FIRST STEPS TOGETHER
SKILLS FOR LIFE

KS3 CURRICULUM POLICY

Revision History			
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Index

1. **Introduction** **(3)**
2. **Curriculum Responsibilities** **(3)**
3. **Roles and Responsibilities of Staff** **(4)**
4. **The Intent and Aims of our Curriculum** **(5)**
5. **Implementation** **(6)**
    a. *Curriculum Personalisation:* *(6)*
    b. *Nurture* *(7)*
    c. *Trauma Informed Approach* *(8)*
    d. *Teaching and Learning Strategy:* *(7)*
    e. *Teaching and Learning Strategy: Diagram* *(9)*
    f. *Subjects and Qualifications:* *(10)*
    g. *Curriculum Personalisation:* *(11)*
    h. *Core Subjects:* *(12)*
    i. *Foundation/Extended Curriculum Subjects:* *(12)*
    j. *Reading:* *(12)*
    k. *Physical Education:* *(13)*
    l. *PSHE, and RSE:* *(13)*
    m. *Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural (SMSC) Education, British Values and Protected Characteristics:* *(14)*
    n. *Enrichment activities, Pupil Led Learning and Learning Outside of the Classroom:* *(15)*
6. **Impact and Assessment** **(15)**

In response to:

DfE (2013) National Curriculum for Key Stages 3-4

DfE (2019) The Independent School Standards

Introduction

First Steps Together offers an integrated therapeutic, and education provision which supports pupils to realise their full potential, whilst developing their social and emotional resilience.

Due to the complex nature of the pupils that attend First Steps Together, it is our responsibility to provide them with the most appropriate curriculum, to promote their academic learning and life skills. This also includes encouraging learners to understand their Personal Social and Cultural Education.

Pupils who attend First Steps Together have invariably experienced disrupted education placements. Some may have limited positive experiences of education, and our assessment processes may demonstrate that pupils are working below age related expectations on admission.

First Steps Together is well-resourced and has a comprehensive range of facilities including ICT in classrooms, a science lab, purpose built catering classrooms, art classrooms, large outdoor grounds, dinner hall which includes recreational space, a purpose-built shower and changing room, and an abundance of specialist resources; these include sensory, SEMH, and communication and interaction aides. Staff are highly skilled and there is a professional development programme in place which includes the robust induction of any new staff to the school. Staff/pupil ratios are deliberately high in order to ensure pupils feel well supported.

This policy covers the flexibility of approach we take with our curriculum, within the parameters of the National Curriculum, and how this approach supports the pupils at First Steps Together to access the curriculum. Our curriculum is broad and rich and meets the needs of our pupils. Our curriculum provides consistency throughout the school whilst recognising developmental and age-related aspects to learning. Staff have worked closely together to develop the curriculum, meaning there is ownership and understanding of the knowledge and skills pupils will gain at each stage in their educational journey.

As a school we celebrate differences and support each other so that everyone can reach their full potential regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The 2010 Equality Act makes it an offence to discriminate against a person due to the 9 protected characteristic(s). At First Steps Together no form of discrimination is tolerated and our pupils show respect for those who share the protected characteristics.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The 9 Protected Characteristics are actively promoted in school through:

- Our school ethos statements, SIP, and SEF
- Our school core values
- Our school behaviour policy
- Conscious role modelling by all adults in the school community
- Active engagement and communication with parents and carers
- Assemblies
- British Values themes for a day, week/term
- Discussion within curriculum subjects, taking a cross-curricular approach
- Promoting articulation by building appropriate language and a coherent vocabulary
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) sessions
- RSE lessons, LGBT discussions and Protected Characteristic talks
- Sporting, Art and Cultural Events
- Pupil Voice
- Educational visits
- Real-life learning outside the classroom
- Guest speakers
- Developing links with local, national and international communities
- Extra-curricular activities charity work and work within the local community

Curriculum Responsibilities

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for the implementation, development and monitoring of all areas of the curriculum throughout Key Stages; supported by the senior leadership team (SLT), and subject specialist practitioners.

Subject leaders in conjunction with the Head Teacher and SLT, have a responsibility for the implementation, development and monitoring of their particular subject area across the key stages, thus ensuring continuity and progression throughout the whole school.

Subject leaders in collaboration with the Head of Curriculum design the school curriculum to ensure it clearly sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils will gain at each stage (**intent**). They also consider the way that the curriculum is developed, taught and assessed in order to support pupils to build their knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills (**implementation**). The Head Teacher, SLT, and subject leaders also consider the outcomes that pupils will achieve as a result of their education at First Steps Together (**impact**).

We expect that most pupils will have a working plan that reflects their current abilities and the modifications required to ensure the pupil's needs are met. Referring institutions, therapeutic partners, and external agencies in conjunction with the Head Teacher, SLT, and subject teachers ensure that all the individual needs of the pupils are met through the development and implementation support plans.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

The teaching staff at First Steps Together will ensure that:

- The curriculum is planned and devised to best suit the needs of each individual pupil, including those with additional needs.
- The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.
- Topics and lessons are planned in logical sequences to ensure knowledge, understanding and skills are developed over time.
- The curriculum is delivered using a range of strategies to support pupils to know more and remember more.
- Subject teachers provide a strategic lead, support and advise colleagues, and monitor progress in their area through our robust evaluation process.
- The procedures for assessment are used proactively to support the learning and development of the pupils and influence next steps, including identifying gaps in knowledge to implement the interventions.

Leaders at First Steps Together will ensure that:

- Staff in the school are involved in decision-making processes that relate to the vision, intent, and development of the curriculum.
- Regular monitoring activities are carried out to ensure that the curriculum offered is progressive and ensures that pupils all achieve positive outcomes.
- All teaching staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities, including the planning of lessons, teaching methods, use of assessment and implementation of the agreed Feedback and Marking Policy
- Staff are provided with opportunities to develop strong subject knowledge as well as pedagogy, including through access to further training.

The Intent and Aims of our Curriculum.

We are committed to providing our pupils with a safe, happy, nurturing, and motivating environment for them to enjoy their learning again and where they are encouraged to reach their potential. At First Steps Together all aspects of school life are designed to inspire and engage pupils, through a mix of a learning curriculum, creative approaches plus essential life skills and experiences. We believe that through this approach we are able to build on our pupils' cultural capital.

Our curriculum and interventions, be that educational or therapeutic, are designed as a cohesive approach to meet the needs of all pupils. Our daily working knowledge of the pupils plays a huge part in meeting their needs. Through this approach we can constantly evaluate what the pupils' needs are and what progress they are making. We have a positive focus for life/social skills and a curriculum that aims to promote the social inclusion of all pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences in the next phase of their life. From admittance at First Steps Together we believe in helping establish the skills pupils need for living.

Our overarching aim is to offer a curriculum which provides pupils with:

- A positive experience of learning which promotes aspirational thinking.
- The skills to keep themselves safe and healthy now and in the future.
- Opportunities to develop independence, confidence, and resilience as well as other positive personal and social skills.
- Support to make a meaningful contribution to society, equipping them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- Academic proficiency in a range of subjects in preparation for the next stage of education, examination pathways and the world of work

Our curriculum has been developed from the requirements of the National Curriculum, but we also offer a wide range of activities to further enrich the experience and learning of the pupils. The school has a clear focus on the personal development, socialisation, and wellbeing of each pupil, as well as on their academic progress. Strong role modelling, mutual respect and positive choices for behaviour are also part of the curriculum.

As our curriculum is not only focused on academic development; we ensure, that there are opportunities for pupils to explicitly engage in activities which promote the following:

- Communication
- Academic progress
- Academic attainments were appropriate
- Relationships
- Self-respect, dignity
- Self-esteem, self-confidence
- Self-regulation
- Independence
- Resilience

We have a timetabled lesson, which is focused on whole-school pupil orientated initiative; specifically, the 'pupil council', 'anti-bullying council' and the 'Eco-Schools Green Flag Award'.

Implementation

Nurture:

Our curriculum is delivered using a variety of approaches and resources depending on the nature of the subject being taught and the needs of the pupils. Our curriculum offer is underpinned by the six 'Principles of Nurture':

- Children's learning is understood developmentally.
- The classroom offers a safe base.
- Nurture is important for the development of self-esteem.
- Language is understood as a vital means of communication.
- All behaviour is communication.
- Transitions are significant in the lives of children.

Through ensuring the aforementioned nurture principles are informing our curriculum and pedagogy, we can ensure that the social and emotional needs of our children are met. Whilst these principles permeate all aspects of our school, these are explicitly evidenced via the following (non-exhaustive) factors:

- All children are offered breakfast in form, which additionally has a focus around current affairs.
- Staff and pupils enjoy meals together during lunch, which enables staff to model, facilitate, and reinforce positive social skills in a safe and structured environment.
- All pupils have an assigned keyworker to support their development; in addition to being readily available, keyworker sessions are explicitly timetabled.
- Our rewards afternoon (Friday PM) provides a means for pupils to celebrate both micro and macro successes; ensuring that behaviour is positively reinforced.
- Transitions between groups are minimal, and wherever possible static groups are formed throughout a child's placement.

There are two core form tutors who also deliver cross-curricular SEND teaching following a nurture approach. This is further supported by specialists in subjects which are GCSE orientated. Form tutors are specialist SEND teachers, who have proven experience in the sector, and capable of delivering the national curriculum through a nurture (primary type) model.

As pupils transition into KS4, they have a mixture of lessons delivered by their nurture teacher, and lessons delivered by subject specialists.

Trauma Informed Approach.

To support the needs of our cohort, we endeavour to:

- Provide our children with daily access to emotionally available adults, who believe in them, and can relate to them with compassion, empathy, and unconditional positive regard.
- Support children experiencing painful life events, by helping them process, work through and make sense of what has happened.
- Ensure that staff always interact with children with kindness and compassion.
- Develop our settings in ways that help children feel calm and safe.
- Foster a culture in which staff and other adults interact with all children in a way that makes them feel valued as individuals throughout their day.

- Have staff and adults who adjust their expectations of vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress.

Where appropriate we will work in collaboration with clinical specialists to offer therapeutic intervention, which may include sensory intervention, play therapy, counselling, music/art intervention, SALT, OT, animal assisted intervention etc…

Teaching and Learning Strategy:

With adaptions, our teaching and learning strategy adopts the 3-stage framework pioneered by Barbara Rogoff: teacher led (I do), scaffolded application (we do), and independent pupil application (you do).

We underpin this strategy with rigorous assessment, and continuous support. These are both implemented via explicit and nuanced approaches. Pupils move through these stages incrementally when they have garnered sufficient knowledge/skills to move forward. Assessment of understanding, and support will be offered at all stages, with the intention of moving a pupil towards independent application (the 'You Do' stage).

Through utilising this model, we can ensure that substantive knowledge is carefully considered, and reinforced. Stage 1 considers a pupil's current substantive knowledge, whilst 2 and 3 are providing the means for a child to practice and recall this knowledge.

Assessment and Impact (see section below) is a crucial element of our teaching and learning strategy. Pupils have the opportunity to revisit, and reinforce concepts delivered throughout the week. The implementation of this strategy helps pupils reflect work completed during the 'You Do' phase, respond to marking, correct misconceptions, and ultimately reinforce the retention of desired skills and knowledge.

The application of this strategy may be used multiple times in a lesson, once during a lesson, or even once over a series of lessons. The strategy provides a sequential means to embed learning, whether this be for a single concept, multiple concepts, or a longer-term topic.

Our assessment policy considers the application of both substantive and disciplinary knowledge. Core knowledge is the cornerstone of substantive knowledge, which can broadly be summarised as contents to be taught as fact (e.g. events leading up to an event). All topics consider pupils' current substantive knowledge through outlines on long-term schemes of work and assessed through the introduction phase of a new topic. Our teaching and learning strategy ensure that substantive knowledge is carefully implanted, and that pupils are able to recall and utilise core knowledge to further their learning.

Disciplinary knowledge refers to the understanding of how knowledge is established, verified, and revised. Our strategy exposes pupils to disciplinary concepts which will further their learning. For example, within science pupils have multiple opportunities to participate in experiments; thus, developing the disciplinary knowledge in relation to how to conduct practical scientific enquiry. Our strategy accommodates this through reinforcing the application of knowledge across the 3 phases, with greater independence and expectation for the child.

The diagram (found on the next page), demonstrates the application of this approach.

Teaching and Learning Strategy: Diagram

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Assessment and Recall</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Planning and subsequent teaching is adapted depending on the differing starting points of each pupil. Where appropriate, all new topics will begin with a low stake, short assessment to establish prior knowledge. This compliments standardised assessments and historic data to provide a sufficient benchmark for pupils. Each week teachers document (via student books and curriculum tracker), whether learning has been secured. Friday's 'recall day' provides a means to further address misconceptions and engage in retrieval practice.</td></tr>
<tr><td>'I do'
During this stage, the teacher will tell pupils what they need to know and show them how to do the things they need to.</td><td>'We Do'
During this stage, tasks are scaffolding to build competence and confidence in concepts.</td><td>'You Do'
During this stage pupils will be expected to complete tasks independently.</td></tr>
<tr><td>● Clear explanation of the knowledge and/or skills being developed; this may form verbal, visual, and practical examples.
● Intended outcomes shared.
● Material is delivered in small chunks and incrementally builds; this is via a step-by-step approach.
● Where appropriate, what a good one looks like (WAGOLL) will be used to help model concepts.
● Modelling is used to structure new knowledge and concepts.</td><td>● This phase is intended to provide a means to prompt comparative and organised thinking.
● Often this phase will include partially completed information, which enables pupils to fill in the gaps.
● This may take the form of whole class examples via the class board/screen, or individually through partially completed handouts.
● Pupils will be encouraged to encode and retrieve; considering how new information changes their previous understanding (encode).
● Retrieval is embedded through supporting recognition and recall (recognition via multiple choice or recalling concepts with prompts).</td><td>● Pupils will be expected to complete tasks/apply concepts which have been covered within earlier stages.
● Assessment will be rigorous here; it is crucial to avoid implementing this phase too early. Otherwise, this can lead pupils to guess and lower their self-efficacy.
● This stage is about pupils recalling information without prompts.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Support and Intervention</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">In addition to initial assessment, at any stage of this cycle, support needs may be identified. Where necessary, teachers are expected to implement interventions to better secure understanding. Weekly monitoring will demonstrate whether pupils were able to successfully apply concepts via the 'You Do' stage or needed/need continuous intervention to better secure skills and knowledge.</td></tr>
</table>

Subjects and Qualifications:

The subjects we ensure pupils experience at First Steps Together are:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- PE
- History
- Geography
- RE
- PSHE (inc. RSE)
- Art and Design Technology
- Food Technology
- Personal Development (inc. Careers)

Although the curriculum is needs-led and therefore tailored to the needs of pupils, National Curriculum coverage is ensured through use of long-term plans. Themes/topics are revisited through the Key Stages to promote consolidation and progression at a deeper level. Each subject lead has developed a progressive long-term plan across the age ranges. Where possible and in order to support our pupils to remember what they learn, links are made between themes and topics across subject areas which is illustrated through our Curriculum Maps. As appropriate, pupils are directed to complete home-learning tasks.

Timetables are organised in a way which enables pupils to access subject specific teachers; this supports consistency, and the principles of nurture. Our work-related learning curriculum is being developed to provide older pupils with opportunities for vocational learning where appropriate. Every pupil accesses an individual Key Worker session which provides an important opportunity for a pupil to develop a relationship with a trusted adult and undertake some self-directed learning in a relaxed and enjoyable way.

Our PSHE offer is perfectly aligned with NCFE's RSHE L1-L2 award; this 2–5-year programme is achieved through pupils' engagement in the subject.

Core Subjects:

All subjects including maths, English, and science (core), follow the national curriculum (appropriately adapted for need). Standardised assessments, completed at the beginning of each key stage, help inform age related proficiency within maths, and English. In science baselines are completed within year 7 for biology, chemistry, and physics. Pupils in all years have 4 lessons of timetabled core curricula (for Maths and English); the fourth lesson is a recall lesson, which provides opportunities for pupils to recap and recall their work from the week.

As with all of our subjects, a curriculum statement and scheme help provide detail of how knowledge is sequentially developed, considering prior and future learning. KS3 English and mathematics utilise award winning commercial curriculum schemes (United Learning and White Rose Maths). These schemes have been designed by educational experts, and purposely designed to provide a solid platform to support the transition from key stage 2 – 3, and eventually to key stage 4. Topics are sequenced logically to continuously build on

learning, whilst introducing new concepts (which in turn are reinforced). Both schemes are mapped to national curriculum criteria and have appropriate topic assessments in order to routinely assess the apprehension of knowledge.

Foundation/Extended Curriculum Subjects:

All pupils are given the experience of The National Curriculum in all Foundation subjects with literacy, numeracy, computing, and other cross-curricular links embedded wherever possible. In consideration of the needs of our cohort; there is significant focus shown towards PSHE (see below). We make use of our excellent facilities through offering food technology as a regular subject for all pupils to access.

Reading:

At First Steps Together, teaching pupils to read and promoting reading for pleasure are both integral to our curriculum. For pupils who have not yet developed initial reading skills, Read Write, Inc: Fresh Start is used; a systematic synthetic phonics programme for struggling readers aged 9 – 13+. Pupils are taught at their challenge point, so they learn to read accurately and fluently in just 15-25 minutes a day.

Reading proficiency is underpinned by standardised assessments which produce a standard age score; these include Group Reading Test (NGRT), and York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC), which can further diagnose reading difficulties including reading accuracy, comprehension, and rate.

Reading skills such as skimming, scanning, continuous reading, and close reading, are also taught explicitly in English lessons to develop fluency and efficiency, as well as other areas of the curriculum.

PSHE, and RSHE:

Here, at First Steps Together we value PSHE as a way to support students' development as human beings, to enable them to understand and respect who they are, to empower them with a voice and to equip them for life and learning.

We include the statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education within our whole-school PSHE Programme.

To ensure progression and a spiral curriculum, we use Jigsaw, the mindful approach to PSHE, as our chosen teaching and learning programme and tailor it to our students' needs. The mapping document, 'Jigsaw 11-16 and statutory RSE and Health Education', shows exactly how Jigsaw and, therefore, our school, meets the statutory RSE and Health Education requirements.

This programme's complimentary update policy ensures we are always using the most up-to-date teaching materials and that our teachers are well-supported.

Our PSHE policy is informed by existing DfE guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance)
- Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool (a tool to support a whole school approach that promotes respect and discipline)
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools (advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils)
- Equality Act 2010 and schools
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance)
- Alternative Provision (statutory guidance)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (advice for schools)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (advice for schools, including advice on cyberbullying)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools (advice for schools)
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance (provides advice on avoiding discrimination in a variety of educational contexts)
- Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools (guidance for maintained schools on promoting basic important British values as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC)
- SMSC requirements for independent schools (guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).

The Jigsaw Programme is aligned to the PSHE Association Programmes of Study for PSHE (mapping document available on the Community Area of www.jigsawpshe.com) and aligned to the definitions of Relationships and Sex Education offered by the Sex Education Forum (National Children's Bureau, April 2020).

Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural (SMSC) Education, British Values and Protected Characteristics:

At First Steps Together, we provide an education that provides pupils with opportunities to explore and develop their own moral values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, high standards of personal behaviour, a positive caring attitude towards other people, an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures. Throughout the curriculum, we encourage pupils to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of the law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. As part of the wider SMSC curriculum, pupils are encouraged to act responsibly and work to support their own and the wider community. Work is carried out on the development of pupils' understanding of services and cultural pillars.

British values are promoted in so much of what we do, not least during our school assemblies, Religious Education and in PSHE. Modern British values are integral to our curriculum aims and underpin our daily school lives. As well as actively promoting British values in school, the opposite also applies. We would actively challenge pupils, staff or professionals expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British values, including 'extremist' views.

We remain conscious that across our curriculum we should remain within the guidelines of protected characteristics as defined in The Equality Act 2010. Our curriculum promotes respect and a culture of tolerance and diversity, and this is firmly embedded. The impact of

teaching related to the protected characteristics, British Values and SMSC activities are all tracked.

Each class has a timetabled lesson which is focused on 3 pupil-led school initiatives: the school council, anti-bullying council, and eco-schools green flag award. Through engaging in these 3 forums, pupils are able to support both their school and wider communities. We believe this an essential tool in developing pupils' SMSC awareness; and developing their respect and understanding of other people, whilst contributing to wider society.

Careers:

Please see our careers and work-related learning policy for full details. We are passionate about helping pupils to identify and realise their ambitions, aspirations and secure futures that are right for them as individuals. Whether pupils want to be an astronaut, an artist, or just aren't sure what they want to be today, we will support them to understand their skills and talents, their interests, and any areas of development. This will help them on their next steps, whether through further or higher education or training, to secure their career of choice and prepare them ready to enter employment.

From year 8 &9, pupils receive access to an independent career's advisor. Furthermore, all pupils have the opportunity to engage in termly employment talks with visiting speakers within an assembly focus.

Enrichment activities, Pupil Led Learning and Learning Outside of the Classroom:

Pupils have access to a range of planned enrichment activities and cultural visits to enhance learning and cultural capital. These are likely to change in line with pupil interests and subject topics being taught throughout the year, but may include:

- Climbing/Water sports
- Horticulture
- Horse-riding
- Lego Creativity
- Boxing
- Circuits and General Fitness
- Topic related visits e.g. Science and Industry Museum/theatre visits
- Visits to local landmarks/places of interest
- Model Making

Impact and Assessment (See Assessment Policy)

The impact of our curriculum is evidenced by the work that the pupils produce, their progression over time and how well prepared our pupils are for the next stage of their education, employment, or/and training. Assessment is an integral part of our approach to teaching and learning and teachers undertake this regularly (see separate Assessment Policy and Feedback and Marking Policy).

Pupils undergo baseline assessments in all core topics, and end of topic assessments, that provide valuable in monitoring pupils' comprehension of new skills and knowledge.

Substantive knowledge is assessed at the beginning of each new topic, alongside disciplinary knowledge; the latter is also carefully examined via key stage summative assessments, which compare age related expectations on a national curve.