



Caelum House School

Curriculum Policy

Our school curriculum is based on the principle that learning needs to be child-led and child paced. Education should encapsulate all areas of development, including the social, academic, emotional and physical; with an overall focus on bringing out the innate, unique character and talents of each individual learner.

We believe strongly that children's learning should be strongly supported, using evidence based techniques, to develop their skills across a wide range of areas. We do this through our high staff ratio, which included 1-1 time for each child, using and developing individual motivation and sensory preferences to support children to learn and achieve their fullest potential.

We also believe that children with communication challenges need to be helped to develop a sense of self; so that as they learn to communicate



their preferences and dislikes, including self-regulation and being taught to recognise and label emotions.

Our staff team are both champions and a mentors for every learner, helping them to unlock their abilities and build confidence in their capacity to handle challenges independently.

These principles are reflected across our unique environment and our teaching ethos across all abilities.

Reception:

Our Reception Class aims to support children to access the Early Years Foundation Stage in a multi-sensory and language rich way, which may not be available to them at non specialist provisions. Whilst following the core principles of the EYFS, we will differentiate for each individual learner dependent on their strengths, challenges and motivation. Our focus on language rich learning provides children abundant opportunities to learn individually collaboratively through exciting experiences designed to challenge, whilst building success in learning in a small group setting. We know that children of all ages learn best when they are provided with rich opportunities to follow their interests and learn together through exploring problems and finding solutions. This is also our understanding of the needs of young learners with ASD and Communication challenges.



These are the foundations on which the heart of our School is based, and the focus of all teaching and learning experiences that we create for the children in our care.

Year 1:

Our Year 1 Curriculum supports learners in the transition between EYFS and KS1, respecting that our pupils will find this leap somewhat harder than their neurotypical peers. This is reflected in our emphasis on the continuation of learning through play and utilising children's motivation and real life experiences to support the next level of their learning experience at Caelum House.

The Key Aims of Our Curriculum:

- To support children to experience the world **across all areas of learning.**
- To provide a secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the strengths, needs and interests of each individual child.
- To ensure our children are prepared for a wide range of life experiences, including **the option to access mainstream/ non specialist educational provisions at any point.**



- To improve choices and life-chances for our children long-term. By providing a unique focus on teaching language and communication skills.
- To provide children **across ability levels** with the opportunity to consolidate their new learning; to use and apply it to make connections to previous learning to help them develop a broad and deep understanding of their world.

How we implement our curriculum:

- Our teaching team will be selected for their expertise in supporting children to learn at their own pace, whilst recognising and fostering their strengths.
- Our curriculum is **linked to the EYFS** and differentiated according to **individual and group interests/ strengths**.
- Learning is centred each term around a theme or topic that is linked to **individual and group interests**.
- All subject learning is interconnected, rather than discrete so that children have a wider experience in applying their knowledge and skills across contexts and concepts.



Theme Focus per Fortnight

These fortnightly themes are the foundations of all learning at. Learning within each subject area is embedded within the theme. We use this model across the school so that all learners are focussed on the same school wide theme, with differentiated learning provided across the age range.



Subject Areas: EYFS

Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.



As we are supporting children who may be preverbal or who have limited verbal skills, we focus our Communication and Language learning on individual needs and differentiate activities and targets using our own developmental language assessment which maps onto the EYFS. This gives us greater opportunity to break communication and language learning into small, measurable steps for children who are not yet strong language users. All staff are trained in using Play2Talk strategies and techniques and will support children in 1-1 activities, paired play and whole group to experience language learning in small steps and develop their listening skills as per their individual targets.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children's personal, social and emotional development is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary

Our specific population of children will have underlying difficulties with their personal, social and emotional development due to the nature of



their difficulties. Therefore, working closely with caregivers we will focus our first 2 terms on supporting children to identify their preferences from a sensory perspective in order to then support them to start to learn to self regulate. Self regulation is a key skill for children with social communication/ sensory processing/ communication challenges to learn at an early age. Children's personal, social and emotional development is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development.

Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives⁷. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts



and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

Many children with ASD/ social communication challenges have strong physical skills. Gross motor development is often an area of strength and through fostering each child's own unique physical profile and sensory preferences, we will use gross motor activities to support other areas such as Communication and Language and PSED. All children will be assessed individually for Gross and Fine motor skills and individual targets will be set in each area. All fine motor skills learning will be targeted as part of our themed activities across the year including scooping and pouring, threading, cutting and puzzle making.



Literacy:

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

Literacy activities will be introduced as part of our theme focus each fortnight, and will include a focus on the following key areas:

- Mark making and motor skills- from early mark making using a range of media to letter formation and handwriting activities as children move through the stages.
- Story time- we will focus on one key text each fortnight as part of our theme. Children will be given copies to share at home with



caregivers and a range of themed activities and sensory story sacks will support children to develop a strong understanding of key elements of the story: character, sequence of events etc

- **Vocabulary focus:** children will be introduced to key vocabulary from each story: character names, places, nouns, verbs and adjectives that feature.



Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

Many children with ASD/ social communication difficulties have strong interests in numbers and aspects of maths. We will focus on individual strengths where children will be taught mathematical concepts through a wide range of interest and theme based learning, including number, measures, shape and space.



Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

Our work on Understanding the World will be linked directly with our themes. Linking back to the challenges that our children will be facing with regard to communication and language, they will be supported throughout to learn new vocabulary and access their learning in whatever way they find motivating and fun.



Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

Through our sensory story sacks and themed messy play and art activities, children will be supported to explore their expressive skills in a variety of ways with a variety of mediums.

