

## Barley Lane School

*Friendship, Optimism, Hardwork*

### **The curriculum offer 2021-22**

The school moved to a primary model across key stages rooted in and prompted by the success our primary teachers had in, often instinctively, privileging and prioritising the happiness and wellbeing of the children and young people who, by their nature (not fond of labels at all), as SEMH students need their emotional wellbeing to be our core focus and we build from there...

We are continually researching, scanning and reaching out to both the local community and the external environment for new opportunities for the children to access, be it a local farm or work placement. Aptitudes and interests alongside the pupil voice contribute significantly to those opportunities that can enhance and supplement our core educational offer.

How they feel and so behave is where we start and so having the right teacher, the best peer group, the best environment and a wider whole school climate all rooted in safe and compassionate and nurturing relationships come before what is taught and how.

We do not believe happiness and wellbeing and good mental health are “bolt-ons” and yet another website or initiative expert driven when we are the experts and not many SEMH schools have been described by Ofsted as we have been as a place where *“Trust, respect and belonging permeate”*.

Putting wellbeing at the heart of our school creates challenges as does the complex and mercurial nature of our children and young people, the challenges they face in their lives and the need for as bespoke a curriculum as is practicable; all these make planning an organizing a coherent curriculum a “painting the Humber Bridge” task and so ongoing...

1. *“Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life”*
2. *“The provider has the same academic, technical or vocational ambitions for almost all learners. Where this is not practical – for example, for some learners with high levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities – their curriculum is designed to be ambitious and to meet their needs”*
3. *The curriculum extends beyond the academic, technical or vocational and provides for learners’ broader development, enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents*

## Ofsted descriptors

1. First the notion of an equality of entitlement (albeit a pragmatic one with some limits) to an engaging and diverse a curriculum offer and this is described across four strands (see table 1)
2. Second the need for every teacher to be resourceful and flexible and innovative to make learning engaging and meaningful and accessible for children and young people often disconnected and disaffected from and by school and learning.
3. Third as a result of priorities one and two dynamic differentiation and pragmatic personalisation that meets the diverse and shifting needs of an equally dynamic and eclectic student body as they mature and move through the school and key stages and with our support their future aspirations and plans start to coalesce so next steps beyond school become naturally clear and achievable.

table 1: the curriculum offer

NONE OF THIS CAN HAPPEN WIHOUT THE RIGHT PEOPLE (resilient, optimistic, dogged, kind) DOING THE RIGHT THINGS (basic SEMH fitness for purpose: structure; routines; relationships) IN A WIDER AND WHOLLY SECURE POSITIVE CLIMATE					
Strand or route	1. the classroom		2. college and the workplace	3. having fun	4. being cared for
	Being able to focus and engage and learn in a supportive and flexible but essentially conventional setting but also...		Experiencing work and the workplace and practical subjects; discovering new skills and interests beyond the classroom-chances for success	Having fun and discovering hobbies and interests; things to enjoy become passionate about...	Being listened to and cared for with adults who are engaged and present and empathetic-some skilled parenting and mentoring
	1. Core subjects	2. Options to tackle a range of other academic subjects	3. Vocational and work based learning*	4. Access to enriching sporting, social and cultural activities (fun!)	5. Access to mentoring, counselling and therapeutic support
	...to have opportunities to do so in innovative and creative and engaging ways for example Shakespeare in a theatre, history in the field and to bring in other voices for example recent "internet safety" guru (challenge, fun!)				
An effective reward mechanism that celebrates and reinforces core values friendship, optimism and hard work					
Education with character is imbued throughout with EHCPs seeking common threads and themes with our core values of friendship, optimism and hard work					
Rationale	To be literate, numerate and IT literate critical to future economic wellbeing and personal worth and dignity.  Access to next step learning and career opportunities	It has been too easy in the past to narrow the opportunities for SEMH students and studying arrange of subjects to GCSE is both an entitlement and fun.  Evidencing you are a rounded learner and person improves access to future learning and career opportunities.	To ensure academic opportunities are promoted is not to diminish the value and pertinence and powerful draw of vocational learning Shakespeare and brick laying both things of beauty ;-)  The balance and variety of setting and subject and activity has proven beyond question critical to keeping our young people engage and motivated.	It is a healthy legacy of the residential model for SEMH the notion of having fun and developing esteem and insight and character by experiencing a range of physical, social and cultural experiences from abseiling to opera; rounded happy people have enthusiasms and interests.  Many of our young people have limited opportunities outside school.	SEMH is something we make clear we all experience and it is an impediment to our learning, happiness and wellbeing. For many students the "good relationships" with staff and flexible curriculum ameliorate and support them but for a significant minority there is a need for more specialist support.
Content	English, Maths, Science, IT, PSHE, careers	Art, PE, Humanities, English literature, Media Studies, DT, Home Cooking Skills, Improving Health and Nutrition, Exercise Studies	Catering, Construction, Automotive engineering, Mechanics, Agricultural studies, work placements	A range of outdoor education opportunities for example climbing and abseiling.  A range of social and cultural activities from football matches to the English Touring Opera.	In-house mentoring and qualified specialist counselling. THRIVE and emotional literacy.  Access to mentoring at SWIS and 1-1  Close working with social care and family support services and other supporting professionals for example EPS and EWS
Accreditation	GCSE, AQA functional skills L1 L2, NCFE L1 L2,	GCSE, NCFE L1 L2, AIM Award	BTEC L1, ABC L1, AIM Award	DoE, NICAS L1 L2 L3, BCU 1&2 star, MIAS L1 L2	
Every tutor is a champion for their young people and seeks to build a pragmatic and varied and engaging experience for their pupils and from Y9 they work with pertinent colleagues in-house and other providers to build a vocational experience and the more complex and vulnerable the child the greater the access. Tutors you are your children's champions and advocates: fight their and your corner. Make big demands on yourselves but also on those around you to help and support and facilitate and make school a great experience for all our young people.					

## **The spirit and the reality of the curriculum offer**

In our setting unless teachers embrace the inherent complexity and challenge in their work and bring the necessary and resilient “can do” and problem solving attitude **no model or “offer” however pretty or well-designed will work.**

Our children and young people would be happy and successful in mainstream if additional thought and wit and innovation weren't needed to engage them.

Teachers must build as we revisit and seek to embed throughout all our work and documentation a positive climate rooted in strong relationships and a solid framework of expectation, ritual and routine.

From that position of stability and good order innovation and imagination and creativity will be needed still so learning is engaging and doable and fun.

This includes enriching and playing with learning and teachers innovating and providing enrichment opportunities so our students experience a diversity and breadth of learning in a variety of settings including sporting, cultural, social and vocational ; on the playing-field, in a canoe, up a rope, on the trail, in the theatre and the museum, in restaurants and shops, in the workplace and the workshop and through fun and play in school and beyond in their communities and in any and every other way we can explore and innovate for them.

The greater the variety and so engagement and fun the more likely we are to catch the imagination and create successes and so spark and encourage a sometimes absent and fragile enthusiasm for learning.

## **Different routes for different children; any “offer” has to bend and flex**

One common characteristic of the children and young people in our care is their diversity and difference and like all children as they mature their strengths and interests develop and shift.

Throughout there is often the powerful residual hurt and uncertainty about the whole business of learning that must be supported and softened and having the right and dynamic and flexible opportunities and blend of learning key in this; what the children access will need constant attention from minor tweaks through substantial change to innovation

The “offer” will be reviewed annually with teachers championing their children and a balance and blend sought from the above menu in-step with their current if shifting needs, age and key stage.

For some ongoing monitoring and tweaking and developing of their personalised “offer” will be needed others will move more predictably and securely through a conventional route.

Sometimes in crisis radical change is needed for example a period of off-site mentoring and tutoring and a supported reintegration to school; sometimes a different school is the best outcome.

Predictable and embedded routines and expectations characterise the learning environment at KS2/3 but this shifts and in KS4 (it can transition from year 9) what is taught is incrementally and increasingly personalised and GCSEs are taken early in this specialist and very particular setting to allow young people to stay motivated and engaged and pursue the vocational learning that many will continue beyond school in college and the workplace.

The school, driven by the wellbeing benefits its stability and “belonging” bring, has moved to a whole school primary model across key stages 2, 3 and 4 that can and does flex for example as described above from year 9 to allow as necessary and pragmatic personalization as our young people access a range of vocational courses off-site and on-site to access specialist subjects for example IT.

### **Curriculum planning**

We start with class groups; these are decided primarily on the cohesiveness and stability of the pupil mix socially (what is most supportive of a positive classroom climate) prescribed by key stage and as with all our work a pragmatic flexibility is ever present as change must and will happen.

Planning is a collegiate and pragmatic task in context and one that requires flexibility and ongoing tweaks and modifications...some children and groups are by their nature so complex and mercurial a wholly personalised and flexible and innovative approach is best.

The teaching team works together to plan a coherent and cohesive and chronological content (long and medium term planning) across key stages 2 and 3 in English, Maths, Science and PSHE that seeks to avoid unhelpful repetition and duplication (some reinforcement is desirable).

Specialist subjects for example PE and IT are planned and taught discretely.

KS4 brings the structure of GCSE and other accreditation plus the vocational courses our young people access so planning is around the “offer” route the student takes...

Short term planning is left to the discretion and professional judgment of individual teachers and peer sharing its scrutiny and this in step with seeking to recruit and retain teachers who relish and want autonomy and responsibility.

The work at the “chalk face” demands relentless drive and enormous and draining energy and enthusiasm and being always “engaged” and “present” so the critical activity of teaching must not be degraded by staff distracted and wearied by cumbersome admin’ tasks so all planning must be sharp and focussed and minimalist.