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# Curriculum Policy

## 1. Introduction

Esland Doncaster School is a specialist independent provision for children and young people aged 7–18 with ASC, ADHD, EBSA and associated Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Our curriculum is designed to improve the overall quality of life for our learners by nurturing their emotional wellbeing, personal development, and academic achievement in equal measure.

We believe that education should be transformative, therapeutic, and tailored. Our approach is rooted in the understanding that our learners require more than access to knowledge, they need connection, consistency, and compassion. That’s why our curriculum is built around four core values: **Fun, Bold, Curious, and Kind**. These values shape every lesson, every relationship, and every opportunity we offer.

In line with the Independent School Standards (ISS), our curriculum provides full-time supervised education appropriate to each pupil’s age, aptitude, and individual needs. It encompasses all required areas of learning:

- **Linguistic** – through English, communication, and literacy development
- **Mathematical** – through numeracy, problem-solving, and financial literacy
- **Scientific** – through thematic science and practical investigation
- **Technological** – through ICT, computing, and digital safety, IDEA
- **Human and Social** – through PSHE, RSE, citizenship, personal development and wellbeing and humanities
- **Physical** – through PE, enrichment and outdoor learning inc. Forest school
- **Aesthetic and Creative** – through art, design, enrichment, English, PE, cooking, IDEA, Enterprise

Our curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced to build cumulatively sufficient knowledge for future learning, employment, and independence. It enables pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts, and acquire skills they can apply in relevant situations. We promote a positive attitude towards learning, support pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, and encourage physical activity and responsibility for health.

We ensure equal access to learning for all pupils, with high expectations and appropriate levels of challenge and support. Our curriculum reflects high academic, vocational, and technical ambition for every learner and equips them with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

For secondary-aged pupils, we offer subject choices that support progression and personal goals, including access to a strong academic core such as English, maths, and science. We prioritise the development of independent learning skills and resilience to prepare pupils for further education, employment, or supported living.

Where appropriate, we promote the learning and development of our youngest pupils through nurturing, play-based approaches that lay the foundation for emotional regulation, communication, and early academic skills.

Our curriculum is not static, it is responsive, relational, and rigorously reviewed to ensure it meets the evolving needs of our learners and reflects best practice in SEN education. It is delivered by skilled staff who understand the importance of therapeutic teaching, trauma-informed practice, and unconditional positive regard.

## **2. Curriculum Intent**

Our academic curriculum is based on the National Curriculum but is flexibly adapted to ensure accessibility, relevance, and engagement for every learner.

Our curriculum is designed to:

- Promote emotional regulation, resilience, and self-worth
- Provide access to a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum
- Support personal development, independence, and preparation for adulthood
- Enable pupils to acquire speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy skills
- Reflect our core values in every subject and interaction

Our curriculum enables pupils to:

- Develop self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence
- Distinguish right from wrong and respect the law
- Accept responsibility for their behaviour and contribute positively to society
- Acquire a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services
- Appreciate and respect different cultures and beliefs

We prioritise:

- Emotional safety and wellbeing as the foundation for learning
- Personalised learning pathways that reflect individual strengths, interests, and developmental stages
- Therapeutic and relational approaches embedded across the curriculum
- Small group and 1:1 teaching where appropriate to reduce anxiety and build confidence
- Opportunities for experiential and practical learning to promote engagement and success

Our curriculum is designed to be responsive, allowing for adjustments based on ongoing assessment and the evolving needs of each child. We work closely with families, carers, external professionals, and the wider school team to ensure that every student receives a meaningful, ambitious education that prepares them for future learning and life.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **The governing board**

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation.

The governing board will also make sure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum, ensuring it meets the independent school standards
- Pupils from year 7 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced

#### **Headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met
- The curriculum meets the independent school standards
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing board
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate

- The school's procedures for assessment are rigorous and robust
- The governing board is fully involved in decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- The governing board is advised on whole-school targets, to make informed decisions
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including pupils with SEN

### **Teaching Staff**

- Deliver the planned curriculum in line with the school's agreed schemes of work, progression frameworks, and learning objectives.
- Plan engaging, differentiated lessons that meet the needs of all learners, including those with SEND, EAL, and more-able pupils.
- Use a range of teaching strategies and resources to ensure accessibility, challenge, and cultural relevance across the curriculum.
- Assess, record, and monitor pupil progress through formative and summative assessment methods, using outcomes to inform future planning.
- Provide timely feedback that supports progression and helps pupils understand their next steps.
- Create a positive learning environment that supports behaviour expectations and enables full access to the curriculum.
- Collaborate with colleagues to ensure consistency in curriculum delivery, share best practice, and contribute to ongoing curriculum development.
- Identify barriers to learning and work with SENCOs, pastoral staff, and leaders to ensure appropriate interventions are in place.
- Engage with professional development to maintain up-to-date subject knowledge and pedagogical skills.

### **Support Staff (e.g. Teaching Assistants)**

- Work under the direction of teaching staff to support the delivery of planned lessons and curriculum activities.
- Provide targeted support to pupils, including those with SEND, EAL, or specific learning needs, to help them access the curriculum effectively.
- Assist with differentiation by adapting resources, reinforcing key concepts, and supporting small groups or individual learners.
- Promote pupils' independence, encouraging them to develop confidence and ownership of their learning.

- Support behaviour for learning, reinforcing classroom expectations and contributing to a safe, productive learning environment.
- Contribute to assessment information by observing pupils, recording progress, and reporting concerns or achievements to the teacher.
- Prepare learning materials and resources as required to support curriculum delivery.
- Participate in training relevant to their role to ensure they can effectively support curriculum implementation.

### **Clinical Staff (e.g., Assistant Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists etc)**

- Collaborate with teaching staff to ensure curriculum delivery is aligned with pupils' clinical needs, therapeutic plans, and personalised strategies.
- Provide specialist assessments that identify barriers to learning related to communication, sensory processing, physical development, or emotional/mental health needs.
- Develop and share intervention plans or therapy programmes that support access to the curriculum.
- Advise on adaptations to teaching approaches, classroom environments, and resources to enable full participation.
- Deliver targeted clinical interventions (individual or small-group) that enhance pupils' capacity to engage with learning.
- Support staff training by providing guidance on relevant therapeutic strategies, communication approaches, or medical needs.
- Monitor pupil progress in relation to clinical goals and share updates with teachers and leaders to ensure joined-up planning.
- Contribute to multi-disciplinary meetings to review pupil needs, discuss progress, and plan integrated support.
- Promote pupil wellbeing and safety, ensuring that clinical considerations are embedded in daily practice and curriculum access.

## **4. Curriculum Implementation**

### **Linguistic Education**

Delivered through English, communication skills, reading interventions, and expressive writing. Pupils develop literacy, vocabulary, and confidence in speaking and listening.

At Esland Doncaster School, linguistic development is a cornerstone of our curriculum. We recognise that the ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing,

speaking, and listening is foundational not only to academic success but to emotional wellbeing, social connection, and lifelong independence.

Our English curriculum is designed to:

- Build functional literacy for everyday life
- Develop expressive and receptive language skills
- Foster a love of reading and storytelling
- Support emotional regulation through written and verbal expression
- Enable access to other curriculum areas through improved comprehension

We deliver English through differentiated pathways, including phonics-based interventions, Functional Skills, and GCSE English Language. Lessons are trauma-informed, therapeutic, and tailored to individual EHCP outcomes. Reading is prioritised across all key stages, with daily opportunities for shared reading, independent reading, and reading aloud.

### **The Importance of Reading**

At Esland Doncaster school we prioritise reading, recognising that “pupils who struggle with reading are more likely to struggle across the curriculum” and “reading comprehension strategies can have a high impact on pupil progress, particularly for disadvantaged learners.” *Source EEF.* We want students to develop their reading skills to enable them to access rest of the curriculum and support independent learning and future success. For our learners, reading also plays a therapeutic role. It supports emotional literacy, empathy, and self-reflection. Exposure to diverse texts helps pupils explore identity, process experiences, and build resilience. Opportunities to embed reading across the curriculum is an expectation.

We use reading age assessments to track progress and inform interventions. Pupils are supported through targeted intervention programmes alongside staff-led guided reading and storytelling sessions where appropriate.

### **Mathematical Education**

Delivered through Maths, Functional Skills and the financial curriculum and the wider curriculum, pupils build numeracy, financial literacy, and problem-solving skills relevant to everyday life. We believe that every child and young person should be enabled to develop a sound understanding of Maths, equipping them with the skills of calculation, reasoning and problem solving that they need in life beyond the bounds of education.

We want our children and young people to make rich connections across mathematical concepts, to develop fluency, mathematical reasoning, and competence in solving increasingly sophisticated problems. We intend for our pupils to be able to apply their mathematical knowledge across the breadth of curriculum areas. Children and young people are encouraged to solve problems each day using concrete resources, pictorial

representations and abstract thinking. We also want our student sto become financially literate in preparation for adulthood.

At Esland Doncaster School we follow the Schemes of Learning set out by ‘White Rose Maths’. ‘White Rose Maths’ is an organisation that provides maths resources for pupils of all ages, from early years to secondary school. The yearly frameworks break down what children need to learn during each week of each term to master the learning objectives laid out by the National Curriculum. At the heart of their resources and frameworks is the motto “Everyone Can Do Maths: Everyone Can!” We continue this approach until the end of Year 9 when pupils follow a pathway towards Functional Skills (including entry level) and GCSE’s.

### **Scientific Education**

Scientific Education at Esland Doncaster School develops curiosity, critical thinking, and understanding of the world through engaging and accessible learning experiences. The curriculum is delivered through thematic Science units and practical investigations, enabling pupils to explore biology, chemistry, and physics in ways that are relevant to everyday life and future pathways.

Teaching is hands-on and experiential, with pupils encouraged to question, observe, investigate, and reflect. Lessons are trauma-informed and carefully differentiated to support learners, promoting confidence, collaboration, and safe working practices while building scientific vocabulary and reasoning skills.

Pupils also explore the natural world through Forest School and outdoor learning, supporting environmental awareness, observation skills, and wellbeing alongside scientific understanding.

At Key Stage 4 and beyond, pupils on Pathway 1 can access AQA ELC Science and Pathways 2 and 3 can access BTEC Level 1 Applied Science, providing an applied and vocationally focused route that supports progression into further education, training, or employment and develops transferable skills such as investigation, data handling, teamwork, and communication.

### **Technological Education**

Technological education at Esland Doncaster School enables pupils to use technology safely, responsibly, and effectively in preparation for life in an increasingly digital world. The curriculum is delivered through computing, iDEA and digital literacy, supporting pupils to develop practical skills for learning, independence, and employability.

Pupils are taught to use digital tools purposefully, including word processing, research, and digital communication, with a strong focus on online safety, digital responsibility, and personal data protection. Computing lessons introduce basic coding,

computational thinking, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, allowing pupils to understand how technology works and its impact on everyday life.

Accreditation is tailored to pupils' pathways. Pupils on Pathway 1 work towards the Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award (iDEA), where pupils can work towards industry recognised awards and badges. Pupils on Pathways 2 and 3 work towards Functional Skills Digital, developing transferable skills aligned to further education and employment.

For pupils on pathways 2 and 3 onwards they too can access the iDEA as part of the enrichment curriculum. iDEA supports pupils to self-direct their learning, build confidence and independence, and develop digitally-recognised skills that prepare them for future learning, training, and adulthood.

### **Human and Social Education**

Human and Social Education is central to safeguarding, personal development and preparation for adulthood. It helps pupils become socially aware, responsible and confident individuals. At Esland Doncaster School, this area of learning supports pupils to develop a deeper understanding of themselves, others and the wider world.

This is delivered through PSHE, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), citizenship and humanities and Forest School. These subjects provide structured opportunities to explore relationships, society, culture and personal identity within a safe, supportive environment.

Teaching is trauma-informed and closely coordinated with clinical guidance to ensure content is appropriate to each pupil's emotional readiness and individual needs. Therapeutic strategies help pupils build emotional literacy, empathy, self-regulation and healthy relationship skills. Key areas of focus include wellbeing, mental health, rights and responsibilities, British Values, equality and meaningful participation in the community.

The Independence Plus Curriculum further strengthens this by offering practical, real-life learning experiences that build confidence, independence and essential life skills. Progress is monitored through reflective activities, pupil voice and continued collaboration between education and clinical teams to ensure learning supports both developmental and therapeutic outcomes.

To deepen pupils' understanding of different cultures, worldviews and traditions, Esland Doncaster School incorporates thematic days focused on religion, beliefs and values throughout the academic year. These events provide structured opportunities for pupils to explore significant religious festivals, ethical themes and cultural practices in a meaningful and engaging way.

Thematic days promote respect, curiosity and inclusion by enabling pupils to experience diverse perspectives through activities such as storytelling, creative arts, food exploration, discussion circles and project-based learning. Content is delivered sensitively and in line with pupils' emotional readiness, ensuring that learning remains accessible, relevant and trauma-informed.

These days also strengthen pupils' understanding of British Values, particularly mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. They help pupils develop cultural awareness, broaden their world view and reflect on their own values and experiences.

The thematic programme supports personal development by fostering empathy, critical thinking and social understanding. It complements learning in PSHE, RSE and humanities, as well as the Independence Plus Curriculum, which prepares pupils for adulthood by exploring identity, community participation and life in a diverse society.

### **Physical Education**

Physical Education at Esland Doncaster School supports pupils' physical wellbeing, emotional regulation, and personal development through a broad and inclusive programme. It is delivered through PE, outdoor learning, and movement-based therapies, ensuring pupils have regular and positive opportunities to be physically active in ways that meet their individual needs.

Pupils develop coordination, fitness, and motor skills, alongside key social skills such as teamwork, communication, and cooperation. Teaching is trauma-informed and carefully structured to promote engagement, confidence, and success, with activities adapted to support learners with SEMH needs.

Outdoor learning enhances physical development while promoting wellbeing, resilience, and engagement with the natural environment. Movement-based therapeutic approaches are used where appropriate to support sensory regulation, emotional wellbeing, and readiness to learn.

Through Physical Education, pupils are supported to develop healthy lifestyle habits and a positive relationship with physical activity, contributing to long-term wellbeing and preparation for adulthood.

### **Aesthetic and Creative Education**

Aesthetic and Creative Education at Esland Doncaster School supports pupils to express themselves creatively and build confidence through a broad and engaging curriculum. It is delivered through art, cooking, design technology, iDEA, literacy and enterprise, providing pupils with opportunities to explore creativity and develop practical skills in a supportive environment.

Pupils develop a range of practical and transferable skills, including fine motor skills, planning, problem-solving, and independence. Creative subjects support emotional regulation and wellbeing, allowing pupils to communicate thoughts and feelings in non-verbal ways while experiencing success and pride in their achievements.

Teaching is trauma-informed and carefully structured to encourage participation, resilience, and personal choice. Through Aesthetic and Creative Education, pupils build confidence, creativity, and skills that support personal development, wellbeing, and preparation for adulthood.

### **Key Stage 4 and 5 Curriculum Pathways**

At Esland Doncaster School, the Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 curriculum is organised into three clearly defined pathways that reflect pupils' stage of development, learning profile and aspirations, rather than their chronological age. This *stage-not-age* approach ensures that all learners can access a curriculum that is meaningful, ambitious and appropriately challenging, while remaining responsive to individual need.

The pathway model provides a coherent structure that supports progression from Key Stage 3 and enables learners to move flexibly between pathways as their confidence, independence and skills develop. Learners may remain within a pathway for stability or transition between pathways where assessment and readiness indicate this is appropriate.

Each pathway offers a carefully sequenced curriculum that balances academic learning, functional skills, personal development and preparation for adulthood. Accreditation routes, teaching approaches and levels of support vary across pathways, ensuring that pupils are prepared for next steps into further education, training, employment or supported adult life.

### **Post 16**

The Post-16 offer at Esland Doncaster School provides a personalised and developmentally appropriate programme for learners who are ready to move beyond Key Stage 4. It is designed to equip pupils with the academic knowledge, vocational skills and life-skills needed for their next steps into adulthood, further education or employment and is carefully aligned to the Education, Health and Care plan.

Our Post-16 provision enables pupils to continue studying core subjects, English, maths and digital literacy, up to GCSE level. Where a student demonstrates the ability and readiness to achieve GCSE outcomes, they will be fully supported to do so. The school does not deliver A-Level or Level 3 qualifications, and where a pupil is ready to progress beyond GCSE level, we work closely with the learner and their family to support a smooth

transition to an appropriate external provider that can meet their advanced academic needs.

In addition to academic study, pupils can access vocational qualifications such as BTEC Introductory Awards or sector-specific units aligned to their interests and aspirations. Career exploration and work-related learning form an important part of each learner's programme.

A core element of the Post-16 curriculum is the Independence Plus Curriculum, which develops essential life-skills through practical learning experiences. This includes personal finance, travel training, communication skills, personal safety, problem-solving, cooking, and participation in the local community. These real-world experiences are designed to build confidence, independence and readiness for adult life.

Student voice is central to planning. Learners actively shape their Post-16 programme through transition meetings, self-reflection activities and regular review discussions. Their ambitions, interests and future goals directly inform decisions about accreditation routes, vocational studies, work-related learning and independence activities. This ensures that each pathway is meaningful, aspirational and aligned with the young person's future direction.

Teaching is trauma-informed, supportive and responsive, ensuring pupils feel secure as they take on increased independence. Planning and review processes involve collaboration between education staff, the clinical team, families and, where appropriate, external professionals.

## **5. Curriculum Impact**

We measure impact through:

- Academic progress and accreditation outcomes
- Improvements in emotional wellbeing and behaviour
- Evidence of personal development and social skills
- Pupil voice, attendance, and engagement
- Readiness for next steps: college, employment, supported living
- Progress against EHCP targets and therapeutic goals

## **6. Careers and Preparation for Adulthood**

We provide impartial careers guidance that:

- Is appropriate to the age and needs of pupils
- Enables pupils to make informed choices about future education and training
- Supports transitions into further education, employment, or supported living

Delivered through PSHE, Enterprise, vocational learning, work experience, and individual guidance sessions. Parents and carers will have opportunities to attend careers days at school and 1:1 guidance sessions with their child.

## **7. Safeguarding and Inclusion**

Our curriculum is designed to safeguard and include all learners. We:

- Promote British Values and protected characteristics
- Teach pupils how to stay safe online and offline
- Embed safeguarding themes across subjects
- Ensure accessibility for pupils with SEND, EAL, and complex needs
- Use restorative approaches to build trust and repair relationships

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Curriculum planning and delivery are monitored through:

- Learning walks and lesson observations
- Work scrutiny and pupil progress reviews
- Pupil voice and engagement surveys
- Staff feedback and CPD evaluations
- External moderation and quality assurance

## **9. Linked Policies and Documentation**

- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Behaviour, Relationships and Engagement Policy
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Careers Education Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- PSHE & RSE Policy