



Resicare Alliance

Curriculum Policy

Document Control

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Overview

Our curriculum aims to prepare our learners for life as adults after The Yews School by offering functional and personalised learning to enable them to hold a positive place in their community.

The curriculum has a strong foundation of life skills and promoting independence in our learners.

Our curriculum also includes functional English (My Communication) and functional Maths (My Thinking and Problem Solving).

We provide real-life opportunities for the pupils to feel part of and understand their community and wider world as well and encouraging social communication and opportunities to apply these skills in their local community.

The curriculum also provides opportunities for creativity and the development of their physical wellbeing, through PE, games, yoga and mindfulness, as well as Physiotherapy and Swimming.

With the right environment and support, we strive for our pupils to become confident communicators, early readers, independent thinkers, and problem solvers.

Our Semi-Formal Curriculum approach has allowed us to promote what our pupils need, rather than being constrained by subject areas.

Learners following the Semi-Formal pathway learn through exploring the world around them and access exploratory sessions that enable them to develop independence towards their skills-based objectives.

The areas of learning are designed to teach the pupils in this phase the essential knowledge they need to develop the skills and concepts required to achieve the independence we aspire towards.

Developing the use of functional expressive communication is central to learning. Pupils are encouraged to engage and form secure relationships with adults to support their engagement in adult-led activities.

Independence is always encouraged through a tiered system of adult modelling, sabotage, and reducing adult support.

Behaviour for learning is also essential to the Semi-Formal curriculum. Staff use consistent strategies for each individual pupil to support them to be in a sensory and emotionally regulated state ready to learn.

Semi-Formal pupils use the curriculum themes as vehicles for skills-based learning. Class staff teams take the pupils' motivators into account to promote learner engagement.

Teaching and learning are strengthened through the pupils' motivation towards exploring the activities provided. Adults support the pupils to access activities with functional self-help, play, and communication skills.

A mixture of child-led and adult-led learning enables a good working relationship between pupils and staff in the Semi-Formal pathway.

Our schemes of work are developmental and not related to age or Key Stage.

The pupil begins at their point of learning, and each learning journey will be personal.

Our pupils have difficulties with generalising skills and concepts and for learning to be meaningful and successful, opportunities for holistic development are presented in real life contexts, where pupils can learn by “doing” and practicing the skills that they will need to be happy, healthy, safe and successful in their life beyond school.

1. Introduction

This Curriculum Policy sets out the principles, structure, and implementation of the curriculum at The Yews School. The Yews School is a specialist through-school that provides high quality, personalised education for children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), moderate learning difficulties, and specific learning difficulties. All learners attending The Yews School have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The curriculum is designed to ensure every learner acquires the skills, knowledge, and independence required for meaningful and fulfilled lives within their communities.

EQUALS SEMI-FORMAL (SLD/MLD) CURRICULUM

This unique curriculum has been written and edited by outstanding practitioners throughout the UK in the education of children, young people and adults with severe and complex learning difficulties.

The general principles governing the schemes of work are that they

- are developmental in nature and open to personalisation - they start at the beginning of the individual pupil's learning journey and aim for the highest level of independence possible
- cover all stages of education from 2 to 25 (and beyond) but are not directly related to either age or key stage. Learners fit into them where they will according to their individual abilities, interests and learning journey
- are not related to the National Curriculum, though the common language of the P Scales is occasionally used for ease of understanding.

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2. Curriculum Philosophy and Intent

The curriculum at The Yews School adopts the Equals Semi-Formal Pathway. It focuses on engagement, functional learning, practical communication, social development, and preparation for adulthood. The school does not follow the National Curriculum because the learning profiles of students require a more specialised approach that prioritises personal development, life skills, and holistic outcomes.

The purpose of the curriculum is to:

- Enable learners to communicate, control, and make choices about their environment and lives.
- Promote independence through daily living and functional skills.
- Foster curiosity, engagement, and meaningful participation in the world around them.
- Embed wellbeing, safety, and self-regulation throughout the educational experience.
- Promote community involvement and preparation for adulthood.
- Recognise and celebrate every achievement through appropriate pathways including ASDAN, Entry Level Certificates, and AQA Unit Awards.

3. Curriculum Design and Key Principles

The curriculum is personalised, flexible, and responsive. Students experience a broad range of learning opportunities that focus on real-life application and are delivered through structured play, multi-sensory approaches, and community-based learning. The curriculum is designed using the following principles:

- Bespoke learning responding to EHCP outcomes and individual interaction profiles.
- Development of communicative competence using total communication strategies.
- Engagement as a driver for progress, applying the Seven Aspects of Engagement to assess impact.
- Sequential development aligned to the Semi-Formal Pathway offered by Equals.
- High expectations for each learner's progress towards adulthood and autonomy.
- Collaboration with parents, therapists, and external professionals to ensure holistic support.

4. Fundamental Curriculum Standards

The Yews School structures its curriculum around twelve fundamental standards that underpin every learner's experience:

1. Communication
2. Independence and Daily Living Skills
3. The Outside World and Community Participation
4. Play and Leisure
5. Wellbeing and Self-Regulation
6. The World Around Us (Understanding Environments)
7. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
8. Creativity and Expression
9. Problem Solving and Thinking Skills
10. Personal Safety and Risk Awareness
11. Physical Development and Healthy Lifestyles
12. Emotional Development and Self-Recognition

Each standard is delivered through engaging, practical activities that are relevant to learners, matched to their developmental stages, and informed by therapeutic approaches.

5. Implementation and Pedagogy

Learning is delivered through:

- Highly structured environments that support predictability and security.
- Multidisciplinary planning that incorporates occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and positive behaviour support.
- Learning pathways that build skills progressively over time.
- Individualised timetables that balance routine, choice, challenge, and sensory regulation.
- Inclusive and adaptive teaching strategies such as sensory integration, visual supports, modelling, and repetition.

- Regular community-based experiences that provide context for generalisation.

Staff measure progress through engagement profiles, personalised targets linked to EHCP outcomes, and recognised accreditation frameworks where appropriate.

6. Personal Development and Preparation for Adulthood

Preparation for adulthood is central to every learner's journey. This includes:

- Developing life skills such as self-care, food preparation, travel training, and money awareness.
- Social communication skills that support relationships and participation.
- Understanding rights, responsibilities, and safeguarding principles.
- Opportunities for vocational exploration tailored to individual interests and strengths.

The curriculum supports learners to build confidence and resilience that will sustain them beyond The Yews School.

7. Assessment and Progress Tracking

Assessment is continuous, formative, and evidence driven. It ensures that each learner's progress is recognised, celebrated, and used to inform next steps. Methods include:

- Equals Semi-Formal assessment frameworks
- Engagement Model principles
- EHCP outcome monitoring
- Tracking of independence and functional communication skills
- Accreditation evidence for ASDAN, Entry Level, and AQA awards

7 (i) Assessment and Progress Tracking: Incorporating MAPP

The Yews School uses MAPP (Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress) as the principal assessment tool to monitor engagement, learning outcomes, and progress points across the Equals Semi-Formal curriculum. MAPP enables staff to recognise, evidence, and celebrate progress in highly personalised learning, particularly where progress is non-linear and may not be captured by standardised academic measures. Learners develop at their own pace and are supported by trusted adults who understand their individual communication and sensory needs. This approach ensures

assessment remains responsive, evidence based, and reflective of each learner's genuine developmental trajectory.

MAPP provides detailed insight into both small-step progression and the quality of learning experiences. It is used to evaluate outcomes aligned with EHCP targets, personalised learning objectives, and the curriculum's twelve fundamental standards.

7 (ii) MAPP Core Principles

The MAPP framework is built upon a set of principles that guide assessment practice at Ladybird Manor:

1. Personalisation

Assessment focuses on what matters for each learner, reflecting their unique strengths, needs, and aspirations. Targets are meaningful, functional, and directly linked to their real-world development.

2. Holistic Progress

MAPP assesses four key dimensions of progress that extend beyond cognition:

- Independence
- Fluency
- Maintenance and Generalisation
- Prompt Reduction

Together these indicators provide a deeper understanding of how well learners acquire and sustain new skills.

3. Engagement as a Measure of Progress

The framework captures changes in engagement using qualitative observation that aligns with the Engagement Model. Positive shifts in persistence, curiosity, anticipation, exploration, and initiation are recognised as significant indicators of learning.

4. Celebration of Small Steps

Every improvement, however subtle, is valued and recorded. MAPP recognises that for many learners with complex profiles, micro-progress represents significant cognitive or developmental achievement.

5. Collaborative Assessment

Teachers, support staff, therapists, and families contribute to assessment decisions to ensure a full picture of the learner's progress. Joint working ensures consistency between school, home, and wider environments.

6. Evidence-Informed Reflection

Photographs, annotated work, observational data, and case notes provide evidence to support professional judgement. MAPP uses this information to refine planning and set ambitious, achievable next steps.

7. Longitudinal Tracking

Progress is monitored over time to highlight sustained improvement, plateaus, or regression. This ensures interventions can be adapted promptly and effectively.

Progress is reviewed termly with parents and carers and contributes to the annual EHCP review cycle.

8. Inclusion, Equality, and Accessibility

All learners access the full curriculum irrespective of need, background, or circumstance. Adaptations are made to ensure accessibility, including assistive technologies, sensory regulation strategies, and tailored communication systems.

9. Safeguarding and Welfare

Safeguarding principles are inherent in every aspect of the curriculum. Staff model and teach safe behaviours, healthy relationships, and personal boundaries. Wellbeing underpins curriculum decisions and student support.

10. Parent and Community Engagement

Partnership with families is vital to maximise impact. Parents and carers contribute to curriculum planning, goal setting, and review processes. The Yews School collaborates with community providers to extend learning into meaningful real-world contexts.

11. Monitoring, Review, and Accountability

Senior Leaders monitor implementation and effectiveness through lesson observations, work scrutiny, learner engagement data, and progress outcomes. The governing body evaluates curriculum impact and ensures alignment to statutory requirements for all learners with EHCPs. This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or curriculum changes require revision.

12. Conclusion

The curriculum at The Yews School is distinctive and aspirational. It is constructed to empower learners with complex needs to achieve autonomy, happiness, and active participation in society. The school remains committed to continuously refining its offer to ensure that every learner thrives academically, emotionally, socially, and physically throughout their educational journey and into adulthood.

Sub note – Although the school does not currently have any students with an identified EAL profile, we recognise the importance of having robust provision in place to meet the needs of any future learners for whom English is not their first language.

Our curriculum is designed to be inclusive, accessible, and adaptable. Should an EAL student join the school, targeted support will be implemented promptly, including:

- *Initial assessment of language proficiency*
- *Access to differentiated teaching materials and strategies*
- *Staff training on EAL pedagogy and cultural inclusion*
- *Collaboration with parents/carers and, where appropriate, external agencies*

By maintaining this readiness, we ensure that our curriculum complies with statutory requirements and can respond swiftly to changes in the school's demographic profile, ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all learners.



Appendix

Rationale for Using Equals as the Core Curriculum Framework

The Yews School selects the Equals Semi-Formal Pathway as the most appropriate vehicle for learning and engagement for its pupils. The Equals curriculum model is explicitly designed for learners with a range of complex learning profiles associated with ASD, SLCN, moderate and specific learning difficulties, where linear academic progression is neither meaningful nor reflective of personal development. It provides a structure that prioritises holistic development, communication, independence, and functional life skills, which align directly with EHCP outcomes and long-term aspirations for adulthood.

The rationale for Equals is grounded in the following principles:

- Relevance and Functionality

Learning focuses on real-world application. Skills are taught through immersive, experiential, and play-based learning rather than abstract subject content that lacks purpose for the individual learner.

- Engagement-Led Curriculum Design

Engagement is central to enabling progress and is the starting point for all planning and assessment. Equals recognises that learners must be actively involved and intrinsically motivated if they are to retain and generalise new learning.

- Flexibility and Personalisation

The curriculum allows staff to design bespoke pathways that respond to each learner's interests, communication needs, and sensory regulation requirements. Learning is shaped by the learner, not the reverse.

- Preparation for Adulthood

The Equals model embeds independence skills, community participation, and emotional wellbeing throughout, ensuring that pupils acquire the capabilities required for fulfilling futures beyond school.

- Alignment with Accreditation Routes

Equals support a range of recognised accreditation outcomes including ASDAN and AQA Unit Awards. These provide external recognition of progress that is appropriate to each learner's attainment level.

Comparison with P Scales and the National Curriculum

Historically, P Scales were used to measure progression for learners working below the standard National Curriculum levels. The removal of P Scales and introduction of the Engagement Model reflected national recognition that highly specialised cohorts require a fundamentally different pedagogical approach. The National Curriculum remains academically driven, subject-specific, and progression-based, which assumes that learners follow a typical cognitive and developmental pathway. For learners at Ladybird Manor, such expectations are often inappropriate and can lead to:

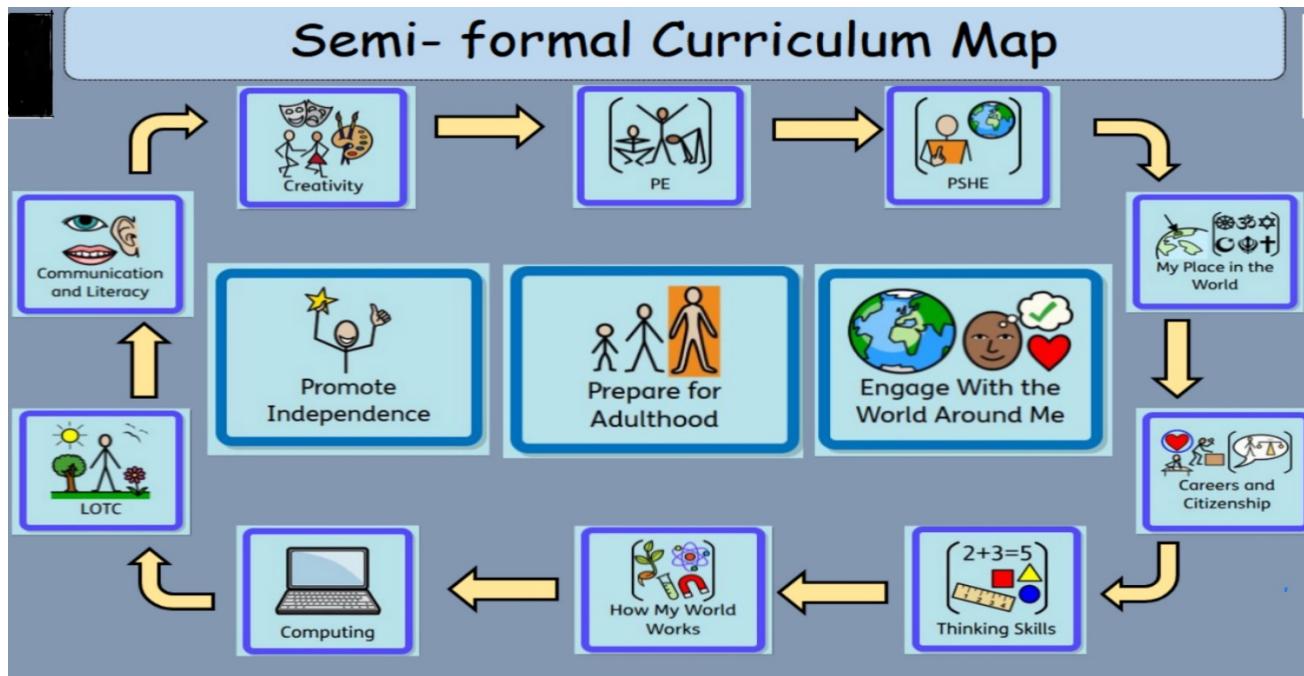
- Misrepresentation of achievement
- Limited recognition of personal, social, and communication learning
- Pressure to follow a curriculum that does not reflect their individual developmental profile

The Equals Semi-Formal Pathway directly addresses these limitations. It acknowledges that progression is often lateral rather than linear, and that small steps in independence, communication, and emotional regulation represent highly significant learning gains. The curriculum enables staff to recognise these achievements authentically through observation, engagement assessment, and functional skill development, rather than systems designed primarily for neurotypical learners.

Conclusion

Equals offer a specialised, adaptive, and meaningful curriculum for pupils whose needs cannot be met by the National Curriculum model. Its focus on engagement, personalised outcomes, and preparation for adulthood ensures that every learner at The Yews School receives a dignified, aspirational, and relevant education that enhances life beyond the classroom.

Appendix – Curriculum Map



1. Independent School Standard 1 - Quality of Education (Curriculum)

ISS Part 1 requires that the curriculum:

- Is **suitable for the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils**, including those with SEND
- Gives pupils **experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human & social, physical and aesthetic/creative education**
- Is **well-planned, broad, balanced**, and enables pupils to **acquire new knowledge**, make progress, and prepare for future life
[fia.uk.com], [britishfir...ium.org.uk]

How the EQUALS Semi-Formal Curriculum Meets Standard 1

1.1 A Curriculum Designed Specifically for SEND Learners

EQUALS clearly states that pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties *require a curriculum different from the National Curriculum*, with structured developmental pathways that prioritise communication, independence, emotional regulation and sensory processing.

This directly satisfies the ISS requirement that the curriculum must be appropriate to the needs of learners, especially those with EHCPs. [qna.files....liament.uk]

1.2 Breadth & Balance Across Areas of Learning

The EQUALS Semi-Formal Curriculum offers a broad blend of learning areas that map to the ISS requirement for varied experiences:

EQUALS Area of Learning	ISS Curriculum Requirement Met
My Communication	Linguistic, social & emotional development
My Thinking & Problem Solving	Early mathematical & cognitive development
The World Around Me	Scientific, human & social education
My Independence	Preparation for life, personal development

My Creativity	Aesthetic & creative subjects
My Physical Wellbeing	Physical education & health
[qna.files....liament.uk]	

ISS requires a curriculum that supports future life and personal development. EQUALS explicitly prioritises **independence**, decision-making, daily living skills and community engagement, ensuring alignment with statutory expectations for preparation for adulthood.

1.3 Developmental Sequencing and Progression

The EQUALS pathways are:

- **developmental**,
- **long-term**,
- **open to personalisation**, and
- designed for pupils working below National Curriculum expectations.

[qna.files....liament.uk]

This meets ISS expectations for a curriculum that is **sequenced, coherent**, and enabling pupils to **acquire knowledge and make progress** appropriate to their profile.

1.4 Suitability for SEND & EHCP Integration

Because EQUALS centres on communication, functional learning and independence, it aligns fully with the ISS requirement for provision tailored to SEND pupils.

ISS Part 1 requires clear provision for pupils with an EHCP—EQUALS directly supports this by enabling curriculum pathways matched to EHCP outcomes (e.g., communication, sensory needs, independence).

2. Independent School Standard 2 - Teaching, Learning, Assessment & Progress

ISS states that teaching must:

- Enable pupils to **acquire new knowledge**, make progress according to ability

- Use effective **planning, assessment, and appropriate methods**
- Involve skilled staff who understand pupils' needs
- Show that pupils are developing academically, socially and personally
[fia.uk.com]

How the EQUALS Semi-Formal Pathway Meets Standard 2

2.1 Teaching Consistent With How Pupils with SLD/MLD Learn

EQUALS is built on the principle that pupils with complex learning difficulties require **different pedagogical approaches**, including repetition, sensory integration, communication scaffolding, and highly structured routines.

[qna.files....liament.uk]

This matches ISS expectations that teaching must meet the needs, aptitudes and abilities of pupils.

2.2 High-Quality Planning & Personalisation

Teaching within the Semi-Formal Pathway is planned around:

- The individual learning journey
- EHCP outcomes
- MAPP-style developmental assessment
- Repetition and consistency

This fits ISS requirements for **well-planned and effective teaching**, including tailored approaches for SEND.

2.3 Assessment That Demonstrates Progress

While EQUALS is not National Curriculum-based, assessment is embedded through:

- MAPP (independence, fluency, generalisation, maintenance)
- Engagement profiling
- Longitudinal development tracking
- EHCP outcome reviews

These systems meet ISS expectations for:

- **appropriate assessment,**
- **tracking progress,** and

- **ensuring pupils develop knowledge, skills and understanding over time.**
[\[fia.uk.com\]](http://fia.uk.com)

2.4 Supporting Communication & Behaviour (Core Teaching Requirement)

ISS Part 2 expects teaching that promotes:

- personal development
- communication
- behaviour for learning

EQUALS embeds communication development across all teaching through:

- AAC
- Intensive Interaction
- Sensory regulation
- Structured communication routines

[\[qna.files....liament.uk\]](http://qna.files....liament.uk)

This is essential for enabling learning in SLD contexts and fully aligns with ISS expectations.

2.5 Skilled Staff & Multi-Disciplinary Work

Teaching in Semi-Formal Pathways typically involves:

- Teachers trained in SEND pedagogy
- Key workers
- SALT / OT involvement
- Integrated therapeutic approaches

The ISS requires teaching to be delivered by staff with secure understanding of pupils' needs—EQUALS strongly supports this by giving staff a clear developmental framework and consistent teaching philosophy.

[\[fia.uk.com\]](http://fia.uk.com)

3. Summary: How EQUALS Meets ISS Standards 1 & 2

ISS Requirement	How EQUALS Semi-Formal Pathway Satisfies It
Appropriate curriculum for needs	Curriculum designed specifically for SLD/MLD learners, developmental not subject-based. [qna.files....liament.uk]
Broad & balanced curriculum	Communication, independence, creativity, physical development, thinking skills, world understanding. [qna.files....liament.uk]
Clear progression & sequencing	Developmental learning journeys adaptable to individual needs.
Assessment supports progress	MAPP, engagement profiling, holistic progress recording.
High-quality teaching	SEND-specific pedagogy embedded in the framework.
Personal development	Strong focus on independence, communication, emotional regulation, community participation.
Preparation for adult life	Life skills embedded throughout <i>My Independence</i> and community learning.