Curriculum Policy
2026-27

The Courtyard offers a tailored educational and social provision with a holistic approach. We aim to equip our students with the skills and experiences needed to discover and thrive with increased independence in their next stage of life.

CURRICULUM - POLICY STATEMENT

Approval Committee:	**Full Governing Body**
Review Committee:	**Curriculum and Standards Committee**
Last reviewed:	**Summer 2026**
Next review date:	**Summer 2027**
Required to publish on website?	**Yes**
Statutory?	**Yes**

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1. Introduction and Context

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive document to share with students, staff, governors, families and other interested stakeholders. The policy incorporates our vision, values and aims as well as describing the approach to our curriculum and the ways in which teaching, learning and assessment takes place at our school.

The Courtyard School is a free school for students with special educational needs. The students who attend the school have a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition and/or speech, language and communication needs, as well as a high proportion of social, emotional and mental health issues.

We provide an **adaptive** and **personalised** curriculum for up to 72 students, aged 13-19. Each student who attends the school follows an **individual** curriculum depending on a number of factors which include academic ability, social and communication skills and personal interests. Students are taught in ability groups where appropriate, regardless of age.

We are also able to offer a therapeutic element to the curriculum through our links with the Local Authority CAMHS, Educational Psychology and Speech and Language teams, the Islington Learning Disability Partnership and our on-site art therapy service. All students are provided with a keyworker to oversee all their **unique** pastoral needs.

2. Vision, Values and Aims

The Courtyard's vision is to offer an outstanding educational and social provision that will equip our students with the knowledge, skills and experiences needed to discover and live out their potential.

We believe that the Courtyard is a safe, happy and stimulating school that supports students' individual needs. The staff work hard to ensure that a nurturing approach supports all students through their education, encouraging them to be responsible and resilient citizens who are able to make the right choices to promote educational and emotional wellbeing.

The aspiration for all students is to unlock their potential and access the highest level of qualification possible whilst also equipping them with the skills to be able to live and work independently.

It is our duty to:

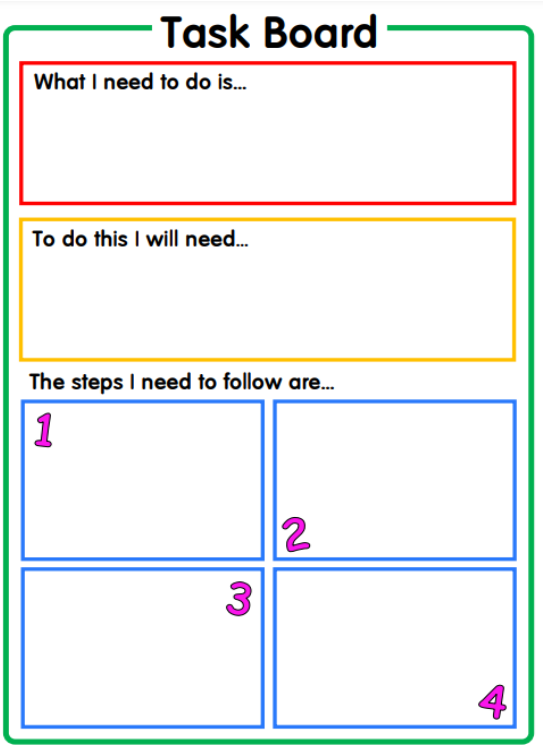
- Provide a curriculum which prioritises skills for life and work, including relevant accreditation and work experience
- Ensure our learners have strong functional literacy and numeracy skills
- Maximise opportunities for independence
- Nurture the whole young person to develop their empathy, compassion and emotional wellbeing

- Provide opportunities to be a confident citizen within the local community and the wider world through engagement in a range of enrichment activities within and beyond the curriculum

A crucial element of the Courtyard's vision is to create secure independent learners. We support the students to access their learning using a range of strategies but they are only implemented if necessary and our aim is to support our students to not be reliant on them but in fact to recognise when it is necessary to apply them and when it is not.

Example: Task Boards

Task boards are an excellent visual resource that supports Autistic learners to process the steps that need to be carried out in order to complete a task. Such a resource can allow students to apply chronology to their learning and can increase the length of time in which they can remain on task and focused. Students have communicated that they appreciate using Task Boards as it limits their dependence on adults in the room to guide their learning; their anxiety levels are less and the quality of work they produce is higher.
Whilst task boards are recognised as being an excellent resource, they can limit the development of independence for some of our students. Therefore, we do not apply such resources as a matter of course to all of our students. We encourage them to self-select where they believe it would be beneficial.



All educationalists will be aware that quality teaching and learning cannot take place without a provision having a robust, supportive, consistent Behaviour Policy. At the Courtyard we pride ourselves on our fantastic positive behaviour for learning approach incorporating Zones of Regulation and Positive Behaviour Support into our everyday practice. Our pastoral support is as bespoke as our curriculum offer. The excellent relationships between staff and students ensures that our students feel best placed to access their learning to the best of their ability and develop their resilience to challenging tasks without causing unmanageable dysregulation. Please refer to our Behaviour for Learning Policy for further detail.

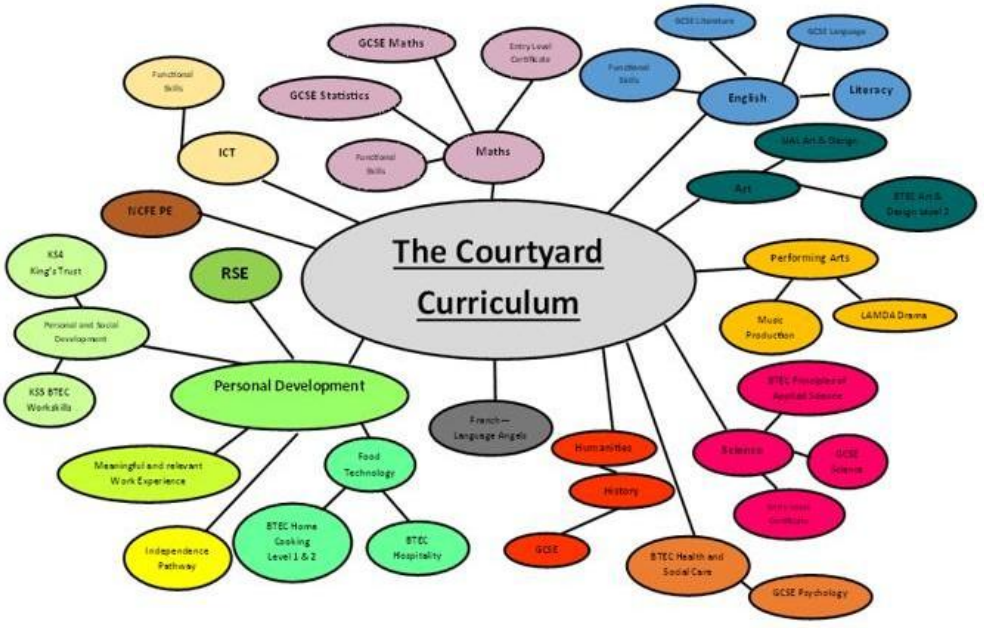
3. Quality of Education – Curriculum Design

The Courtyard is dedicated to providing a broad and balanced curriculum at levels appropriate to the developmental understanding of each **individual** student. We believe that students should leave us with the necessary knowledge, skills and accreditation to see them successfully move forward to the next stage in their lives, whether that be college, Supported Internship, an apprenticeship or paid employment.

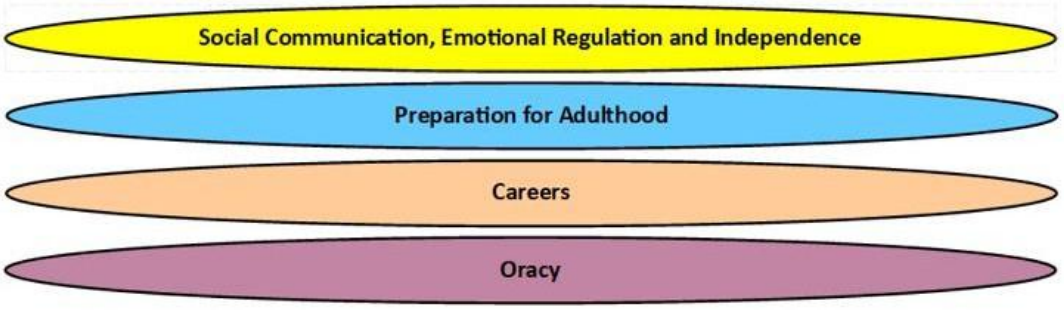
The Courtyard has developed a curriculum that meets the wide ranging educational and social needs of our students. It is based on the values made explicit in our vision and also encompasses and extends the National Curriculum. Curriculum planning is based on the Courtyard's recognition of key skills that students who attend our school need to develop in order to live successful lives and achieve their potential.

Ensuring our students are prepared for adult, independent life is at the centre of our curriculum, as evidenced in the Personal and Social Development suite of subjects.

The starting point is the individual child with a programme designed to meet his/her needs. The long-term targets from each child's EHCP and entry point baseline assessments are used to populate a student's pathway whilst at the Courtyard, with the short-term targets from the Appendix A of the EHCP forming the basis of the student's end of year goals which are reviewed three times per year.



A students individualised curriculum can take many pathways through the programme. For example, a student may study English at GCSE level, Maths at Entry Level, ICT at L1, and so on.



Communication is another key aspect of our curriculum, with both specific communication sessions timetabled as well as cross-curricular opportunities throughout the day.

We endeavour to provide opportunities for students who are identified as having a gift or talent to develop their skills and abilities in that area.

Our aim is for all students to leave with at least five accredited outcomes. Our aspirational aim is for all students to leave with at least five Level 2 accredited outcomes.

4. Quality of Education - Curriculum Framework and Delivery

The curriculum at the Courtyard recognises the need for students to live an independent active life. The SEND Code of Practice recommends that from 14 years old:

"High aspirations about employment, independent living and community participation should be developed through the curriculum and extra-curriculum provision." (SEND Code of Practice, January 2015)

The Leadership Team devises a curriculum which meets the needs and aspirations of the current cohort of the school and, if necessary, adapt and modify it annually.

Teachers create a long-term curriculum overview which details the progression of learning students will make throughout the year. These are overseen by the Teaching and Learning Leadership Team.

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the Leadership Team via monitoring and moderation of planning and assessment, analysis of progress data, learning walks, book monitoring, a CPD programme, LINK meetings with teachers and discussions with students and Governor Visits.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance and SEND Preparation for adulthood is incorporated into the curriculum throughout the year groups and academic stages.

Subjects

Subjects are divided into three areas at The Courtyard: STEAM, Language, Culture and Communication (LCC) and Personal Development.

STEAM Subjects

The STEAM subjects of the curriculum consist of adapted National Curriculum subjects. The subjects are:

- **Maths**
- **Science**

- **ICT**
- **PE**
- **Art**

Maths:

Maths is taught discretely to all students whilst also being reinforced throughout the curriculum. A wide range of skills and accreditations is offered in both cater for students of all ability. Maths is often taken out of the classroom so that students can see how it informs a large part of wider life. Maths Mastery methods benefit many of our students, thus enabling them to see maths as a subject which relates to the real world.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
Maths	Pearson GCSE Maths Pearson GCSE Statistics Pearson Functional Skills Pearson Entry Level Certificate	Foundation / Higher L1 EL1-EL3

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Science:

A strong focus on practical science is given in science lessons as students explore how the world around them works. Students can access the Science curriculum via a range of qualifications suited to meet their current understanding and prior knowledge. Areas covered include: fundamentals of science, working in the science industry, scientific investigations, scientific practical techniques, perceptions of science and using mathematical tools in science. In addition to these units, students cover key areas of biology, chemistry and physics. Assessment is on-going throughout the programmes and includes externally assessed exams, assignments, presentations and practical based assessments.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
Science	Pearson Entry Level Certificate Pearson BTEC Pearson iGCSE	PASS Level 1 – 2 Grades 1-9

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

ICT:

Recognizing that ICT has a central role in our day to day, at The Courtyard Islington we ensure the subject is fully assimilated into every subject across the curriculum, moving beyond a discrete teaching approach of standard ICT stand-alone lesson. This is done through the pervasive use of high-quality technology and a broad range of embedded ICT skills across all subjects. Students are equipped to learn and apply ICT knowledge effectively. Teachers at The Courtyard Islington continuously adapt how ICT is used within their subject area to suit student interests and ensure real-world applicability. Our aim is to deliver a high-quality functioning computing education that equips students with the computational thinking and creativity to understand the world, providing learners with the opportunity to gain an understanding of computational systems of all kinds, and more importantly to be able to apply these skills into real life situations.

Subject	Accreditation	
ICT	Pearson Digital Functional Skills	EL3 - L1

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Physical Education:

All students engage in 2 hours of P.E. per week. Sessions take place in Highbury Fields where team games build interpersonal skills and coordination, or at Highbury Leisure Centre gym where students can increase their knowledge on muscles and their own body, as well as specific exercise and muscle training they can use in all aspects of life. A main focus of P.E. is how exercise and general fitness is beneficial for students in terms of mental health, psychological well- being, anxiety, depression and stress.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
PE	NCFE	Level 1

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Art:

The art course allows students to explore different ways to express themselves creatively, alongside learning new skills and techniques via a wide range of mediums. Learners are encouraged to express themselves and learn about culture, current affairs and personal discovery and development through a range of mediums including drawing, painting, sculpture and design.

This subject combines practical artwork production with artist research and trips to galleries, which add to the students' cultural experience and understanding. Finding out about the wider world through exploration of different artists and designers from past and present means their understanding of our place in the world and in history becomes more meaningful.

This subject is inclusive of all abilities; from students with little or no Art experience to those working at a more competent level.

Students who have little experience have the opportunity to gain accreditation though The AQA Unit Award Scheme. Those with a passion for art can study the BTEC Firsts Art & Design.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
Art & Design	Pearson BTEC UAL Art and Design Diploma	Level 1 – 3 L2/ 4 GCSE Grade 1-9

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Language, Culture and Communication (LCC) Subjects

The LCC subjects of the curriculum consist of areas of the curriculum that encourage oracy, reading and literacy development, alongside writing at depth to communicate understanding. They have been adapted from National Curriculum subjects to meet the needs of our students. The subjects are:

- **English**
- **Literacy**
- **Performing Arts: Drama, Music Production and Band**
- **Humanities**
- **Languages - French**

English:

English is taught discretely to all students whilst literacy is also reinforced throughout the curriculum. Students engage with a wide range of literature whilst an emphasis is put on communication and developing speaking and listening skills. We believe that a quality English curriculum should foster and develop our young people's love of reading, writing, discussion and debate. We aim to inspire an appreciation of the written word through reading, songs, poems, articles, novels and non-fiction texts, and to develop students socially, emotionally, culturally, intellectually and spiritually. The English and Performing Arts team collaborate on three productions per year: Christmas Pantomime, The Courtyard Talent Show and the new Annual Arts Awards Evening, so that students have the opportunity to access and celebrate a complex dramatic text regardless of academic ability, in either a production or performance role.

Subject	Accreditation	Level

English	Pearson GCSE Language Pearson GCSE Literature Pearson Functional Skills	GCSE GCSE EL1-L2

The Literacy Intervention programme is used for students who are identified as requiring additional literacy support. The programme is a multi-sensory system which supports learners with dyslexia and other learning difficulties to increase their reading and spelling abilities. The over-learning model of the programme means that students are able to better retain the spelling and meaning of new vocabulary.

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Performing Arts (Music and Drama):

Performing Arts introduce students to the different ways of expression through the means of communication, devising, performing and evaluating performance performance. This includes units such as introduction to drama/music production, exploring emotions, movement exploration, and using your voice which will expand their vocal and singing skills. Students are encouraged to act on their creative impulses within a structured format, and learn skills that will help them not only in playing a character but also into adulthood.

Skills such as a clear public speaking voice; projection and articulation, posture and improvisation as well as basic theatre vocabulary in drama and production, melody, rhythm, scale and tone, IT programme creation and public performance in music.

This subject is very practical, and allows students to experience a more kinesthetic approach to learning.

Students who show particular talent and interest in drama can have the opportunity to study LAMDA Performing Arts. This involves 3 units spread across 2 years, with a more detailed exploration into acting and opportunities to take part in performances, allowing students to receive the necessary introduction into drama if they wanted to continue studying upon leaving The Courtyard.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
Drama Music Production	LAMDA	Entry Level 3 - Level 2

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Humanities:

Humanities is a combination of History, Geography and RS, designed to guide the students in the self-discovery of the world that surrounds us. Our aim is to inspire in students a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people, and equip them with knowledge about diverse places, people, resources and natural and human environments. The topics covered are also used to compare British Values with the different lifestyles all over the world, equipping our students with a wider scope of understanding of the complexity of people's lives, the diversity of

societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
History	GCSE	Grades 1-9

Subject statement and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Languages - French

The study of languages allows students to benefit from immersing themselves in a different culture. It also develops critical thinking skills, problem solving, creativity and flexibility of mind. Research also indicates that learning a second language helps enhance the knowledge and understanding of an individual's first language. All in all, learning a second language is a really positive element of study. At the Courtyard, we have chosen to study French. French is spoken by over 221 million people across five continents and is the second most widely learned language after English. It is the international language of cooking, fashion, theatre, visual arts, dance, and architecture.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
French – Language Angels	AQA Unit Award Scheme	PASS

Subject statement and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Personal Development

Personal Development subjects of the curriculum are those deemed necessary to equip our students with a variety of knowledge and skills to pursue adult, independent life.

The Personal Development subjects are:

- Home Cooking/Hospitality
- PSD/WorkSkills
- RSE

BTEC Home Cooking and Hospitality:

Being able to prepare a meal for oneself is a key life skill and so all students engage in both theory and practical cooking lessons every week. The Home Cooking Skills course gives students the basic skills and knowledge to be able to cook for themselves in a healthy and cost-effective way. They learn kitchen basics: what equipment is needed and the best way to stock a

store cupboard, fridge and freezer; food safety and hygiene: knife safety, fridge management and rotation; how to shop cleverly: shopping lists, seasonal food and planning ahead, preparing ingredients and understanding confusing food labels.

The Hospitality course sharpens students' skills for employment or further study. Students gain an understanding of the hospitality industry including job roles, enterprise and finance, healthy lifestyles, and preparing and presenting food and beverages. They will learn and then apply the knowledge and practise the skills needed in order to follow a chosen career or future studies.

Subject	Accreditation	Level
Home Cooking	Pearson BTEC	Level 1 – 2
Hospitality	Pearson BTEC	Level 1 - 2

Subject statement and termly Teaching Overview can be viewed on the school website

Personal and Social Development (PSD) and BTEC WorkSkills:

PSD is taught in KS4 using the Prince's Trust scheme of work. It provides students with a safe environment to learn and practise skills needed to help them develop meaningful relationships and successfully navigate our social world.

Students in the Sixth Form are then able to progress onto the BTEC WorkSkills course, gaining accreditation in Level 2 depending on the number of units achieved. The BTEC WorkSkills Level 2 course is a two-year program. Each 'Year Plan' is composed of three units. In the first year students focus on the creation of a CV and a covering letter, self-management skills and presenting a professional image in new work environments. In the second year the units cover personal and social relationships, working in a team and learning from work placements.

Students will gain a Pearson BTEC Level 2 95*GLH Award in WorkSkills after the successful completion of the six units.

Tailored employability workshops and events will be run once a month to complement the curriculum and give students a better awareness of what they have to offer employers/what to expect and guidance about how to succeed in their applications, interviews, work experience placements, college, etc.

Students receive Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance for personal development, skills development, access to online resources, employability skills training, college taster days, and pastoral support. All Sixth Form students take part in work experience placements for 2 hours per week. A great deal of time and effort is put into finding appropriate placements based on students' interests and future aspirations.

Subject	Accreditation	Level

PSD Workskills	King's Trust Pearson BTEC	PASS Level 1 - 2

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview* *can be viewed on the school website

Relationships and Sex Education (R.S.E.):

R.S.E., now a statutory part of the curriculum, is seen as a crucial part of the journey of preparing our students for adult, independent life.

We recognise not only the high importance of teaching and assisting our students to understand, recognise and form healthy friendships and relationships, but also the vulnerability that our learners have in the community when it comes to matters of sexual activity and the possibility of being exploited.

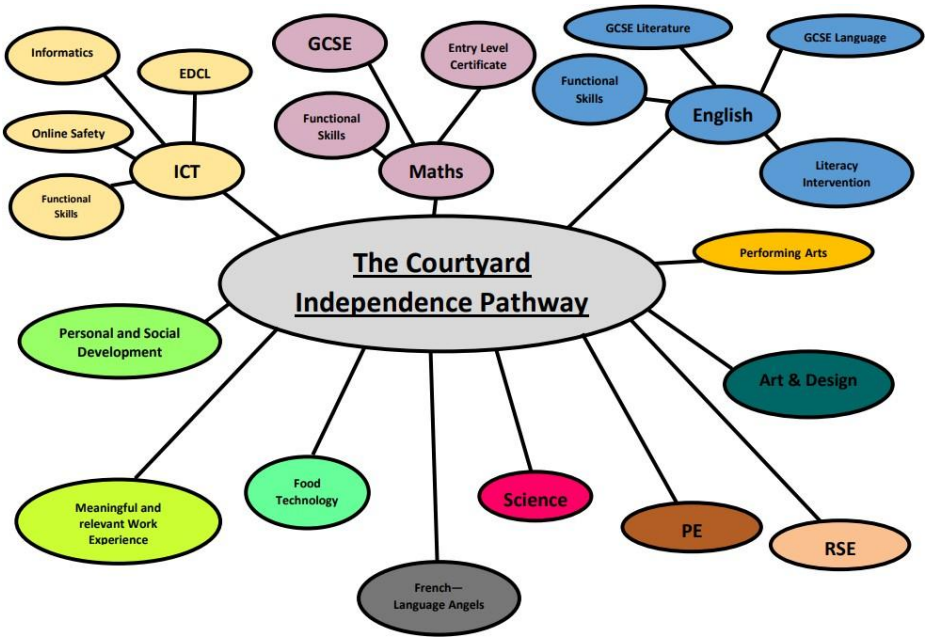
High quality RSE helps create safe school communities where students can grow, learn, and develop positive, healthy behaviour for life. It can have a positive impact on students' health and wellbeing and their ability to achieve, and can play a crucial part in meeting these obligations. Our aim is to generate discussion amongst young people about health and wellbeing, relationships and living in the wider world. RSE has a key part to play in the personal, social, moral and spiritual development of young people.

RSE is delivered across the academic year via three RSE Specialism Days, allowing students to learn about the subject content at greater depth. The school engages with external specialist organisations to enrich the learning further. Please see our separate RSE policy for more information.

Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview* *can be viewed on the school website

Independence Pathway

The Independence Pathway was created in September 2019 in recognition of the need to have a bespoke curriculum for a group of students for whom a particular focus on developing independence skills was seen as a priority. The curriculum was formed in consultation with teachers and parents and designed in close collaboration with the school's speech and language therapist.



Subject statements and termly Teaching Overview [can be viewed on the school website]

5. Quality of Education - Assessment

At the Courtyard we use a range of assessment systems in order to show progress in both academic achievement but also in other areas of the curriculum and a student's development in Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, Independence (SCERI), emotional literacy and behaviour.

For students at the Courtyard, assessment aims to:

- Provide a baseline against which to measure attainment and progress in all areas.
- Identify the 'hidden talents' of students beyond the academic subjects.
- Identify the learning needs of an individual student or group of students.
- Inform planning, target setting and interventions.
- Assist with the development of quality teaching strategies which motivate students.
- Comply with statutory requirements.
- Inform parents and carers of their child's experiences and achievements.
- Support the identification of barriers to learning and the development of strategies to overcome these.

Assessment is an on-going activity throughout the year through questioning, marking of students' work and observations of students' learning.

Students are formally assessed in English, Maths and ICT three times per year. Formal Accreditation in Functional Skills qualifications can take place at any time during the year, as and when the student is ready. This process allows for rapid progress where relevant, through the

accreditations. Students will only be entered for a qualification if it is agreed by all parties that they are ready and we are confident that accreditation will be gained.

Students are entered for the BTEC qualifications once their body of coursework is ready and they have completed all necessary units in order to achieve the award.

Formal assessment in Entry Level Certificates, GCSE and iGCSE programmes will take place when the course content has been covered, usually 2-3 years.

Teachers assess other subjects, SCERI and behaviour using a RAGG (Red/Amber/Green/Gold) rating, depending the progress students have made towards their **individual** targets.

6. Quality of Education - Attainment and Progress

Targets and tracking:

Students' academic targets are set based on a number of factors: their KS2 achievements, baseline assessments, therapeutic advice, parental advice and teacher advice.

Due to the wide range of qualifications offered in English, Maths, Science and ICT, these subjects use a points system in order to create a uniform tracking system of progress. The points system is adapted from DfE Primary Progress Measures (2016).

Expected and aspirational targets are set based on the expectation that students will make 4 points of progress per year and uses a target-setting model based on the DfE National Progression Guidance document, although these are adjusted according to individual students' starting points and other factors which may have affected their attainment prior to arrival at The Courtyard. Attainment data is collected and tracked by the Teaching and Learning Team and analysed in collaboration with teachers in order to monitor progress of students.

SCERI targets are assigned to students either in Annual Reviews, SCERI staff meetings, 'All About' staff meetings and the emotional literacy questionnaire. These are also reviewed three times per year and adjusted accordingly, depending on when they are met.

Progress:

The three assessment windows per year inform teachers and leaders of students' attainment against standardised levels for those who are studying formal qualifications in GCSE, Functional Skills and BTEC.

The assessment data will also show students' progress from their starting points and also indicate who are either below, meeting or exceeding their expected and aspirational targets. Progress in the remaining subjects, SCERI and behaviour is monitored by the Teaching and Learning Team and the Pastoral Team. Targets are adjusted accordingly and interventions put in place for those identified as in need of support.

Parents are informed of their child's progress three times per year as well as the Annual Review which monitors progress of the EHCP targets.

7. Quality of Education - Reading

Students are encouraged to read widely. Reading and oracy form part of daily Keyworker sessions whereby students are involved in shared reading and discussion of current affairs through the VotesForSchools programme. This is a voting platform for students which covers SMSC, British Values and Prevent.

Students are invited to complete an online questionnaire about their reading habits which include stating the types of texts they read and the genres of story they enjoy. This allows teachers and leaders to encourage reading of various mediums during break and lunch times and the purchase of favoured genres for those who like to read hard copy texts.

The Literacy Intervention programme assesses students' reading and spelling ages and indicates progress in comprehension, spelling and grammar.

8. Quality of Education – Destinations

Our Sixth Form students successfully move onto a range of FE destinations including college and apprenticeships as well as supported internships.

Y11 and 6th form students attend a range of different work experience placements each year. The placements are intended to match the interests of the students to develop confidence and encourage active participation as well as building vital life/work skills which are useful on the journey of independence.

Examples of placements include: Direct Line, Sir Robert McAlpine, A-Force, Multiplex, Islington Council, Great and Small Dog Care and Hilton.

9. Personal Development: SMSC, British Values, CEIAG, Healthy Living/Wellbeing, Citizenship, Equality and Diversity

Keyworker Sessions:

Keyworker sessions take place daily and, once a week, students engage in VotesForSchools; a voting platform on which students vote on a topical question based on current affairs. It covers aspects of SMSC, British values, Prevent, Student Voice, PSHE and Citizenship.
Education on Equality and Diversity is interwoven into all areas of the school's curriculum, creating an inclusive environment.
Students also engage in sessions which support the development of their Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Independence (SCERI).

After-school Enrichment:

Students are able to choose an after-school enrichment activity to take part in every Monday. These change regularly and are based on options suggested by the students themselves. Current options include: Coding, Arts and Crafts, Cooking, Communication Games, Homework Club, Team sports and fitness and Film studies.

School Trips:

Teachers and leaders plan educational visits for their subject or for the wider enrichment of students' learning and experience of the world each term. A full insight into the huge range of visits students experience can be seen on the school's dedicated Instagram page - thecourtyardschool.islington

School Residential Trip:

Students visit Macaroni Wood Children's Venture in the Cotswolds each Summer. Students hugely benefit from time away from school to develop their SCERI skills in a new and unfamiliar environment.

Activities Week:

The end of each academic year is an opportunity for the students to access a week-long period of activities, exploring different enrichment events in and around the city of London. Activities are suggested by the students and represent their interests. Such activities include kayaking, museum visits, nature walks, art workshops, theme parks, music production sessions, outings to the coast and cinema visits.

6th Form Masterclasses:

The 6th Form regularly take part in masterclasses which include motivational speeches from special guests; sessions to develop students' employability skills; taster sessions at London colleges and an annual Courtyard Careers Event.

Linked policies

Behaviour for Learning
SEND Code of Practice