

Rationale

Beatrice Tate School has adopted a curriculum structure with 3 levels to provide pupils with experiences that are both relevant and challenging and identify opportunities for progression.

Levels are not defined by age but by need and achievement and each level covers skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Pupils may move from one level to the next at any point in their school career as part of a seamless continuum.*

Pre-formal

The pre-formal curriculum is based on the Castle Wood School model developed by Dr Penny Lacey, Senior Lecturer in Education at University of Birmingham. The pre-formal curriculum enables pupils at very early levels of development (typically assessed at P1 to P3) to:

- develop a sense of security in the school environment;
- establish positive relationships with familiar adults;
- explore the world around them using their sensory and physical capabilities to the full;
- establish behaviours through which they can communicate with other people.

The curriculum is personalised for each child based on assessments of individual needs and personal targets are identified in consultation with families, classroom staff and representatives from partner agencies. Targets focus on learning fundamental skills and gaining basic understanding of the world: communication, cognition, physical and self-help and independence.

‘Welsh Routes for Learning’ (WRfL), a fit-for-purpose assessment for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties, is the main assessment tool for pupils following the pre-formal curriculum. It takes a holistic view of learners and focus on how they learn and assessment takes account of learners’:

- preferred learning channels and ways of processing information (visual, auditory, tactile)
- ways of communicating
- ways of integrating new experiences with prior learning
- ability to remember and anticipate routines
- approaches to problem-solving situations
- ability to form attachments and interact socially.

Semi-formal

Pupils following the semi-formal curriculum learn best when learning is related to their own experience. Some may learn through structured play whilst others learn more effectively through functional activities or topic-based approach.

The curriculum content broadly corresponds to the content of the national curriculum (P levels 4 to 8) but the teaching approach reflects the age and learning style of the pupils. The semi-formal curriculum is supported by curriculum subject materials from EQUALS, a registered charity committed to supporting the work of teachers of pupils with profound, multiple and severe learning difficulties. EQUALS, a professional organisation, managed by teachers for teachers, seeks to deliver the highest standards of education to pupils with learning difficulties.

At semi-formal level, PIVATS (performance indicators for valued added target setting), developed by Lancaster County Council, is used for as the main assessment tool for pupils who progress beyond WRfL levels. PIVATS is an extended version of the revised P Scales and national curriculum levels. Each of the level descriptions expressed as P1(i) to P8 and 1C to 4 has been differentiated into five stepping stones to lead to the P Scale milestone and National Curriculum level 4.

Formal

Pupils at the formal level are taught national curriculum subjects which are modified in line with their learning difficulties. Whilst the formal curriculum is highly structured, teaching and learning is often linked to practical activities and consolidated by repetition and reinforcement.

The formal curriculum is based on the EQUALS schemes of work and PIVATS is the main assessment tool.

***Curriculum flexibility**

As each curriculum level has a clearly defined content and approach, planning and teaching is most efficient where a class works within one level. There may however be valid reasons for mixed groupings; for example, in order to provide pupils with a peer group of their own age or to challenge pupils who are making good progress within a particular level by enabling them to work alongside pupils who are addressing the next level.