



SOMERHILL

# **CURRICULUM POLICY**

**Owner: Deputy Head Academic**

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## Curriculum Policy

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## Introduction

The prime aim of the curriculum at Somerhill is to provide full-time supervised education for pupils from 2 to age 13, in the case of boys, and 11 in the case of girls. We aim to give pupils experience in; linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, PSHE including RSE, physical, aesthetic and creative education - pursuing high individual achievement. The core skills of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy are emphasised. The principal language of instruction is English. We also emphasise achievement in its broadest sense; whether pupils are studying academic subjects, sport, music, technology, drama or art, developing a sensitivity to other people and the environment, gaining knowledge and skills for life in British society and a global workplace, or developing responsibility and confidence to make informed decisions about their lives. We aim to challenge our pupils and give them opportunities for independent learning through a broad and balanced curriculum. The school develops the individual and prepares pupils for the next stages of education and beyond. We aim to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress during throughout their time at Somerhill.

Our curriculum aims to:

- be balanced and broadly based
- provide equal access and opportunity
- ensure progression and continuity
- provide appropriate differentiated support for pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs.

The school does all it can to meet the individual needs of every child. If a child displays signs of having difficulties with their learning, then his/her teacher makes an assessment of this need and refers them to the Head of Learning Support for further assessment. We comply with the requirements set out in the SEN Code of Practice in providing for children with special needs. In order to help children who have special educational needs, the school will adopt a graduated response that recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and brings increasingly specialist expertise to bear on the difficulties that a child may be experiencing.

Should any pupil in the school have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan the needs of any such pupil will be coordinated by the Head of Learning Support who will ensure that statutory requirements and individual needs are met.

Please also see: Somerhill Learning Support Policy, Somerhill Teaching and Learning Policy and the Somerhill PSHE & RSE Policies.



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## The EYFS Curriculum

We adhere to the 'Statutory Framework of the EYFS' and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/ carers;
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven curriculum areas, using play as the vehicle for learning;
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support;
- Work in partnership with parents and carers;
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment and by the children's own ideas and interests;
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated, child- initiated and adult supported;
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors.

## Planning in EYFS and Key Stage 1

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and (sometimes) exceed the Early Learning Goals.



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All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive, both in the EYFS and into Key Stage 1. These three areas are the **prime** areas:

- **Communication and Language:** The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life. Through weekly Diversity and Inclusion lessons they will also understand that they are all unique and wonderful in their own ways.



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- **Physical Development:** Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

Children are also supported through the four **specific** areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- **Literacy:** It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing)
- **Mathematics:** Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.
- **Understanding the World:** Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's



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personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children’s vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

- **Expressive Arts and Design:** The development of children’s artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.’ (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage March 2021)

In planning and guiding children’s activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. These are referred to as the ***characteristics of effective teaching and learning:***

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’.
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

We create medium term plans based on the Creative Curriculum topic for each term, which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning. At the beginning of each topic the children are encouraged to share their ideas for learning experiences with us. These ideas are then used to inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations which identify areas to focus on.

We always remain flexible to allow for unplanned circumstances and children’s responses. Our planning is continually evaluated by all staff to ensure that children’s individual ‘Next Steps in Learning’ and personalised learning needs are met.



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Children will engage in whole group and small group activities these are referred to as 'Teacher Directed Activities' alongside their independent learning. There are also allocated times for whole class daily 'carpet learning sessions'.

The creative curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS framework: *'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'*.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those which are planned by adults. During children's play, the adults in class interact when appropriate to stretch and challenge them further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating learning environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outdoors as far as possible.

### **Somerhill Pre-Prep**

Within the structure of SPP, each class has a form teacher, and each subject has a 'Subject Lead teacher'.

The Subject Leads have a strong knowledge of their subject. They are responsible for leading good practice, supporting colleagues and ensuring the profile of their subject is maintained. Subject lead teachers prepare schemes of work, teaching strategies, pupil activities, resources and budgets. They organise and undertake peer observation and monitor the children's learning outcomes. Subject leads keep the Somerhill community abreast of any relevant developments or initiatives regarding their subject and informative workshops are presented to the Somerhill Community annually. They are overseen by SPP Deputy and Head teacher.

The SPP curriculum is delivered primarily through a creative curriculum by the form teacher. The Creative curriculum is organised into three termly topics per academic year. This is run on a three-year cycle of learning. The creative curriculum ties in Art and DT, Geography, History, Science and ICT. All classes in SPP are mixed ability and the children's different learning needs are met through differentiation (see Teaching and learning and SEND policy for more details). PSHE and RE are taught explicitly every week in SPP.

Specialist subject teaching is introduced in Pre-School with weekly music groups and PE lessons. All SPP classes receive a regular Woodlands session in the outside learning environment, specialist music and singing tuition and specialist PE teaching. As the children grow and move up through SPP, the number of specialist teaching increases to include French in Year 1 and Year 2.





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## **Somerhill Prep School**

Within Derwent Lodge and Yardley Court, schemes of work, teaching strategies, pupil activities, resources and budgets are organised and managed by departmental heads. Subject departments also organise and undertake peer observation, monitor the marking of work and arrange subject meetings.

Delivery of the curriculum is primarily Form based and in Form rooms for Year 3 and 4 pupils, with the exception of subjects requiring specialist accommodation and teaching. From Year 5 onwards, pupils generally move to subject specialist rooms for all subjects.

Setting occurs from the Lent Term in Year 4 for maths only. See our Teaching and Learning policy for details on setting throughout the Prep school.

Years 7 and 8 focus on the Prep School Baccalaureate whilst retaining Common Entrance English and maths. Pupils are set for maths, English, science, French and Latin.

Comprehensive 'Curriculum Summaries' are reviewed, updated and shared with parents at the beginning of each academic year via the Parent Portal.



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## **Examinations**

### **The Kent Test**

Many of our pupils sit the Kent Test (11+) in September of Year 6. Parents are notified of state school allocations on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Independent School Examinations**

In our area, many independent schools use the ISEB Common Pre-Test for entry to Year 7 and 9. Some schools set their own entry exams, and the pupils also sit scholarship examinations for individual schools where appropriate. Details of these are available from the Deputy Head, Academic and Year 6 coordinators, who have responsibility for making sure individual examination information is available to teaching staff.

### **Year 8: Final exams and PSB certificates**

Year 8's final exams are held in June and scores are shared with those senior schools which request them. Regular assessments are taken as part of the PSB programme in Years 7 and 8. There are also assessed projects in art, engineering and drama which form part of their overall PSB grade for those specific subjects. In the second half of the lent term the Year 8 boys undertake their extended study project (PSPQ) within their history, geography and PRE lessons. This is assessed on five key areas and given a final narrative grade which appears on their PSB certificate. The PSB certificates are sent to future schools as part of the transition process.

### **Other External Exam and Scholarship Examinations**

There are further examinations that take place between Year 6 and 8, be it entry or scholarship exams. Details of these are available from the Deputy Head, Academic who has responsibility for making sure individual examination information is available to teaching staff. Mock examinations take place where appropriate.



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## 13+ Academic Scholars

### The Selection Process

- A long list is created by the Deputy Head, Academic based on an analysis of Year 6 PTE/PTM/PTS and CAT data – generally speaking, scores in excess of 127 are required to make the long list.
- A meeting of academic Heads of Departments takes place just after the first half of the Michaelmas term (of Year 7) to discuss the long list.
- Attitude to Learning and Achievement must be considered in equal measure.
- An academic scholar must possess the intrinsic motivation required to drive their studies forward.
- Any concerns regarding a candidate's suitability must be clearly communicated by the Head of Department and added to the meeting minutes (which are agreed by all parties).
- The final decision regarding the proposal of a pupil's suitability is made by the academic team (Deputy Head, Academic and Headteacher).
- The parents of those boys we would seek to advance towards scholarship are contacted by the Deputy Head, Academic and Headteacher and a meeting is arranged. At this meeting, the process/expectations and time demands of academic scholarship are clearly outlined.
- Parents to consider and make a final decision in consultation with their son.
- Scholarship process commences in the Lent term of Year 7.
- The expectation is that scholarship work is differentiated within lessons. Extra sessions after school or at the Deputy Head, Academic's discretion are also encouraged – this can include substituting art, games, PE, engineering, drama or music lessons for academic scholarship tutor sessions.