



## **Curriculum Policy**

Yew Tree Farm School  
Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway  
Swanton Street  
Sittingbourne  
ME9 8AT

Date - 23/01/24

Reviewed by - Edwina Grix

Next review date - 23/01/25

**Introduction:**

Pupils attending YTFS do so due to a breakdown in their previous placement, often resulting in a lack of engagement or disruptive behaviour. Pupils are taught in small groups, with high adult ratios. The majority of learning occurs outside of a formal classroom environment. The curriculum is carefully structured and personalised to the needs of each individual pupil to ensure maximum progress, achievement and confidence.

**Intent:**

The curriculum is accessible to all learners and takes into account their ages, aptitudes and needs. It is designed to be broad and balanced and cover national curriculum aims appropriate to each individual learner's capabilities.

The curriculum provides learners with the opportunity to learn and follow the fundamental values of YTFS.

Fundamental Values:

Students and staff will -

- Be kind above all else, demonstrating understanding and compassion to create a caring and safe environment
- Have high expectations of themselves and of each other and work together to achieve these
- Demonstrate perseverance when challenged
- Strive to discover their identity and interests and build confidence in themselves as individuals
- Be engaged and committed to their learning and subscribe to the emphasis on outdoor practical learning

The curriculum allows learners to confidently move on to further placements. It provides the necessary knowledge and skills for learners to not fall behind their peers in other settings, and to close the achievement gap that may be present due to the learner's disaffection in a previous placement. Additionally, the curriculum has a strong emphasis on confidence building, resilience and independence, along with allowing learners to develop an understanding of their identity and values within the school community and beyond.

Learners at YTFS are engaged and motivated to progress and achieve. They are interested in the subjects and are proactive students with high expectations of themselves. They enjoy attending YTFS and subscribe to the school vision. Learners find the curriculum interesting and challenging.

**Implementation:**

(For more details refer to the Curriculum Implementation by Subject document in Appendix A, and our SMSC Policy.)

Learners in KS2 have the following lessons each day:

- Wellbeing Check In
- English, phonics and SPAG
- Maths
- PE
- PSHE and coffee break
- Topic or Science

## - Farming

Our curriculum is thematic with linguistic, scientific, technological, human and social and aesthetic and creative education taught together within a daily topic lesson. This allows learners the opportunity to fully engage with learning that interests them, has cross curricular links and real world applications. All of KS2 investigate the same theme at the same time, where appropriate, so the entire school can unite for their project work. Curriculum aims for each topic are differentiated based on students' age and stage; with support and scaffolding available for those that need it, and challenges to push the most able of learners. Each theme is chosen based on the interests of our student cohort. It is linked to the national curriculum, has relevant and high quality texts attached, includes work outside of the classroom, has real world links and builds life skills. Additionally each theme has teaching on SMSC and British Values. All details can be seen on our Topic Schemes of Work.

During maths lessons we follow Schemes of Work from Hamilton Brookes. Our maths lessons are short and reduce demands on learners that struggle to engage. Using a scheme allows learners to start work with limited pressure and quickly gain results and make progress. We are able to ensure work is differentiated for each student and provide adult support to those struggling. Individual challenges can be set to stretch all students, not just the most able.

Phonics, SPAG and literacy skills are taught as part of our English lessons every day, to ensure learners make quick and masterful progress. We use the Twinkl Phonics program - Codebreakers along with the Hamilton Brookes scheme, to ensure a full coverage.

Each morning our students are greeted by the staff and have a soft start to help with the transition. There is then a wellbeing check in, along with a discussion of the day to come, a weather check and jobs are allocated. This less structured time is a vital part of our curriculum. It teaches necessary life skills, including social skills, planning and teamwork. The PSHE learning outcomes are reinforced via the wellbeing check and learners become more empathetic towards their peers.

For lunch time and break time students and staff come together to eat and socialise. Once a week students will cook lunch for everyone over the open fire, sharing a meal they have worked together to grow, prepare and cook. During break time we will have a site coffee break and PSHE discussion. Students make the tea, serve the biscuits and ensure everyone is included. Then the full school will participate in the PSHE learning, following schemes of work from Twinkl. These schemes are differentiated based on learners' age, and are perfect as they include full school project work that we can focus on during coffee breaks.

Everyday, learners will have an hour of farming. This is in addition to any time spent out on the farm during topic time. Each term will be based around a seasonal project that the students can immerse themselves in and take ownership of. This is an essential component of our school curriculum and in building learners' engagement and role in the school community. The farming schemes of work are linked to curriculum aims, but the main focus is developing students' confidence, empathy and sense of worth. More details can be found on our Farming Scheme of Work.

PE is taught daily and the curriculum focuses on teamwork, communication and physical and mental wellbeing. There will be different activities including use of the OAA equipment, a dog walk with orienteering and team building exercises. More details can be found on our PE Schemes of Work.

Our curriculum and teaching is strongly linked to our behaviour policy and our Learning Expectations. Through enjoyable and engaging lessons that students want to take part in, they develop their learning behaviours and are able to meet our expectations.

All of our planning, assessment and teaching takes into account students' EHCPs and Independent Learning Plans. Targets are reviewed regularly to assess progress and teachers use reflective practice to ensure their lessons are supporting all students to meet their targets.

**Impact:**

Learners will develop academic confidence throughout their time at YTFS and feel prepared to move onto another educational setting. They will have made strides to close the achievement gap and catch up with their peers so they are not behind when they move on. They will have experienced all topics on the national curriculum through the thematic curriculum and have a broad and balanced understanding. They will have made excellent progress with maths and literacy skills and feel able to achieve.

Learners will have developed their life skills and feel able to communicate with their peers and with adults, they will feel confident asking for help and voicing their concerns. They will have an understanding of their own physical and mental wellbeing and that of others and a strong sense of personal identity. They will be committed learners that enjoy school and are active members of their school community.

**Appendix A:**

**Curriculum Implementation - by Subject**

Differentiation

At Yew Tree Farm School our fundamental aim is to get our students working together and encourage team work. We want to nurture a sense of community in our learners and therefore we believe it is key to have them working on projects together, across the school. With this in mind all of our topic lessons are differentiated by outcome and the level of support the student receives. Some pupils are able to get on independently with a task and others may require help from staff, peers and the use of manipulatives. Independent Learning Plans, informed by targets on EHCPs, are in place for each student, to guide staff in the best way to support their learning and achieve progress. ILPs are reviewed regularly.

Art

Art forms an important part of our curriculum. We believe that art is a subject that we can all access and achieve at. We believe that art is about the process and to prevent anxiety we place less emphasis on the outcome. During our Art sessions we have the opportunity to develop socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. We value the importance of studying the work of artists. Art is taught through our topic work, but we place an importance on allowing the children to experiment with different mediums and have time to

practice skills. The children have the opportunity to plan and evaluate their work and comment constructively on the work of others. Being outside we have the freedom to explore natural materials and we have ready available subject matter to inspire our artwork. We recognise and nurture the particular gifts our students have by inviting family and friends in to see the students artwork.

### Design Technology

At Yew Tree Farm School Design and technology forms an integral part of our curriculum. We love the opportunity to solve problems and use creativity and imagination to design new products. Design Technology is incorporated into our topic work, where pupils have a range of opportunities to design, make and evaluate their work. On the farm we have the benefit of being able to develop our skills in design technology with the huge range of practical tasks that need completing. We also use the campfire as a means to come together and like to capitalise the opportunity to cook around the fire.

### Geography

Where possible our Geography learning is based around the local area. Being outside we have strong links to the local area and the environment. The weather comes into our everyday learning and being prepared for the outside and the weather that day is an integral part of our day. We also aim to inspire our students with a curiosity about their world and the people in it. Children will learn how to use atlases, globes and online maps. They will be able to locate countries that are central to our topics and identify where they are on the map. Geography learning is covered in topic lessons and our farming sessions each day.

### History

We believe that studying History encourages children's curiosity and encourages them to ask critical questions. History is incorporated into our topic sessions. We allow the children the chance to work as Historians critically analysing different sources of information. We will study different important time periods in local, British and World History. The students will learn how information from the past is gleaned from a range of different sources.

### Physical Education

Due to the needs of our students PE on the farm is quite different to a typical school. Our students are outside and on the go a lot of the day. We allocate half an hour everyday for PE, however instead of traditional sports games, our PE focuses on exercise for well being and outdoor and Adventurous activities. We do not have enough students in our class to play team games, but team building is still an integral part of our PE and something that we explore with problem solving games. As part of our exercise for well being, we include dog walks (where our pupils can explore the local area) and yoga and mindfulness. See PE Schemes of Work for details.

### Science

Through our science work we aim to create a love of enquiry and exploring new things. The vast majority of our scientific learning will be undertaken through practical investigations utilising the farm, campfire and outdoors. Science is covered during our topic sessions, but also in our farming sessions each day, where the pupils will be caring for the animals, maintaining the site and tending to the allotment. Nutrition and the journey of our food from farm to fork plays an integral role in what we do on the farm and will be something that the students are always learning about. In our science topic lessons students will learn about conducting a fair test as well as different methods of scientific enquiry including observing changes over a period of time, noticing

patterns, grouping and classifying things, carrying out investigations and using a wide range of secondary sources.

### Music

At Yew Tree Farm School we know that music promotes a feeling of well being, togetherness and joy. Our music lessons are carried out around the campfire, where we sing and perform purely for the pleasure of taking part. We also see music as an opportunity to develop outside partnerships and invite friends and family on to site to join us.

### PSHRE

PSHRE is a huge part of what we do at YewTree Farm School. For many of the children the social side of school is what they find the most challenging and we see it as our primary job to support them to become part of the class and our team. PSHRE is covered in every part of our day and starts in the morning with a campfire and breakfast, followed by a daily check in. Becoming independent is key to our vision, so students are taught to have the correct clothing and equipment for the weather and tasks ahead that day. Everyday we have a PSHRE session, which we call our assembly, with our morning coffee break. During this session we look at issues that are personal and unique to us, things that affect the farm and global issues. This is an opportunity for the whole site to come together, including any one-to-one students on the farm that day. We take the themes for our daily assembly and PSHRE lesson from the Twinkl scheme of work, although we do not use the worksheets, preferring practical tasks or discussion.

### Writing

Many of our children are reluctant writers so we aim to ensure all of our writing has a clear real life purpose and is embedded in our topic work. Writing is rarely done in an exercise book, but outside with a clipboard, on a large scale piece of paper with felt tips, on post stick notes or on a whiteboard. We aim to have an opportunity to write everyday in our English and topic sessions. For summative assessments we will have a termly longer writing piece. To reduce demand upon our pupils we do not have a strict handwriting policy at YewTree Farm School. Correct letter formation is modelled, however we believe as long as we can read a student's work, the style of their handwriting is not as important. Like all of our topic subjects, writing is differentiated by outcome and level of support. Children have individual writing targets and where for some putting pen to paper is an achievement, others will be expected to include a range of writing techniques in their work. Therefore the activity will be the same for the whole class, but the success criteria will vary for each student.

### Reading

We aim to foster in our children a love of reading. In order to achieve this our classrooms are well stocked with high quality texts and we allow time everyday for sharing a book as a class. Students are allowed to borrow books to take home and read and there is time everyday to read independently. We do not use a scheme for our reading, preferring for children to choose books based upon their interests. However we do have a wide range of books from various schemes in school so students can choose to read those if they prefer. We are fortunate to have such a high ratio of staff to students, so we are able to hear our students read frequently or just share a book with more reluctant readers.

### Phonics, Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Our children arrive at Yew Tree Farm School all at different stages. While some have already passed the year 1 phonics screening, many have not and for this reason we include a daily phonics, spelling, punctuation and grammar lesson within our English lesson. Phonics is vital to our children because it helps them to establish a love of reading that will hopefully last a lifetime. To ensure a full coverage we use the Twinkl phonics scheme - Codebreakers, alongside Hamilton Brookes. By using a scheme that has all the resources ready made, we are able to dip into the correct stage for each pupil and tailor our lessons to cater for their needs. Many of our pupils are reluctant writers, so we teach phonics and SPaG through games, rather than recording in a book.

### Maths

Maths lessons are taught everyday and are separate from our topic work. Wherever possible we aim to use the farm to connect our Maths to a real life concept and engage the pupils. The starters to our lessons always start with practical concrete Maths before moving to the pictorial and finally the abstract. Maths is taught in school using the Hamilton Brookes scheme. For our students using a scheme with resources is preferable as many are demand avoidant and we find having a few questions to answer on a sheet can be less demanding. It also ensures that all areas of the Maths curriculum are covered. As the students in our class range in ability we use resources from different year groups for each student, however they all work on the same area of learning, so everyone can contribute to the input and plenary.

