


Helm Academy Virtual School Curriculum Guarantee Policy



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Person Responsible: Eve Bartlet – Director of Education
Ratified by: Anita Cameron – Executive Headteacher

Helm Academy

EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. It should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Helm Academy documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

Policy Issues and Updates

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1	E. Bartlet	May 2025	Policy implemented	01/05/2026
2	E. Bartlet	Dec 2025	Policy updated	01/12/2026



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1. Curriculum Entitlement

Pupils at Helm Academy Virtual School [HAVS] are entitled to a curriculum which contributes to a well-balanced education, developing the abilities, life skills and social competences of individual pupils so that they may take a valuable, positive, and active place in society. The entitlement is for each pupil, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, or disability.

2. Cross References

- Assessment Policy
- Non-Examination Assessment Policy
- SEND Policy and Information report
- Equality information and objectives

3. Curriculum Intent

The aims of our curriculum are to:

- Prioritise a broad and balanced curriculum that incorporates a strong set of core subjects, as well as opportunities for enrichment in areas not typically associated with a traditional school curriculum.
- Coherently plan and sequence all core subjects across the school, from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. We also have a full curriculum available from KS1 including a full phonics package, to support all pupils regardless of their age, in order to meet their needs.
- Allow pupils to accumulate a sufficient knowledge of skills to prepare them for future learning and employment.
- Enable pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts and acquire skills which can be transferred and applied to relevant situations.
- Support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Support pupils' physical development and responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and enable them to be active.
- Promote a positive attitude towards learning.
- Ensure equal access to learning for all pupils, with high expectations for every pupil and appropriate levels of challenge and support.
- Be ambitious for all pupil and set high expectations of real, purposeful outcomes; inspired by SEN research, technology, and innovative teaching.
- Equip pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- Provide subject choices that support pupils' learning and progression and enable them to work towards achieving their goals.
- Develop pupils' independent learning skills and resilience, to equip them for further/higher education and employment.
- Develop pupils to develop functional skills for living so each of them can lead a fulfilling and substantially independent life where appropriate.
- Provide an enrichment curriculum through outdoor experiences that build on the holistic learning of academic, life skills and social competencies, developing the pupils' confidence and sense of achievement.
- Ensure that all pupils achieve accreditation in English and Maths as a minimum and offer a broad range of accredited subject pathways.
- Blend therapeutic interventions with learning, inside and outside of the classroom.

- Offer enrichment by building on pupils' interests, which nurtures exciting opportunities and aspirations.
- Engender pride, resilience and aspiration for every pupil, preparing them to lead safe, independent lives and to be active members of their community.

4. Implementation

Core Learning – Key Stage 1 & 2 (available if required)

Pupils follow can follow the Hamilton Brooks <https://www.hamilton-trust.org.uk/about-hamilton/> thematic curriculum, based on focus areas from the National Curriculum programme of study. As well as the core subjects of English, Maths & Science, the curriculum also incorporates History, Geography, Religious Education, PSHE, Physical Education, MFL, IT and the Creative Curriculum (a combination of Art, Design Technology & Music).

Core Learning – Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught in age groups across core subjects of English, Maths & Science as well as Foundation subjects including Humanities, Physical Education, IT, MFL, STEM and Personal Development (PSHE, Careers & Life Skills).

Core Learning – Key Stage 4

In KS4, all pupils must take qualifications in English, Maths, and Science. The most suitable qualifications for each pupil are ascertained by way of an assessment that takes place during towards the end of Autumn 1 term. While we endeavour to enter as many pupils as possible for a GCSE qualification, alternative qualifications (e.g. Functional Skills and Entry Level) may be more suitable for some of our pupils. In addition to these three core subjects, pupils also select two additional KS4-level qualifications from the following list of options:

- History
- Geography
- PE
- Art
- IT User Skills / Computer Science
- Food & Nutrition

The curricula for these qualification-based subjects largely follows the specification from the relevant exam boards, with adaptation to suit the needs of our pupils.

In addition to studying the qualification-based subjects listed above, pupils continue to partake in non-examined subjects such as Personal Development and Physical Education. We also partner with the local colleges and in some cases can offer bespoke examination and qualification packages dependent on need and availability.

Modern Foreign Languages

Our KS3 pupils receive Modern Languages each week, with the target language also being French. However other options maybe available depending on staffing and the needs of pupils at the time

Wellbeing and Personal Development

All elements of our curriculum are therapeutically informed and link across the curriculum, spearheaded by our golden thread of Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Pupils receive at least 45-minutes of PSHE/RSE sessions per week. They follow a curriculum based largely on age-appropriate topics selected from the PSHE Association's list of PSHE with additional topics covered on an ad hoc basis. These ad hoc topics correspond to any PSHE/RSE-related issues that emerge unexpectedly from within the pupil cohort. We also

implement more specific, bespoke therapeutic opportunities such as Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and 1:1 Talk Time with the Therapy Team.

Reading is a 'golden thread' at Helm Academy and the school supports the acquisition of phonics skills with dedicated lessons at the start of each day. Reading time is built into tutor time throughout the week and our library is well resourced and used.

All staff support pupils throughout the school day. We eat together at lunch times and fully integrate in our carefully structured break times. Physical development and wellbeing are supported through timetabled Physical Education, including Outdoor Education and offsite activities. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the community in lots of ways to support them in understanding what it means to be an active British citizen. Extracurricular activities enrich pupils' experience and are an integral feature of the school's ethos. All pupils and teachers are encouraged to participate, whether it be sporting, cultural, musical, visits, exchanges, or other of the multitude of experiences offered.

Enrichment

Enrichment lessons are woven into the timetable for all pupils and serves as opportunities for pupils to access activities and learn knowledge and skills that are not typically found in a more "traditional" school curriculum. Enrichment activities rotate between groups throughout the school year, and several are offsite.

Some examples of Enrichment activities that are on offer at various points throughout the academic year are: Forest school (if appropriate to the needs of the pupils when assessed individually) Cooking, Photography and Expressive Arts.

Enrichment activities are considered to be part of the school's core curriculum and are supported by plans drawn up by the member(s) of staff responsible for each Enrichment activity.

Several Enrichment activities lead to external awards (ASDAN, AQA).

Creative Learning

The curriculum at Helm Academy incorporates many opportunities for creative learning: Art, STEM and Creative Curriculum lessons (Art, Music and Design Technology) are all included as well as Enrichment opportunities (for example: Photography, Music, Expressive Arts).

Planning & Subject Curriculum Design

Every subject taught has a Curriculum Pathway that details how the knowledge and learning sequences from the earliest starting point to the latest possible endpoint (e.g., Year 11, KS4). These Curriculum Pathways are complemented by Long Term Plans, which detail what pupils in each year group will learn over the course of one academic year. Medium Term Plans provide more granular detail on how individual units of learning are sequenced over the course of each half term. Medium Term Plans also contain information pertaining to how the lessons and intent are adapted to specific learners.

Inclusion

All lessons aim to be inclusive. A level of adaptation which provides appropriate tasks for each pupil and a challenge which will maximise achievement should be experienced. Each pupil should be sufficiently equipped to make informed and realistic decisions at each stage in his/her development so that his/her role is active in contributing to progression.

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils at their stage and level. They will use dynamic, formative and summative assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils
- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds

Lessons are planned effectively so that our pupils can access every curriculum subject, and that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving at or above expected progress. Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. In this case, lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects. Further information can be found in our statement of equality information and objectives, and in our SEN policy and information report.

5. Curriculum Impact

The impact of the three areas of our curriculum is tracked in several ways. We track the academic, personal development and social skills of pupils throughout their time at school through Assessment of and Assessment for Learning, EHCP and Therapeutic Outcomes, Pupil Reflection, BKSb, Boxall Profile, and formal qualifications.

Pupil progress is tracked and recorded, and learning is planned around the identified next steps, at a pace and style that meets their needs. Learning is structured to allow pupil collaboration and support of each other.

The outcomes of qualifications that pupils achieve allow us to assess the impact of our provision. Even sitting exams shows pupils' commitment to learning and their ability to work independently when completing these.

Assessment of impact is also judged via regular marking and monitoring of pupil work. Senior staff members carry out regular "book looks" to ensure this is taking place, and that feedback given to pupils is frequent, sufficiently detailed, and relevant to the work being marked.

Moderation and Standardisation

As a school we strive to ensure that all our assessments are as accurate and reliable as possible. This will ensure that we can accurately track pupil progress and achievement over a period of time. To ensure that our assessments are accurate and reliable we have a structure of internal assessment moderation and standardisation including waypoints and endpoints. Meeting time is directed to opportunities to cross moderate within and outside of each department to validate our assessments.

6. Legislation & Guidance

Our Curriculum Policy reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum Programme of Study, for which all maintained schools in England must teach, and which we have chosen to follow.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 and the Equality Act 2010 and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's Governance Handbook.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

The Director of Education

The Director of Education is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed regularly.
- Where appropriate, the individual needs of some pupils are met by permanent or temporary disapplication from all or part of the National Curriculum.

- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate.
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements.
- The Headteacher is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- The Headteacher is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions.
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the Director of Education to account for its implementation. The Headteacher will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- The school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, Maths, Science and (subject to providing the right to withdraw) Religious Education, and enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the requirements of the funding agreement.
- All courses provided for pupils below the age of 16 that lead to qualifications, are approved by the Secretary of State.
- The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements.
- They participate actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- They fulfil their role in processes to disapply pupils from all or part of the National Curriculum, where appropriate, and in any subsequent appeals.
- Pupils from Year 7 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced.

Other staff

Responsibility for curriculum will be shared by Subject Leads, Senior Teachers, Assistant Heads and the appropriate staff. Other staff will ensure that the school's curriculum is implemented in accordance with this policy.

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8. Review of implementation

The implementation of this Policy is reviewed annually by the school's Senior Leadership Team in consultation with staff and a report is made to the Governance Body.

The school may submit to the Helm Academy Board proposals for amendments to this Policy.

9. Accreditation and qualifications

- Pupils undertake accredited courses for up to two years, centred around our Curriculum, which is designed specifically for neurodiverse learners. This includes vocational courses at college and access to internal subject options delivered in learning blocks so that students have access to a wider range of courses.
- A range of qualifications including GCSEs, ASDAN and Functional Skills supporting pupils to progress into employment, training, further education, and higher education.
- Support for young people to achieve awards alongside the more traditional academic and vocational subjects.

- Pupils study the Personal Development and Life Skills curriculum (Leadership, Independence, Vocation, Environment), raising their self-esteem, entrepreneurial and resilience skills and making plans for future home and community life. Careers
- Pupils have a dedicated and robust Careers curriculum. This is both embedded cross curriculum and specifically in individualised career pathways programme.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is provided from Y7 upwards.
- There is a separate Careers policy.
- There is a specific independent careers professional who advises the Board and works with pupils – **Gemma Armer – GA Career Links** [Gemma Frances Armer | LinkedIn](#) and work towards an aspirational employment goal and have access to up to date, unbiased careers advice, including understanding local employment opportunities.




Gemma Frances Armer · 1st

Governor at Aintree Davenhill, Principal at Onyx Academy of Dance & Promotions, LIPA Principal Maghull, Dance Teacher, Career Leader, Career Advisor, Performing Arts Teacher, PSHE Teacher, Exams Officer, Party Planner

United Kingdom · [Contact info](#)

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 Thrive Approach

- Employability skills are taught throughout all Key stages.
- Pupils have access to work experience or placements.
- Pupils have job search training - CV, application form and personal statement as well as interview support. Curriculum Quality Assurance To ensure that we deliver a high-quality curriculum which is broad, ambitious, and inclusive it is strategically overseen by The Curriculum and Assessment Committee. This is made up of the CEO and Director of Education, Executive Headteacher, The Head of Teaching Learning and Curriculum, Education Governor, and Non-Executive Director for Education. The group meets half termly to establish and agree plans for any curriculum development. The Curriculum and Assessment Group is formed from the education senior leaders from the School Support Partnership and include Head Teachers, Deputy

10. Helm Academy Reading Plan

Rationale: The pupils who will be attending Helm Academy are ones who bring with them years of trauma with regards to the educational system and will have significant gaps in their education due to extended absences. Because of this, we have created a reading program that will provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to read a variety of texts in a variety of contexts.

Pupils will be engaging in early phonics intervention programming if required (please see phonics plan), as well as guided reading practice, whole class reading instruction, real-world reading opportunities, and structured time to read for pleasure.

Early phonics intervention – please see our plan, here: [phonics plan.docx](#)

Guided reading practice – Pupils will be spending structured reading time with their classroom teacher in ability groups. These sessions will occur on a weekly basis and will consist of shared reading opportunities with high-interest and level-appropriate texts. During these sessions, staff will work on specific gaps that have been identified through the diagnostic assessments performed each term using BKSb and other inhouse assessments. By using our collected data to target gaps, we will be able to progress pupil reading ability quickly and efficiently.

These guided reading sessions will also allow for teachers to model effective reading and decoding strategies, providing pupils with low-stakes opportunities to develop their reading skills.

Teachers will keep notes on pupil progress and challenges each week, which will inform future practice and focus

Whole Class Reading Instruction – Through our structured English plan, pupils will encounter specific and repeated reading skills in each unit and each year with differing themes to ensure engagement and exposure to a wide variety of mediums and perspectives. Embedded in this programming is the exploration of key reading skills, such as analysing text forms and features, word formation, key vocabulary, and explicit teaching of comprehension skills. These opportunities are embedded throughout lessons in a way that allows for pupils to build these skills in a scaffolded way, with differentiation in levels of text and support from their teacher.

Our medium-range plans outline what specific literacy skills are being taught in each lesson along with the overarching themes and ideas that underpin the unit. In this way pupils who fit the profile of a Helm Academy pupil will be provided with multiple avenues to build their skills and will have the teaching of these skills repeated so that they can attain and display mastery at their own pace.

Real World Reading Opportunities – As our pupils are looking toward becoming successful and contributing community members, we will be providing ample opportunities for our pupils to practice their reading in real-world situations within their community. This may entail reading a menu, reading instructions for taking out a library book, reading a bus schedule, etc.. In this way, pupils can see the real-life applicability of their in-school learning and apply it in a way that directly translates to their post-education success.

Structured Reading for Pleasure time – As outlined in our morning work routine, which can be found here: [Morning work schedule.docx](#), pupils will have weekly reading periods built into their schedules. This reading time will allow them to read choice texts that are appropriately levelled for independent reading. This can be supplemented by texts that provide a read-along option or through the use of Google Read and Write, which will allow pupils to listen along to their stories, should they wish. By providing pupils with a broad range of options for reading, we allow them agency and enjoyment in reading.

Overall - As our pupil population will have complex needs, we have a list of adaptations for pupils depending on their unique learning profile. These supports may range from adaptations that will be used in each classroom as best practice (pre-teaching of vocabulary, short written instructions, level-appropriate texts, etc.) to pupil-specific adaptations (abridged versions of texts, targeted phonics intervention, text-to-speech technology, etc.). These adaptations can be found in the appendices

By having pupils complete initial diagnostic assessments using BKSb, and following up with a termly assessment, we are able to gauge pupil progress along our continuum, from pre-entry level onward. These assessments are supplemented by weekly reading feedback and assessments by the pupils' classroom teacher. The data from these assessments is to be inputted into the School Overall Progress Tracker, where we will be able to quickly identify and intervene with any gaps or struggling pupils.



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APPENDIX

Curriculum and accessibility

To ensure that all pupils are able to be fully included in all curriculum areas, their access needs will be fully assessed upon receiving notification of their future attendance at Helm Academy. These provisions may include:

a. **For Pupils who experience hearing loss:**

- Hearing loop
- Assisted Listening Devices
- Optimised seating
- Visual Aids
- Captioned Media
- Permission to use mobile phone to adjust hearing aids
- Makaton instructions

b. **For Pupils with reduced vision:**

- Large, clear print out of visuals
- Larger text used for regular classwork
- Clear, unfussy handouts
- Visualiser in classrooms
- Clutter free spaces
- Touch Typing support
- Speech to Text and Text to Speech facility
- Adapted examination papers

c. **For Pupils with Dyslexia:**

- Differentiated instructions
- Auditory repetition
- Tactile, multi-sensory engagement
- Speech to Text and Text to Speech facility
- Provision of printed notes and note taking buddies
- Choices of ways to present work
- Coloured overlays and paper
- Graphic Organisers
- SNIP spelling
- Clear San-serif font for classwork
- Additional time for assessments
- Reading Pen

d. **For Pupils with Autism:**

- Structured environment
- Visual Supports
- Clear routines
- Sensory accommodations
- Sensory-friendly spaces
- Weighted blankets
- Time out routines
- AAC devices

e. **For Pupils with ADHD:**

- Visual Timers and Schedules
- Movement Breaks
- Active learning Environment where movement is encouraged
- Transition Warnings
- Emotional Support
- Taught Coping Strategies
- Teaching with Wait Time and Empathy
- Fidget toys
- Bounce bands on chairs
- Online diaries and memo systems.

f. **For Pupils with Low Reading Levels:**

- Appropriate text levels – abridged versions, graphic novels, audiobooks
- Phonics teaching at appropriate levels
- Screening for Dyslexia
- Pre-teaching of Vocabulary
- Multi-sensory teaching
- Pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading strategy cards
- Short, written instructions – supported visually.
- Appropriate Reading Schemes – Barington Stoke, Hi-Lo Fiction/Non-Fiction
- Intervention teaching – Fresh Start, Read Write Inc, Reading Eggs
- Speech to Text and Text to Speech facility
- Audio-read along books
- Colourful Semantics

g. **For Pupils with Speech Difficulties:**

- Speech therapy activities lead by a specialist
- Speech activities in class
- Low pressure environment - Written answers accepted
- Rehearsed speech in advance or prerecorded
- Thought given to presentations – present other than orally
- AAC devices
- Picture boards and PEX
- Makaton

h. **For Pupils with Low Writing Levels**

- Modelling by the teacher
- Scaffolded tasks – focus on key skills
- Word walls – Vocabulary cards
- Visual Stimuli
- Structured Planning – graphic organisers
- Speech to Text facilities
- Draft first – refine later
- Visual checklists
- Reduced working memory reliance

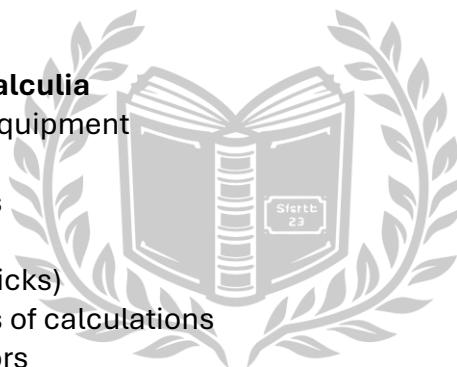
- Choice of ways to present
- Colourful Semantics

i. **For Pupils with Dysgraphia**

- Extra time for written tasks
- 1:1 support for notetaking or note-taking buddy
- Writing Slope
- Shaped pens / pen grips
- Cursive writing support
- Touch Typing support
- Chalkboard and Multi-sensory (Wet-Dry-Try)
- Phonics blocks
- Handwriting without Tears program
- Phonics Plus Visualisation
- Short, supported tasks with assistance (write some, dictate some, write some etc)

j. **For pupils with Dyscalculia**

- Base Ten Maths equipment
- Ten Frames
- Place Value cards
- Cuisenaire rods
- Lego (standard bricks)
- Worked examples of calculations
- Graphic calculators
- Larger square graph paper
- Organisational tools
- Assessment accommodations



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Reviews EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

Any intervention or special program being accessed by pupils will be reviewed periodically to ensure that the program/ support remains relevant and that the student is still making advanced progress. Assessments may be carried out to confirm the validity of findings.

Training

Teachers and Teaching Assistants will be given training when new programs are introduced and periodically throughout the year. They will be asked for regular, termly feedback about the suitability and sustainability of the program chosen.

Showcases and demonstrations of programs/supports will be facilitated where necessary.

Exam Access

Exam access arrangements are provided to ensure that all pupils can demonstrate their true abilities in assessment situations. The school works proactively to identify any barriers a student may face and assesses exam access needs in collaboration with Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and other specialist teachers. This may include considering provisions such as extra time, a reader or scribe, rest breaks, modified papers, or access to assistive technology.

Decisions are based on a combination of professional assessments, the student's normal way of working, and exam board requirements. Once arrangements are agreed, the school supports pupils by implementing these adjustments in class and in internal assessments, ensuring they are familiar and confident with the support they will receive. Regular reviews are carried out to monitor effectiveness and to ensure each student's needs continue to be met.

Parental / Pupil Involvement

Parents and pupils will be shown the methods being provided to support their learning and will have the opportunity to discuss alternatives. Progress updates will be provided regularly.

All of our pupils are individuals and may have any or multiple conditions affecting their learning. The lists provided are not exclusive, but an indication of the flexibility and personal approach offered at Helm Academy. We will always work with other professionals to create the best possible individual plan for each student, which may mean that their learning does not look like that of other pupils or follow a linear progression, but reflects the SEND, trauma and emotional regulation needs that they have.



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