



FIRST BRIDGE SCHOOL

# Curriculum and teaching policy

## **Introduction**

The aim of this policy is to outline First Bridge School's curriculum approach and how we meet the needs of our pupils – all of whom have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), most supported by education, health and care (EHC) plans – through our integrated therapeutic and educational curriculum. This policy complements and should be considered alongside our admissions, assessment, early years and personal development policies.

We meet our pupils' needs by:

- having consistently high expectations of every pupil.
- facilitating high-quality, inspirational and innovative teaching and learning.
- creating a safe, secure, caring and enjoyable environment in which pupils work, learn, thrive and develop independence.
- providing a personalised curriculum, developed with each individual pupil's development in mind.
- Providing teaching underpinned by evidence-based practice.

## **Curriculum**

### **Curriculum statement**

At First Bridge School, all pupils have complex SEND. The nature of their needs requires the curriculum to be personalised to each pupil and because of this it is naturally broad and balanced. We integrate high-quality, evidence-based therapy with carefully-adapted national curriculum delivery, in order to provide transformational education to our pupils.

The curriculum at First Bridge School has been developed to meet the needs of our pupils, from Early Years to year 4. It aligns to the Independent Schools Standards (ISS) areas of learning and has communication and social interaction at its core. All pupils have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that integrates and aligns therapeutic and curriculum targets. Where pupils have an EHC Plan, the focus of IEPs additionally aligns with both short and long-term outcomes.

We set high expectations and appropriate targets for all pupils, supporting them to develop the confidence, resilience, creativity, and skills necessary to lead fulfilling lives. We celebrate the diversity of abilities, cultures, faiths, and

languages within our community, ensuring that all pupils are valued and included.

The therapeutic curriculum is designed primarily utilising the Assessment of Basic Language Skills-revised (ABLLS-r) as well as other standardised and criterion-referenced assessments. The therapeutic curriculum is then embedded into our educational offer and curriculum, which enables our pupils to access a personalised, meaningfully enriching and ambitious educational experience.

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

At First Bridge School, we fully meet all EYFS teaching and learning requirements by delivering an integrated, evidence-based curriculum that addresses every element of the prime and specific areas of learning. Our provision is highly personalised, developmentally informed, and grounded in high-quality therapeutic approaches, ensuring that communication, social-emotional development, physical development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts are embedded throughout daily teaching. Through structured planning, consistent assessment, and carefully adapted learning environments, we ensure all pupils access a broad, balanced, and developmentally appropriate EYFS curriculum that secures strong foundations for future learning and independence.

### Learning areas and development

At First Bridge School, we deliver a broad, balanced curriculum across the seven areas of learning and development, with communication and interaction at the heart of all teaching and learning.

We provide structured, meaningful learning opportunities, through engaging activities, that support skill acquisition, engagement, and independence.

We personalise learning to each pupil's strengths, developmental stage, and needs, ensuring that teaching supports sustainable progress while remaining motivating, relevant, and accessible.

### Planning

Teachers set termly, whole-school themes (including events and assemblies). The Early Years Lead and Clinical Supervisor create medium-term plans for the Early Years cohort, aligned to the EYFS and pupils' developmental needs.

Plans show how themes are taught through weekly provision areas (e.g., literacy, maths, music, technology, art, sand/water, messy play, and role play), with prompts and extension targets linked to IEP goals and informed by termly 'Development Matters' snapshots and ABA assessment. Planning is reviewed half-termly to inform next steps and support progress, engagement, and skill development.

Across all planning, we embed the seven areas of learning to support each child's holistic development.

## Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

We complete an EYFS Profile for each pupil at the end of their Early Years provision. If a pupil moves to another setting, we share the report to support continuity. For pupils transitioning into our older years, the profile is included in a structured handover with input from Clinical Supervisors and teachers to inform next-step planning.

## Learning areas

### *Communication and Language*

Spoken language underpins all areas of learning. We create a language-rich environment where adults and therapists model and extend communication in everyday interactions, build vocabulary through regular stories and rhymes, and provide frequent opportunities to practise language through conversation, play, and storytelling.

### *Personal, Social and Emotional Development*

Pupils' personal, social, and emotional development (PSED) is fundamental to their well-being and cognitive growth. We provide strong, warm, and supportive relationships with adults to help pupils understand their own feelings and those of others. We support pupils to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, and achieve individualised self-help and independence targets, including goal setting, perseverance, and focusing attention. Through adult modelling, guidance, and tailored programs, pupils learn to care for their bodies, make healthy choices, and manage personal needs independently. Supported interactions with peers help pupils form friendships, cooperate, and resolve conflicts positively. These skills, reinforced through individualised

targets and programmes, provide a secure foundation for learning, achievement, and lifelong well-being.

### *Physical Development*

Physical development is vital for pupils' overall growth, health, and well-being. We provide opportunities for both gross and fine motor development through structured activities and individualised programs that support each pupil's strength, coordination, balance, and spatial awareness. Pupils develop core strength, stability, and agility through indoor and outdoor play, games, and guided movement experiences. Fine motor skills are supported through small-world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts, and the use of tools, with adult modelling, feedback, and tailored support. Individualised targets in physical skills and self-help routines, such as dressing, feeding, and hand hygiene, are embedded within daily activities, enabling pupils to build confidence and foundational skills that support later learning and social-emotional well-being.

### *Literacy*

We provide a rich literacy environment to foster a lifelong love of reading and writing. Pupils develop language comprehension through adult-led interaction, shared discussion about the world around them, and regular reading of stories and non-fiction, alongside rhymes, poems, and songs. We support pupils to develop word reading and writing through structured teaching of the Read Write Inc programme and individualised targets, including decoding unfamiliar words, recognising familiar words, handwriting, spelling, and composing ideas. Practitioners guide, model, and provide feedback to help pupils embed these skills, in line with their developmental stage and Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals.

### *Mathematics*

We teach maths through hands-on learning in number, shape, space, and measure. Pupils build early counting and number skills (to 10), explore patterns and relationships, and solve practical problems using resources such as manipulatives and ten frames. Teaching is supported by individualised targets and ABA-informed strategies, with adults modelling, scaffolding, and encouraging pupils to take risks and learn from mistakes.

### *Understanding the world*

We help pupils explore and understand the world through practical, real-life experiences. Pupils take part in supported visits (e.g., doctors and dentists) and termly community trips to build confidence and apply learning in meaningful contexts. Stories and non-fiction texts extend their understanding of the social, cultural, technological, and natural world, supported by individual objectives linked to developmental need and IEP goals to promote generalisation beyond the classroom.

### *Expressive Arts and Design*

We provide frequent opportunities for pupils to explore the arts, developing creativity and cultural awareness. Pupils use a range of media and sensory experiences to express ideas and feelings, supported by staff through individual goals that build skills and vocabulary. Rich, repeated experiences help pupils respond with confidence to art, music, and performance in different contexts.

### *Observations and evidence*

We use ongoing observation and evidence to track pupils' learning and development. Daily observations, including photos and videos, are uploaded to Family with brief notes and relevant learning tags. Additional evidence from group activities, assemblies, and special events is recorded on HIRASMUS and shared with the Group Lead to inform planning. This ensures progress is monitored, learning is personalised, and achievements are shared with families.

### *Assessments*

Daily observations, *Development Matters* snapshots, Two-Year Checks, and EYFS Profiles give an overall view of each pupil's progress. We use this information to set IEP targets and plan termly learning that is personalised, developmentally appropriate, and supports continued progress across the EYFS.

### *Two Year Checks*

We request Two-Year Developmental Checks for pupils who meet the age threshold before joining, gathering reports from their previous setting or healthcare provider. If a pupil reaches the threshold while enrolled, we use

the most recent six-monthly report or assessment. Findings inform targeted support and individual learning plans.

### Development Matters

We use *Development Matters* from intake to assess pupils' learning and development. We complete a baseline assessment on entry and update a snapshot termly to track progress, identify needs, and set targets. This ensures teaching remains responsive and personalised across the EYFS.

### Safeguarding and welfare

We meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Department for Education's EYFS statutory framework to ensure pupils learn in a safe, secure, and supportive environment. We maintain appropriate staff ratios, ensure staff are trained and vetted, promote health and safety, and follow robust safeguarding procedures. Further detail is set out in the Safeguarding and Welfare in the Early Years Policy.

### **Our adapted national curriculum**

- Builds positively on what pupils already know and what they can do.
- Enables pupils to focus on building strong foundational skills for future independent learning.
- Includes well-structured opportunities to learn skills in an intensive way, and then generalise then into natural environments, developing and extending learning.
- Is always relevant, functional and interesting for the pupil.
- Offers opportunities for the pupils to be creative and adventurous in their learning.
- Provides opportunities for first hand experiences using a wide range of resources.

## The Independent School Standards (ISS)

Our curriculum offer is aligned to the ISS standards (Part 1), which is then integrated to align with pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEP). Below is an example of how we design and embed the curriculum into our subject areas and groups, to meet the needs of our pupils.

ISS Areas of Learning	Linguistic	Mathematical	Scientific	Creative	Technological	Human & Social	Physical & Aesthetic
Subject-group interpretation	English	Mathematics	Science	The Arts	The Technologies	PSHEE (RSE), Humanities	Sport and PE
Subjects within the group	English	Math	Science	Art, Music & Drama	Design Technology, Computing, Food Technology	PSHE Education, Geography, History, Religious Education	Physical Education (PE)

## Schemes of work

Teachers and therapists follow our schemes of work (SoW) which have been created and adapted from national curriculum subjects, including English, Mathematics, science, art, physical education (PE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE). There are also SoWs for Food Technology as this is another area where our pupils can develop independence. The how targets are translated into a practical plan, including themes and/or topics or units of study which are then utilised in the creation of planning documents to support with the delivery of the topic. A scheme of work entitled Wider Curriculum has also been created to show how all of the other subjects are encompassed within the school's annual "Operational and Academic calendar" of events and assemblies, the subjects included in this scheme of work are; Geography, History, Religious Education (RE), Music, Design and Technology (D&T) and Modern foreign languages (MFL).

Each scheme outlines how educational targets are transformed into practical plans, incorporating themes, topics, or units of study. These form the basis of detailed planning documents used to support effective teaching and learning.

## **Communication**

We prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills. Where possible, pupils are taught to use vocal, verbal communication. Therapy programmes focus on expressing needs, using language to interact, responding as listeners, identifying people, places, and objects, and answering questions. Following a full language and communication assessment, if a pupil is not able to communicate vocally, we provide an agreed alternative method with parents. This may include augmentative and alternative communication systems such as PECS, Proloquo2Go, other communication devices, or sign-supported systems such as Makaton. Parents receive information, training, and resources so that the same communication approach can be used consistently at home.

## **Reading**

To give our pupils the greatest opportunity to be able to learn to read, all pupils work on their phonics skills using the systematic synthetic phonics programme Read Write Inc (RWI). This is taught during daily English lessons as the overarching theme in each half-term's long-term plan and is also explicitly taught during their one-to-one therapy sessions. Pupils have an initial assessment to gauge their phonetical knowledge and skills. Based on the results of the assessment, a personal target is set for each pupil. If no phonic knowledge is identified during the assessment, a subsequent assessment is conducted, to identify if they have the pre-requisite skills necessary for successful acquisition of reading. These skills include:

- scanning left to right.
- identifying pictures within an array.
- matching letters.
- labelling pictures.

If a pupil does not consistently demonstrate these skills, they are targeted for specific intervention in their therapy lessons and constitute their phonetic pre-skill.

## **Planning**

Medium- and long-term plans are written for subject groups, early years, special events and assemblies. Within these plans learning objectives are set,

along with a plan of how these targets are to be met, resources needed and cross curricular links both to the national curriculum areas, as well as the early years prime and specific areas. There is an area for anyone who delivers the subject matter within the plan to complete an evaluation which is then reflectively used when creating future plans.

Planning for groups is created in line with the schemes of work. All pupils attend small bespoke groups for Art, Food Technology and P.E. Pupils also attend small group activities that include the wider curriculum topics, which is accomplished through special events and assemblies.

Group targets are individualised to each pupil, with specific goals and outcomes that align with their IEP and Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) where appropriate. If a pupil does not yet have the pre-requisites to access academic learning objectives, they will still attend group sessions to work on these skills, but they will also receive intensive 1:1 intervention on their individualised curriculums with their team of ABA therapists.

Pupils of school age also attend academic groups for English, mathematics, science and PSHE education across the week. The number of groups pupil attend depends on their ability to attend and learn in a group setting and this is shown through their learning pathway.

## **Teaching and learning**

We deliver a curriculum that integrates evidence-based clinical practice with high-quality, educational and academic curriculum and teaching. This combined approach enables pupils to make meaningful progress by developing functional communication, essential learning behaviours, and the skills needed to access a broad and ambitious curriculum. Our aim is to provide a transformational educational experience where teaching is structured, purposeful, and directly linked to improving long-term outcomes.

All pupils are taught in a way that builds systematically on prior learning, with support gradually reduced as independence increases. This includes targeted 1:1 teaching aligned with each pupil's Individual Education Plan (IEP), small-group sessions linked to the wider curriculum, and focused core-curriculum groups led by a Group Lead.

## Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Each pupil has an individualised teaching programme (IEP) delivered in 1:1 and/or small-group lessons.

IEPs are based on the long-term outcomes in a pupil's EHCP (where applicable) and detailed clinical therapy and educational assessment. Each IEP includes personalised targets intended to be taught and acquired over a 5–6-month period, with two IEP cycles per academic year.

Progress towards IEP targets is reviewed with parents each month, and parental priorities are incorporated into target selection. Progress is also formally reviewed and reported twice yearly, during the Annual Review, and in annual reports.

IEP targets are written using the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound). Although updated twice yearly, the pupil's wider curriculum is not restricted to IEP targets alone.

Teaching staff work directly with pupils and maintain daily oversight of their programmes, making adjustments as needed to ensure progress.

## Fundamental pathways

First Bridge School's Learning Pathways are designed utilising a variety of key evidence-based developmental curriculums and carefully selected components from national curriculum frameworks which are then delivered through three individualised and flexible learning pathways, known as 'Fundamental Pathways'. These pathways are categorised as: **Foundations, Structures and Formations.**

Many pupils with a suspected or diagnosed developmental delay, will have strengths in their learning and areas of need in others. At First Bridge School, we recognise the intricate development of each pupil's skills, and the absolute necessity for a curriculum that not only teaches and secures the foundations for a successful educational journey, but one that also continues to develop the strengths, desires and motivations of our pupils. Our Fundamental Pathways are designed to do just that, ensuring we do not lose sight of the necessary learning pathway each pupil requires, whilst also allowing us the flexibility to develop highly bespoke, motivationally stimulating, differentiated curriculums for each pupil.

Fundamental Pathways aim to teach pupils to become successful and independent learners, effective communicators and confident and responsible individuals. Our integrated curriculum and therapy model aims to enable pupils to develop the language, communication, play, academic, independence and emotional and social skills necessary for successful future learning. The core thread that runs throughout our pathways is the fundamental development of foundational skills that enable our pupils to develop the essential knowledge, understanding and abilities required for a safe, meaningful and fulfilling life beyond First Bridge. Through the wider curriculum areas and topics, pupils access a rich, diverse and meaningful learning environment which helps engage them with and bring understanding to the world around them.

**Foundations** - *Pupils are learning the foundational skills necessary to access future learning and to help them develop an awareness of and connect with the world around them. We do this through interaction, play, exploration, direct teaching, and practical activities.*

**Structures** - *Pupils begin to develop the structural skills required to extend and progress on their foundational learning. Acquiring the pre-requisite skills required to learn as a part of a group, and the vital skills required to be able to access long-term group- based teaching.*

**Formations** - *Pupils are forming themselves, becoming independent individuals who are confident in their sense of self, their love for learning and their abilities to make choices for their future educational journeys.*

## **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

At First Bridge School, a large proportion of our current pupils have EAL.

In defining EAL we have adopted the following definition, as taken from DfE guidance:

*'An EAL pupil is a pupil whose first language is not English. This encompasses pupils who are fully bilingual and all those at different stages of learning English.'* EAL pupils may be:

- newly arrived in the UK
- newly arrived in the UK, but were attending an English-speaking school or early years previously

- born abroad, but moved to the UK at some point before starting school or early years
- born in the UK, but in a family where the main language is not English

Our classrooms are equipped with age and culturally appropriate resources that promote the development of 'first language'. Classrooms are arranged to be socially and culturally inclusive.

First Bridge School promotes language development through the rich use of language and communication aids. Procedures of how to incorporate EAL into a pupil's specific programme are individualised, based on the pupil's specific need, and in discussion with parents and other professionals, including Speech and Language Therapists, where appropriate.

Staff are aware of pupils who are defined as EAL and make amendments to planned lessons and resources to support.

Pupils who are defined as being EAL are recorded as such, including their other language(s), by the Clinical Lead on the Data Dashboard, Family App and HUBmis.

### **Other strategies we use to support pupils with EAL**

- Include all EAL/ bilingual pupils fully in lessons.
- Set high expectations for pupil participation and achievement.
- Assess pupils in line with all other expectations.
- Provide opportunities for peer support- using paired/ small group work where appropriate.
- Offer access to traditional rhymes and stories.
- Provide context embedded language experiences.
- Check for pupils understanding – ask questions or get the pupil to explain what they are going to do.
- Give clear, full explanations of subject specific language.
- Provide opportunities for previews of difficult or complex texts.
- Use consistent language when giving pupils instructions.
- Be aware of the effect of eye contact and body language.
- Accept non-verbal/ 'I don't understand' responses from pupils.
- Use ICT where appropriate.
- Use collaborative learning resources to reinforce and consolidate prior learning.
- When planning highlight EAL needs and support to be given.

- Encourage, and incorporate where possible, the use of home language to support and enhance understanding in English.

## **Teaching strategies**

First Bridge School applies the principles of Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behaviour (VB) to teach communication, language, social skills, self-help and independence, community participation and any other socially significant behaviours.

Teaching strategies such as errorless teaching, error correction, task analysis, shaping, prompting and prompt fading are used alongside reinforcement and high-rates of teaching opportunities to teach, shape, and reinforce acquisition of new skills and behaviours that will enhance the quality of life for the pupils at our school.

Teaching, within core lessons at First Bridge School, is carefully adapted to meet the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure learning is accessible, engaging and appropriately challenging. Lessons are typically structured with clear modelling, step-by-step explanations and opportunities for guided practice before pupils work more independently. Visual supports, concrete resources and structured routines are frequently used to help pupils understand key concepts and maintain focus. Teaching is responsive, with staff continually assessing pupils' understanding during lessons and adjusting support accordingly. This may include breaking tasks into smaller steps, providing additional prompts, or offering targeted adult support where needed. Opportunities for repetition, overlearning and retrieval are also built into lessons to help pupils consolidate knowledge and skills over time. Through these approaches, teaching aims to support pupils in accessing the National Curriculum while developing confidence, independence and a positive attitude towards learning.

## **Equality and inclusion**

We are committed to providing equal access and opportunities for all. Please see our equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and our accessibility plan.

## **Training and resources**

First Bridge School is committed to ensuring that all staff have the knowledge, skills, and resources required to deliver high-quality provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. We provide ongoing professional development to support the consistent application of evidence-based practice and high-quality teaching and learning.

All staff members receive comprehensive induction training, which includes safeguarding, behaviour support, the principles of ABA, data collection procedures, and the use of our online systems (e.g., HI Rasmus). Training is tailored according to role, with therapists, room leads, teachers, and senior staff receiving role-specific development to ensure they can meet the diverse needs of our pupils.

The school is committed to providing ongoing professional development that supports both high-quality teaching practice and subject-specific expertise. Our qualified teachers are proficient in evidence-informed pedagogy, alongside their knowledge of subject-specific criteria within our adapted curriculum. Teachers ensure that they remain confident in their subject disciplines, and are able to both apply effective teaching strategies, and also adapt their practice to meet the diverse learning needs of all pupils. Continuous professional learning enables our teachers to refine their practice and deliver a curriculum that is engaging, ambitious, and responsive to pupils' progress.

Professional development is ongoing and includes regular in-house training, workshops, and supervision delivered by Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs) or equivalent specialists. Staff are supported to pursue professional qualifications relevant to their roles.

In addition to training, First Bridge School ensures that staff have access to the resources necessary to implement effective support and interventions. This includes teaching and learning materials, specialist equipment where required, and digital systems for data collection and monitoring progress.

Reflective practice is encouraged, with regular opportunities for staff to share learning, review case studies, and engage in peer support. All training and resource provision are reviewed annually to ensure alignment with best practice, current research, and statutory guidance.

Whilst a SENDCo is not required in our setting, First Bridge School ensures that all staff are adequately trained and resourced to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and that professional development is sufficient to deliver high-quality, evidence-based interventions.