

# Curriculum Policy 2023-2024

This policy was reviewed on:

**Date:** 7 February 2024

**By:** Euan Macdonald

**Policy will be reviewed on:** August 2025

This policy was ratified/reviewed by Governors on:

**Date:** 8 September 2023

**Frequency of review:** Every 2 year(s)

*This policy is in line with the Independent School Standards (Revised January 2015)*

**Note:** This document uses the most current Government information and guidance at the time of writing. It may change according to Government policy.

# 1 | Statement and vision

Northstar Upper School is a safe, caring, high quality learning environment for pupils with a variety of complex special educational needs.

In addition to their learning needs, many students have missed large aspects of their educational entitlement prior to attending the school, and so begin their education here with levels of achievement significantly below average.

The aims and values of Northstar Upper School are focused on maximising every individual's potential to develop into a confident, secure, well-adjusted and skilled young person who will make a positive contribution to society and live as independent a life as possible.

We are therefore committed to the following principles:

- To respect the value of all individual students and staff
- To provide the highest standards of care and education
- To ensure safety, security and opportunities for success
- To foster students' social, moral and personal development
- To enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress to increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
- To provide a rounded curriculum of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education
- To ensure students acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills
- To help students learn to manage their behaviour and act responsibly

# 2 | Entitlement

To meet the needs and entitlement of our students, Northstar Upper School delivers a differentiated curriculum, based on a person-centred planning framework, which is closely aligned with our pupils' levels of ability, interests and aspirations.

This skills-based curriculum links subjects and year groups purposefully and progressively together, through exciting and stimulating themes that will positively develop the students'

Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural, Mental and Physical Well-being.

There is an underlying focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills alongside the development of personal and social skills and resilience in all subjects.

Each subject area meets individual needs by delivering the national curriculum programmes of study in a manner that makes them accessible to all pupils within the school. The curriculum design provides opportunities that are unique to each student, supported by high quality on site resources.

Where appropriate, class groupings are organised on a Stage not age basis, reflecting the discrepancies between chronological age, social and emotional maturity and cognitive ability.

### 3 | Identification of Needs

Pupils are admitted to the school after a thorough analysis of their needs. Each pupil is inducted into the school through a basis of informal interview at home or school and a battery of assessments. On entry this information is used to place the pupil within the correct level of work and grouping.

The statement is used to provide each pupil with an effective timetable. Where needed, pupils can start on a shortened timetable that is extended as the pupil gains confidence within the surroundings.

Where the pupil has not accessed education for a long time, the school can provide outreach work at home for a specific and agreed period of time.

### 4 | Aim and objectives of the curriculum

Overall curriculum aims and objectives are as follows:

- To optimise the use of computing in all curricular areas
- To optimise the use of functional skills in all curricular areas
- To provide pupils with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum
- To provide access to a differentiated national curriculum and national guidelines.
- To offer accredited courses which are appropriate to ability levels and individual aspirations.
- To carry out baseline assessment from which future progress can be monitored.

- To cater for pupils' individual learning styles.
- To equip pupils with the key skills required to appropriately interact within their community.
- To promote the use of the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) framework to ensure the six groups of skills that, together with the functional skills of English, mathematics and computing, are essential to success in learning, life and work.
- To develop a sense of personal achievement.
- To encourage self-motivated learning.
- To prepare students academically, vocationally and socially for adulthood.

## 5 | Recording pupil achievement: assessment and evaluation

Attainment data is collected every half-term for each pupil.

Each subject area provides a curriculum framework within which arrangements for assessing and recording pupils achievements are integral to the learning process.

Where students are not following the specification for a certified route, teachers use National Curriculum Levels to assess progress over time. These Level indicators are understood by teachers, pupils, parents/carers and outside agencies therefore they provide the best tool to use in school.

Assessment will be used for a variety of purposes: diagnostic, formative and evaluative. It will be used as an aid to making judgments about progress and to record the achievements of a pupil and therefore contribute to future planning. These judgments will be based on evidence from more than one source, such as teacher observation, class work, tests, investigation, questioning, project work, and examinations (where appropriate).

## 6 | Assessment and recording

Assessment will take place at three interrelated levels: short term, medium term, and long term. These assessments will be used to inform teaching in a cycle of planning, teaching and assessment.

- Short term assessments will be an ongoing part of every lesson to check pupils'

understanding and gain information which assists in adjusting day to day lesson plans.

- Medium term assessments will focus on ideas linked to the key objectives which have been covered during each half term. Individual targets on pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEP) will be assessed on a daily basis and reviewed three times a year.
- Long term assessments will take place annually, prior to a young person's Annual Review. A variety of assessment tests may be used according to pupils' ability levels.

Assessment will also be conducted via end of key stage tests or tasks, formal examinations and external accreditation. (See individual subject description for examination/accreditation systems used). Pupils' individual success will be recognised and celebrated through the school systems for rewarding and celebrating achievement.

## 7 | Intended outcomes

By implementing a differentiated and modified national curriculum it is intended that Northstar Upper School will:

- Optimise the communication skills of all pupils.
- Cater for the specific needs and learning difficulties of individual pupils as described in their statements, by providing teaching and learning opportunities at an appropriate level.
- Engage pupils' interests in personal development and encourage a thirst for learning
- Create a positive learning environment where pupils can work safely.
- Allow pupils to interact and learn from each other.
- Allow all pupils to reach their full potential and achieve their own personal success.
- Give pupils opportunities to develop their key skills.
- It is intended that through their programme of study, our pupils will:
- Improve their communication skills.
- Improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

- Develop greater levels of independence.
- Have gained the life skills required to function more appropriately in the community.
- Have gained accreditation to demonstrate the levels to which they have studied.
- Have gained relevant experiences to inform their decisions about future careers.
- Have a positive attitude towards their past, present and future learning.
- Develop confidence to move to the world of work, vocational or higher education.
- Have sufficient key skills and self-esteem to approach new situations confidently.

## 8 | Inclusion and Intervention

The needs of the pupils educated at Northstar Upper School are varied and often complex. Successful inclusion relies on a good understanding of, and absolute respect for the needs of the individual. Wherever possible, the school gives all individuals the same access and opportunities as every other pupil.

Each department attempts to set suitable learning challenges, responds to pupils' needs and seeks to overcome all potential barriers to learning. This is supported by:

- The school SENCO/or person responsible
- Learner profiles
- Intervention programmes
- Therapeutic support and other professional assessments

## 9 | Inclusion and Intervention

All elements of the school curriculum are underpinned by the need to enable pupils to feel safe and adopt safe practices. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) supports staff in delivering specific safeguarding issues within the curriculum, including how to keep safe, e-safety, anti-bullying and a wide range of awareness raising topics.

## 10 | Non-partisan views

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. Our curriculum is designed to be non-partisan and our staff handbook reminds those with an influence over our students to maintain a non-partisan approach at all times during curriculum delivery.