Curriculum Policy

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**Contents**

[1. Curriculum aims 3](#_Toc191191996)

[2. Legislation and guidance 4](#_Toc191191997)

[3. Roles and responsibilities 4](#_Toc191191998)

[4. Organisation and planning 5](#_Toc191191999)

[5. Inclusion 7](#_Toc191192000)

[6. Monitoring arrangements 7](#_Toc191192001)

[7. Links with other policies 7](#_Toc191192002)

# 1. Curriculum aims

Music Stuff Education (MSE) is a specialist independent secondary school which is based across Greater Manchester. MSE operates as a full-time school for children with SEMH needs. Additionally, we offer full-time alternative provision. Our school opened in 2012 and now spans across 7 learning centres: Cuthbert 1, Cuthbert 2, Cuthbert 2B, Cuthbert 3, Fog Lane 1, Fog Lane 2 and Wilbraham Road. Many of our students have needs around SEMH (either met or currently unmet) which can act as potential barriers to learning. Many too will have experienced developmental and environmental issues and many experience high levels of deprivation, with the majority of our students not experiencing the range of more rounded, cultural and developmental opportunities available to peers elsewhere.

At Music Stuff Education our mission is to create an inclusive and nurturing environment where every individual is empowered to thrive. We are committed to meeting the unique needs of each learner, fostering resilience, confidence, and self-esteem. By celebrating individuality and encouraging self-belief, we inspire our learners to express themselves freely and authentically. Our school prioritises mental health and well-being, ensuring every learner feels valued, supported, and successful. Together, we guide our learners and prepare them for adulthood so that they are able to make meaningful contributions to society. In doing this we aspire to equip them with the skills to embrace challenges and achieve their fullest potential.

We are committed to providing a safe, calm, welcoming, and nurturing environment where every student can thrive. Our goal is to break down barriers and create a setting that supports effective learning, enabling pupils to fully engage with our curriculum, and empowering them to achieve their highest potential. We aim to ensure that our school has a culture, ethos and practice that strengthens relational approaches and inclusion, recognising the importance of psychological safety. Our school implements Thrive – a trauma-informed whole-school approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

All students are entitled to a curriculum that meets their needs and prepares them for life’s opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences. Our aim is to provide a curriculum that is ambitious, broad and balanced and one that nurtures and encourages everyone to achieve their full potential. We aim to provide students with the skills, knowledge, and cultural capital they need to access further education, employment or apprenticeship, preparing them for adulthood.

Our curriculum is designed to:

* Be ambitious, broad and balanced and allow all students to access a range of academic, vocational and creative subjects that inspire, motivate and foster a curiosity to learn
* Enable all students to make progress form their individual starting points and to achieve success in their learning
* Be underpinned by the national curriculum but flexible enough to adapt to the needs of our students
* Have a strong focus on improving students’ literacy and numeracy
* Support students’ social, emotional and mental health and develop confidence, self-esteem, independence, social skills, and teamwork
* Support all students to lead healthy and safe lifestyles
* Be inclusive, encourage respect, celebrate diversity and uphold the fundamental British values
* Prepare our students for the next stage in their education and for adulthood

The Curriculum aims are underpinned by our values; Ready, Respectful, Safe and Successful, and we also use the stance of PACE and the communication skills of the Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) to support children and young people. PACE is the acronym used by psychologist Dan Hughes to describe the optimal adult stance when working with children to reduce stress, enhance connection, promote safety and engender the learning of new social and emotional skills, supporting staff to manage behaviour positively and use de-escalation strategies. PACE stands for:

* Playfulness – sensitive and appropriate playfulness helps the child feel safe and promotes positivity
* Acceptance – unconditionally accepting the child makes them feel safe, secure and loved
* Curiosity – genuine and non-judgemental interest in the child helps them become aware of their inner life
* Empathy– demonstrating compassion for the child and their feelings supports the child’s sense of self-worth

The VRFs represent the key techniques that we consciously apply in relationships and include:

* Attunement – matching the energy of the child with non-verbal, prosodic, energetic and behavioural communication
* Validation – acknowledging the validity of the child’s feelings and experiences
* Containment – predictability, routine and experiencing safety and security, both relationally and environmentally
* Regulation – transforms what was too much to bear alone into an experience that can be tolerated together.

Alongside these, we promote fundamental British values and reinforce and promote British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

# 2. Legislation and guidance

The policy reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25) and [Equality Act 2010](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/6/chapter/1), and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education’s [Governance Handbook](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook).

# 3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

The governing board will also ensure that:

* A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
* Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
* The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements
* It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum
* Pupils are provided with careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

3.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

* All required 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
* The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board
* Requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects are managed, where appropriate
* The school’s procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements
* The governing board is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
* The governing board is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions
* Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEND

3.3 Other staff

Other staff will ensure that the school curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.

# 4. Organisation and planning

Heads of Department are experts in their subject, they lead on the content, specifications and delivery of the curriculum in each subject. At the heart of curriculum design is a shared commitment to constructing programmes of study that pupils find interesting and challenging but are coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge. Our curriculum has the ambition of the national curriculum but is flexible to meet the needs of our students. Key knowledge and skills are identified through our end point document at KS3, or the course specification at KS4, and children have regular opportunities to revisit, recall and apply key knowledge and skills in order to deepen their understanding. When teaching new content and skills, teachers provide explicit support and guidance and fully explain the concepts and skills that students are required to learn in manageable smaller steps. Formative, ongoing assessment is inextricably linked with our curriculum method. Teachers use quality first teaching strategies and students are given time to practise new knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum, enabling children to know more and remember more and move from basic, to deeper understanding and ensure that there is a sustained change in their long term memory.

Students can arrive at Music Stuff Education at any time in their school career and we have in place a baselining process which accurately assess students’ prior knowledge, identifies gaps and allows students to make progress no matter what their starting point, with a personalised and ‘gap led’ approach. Prior attainment data and knowledge of students’ SEND needs are used alongside baseline assessments to set quantitative and qualitative targets. Gap analysis is used in core subjects to identify students’ gaps in learning and starting points and set individual targets. Reading is assessed using the GL New Group Reading Test and reading ages and age standardised scores are shared with all staff and interventions put in place as necessary.

We recognise our school context and our students’ social and emotional needs; the wider curriculum and pastoral support are as important to us as academic achievement. Our curriculum offer encompasses all learning experiences that our students receive whilst with us, including enrichment time, trips and other experiences, building confidence and aspirations for the future irrespective of their entry point and SEND. This is intended to raise self-esteem, challenge pupils at an appropriate level and to help them enjoy learning whilst achieving positive outcomes and prepare them for adulthood. All our Centres follow a ‘school themes calendar’ which looks at different themes across the year including British Values, awareness days and religious festivals and students are able to take part in activities based around the theme, supporting students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Statutory RSE content is taught during PSHE lessons and is provided by an external provider and British Values and careers education are taught as part of the PSHE curriculum and supported by our school themes calendar.

Our curriculum documents outline the broad and balanced curriculum that all our students can expect. As stated above, it outlines our emphasis on key skills and knowledge, broad and engaging experiences and a focus on personal development.

We provide the following key curriculum documents:

- ‘Whole School long-term overview’ which shares the overview of topics for every year group across our centres.

- ‘Subject long-term overviews’ which share the whole school sequence of topics that are covered in each year group for every subject.

- ‘Subject end point documents for each subject, which outline the progressive subject skills, knowledge and concepts and work alongside progression steps.

- ‘Medium term plans/unit plans’ which guide staff on the learning journey a class may take to meet the end points. These include details of how we ensure all students are able to learn and make progress.

- ‘Knowledge Organisers’ outline key knowledge and vocabulary we want students to know in particular subject areas.

**Key Stage 3 (Wilbraham Centre)**

Our Key Stage 3 curriculum builds on students’ prior knowledge, using prior attainment, SEND documents, summative baseline assessments and formative assessment to meet our students’ individual needs. We have a thrive practitioner on site and students’ social and emotional wellbeing and mental health is prioritised alongside students’ academic learning. We aim to provide students with a broad and balanced range of subjects. We emphasise core skills of literacy and numeracy and whilst our curriculum is broadly based on the national curriculum, it is flexible enough to ensure we meet the needs of our students, many of whom are working well below age related expectations. As well as timetabled core subjects of English, Maths and Science, all students study PSHE/RSE, History and Art and Design, with pupils’ ICT skills being supported within these subjects. Opportunities for independent and small group reading are timetabled three times a week. To enrich their offer students also have timetabled enrichment activities including, Food and Cooking and Physical activity. Students are supported in their social and emotional development through activities based on the thrive profile and a nurture-based ethos, with a high student to staff ratio and small classes.

**Key Stage 4 (with integrated year 9s)**

At Key Stage 4, we offer GCSE’s, Functional skills and entry level certificates, and BTEC qualifications and these include both academic and vocational subjects. As well as the core offer of English Language, Maths, Science, Art and Design, History and PSHE/RSE, students can study subjects including English Literature, Creative Media and Hair and Beauty. Please see below the qualifications that are offered. There are timetabled periods for physical activity and cooking, which offers both enrichment and preparation for adulthood and reading periods where pupils can read independently or in small groups. As with KS3, students’ social and emotional wellbeing and mental health are supported through a relational approach, high student to staff ratio with small class sizes, and the Thrive profile.

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| Subject | Qualifications: |
| English Language | Entry Level Certificate  GCSE |
| English Literature | GCSE |
| Maths | Entry Level Certificate  GCSE |
| Science | Entry Level Certificate  GCSE Physics  GCSE Biology |
| Art and Design | GCSE |
| History | Entry level  GCSE |
| Creative Media | BTEC Level 1 introductory |
| Hair and Beauty | VTCT Level 1 Diploma |

# 5. Inclusion

Teachers set high expectations for all students. They will use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

* More able students
* Students with low prior attainment
* Students from disadvantaged backgrounds
* Students with SEND
* Students with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers will plan lessons so that students with SEND can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of students whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help students to develop their English, and to support students to take part in all subjects.

Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEND policy and information report.

# 6. Monitoring arrangements

Subject leaders/curriculum leaders monitor the way their subject is taught throughout the school by:

 Planning scrutiny

 Learning walks

 Books scrutiny

 Lesson observations

 Student voice questionnaires

 Meetings with student council

They also have responsibility for monitoring the way in which resources are stored and managed.

This policy will be reviewed every year by the headteacher, the Deputy Head for Teaching and Learning and the governors. At every review, the policy will be shared with the full governing board.

# 7. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

* Assessment Policy
* Marking and Feedback Policy
* RSE Policy
* Literacy Policy
* Careers Policy
* SMSC Policy
* SEND Policy and Information Report
* Equality Information and Objectives