

The Oswaldtwistle School



Whole School Curriculum Statement

June 2023

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Context

As a pupil referral unit, we offer a highly inclusive, educational provision to young people of secondary school age whose needs have not been met by their mainstream curriculum offer. The individual circumstances of our students vary greatly, but the majority are disadvantaged with unmet needs, some being very complex. The majority suffer from a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem with many running the risk of a reduction in educational achievement.

In order to meet the individual needs of each of our student's, we offer a number of bespoke provisions, each with its own unique curriculum and rationale. Provision allocation is informed by a number of factors including the records we receive from the student's previous school/s, any available SEN reports or reports from other professionals/ agencies and the outcomes from a bank of high-quality baseline assessments conducted on entry into the school. We also take into consideration the thoughts and feelings of the student and their parents/carers when finalising their provision. Movement between provisions does occur and is usually a response to the emerging social, emotional and mental health needs of the students. It is against this back drop that the curriculum has been carefully crafted and as a team we work tirelessly within this context to help our students develop the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to become responsible, resilient and productive citizens.

Regardless of provision type, our ultimate aim is to ensure all students engage positively with a purposeful curriculum that enables them to secure an appropriate destination to move on to, be it a return to a mainstream setting, moving on to a special school setting, heading off to college or entering the world of apprenticeships and work.

Rationale behind the curriculum.

In line with the Government's SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan for AP (March 2023), we view Oswaldtwistle School not as a 'destination centre' but as an 'intervention centre' which is reflected in our curriculum rationale/Intent and associated curriculum pathways.

Our rationale, regardless of provision type, links directly to our school vision and focuses on both academic achievement and gains in social emotional literacy and personal development. The learning experience is highly personalised within a support network that focuses on removing 'barriers' and encouraging participation and achievement. The aim being to provide students with an experience that will ultimately equip them with the necessary competencies and confidence to achieve their full potential, move on and be the best they can.

Curriculum Intent:

Our curriculum has 2 main aims: the promotion of personal development and academic success.

1. Personal Development

Central to the personal development of all our young people is the promotion of Social Emotional literacy (Steiner 1997), that underpins all that we do at Oswaldtwistle School. As a team we focus on the promotion and development of pupil self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills and the difference this can make to a young person's wellbeing and behaviour. At KS3 all students participate in Forest Schools activities one day a week which allows for the promotion social emotional literacy. At both KS3 and KS4, students engage in weekly key worker sessions and mentoring sessions to support their development in this area. We also embrace trauma informed practice and make reasonable adjustments where necessary to meet the needs of our students. We aim to ensure that our school is a safe and happy place where learning is accessible for all.

Given our inherently large percentage of Pupil Premium students (often 2/3 times that of mainstream schools) and the high level of vulnerability they often present with, we work tirelessly to help our young people to appreciate the life opportunities available to them. In line with Emily Style's (1996) notion of the "curriculum as mirror and window" – a mirror for students to be able to identify their own experience with, but also a window to see beyond their own experience to a greater, richer understanding of the world around them; we work hard to promote gains in cultural capital whilst encouraging the development of a host of skills and knowledge that will help them to be the best they can be. In so doing we aim to secure an ambitious and successful transition to their next destination in a safe and healthy manner.

In support of this we work hard to develop their awareness of the country in which they live and that of the wider world. We keenly promote SMSC, British Values, the rights of the child as promoted through the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA), and good mental health and wellbeing. Careers Information and Guidance features prominently along with the promotion of inter-personal skills. Students also access 2 Curriculum for Life lessons a week in which they learn about the multicultural country in which they live and the need for tolerance and respect for fellow citizens regardless of religion and culture.

We also focus on the promotion of vocabulary in line with the research carried out by Hart and Risley (1995) who identified disadvantaged students as having far smaller word banks and poorer reading abilities than the general student population. We fiercely believe that improved vocabulary banks will help boost our students' ability to read and write, thus improving their chances of success. Reading itself is fervently promoted and is a key curriculum feature along with writing and oracy. (see the school's disciplinary Literacy Policy for more detail).

Furthermore, we encourage our students to develop interests and further improve their talents by creating opportunities for them to engage in a variety of cultural enrichment activities, sport related activities, drop down days and lunch time activities, including music. Opportunities to encounter and

understand the best of ideas, concepts and human achievements known to man are also promoted through lessons, form time activities, trips, assemblies and drop-down days.

To support gains in self-esteem and learning a 'Growth Mind-set' (C Dweck 1985) and 'can do' culture is promoted in the hope that our students will improve their resilience and ability to cope with an ever-changing world of challenging situations.

2. Academic Success

The majority of our students engage with either a 3-year Key Stage 3 curriculum or a 2-year Key Stage 4 curriculum, be it not in all cases, for a long period of time. The remaining students follow a bespoke, more thematic approach to their learning over a short period of time before returning to their main stream school.

The KS3 curriculum is broad and a range of subjects are studied; however, a high level of importance is attached to personal development and social emotional literacy. Without this wider focus it is doubtful that a majority of students would be able to access learning and in turn successfully return to their mainstream school or move on to an appropriate destination. Reading and writing are also a curriculum priority for the very same reason. Core subjects include Social Emotional Literacy, Interpersonal Skills, Maths, English, Science, Curriculum for Life (PSHCE), Humanities, Art, Technology and PE.

The 2-year KS4 curriculum allows for 3 main curriculum pathways to be followed; an academic pathway, an academic/vocational pathway and a transitional pathway that focuses on the development of skills linked to a desired future trade/job. The varying pathways are offered to promote maximum engagement and to secure a successful transition to post 16 opportunities. All students regardless of pathway followed, study English, Mathematics, Curriculum for Life (PSHCE) and PE within a context that promotes both Personal Development, Social Emotional Literacy and Life skills.

All students follow an ambitious curriculum that is personalised to meet their needs, with outcomes ranging from 7 GCSEs, including Maths, English and Science to a City and Guilds Level 1/2 vocational qualification with GCSE English and Maths. Each individual is expected to work optimally whatever the course and engage positively with all reading and writing activities. Careers is central to every provision and extended work experience placements are available to students who we feel will benefit from that experience. Extra support is given to our disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND through a variety of support/intervention packages.

Implementation of the taught curriculum – pedagogy and practise

Regardless of the curriculum being followed all learning pathways are carefully personalised to meet the individual needs of all students and have been planned and sequenced to allow for the accumulation of knowledge and skills over time, whilst encouraging students to make the most of their interests and talents. All content is taught in a logical progression, to enable students to develop the necessary knowledge and skills from simple to more complex and abstract ideas. The ultimate aim being the transfer of key knowledge and skills to the long-term memory. In all subjects the end points

of the curriculum are clear in terms of what pupils need to know and be able to do and all teachers embrace 'adaptive teaching' so to ensure an inclusive approach to learning.

Our instructional approach to teaching and learning fully embraces the pedagogy advanced by Rosenshine in his work on the 10 principles of Instruction. **Strand 1:** Sequencing, concepts and modelling – present new material using small steps, provide models, provide scaffolds for difficult tasks, **Strand 2:** Questioning – ask questions, check understanding, **Strand 3:** Stages of Practice – guide student practice, obtain high success rates, independent practice (I, We, You) and **Strand 4:** Reviewing material – daily review and monthly review. Rosenshine represents the link between the field of cognitive science and classroom practice and we believe it helps our young people to achieve the best results in the classroom.

Staff also appreciate the need to embed learning in order to allow new learning to take place effectively. To this end, all teachers regularly plan for and deliver retrieval/retention activities which leads to the embedding of knowledge and skills and ultimately the securing of end points. This reflects the Cognitive Load Theory and how the brain learns and stores knowledge, and the link between the huge capacity of the long-term memory and the smaller working memory (Sweller, 1990s).

Teachers fully appreciate the importance of assessment as an integral part of the implementation process and to this end we have introduced the use of base line assessments at the start of units to help teachers to identify gaps, and even strengths; and impact assessments at the end of topics to enable staff to see what has been successfully learned and in which areas students require more practice through retrieval work.

Formative and summative assessment is used frequently by all staff in an attempt to interrupt forgetting and embed learning. Teachers are familiar with the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve and the role that frequent quizzing and interleaving can play in the embedding of learning (Roeder and Karpicke 2006)

Academic trackers are used by all teachers and contain the end points for each of the topics being taught. These are used by teachers and students to measure the degree of mastery/fluency in each of the subcomponents of the unit of learning.

Cross curricular links are viewed as an important aspect of curriculum planning and teachers are passionately working to improve this feature especially given the short stay nature of the school and the difficulties faced when trying to secure the vertical sequencing of knowledge and skills as seen in mainstream settings. We believe in the strength of cross curricular links when trying to embed learning to the long-term memory and to enable students to appreciate how knowledge, concepts and skills can be shared across subjects.

In addition to Rosenshine's principals, teachers also use the teaching and learning strategies advocated on each student's Individual Education Plan, Behaviour Support Plan and Education Health Care Plan in an attempt to maximise progress and outcomes for each student.

Curriculum Impact

The impact of our curriculum is measured not only by the academic progress of our students and associated GCSE results, but also by their personal development in terms of gains in cultural capital and improved levels of resilience and social emotional literacy, which in turn, supports them in their readiness to move on. The voice of all stakeholders' along with data analysis outcomes, to include gains in reading age, are used to assess the success of the curriculum. Oswaldtwistle School attendance rates compared to previous school attendance rates are also used as a measure of success in the belief that if needs are being met attendance will undoubtedly improve, as will behaviour. As pupils are being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment, any data linked to these transition phases is also used to help assess the success of the curriculum; for example, NEET figures, the percentage success rate of returning intervention students and the percentage success rates of permanently excluded students when moving on to a new mainstream school.