

BRENT KNOLL SCHOOL

PREPARING

YOUNG

PEOPLE FOR LIFE

AFTER SCHOOL

IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

BRITAIN

## **Introduction**

A key role of Brent Knoll School is to prepare its young people for life after school and in particular to prepare them for life in modern Britain. It is no longer sufficient for modern special schools to just prepare the way for transition to the next stage of education. In the current climate it is essential that schools such as Brent Knoll provide young people with a wide range of skills and qualities that will enable our young people to become as independent as possible in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain.

Brent Knoll has a multi-faceted approach to achieving this aim and planning and education for future independence is provided through the following approaches.

- 1) Curriculum
- 2) Specific skills training
- 3) Culture and Ethos
- 4) Values

## **Curriculum**

Fundamental to our curriculum approach at Brent Knoll is our commitment to personalise the curriculum to the unique qualities and needs of each pupil. This personalisation is informed by knowledge of the strengths and difficulties associated with autism in general. Our curriculum has the flexibility to address the individual and very specific needs of each pupil and is characterised by being:

- Individually planned
- Specialised
- Intensive
- Goal-directed
- Guided by pupil performance

Pupils with autism exhibit significant social communication and language difficulties. Appropriate communication and social skills are necessary in order to express needs, desires and feelings. Language and communication are the foundations for the development of relationships, participating in society and accessing the curriculum. It is therefore crucial to develop skills in these areas in order to improve pupils' quality of life. For this reason, Brent Knoll places an emphasis upon receptive and expressive communication (speaking and listening) within the English curriculum.

## **English**

The English curriculum encompasses all the aspects of communication – non-verbal, verbal and written. It promotes learning across the curriculum and underpins pupils' achievements and participation in all aspects of their lives. Speech and language

therapists work within the multi-disciplinary team to develop appropriate programmes to encourage and development communication.

Individual assessments of each pupil and conversations with their family inform decisions about which communication system to use with any individual pupils. For some, additional (augmentative) communication systems are used. These include PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), Makaton (a signing system) and the use of 'Communication books' which include words or pictures that a pupil can point to in order to comment on their environment or to make a request without (or alongside) speech.

## **Computing**

Developing capability in computing helps all pupils become part of the rapidly changing world in which technology is an essential part. Computing can help pupils to develop their broader communication and literacy skills through technologies that support interaction with other pupils as well as staff.

For some pupils, communication and literacy skills will develop through using a range of visual and written materials, for example, photographs, symbols and large print, as well as ICT and other technological aids. Other pupils will develop these skills through using alternative and augmentative communication, for example, facial expressions and gestures.

ICT, in particular use of computers and entertainment systems, also provides engaging, motivating and meaningful leisure activities that many pupils can learn to access independently to structure their leisure time enjoyably and appropriately. ICT can also encourage creativity. It can help pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning, plan and organise their ideas, and produce and present work of a high standard. Children at Brent Knoll have access to a range of cutting edge technology in the classroom and around the school that supports their learning.

## **Mathematics**

Mathematics can provide pupils with powerful ways of exploring, investigating and understanding the world; for example the skills of making comparisons, identifying differences, investigating relationships and establishing connections - important skills that extend across the entire curriculum. Mathematical skills encourage logical reasoning and, at later stages of mathematical development, the ability to think in abstract ways.

At the earliest stages of development, where thinking centres around concrete situations and events, pupils are supported to make sense of experiences and sensations through learning to recognise changes in patterns, quantity, space and time. Such experiences may help pupils to approach problems or novel situations

flexibly, to move from random to trial and improvement responses, and later to anticipate and predict.

In this way, mathematical skills and understanding build on the earliest perceptual and cognitive learning. Pupils are encouraged to use and apply their mathematical skills throughout each day, in meaningful situations.

### **Music**

Music gives all pupils an opportunity to develop their musical skills in four key areas: performing, composing, listening and appraising. Music is a unique form of communication: it develops pupils' creativity, allowing them to explore and try out new ideas. It also provides an opportunity to generalise skills such as imitation and coordination.

In addition to regular music lessons, pupils have the opportunity to learn individual instruments and the school runs its own Makaton choir. Visiting performing musicians enrich the music curriculum.

### **Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE)**

Learning PSHCE helps all pupils develop as individuals in a wider society. Pupils learn to understand themselves physically, emotionally, socially and sexually and to understand their relationships with others. Personal and social skills have strong links with PSHCE. Due to their difficulties in understanding social situations and with communication, pupils may use unusual ways to communicate or interact.

Such behaviour may include:

- self-injurious behaviour
- confrontational non-compliance
- extreme states of avoidance and withdrawal, often associated with obsessive and ritualistic behaviours
- avoiding tasks, behaviour which disrupts, being easily distracted or especially active or hyperactive
- inappropriate sexual behaviour

Such behaviour may be challenging to staff and to families. Where behaviour like this occurs, staff use structured and personalised behaviour plans and interventions to help pupils to recognise, manage and moderate their own behaviour. Support is offered to families so that similar behaviour change can also be achieved at home.

### **Physical Education (PE)**

Physical education (PE) gives all pupils opportunities to develop their physical skills and to apply those skills in different situations. It also enables personal and group

achievements to be acknowledged. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in organised sporting events which has a huge impact on learning teamwork and important life lessons such as winning and losing.

### **Work-Related Learning (14-19 years)**

Work related learning is defined as 'planned activity that uses work as a context for learning.' It is concerned with the world of work, work experience and careers education. It is also about the development of skills for lifelong learning, including employability skills and can be delivered through a broad range of activities through work-related application of the National Curriculum, to careers education and for pupils in KS4 the ASDAN Award curriculum

An increasing emphasis is placed on learning and applying skills in the community, including work experience placements and vocational education through our link with the local FE College.

Learning is planned to support all learners to:

- See the relevance of the curriculum to their own experiences and aspirations
- Have sufficient opportunities to succeed in their learning at the highest standard

Pupils' achievements are recognised through nationally accredited awards such as GCSE, Entry Level Certificate and ASDAN

## **Specific Skills Training**

As a school we have identified key skills that we believe are central to enabling young people at Brent Knoll to lead more independent lives. Several of these are addressed directly through the curriculum but others are developed through specific training sessions or through the integrated work of the therapists.

**Communication** – as well as being addressed through the English curriculum, communication skills are developed through the integrated work of the speech and language therapists. This is particularly the case with developing social communication skills. The school uses a range of augmentative communication strategies such as Makaton signing and Picture Exchange Communication system (PECS).

**Work place skills** – older pupils are given the opportunity to develop work place skills through the secondary work experience programme and the ASDAN award scheme. All Year 10 pupils have the opportunity to complete a two week work experience placement. These can be in supported environments but pupils are encouraged to select placements appropriate to their level of independence. The ASDAN course also involves many aspects of vocational education and this is supplemented by the link with Lewisham College where all Year 11 pupils attend one day per week.

**Independent Travel** – being able to travel independently is a key skill that is fundamental to the ability to lead an independent life. Travel training is provided for identified pupils and organised by the occupational therapy department. In addition class groups are encouraged to use public transport when going out on school trips and visits in the locality to familiarise children with travel.

**Life Skills** – the development of life skills is integrated throughout the school curriculum and teachers plan for these opportunities in all curriculum areas. Pupils have the opportunity to access local services such as shops and supermarkets while reinforcing mathematical skills. Subjects such as Food Studies provide opportunities for children to learn cooking and domestic living skills and for older pupils the ASDAN course focuses on many aspects of real life skills.

## Culture and ethos

Brent Knoll is a specialist school for children with autism. In addition there is provision for children with social, communication and interaction difficulties who do not have a clinical diagnosis of autism but who would benefit from the strategies and interventions employed in meeting the needs of children with autism.

We are a learning community. We will be responsive to the needs of all our pupils and staff in a caring and friendly atmosphere, where quality and excellence in all things is encouraged and acknowledged.

Every pupil will have access to a well-balanced and broad curriculum. Study will centre on well-planned learning activities that build on pupils' previous knowledge and experience and meet the individual needs of each child. Transition between Key Stages will be well planned and effective. All staff will recognise the particular difficulties experienced by young people with autism in communication, flexibility of thought and social interaction. It is important that we as a school identify the qualities that we wish to develop in our young people. To support our young people in making a successful transition to life after school we believe that we need to give our young people confidence and a belief in themselves and their abilities. Much of the work we do around celebrating success and providing a wide range of challenging activities has that aim. It is also crucial that our young people develop a degree of resilience as the challenges they may face are likely to be

The children will know what is expected of them and they will be supported in understanding the relevance of their learning tasks. The children will have the opportunity to be involved in planning and evaluating their own learning. They will experience independent and collaborative work.

Teachers will provide stimulating learning opportunities including first-hand experiences and open-ended tasks. A variety of teaching methods will be used. Teachers will recognise that individual pupils learn in different ways and will prepare activities that allow pupils to access learning whatever their individual learning style. Teachers will ensure that children have access to well organised learning resources and quality materials and tools. Classrooms and shared areas will be well managed and tidy. The pupils' work will be thoughtfully presented and there will be stimulating and attractive displays in classrooms and work areas.

There will be a welcoming, calm and purposeful atmosphere within the school. The pupils' attitude to their work will demonstrate a high level of self-motivation and independent learning skills. The pupils will find their education challenging, rewarding and interesting. They will have opportunities to extend tasks and pursue individual lines of enquiry. Academic and personal achievement will be celebrated in a variety of ways. Everyone involved in the school will have a shared purpose and pride in the school.

We will ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes alongside personal, social and learning skills. There will be high expectations of achievement and social behaviour with agreed principles between staff and pupils. We will encourage self-confidence; self respect and respect for others. Opinions will be valued.

## Values

There are several key values that underpin the work of the school and that are the foundation of many school policies and practices. These are;

- \* Honesty
- \* Kindness
- \* Patience
- \* Tolerance
- \* Respect
- \* Politeness
- \* Fairness
- \* Trust
- \* Happiness
- \* Compassion
- \* Empathy
- \* Appreciation of worth
- \* Understanding
- \* Dignity
- \* Care

Brent Knoll School is committed to serving its community. It recognises the multicultural, multi faith and ever-changing nature of the United Kingdom, and therefore those it serves. It also understands the vital role it has in ensuring that groups or individuals within the school are not subjected to intimidation or radicalisation by those wishing to unduly, or illegally, influence them.

The school as a Cooperative Trust accepts admissions from all those entitled to an education under the SEND Code of Practice, including pupils of all faiths or none. It follows the policies outlined by its governing body regarding equal opportunities, which guarantee that there will be no discrimination against any individual or group,

regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political or financial status, or similar. It seeks to serve all.

The Government emphasises that schools are required to ensure that key 'British Values' are taught in all UK schools. The government set out its definition of British values in the 'Prevent Strategy' – values of:

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

#### Democracy:

Democracy is a key cooperative value promoted throughout the school. Pupils have the opportunity to have their voices heard through our Pupil Council and Pupil questionnaires. There is a pupil representative on the Cooperative Trust forum. Pupils also participate in the election of the Young Mayor of Lewisham and vote in the democratic process. This year one of our Year 10 students was a candidate for the Young Mayor post.

#### The Rule of Law:

The importance of laws, whether they be those that govern the class, the school, or the country, are consistently reinforced throughout regular school days, as well as when dealing with behaviour and through school assemblies. Pupils are taught the value and reasons behind laws, that they govern and protect us, the responsibilities that this involves and the consequences when laws are broken. Visits from authorities such as the Police and Fire Service are regular parts of our calendar and help reinforce this message.

#### Individual Liberty:

Within school, pupils are actively encouraged to make choices, knowing that they are in a safe and supportive environment. As a school we educate and provide boundaries for young pupils to make choices safely, through of provision of a safe environment and empowering education. Pupils are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights and personal freedoms and advise how to exercise these safely, for example through our E-Safety and PSHE lessons. Whether it be through choice of challenge, of how they record, of participation in our numerous extra-curricular clubs and opportunities, pupils are given the freedom to make choices.

### Mutual Respect:

Part of our school ethos and behaviour policy has revolved around core values such as 'Respect', and pupils have been part of discussions and assemblies related to what this means and how it is shown. Posters around the school promote respect for others and this is reiterated through our classroom and learning rules, as well as our behaviour policy and the school prayer.

### Tolerance of those of Different Faiths and Beliefs:

This is achieved through enhancing pupils understanding of their place in a culturally diverse society and by giving them opportunities to experience such diversity. Assemblies and discussions involving prejudices and prejudice-based bullying have been followed and supported by learning in RE and PSHE. Members of different faiths or religions are encouraged to share their knowledge to enhance learning within classes and the school. We hold an annual Multicultural Day which is a celebration of our diverse community.

### **How Brent Knoll Promotes Fundamental British Values**

#### **Through promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding**

Criteria	School evidence
Enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence	Interwoven into achievement in all its forms – e.g. formal occasions such as assemblies; praise in lessons. Sports reps enable students to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. e.g. London Youth Games. Helping students to make the most of the gifts they have been given e.g. all have the opportunity to perform in or lead an assembly.
Enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England	From the early years onwards emphasis is given to help children make the 'right' choices, especially through the Citizenship and PSHE curriculum e.g. all children contributed to the drawing up of the new behaviour policy (September 2014). Good partnership with the local police who visit regularly. Have been occasions to bring in police with parental permission, to point out how particular behaviour could be viewed by the law.

<p>Encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and show how they can contribute positively to the lives of others in the local community and society more widely</p>	<p>Charity fund raising – Royal Marsden cancer care; termly fund raising for national charities; children support local food bank; harvest festival donate the produce either to the food bank or a local care home. DoE – volunteers for a weekly commitment to assist in the running of a play centre. Introduced a new rewards system 'Vivo' – has made students more aware of consequences of their actions and behaviour.</p>
<p>Enable students to gain a broad general knowledge for public institutions and services in England</p>	<p>Visits from and to police, fire brigade, medical centres. Visits to museums in central London e.g. Imperial War Museum; 2012 Olympics.</p>
<p>Further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions through appreciating and respecting their own and other cultures</p>	<p>PSHE/RE are central to the delivery of these aspects. Multi-Cultural Day – celebrating different cultures enables students to appreciate and respect the views and beliefs of others.</p>
<p>Encourage respect for other people</p>	<p>One of the school's core values is 'Respect'. School prayer is founded on 'respect' – students have memorised this and say it aloud every week in assembly.</p>
<p>Encourage respect for democracy and support in the democratic processes, including respect for the law in England</p>	<p>School Council – voted their class mates into office. All secondary children participate in Lewisham Young Major programme – as a result all students gain a first-hand view of democracy in action.</p>

## Knowledge and understanding

Criteria	School evidence
How citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process	School Council – suggested that secondary students should wear blazers Removal of the vending machine (from SC members) Year 11 are permitted to choose their own leaving activities Jack Petchey Awards – nominations and have an influence on decision making
How the law protects individual citizens and is essential for their wellbeing and safety	Work with Police on 'Stranger-Danger' – high police presence in the school and the local community.
Understanding of the separation of power between the executive and judiciary. That some bodies e.g. the police and army can be held to account through parliament, the courts, for instance, maintain independence	In Years 10 and 11 the role of the courts and the judiciary is covered in some depth.
The freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law	Reinforce different faiths and beliefs across the school. Is enshrined in assemblies through the RE curriculum and visits to places of worship. Representatives from different faiths have led assemblies.
Accept that people have different faiths or beliefs and that these should be accepted and tolerated, and are not a cause of prejudice or discrimination	Positive promotion of different festivals and beliefs – across all aspects of school life, have enabled students to gain a strong perspective of this aspect.
The importance of identifying and combatting discrimination	Enshrined in the culture of the school – the concept fairness and giving all students a chance to succeed in whatever they want to undertake.

Jon Sharpe

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