New Forest Small School

Teaching and Learning Policy

Member of Staff Responsible	Alison Alp
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RATIONALE

A commitment to providing high quality teaching that encourages, supports and enables students to be successful learners is at the heart of New Forest Small School's Statement of Purpose. This policy aims to define what as a school we mean by 'high quality teaching' and in so doing, the policy clarifies the expectations we hold about the standards of teaching we are striving for, which outcomes which outcomes we are seeking for our students to support 'Learning for Life', how we work together to achieve these outcomes, and how we address the specific needs of learners who are at risk of underachievement.

OBJECTIVES

● To ensure that students benefit from consistently high quality curriculum delivery and learning experiences
● To raise levels of student achievement across all subjects and areas of experience and throughout the age and ability range
● To facilitate students' progress in four interlinked areas of education: human and social, physical, academic, and sustainability education
● To strengthen further the professional expertise of the teaching team

CORE PRINCIPLES

Teaching and learning at the New Forest Small School are based on the principle of holistic education, as set out in our 'Learning for Life' Framework (Appendix A).

We believe that children and young people can achieve their full potential when they are given space to be themselves, understand their own strengths, build a growth mindset, develop skills that support better mental wellbeing, interact effectively in social and group-learning situations, and become independent and self-motivated learners. These crucial 'Human and Social Education' outcomes are closely linked with the ability to engage in healthy physical exercise, to acquire a variety of academic skills (literacy, numeracy, scientific, technological, artistic and creative), and to contribute effectively to building a more sustainable society.

In order to realise the above outcomes and create a culture of continuous improvement, high quality teaching at New Forest Small School will be achieved by teachers:

1. Having a secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach
2. Setting high expectations in order to extend students' knowledge, skills, concepts and understanding
3. Planning and preparing effectively
4. Employing appropriate methods and strategies to enable students of all abilities to achieve the desired learning outcomes
5. Employing timely and appropriate intervention when needed and possible to support students' progress.
6. Managing time and resources efficiently and effectively
7. Valuing and praising the work of students and promoting high standards of behaviour
8. Using the agreed assessment, recording and reporting strategies, to help students to make progress and to support the planning of teaching strategies that help students improve in targeted areas.
9. Setting appropriate homework tasks which enhance student learning and progress
10. Providing a safe and stimulating learning environment
11. Liaising with parents and other professionals, where required, to support students
12. Providing impartial, accurate and up-to-date careers guidance.

MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE

Management

Nicholas and Alison Alp oversee Learning and Teaching in the school.

There are regular meetings for both Primary and Secondary, with a specific focus on key aspects of Learning and Teaching and helping each child to achieve progress in areas of the framework that they may be struggling with.

Subject teachers have responsibility for the quality of Learning and Teaching in their subjects. They identify priorities for improvement.

Formal and informal monitoring activities are carried out by the deputy head Marianne Wilberforce. Such activities will involve lesson observation; work sampling, and discussions with the teacher and with students. Feedback to individual teachers and the head teachers will be given when formal monitoring has been undertaken. The success of this policy will be measured against the objectives set out above and against the success criteria in the relevant sections of the School Improvement Plan.

The Governors' Advisory Board is encouraged to review the School Improvement Plan and comment on the extent to which the school is meeting the Independent Schools Standards, with a particular emphasis on the delivery of quality education, at its termly meetings. The Headteacher and other staff members attend the Board meetings and ensure that its decisions and recommendations are communicated to staff during the weekly meetings (see below), and/or by e-mail. Additional staff meetings or training may

be arranged as necessary if there are particular concerns that need to be discussed in more depth.

Practice

The Teachers' Standards below provide clear guidance about what the school's expectations are with regard to classroom practice. All teachers are sent this and a copy is held in the office.

What the school has been focusing specifically on are
- The Principles of Assessment for Learning (AFL)
- Strategies for differentiation and the use of LSAs in the classroom
- Independent learning opportunities
- The use of baseline assessment information and feedback to students on how they can make progress
- Stimulating starters to engage the students

TEACHERS' STANDARDS – GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers make the education of their students their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. Teachers act with honesty and integrity; have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and are self-critical; forge positive professional relationships; and work with parents in the best interests of their students.

PART ONE: TEACHING

A teacher must:

1 Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge students
- establish a safe and stimulating environment for students, rooted in mutual respect
- set goals that stretch and challenge students of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions
- demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of students.

2 Promote good progress and outcomes by students
- be accountable for students' attainment, progress and outcomes
- be aware of students' capabilities and their prior knowledge, and plan teaching to build on these
- guide students to reflect on the progress they have made and their emerging needs
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how students learn and how this impacts on teaching
- encourage students to take a responsible and conscientious attitude to their own work and study.

3 Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge
- have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain students' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings

- demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship
- demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject
- If teaching early reading, demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics 8
- If teaching early mathematics, demonstrate a clear understanding of appropriate teaching strategies.

4 Plan and teach well-structured lessons
- impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective use of lesson time
- promote a love of learning and children's intellectual curiosity
- set homework and plan other out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding students have acquired
- reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching
- contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum within the relevant subject area(s).

5 Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all students
- know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable students to learn effectively across the different areas of the 'Learning for Life' framework, including academic skills
- have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit students' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these
- demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support students' education at different stages of development
- have a clear understanding of the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities; those of high ability; those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those who qualify for pupil premium funding; those with English as an additional language; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

6 Make accurate and productive use of assessment
- know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements
- make use of formative and summative assessment to secure students' progress
- use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan subsequent lessons
- give students regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage students to respond to the feedback.

7 Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment
- have clear rules and routines for behaviour in classrooms, and take responsibility for promoting good and courteous behaviour both in classrooms and around the school, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy
- have high expectations of behaviour, and establish a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions and rewards consistently and fairly

- manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to pupils' needs in order to involve and motivate them
- maintain good relationships with pupils, exercise appropriate authority, and act decisively when necessary.

8 Fulfil wider professional responsibilities
- make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school
- develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support
- deploy support staff effectively
- take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues
- communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being.

PART 2: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. **Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school by…**

   - Treating students with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position, including appropriate dress.
   - Having regard for the need to safeguard students' wellbeing in accordance with statutory provisions
   - Showing tolerance and respect for the rights of others
   - Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberties and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
   - Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerabilities or might lead them to break the law.

2. **Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality**

3. **Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities, including the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.**

Democratic Participation in Improving Teaching and Learning

In addition to promoting individual excellence in teaching practice, the School also strives to develop a culture of continuous improvement and to build an inclusive and democratic community in which everyone works together to enhance the learning outcomes for students, across the entire 'Learning for Life' Framework. This is achieved through regular staff meetings, and annual School Meetings and parents' meetings.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings will normally be held weekly for both Primary and Secondary staff. The aims of these meetings are:

- to give staff a forum to share ideas about effective ways of teaching, assessment, safeguarding students and communicating with parents
- to discuss new or modified policies, frameworks, and/or self-evaluations / school improvement plans
- to improve the learning and progress of individual pupils who may be at risk of underachievement (see below).

Any member of staff may propose items for the agenda by communicating them to the School Administrator in writing at least two working days before the meeting.

Agenda items that are not discussed in a given staff meeting will usually be carried forward to the next one, but if the issues in question are very urgent, additional meetings of some or all staff members may be convened at the Headteacher's discretion.

School Meeting

The School Meeting is held once a term and involves all students from Orange to Lilac class, the teachers of the Primary classes, and the Headteacher. It provides an opportunity for the students to practice the values of democracy and mutual respect in real-life situations, while proposing their own ideas for improving teaching, learning and welfare within the school community. Before the meeting the scribe will take any agenda items from each class including teal class. At the start of the meeting the chair will remind students about the importance of active listening and tolerance for those with different faiths, beliefs, opinions or political persuasions. They will also remind children of the hand gestures used to enable the meeting to run smoothly.

The agenda can relate to any aspect of teaching, learning or welfare. Decisions are taken by majority vote.

In principle, the Headteacher has the right of veto and would unhesitatingly veto any decision by the students that might compromise safeguarding, lead to a violation of the law, or negatively impact the welfare of the school community - giving a full explanation of the reason(s) for the veto. In practice, however, older students usually set out logical and convincing arguments against ideas that are impractical or potentially unsafe, and there is no need for the Headteacher's veto to be used.

Parents' Meeting

The Parents' Meeting is held once a year and all parents and legal guardians of current students at the School, including Kindergarten, are eligible to attend. It provides an opportunity for parents to give feedback on policies and practice at the school, and/or

suggest improvements. The agenda is defined by parents themselves at the start of the meeting, and can relate to any aspect of teaching, learning or welfare.

Ideas supported by a proposer and a seconder are usually taken forward for action by the Headteachers and/or Governors' Advisory Board, unless there is controversy within the meeting, in which case the issue is decided by majority vote.

'Learning for Life' Framework

The New Forest Small School's unique 'Learning for Life' Framework helps teachers, students and parents to understand the school's expectations and aspirations, not only in terms of academic progress, but also in a holistic sense of preparing students for a successful adulthood as independent learners and proactive participants in a democratic society.

The current version of the framework was developed jointly by staff and Upper Secondary students and is grounded in the school's aims and ethos, which can be found on the NFSS website, and underpinned by world-leading research on values and competencies in Education for Sustainability (conducted by a staff member who is working towards a PhD in this area). It consists of four main areas of skill development, two of which are subdivided:

1. Human and Social Education
    a. Self-awareness and mental wellbeing
    b. Confidence
    c. Social skills
    d. Motivation and free thinking
2. Physical Education
3. Academic Education
    a. Literacy skills
    b. Mathematical, scientific and technological skills
    c. Artistic and creative skills
4. Sustainability skills

The full framework, with aspirational learning outcomes for each of the nine sections, can be found in Appendix A.

The framework is used in the Annual Review process (Bi-annual Review from 2018/19) and in conversations between students and their respective personal tutors. It can also provide guidance on expectations and goals for class teachers and one-to-one mentors.

We recognize that all students will find some of the outcomes more difficult than others, and that students with certain types of SEN and disabilities will inevitably struggle with some sections of the framework. Students with autistic spectrum conditions, for example, will find the Social Skills section especially challenging. In addition, some of the outcomes, especially in the 'Self-awareness and mental wellbeing' section, may be

part of a lifelong learning journey for staff as well as students. We have no expectation that all of the outcomes will be fully achieved by the time a student leaves, but that significant progress will have been made towards all of them, with a particular focus on those that they do not find easy.

The school is piloting individual 'Learning for Life' workbooks on a rolling basis, starting with Upper Secondary in 2018/19. The pilot will be evaluated by the SENCO, Senior Secondary Teacher, Policy Adviser and Headteacher to determine:

- the most appropriate format for the workbooks (online or print copies, completed by students only or also by staff and/or parents, etc.)
- whether students find the individual workbooks a helpful way to identify the areas that they find challenging, and set goals to improve their progress, and motivate themselves to keep working towards the goals
- whether staff respond positively to the workbooks or find them an unnecessary burden
- whether the workbooks facilitate productive conversations between staff and parents

If the pilot scheme is successful in relation to these criteria, it will be extended to Lower Secondary in 2019/20 and then Upper Primary in 2020/21.

Enhancing Progress in Literacy and Numeracy

Teachers in the Primary classes use reading and spelling tests to gain an understanding of pupils' progress in literacy.   We do not currently have a standard reading scheme that is implemented systematically throughout the whole Primary school, as the high proportion of students with SEND and especially autistic spectrum conditions (typically high intellectual ability combined with difficulties in social interaction) means that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not suitable for NFSS. However, teachers are encouraged to use the Oxford Reading Tree reading scheme where appropriate, especially in Lower and Middle Primary classes, where a high importance is placed on the development of literacy skills.

To support all students in making the required progress in numeracy skills, NFSS uses a 'Matrix of Skills' in Primary classes. Staff are encouraged to rate each student as either 'limited understanding', 'developing understanding' or 'mastered' in relation to a set of clearly defined numeracy skills, at termly intervals. The colour-coded matrix enables staff to quickly and easily identify children who may be struggling with numeracy, as well as providing feedback to parents in the Annual Review process (increasing to bi-annual from 2018/19).

Supporting Students at Risk of Underachievement

The school understands 'students at risk of underachievement' to include all those, including students of very high ability, who are not currently achieving progress that is congruent with their ability and potential. We recognise that a student may be achieving

educational outcomes that are equalling or even exceeding the national average for their age group, and still be at risk of underachievement.

Students may be at risk of underachievement in any or all of the four areas of skill development that make up the NFSS 'Learning for Life' Framework – Human and Social Skills, Physical Skills, Academic Skills and Sustainability Skills (see Appendix A). This may be for any or all the following reasons:

- Special educational needs, disabilities, and/or medical conditions
- Above-average ability or very high ability
- English as an additional language
- Gaps in knowledge due to extended absence at this school and/or a previous one
- History of bullying, bereavement, abuse or other adverse childhood experiences
- Disadvantaged backgrounds, including those in receipt of pupil premium funding

Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Medical Conditions

The school's arrangements for supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities are as detailed in the SEND Policy, and those with long-term medical conditions in the Medical Conditions Policy, respectively. We recognise, however, that not all students who are at risk of underachievement in one or more areas of the framework will qualify for a formal Education, Health and Care Plan. The internal Individual Education Plan process enables us to respond to lower levels of need, using the same four-step procedure of 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' that is used in designing interventions for students with formally-recognised SEND.

School-led IEPs are drawn up by the SENCO for students with educational needs that do not meet the formal definition of SEN (such that either it would not be appropriate to refer them for an EHC needs assessment, or they have been referred but refused an EHCP) but cannot be fully met through high-quality differentiated teaching within a standard classroom. This could include, but is not limited to students with:

- Mild dyslexia, dyscalculia or dyspraxia, or a combination of these
- Asperger's syndrome or other autistic spectrum conditions that affect their learning, especially in relation to participation in group learning activities, but are not severe enough to require an EHCP
- Mild to moderate difficulties with attention, concentration and/or executive function
- Mild cognitive impairment
- Mental health challenges, e.g. mild to moderate depression, OCD or anxiety
- Large gaps in knowledge, such that they cannot catch up through self-directed study

Fine motor difficulties: Throughout the Primary classes, the school's policy is to encourage neat and legible handwriting, without blaming or shaming those who find this

challenging as a result of fine motor difficulties. We do not explicitly teach or recommend any specific style of handwriting, although cursive styles are discouraged – our focus is on clarity and readability. If a student reaches the Secondary classes and is still struggling with handwriting, to the extent that they are unable to express their ideas clearly in their written work, they may be permitted to use a laptop in class at the discretion of the SENCO as part of a school-led IEP process. Assistance with touch-typing may be given as necessary.

Other interventions that may be recommended in school-led IEPs include, but are not limited to:

- One-to-one mentoring to improve skills in one or more areas of the 'Learning for Life' framework, raise aspirations, or enhance general study skills
- On-to-one tuition in specific subjects that are causing difficulty
- Recommendations for students themselves
- Suggestions for class teachers, such as 'scaffolding' or revisiting topics over time to consolidate content
- Being assessed by an Educational Psychologist to evaluate the need for access arrangements in GCSE exams (extra time, reader and scribe, etc.)

The SEND overview spreadsheet can be used both to summarise targets from existing EHCPs and school-led IEPs, and as a place for teachers to share their concerns about students who may be making slower than expected progress or are thought to be at risk of underachievement.

More able and talented students

All staff are encouraged to 'teach to the top', in the sense of including content that is specifically targeted to the most able students when planning lessons, homework and assessments. Staff are also actively encouraged to seek out resources that can challenge and inspire the more able, either during lessons or at home, e.g. recommended reading lists, videos, and /or events.

We recognise that motivation and mindset are key factors in achievement, and that students with high ability and low motivation (e.g. as a result of negative experiences at previous schools, an undiagnosed mental health condition, or a lack of interest in a particular subject) are at very high risk of underachievement. Such students are usually supported through a school-led IEP, with the recommendations typically involving one-to-one mentoring and/or extra sessions with their personal tutor.

Students with English as an additional language (EAL)

Students whose first language is not English may find it difficult to understand spoken and/or written instruction, contribute to class discussions, and express themselves clearly in writing. Class teachers are encouraged to avoid mislabelling all students with English as an additional language as having SEND, while also being alert to the

possibility that some EAL students may indeed have undiagnosed SEND and/or other issues that place them at a higher risk of underachievement.

We endeavour to integrate students with EAL within the class that is most appropriate for their age group, as much as possible, and to meet their needs through a mixture of differentiated teaching – facilitated by the small class sizes – and one-to-one support. The latter would normally include private tuition in English, using resources designed specifically to teach English as an additional language alongside (or instead of) the standard curriculum resources) as appropriate.

Adverse childhood experiences and significant gaps in knowledge

Students may have significant gaps in their knowledge, in comparison to their peers, as a result of having missed large sections of the curriculum. This may be as a result of extended absence due to illness, or because their behaviour, concentration and/or motivation were affected by adverse childhood experiences (e.g. bullying, abuse or bereavement). It may also be because they have recently joined the school, either from a home-schooling environment or from a school in which the curriculum was organised very differently.

In parallel to any ongoing safeguarding work that may be necessary, staff will be sympathetic to students with gaps in large knowledge, especially where they are linked to a known history of adverse childhood experiences. Asking them direct questions in front of their peers about topics where they are thought (or suspected) to have limited knowledge should be avoided, and additional instructions may be needed to help them stay safe in practical work etc.

- In the case of students who have large knowledge gaps but are now highly motivated, staff will typically provide additional worksheets and (up to a point) differentiated teaching to help them catch up the content that they have missed. An IEP will not be required in this case.

- Where students have missed a large amount of curriculum content and also need extra support to increase their motivation and develop a growth mindset, a school-led IEP process will normally be initiated to determine the most suitable approach, e.g. extra sessions with a personal tutor, one-to-one mentoring, and/or subject tuition.

Pupil premium

Many of the interventions recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation for students in receipt of pupil premium funding (based on cost-benefit ratios and the availability of supporting evidence) are strategies that NFSS is already using as part of its standard practice for all pupils. These include small class sizes, collaborative learning, outdoor adventure learning, extensive use of the arts, and especially

'metacognition and self-regulation' (which is a core element of the Self-Awareness and Mental Wellbeing section in the NFSS Learning for Life framework). Others, such as one-to-one mentoring, personal tutor sessions, use of LSAs and individual subject tuition, are widely used with SEND and EAL students and others at risk of underachievement.

In making decisions about the allocation of pupil premium funding, and/or specific measures to support other students who may be seen as broadly 'disadvantaged' but do not meet the strict criteria for pupil premium funding, the Headteacher will consult with the SENCO and/or class teachers as applicable. As NFSS is an independent school that does not offer full bursaries or full scholarships, the majority of children in receipt of pupil premium funding would normally be in Kindergarten, but there are occasions when this is not the case (e.g. when NFSS has been identified as the school of choice as part of an IEP process).

Full records of income and expenditure for all pupil premium payments will be kept at the school and shared with the Local Authority and other appropriate stakeholders in accordance with statutory guidelines. It is noted that information about parental income is regarded as sensitive data under the 2018 General Data Protection Regulations, and lists of students in receipt of pupil premium funding should therefore be treated as confidential except where there is a legal obligation to share them.

Managing Transitions Between Classes

Transitions between classes, especially from Lower/Middle Primary to Upper Primary and from Upper Primary to the Secondary School, can be difficult and potentially upsetting for children. A particular challenge, in contrast to mainstream schools, is that children at NFSS are grouped by taking into account three separate criteria – age, academic ability, and social and emotional skills. This means that there are often occasions when only one or a few students in a class will make the transition to a higher class, as opposed to the whole cohort moving together.

Decisions about whether or not to move a child to a new class are taken not only with reference to the individual and how the new social environment will affect their learning, but also considerations of the higher class and how it will be affected (positively or negatively) by the transition. Staff may be reluctant, for example, to move a child with challenging behaviour up into a class that already has several members with emotional and behavioural difficulties, if their academic needs can continue to be met through differentiated teaching in their current class.

It may be appropriate, in some cases, for a child to join a higher class on a trial basis, with the option of returning to their old class still being left open. In these cases, the views of students and parents will be taken into account, but the final decision remains with the Headteacher.

The allocation of classrooms is usually done on the basis of class size, bearing in mind any adjustments or adaptations that may need to be made for children with SEND.

We reduce the impact of transitions by encouraging children to move into their new classroom during the last week of the Summer term, so that when they return in the autumn they are not in a strange and unfamiliar learning environment.   In addition, the culture of the school is to encourage students to mix freely and play together during lunch breaks rather than segregating them by class (with the exception of Kindergarten), so that they normally have an opportunity to get to know each other and do not feel that they are being moved into a class of strangers. The small classes and strong focus on forest play make the school a vibrant community.

We recognise that children with autistic spectrum conditions may find change particularly challenging and upsetting, and that transitions between classes can be a traumatic time for them.   Children with severe ASC normally have an EHCP and a dedicated Learning Support Assistant who will remain with them throughout the transition. Those with mild to moderate ASC may require some one-to-one mentoring, with a focus on some of the self-efficacy skills from the 'Learning for Life' framework, especially SM7-SM10 (see Appendix A below), to help them manage their feelings about the change.

Preparation for Adulthood

All students in Upper Secondary are provided with accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–

(i)   is presented in an impartial manner;

(ii)   enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and

(iii)   helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.

Careers guidance is provided to in a variety of settings, including PSHE lessons, one-to-one mentoring sessions, and Careers Days in which parents and other individuals representing a diverse range of professions are invited to come in and talk to the students about their work.

The 'Learning for Life' framework, especially the Human and Social Education section, provides a foundation for acquiring many of the skills that the pupils will need in their transition to adult life. We recognise, however, that students with EHCPs and those with borderline SEN (supported through in-school IEPs) may need extra support to help them identify career paths that are realistic and achievable while also encouraging to have high aspirations, to develop independent learning skills, and to create a manageable plan for transitions to college or other 16-19 education and training provision. This support may be provided by LSAs, by the SENCO, and/or by individual members of staff providing one-to-one mentoring sessions.

GCSE Courses

The current school policy is for all students in the Upper Secondary class to study for GCSE courses, in contrast to a previous policy of allowing some students with special educational needs and disabilities to focus on a Functional Skills programme as an alternative to GCSEs. The expectation is that pupils of high ability will sit GCSE examinations in nine or ten subjects, those of average ability will take seven or eight, and pupils with SEND will typically take five or six GCSEs.

The school offers five core GCSE courses in Maths, English Language, English Literature and Combined Science (Dual Award), which all students are expected to study as a minimum unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The optional subjects currently available are Psychology, History, Geography, Art and Design, Music, Spanish, and `Triple Science' (i.e. separate GCSE courses in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, in place of the dual award Combined Science). Other GCSE options may be offered in certain cases if there is sufficient demand and a suitable teacher is available, although there may be an extra charge if some of the teaching has to be done outside normal school hours.

Students normally choose their options in Year 9 or equivalent, although in the case of more able and talented students, the conversations may begin in Year 8. Decisions about GCSE options must be considered carefully, and will be made through a process of consultation between the student, the parents, the relevant subject teachers and the Headteacher. These conversations will normally be held during the Spring term.

Subject teachers will provide students and their parents with all relevant information in a timely manner, including GCSE curricula and specifications where appropriate.

Once a student has made the decision to study a particular set of options for GCSE, and the Option Sheet has been signed by the student and countersigned by the parent and the Head Teacher, the student is expected to:

- abide by that decision;
- participate fully in all the relevant classes to the best of their ability (including any practical classes, mock exams, field trips or organized study sessions);
- submit coursework in a timely manner if required (currently Art and Music only); and
- sit all the GCSE examination papers in that subject.

Students will only be allowed to drop out of a course in exceptional circumstances, such as severe physical or mental health problems. Such decisions will be taken by the Head Teacher if, after extensive discussion with students and parents, they believe it to be in the student's best interests to reduce the number of GCSEs that they are taking. Students reporting issues such as disliking a subject or teacher, changing career plans, experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, or struggling to understand the course material or cope with the workload (whether for one or more specific subjects or across the whole curriculum) will be offered a tutorial session with the Head Teacher and may, where appropriate and practicable, be offered one-to-one tuition and/or emotional literacy support. There may be an extra charge for these sessions, to be negotiated with the parents.

Students who declare themselves to have 'dropped' a subject without engaging in the proper consultation processes, and fail to attend the required classes, will be recorded in the same way as unauthorized absences and dealt with in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE POLICY

All members of the teaching team will use the policy to assist them to reflect on their own practice and to strive for continuous improvement.

This policy is monitored by the Head Teachers on an annual basis.
The report will identify areas for further development and action but will not refer to individual teachers.

Appendix A: <u>New Forest Small School `Learning for Life' Framework</u>

1. Human and Social Education

1.1. Self-awareness and mental wellbeing

SM1: I can talk about what I like doing, what interests me, and what excites me
SM2: I can talk about my strengths and what I'm good at
SM3: I can recognise what I need to work on, set realistic goals and strive to achieve them**
SM4: I can recognise when my strategies aren't working, and find new ways to do things**
SM5: I can listen to feedback with a growth mindset, and use it to make my work better
SM6: I can recognise how my actions affect others, and change my behaviour if necessary
SM7: I can understand my own feelings and where they come from
SM8: I can think through situations that make me anxious
SM9: I can use positive self-talk statements when I'm scared or worried
SM10: I can manage my feelings by focusing on my goal(s)**

1.2 Confidence

C1: I am confident in coming into the classroom and handling day-to-day tasks
C2: I am confident in doing 'group learning' activities
C3: I am confident in playing outside and handling materials and equipment safely and effectively**

1.3. Social skills

S1: I can recognise when other people's beliefs, interests and experiences are different from mine
S2: I can respect people for who they are, even if I disagree with them
S3: I can recognise how other people may be feeling (based on their words, facial expressions, tone of voice and body language) or take steps to find out how people are feeling**
S4: I can listen to others and make sure that I understand what they are saying
S5: I can understand and follow sensible instructions or guidance
S6: I can discuss my ideas with others and take their opinions on board**
S7: I can take turns and understand why it's important
S8: I can share with others and understand why it's important
S9: I can recognise (or take steps to find out) other people's needs, and help them if appropriate
S10: I can work as part of a team

1.4. Motivation and free thinking

MF1: I can identify the steps needed to solve a problem or complete a task**
MF2: I can see which tasks are most important, and do those first**
MF3: I can get started on tasks by myself**
MF4: I can keep track of information and things**
MF5: I can follow a sequence of activities**
MF6: I can motivate myself and others to keep trying when things don't go as hoped
MF7: I can share my own ideas in classroom discussions
MF8: I can 'think outside the box' and allow new ideas to develop and flourish*
MF9: I can argue a case in a debate*

MF10: I can evaluate different source materials and reflect on my own opinions*

2. Physical Education
P1: I can play team games, e.g. rounders and football
P2: I can complete dance, drama and movement exercises
P3: I can attain simple yoga positions**
P4: I can complete cardio workout routines*

3. Academic Education

3.1. Linguistic
L1: I can read and understand texts and questions**
L2: I can link data and explanations where necessary*
L3: I can organise my thoughts and structure my work**
L4: I can explain my ideas clearly, both orally and in writing**
L5: I can understand and use the right vocabulary for each subject*
L6: I can recognise when words have a 'scientific' meaning as well as an everyday meaning*
L7: I can learn new words by relating them to what I already know

Mathematical, scientific and technological
M1: I can analyse data in depth by creating and interpreting graphs, tables, bar charts, diagrams, etc., calculating averages and percentages, and looking for patterns**
M2: I can 'translate' between written language and mathematical symbols*
M3: I can create, rearrange and solve equations*
M4: I can make accurate measurements and understand them as numbers and units**
M5: I can use logic to design experiments, work things out and solve problems*
M6: I can evaluate evidence, arguments and conclusions*
M7: I can recognise where I need to rethink my own beliefs and assumptions*
M8: I can remember important facts**, equations, formulae and symbols*
M9: I can use equipment, including ICT devices, to complete tasks

Artistic and creative
AC1: I can come up with original ideas, designs, and solutions to problems
AC2: I can bring different subjects together and see the connections between them*
AC3: I can find hidden meanings and understand things at deeper levels*
AC4: I can use creative memory techniques (e.g. acronyms, acrostic, storyline method, song lyrics, mind-maps, visualisation) to help me memorise information*
AC5: I can make and enjoy visual art and performance arts
AC6: I can use the arts to support and enhance my learning in other subjects

4. Sustainability Education

SU1: I can respect and celebrate the differences between people
SU2: I can speak out against bullying, prejudice and discrimination whenever I see them
SU3: I can help to build a community based on democracy and mutual respect
SU4: I can resolve conflicts and tensions without using violence**
SU5: I can act to reduce my ecological footprint and preserve the diversity of life on Earth*
SU6: I can think holistically and see things from a systems perspective*