

The Treehouse School Curriculum

Ambitious about Autism's mission: We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Context

Treehouse school is an autism- specific school, committed to supporting all pupils to achieve their maximum potential whilst having an excellent Quality of Life.

All the pupils at Treehouse school have a diagnosis of Autism with the majority working significantly below the levels of their mainstream peers. They have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) that outlines the outcomes that are to be achieved at the end of each Key Stage.

Treehouse pupils have a wide range of needs ranging from those who benefit from a more sensory based curriculum to others who can access aspects of the National Curriculum.

Pupils with autism do not learn in the same way as their peers. They may learn more quickly in some areas whilst finding some skills much more challenging. This is often referred to as a “spiky profile,” this means that we plan teaching and learning with consideration for the individual pupil profile, as well as the outcomes on their EHCP.

Curriculum Pathways

We offer three different curriculum pathways to our pupils.

- Pre-formal
A sensory based curriculum, with an emphasis on engagement and early development rather than subject specific study.
- Semi-formal
For students who can access learning through slightly more formal subjects, although not yet at National Curriculum level.
- Formal
Subject specific study is undertaken (Some of which is at National Curriculum level) and Entry Level Qualifications are achieved where appropriate from KS4.

The pathways are not necessarily sequential, neither are they linked to chronological age. The pupil follows the pathway that best meets their developmental needs rather than their age.

For example, an 8-year-old pupil could follow the Formal pathway whilst a 15-year-old pupil may follow the pre-formal pathway.

Each curriculum pathway has elements which overlap and are embedded into each other to allow easy transition for pupils who may transition from one to another.

The Ambitious Approach

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The Ambitious Approach Framework is based upon a person’s indisputable rights to be:

- Treated with dignity and compassion.
- Valued
- Listened to
- Supported to have the best quality of life possible.
- Empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

The Framework provides a core structure for facilitating and developing QoL (Quality of Life) and is based on School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SW-PBS). The Framework incorporates what is known about supportive practice for children and young people with autism.

The focus of the Framework is centred on creating and sustaining systems of support for all, across the whole education setting. In SW-PBS terms, this is called the universal, or Tier 1, offer.

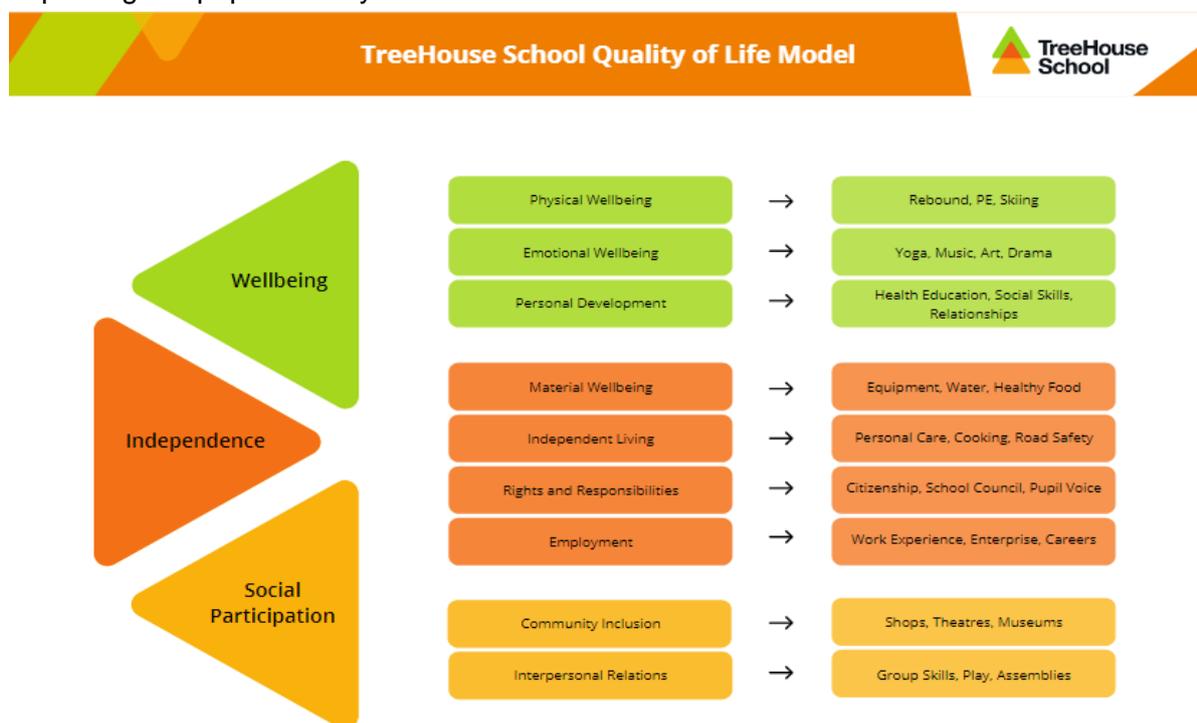
The Ambitious Approach aims to improve a pupil’s Quality of Life through the curriculum. This is best achieved in an environment that understands behaviour and promotes measurable outcomes for children and young people.

This approach means that each individual pupil is placed at the heart of their own personalised curriculum, designed around their strengths, needs and interests. The Ambitious Approach advocates for and delivers learning that is enjoyable, age appropriate, individualised and designed to respond to the needs, talents, and interests of all pupils.

We want them to know more, understand more and provide them with the tools they need whilst being as independent as possible.

Quality of Life Model

The Quality-of-Life model is at the heart of our curriculum, everything we do is about improving our pupils Quality of Life.



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English and Mathematics

The development of English and Mathematics skills are essential for all pupils; hence they are addressed through all three curriculum pathways.

On the Pre-Formal pathway, English is embedded through a sensory based curriculum within the areas of Communication & Language, PSED & Physical Development.

Reading

Within the pre-formal pathway, pupils are exposed to early reading through sensory experiences, such as music, attention autism, TAC PAC and story massage within communication and language lessons. They are also exposed to reading within their environment using visuals, signs, and symbols. Pupils will begin to be taught the early teaching of systematic synthetic phonics developing their phonological awareness through daily exposure to environmental sounds, words, actions, songs, and stories. Pupils will predominantly be focusing on the first two key skills of this process; learning the letter sounds and learning letter formation using a multi-sensory approach. These two fundamental stages will support the prerequisite skills for speech development/communication as well as letter identification and reading and in turn will provide the foundations to the pupils progressing onto the Semi-formal curriculum pathway.

When teaching the 42 letter sounds, pupils will learn to associate the sounds with an action and explore this through songs and stories. The sounds are taught in a specific order, not alphabetically, which enables pupils to begin to build words to read as early as possible. On the Semi-formal pathway, pupils will continue to develop the skills needed for reading, writing, speaking, and listening through more formal communication and language and literacy lessons. Pupils will continue to learn their 42 letter sounds with a greater emphasis being placed on blending the letter sounds together to read and write unfamiliar words as well as identifying and reading tricky words they are unable to decode. Once pupils can successfully identify the 42 letter sounds, they will be introduced to our reading scheme where they will generalise their blending and develop their understanding of language and comprehension skills. Further to this, literacy lessons within the Semi-formal pathway focus on a book of the week. Within these lessons, pupils have the opportunity to engage in whole class reading by reading out sentences from the story. Literacy lessons incorporate a thematic approach through which keys texts are selected. Pupils also develop their comprehension skills by engaging in comprehension-based activities based on these texts.

The Formal Pathway sees English taught as a subject specific lesson to pupils who can access aspects of the national curriculum. As a result, pupils on this pathway will access aspects of the national curriculum programme of study from KS1 –KS4 as appropriate for their profile and developmental level. Pupils will also continue to have access to the reading scheme which supports our most confident readers with a selection of longer fiction and non-fiction texts.

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Maths

On the Pre-Formal curriculum pathway Maths is embedded through a sensory based curriculum within the areas of Communication & Language, PSED & Physical Development. An example of this would be the teacher using the language such as 'Empty' or 'Full' when pouring liquids from one container to another during a Physical development session, or counting 1,2,3 when pupils are tidying their equipment away from a mark making lesson.

On the Semi-Formal pathway Mathematics, is introduced as its own subject, and pupils work on mathematical concepts in the areas of Measurement, Geometry and Number using the CPA approach (concrete-pictorial-abstract). This enables pupils to build solid foundations in their understanding of maths. Pupils learn new concepts initially using concrete examples, such as counters and objects and 3D manipulatives, then progress to drawing, identifying, and using pictorial representations before finally using more abstract symbols and signs, such as a written sum.

When pupils reach the Formal Curriculum Pathway, pupils are taught following a programme of study which the teacher will adapt according to pupil need. Teachers will deliver the most relevant aspects of the National Curriculum for Mathematics depending on the pupil profile and need.

PSHE

PSHE is a core subject across all pathways. On the Pre-Formal Pathway, developmentally appropriate PSHE targets are delivered through PSED lessons. On the Semi- Formal pathway PSHE is also embedded within the PSED lessons, albeit at a more challenging and appropriate level. The Formal pathway and sixth form students have PSHE as a standalone subject, and pupils learn from key themes including, Living in the Wider World, Relationships (Including RE at primary and SRE at Secondary), & Health and Wellbeing.

The Sixth Form Curriculum

The sixth form curriculum is based on the SEND Preparing for Adulthood outcomes. The Preparing for Adulthood curriculum is designed to meet the needs of individual learners through practical activities that will enable them to increase their independence and Quality of Life. The programme incorporates individual learning objectives that link to pupil's EHCP outcomes and the Preparing for Adulthood curriculum.

There are four pathways that are included in the curriculum:

- Work Related Learning & Enterprise
- Independent Living
- Friends, Relationships, and Community
- Health and Wellbeing

In addition to the above, English and Mathematics is embedded across the Preparing for Adulthood pathways at the Pre-Formal level.

For sixth formers working at the Semi-Formal and Formal level, pupils have English and Maths taught in two ways. Pupils' access targeted weekly English and Maths lessons, as well as have their targets embedded across the 4 Preparing for Adulthood pathways, allowing skills to be taught in a functional way. Finally, PSHE is taught to all pupils in the sixth form as a standalone subject.

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Transition and Preparing for Adulthood

Moving to a new school, then changing classrooms and teachers each year is especially hard if you find change difficult, as many autistic people do. Transition work forms part of the curriculum offer at Treehouse school to support pupils when change happens. This support is provided by teachers, behaviour analysts (BAs) and the teaching and behaviour support team (TABS). An additional focus is the daily act of transitioning from home to school, from classroom to another area in the school which may also be a challenge to some pupils.

Although the Preparing for Adulthood framework is a particular curricular focus in the 6th form, its foundations are developed as soon as the pupil starts school. This means that everyone is working towards the key skills that pupils with autism need to function well and happily in adulthood. This work is preparation for leaving Treehouse school and moving to a new placement, whether this be Ambitious College or another setting.

British Values

All schools are expected to uphold British Values and make the teaching of the values part of their Curriculum offer. At Treehouse school we teach pupils about the 5 values that are encompassed under the British Values framework.

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.

Treehouse school have adapted and broken down these values to make them accessible to all pupils at their own developmental level. The bespoke Quality of Life Curriculum ensures that all the areas are addressed.

Cultural capital

At Treehouse school we develop our pupils' cultural capital by taking advantage of London's rich cultural diversity, enabling the children to access a wide variety of experiences through community visits and access to the arts including music, drama, sport, and literature. We celebrate our similarities and differences through cultural and religious celebrations by inviting in visitors, holding festivals and celebratory assemblies. We believe the wider the cultural capital that is experienced the more opportunity to improve a child or young person's quality of life.

Equal opportunities and Inclusion

The ethos of the Ambitious Approach is that each child has an equal right to an outstanding education that is tailor-made for them. We carefully review, through our provision maps, learning activities that facilitate the child achieving their EHCP outcomes and other curricular

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learning objectives. Community visits/ experiences are available to all, whatever their starting point irrespective of their individual self- regulation needs. This is addressed through robust and rigorous risk assessments that keep everyone safe.

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