



Local Procedure/Protocol

School/Home Name:	Sandwell Learning Centre
Local Procedure/Protocol Title:	Curriculum Protocol and Procedures
Linked to Group Policy Title & Code:	Curriculum Policy
Date Reviewed:	July 2024
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Procedure/Protocol Lead:	Andrew Southwell (Head Teacher)
Procedure/Protocol Sponsor:	Brin Kelleher – School Development Lead

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Witherslack Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL, GOVERNANCE (ESG) STATEMENT

Witherslack Group is committed to responsible business practices in the areas of: Environmental Stewardship, Social Responsibility, Governance, Ethics & Compliance. An ESG impact assessment has been completed on this procedure/protocol to ensure it can be implemented successfully without adverse implications on our Group goals.

To ensure that this procedure/protocol is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, please email the named policy lead.

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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1** Sandwell Learning Centre is an independent special school and part of the Witherslack Group. Our pupils are aged 8 to 19, with many strengths and interests, along with complex educational needs, such as social communication difficulties, trauma and behaviours which challenge. Pupils are placed at Sandwell from a variety of different Local Authorities from across the country. All pupils have had significantly impaired school placement often leading to prior exclusions, school refusal, limited timetables, alternative provisions and 1:1 tutoring services. This means that all the young people that join us, have disrupted education, with significant gaps in their knowledge, understanding and challenges in trusting and connecting with adults.
- 1.2** Our School benefits from fantastic grounds within a stunning rural location. This contributes to making school a positive and happy place in which to learn, work and live and we make full use of the environment. Our School is well-resourced and has a comprehensive range of facilities. Class sizes are deliberately small in order to ensure pupils feel well supported by highly-skilled staff team of education, pastoral, care and therapy staff.

2. VISION, AIMS AND INTENT

- 2.1** Sandwell Learning Centre is an integrated provision. At Sandwell Learning Centre, we provide a nurturing, inclusive, and empowering environment where every child, regardless of their past experiences, is given the opportunity to heal, grow, and thrive. Through our integrated approach, combining tailored education, therapeutic care, and holistic clinical support, we aim to foster resilience, self-worth, and lifelong success in young people who have faced significant adversity. Together, we are committed to breaking the cycle of trauma, restoring hope, and preparing each child for a brighter, more fulfilling future where they can reach their fullest potential academically, emotionally, and socially.

At Sandwell, the curriculum is underpinned by the values and culture of the school. Every pupil is unique and their personal development, EHCP and academic needs are at the forefront of our delivery and expectation. We promote engagement and progression into our curriculum so that our pupils can see the value in their educational experiences, enjoy learning, make progress, achieve, and become confident in leading healthy, fulfilling lives and make a positive contribution to society as responsible citizens. We aim to exceed the unique academic and personal development needs of all our pupils, preparing them for the next phase of their lives, whether that be the new term, the new academic year, a new school, college or the world of employment. This is illustrated through our 'tree' model, where the 'roots' represent the essential foundations of their learning and development, the trunk, the core subjects and the branches the wider curriculum.

The curriculum by design intends to focus on social skills, personal development and the teachers, teaching assistants and wider staff teams have a responsibility to take learning into the wider world and support the pupil's ability to feel safe and contained to enable them to access learning opportunities. The opportunities for safety and security are unpinned by clinically informed practices such as PACE and staff are supported through the integration of our onsite clinical team. At Sandwell Learning Centre the individualised opportunities to engage in learning can only be captured when each pupil feels ready to learn, therefore staff take the opportunities to build relationships and embed key learning throughout the day across all

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areas of the site. At Sandwell Learning Centre lessons are not intended to always take place in the classroom but the focus on literacy and social skill development can be captured across the site.

We recognise that to have a brighter future, children need to have a high sense of achievement and pride in the work they do, and so we offer a broad and ambitious range of knowledge, skills and experiences, giving access to a wide range of accreditation opportunities.

We aim to exceed the unique academic and personal development needs of all our pupils, preparing them for the next phase of their lives, whether that be the new term, the new academic year, a new school, college or the world of employment. This is illustrated through our ‘tree’ model, where the ‘roots’ represent the essential foundations of their learning and development, the trunk, the core subjects and the branches the wider curriculum.

We recognise that to have a brighter future, children need to have a high sense of achievement and pride in the work they do, and so we offer a broad and ambitious range of knowledge, skills and experiences, giving access to a wide range of accreditation opportunities.

We aim to do this by:

Encouraging our pupils to develop a positive perception of themselves and a sense of belonging.

Supporting our pupils to optimise their health and well-being, manage their emotions effectively and develop their resilience.

Inspiring our pupils to develop a love of learning, experience success and achieve positive outcomes.

Encourage our pupils to engage with reading for information and pleasure; through a variety of mediums including but not limited to books, magazines, newspapers and websites.

Enabling pupils to achieve qualifications and accreditation reflective of their strengths, needs and interests.

Developing our pupils’ employability skills, to encouraging them to raise their career aspirations, through knowledge and experience of the workplace.

Supporting our pupils to gain the knowledge and tools to prepare for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life.

Helping our pupils to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) awareness, preparing them for life in modern Britain, including respect for diversity, British Values and protected characteristics and understand their rights and responsibilities to appropriately express their views.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 *Leaders at Sandwell Learning Centre 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 appropriate, enabling all pupils to achieve positive outcomes
- All teaching staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities, including high quality planning and teaching methods, use of regular assessment and consistent implementation of the agreed school policies and procedures
- Teachers are provided with opportunities to sustain continued professional development in a variety of fields including subject specialisms, effective behaviour management, as well as being upskilled in supporting the needs of pupils.

3.2 *The teaching staff at Sandwell Learning Centre ensure that:*

- The curriculum is planned and delivered to support pupils to develop skills, knowledge and vocabulary, helping pupils to know more and remember more and to be prepared for their adult lives
- The curriculum is planned and devised to best suit the needs of each individual pupil, and takes account of outcomes and strategies outlined in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), PEPs and other key documents
- A range of teaching and differentiation strategies are used to ensure all our pupils are stretched and able to progress at their own pace
- Pupils are given the opportunity to experience safely planned activities outside of the usual classroom environment
- Pupils know their next steps and how to get there, with opportunities to discuss their own learning

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- Parents/carers are provided with high-quality reports which reflect what their children have been learning and how they will be supported to progress
- The procedures for assessment are used to support the learning and development of the pupils, including identifying gaps in knowledge and next steps
- Subject leads provide support and advice for colleagues, and monitor progress in their subject area

3.3 **Clinical staff ensure that:**

- Appropriate clinical support is provided to assess and meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils
- Suggestions, strategies and bespoke interventions are provided to support pupils' learning, competencies, development and preparation for adulthood

3.4 **All staff ensure that:**

- High expectations are maintained for our pupils and themselves at all times
- Reading, learning and high aspirations are role-modelled by all members of the school community
- Positive contributions are made to the whole-school Internal Team Around the Child (ITAC) approach
- Pupils are supported to express themselves appropriately socially and emotionally
- Pupils are helped to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and achieve their next steps with increasing independence
- Pupil achievements are celebrated and positivity is promoted in all aspects of school life

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 **Curriculum Delivery**

Our school timetable comprises of thirty teaching periods per week for each year group. This is sandwiched between a daily registration and reading session and a clearly structured tutor time session to end each day. Small class sizes with a high staff to pupil ratio supports effective implementation of the curriculum, along with clinical support from the Speech and Language Therapist, Mental Health Practitioners, Occupational Therapist, Assistant Educational Psychologist and Clinical Psychologist.

To accompany the curriculum our timetable has been carefully designed to meet the individual needs of our existing cohort. This includes careful planning in order to reduce transitions and plentiful opportunities to support sensory, social communication and mental health needs.

Our approach is child-centred, with high expectations for each learner with a curriculum offer after baseline assessments are completed that is broad, balanced and highly relevant for each young person. The qualification choice is based on age, aptitude and individual needs.

Through high quality teaching of knowledge, skills and vocabulary across core and foundation subjects, all pupils are challenged to achieve the best possible outcomes and make progress across all Key Stages. Medium Term Plans are used to ensure pupils cover the content for their learning profile with the intent of closing any gaps in knowledge, so they are prepared for future academic and wider world success. The delivery of our key focus areas related to learning, work and life are reflective of age, stage, and carefully selected learning experiences based on individual pupil needs. A range of specific approaches are used to implement and deliver the curriculum, such as:

- Learning outside of the classroom and personal development activities.
- Interdisciplinary approaches, using strategies from education, care and therapy.
- Real-world and functional activities.
- Interactive activities and games.
- Exploration of new vocabulary and ambiguous language.
- Recall tasks.
- Worksheets/work books/extended writing opportunities.
- Role-play and discussion.

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- Practical activities.
- Modelling, questioning and scaffolding.
- Inquiry and project-based tasks.
- Collaborative and independent learning.
- Cross-curricular learning.

4.2 Key Stage 2 (Years 4 - 6) KS2

Pupils start their school journey in our designated primary classrooms and are taught most of their lessons by their class teachers. Pupils access the National Curriculum, with additional interventions offered as required. There is a focus on reading, including the teaching of phonics to early readers using the Read, Write, Inc. programme. Pupils access community sports activities to support the physical development, skills acquisition and well-being across the key stage all year round.

Pupils have timetabled lessons in; English, Maths, Science, PE, PSHE (including Relationships and Health Education), Humanities (Geography and History), Creative (Art, Music, Food Technology), Social Skills and Computing. Individual pupils access clinical/therapeutic input as appropriate to their needs.

4.3 Key Stage 3 (Years 7 – 9)

Pupils at KS3 continue to be taught for most subjects in their own dedicated classrooms. They access National Curriculum subjects with a continued focus on reading. Pupils are taught by their form teachers, in the majority, with specialist teachers transitioning into their classrooms for English, Maths and Science. The KS3 curriculum is and timetabled to include; English, Maths, Science, PE, PSHE (including Relationships and Health Education), Humanities (Geography and History), Creative (Art, Music, Food Technology), Social Skills and Computing. The KS3 pupils visit specialist teaching rooms as appropriate to the subject e.g. the Science Lab, food tech and the Art Room.

4.4 Key Stage 4 (Years 10 – 11)

Our Key Stage 4 offer is a tailored to meet the experience and expectations of the pupils in that stage of learning. This means there is often a mixture of GCSE, functional skill/entry level offer for English, Maths and Science, with the opportunity of a variety of other accreditations to support PSHE and other subjects. Where appropriate the school has previously liaised with a vocational offering through a local college.

In Year 10 and Year 11, pupils follow a core curriculum of English, Maths, Science, PE, PSHE (including Relationships and Health Education), Humanities (Geography and History), Creative (Art, Music, Food Technology), Social Skills and Computing. Here specialist teachers transition to the pupil classrooms for English and Maths and then the pupils transition for Science and Creative to specialist rooms for appropriate learning opportunities.

KS4 pupils continue to access clinical/therapeutic input as appropriate to their needs.

4.6 Residential Pupils

All of our pupils are looked after and in residence at one of the 3 children’s homes based on the Sandwell site. All pupils access their class group during the school day and they have the opportunity to gain further accreditation where appropriate to their needs. This is specific to the individual pupil and linked to the development of key life skills.

4.7 Homework

At Sandwell Learning Centre, teachers provide opportunities for extended learning and homework when it is appropriate and pertinent to a pupil’s needs. Homework is not a regular occurrence at Sandwell Learning Centre. Some pupils may be provided with weekly or fortnightly tasks as linked to the core subjects and some pupils may be provided with revision booklets to complete in preparation for the exam period. All pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home.

4.8 Reading

At Sandwell Learning Centre, reading is integral to our curriculum. We are committed to ensuring that all pupils leave us as ‘a reader’ and we have a robust reading strategy in place to achieve this. For pupils with

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early reading skills, explicit teaching of phonics is provided. Reading interventions are provided, when necessary, in line with a pupil’s individual needs. Reading is fundamental to education. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils’ success. Through these, our pupils develop communication skills for education and for working with others: in school, in training and at work. Pupils who find it difficult to learn to read are likely to struggle across the curriculum. At Sandwell, we timetable English and Reading separately to allow additional focus on stand-alone reading sessions.

The National curriculum Programme of study for Reading is based on two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading

At Sandwell, our vision for reading is:

- All learners leave with functional reading skills, enabling them to more fully access the adult world.
- All learners to engage with reading for different purposes (i.e. pleasure, learning, work, etc.) with a view to develop reading for pleasure.
- All staff members to be confident in their own reading skills, and to be trained in supporting learners in developing their reading skills.

4.9 **Therapeutic Provision**

Our onsite clinical team use a multi-disciplinary approach to contribute to, and support staff, in building a holistic shared understanding of the children and young people who are part of Sandwell Learning Centre. Our approach holds the child or young person’s needs and views at the heart and helps pupils to understand and regulate their own emotions, develop appropriate coping strategies and achieve personal targets as set out in pupil EHCPs, PEPs and other profiles. Pupils have access to on-site sensory equipment and there are designated spaces across the school building where there is a lower demand to provide alternatively stimulating environments in order to support their self-regulation of emotions and behaviour. Pupils are offered group or individual therapeutic sessions, as appropriate to their needs with all having access to the therapeutically led Social Skills groups embedded within the timetable.

In addition, the clinical team support with our Social Skills program delivered explicitly through the timetabled sessions. Here there is a focus on Improving Social Skills to support the development of healthy relationships including lessons on empathy, communication, and conflict resolution to help our pupils form positive relationships with peers and adults. Many pupils with adverse experiences have trouble trusting others. PSHE can build a safer social space, guiding them in forming supportive and respectful relationships. The PSHE programme helps our helps pupils establish respect and personal boundaries, which is critical for children who may have experienced abusive or unsafe environments.

4.10 **Physical Education**

All pupils access PE lessons at Sandwell Learning Centre, this is often through the dedicated PE lessons. These lessons can take place on the Multi-Use Games Area but some may also take place off-site and utilise community facilities such as the local leisure centre sports hall, swimming pools and gymnastics centre.

Our PE curriculum aims to foster the holistic development of our pupils by promoting physical health, emotional resilience, and social skills. We strive to create an inclusive, supportive, and engaging environment where pupils can build self-esteem, manage their emotions, and develop positive social interactions through physical activity. The curriculum emphasises enjoyment, participation, and personal achievement over competition and encouraging lifelong habits for improved physical and mental well-being. It is designed to cater to a wide range of abilities, ensuring each pupil can experience success and progress. Our overarching goal is to help pupils improve their physical fitness, emotional regulation, and social competence, all while embedding a sense of responsibility, teamwork, and respect for self and others.

Lessons are tailored to meet the varying needs and abilities of pupils. Activities are designed to be inclusive, with adapted tasks that provide opportunities for success and challenge at every level. Staff use trauma-informed strategies to ensure the emotional and mental health needs of pupils are supported during PE sessions. This involves creating safe and structured environments, offering clear and consistent routines, and

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being aware of individual triggers that may impact engagement in physical activity. The curriculum focuses on fundamental movement skills (agility, balance, coordination) at an early stage, gradually introducing more complex skills and sports as pupils grow older. This progression allows pupils to experience success at their own pace, while building physical competence.

PE lessons incorporate opportunities to develop emotional literacy, such as managing frustration, celebrating success, and coping with failure. Structured group activities foster teamwork, cooperation, and communication, while individualized tasks allow for personal goal-setting and self-reflection. Physical education is linked with other areas of learning, such as PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education), to reinforce the importance of physical health and emotional well-being, as well as addressing key themes like resilience, self-regulation, and mindfulness. A key implementation focus is creating a positive, non-threatening environment where pupils feel safe to take risks, try new activities, and express themselves through movement. Positive reinforcement is used to build confidence and reduce anxiety around physical activity.

Pupils demonstrate improved fitness levels, motor skills, and an understanding of the benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Regular participation in physical activities contributes to better overall health and well-being. Through structured and supportive physical activities, pupils show increased resilience, improved self-regulation, and greater emotional control. They develop healthier coping strategies for managing stress and frustration. Pupils are better able to engage in cooperative activities, display teamwork, and communicate effectively with peers. They learn to value inclusivity, respect others, and understand the importance of collaboration. By experiencing success in a range of physical activities, pupils develop greater self-confidence and self-esteem. They are more willing to take on new challenges and apply these skills across other areas of learning. Pupils gain a positive view of physical education, associating it with enjoyment, achievement, and emotional well-being. This positive relationship with PE increases the likelihood that they will continue to engage in physical activity outside of school and into adulthood. The physical, emotional, and social skills pupils gain through the PE curriculum enhance their ability to engage with other aspects of school life, including academic learning, fostering a more balanced approach to their development as individuals.

4.11 PSHE, Citizenship and Careers Education

All pupils access PSHE and Citizenship at Sandwell Learning Centre. The curriculum plan ensures coverage across three core themes:

- 1. Health and wellbeing (including statutory Health Education)*
- 2. Relationships (including statutory Relationships and Sex Education)*
- 3. Living in the wider world (including Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural Education, Economic wellbeing, Careers Education and Citizenship).*

At Sandwell Learning Centre a significant emphasis is placed on PSHE, Citizenship and Careers as Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) is crucial for pupils who have experienced significant adverse childhood trauma and who face social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. PSHE provides a structured, supportive environment that helps our pupils develop essential life skills, coping mechanisms, and a better understanding of themselves and their emotions. The intent of the curriculum at Sandwell Learning Centre is to support emotional regulation and resilience through the understand of emotions, and how to identify and label their feelings. The curriculum will help pupils to develop coping strategies and learning tools for managing stress and difficult emotions, such as mindfulness or deep breathing as well as building resilience through a fostering of growth mindsets and problem-solving. Our PSHE curriculum develops pupils’ ability to manage setbacks and challenges more effectively. The promotion of Mental Health Awareness is key and PSHE plays a vital role in this to raising awareness, encouraging self-care and label how to access support. Building Self-Esteem and Identity - Adverse childhood experiences can undermine a child’s sense of self-worth. PSHE fosters self-esteem by encouraging self-reflection, addressing stigma and stereotypes as well as celebrating individuality.

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PSHE teaches healthy decision making by helping with critical thinking, encouraging problem-solving skills: These are crucial for overcoming challenges in both personal and social contexts, equipping pupils with tools to navigate difficult situations independently.

At Sandwell Learning Centre PSHE contributes to a holistic school environment where our pupils can feel understood, valued, and supported, paving the way for long-term personal development and success.

As part of the SRE programme Parents have the right to withdraw their child from Sex Education delivered as part of PSHE up until three terms before a child’s 16th birthday (please refer to the school’s RSE Policy). RSE lessons are carefully planned and taught in a sensitive and age-appropriate way using a variety of resources.

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

At Sandwell Learning Centre, SMSC and British Values are promoted in so much of what we do, not least during our tutor time, breaks and lunches as well as directly through the in PSHE, Citizenship, and Careers lessons.

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 well as actively promoting British Values in school, the opposite also applies: we actively challenge pupils, staff or professionals expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British Values, including ‘extremist’ views.

As part of the wider SMSC curriculum, pupils are encouraged to experience awe and wonder, act responsibly and support their community. In addition, we help our pupils to learn about the protected characteristics as defined in The Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5. IMPACT, ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

5.1 Impact

The impact of the curriculum at Sandwell Learning Centre is evidenced by the work that the pupils produce, their progression over time and how well prepared our pupils are for further learning, work and life. We recognise that we may never see the long-term impact of our curriculum but we make every attempt to find out the wider impact using key indicators (outlined below) which relate directly to our curriculum intent:

- Pupils will be enthused by learning and achieve positive outcomes
- Pupils will remember what they learn and make progress in all subject areas
- Pupils will leave us with a reading age beyond a functional level and they will be well-prepared for the next stage of learning
- Pupils will achieve a range of nationally recognised qualifications, including English and Maths, and will have achieved the outcomes and targets outlined on their EHCPs and PEPs
- Pupils will have identified possible career pathways in line with their strengths and interests
- Pupils will have an understanding of different workplaces
- Pupils will have developed a range of skills transferrable to the workplace
- Pupils will be far less reliant on adult support and will be working towards independence in many ways
- Pupils will be socially and emotionally prepared for transition to further education, employment or training
- Pupils will feel accepted and valued and will demonstrate improved self-esteem and confidence
- Pupils will know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and they will have developed a range of positive coping strategies
- Pupils will have an awareness of their rights and responsibilities and they will be able to express their own views effectively

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- Pupils will demonstrate respect, kindness and pride, an ability to form positive relationships with others and they will be well-prepared to contribute positively to their communities

5.2 **Assessment**

We use assessment as a key part of our approach to inform the next steps for pupils and to monitor the wider impact of our curriculum. Achievement of key concepts and skills are tracked three times a year using our assessment system, known as SOLAR.

Wherever possible, we enter our Key Stage 2 pupils to sit external tests (KS2 SATs). However, due to the gaps in learning that some of our pupils have previously experienced, some pupils may not be yet able to achieve the national expected standard in their tests. If it is felt not to be appropriate for a pupil to participate in the SATs, parents/carers will be notified in writing.

Our expectation is that all Key Stage 4 and 5 pupils will achieve externally recognised qualifications and accreditation which are both ambitious and reflective of their abilities.

Softer skills are tracked using the Boxall Profile. Experiences related to the teaching of protected characteristics, British Values and SMSC activities are all tracked using SMSC Gridmaker.

5.3 **Monitoring**

The school's usual monitoring activities ensure that the curriculum offered is progressive and appropriate, enabling all pupils to achieve positive outcomes. Such monitoring activities include planning and work scrutiny, lesson observations and learning walks, which are carried out by leaders.

Sandwell Learning Centre will review this local protocol annually to ensure it continues to reflect its best practice and that it meets the requirements of the Witherslack Group Curriculum Policy.

6. **CURRICULUM MAP**

7. **REFERENCES**

None

8. **ASSOCIATED FORMS**

None

9. **APPENDICES**

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