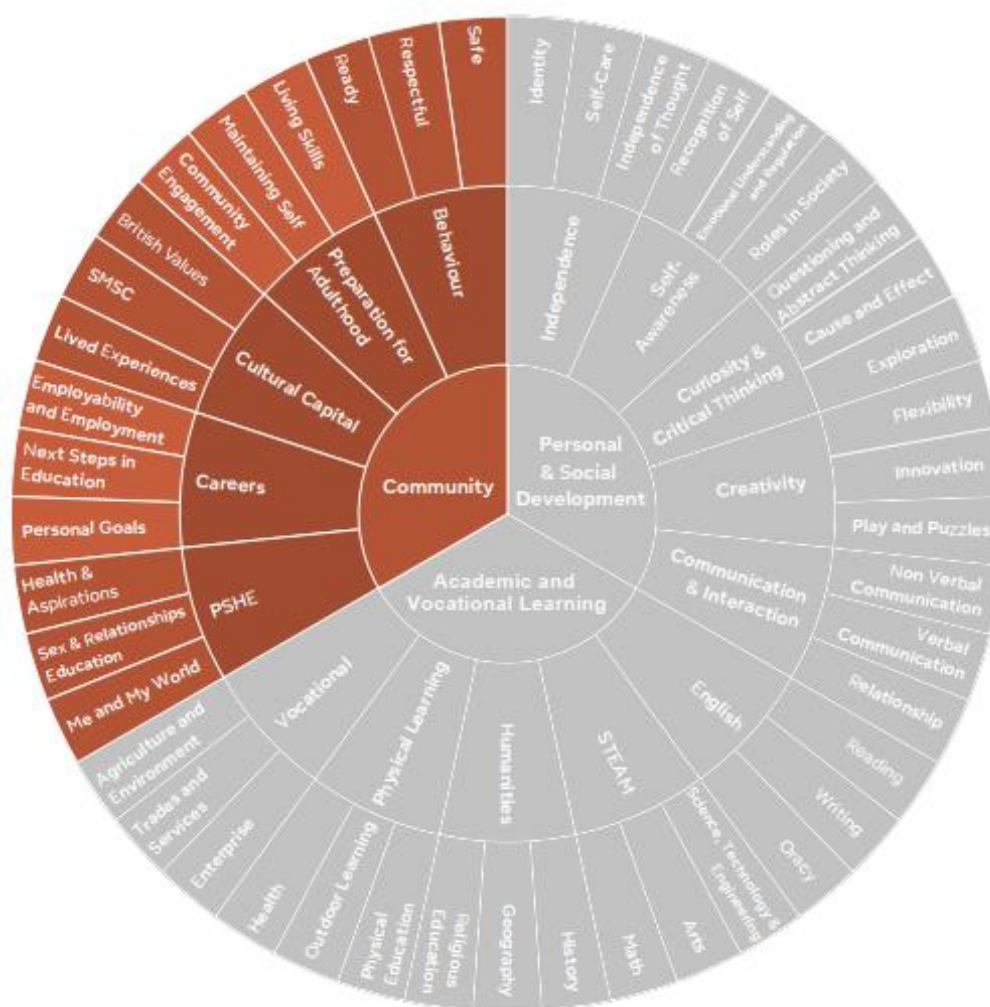
Agriculture and Environment

Trades and Services

Enterprise

Vocational learning refers to education and training that equips individuals with the specific skills and knowledge needed for a particular trade, profession, or career. It is practical and work-focused, often involving hands-on experience, apprenticeships, or work placements. Vocational learning prepares pupils for employment. The curriculum covers agriculture and environment, trades and services, and enterprise.

8. Community



8.1. PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic)

Health and Aspirations

Sex and Relationships
Education

Me and My World

To ensure sequence and progression within the PSHE curriculum, the School uses the Jigsaw programme of learning. Resources are adapted for the needs the pupils. Within the Jigsaw programme of learning there is a mandatory element of SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) Please see the separate SRE policy for further details.

8.2. Careers

Employability and
Employment

Next Steps in Education

Personal Goals

To ensure a robust and purposeful Careers curriculum, the School has chosen to align with the Gatsby Benchmark. This ensures that pupils are given a variety of opportunities to consider potential careers and provides opportunities for the youngest pupils to begin considering their chosen paths. Pupils are given the opportunity to access independent careers advice and are supported in their exploration of further education opportunities.

8.3. Cultural Capital

British Values

The staff at Coombe House School are passionate about ensuring pupils are provided opportunities that they may not have access to otherwise. Lived experiences focuses on providing opportunities where pupils engage in tasks, visits and activities that create lifelong memories.

SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural)

The School has created a progressive pathway for the teaching of SMSC. It is split into four core areas and starts at KS1 and progresses to KS5.

Lived Experiences

Teaching fundamental British Values to pupils improves their SMSC development. Fundamental British values underpin what it is to be a citizen in today's modern and diverse Britain and promotes moral and cultural understanding that celebrates the diversity of the UK.

8.4. Preparation for Adulthood

Living Skills

Maintaining Self

Community Engagement

Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) is a term used to support the transition from childhood to adulthood for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and to support them to achieve the best outcomes. At Coombe House School, the progression of skills and knowledge as dictated within the Preparing for Adulthood support tool commissioned by the Department of Education is followed.

8.5. Behaviour

Ready

Behaviour is learnt, it is taught, and it is a skill. This curriculum incorporates learning valued behaviours in a range of contexts enabling pupils to succeed and thrive in the world around them. The aim is to support the pupils understanding and application of these skills through a positive behaviour model that is underpinned by the key concepts of:

Respectful

- Ready: Are pupils ready to engage, listen and participate?
- Respectful: Are pupils able to demonstrate respect for themselves, others and the environment around them?
- Safe: Are pupils able to keep themselves and others safe?

Safe

A more detailed overview of the approach to behaviour including the approach to valued and detrimental behaviour can be found within the [Behaviour Policy](#).

9. Strategic Curriculum Planning

To assist teachers in their planning, there is a range of supporting structures in place to aid them in ensuring a sequenced and progressive programme of learning. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Curriculum Pathway** – This provides a long-term overview of the topics / foci areas across all years within the School.
- **Curriculum Overview** – This provides a brief overview of each learning areas across the pathway and key concepts.
- **Curriculum Map** – Provides key vertical concepts and key questions of the specific focus area.
- **Scheme of Learning** – Provides detailed insight into the subject knowledge learnt, key subject skills and links to opportunities for cross curriculum and community engagement.

The nature of each area of learning informs the level of detail within the respective plans. For example, the supporting structure that creates the learning framework for 'English' is different to that for 'Self-Awareness', due to the differences in the pedagogy required to underpin effective learning for each.

Teachers publish and share long-term and medium-term plans with the School Senior Leadership Team to aid monitoring and quality assurance. They detail the progression and sequence of knowledge, skills and understanding across each half term.

Teachers evidence progression through a range of formative and summative assessments. Evidence of learning is gathered in ways that are meaningful for the pupil. This may include but are not limited to; written examples of learning, online systems / assessments, records of conversations, photographs and tangible outcomes. This allows staff to facilitate a curriculum based around individual needs and circumstances, but within a structured, progressive, sequenced framework

The School's approach allows teachers to have confidence in deviating from typical mainstream approaches and for leaders to have an effective tool for quality assurance. Teachers and leaders are able to use planning structures to identify barriers in learning, prior gaps in learning, establish areas of strength and recognise areas where pupils may not have previously had opportunities to 'try' or 'thrive'.

10. A Broad Curriculum

Whilst pupils will access all areas of the School's broad curriculum, the School Senior Leadership Team understand that maths, English, and PSHE are often most critical to being able to access learning more generally, to stay safe and to maximise opportunities for further learning and employability in the future.

The obligations within the Independent School Standards aim to deliver a 'broad' coverage of subjects and therefore curriculum planning ensures that all pupils experience this breadth during their time in school.

The School's approach allows pupils to focus and specialise on certain 'learning outcomes' more than others during certain periods, if this aids their 'overcoming barriers' or meets their needs at a particular time. Where this specialism is developed, it is always closely monitored to ensure it offers suitable balance over time.

11. Outcomes

The Curriculum Wheel provides pupils with a range of opportunities to develop key knowledge, skills and understanding so that pupils are ready to transition to their next stage of education, training or employment, and then to progress onto a happy and fulfilled adult life.

Pupils' final exam results earned are not seen as the end, but as the beginning, and focus on outcomes in adulthood. A real measure of success is whether the new skills, knowledge and understanding that are learned are sufficiently embedded so that they can be applied independently in the real world.

The approach centres on gaining accreditations, developing resilience and becoming ready to move on to the next stage of education or training.

The curriculum is supported by a range of recognised accredited qualifications. This ensures that accreditation is both aspirational and effective in enabling progression to their next stage. Due to the often-complex prior education experiences prior to joining Coombe House School, the accreditation earned by pupils will be very personal to them.

These accreditations may include, but are not limited to:

- GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education).
- Functional Skills.
- Entry Level Certificates.
- BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council).
- ASDAN Awards (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network).
- AQA Unit Award (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance).
- Duke of Edinburgh.
- John Muir Award.

12. Version Control

Date of adoption of this policy	June 2025
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Policy owner (Proprietor)	Dorset Centre of Excellence