



Outcomes
First Group

Curriculum Policy

Our Capabilities-Based, Integrated
Therapeutic Curriculum

Mountfield Heath School



Document History

Version	Comments/amendments	Name	Date
1.0	Version 1	Lyndsey Jeffries	September 2018
2.0	Version 2 reviewed – review again in September 2019	Lyndsey Jeffries	June 2019
3.0	Version 3 – updates made to the Planning guidelines and Literacy Intervention	Frankie Kelly	September 2019
4.0	Version 4 – major review and rewriting of policy to reflect practice at MHS.	Sam Dugan	November 2021
5.0	Version 5 – Full review. Introduction of the revised integrated therapeutic curriculum.	Sam Dugan	September 2022
5.1	Reviewed – formatting improvements, wording changes for clarity, ITEPs, topic frequency, links to guidance included, knowledge & skills progression included.	Sam Dugan	September 2023
5.2	Clarification of SOLAR: curriculum framework, not assessment framework.	Sam Dugan	November 2023
5.3	Reviewed – change to need profile following move from Acorn to Options Autism within OFG. No further immediate changes pending move to EfL in Spring 2025.	Sam Dugan	December 2024
5.4	Reviewed – policy requires full update to reflect move to Capabilities Approach.	Sam Dugan	September 2025
6.0	Version 6 – Introduction of Capabilities Approach to support Integrated Therapeutic Curriculum, Evidence for Learning and Ipsative Assessment.	Sam Dugan	February 2026

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1. Introduction

At Mountfield Heath School, the curriculum is designed to enable every pupil to develop the knowledge, skills, relationships and personal agency needed to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life. Our school provides education for neurodivergent pupils with a wide range of complex needs, including autism, ADHD, PDA, developmental trauma, sensory and communication differences and complex (also known as severe) learning disabilities. Since 2018, we have developed a highly integrated therapeutic curriculum that places wellbeing, autonomy, and identity at the centre of every learning experience.

Our curriculum has grown from sustained reflection, staff collaboration, and engagement with contemporary theory. It draws on the professional study and research of our teachers, therapists and leaders, alongside the practical wisdom of the whole staff team. This collective expertise has shaped a curriculum that is ambitious, individualised, and firmly rooted in what we know helps our pupils thrive.

The current iteration of our curriculum is guided by the Capabilities Approach (CA): a strengths-based, neuro-affirming model of education that foregrounds human dignity, agency and flourishing. We celebrate our pupils as they are, hold high aspirations for their futures, and recognise that what we do in primary school forms the foundations for preparation for adulthood.

The curriculum is designed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, with reasonable adjustments embedded as a baseline entitlement for all pupils. For some pupils, learning will include the development of academic knowledge and skills. For others, the focus will be on communication, independence, regulation, social understanding and participation in everyday life.

The curriculum therefore prioritises:

- communication and language
- emotional regulation and wellbeing
- social connection and belonging
- independence and autonomy
- engagement with the wider world
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Learning is understood to take place across the whole school experience: in classrooms, outdoor environments, therapeutic work, play, relationships and everyday routines.

The curriculum is supported by the school's assessment systems, including Individual Therapeutic Education Plans (ITEPs), Evidence for Learning (EfL), and ongoing multidisciplinary collaboration.

In developing our curriculum, we have aligned it's aims and principles to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with comprehensive mapping detailed as an appendix to this policy.

2. Curriculum Principles

The curriculum is shaped by the following core principles:

2.1 Dignity and Agency

All pupils are recognised as individuals with rights, preferences and potential. The curriculum aims to support pupils to express themselves, make choices and participate meaningfully in their communities.

Pupils are supported to develop self-understanding, autonomy and confidence through experiences that value their voice and perspectives.

2.2 Neuro-affirming Practice

The school recognises neurodiversity as a natural part of human variation. The curriculum therefore aims to support pupils' differences rather than seeking to normalise or suppress them.

Teaching approaches prioritise:

- regulation before expectation
- sensory-aware environments
- communication support
- relational safety and trust

This enables pupils to engage with learning in ways that respect their developmental needs and individual profiles.

2.3 Relationships as the Foundation for Learning

Positive relationships are central to learning at Mountfield Heath School. Pupils learn most effectively when they feel safe, understood and connected.

Staff prioritise:

- co-regulation
- attuned communication
- trust and predictability
- emotionally supportive environments

These relational foundations support pupils' readiness to learn and participate.

2.4 Learning Through Experience

Many pupils learn most effectively through concrete experience, sensory exploration and meaningful activity.

Learning opportunities therefore include:

- play-based exploration
- practical and sensory learning
- outdoor learning and Forest School
- collaborative activity
- real-world experiences

This approach supports the development of understanding through participation and interaction rather than solely through abstract instruction.

2.5 Developmental Progress

Progress is understood as developmental rather than strictly linear. Pupils may demonstrate progress through:

- increased engagement
- improved communication
- greater independence
- strengthened relationships
- improved regulation
- application of skills across contexts

The school's assessment systems are designed to recognise and record these forms of progress.

2.6 Curriculum Compliance

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (ISS), in particular Part 1 (Quality of Education — Curriculum). While Mountfield Heath School is not required to follow the National Curriculum, the school ensures that curriculum content is broad, balanced and coherent. The Curriculum Wheels (see Section 9) map subject coverage across the Capabilities Framework, providing assurance that pupils access a wide range of knowledge and experience. Leaders review coverage annually to ensure this remains the case.

3. Pedagogy and Cognitive Development

We recognise that differences in memory are a dominant feature of our pupils' cognitive profiles. Insights from cognitive science, and our deep knowledge of our pupils, guides our use of targeted strategies to promote memory development and retrieval. These include:

- Using special interests to engage pupils and support the development of long-term memory and understanding
- Breaking down learning into small steps to reduce cognitive overload
- Supporting working memory through trusted relationships and emotional safety
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Where developmentally appropriate, we explicitly teach metacognitive awareness—knowing how and why one learns. Staff model their own learning strategies and reflections. This supports resilience, attention, and willingness to engage with challenge.

In addition to developmental differences, most of our pupils have experienced disrupted or traumatic educational journeys. This results in 'spiky profiles'—with gaps, misconceptions, and uneven prior knowledge.

To address this, we:

- Emphasise consolidation of learning into long-term memory and generalisation across contexts
- Provide purposeful repetition in accessible, meaningful ways
- Use SaLT and OT input to embed strategies across contexts
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Social cognition differences, literal understanding, and rigidity of thought are also common. Teaching is structured accordingly:

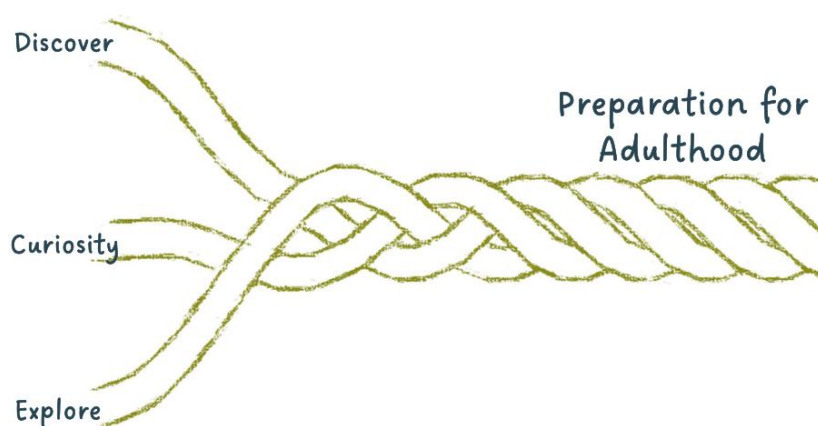
- Carefully matched peer communication
- Primary use of small-group instruction
- 1:1 instruction when needed for focus and co-regulation
- High exposure to structured turn-taking and collaborative learning

Staff use clear modelling, scaffolding, and consistent language, always adapted to the individual. These pedagogical approaches enable pupils to develop the capabilities described within the school's curriculum framework through supported interaction, experience and reflection. Safety, predictability, and relational trust are foundations for increased independence.

Implementation of this pedagogical approach is supported through regular multidisciplinary communication between education and clinical teams, ongoing review of behavioural and engagement data, sensory environment audits, and leadership monitoring of teaching and learning. These processes enable the school to identify patterns, respond to pupils' needs and continually refine teaching approaches.

4. Curriculum Structure

The curriculum is structured to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate for each pupil. Pupils are supported through curriculum pathways that reflect their stage of development, communication profile and learning needs. The three pathways are:



Curiosity

- For pupils with complex sensory and communication needs, and complex (also known as severe) learning difficulties.

Focus: exploration, early communication, shared attention, and engagement with the environment.

Outcome: discovering the world around them and developing early autonomy, often leading to supported adult living.

Discover

- For pupils with moderate learning difficulties and delays of 2+ years.

Focus: functional academics, emotional regulation, Activities of daily living (ADLs), and community participation.

Outcome: practising skills in different contexts, promoting independence and community engagement, often leading to supported or semi-independent living.

Explore

- For pupils with moderate learning needs and interrupted educational histories.

Focus: academic confidence, self-reflection, identity, and future preparation.

Outcome: developing self-efficacy and aspiration, often leading to qualifications and supported or independent living.

These pathways reflect stages of development, not ability levels or key stages, and provide a framework for planning learning experiences while maintaining flexibility to respond to individual pupils. Placement within pathways is reviewed regularly and may change as pupils develop.

5. The Capabilities Framework

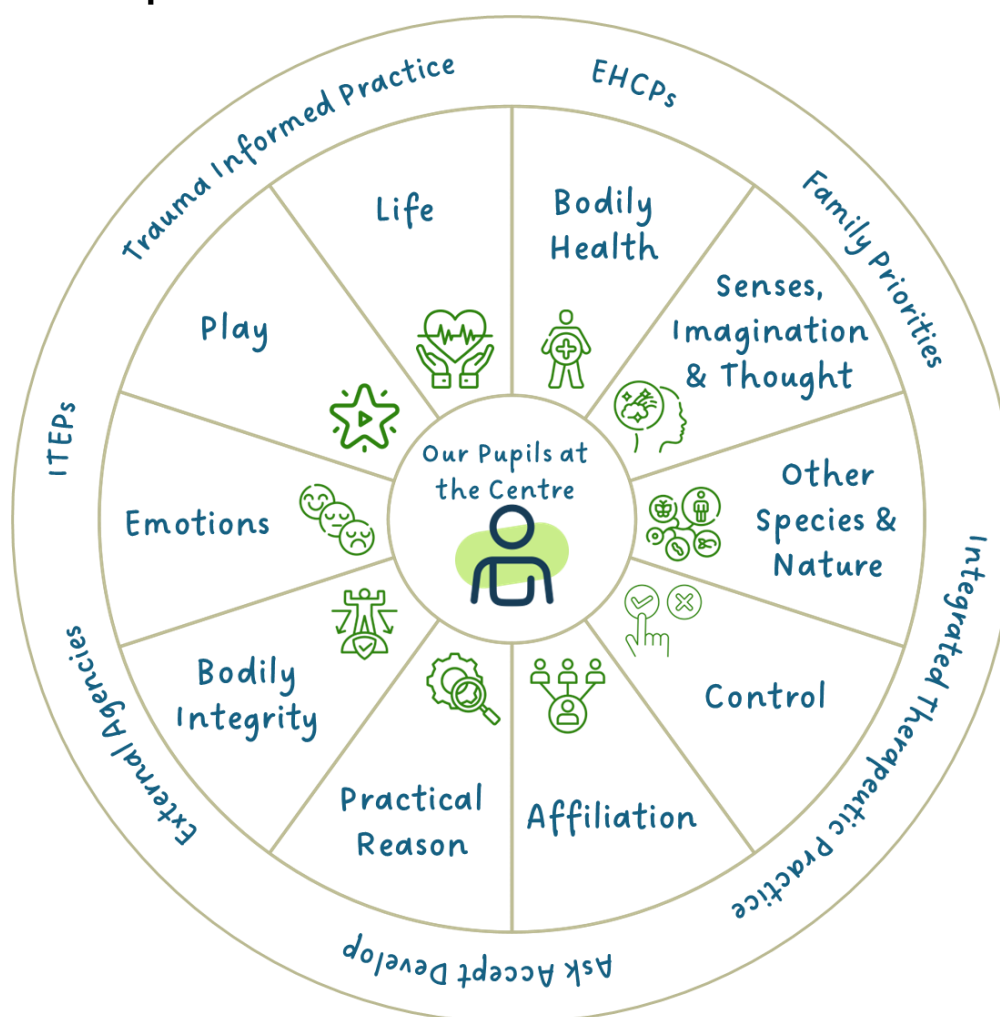
The curriculum is organised around a set of core capabilities that reflect the broader outcomes we want pupils to achieve in life.

These capabilities draw on the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum and focus on what individuals are able to do and be within their lives. Our intent is to equip every pupil with the capabilities they need to live lives of meaning, safety, connection, and purpose. The framework supports the development of capabilities such as:

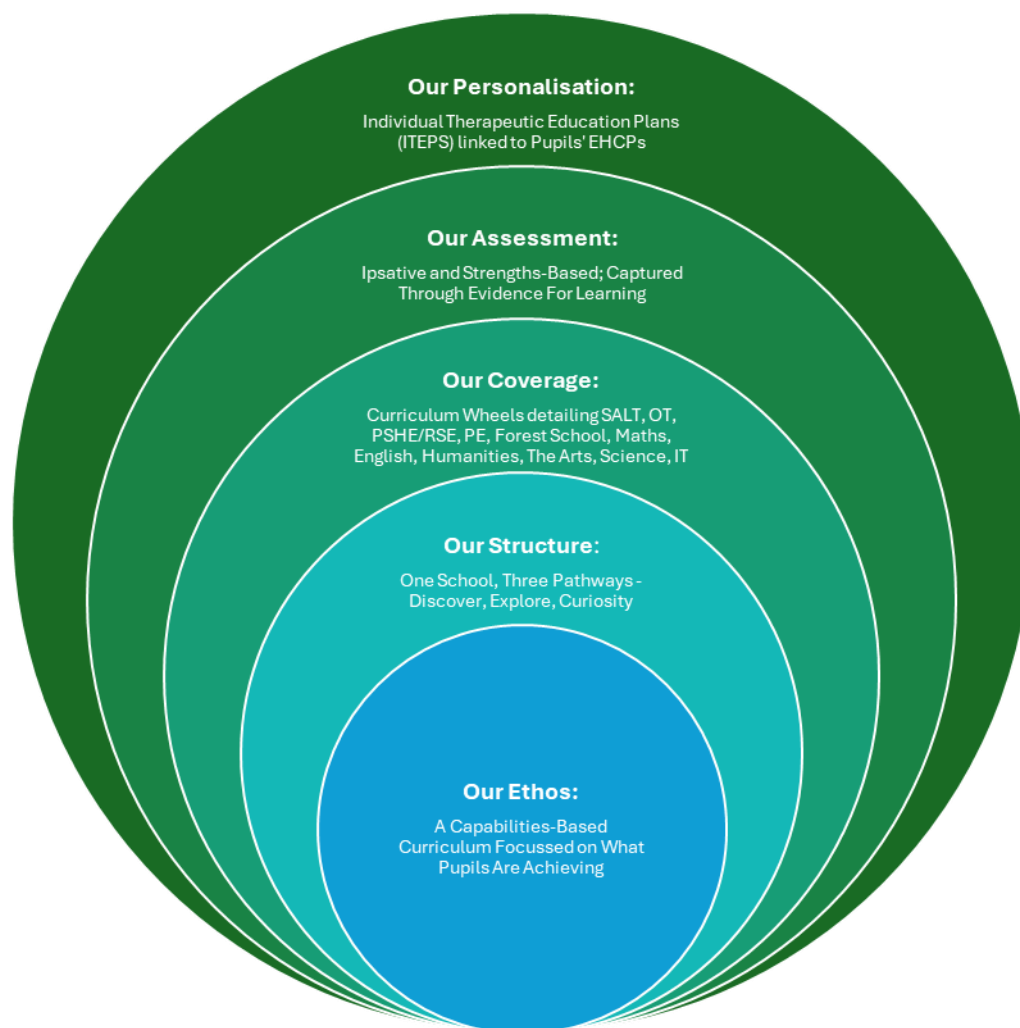
- communication and expression
- bodily health and wellbeing
- emotional understanding and regulation
- relationships and affiliation
- imagination and play
- interaction with the natural world
- autonomy and practical reasoning
-

Each capability includes a small set of achievement statements that describe meaningful areas of development for pupils. These statements help staff to observe and recognise progress in ways that reflect pupils' lived experiences rather than purely academic attainment.

6. Curriculum Implementation



We implement our curriculum through a coherent five-part model. Curriculum delivery combines structured teaching with responsive, relational practice.



Learning is supported through:

- planned teaching sessions
- continuous provision and structured environments
- therapeutic input
- outdoor learning and Forest School
- play and exploration
- everyday routines and social interaction

Staff adapt teaching approaches to suit pupils' communication, sensory and developmental needs.

Strategies may include:

- visual supports
- modelling and scaffolding
- sensory regulation strategies
- structured routines
- collaborative learning
- supported play

This flexibility ensures that learning remains accessible and meaningful for all pupils.

7. Personalisation

Each pupil's curriculum is personalised through their Individual Therapeutic Education Plan (ITEP). ITEPs identify key targets linked to:

- EHCP outcomes
- therapeutic priorities
- developmental needs
- communication goals
- independence skills
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Targets are reviewed regularly through multidisciplinary collaboration involving teachers, therapists and families.

This ensures that curriculum experiences remain closely aligned with pupils' needs and aspirations.

8. Assessment

Assessment supports understanding of pupils' development rather than ranking or comparison.

Assessment at Mountfield Heath School is based on:

- ongoing observation
- reflective professional judgement
- evidence gathered through Evidence for Learning
- review of ITEP targets
- pupil progress meetings
- multidisciplinary discussion

We use ipsative assessment processes and understand progress in relation to the individual pupil's starting point and development over time.

Assessment information supports:

- curriculum planning
- target setting
- communication with families
- annual review processes

Further detail can be found in the Assessment and Evidence for Learning Policy.

9. Curriculum Coverage

While the curriculum prioritises developmental learning, pupils also experience a broad range of subject areas including:

- communication and language
- mathematics
- creative arts

- physical development
- science and understanding the world
- outdoor learning
- personal, social and emotional development

Each curriculum area has a Capabilities Curriculum Wheel and additional information contained within our Curriculum Collection documentation. These tools:

- Map out how that subject supports each Capability through specific curriculum content, experiences, or pedagogies
- Ensure that curriculum breadth is maintained within our capabilities-led model
- Function as a long-term planning overview, not as an assessment tool
- Provide staff, governors, and stakeholders with clear visibility of how subject knowledge and therapeutic provision are integrated within the wider offer

Curriculum Wheels capture how each subject supports meaningful, inclusive development through the Capabilities.

Subject learning is adapted to meet pupils' developmental levels and may be integrated into thematic or experiential learning activities.

Curriculum coverage therefore supports both developmental learning and engagement with wider knowledge of the world.

9.1 Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal, social and emotional development is central to the curriculum at Mountfield Heath School.

Many pupils require explicit support to develop emotional understanding, regulation, social communication and self-awareness. These areas are therefore embedded across the curriculum rather than being taught solely as a discrete subject.

Through planned learning experiences, therapeutic input and everyday interactions, pupils are supported to develop:

- emotional literacy and regulation
- understanding of relationships and boundaries
- self-advocacy and personal agency
- resilience and confidence
- respect for themselves and others

PSHE themes are addressed through a combination of structured learning opportunities and responsive teaching linked to pupils' lived experiences.

This includes learning related to:

- friendships and relationships
- wellbeing and self-care
- safety and risk awareness
- identity and belonging
- participation in communities

For many pupils, this learning is supported through visual resources, modelling, structured discussion and experiential activities.

9.2 Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

The curriculum recognises that emotional wellbeing is closely linked to learning and participation.

Staff prioritise:

- co-regulation and emotional safety
- development of emotional vocabulary
- understanding of internal states and needs
- strategies for managing feelings and stress

These approaches support pupils to build the foundations for positive mental health and engagement with learning.

SEMH development is supported through collaboration between teaching staff and the school's clinical team, including Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

9.3 Fundamental British Values

The school promotes Fundamental British Values through the everyday life of the school community.

These values include:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect
- tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

Pupils experience these values through participation in decision-making, respectful relationships and opportunities to express their views.

Examples include:

- making choices and expressing preferences
- taking turns and sharing resources
- participating in group activities
- understanding rules and fairness
- learning about different people, cultures and communities

Teaching approaches are adapted to ensure that these concepts are accessible and meaningful for pupils with a wide range of communication and developmental needs.

9.4 Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

The school meets its statutory duties under the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019. RSE is delivered in a manner appropriate to pupils' ages, developmental levels, communication profiles and individual needs.

Provision is detailed in the school's RSE Policy, which sets out how statutory content is made accessible for pupils with complex needs, including the use of visual supports, adapted resources, and therapeutic integration. The RSE Policy is reviewed annually and is available via the school website.

10. Preparation for the Future

The curriculum is designed with preparation for adulthood in mind from the earliest stages of a pupil's education. At primary level, this means building the foundations — in communication, regulation, independence, social understanding and self-advocacy — that will support pupils' progression into whatever adult life holds for them.

The Capabilities Framework ensures this orientation is embedded across all learning experiences rather than deferred to later schooling. Pupils' EHCPs and ITEP targets are aligned to long-term outcomes, and transition planning forms part of the annual review process in collaboration with families and relevant agencies.

Where appropriate, pupils may progress towards opportunities for accreditation or qualifications in later educational settings.

11. Review and Quality Assurance

The curriculum is regularly reviewed by school leaders to ensure it remains responsive to pupils' needs and aligned with current best practice.

Quality assurance includes:

- learning walks and observations
- review of Evidence for Learning records
- pupil progress meetings
- moderation discussions
- feedback from pupils, families and staff

Governance maintains oversight of curriculum quality through a programme of focused governor visits. These include dedicated visits covering safeguarding, quality of education, and other aspects of provision. Governors receive reports from these visits and review curriculum effectiveness as part of their broader accountability responsibilities.

These processes support ongoing development of the curriculum and ensure that provision continues to promote pupils' wellbeing and learning.

12. Terminology

In this policy, the term *learning disability* may be used in its established professional sense to describe significant differences in intellectual development that affect learning, communication and independence.

Some pupils may have *severe learning disabilities* meaning they require substantial support in areas such as communication, mobility or personal care.

These terms are used descriptively rather than to define pupils' potential or identity. Each pupil is recognised as an individual with strengths, preferences and aspirations.

APPENDIX 1 Detailing the Capabilities and Mapping to UNCRC

1. Life

The capability to be alive and to live a life with dignity, safety, and care.

- Pupils are safe, nurtured, and supported to manage health risks.
- Curriculum teaches personal safety, self-care, and boundaries.

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 6** – Right to life, survival and development
- **Article 19** – Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- **Article 24** – Right to health and health education



2. Bodily Health

The capability to experience good physical health, including nutrition, exercise, and sensory regulation.

- Movement-rich, sensory-integrated learning environments
- Individualised health and sensory support

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 23** – Rights of children with disabilities
- **Article 24** – Right to health
- **Article 31** – Right to rest, leisure, and play



3. Bodily Integrity

The capability to move freely, be protected from harm, and exercise bodily autonomy.

- Teaching consent, boundaries, and safe refusal
- Comfort, movement, and risk-taking supported

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 16** – Right to privacy
- **Article 19** – Protection from all forms of harm
- **Article 34** – Protection from sexual abuse



4. Senses, Imagination and Thought

The capability to think, reason, imagine, and express oneself in diverse ways.

- All forms of communication are valid and supported
- Multisensory and creative learning valued

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 12** – Right to be heard and taken seriously
- **Article 13** – Freedom of expression
- **Article 23** – Access to education and participation for disabled children



5. Emotions

The capability to feel, express, and regulate emotions safely and meaningfully.

- Emotional literacy and interoception explicitly taught
- Co-regulation frameworks (e.g. Zones, Social Thinking) used

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 3** – Best interests of the child
- **Article 17** – Right to access information to promote wellbeing
- **Article 39** – Recovery and reintegration for children who've experienced trauma



6. Practical Reason

The capability to make choices, reflect, and shape one's own values and decisions.

- Pupil voice is central in routines and planning
- IEPs reflect pupil interests and goals

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 12** – Right to express views in decisions
- **Article 14** – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- **Article 29** – Education must develop personality and talents



7. Affiliation

The capability to form relationships, belong, and participate in community.

- Curriculum fosters connection, social communication, and inclusion
- Belonging and identity are core values

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 2** – Non-discrimination
- **Article 15** – Freedom of association
- **Article 23** – Full and active inclusion in the community



8. Other Species / Nature

The capability to connect with, care for, and learn through the natural world.

- Forest School and outdoor learning enhance wellbeing
- Pupils engage in environmental responsibility

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 29** – Education should respect the natural environment
- **Article 31** – Right to leisure and play in safe, natural spaces



9. Play

The capability to engage in joyful, spontaneous, and creative play.

- Play is valued in its own right
- Opportunities for symbolic, sensory and shared play are embedded

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 31** – Right to play, leisure, and cultural life
- **Article 23** – Play opportunities must be inclusive of disabilities



10. Control Over One's Environment

The capability to influence decisions and spaces that shape one's life.

- Pupils co-design transitions, routines, and learning environments
- Feedback and autonomy are embedded in planning

UNCRC Links:

- **Article 12** – Right to be involved in decisions affecting them
- **Article 23** – Right to active participation in society
- **Article 29** – Education must support active citizenship





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