



Curriculum Policy

2026-2027

CURRICULUM POLICY

The Learning Orchard, our bespoke curriculum, exists to grow every child's potential. We offer a broad-based curriculum that builds powerful knowledge, promotes a genuine enjoyment of learning, and equips pupils with the skills, character and confidence to thrive as active, articulate and responsible members of a rapidly changing world. Underpinned by the principles of High Performance Learning, we believe every child is capable of high performance when given the right knowledge, values and thinking skills: there is nothing our children can't do, they just might not be able to do it yet.

Status

- This policy reflects the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2025, (effective 1 September 2025). It should be read alongside the school's approach to High Performance Learning (HPL), the framework and ethos that underpins teaching and learning across Orchard House School. Orchard House School is working towards High Performance Learning World Class School accreditation.

The Learning Orchard Curriculum

The Learning Orchard is Orchard House School's bespoke curriculum: subjects and topics devised by our specialist teachers to suit our ambitious children and school. It prepares children not only for exams, but for all that comes next, fostering a lifelong love of learning and an inquisitive mind that helps children adapt to any terrain. It is progressively knowledgeable, supportively stretching, and reassuringly rigorous.

Every subject, lesson and activity in The Learning Orchard is rooted in four guiding principles:

Holistic Learning: We intrinsically and explicitly link topics, knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Lessons are contextualised and applied, creative and fun, inspiring a lifelong love of learning in every child.

Leadership: The preservation and protection of our world depends on strong leadership. We nurture a sense of community, champion a dedication to service and celebrate initiative to inspire future leaders.

Powerful Knowledge: Through a broad, knowledge-rich curriculum that encourages curiosity and exploration, we provide our children with the skills and understanding they need to become well-rounded and informed individuals.

World Readiness: The next generation must be equipped for a changing world. By fostering creativity, invention, adaptability and an appetite for discovery, we help our children to thrive both at school and beyond.

These principles run through eight interconnected subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, Knowledge (History and Geography), The Arts, Reasoning, STEAM, and Philosophy and Oracy. Philosophy and Oracy underpins every branch of the curriculum, helping children to think, speak and see things differently: to share opinions with spirit, listen deeply, debate respectfully and interview well. The Learning Orchard is complemented by our established teaching in Sport, Computing and French, together with music, performance and a rich programme of extra-curricular activities, trips and residential, all of which are essential to the learning experience at Orchard House School.

As a school we take a character-first approach that values kindness, openness, attentiveness and excellence. We designed The Learning Orchard to nurture qualities that make for modest yet ambitious young people who have all they need to excel: children who are kind, knowledgeable, articulate, inquisitive, adaptable, creative and determined.

Areas of learning include:

- Science
- Knowledge (History and Geography)
- The Arts (art, drama and music)
- Reasoning
- STEAM - Project based learning
- Philosophy and Oracy
- French
- Computing
- Physical Education, Games and Swimming
- Beliefs and Values and RSHE
- Forest School (KS1)

High Performance Learning

High Performance Learning (HPL) is the framework and ethos that sits alongside The Learning Orchard and shapes how we teach, talk and think about learning at Orchard House School. HPL rejects the idea that high achievement is fixed or reserved for a select few. We believe every child can grow their intelligence and their potential when they are given the right support, challenge and opportunities, and we build our teaching to expect and work towards high performance for every child, not just some.

How we teach thinking and learning behaviours

HPL identifies two sets of characteristics that we teach explicitly and weave throughout everyday teaching, classroom discussion and learning experiences, rather than as separate lessons:

Advanced Cognitive Performance characteristics (ACPs): how children think, including metacognition, linking ideas, analysing, creating and realising. Building these characteristics helps children become more reflective, independent and ambitious learners.

Values, Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs): how children approach learning, including resilience, hard work, empathy, collaboration and open-mindedness. These dispositions are modelled, named and celebrated throughout the school day, including through child-friendly characters that help younger children recognise these behaviours in themselves.

The language we use

Language matters to how children see themselves as learners, so we are deliberate about the words we use:

- We avoid describing children in terms of fixed ability, and do not use language such as 'clever', 'gifted' or 'not academic' to label a child. Performance in any subject can and does change over time.
- We talk about growing potential rather than fulfilling potential, because potential is not a fixed ceiling to be reached but a capacity that continues to develop with effort, teaching and practice.
- We believe that while every child is on their own, independent learning journey, there is nothing they can't do: they just might not be able to do it yet. We encourage children to say 'I can't do this yet' rather than 'I can't do this'.
- We recognise and name the thinking skills and learning behaviours (the ACPs and VAAs above) that children show, so that children understand not only what they have achieved, but how they achieved it.

Staff receive training and support to use this language consistently, and it informs how we plan lessons, give feedback, and talk with parents about their child's progress.

Assessment

- Elements of the curriculum are assessed using National Curriculum criteria but assessments will also be made with regard to other external influences e.g. 11+ entrance exams and common entrance. Formal assessments are conducted termly focusing on reading, spelling, writing and mathematics across Key Stage 1 and 2.
- See *Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy*

Equal Opportunities

Access to programmes of study is based on academic suitability and appropriateness, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion or belief.

Orchard House School also seeks to promote community cohesion.

Disabilities: In accordance with the statutory requirements the school aims to make the curriculum accessible to all pupils as far as is reasonably practicable.

This sits alongside the High Performance Learning belief that every child, whatever their starting point, is capable of high performance when given the right conditions in which to grow.

Adaptive Teaching

Most subjects are taught in mixed-performance groups, and a variety of adaptive teaching and learning techniques and materials are used in all courses to suit pupils' different needs. In line with High Performance Learning, we avoid fixed ability labels: grouping reflects a child's current, and always changeable, performance rather than a ceiling on what they can go on to achieve.

Mathematics is set according to demonstrated attainment and performance from Form 4 through to Form 6, and groups are reviewed regularly so that children can move as their performance develops.

Learning support is provided by specialist teachers for pupils who need help in a specific area of learning. (see SEND Support policy)

Early Years

- The curriculum is planned with reference to the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage September 2023, effective 2024, covering the following areas of learning:
 - **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive 9 relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.
 - **Communication & Language**

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them

to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

- Physical development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

- Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

- Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the

relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

- Understanding the world

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them - from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

- Expressive Arts & Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

(see EYFS policy for details)

KS1 & KS2

The curriculum is planned with reference to the National Curriculum across KS1 & KS2, delivered through the Learning Orchard, with the addition of supplementary resources to support the National Curriculum areas of learning.

Mathematics

The national curriculum for mathematics aims to ensure that all pupils:

- become fluent in the fundamentals of mathematics, including through varied and frequent practice with increasingly complex problems over time, so that pupils develop conceptual understanding and the ability to recall and apply knowledge rapidly and accurately
- reason mathematically by following a line of enquiry, conjecturing relationships and generalisations, and developing an argument, justification or proof using mathematical language
- can solve problems by applying their mathematics to a variety of routine and non-routine problems with increasing sophistication, including breaking down problems into a series of simpler steps and persevering in seeking solutions

English

The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written language, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information

- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate

High quality children's literature is at the heart of our approach to English. We select diverse and challenging texts and link them with topics taught throughout the curriculum to develop vocabulary and comprehension. Our scheme of work is supported by CLPE and Read Write Inc Phonics and Spelling.

Science

The national curriculum for science aims to ensure that all pupils:

- develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics
- develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science through different types of science enquiries that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them
- are equipped with the scientific knowledge required to understand the uses and implications of science, today and for the future

Alongside the national curriculum for science, Developing Experts is used as a supplementary resource to enhance scientific enquiry and application. Science teaching feeds and cultivates curiosity, encouraging children to ask questions, use their initiative and make discoveries.

Knowledge, The Arts, Reasoning, STEAM and Philosophy and Oracy

- The History and Geography scheme of work exposes our pupils to ambitious content supported by the wider curriculum. The

programme of study offers pupils the opportunity to gain a broad, well sequenced knowledge foundation.

- The Arts comprise of visual art, drama and music and aim to promote creativity, confidence and self expression alongside ambitious teaching of artistic periods, mediums and movements.
- STEAM takes the form of our bespoke, project based learning programme which promotes global citizenship by exposing children to real world problems and challenging them to find solutions. This programme fosters skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.
- Philosophy and Oracy is woven throughout the curriculum, helping children to think, commit, justify and reflect, and to become confident, articulate communicators.

RSHE

Please refer to RSHE policy..

Timetabling

- The head, deputy head and SLT when devising the timetable ensure that the balance of subjects and the time allocated for each subject is appropriate.

Extra-Curricular provision

- A broad range of extra clubs and squads are provided across KS1 and KS2 to extend and support the curriculum across the school. These are provided by form teachers and specialist teachers throughout the school. The clubs vary from invitation only where potential scholars have been identified and those offered to all children.

Relationship to other policies

- This Curriculum policy embraces policies and procedures for Admissions, Assessment, Assemblies, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Homework, Educational visits, SEN Support, Sex Education and Teaching and Learning.

Subject policies, plans, work scrutiny and monitoring

- Full details of the subject policies and long-term plans are contained in a separate section on the shared file on Google Drive. Class teachers make copies as needed.
- SLT monitors delivery of curriculum, teaching and learning through regular learning walks, lesson observations and book looks.

Monitoring

- Line managers and subject leads may observe class teaching throughout the year across different Key stages. During the observation (approx. 20-60 minutes), the observer should make notes on the common subject observation sheet with particular reference to the children's learning and achievement levels, as well as lesson content. Feedback must be provided verbally in a scheduled meeting and through the observation form.
- Subject leads are also responsible for work scrutiny of their subject area. Core subjects Maths, English and Science are to be monitored twice yearly whilst non-core subjects are to be checked formally once a year.
- Subject leads are to manage their subject in line with the Curriculum schemes of work and subject action plans throughout the academic year.
- At the end of each academic year subject Co-ordinators are responsible for logging, which children's books are to be kept for reference.

Roles and responsibilities of head, other staff, governors

- The head will ensure that:
 - all statutory elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met. This will include how the subject will be taught and assessed, the use of language, and the use of information and communications technology
- Other staff, eg the Deputy Head, academic and member of SLT, will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy and is responsible for liaising with Subject Leads to

discuss their subject's focus, in line with the Curriculum schemes of work.

- The governors will ensure that:
 - they consider the advice of the head when approving this curriculum policy
 - parents receive timely reports on the progress of their child
 - they participate actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum