



# The Castle Curriculum

---

A guide for parents and carers, staff and visitors



# Contents

---

Introduction	3	Pre-formal proactive	16
Our values	4	Semi-formal	18
Our ethos	5	Formal	20
Our aims	6	Our areas of learning	22
Our facilities	7	English	23
Our curriculum cycle	8	Reading and phonics	25
Our pathways	9	Maths	27
Curriculum design	10	PSHE	29
Assessment and accreditation	11	Physical health and wellbeing	31
Our assessment	12	Creativity	33
Our post-16 accreditation	13	Our World	35
Pre-formal reactive	14	Preparing for adulthood	37



# Introduction

## Curriculum design

We have designed our curriculum as a vehicle for supporting learners to achieve their individual outcomes, to support them in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for a successful life after school.

For semi-formal and formal learners who access subject specific learning, our programmes are based on an adapted National Curriculum. These programmes are linked to preparation for adulthood and founded on an in-depth knowledge of each child.

We value partnerships and the opportunities that community experiences bring. As such, as much learning as possible takes place in a real-world and context. We want to prepare our learners with skills for life.





# Our values

We value:

- A climate that fosters fun, learning for all and a positive self-image
- Good relationships between staff and learners, school and home, school and the wider community
- An environment where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and is of equal worth
- The different interests, strengths, rates of working and ways of learning for all
- Each and every individual's success



# Our ethos

At Castle, we aim to support all aspects of a child's development – academic, emotional, mental health, social, physical, life skills, sensory, and communication.

We believe learners' learning is the best it can be when they feel happy, safe, and accepted.

learners are never made to feel that they are lacking or behind in their learning, because we work hard to provide lessons that meet their learning needs at exactly the right level. We do not use punishments or other sanctions.

Staff prioritise and nurture positive personal relationships with learners, because these are the best foundations for successful learning.

We know that children need to be nurtured so they can feel a sense of connection with others, a sense of optimism and a greater belief in themselves.





# Our aims

- Our curriculum **intent** is making each child's learning stimulating, creative, fun and successful. We hold high aspirations for every child.
- We aim to **implement** it through high quality teaching based on sound knowledge and understanding of each child's needs. This means shaping teaching around the way different learners learn, and taking care to nurture their unique journey. To offer a range of compelling learning experiences, which excite and inspire.
- We want its **impact** to be seen in outcomes linked to each learner's aspirations. For our success to be their success- for them to achieve and be ready for whatever is next.



# Our facilities

---

Our learners benefit from access to a wide range of specialist areas and interventions.

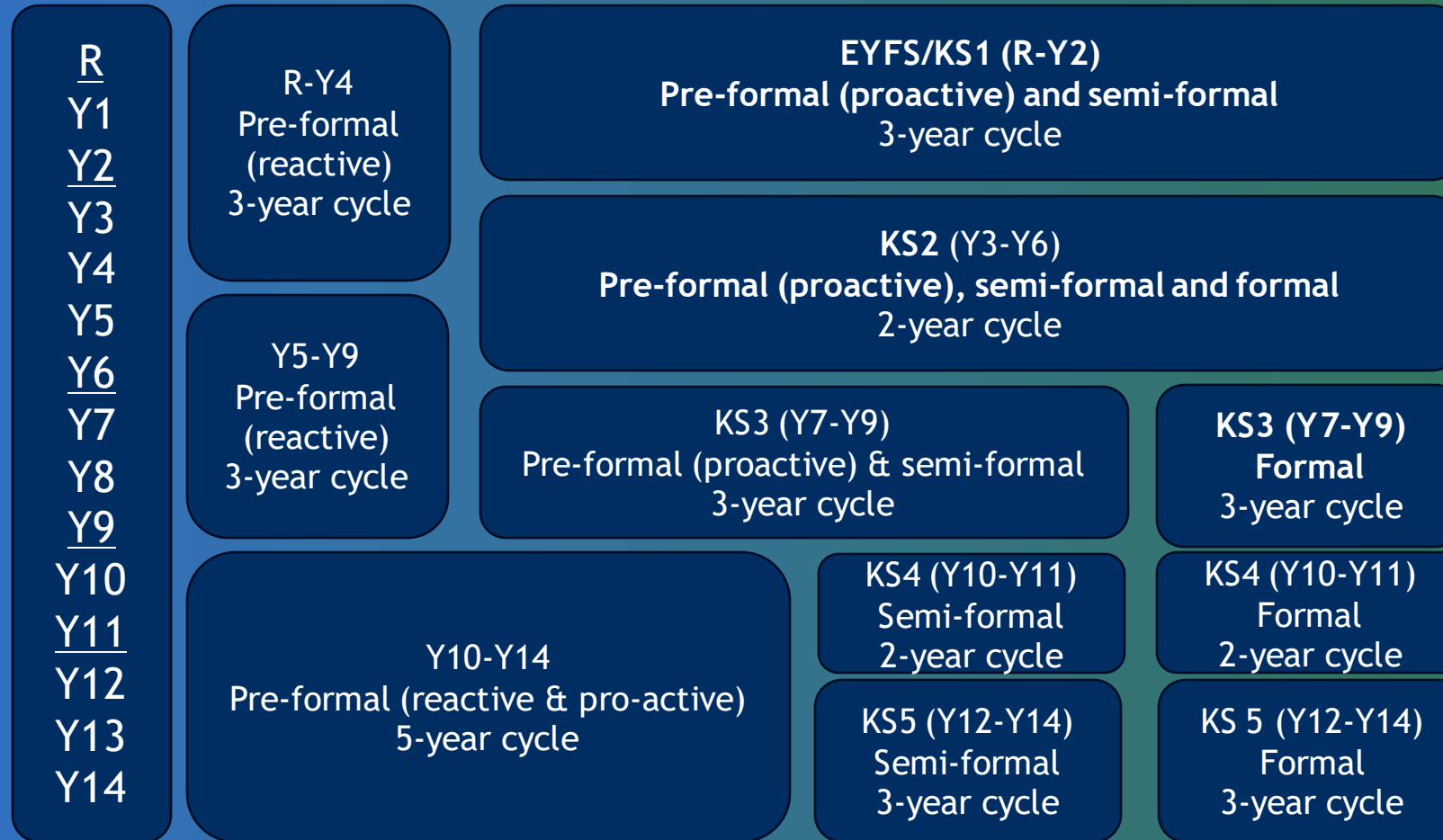
For those learners within the Early Years and Key Stage One, our Fields Centre is a bespoke setting with a strong focus on learning through play. Specialist facilities include a Forest School, soft play and light room.

Over on our main site, our hydrotherapy pool, gym, fitness studio, and trampolines support learners in their physical, social, emotional and communication development.

Our formal post-16 base at Chesterton Sixth Form, adjacent to our main site, provides progression and preparation for college and beyond for our oldest learners, providing an invaluable opportunity to practice transitioning with our wraparound support.



# Our curriculum cycle



All our classes have mixed key stages to facilitate our learners accessing the best pathway to suit their individual characteristics. To avoid repetition and ensure breadth of opportunity, we have bespoke curriculum cycles for each pathway at each stage of a learner's journey



# Our pathways

Our curriculum is split into 4 distinct pathways. Learners may stay on one pathway for their journey through school or travel more than one.

## Pre-formal (reactive)

For learners working below the pre key-stage standards, working consistently and over time at the earliest developmental levels

### Pre-formal reactive learners show:

- emerging intentional communication
- emerging contextual and social awareness
  - emerging physical independence
- learned responses to familiar routines
- early development of joint attention

## Pre-formal (proactive)

For learners working below the pre key-stage standards, working consistently and over time at most severe end of the SLD (severe learning disability) spectrum

### Pre-formal proactive learners show:

- developing intentional communication
- developing contextual and social awareness
- developing levels of physical independence
- learned responses to familiar routines
- early development of joint attention

## Semi-formal

For all primary learners, and those secondary learners who continue to need a thematic, multisensory approach

### Semi-formal learners show:

- reciprocal communication
- increasing independence
  - social awareness
- developing awareness of abstract concepts

## Formal

For secondary learners who are able to access discrete, subject-based sessions

### Formal learners show:

- extended, reciprocal conversation
- awareness of context in communication
- social awareness and ability to read social cues
- ability to comprehend a variety of complex concepts

### Learning organised around 4 EHCP areas

Continuous, holistic provision across sessions, covering the 4 EHCP areas:

- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- communication and interaction
- physical, sensory and life skills

### Learning organised around 4 EHCP areas, core curriculum subjects, creativity and our world

Continuous, holistic provision across sessions covering the 4 EHCP areas, combined with discrete curriculum sessions in English and maths, and potentially other subjects depending on class need.

### Learning organised into 6 discrete subject areas

Discrete, subject-based learning in English, Maths, PSHE, Art Music Design Technology, computing Food Technology, PE and Humanities.

# Curriculum design

Learning for our pre-formal pathways focuses on the four key areas of Education, Health and Care Plans – Cognition and Learning, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Communication and Interaction, Sensory, Physical and Life Skills.

Our semi-formal and formal pathways ensure the delivery of core subjects and foundation subjects. These are carefully woven into our long-term planning which ensure breath of coverage and progression.

Using an individualised approach, we ensure that we are constantly building on and from a learner's previous experiences, knowledge, understanding and/or skills.

We do this by knowing and understanding each child, their starting point and what we want them to know and understand when they get to their next transition point. We take time to know what their hopes and aspirations are, working collaboratively to support them to achieve.

Through our use of Evidence for Learning (EfL) we record and evaluate steps of progress as identified by our assessment frameworks. We ensure that learners learning follows a coherent sequence that is planned and that (where possible) is applied in a real world context.





# Assessment and accreditation

Assessment is an ongoing process, and is an integral part of our teaching and learning. It allows us to identify what learners already know and can do and helps us to plan the next steps in learning. It supports us to identify any barriers to learning and then respond with the necessary support.

We have designed our own bespoke assessment frameworks, adapted to the needs of our learners.



Our pre-formal learners use the Castle Flower framework, which is adapted from the Victoria MSI curriculum.



Our semi-formal learners use the Castle Rainbows, which are adapted from the Birth to 5 Matters EYFS goals.



Our semi-formal and formal learners use the Castle Gemstones, which are adapted from the National Curriculum age-related expectations.

Formal subject areas have their own assessment frameworks.

We are currently piloting the AET framework across the school.





# Our assessment

Cognition and Learning

Social, emotional and  
mental health

Communication and  
interaction

Physical, sensory and life  
skills

All  
learners

Annual review assessment of progress against EHCP goals

Pre-formal  
reactive

Routes for Learning and/or Castle Flower framework

Pre-formal  
proactive

Routes for Learning and/or aspects of semiformal pathway

Semi-  
formal

English & Maths:  
Castle Rainbow  
and Castle  
Gemstone  
frameworks

Selected formal frameworks where  
appropriate

Formal frameworks in  
music, art, DT, food  
tech, humanities, and  
science

PSHE framework

AET framework  
(from September  
2024)

PE and  
cycling  
frameworks

Swimming  
framework

Formal

Post-16

Accreditation frameworks

Preparing for Adulthood goals via Annual Review process



# Our post-16 accreditation

## Pre-formal (reactive)

### Pathway 1: EQUALS Moving On

for learners working within Entry 1

This is a modular curriculum with flexible units focusing on:

- Communication
- Numeracy
- ICT
- Creativity
- PSHE
- Leisure and Recreation
- Daily Living Skills
- Work Related Learning

## Pre-formal (proactive)

## Semi-formal

### Pathway 2: OCR Life and Living Skills

for learners within Entry 1 and 2

This offers a range of units which can be selected to suit the needs and interests of the learner. These may focus on the following areas:

- Communication
- Maths
- ICT
- PSHE
- Drama
- Art
- Music
- Work Related Learning
- Home Management and Leisure

## Formal

### Pathway 3: Edexcel Entry Level Functional Skills

for learners within Entry 1-3 and beyond

A range of qualifications in academic and vocational areas which may include:

- Functional skills English and Maths
- Entry Level in a range of subject areas
- GCSE Art
- Young Leaders
- First Aid
- Aspects of Life and Living skills

# Pre-formal reactive

For learners working consistently and over time at the earliest developmental levels

- The pre-formal reactive curriculum aims to develop the earliest learning skills and enable our learners to engage with the world around them.
- It follows a scheme of themes and storybooks, offering learners a rich variety of stimuli and providing opportunities to build on their experience.
- Pre-formal reactive learners are likely to have multi-sensory impairments, and are supported by teams of specialists and highly-trained staff working together.

## Assessment & accreditation

Learners' progress is assessed using individual EHCP targets, and either Routes for Learning or the Castle Flower framework. It is accredited through EQUALS Moving On at 16 and 19.





## Pre-formal reactive cognition and learning aims:

- provide personalised curriculum.
- experience a curriculum that is intrinsically linked together
- opportunities and time to repeat, practise and consolidate skills.
- an engaging curriculum based upon learners' interests and motivation

## Pre-formal social, emotional and mental health aims:

- PSHE to be embedded throughout daily/weekly timetables.
- access to personalised learning, using specialised teaching approaches and interventions.
- learners supported to express their choices.



## Pre-formal reactive communication and interaction aims:

- learners to experience a total communicative environment.
- learners are recognised as intentional communicators.
- total communication developed through whichever form suits the learner best; such as gestures, eye movements, vocalisations, sensory cues, objects of reference, on-body signing, Makaton and photos or symbols.

## Pre-formal reactive sensory, physical and life skills aims:

- opportunities to have regular positional changes throughout the day.
- a focus on physical development
- development of body awareness.
- staff to work closely with the learners' therapists.

# Pre-formal proactive

For learners working consistently and over time at the most complex end of the SLD (severe learning disabilities) spectrum

- The pre-formal proactive curriculum aims to develop the earliest learning skills and enable our learners to engage with the world around them
- It follows a scheme of storybooks, linked to themes, offering learners a rich variety of stimuli and providing opportunities to build on their experience
- Many pre-formal proactive learners have Autism Spectrum Condition as the primary factor impacting their learning style

## Assessment & accreditation

Learners' progress is assessed using individual EHCP targets and either Routes for Learning or the early Castle rainbow levels. It is accredited through EQUALS Moving On at 16 and 19.





## Pre-formal proactive cognition and learning aims:

- Supporting learners' concentration, learning and wellbeing.
- Providing lessons in small group settings or individually.
- learners access differentiated learning tasks related to their individual targets.

## Pre-formal proactive social, emotional and mental health aims:

- Promote a calm and structured environment
- Enable learners to feel in control.
- Develop learners' social and play skills with a focus on their EHCP targets.
- Regulate learners' well being
- Implementing Individual calming strategies throughout the day.



## Pre-formal proactive communication and interaction aims:

- learners communicate their basic needs and wants in an acceptable manner (express their needs before using their actions).
- Promoting social skills, interactions between learners as well as staff and learners.
- Enable learners to transfer their communication skills outside of school.

## Pre-formal proactive sensory, physical and life skills aims:

- Promote independence in all aspect of the day (personal hygiene, looking after own belonging, tidy up after themselves, undress and dress themselves).
- learners stay content and regulated throughout the day.
- Sensory & movement breaks are implemented according to learners' individual needs.



# Semi-formal

Learners working above the pre Key Stage standards, working towards OCR Life and Living Skills at post-16.

- Strong focus on early learning and communication skills
- Beginnings of subject-based learning
- Schemes of work based on storybooks and/or themes
- Engaging and motivating experiences
- Specialist interventions

## Assessment & accreditation

Progress is assessed using individual EHCP targets, supplemented with the Castle Levels in English and Maths, and additional frameworks where appropriate. Post-16 accreditation is via OCR Life and Living Skills.



### Semi-formal Literacy aims:

- establish the building blocks of reading and writing
- focus on Phonics, phases 2-5 and beyond
- develop literacy skills via a story topic, or theme with sensory exploration, role-play and creativity

### Semi-formal Numeracy aims:

- focus on practical skills and confidence in early number and maths concepts
- explore maths through stories
- experience maths in a variety of contexts

### Semi-formal PSHE aims:

- build friendships
- explore PSHE linked to class story topic and PSHE curriculum
- experience PSHE across each day and linked to individual EHCP targets

# Semi-formal



### Semi-formal Creativity aims:

- experiment with creative techniques and expression
- explore creativity linked to class story topic
- experience input from art and music therapists
- participate in school projects

### Semi-formal Physical Health and Well-Being aims:

- participate in structured PE, swimming and cycling sessions
- experience physical activity embedded across each day and linked to individual EHCP targets

### Semi-formal Our World aims:

- experience Our World via in-school spaces, e.g. Forest School
- take part in community visits
- experience subject specific humanities, computing, food technology or science sessions

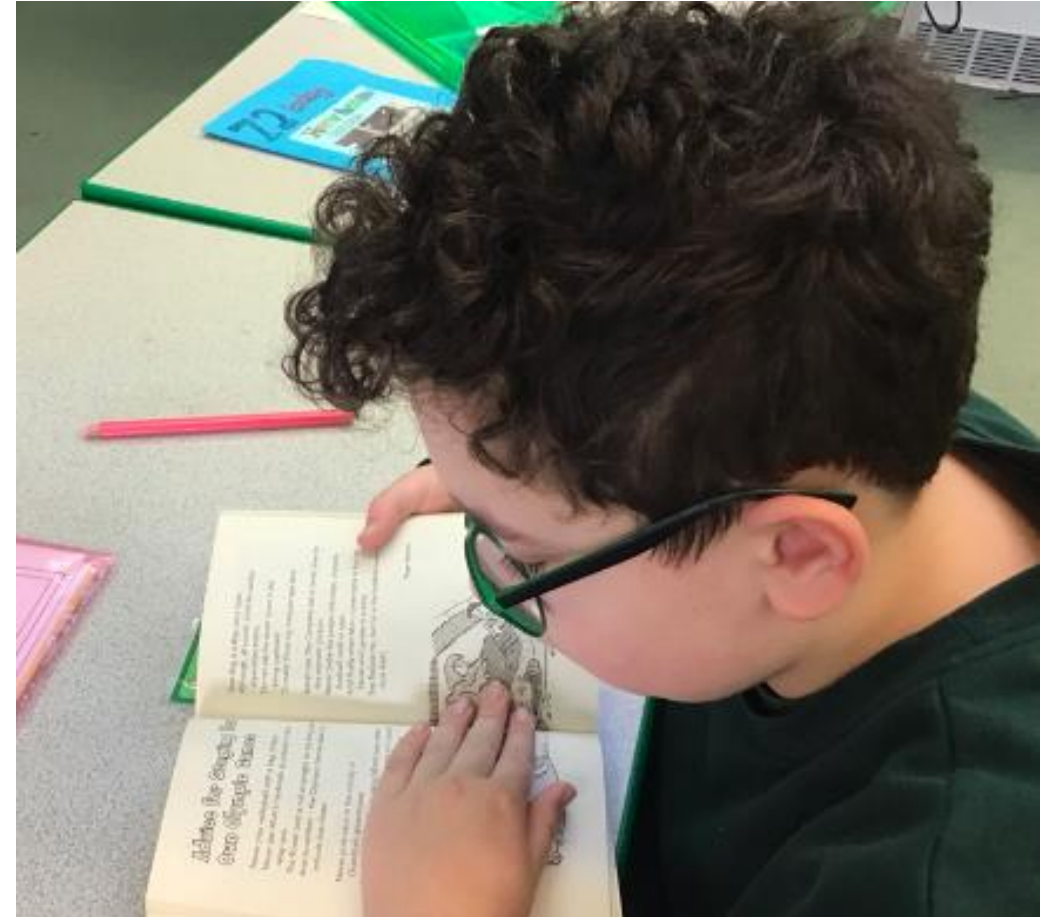
# Formal

For secondary learners working towards Entry Level qualifications

- a rich subject-based academic curriculum
- adapted to needs, interests, and learning styles
- builds towards formal qualifications
- encourages exploration of interests and knowledge of wider world

## Assessment & accreditation

Assessment based on EHCP targets, Maths and English Castle Levels and PSHE, as well as individual frameworks in discrete subject areas. It is accredited with entry levels or GCSEs where appropriate.





### Formal Literacy aims:

- enhance reading and writing proficiency
- cultivate speaking and listening skills via class discussions

### Formal Numeracy aims:

- build fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills
- build deep understanding of key mathematical concepts

### Formal PSHE aims:

- enhance social and conversation skills
- build knowledge about personal safety, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- prepare for adulthood



### Formal Creativity aims:

- Experience a rich variety of art, music, dance, choir, and art projects
- Possible 1:1 input from art and music therapists for select learners.

### Formal Physical Health & Wellbeing aims:

- Experience and enjoy sports, swimming, cycling, bike ability, fitness suite use, and social walks.
- Participate in competitions, tournaments, and sports activities involving other schools

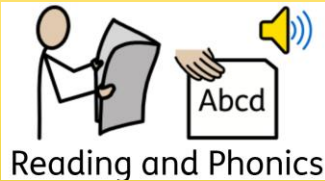
### Formal Our World aims:

- Expand global awareness (past, present, future).
- Explore artefact boxes, community visits, experiments, and cooking.
- Cultivate respect for diverse beliefs.

# Our areas of learning

23

(ABC)  
English



25



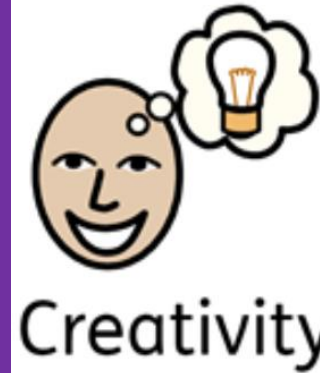
27



29



31



33

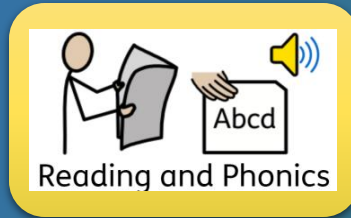


35



# English

See also:



Communication is an integral part of our approach to English, whether using speech, a learner's alternative communication method, or written communication for our more formal learners. Our priority is always to ensure our learners can communicate their wants, express their needs, socialise to their full potential, and to be part of a community where their voice is heard.

We lay the foundations for writing with a focus on gross and fine motor skills, self-expression and mark-making, using colourful semantics to support early sentence composition. Many of our learners will then progress to formal writing, which we develop as a life skill through practical, real-life activities and experiences.

Everyone is immersed in a rich variety of stories and texts. Our formal learners will explore texts for different purposes, empowering them to navigate the world around them with more confidence and independence.





(ABC)

English

Pre-formal  
↙ reactive and pro-active

Semi-formal

Formal

(ABC)  
English



**Aims:**

- promote a love of enjoying stories together
- develop communication and cognition skills via a story topic, with sensory exploration, play and creativity

**Delivery:**

- embedded holistically throughout the day

(ABC)  
English

**Aims:**

- promote a love of reading and enjoying stories together
- develop literacy skills via a story topic, with sensory exploration, role-play and creativity

**Delivery:**

- planning by subject specialists, delivered by class teachers
- embedded practical skills

(ABC)  
English

**Aims:**

- enhance reading and writing proficiency to obtain functional literacy
- promote a love of reading and independent reading
- cultivate speaking and listening skills via class discussions

**Delivery:**

- focused sessions on the daily timetable including daily phonics
- planned and delivered by subject specialists

Castle

# Reading and phonics

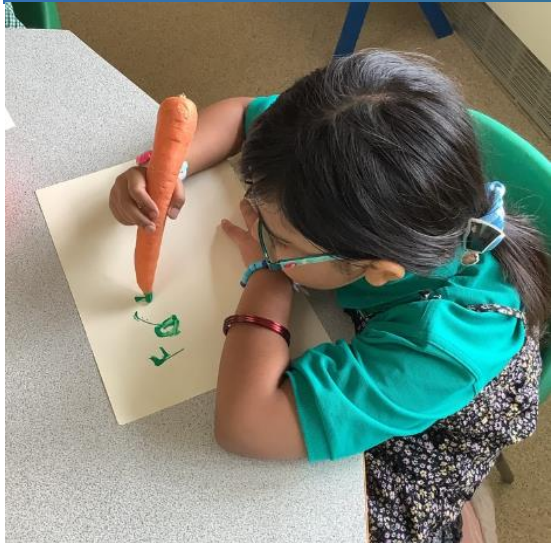
See also:

(ABC)  
English

At Castle we want all our learners to develop a love of reading and sharing stories together.

Our Castle-themed library is a place where we can come together and experience books and stories, independently or in groups.

All learners begin their exploration of letters and sounds at phase 1 of phonics, developing their awareness and enjoyment of rhythm and rhyme. For those who can progress to phases 2-5, we use the Twinkl phonics scheme to ensure coherent progression. For our oldest learners, we base our approach around reading for life, developing functional literacy to prepare for adulthood.

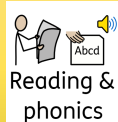






## Reading & phonics

### Pre-formal reactive and pro-active



Reading & phonics



Cognition and Learning



Communication and Interaction

#### Aims:

- promote a love of enjoying stories together
- explore the pre-requisites of reading and writing
- develop phonic awareness at phase 1

#### Delivery:

- embedded holistically throughout the day
- focused cognition sessions

### Semi-formal



Reading & phonics

#### Aims:

- establish the building blocks of reading and writing
- focus on phonics phases 2-5
- promote a love of reading and enjoying stories together

#### Delivery:

- daily phonics and reading sessions
- embedded practical skills

### Formal



Reading & phonics

#### Aims:

- enhance reading and writing proficiency to obtain functional literacy
- promote a love of reading and independent reading

#### Delivery:

- daily phonics and reading sessions
- embedded practical skills

Castle



# Maths

Maths can be found in every part of day-to-day life, and is a fundamental skill for our learners to develop in preparation for adulthood.

We make it relevant, engaging and fun, in order to prepare learners to handle different everyday maths situations with confidence.

Our approach is based on Maths Mastery.

For our pre-formal and semi-formal learners, we bring maths alive, using approaches such as Messy Maths, Maths in Stories, going outside, and sensory activities.

Our formal learners have discrete lessons as well as frequent opportunities to embed and generalise their maths skills by working on cross-curricular projects, such as enterprise and catering projects.

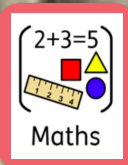




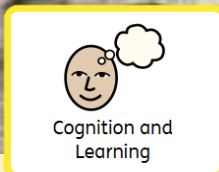
Maths

## Pre-formal

reactive and pro-active



Maths



Cognition and  
Learning

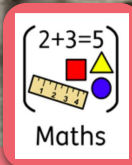
### Aims:

- explore the pre-requisites of mathematical awareness
- develop contingency awareness, positional awareness, vision, handling objects, object permanence, and awareness of time, sequence and routine.

### Delivery:

- **embedded holistically throughout the day**

## Semi-formal



Maths

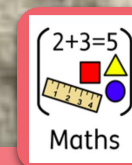
### Aims:

- focus on practical skills and confidence in early number skills
- explore shape and number through stories
- experience shape and number in the wider community

### Delivery:

- focused sessions on the daily timetable
- planning by subject specialists, delivered by class teachers
- embedded practical skills

## Formal



Maths

### Aims:

- build fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills
- build deep understanding of key mathematical concepts
- To develop mastery in Maths

### Delivery:

- focused sessions on the daily timetable
- planned and delivered by subject specialists
- maths in the community via life skills and enterprise

Castl



# PSHE

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is central to everything we do at Castle. Every child has targets set in their Education, Health and Care Plan that are related to their academic, cognitive, sensory, emotional and mental health needs as well as their social and communication skills, and these are addressed through our rich and varied curriculum.

We want everyone to be able to respect and value themselves and others, to have fun learning, playing and connecting with others, to aim high and celebrate success, and to prepare for life in the wider community.

We focus on these elements at every opportunity, whatever the child is doing, be it in lessons, on visits and in all the times in between.

For some of our learners, discrete PSHE lessons are appropriate, where they are taught a range of topics and themes commensurate with the Department for Education statutory guidance, their age and their stage.







## Pre-formal

proactive and reactive



### Aims:

- build awareness of self, others, and social and emotional needs
- build friendships
- build early communication skills

### Delivery:

- **embedded holistically throughout the day**

## Semi-formal



### Aims:

- build friendships
- explore PSHE linked to class story topic
- experience PSHE across each day and linked to individual EHCP targets

### Delivery:

- embedded provision throughout the day
- some classes may have discrete sessions delivered by class teachers

## Formal



### Aims:

- enhance social and conversation skills
- build knowledge about personal safety, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- prepare for adulthood

### Delivery:

- discrete sessions delivered by class teachers following a central scheme of work



# Physical health and wellbeing

---

We have a specific PE curriculum which is delivered by the PE team. Our class teams and physiotherapists also play an important role in delivering physical activity.

learners on our pre-formal reactive pathway focus heavily on postural management and mobility – they access PE through their own individualised programmes and group sessions.

We have a wide range of PE resources and projects, including a vibrant whole-school cycling programme which won us Bikeability's School of the Year award in 2022.







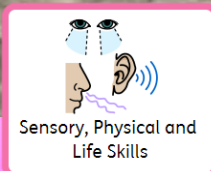
Physical Health  
and Wellbeing

## Pre-formal

reactive and pro-active



Physical Health  
and Wellbeing



Sensory, Physical and  
Life Skills

### Aims:

- Meet individual physical EHCP targets with individualized support

### Delivery:

- postural care and support from moving and handling trained staff
- movement programmes such as yoga, Sherbourne Movement, or individual physiotherapy programmes.
- bespoke sessions in specialist areas such as swimming in the hydrotherapy pool and rebound therapy on the trampolines.

## Semi-formal



Physical Health  
and Wellbeing

### Aims:

- Build fitness, physical awareness, and confidence
- experience and enjoy physical activity, swimming, cycling, bikeability, and social walks.

### Delivery:

- structured PE, swimming and cycling sessions
- physical activity embedded across each day and linked to individual EHCP targets
- lunchtime clubs

## Formal



Physical Health  
and Wellbeing

### Aims:

- Build fitness, physical awareness, and knowledge of the effects of exercise on the body
- experience and enjoy sports, dance, swimming, cycling, bike ability, fitness suite use, rebound and social walks.

### Delivery:

- structured PE sessions
- Specialist session for dance and cycling
- lunchtime clubs
- trips and competitions



# Creativity

Arts and culture are an essential part of the education of every child. We use creativity as a medium to engage and inspire our learners.

Every year in the spring term we have our 'Wonder Week', where learners are immersed in a creative project, approaching their curriculum through a creative lens.

We have strong links to the rich creative community in Cambridge, including our collaboration with Kettle's Yard museum and our artist in residence.

Our school choir brings the school community together across pathways and stages to express themselves together through music.





## Pre-formal

reactive and pro-active



### Aims:

- explore materials and sensory experiences through creative activities linked to the class story topic

### Delivery:

- holistically embedded throughout the day
- rich variety of art, music, dance, choir, and art projects
- integrated input from art and music therapists

## Semi-formal



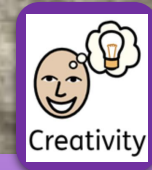
### Aims:

- experiment with creative expression
- begin to develop understanding of creative techniques
- explore creativity linked to class story topic

### Delivery:

- rich variety of art, music, dance, choir, and art projects
- integrated input from art and music therapists
- possible structured art and music sessions

## Formal



### Aims:

- experiment with and refine creative expression
- build knowledge and understanding of a variety of creative techniques
- Explore creativity in subject-based session

### Delivery:

- structured art and music sessions
- rich variety of art, music, dance, choir, and art projects
- possible 1:1 input from art and music therapists for select learners

Cast

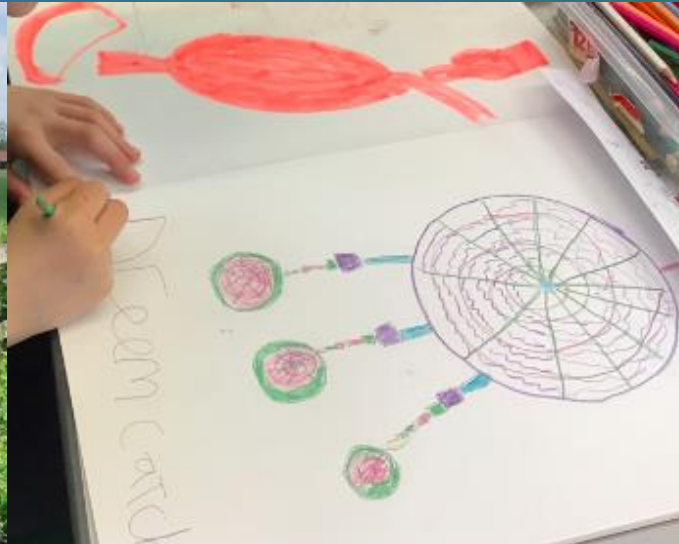


# Our World

Understanding of the world around us, supports and enables us to navigate it safely and understand communities.

We encourage and value curiosity, exploring the world around us via experimentation and discovery.

We expose our learners to a rich variety of experiences from their own and other cultures, so that they can learn to be curious, tolerant, compassionate global citizens.





Our World

## Pre-formal

reactive and pro-active



Our World



Cognition and Learning

### Aims:

- Expand experiences of the world around us

### Delivery:

- holistically embedded throughout the day through the story topic and through use of specialist areas.
- community visits

## Semi-formal



Our World

### Aims:

- Expand experiences of the world around us
- Begin to understand more abstract concepts about the world around us

### Delivery:

- experiences in in-school spaces, e.g. Forest School
- community visits
- may have subject specific humanities, computing, food technology or science sessions

## Formal



Our World

### Aims:

- Expand global awareness (past, present, future).
- Explore artefact boxes, community visits, experiments, and cooking.
- Cultivate respect for diverse beliefs

### Delivery:

- subject-specific humanities, computing, food technology and science sessions
- community visits





# Preparing for adulthood

## Preparing every learner for their next steps

We believe that one of the central aims of the educational opportunities we deliver is to enable the children who arrive at our school to leave as young adults, who are as independent and ready for life beyond school as possible.

### Employment

- Work Related Learning and careers programmes for KS4 and 6th form
- Links to Project Choice
- Moving into paid employment and education

### Independent Living

- Focus on developing skills to live a more independent life
- Life skills e.g. independent travel and cycling
- Links to social care

### Friendships, Relationships and Community

- Strong community links
- Projects with National Citizen Service
- Arts project
- Having friends and relationships
- Being part of our community

### Good Health

- Taught within PSHE
- Project with School Nursing team
- Being as healthy as possible

