

Curriculum Statement

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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 Virtual School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

Policy Issues and Updates

Version Number	Created/ Reviewed/ Amended By	Date Created/ Reviewed/ Amended	Comment	Next Review Date
1	E. Bartlet	May 2025	Policy implemented	01/05/2026

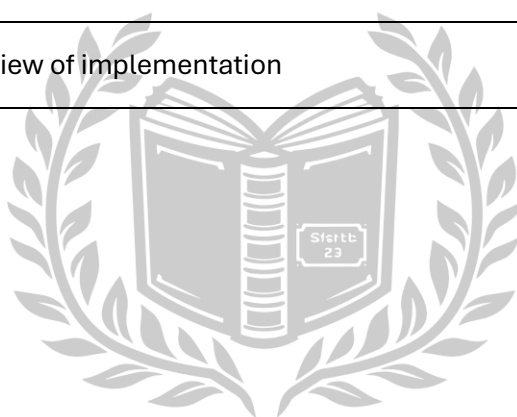


Helm Academy

EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

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Helm Academy

EMPOWERING MINDS, NAVIGATING FUTURES

Curriculum Vision & Ethos

At Helm Academy Virtual School our ethos is based on care, growing the children's resilience, and developing *cultural capital. Within a nurturing environment, we strive to promote positive mental health and well-being, to cultivate self-awareness, realise personal potential and achievement and ignite a passion for lifelong learning.

Many of our pupils have had difficult childhood experiences. We encourage emotional and sensory regulation, often by over-learning, to build confidence, kindness and resilience to help the children to connect to and respond appropriately to their peers, the environment and beyond. This allows children to consider the cause and effect of their behaviour and recognise the impact they make on their immediate environment and others, including their peers.

We have adopted the National Curriculum as our base for an exciting, broad, interactive and engaging curriculum. The school's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. All aspects of the curriculum, teaching and learning are underpinned by high quality and readily available resources and technology.

The curriculum will be developed to be ambitious and meet the needs of our SEND pupils, expanding their knowledge, skills and abilities to apply what they know and can do, with increasing fluency and independence.

Our curriculum focus ensures that children are offered a wide breadth of learning experiences which are challenging, real life and meaningful. This approach enriches learning and life experiences for all pupils. The curriculum is further enriched through a variety of learning outside of the classroom, cross-curricular links and stimulating and inspiring outdoor educational experiences. We make purposeful use of our local environment to provide an opportunity to meet unique interests and talents to ensure that all our children are at the centre of a broad, balanced, and varied learning experiences.

* Cultural capital - The study of society, including relationships, social interactions and culture. To develop knowledge, skills and behaviours, so that they accumulate over time through many different experiences and opportunities.

Curriculum Intent

The Helm Academy Virtual School programme of study offers:

- ✓ A curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, that sets high expectations of real, purposeful outcomes; inspired by SEN research, technology and innovative teaching.
- ✓ A curriculum that ensures all pupils achieve accreditation in English and Maths as a minimum and offers a broad range of accredited subject pathways.
- ✓ A curriculum that blends therapeutic interventions with learning, inside and outside of the classroom.
- ✓ A curriculum that offers enrichment by building on pupils' interests, which nurtures exciting opportunities and aspirations.

- ✓ A curriculum that engenders pride, resilience and aspiration for every pupil, preparing them to lead safe, independent lives and to be active members of their community.
- ✓ The curriculum construction is designed to give all our pupils:
 - The knowledge, social skills and cultural capital they need to succeed in life so that our pupils develop the essential skills in reading, writing, oracy and numeracy.
 - a full and rounded entitlement to learning to foster pupils' creativity and develop essential skills, including independent learning skills that transfer to a desire for lifelong learning.
 - the opportunity to develop a healthy, balanced and safe lifestyle underpinned by an understanding of community cohesion and the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and acceptance of those with different faiths and beliefs and guidance relating to relationships and sexual health.

The Enhanced Curriculum

The foundation of the school's curriculum will be built upon the National Curriculum and enhanced in the following ways.

Whole School Reading

Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer. A rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. At all stages, reading attainment is assessed within English and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils. Reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge pupils are taught when they are learning to read.

Bespoke Learning

To ensure an ambitious, connected curriculum that has high expectations of our pupils, we promote a love for learning using a range of teaching styles that include the personalised needs of each pupil. Our staff are highly skilled at adapting learning for individual pupils to ensure that they build knowledge, skills and understanding. This at times requires flexibility to accommodate the many and varied complex needs and the associated mental health concerns that need to be supported throughout the school day.

IT and Technology in Teaching and Learning

Key to this objective is our IT curriculum which underpins engagement and versatility of delivery to promote the pupils' growth in computing capability; an essential skill for life which enables our learners to participate more readily in a rapidly changing world. Using the internet and email, for example, gives them rapid access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities, and cultures. As a school which embraces technology, it is our conviction that the integrated use of a range of hardware and education-based software enriches pupil engagement and supports the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning processes and vital communication between pupils, parents, and teachers.

Life Skills

We aim for all our pupils to develop functional skills for living so each of them can lead a fulfilling and relatively independent life. We recognise that for young people with autism and associated conditions, every experience may provide a learning experience. Teaching functional skills and life skills is at the core of our Personal Development curriculum as well as the bespoke programmes from our therapy team (either 1:1 or in paired / group sessions). Areas such as functional life skills and communication are very weighted towards support from therapists.

Our curriculum includes ample opportunity to develop life skills through the experience of daily activities both on and off site. Furthermore, key life skills are integrated across the day in addition to discrete sessions (for example, during breakfast, break and lunch times). There is a strong emphasis on working in partnership with families and the wider community to ensure the teaching of life and social skills spans across the pupil's day including before, during and after school.

Team Around the Child and the Family

Our outward facing, multi-agency approach at Helm Academy Virtual School includes pupil and parent voice, integrated therapeutic support such as support for mental health, occupational therapy, play therapy and speech and language interventions, supported by our dedicated family liaison and pastoral teams. This approach will help to enhance both the learning and social experiences of pupils to the benefit of all. Working closely with the adults in the child's life, the school's curriculum will be adapted for each child, reflecting their background, their needs, their interests and their social experiences, so that we consider not only what, but also how the pupils will learn, whilst promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical qualities of all children and their wider communities.

Bespoke Outdoor Adventure & Enrichment

Planned enrichment activities supplement the school's curriculum and contribute to the development of pupils' personal, social and emotional wellbeing. These include opportunities such as Forest Schools, music lessons with Southampton Music Service and Expressive Arts. The aim is to improve group cohesion and individual resilience and boost self-esteem, confidence and social skills. Societal practices and developing social interactions will be key elements of the enrichment programme.

Curriculum Implementation

At Helm Academy Virtual School the personalised curriculum and range of approaches and learning styles will have a focus on effective communication to enhance social and emotional health.

Adapted planning will consider emotional regulation strategies as identified in EHCPs that need to be included to promote a love for learning, leading to academic and social progress. Physical and sensory needs are also taken into consideration, and we will look for discrete ways in which children can learn skills alongside their acquisition of knowledge, ensuring that both are developed.

Prior learning will be understood through effective assessment and frequent opportunities for pupils to rehearse learnt knowledge and skills. Our approach means that many skills are reinforced because of cross-curricular teaching in the context of many other subjects, including the Enrichment curriculum.

We aim for a depth of learning and breadth of coverage, where excellent staff subject knowledge links components of knowledge to broader, conceptual learning. Opportunities to practise skills and knowledge are built into the curriculum to secure a deep understanding of what pupils have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts.

Curriculum planning layers knowledge and concepts delivered in a range of styles so that all pupils can make progress. Staff systematically check pupil's understanding to identify gaps in learning and misconceptions. This provides clear feedback for ways forward so that the pupil makes progress. Clearly set out success criteria are used effectively to gain intended learning outcomes and elicit valuable pupil self-assessment.

We will use a variety of interventions to support emotional literacy skills to nurture positive mental health so that learning can continue successfully. We will have excellent home/school links and specialist roles such as our Family Liaison Lead who helps to support all aspects of family life through regular support and through our parents' meetings where help and advice is given as needs arise.

We actively take into account the health and well-being of pupils and their families and staff make an extra effort to include families in decisions that affect their children. Staff will seek and take advice from families and outside agencies to see how best to support our children, so that we can have the best outcomes for their futures and nurture their progress. We actively support our pupils to develop the skills for lifelong healthy relationships and a healthy lifestyle.

We take every opportunity to enrich the curriculum with outside providers, trips and visits, celebration days, whole school themed weeks and Enrichment opportunities. This gives context to learning and shows our pupils that education is relevant, fun and worthwhile.

Curriculum Impact

We live in an ever-changing world, and it is our aim to ensure that our pupils are ready to face these challenges and succeed in whatever they do. The intention of the multi-faceted curriculum is for children to make excellent progress during their time at Yarrow Heights School, academically, socially and personally, transforming their lives and giving them hope for the future.

At our school, we learn together that there are different pathways to success and develop perseverance by overcoming barriers. This is reflected across all curriculum areas where pupils' work throughout the curriculum is of good quality. We understand that 'getting stuck' means that personal development and learning is taking place, and this is just part of the journey to success.

Through our ambitious curriculum we aim for every child to enjoy learning and gain knowledge, skills and attributes which will enable them to lead happy, fulfilling and successful lives in the future. Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well. This is reflected in results from national tests and examinations that meet government expectations, or in the qualifications obtained (our first external assessments took place in 2024).

Subject leaders will regularly share data about their subjects with children, parents and staff, celebrating the many examples of progress and success because of the effort undertaken by our pupils, staff and family support. Thorough scrutiny of subject data, pupil outcomes and behavioural development means staff can plan further interventions as needed, with the quality of teaching regularly monitored through collaborative learning walks, books scrutiny and lesson observations.

Furthermore, senior leaders, subject leads and teachers use information gained from assessment to evaluate their effectiveness of their curriculum designs. This means that if patterns of slow

progress emerge within a particular subject, staff will first look to adjusting the intent or implementation of their curricula to address the issue.

At Helm Academy Virtual School we regularly undertake pupil, parent and staff surveys to monitor and improve our practice at all times, to develop pupils who thrive during their time at school and to encourage meaningful, happy and fulfilling futures for all.

The impact of our curriculum will be that:

- ✓ Pupils are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training.
- ✓ Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age.
- ✓ Pupils can apply mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.
- ✓ There are high levels of accountability, knowing what is implemented and learned.
- ✓ There are clear methods to check what pupils know, can do and understand so that the right work is taught/informs teaching (Assessment for Learning).
- ✓ Teacher subject knowledge is consistently strong across the school, phase, key stage, and department.
- ✓ Pupils' personal development is well supported through Personal Development lessons and our enriched curriculum to develop essential skills, enabling them to successfully prepare for adulthood.
- ✓ Senior leaders check implementation of the curriculum.

Leaders ensure that all groups of pupils can access the curriculum well. In our Primary department, leaders understand all the component strands of the National Curriculum.

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 Virtual School Board proposals for amendments to this Policy