

Individual Growth, Individual People'

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Life Skills Policy

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Intent

At Newark Orchard School, we want to celebrate all types of progress made by our students. We already have systems in place that celebrate the academic and vocational progress our learners make, but wanted a curriculum that recognises and celebrates the non-academic learning across the school.

With this in mind we designed the Life Skills curriculum. This curriculum was written to show the "hidden curriculum" that takes place consistently throughout the school. These are the things we teach every day but aren't explicit in our lesson plans and curriculum maps. Some examples are the work we do around mindfulness and mental health, modelling how to be respectful and have good manners both in school and when out in the community, and how to be more independent.

Our Life Skills curriculum ties in with assessment methods already used within school. There are links with the Engagement Profile at the lower levels, and ideas have also been included from the Autism Education Trust framework. At the higher levels of the curriculum, there are links with our SOLAR reporting system, and accreditation that is already being followed through ASDAN Personal and Social Development and Short Courses. There are also cross curricular links with RSHE and Careers throughout the Life Skills program.

Implementation

Our Life Skills curriculum has been split into 5 levels of progression. Levels One and Two are based around the Engagement Profile and tend to be used with our younger learners and learners with more complex needs. Levels Three, Four and Five are based around the more formal curriculum that the majority of our learners follow while they are at school.

Each of the levels are then broken down into 5 sections or modules. These are the same headings across the whole curriculum so it has a holistic approach.

- Healthy Living and Personal Care
- Independent Living and Personal Safety
- Independence in the Community
- Emotional Understanding and Relationships
- Careers and Job Skills

Targets are set under each of the section headings. Each target is then broken down into smaller, manageable steps that our students will be able to work towards. Every student who attends our school is baselined to see which level of the Life Skills curriculum is the "best fit" for them, as we understand that the very nature of our students can lead to a more spiky profile where they might have been working over several levels at once. The booklets at Level One and Two are also available in symbols to support our learners who have more needs around communication.

Teaching

Once the students are assessed, each student is provided with their own Life Skills booklet, which contains all the targets they are working on at that level. This booklet then follows them through their learning journey at Newark Orchard, and moves classes with them so their new class team can see what has been achieved so far. When the student has completed the targets at their current level, they move to the next level of the program. However, there is no timescale to this as we understand that all our students make progress at their own rate.

Life Skills lessons can be stand alone focused sessions on a particular target, or they can be embedded in a cross curricular through incidental teaching. The targets and objectives are expected to be on medium term plans and are linked to their corresponding teaching.

Each page in the booklet has a main target that is then broken down into smaller, easier to achieve targets. These then have a record that shows when the student started working towards the target, and when they completed the target. There is also a space for the learner and a member of staff to sign to say that they are happy the target has been achieved. There is also space for supporting comments or photographs that celebrate what has been achieved.

Impact

Our goal is to make our learners as independent as possible before they transition out of Newark Orchard School and on to their next placement, whether that is college, apprenticeships or work. Our Life Skills program is designed to help them prepare for adulthood and our leavers move on confident in their abilities that they have developed over the years. The booklets for each student can also follow them into their next setting, so there is no loss of learning.

We have found the students enjoy taking ownership of their learning and are proud when they have completed a target. They recognise that these targets improve their independence, which in turn increases their self-esteem. The staff appreciate that this is a way that shows all hidden learning that is delivered throughout the school, and recognise the hard work and dedication given to all of our students.

At Newark Orchard School, we believe Life Skills is fundamental in our formal and non-formal learning and will allow our young people the best opportunity be a functional, contributing member of society.