



Curriculum For All Policy

March 2026

Position	Signed	Date
Principal	<i>Sharon Cassidy</i>	<i>5/3/26</i>
Chair of Board of Governors	<i>June Neill</i>	<i>5/3/26</i>

Introduction

Knockavoe is a special school providing education and learning for pupils aged 3 to 19 years with a wide range of special educational needs, including severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), and other complex needs. Our *Curriculum for All* policy has been developed with the belief that every pupil can learn, progress, and achieve when given the right opportunities. We hold high expectations for all learners and are committed to ensuring that every pupil at Knockavoe School is safe, happy, and actively engaged in meaningful learning.

Our school vision of 'reaching for a brighter future' guides every aspect of our curriculum, ensuring that each pupil is supported, challenged, and empowered to progress and achieve their full potential in an equitable, nurturing and inclusive environment. Within our specific context the curriculum will have a formal yet flexible approach with opportunities for additional and shared learning experiences with a focus on the holistic development of each child and young person.

Our Curriculum for All places a strong emphasis on Nurturing Principles, ensuring that emotional wellbeing, positive relationships and a sense of belonging are embedded throughout learning. This approach supports pupils to feel safe, regulated and ready to learn, allowing every child to engage, progress and achieve their full potential.



As a Rights Respecting School, it is important to embed this policy with the context of the Articles within the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The core articles linked to our Curriculum for All policy are the following:

Article 28 – Right to Education

Every child has the right to education and governments must make education available and accessible to all.

Article 29 – Aims of Education

Education must develop each child's personality, talents, abilities, respect for others, and preparation for life in a free society. This directly matches Knockavoe's focus on holistic development, communication, independence, and life skills.

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils (Foundation Stage through to Post-16), all staff, visiting professionals, and governors. It covers classroom learning, therapeutic provision, accreditation, extended schools provision, off-site learning, and careers/transition.

Vision

Our curriculum for all policy is underpinned by our belief that every pupil is entitled to a broad, balanced, relevant, differentiated and holistic curriculum that promotes academic, personal, social, and emotional development. This document also reflects Northern Ireland's Curriculum for All policy that "every child and young person is happy, learning and succeeding" and that every pupil receives an education that is inclusive, ambitious and tailored to their individual requirements (Department of Education, 2025).

Aims of the Curriculum

- Provide a broad, balanced, and multi-sensory inclusive curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all pupils.
- Promote each pupil's communication, independence, wellbeing, and personal development.
- Enable each pupil to reach their full potential both academically and personally.
- Foster positive relationships and a school culture built on empathy, kindness, compassion, trust, respect, and positivity.
- Ensure pupils develop functional literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and life skills that support lifelong learning.
- Offer meaningful, engaging learning experiences that develop creativity, problem-solving, and curiosity.
- Prepare pupils for life beyond school through accreditation, careers education, and transition planning.
- Prepare pupils for life beyond school, including transitions into adulthood, further education, training, or supported living.
- Promote community participation, citizenship, equality, and respect for diversity.
- Support pupils' physical development, health, and emotional wellbeing through therapeutic and holistic approaches.
- Embed environmental responsibility across learning and support the school's Eco-Schools journey.
- Teach accessible, age-appropriate green skills that help pupils understand sustainability, caring for nature, and making positive choices for the environment.
- Foster pupils' self-esteem, resilience, and positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensure fairness, equality of opportunity and inclusion in all aspects of school life.

Values

Our policy reflects our school values with the aim that every pupil is supported to become a lifelong learner and is enabled to 'reach for a brighter future' through participation in learning experiences that develop our core values, including empathy, kindness, compassion, trust, respect and positivity as essential foundations for personal growth and wellbeing.



Appendix 1: (Knockavoe School, 2022)

Roles and Responsibilities in the implementation of this policy.

- The Board of Governors: responsible for overseeing the strategic implementation of the Curriculum for All policy, ensuring that provision is inclusive, well-resourced, and aligned with the school's vision and statutory requirements
- Ensure the curriculum meets statutory requirements and reflects the ethos of the school.
- Principal: Overall responsibility for curriculum leadership and statutory compliance, effective staff professional learning and manage resources to support the curriculum for all.
- Senior Leadership Team: implementation of policy and oversight of curriculum development and assessment.
- Class Teachers: Planning, delivery, and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Support Staff: Facilitate pupil access to the curriculum and promote independence providing the right levels of support and challenge.

Curriculum Framework

The curriculum is guided by:

- *The Northern Ireland Curriculum (Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4)*
- *The Entitlement Framework (Key Stage 4 and Post-16)*
- *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016*
- *SEND Code of Practice (NI)*
- *DE Guidance on Curriculum Flexibility for Special Schools (2007)*

The school exercises **flexibility** in implementing the statutory curriculum, ensuring it meets the developmental and learning profiles of our pupils. We deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum, adapting it appropriately to meet the needs of our learners. Communication, regulation and independence are at the centre of everything we do.

Every pupil has a Personal Learning Plan (PLP), created collaboratively by staff and parents, which sets out individual learning goals. These are supported through a balanced mix of structured play, one-to-one teaching, small group sessions, and both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities. This approach ensures that pupils have full access to all areas of the Northern Ireland Curriculum while developing essential cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills.



Appendix 2: (The Big Picture Primary CCEA, <https://cea.org.uk/key-stages-1-2/overview>)

Our learning programmes are created in close collaboration with key allied health professionals, including Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Physiotherapists.

Throughout our pupil's educational journey at Knockavoe School from age 3-19 we continually encourage positive dispositions and to value learning. Pupils are supported and encouraged to develop appropriate skills and knowledge to help make informed choices and keep safe. The Preventative Curriculum is delivered through our Relationships and Sexuality Education programme. (For more information see our RSE Policy available at www.knockavoeschool.com)

Foundation Stage

Play is at heart of learning in Foundation stage, pupils explore the different areas of indoor and outdoor play through the six areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Movement
- Language Development
- Early Mathematical Experiences
- The Arts- Jo Jingles, messy play
- The World Around Us

The Foundation Department offers a warm, nurturing, and inclusive learning environment for pupils from Nursery age. We provide a child-centred and individualised educational experience that is engaging, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate. Our core aim is to inspire a lifelong love of learning while helping every child achieve their fullest potential.

Our teaching and planning are guided by the Northern Ireland Curriculum, CCEA learning through play document and adapted from Claire Devlin's skill-based learning. This ensures that all learning experiences are meaningful, accessible, and suited to each child's age and stage of development. We place a strong emphasis on active, hands-on learning through sensory exploration, play-based activities, and topic-led experiences that reflect pupils' interests. Assessment is evidenced through individual pupil skills books with photos and pieces of work for each area of learning.

As our Foundation Stage pupils begin their learning journey, they engage not only with the formal curriculum but also in developing essential functional skills that form the foundation for future independence and active participation within their community.

These foundational functional skills include:

- Functional Communication
- Gross Motor Skills Development
- Fine Motor Skills Development
- Communication and Language Development
- Early Number Awareness
- Transition Skills
- Self-Regulation and Co-regulation Skills
- Personal Development and Thinking Capabilities



As pupils progress through Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and post-16, learning becomes increasingly functional, practical and where appropriate, accredited. Functional skills form the basis for our curriculum, education and learning for pupils as they progress through each Key Stage. For more information on functional skills see Appendix 5.

Key Stage 1 and 2 (Ages 6–11)

Key Stage 1 (primary school Years 3 and 4) builds on Foundation Stage experiences, and Key Stage 2 (primary school Years 5, 6 and 7) builds on Key Stage 1 experiences. As children progress through these stages, they move from informal to more formal learning

The Primary Department strives to provide a supportive and inclusive environment in which all pupils can flourish. Acknowledging the uniqueness of each child, we tailor our educational approach to individual needs, ensuring that every pupil receives the support and encouragement necessary to achieve their full potential.

Our staff collaborate closely with families and a multi-disciplinary team to create personalised learning plans that highlight each child's strengths and developmental priorities. The department delivers a broad and balanced curriculum that integrates academic, therapeutic, and life skills, fostering holistic growth and well-being.

We prioritise the development of essential literacy, numeracy, and social skills while providing a range of extracurricular activities that enrich the learning experience, build confidence, and promote independence and overall well-being. ICT is embedded throughout planning, and lessons to enhance teaching, promote pupil engagement and support learning outcomes across all curricular areas.

Focus: Developing communication, functional literacy and numeracy, and independence.

Curriculum areas:

- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- The World Around Us
- The Arts
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Physical Education
- Religious Education

The Primary Department provides a caring, structured, and inclusive environment where every child is valued, supported, and encouraged to thrive. We offer a personalised and engaging educational experience tailored to meet the diverse needs of our pupils, helping them build confidence, independence, and a positive attitude towards learning.

Our teaching and planning are guided by the Northern Ireland Curriculum, ensuring that learning is meaningful, relevant, and adapted to each child's individual stage of development. We deliver a broad and balanced curriculum through creative, practical, and experiential learning opportunities that promote curiosity and active participation.

Pupils in the primary department will be given regular opportunities to engage in community-based activities and a range of social experiences. We actively encourage our pupils to participate as valued members of the local community, promoting confidence, independence, and social interaction. These experiences are designed to enrich their learning, support personal development, and help them apply key skills in real-world settings.

Each pupil has a Personal Learning Plan (PLP), developed in partnership with parents, carers, and where appropriate, other professionals. These plans outline clear, achievable targets and are reviewed regularly to celebrate progress and identify next steps. Teaching is delivered through a combination of whole-class learning, small group work, one-to-one support, and therapeutic or specialist interventions where required.

Q Skills Assessment is a structured assessment tool used in our primary classes to measure and track pupils' progress in key skill areas. It focuses on identifying individual strengths and developmental needs across areas such as communication, literacy, numeracy, and personal development. Designed to support children with a range of additional learning needs, the assessment provides clear, step-by-step indicators of progress, helping teachers plan targeted interventions and personalised learning programmes. By regularly monitoring small but significant achievements, the Q Skills Assessment ensures that each pupil's progress is recognised, recorded, and supported effectively.

We place strong emphasis on developing communication, literacy, numeracy, life skills, and emotional wellbeing. Through structured routines, visual supports, assistive technologies, and differentiated teaching approaches, pupils are supported to access all areas of the curriculum in ways that reflect their individual strengths and needs.

Our aim is to empower every child to reach their potential, develop key skills for life, and experience success in a supportive and respectful learning community whilst having fun along their journey at Knockavoe.



Sensory provision

Sensory provision is within two specialist classes and has been developed to meet the complex needs of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and high priority medical needs. This provision is delivered across: The Butterfly Room and Glenside Suite. Teaching and learning are highly individualised, therapeutic and sensory based, ensuring pupils can access meaningful educational experiences at their developmental level.

The curriculum in both classes is centred on:

- Sensory exploration
- Therapeutic learning approaches
- Communication development
- Personalised one-to-one teaching and intensive interaction
- Holistic development (cognitive, physical, emotional and social)

Learning is experiential, practical and carefully adapted to support pupils with complex medical and physical needs. Staff work collaboratively with therapists and healthcare professionals to ensure safe, consistent and responsive support.

Butterfly Room

The Butterfly Room supports pupils at an early developmental stage, many of whom require intensive support for learning and medical care.

Key features include:

- A strong emphasis on sensory regulation and engagement
- Multi-sensory activities to stimulate visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and proprioceptive awareness
- High levels of 1:1 adult support to maximise engagement and responsiveness
- Structured yet flexible routines to provide predictability and emotional security

Pupils in the Butterfly Room follow the Quest for Learning framework. Quest focuses on early developmental skills such as:

- Attention and responsiveness
- Exploration and cause-and-effect
- Early communication
- Emotional awareness
- Physical participation



Learning is assessed through small, observable steps of progress.

Glenside Suite

In the Glenside Suite learning continues to be sensory and therapeutic but becomes more structured and accreditation focused.

Pupils in Glenside work towards programmes offered by ASDAN, which provide nationally recognised accreditation tailored to learners with complex needs. These programmes focus on:

- Life skills
- Personal development
- Communication
- Independence
- Community participation

While still highly supported, pupils in Glenside are encouraged to develop increased autonomy and engagement in purposeful activities.

Communication Approaches

Communication is central to the sensory provision. As many pupils are pre-verbal or non-verbal, a total communication approach is used, including:

- Objects of reference to represent activities and routines
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Makaton signing and symbols
- Intensive Interaction to develop early communication and shared attention
- AAC



Staff consistently model communication strategies and respond sensitively to all attempts at interaction, ensuring pupils feel heard and understood. Learning environments are carefully adapted to support regulation and engagement. This includes:

- Sensory rooms and calming spaces
- Specialist seating and positioning equipment
- Multi-sensory resources
- Structured sensory circuits
- Opportunities for physiotherapy and occupational therapy programmes to be embedded into the school day

Many activities are delivered on a 1:1 basis, ensuring that learning experiences are personalised and responsive to each pupil's medical and developmental profile.

The curriculum delivered across the Butterfly Room and Glenside Suite is holistic, sensory-based and highly individualised to meet the needs of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and complex medical needs.

Learning is experiential and therapeutic in nature, with a strong emphasis on engagement, communication, regulation and independence.

Key Stage 3 - Post Primary (Ages 11–14)

At Key Stage 3 (post-primary Years 8, 9 and 10), the curriculum builds on the learning experiences that pupils bring from primary school. The Key Stage 3 curriculum at Knockavoe school is designed to provide a broad, balanced and personalised learning experience for pupils aged 11–14. It ensures that statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum are met while addressing the individual learning, social, emotional, and developmental needs of our pupils. The curriculum prepares pupils for progression to Key Stage 4, further education, and independent living.

CURRICULUM AIM	The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.														
CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES	To develop the young person as an individual		To develop the young person as a contributor to society		To develop the young person as a contributor to the economy and environment										
FOR	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT		HOME ECONOMICS		LOCAL AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP		EMPLOYABILITY								
THROUGH	personal understanding mutual understanding personal health		moral character spiritual awareness		citizenship cultural understanding		media awareness ethical awareness								
KEY ELEMENTS	employment economic awareness		education for sustainable development												
INFUSING	COMMUNICATION														
CROSS-CURRICULAR SKILLS	USING MATHEMATICS														
THINKING SKILLS AND PERSONAL CAPABILITIES	USING ICT														
ACROSS	Managing Information		Working with Others		Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making		Self-Management								
AREAS OF LEARNING	Being Creative														
PROMOTING / ENCOURAGING	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>THE ARTS</td> <td>ENGLISH (IRISH In Irish Medium Schools) with Media Education</td> <td>ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY</td> <td>MATHEMATICS with Financial Capability</td> <td>MODERN LANGUAGES</td> <td>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</td> <td>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY</td> <td>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</td> </tr> </table>							THE ARTS	ENGLISH (IRISH In Irish Medium Schools) with Media Education	ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY	MATHEMATICS with Financial Capability	MODERN LANGUAGES	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
THE ARTS	ENGLISH (IRISH In Irish Medium Schools) with Media Education	ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY	MATHEMATICS with Financial Capability	MODERN LANGUAGES	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION								
LEARNING EXPERIENCE	Investigation and problem solving	links between curriculum areas	relevant and enjoyable	media-rich	skills integrated	active and hands on	offer choice								
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING	challenging and engaging	supportive environment	culturally diverse	positive reinforcement	varied to suit learning style	on-going reflection	enquiry based								
ATTITUDES AND DISPOSITIONS	building a more open relationship between learner and teacher	clear learning intentions shared with pupils	shared/ negotiated success criteria	individual target setting	taking risks for learning	advice on what to improve and how to improve it	peer and self assessment								
	personal responsibility	concern for others	commitment – determination – resourcefulness	openness to new ideas	self-belief – optimism	pragmatism									
	curiosity	community spirit	flexibility	tolerance	integrity	moral courage	respect								

Appendix 3: (CCEA, 2020 <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/big-picture-curriculum-key-stage-3>)

Principles of the KS3 Curriculum

- **Personalised Learning:** All pupils receive differentiated learning programmes tailored to their abilities, interests, and PLP outcomes.
- **Inclusive and Accessible:** Lessons are adapted to ensure access for all pupils, including those with cognition and learning difficulties, autism, or social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- **Focus on the specific teaching of the Cross Curricular Skills:** Using Mathematics, Communication and Using ICT. Emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy, communication, independence, social skills, and personal development.
- **Holistic Progress:** Academic, social, emotional, and practical outcomes are equally valued.

Curriculum Areas

Area of Learning	Focus in Special School Context
Language and Literacy	Reading, writing, speaking and listening; functional communication skills.
Mathematics and Numeracy	Number, problem-solving, real-life applications and functional maths.
Science and Technology	Scientific enquiry, technology, and practical investigation adapted to individual ability.
Environment and Society	History, geography, understanding the world and social awareness.
The Arts	Music, drama, and visual arts to develop creativity, expression and confidence.
Modern Languages	Basic language awareness where appropriate.
Physical Education	Physical activity, health and wellbeing, adapted PE programmes as needed.
Learning for Life and Work (LLW)	Citizenship, employability, personal development, home management and functional life skills.
Religious Education	Beliefs, values, ethics and spiritual development.

The teaching of the Cross-Curricular Skills and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are embedded throughout all areas of learning.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

- Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Self-Management
- Working with Others- opportunities for shared education
- Managing Information
- Being Creative

Assessment at Key Stage 3 is integral to teaching and learning within Knockavoe and reflects the principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Assessment processes are adapted to meet the diverse cognitive, medical, sensory, behavioural, and communication needs of our pupils.

Our approach ensures that assessment is meaningful, personalised and focused on individual progress.

Aims of KS3 Assessment

At KS3 assessment aims to:

- Support progression across all Areas of Learning within the Northern Ireland Curriculum
- Recognise and celebrate individual achievement
- Identify barriers to learning and inform targeted intervention
- Provide clear information to parents/carers and external professionals
- Contribute to Annual Review and statutory reporting processes

Assessment at KS3 is:

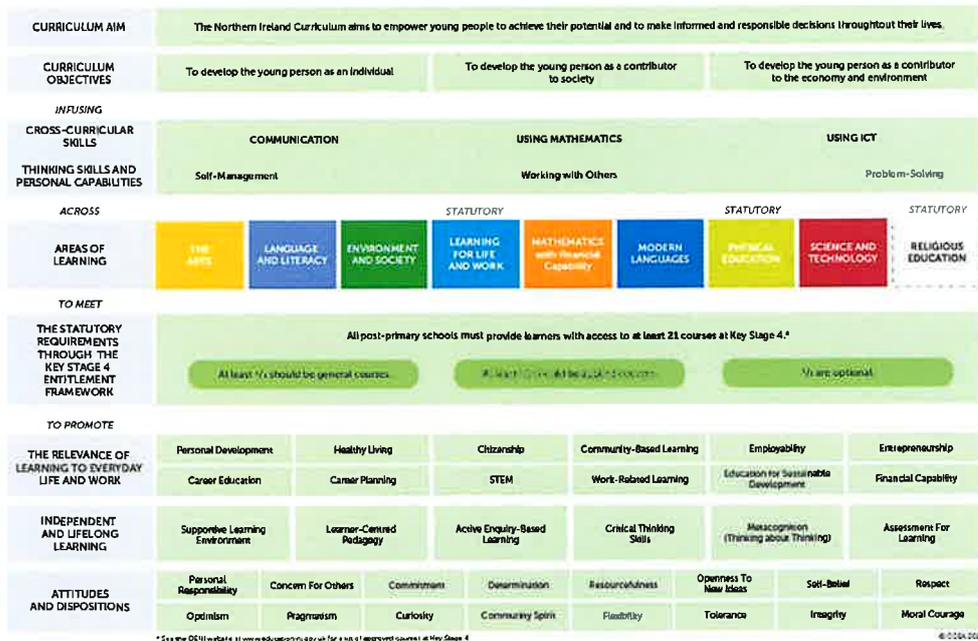
- Ongoing and formative – embedded in daily teaching and learning
- Individualised – aligned to each pupil's stage of development and Statement of Special Educational Needs / Education, PLP outcomes
- Holistic – reflecting academic, social, emotional, communication, physical, and independence skills
- Evidence-based – supported by observation, work samples, structured tasks, therapeutic reports, and online Q Skill Assessment.

In Knockavoe School transition planning begins in Year 10 at the end of Key Stage 3 to support pupils as they prepare for the next stage of their education and adult life. At this stage, a person-centred approach is adopted, involving the pupil, parents or carers, school staff, and relevant external agencies. The process focuses on identifying the young person's strengths, interests, aspirations, and support needs, helping to shape appropriate Key Stage 4 pathways and longer-term goals such as further education, training, or supported employment. Early planning ensures that supports are put in place in a timely and coordinated way to promote positive post-school outcomes.

Key Stage 4 and post 16 (Ages 14–19)

The Entitlement Framework within Key Stage 4 and Post-16 education ensures that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum offer. Within Knockavoe, the framework is adapted to reflect the diverse learning needs, abilities, aspirations, and long-term outcomes of our pupils, while remaining aligned with the statutory requirements set by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

Our post-16 provision is designed to promote progression, independence, employability, and preparation for adult life by following a Pathways programme determined by pupil ability.



Appendix 4: (CCEA, 2020 <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/big-picture-curriculum-key-stage-4>)

The Post-16 Entitlement Framework in our setting is underpinned by the following principles:

- Equality of access to a broad and relevant curriculum
- Personalised pathways based on individual strengths, needs, and aspirations
- Progression routes that are meaningful and achievable
- Preparation for further education, training, supported employment, or adult services
- Development of independence, life skills, and community participation

In line with the Entitlement Framework, pupils have access to a range of general and applied courses, adapted appropriately within a special school context. The curriculum may include:

- Accredited vocational qualifications
- Skills-based and occupational studies programmes
- Life and independence skills qualifications
- Personal development programmes
- Work-related learning and enterprise activities

- Community access and inclusion programmes

Where appropriate, partnerships with local colleges, training providers, and community organisations support curriculum breadth and progression opportunities.

Accreditation and Qualifications

Pupils may access a range of appropriate accreditation pathways depending on ability and need. These may include:

- Entry Level and Level 1 and 2 qualifications
- Unit-based awards and certificates
- Occupational Studies vocational courses
- Essential Skills courses in Numeracy and Literacy
- Personal and social development qualifications
- Employability and work skills accreditation

Accreditation is selected to ensure it is meaningful, accessible, and supportive of each pupil's long-term transition goals. Pupils may be given the opportunity to attend a range of third-party providers e.g. Further Education Colleges, 21 Training.

Individualised Pathways

All post-16 pupils follow personalised learning pathways informed by:

- Statement of Special Educational Needs / Annual Review outcomes
- Transition planning from Key Stage 4
- Multi-disciplinary input
- Pupil voice and parental consultation
- Careers education, information, advice, and guidance (CEIAG)

Pathways balance accreditation with independence, communication, social development, and wellbeing.

Preparation for Adult Life

A central aim of the Post-16 Entitlement Framework within our special school is preparation for adulthood. This includes:

- Independent living skills
- Financial capability
- Workplace behaviours
- Social and community participation
- Health and wellbeing education
- CEIAG – pupils will be supported by the Careers Service, N Ireland and a range of other professionals to help with preparation for transition and adult life.

Transition planning is embedded throughout Key Stage 4 and post-16 provision and reviewed annually in collaboration with families and external agencies.

Monitoring and Review

The post-16 curriculum offer is reviewed regularly to ensure:

- Compliance with Department of Education requirements
- Relevance to pupil need and progression routes

- Quality of provision and outcomes
- Effective partnerships with external providers

Within Knockavoe, the Post-16 Entitlement Framework ensures that all learners access a meaningful, flexible, and aspirational curriculum. Provision is carefully adapted to meet complex needs while maintaining high expectations and a strong focus on independence, employability, and successful transition to adult life.



Teaching, Learning and assessment

Teaching approaches are:

- Differentiated to meet individual learning needs.
- Adaptive teaching and scaffolding.
- Multi-sensory, visual, and experiential.
- Supported by assistive technology where appropriate.
- Informed by Pupil Learning Plan (PLP) and multidisciplinary input (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy).

Regular formative assessment informs planning and ensures progress is measured and celebrated.

‘Scaffolding is a highly complex process requiring a wide range of skills from the teacher. To properly scaffold, the teacher needs to possess and show a range of emotional skills such as empathy and patience. The teacher needs to know when and how to provide close support and also when to take it away.’
(Kirschner & Hendrick, 2024)

At Knockavoe School, staff will support, and scaffold pupil learning using a variety of approaches and aim to provide the right level of support for pupils to succeed in learning. Decreasing levels of adult support is the main objective and enabling pupils to be independent with activities and tasks that challenge their learning.

Assessment and Recording

Assessment is:

- Continuous, holistic, and linked to PLP targets.
- Recorded using systems such as Quest, Qskills Assessment, ASDAN, Levels of Progression.
- Shared with parents and external agencies through annual reviews and reports.

Progress is measured not only in academic outcomes but in communication, independence, and social engagement.

Assessment in Foundation Stage emphasises skills and capabilities.

Key skill areas include:

A. Cross-Curricular Skills

Children are assessed on their developing ability to:

- Communicate — expressing ideas, interacting with others, understanding language.
- Use Mathematics — applying mathematical thinking in practical contexts.
- Use ICT — exploring and handling information through technology.

These skills are integrated through play, exploration, adult interaction, and purposeful activities — which is especially valuable in special school settings where learning pathways are highly individualised.

The primary method of assessment at this stage is ongoing observation.

- Teachers and classroom assistants regularly observe children in everyday activities.
- Observations are used to build a picture of a child's learning over time.
- Assessment is contextual, embedded in play, routines and real-life tasks, rather than formal testing.
- These observations often target prerequisite or emerging skills (e.g., attention, turn-taking, basic motor skills) that are essential foundations for later learning.
- Q Skills Assessment (Prerequisite Skills) – frameworks that help teachers identify and assess foundational abilities that underpin later learning.
- Quest for Learning – designed to support

Q Skills Assessment within Knockavoe is:

- Embedded - integrated into everyday classroom practice rather than assessed in isolation
- Individualised - aligned to each pupil's developmental stage and learning pathway
- Holistic - reflecting social, emotional, communication, sensory, and cognitive development
- Evidence-informed – based on observation, pupil participation, recorded outcomes, and collaborative professional judgement

Holistic Pupil Mapping

The Holistic Pupil Mapping Tool is a structured, child-centred framework designed to provide a comprehensive overview of each pupil's needs, strengths, and provision requirements within Knockavoe. The tool is at the very early stages of development through a process of consultation and will continue to be refined and developed as the tool is piloted across key areas within the school.

The tool supports multi-disciplinary collaboration and ensures that medical, behavioural, sensory, curriculum, and communication needs are understood in an integrated way. It aligns with the SEND framework in Northern Ireland and supports Annual Reviews, and PLPS.

Purpose

- To create a shared understanding of each pupil's profile
- To inform personalised learning and support planning
- To identify barriers to learning and participation
- To guide targeted interventions and resource allocation
- To support safeguarding and wellbeing
- To facilitate communication between school staff, parents/carers, and external professionals

Core Domains of the Mapping Tool

Medical Needs

This section provides a clear overview of health-related needs that may impact school life and learning including:

- Diagnoses (e.g., epilepsy, cerebral palsy, genetic conditions)
- Medication requirements and administration protocols
- Feeding and nutrition plans
- Mobility needs and equipment
- Personal care requirements
- Seizure management or emergency care plans
- Involvement of external health professionals (e.g., paediatricians, OT, physiotherapy, SALT)

This ensures staff are aware of risk factors, care procedures, and necessary adjustments throughout the school day.

Behaviour & Emotional Regulation Needs

This section identifies behavioural presentation and underlying needs including:

- Triggers and patterns of behaviour
- Emotional regulation profile
- Co-regulation strategies
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) plans
- Risk assessments
- Trauma-informed considerations
- Social interaction profile

The focus is on understanding all behaviour as communication, driven by emotion, and promoting proactive, preventative strategies.

Sensory Needs

Many pupils in Knockavoe present with sensory processing differences. This section maps:

- Sensory sensitivities
- Sensory seeking behaviours
- Sensory avoidance behaviours
- Environmental triggers
- Recommended sensory diet or regulation strategies
- Required adaptations (lighting, noise levels, seating, movement breaks)

This ensures the learning environment supports regulation and engagement.

Curriculum & Learning Needs

This section outlines academic and developmental learning levels in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum and relevant accreditation pathways, including:

- Current attainment levels

- Engagement level (e.g., engagement model, pre-formal/formal curriculum stage)
- Literacy and numeracy profile
- Access arrangements
- Differentiation requirements
- Pathways (accredited courses, life skills, vocational learning)

The tool supports personalised curriculum planning and realistic, meaningful target setting.

Communication Needs

Communication is central to participation and wellbeing. This section maps:

- Primary mode of communication (verbal, AAC, PECS, Makaton, eye gaze, etc.)
- Receptive language level
- Expressive communication level
- Social communication skills
- Pragmatic language profile
- Communication aids and assistive technology
- Support required to understand instructions

It ensures consistent communication approaches across staff teams and promotes pupil voice.

Multi-Disciplinary Integration

The Holistic Mapping Tool encourages collaboration between:

- Teachers
- Classroom assistants
- SENCo
- Therapists (SALT, OT, Physiotherapy)
- Educational Psychology
- School nursing services
- Parents and carers

The map becomes a live working document, reviewed termly and updated following Annual Reviews or when there are significant new needs or changes presented.

Outcomes

Using this tool enables:

- Early identification of emerging needs
- Improved consistency of support
- Reduced crisis incidents
- Increased engagement in learning
- Enhanced wellbeing
- Clear documentation for statutory processes
- The holistic development of all learners underpins curriculum design, planning, and delivery across the school.
- Learners are supported and challenged to make appropriate progress and to achieve outcomes aligned with their individual needs and abilities.
- The statutory curriculum is enhanced and extended through a broad range of additional, meaningful learning experiences.

Monitoring and Reporting

Q Skills development is reviewed:

- Through ongoing formative assessment
- As part of planner progress tracking
- Within Individual PLPS
- During Annual Review processes

Information gathered informs future planning, intervention strategies, and curriculum design to promote independence, resilience, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Q Skills assessment in Knockavoe ensures that pupils develop essential life-long capabilities alongside academic learning. By embedding these skills within personalised and meaningful contexts, we enable pupils to build confidence, independence, and readiness for future learning and life beyond school.

Enrichment and Extended Curriculum

- Educational visits and community-based learning
- Outdoor learning
- Arts, music, and drama therapy
- Sports and physical wellbeing
- Participation in local and regional events
- Links with mainstream schools

Transition and Progression

Smooth transitions are ensured between key stages and at exit points. Transition plans are developed collaboratively with families, Education Authority Transition Service, Careers Service NI, and post-school providers. Further information regarding transitions can be accessed from our Pathways leadership team who are in the process of developing a Transition and Pathways policy.

Monitoring and Review

The Principal and Senior Leadership Team will:

- Monitor curriculum delivery and effectiveness annually.
- Evaluate pupil progress and outcomes.
- Review and update this policy in consultation with staff, governors, and parents every three years or sooner if required by DE guidance.
- Provide regular Curriculum updates to the Board of Governors.

References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Knockavoe School. (2022). *Core Values*. [Online]. Knockavoe School. Last Updated: 2022. Available at: <https://www.knockavoeschool.com/> [Accessed 26 February 2026].

Appendix 2: CCEA. (2020). *The Big Picture Primary*. [Online]. CCEA. Last Updated: 29/06/2020. Available at: <https://ccea.org.uk/key-stages-1-2/overview>

Appendix 3: CCEA. (2020). *The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stage 3*. [Online]. CCEA. Last Updated: 24/03/2020. Available at: <https://ccea.org.uk/key-stage-3/overview> [Accessed 26 February 2026].

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Appendix 5: Functional Skills

Appendix 5: Functional Communication

We support all pupils—both verbal and pre-verbal—by providing access to a range of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) strategies and tools. Staff ensure that every child is given regular opportunities and meaningful ways to communicate. This approach empowers children to express their needs, make choices, and share their preferences with confidence and clarity.

Gross Motor Skills Development

Gross motor skills involve large scale movements such as running, jumping, balancing, climbing, throwing and catching. These skills are the foundation for physical confidence and everyday tasks (independence, play, participation in activities).

In Knockavoe, support includes:

- Structured movement sessions: regular activity blocks that build core strength, balance and coordination, such as adapted athletics, games, dance and simple gymnastics.

- Differentiated activities: modifying tasks so children work at their own pace, e.g., stepping stones before running, low obstacles before climbing, or supported balance lines.
- Use of sensory-motor equipment: such as balance beams, large balls, crash mats, scooters or climbing frames tuned to each child's capabilities.
- Outdoor and indoor movement zones: designing play spaces to encourage spontaneous body use (pushing, pulling, lifting, moving).
- Repetition and routine to foster confidence and reduce anxiety around physical challenges.

These strategies help pupils develop muscular strength, control, spatial awareness and whole-body coordination, essential for further motor progress and general health.

Fine Motor Skills Development

Fine motor skills focus on small, precise hand and finger movements, crucial for self-care tasks, early writing, arts, manipulating classroom tools and hand-eye coordination.

In our Foundation Stage, support approaches include:

- Therapeutic and skill-building activities: using play dough, threading, puzzles, tweezers, pegs, craft tools and textured materials to strengthen hand muscles and improve control.
- Functional practice: daily routines involving buttons, zips, painting, cutting and applying stickers reinforce real-world motor skills.
- Targeted modelling: adults model grasping, positioning and guided manipulation to scaffold the skill.
- Embedded opportunities: using fine motor challenges in cross-curricular play (e.g., using small pieces in role-play, constructing with small blocks, sorting tasks).
- Adaptive equipment: pencil grips, larger chinks or scissors, sloped work surfaces, which can help children experience success and increase independence.

These approaches align with motor skill progression models, where strengthening control and precision in hands supports confidence and independence in learning and self-care.

Communication and Language Development

Communication is the cornerstone of literacy.

In Knockavoe, pupils may experience speech, language or communication difficulties, so we prioritise:

- Developing attention and listening skills
- Encouraging turn-taking and shared interaction
- Expanding vocabulary through play and daily routines
- Supporting understanding of simple instructions
- Using visual supports, gestures, objects of reference or augmentative communication systems where needed

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and recognise sounds in spoken language. In our Foundation Stage, this may include:

- Listening to environmental sounds
- Identifying rhythm and rhyme
- Clapping syllables
- Recognising initial sounds in words
- Engaging in songs, rhymes and repetitive stories

Visual and Auditory Discrimination

Children develop the ability to notice differences and similarities in:

- Pictures and symbols
- Environmental print
- Sounds and spoken words

In our Foundation stage we use structured matching, sorting and sequencing games to support these skills. Visual timetables and symbol systems also reinforce early symbolic understanding.

Fine Motor Skills and Early Mark Making

Pre-literacy includes physical readiness for writing. Pupils are supported to:

- Develop hand strength and control
- Practise grasp patterns
- Engage in mark-making with paint, sand, chalk or large pencils
- Experiment with drawing shapes and patterns

Print Awareness and Early Reading Behaviours

Children are encouraged to:

- Handle books appropriately
- Turn pages
- Recognise that print carries meaning
- Understand that text is read from left to right
- Join in with repeated phrases in stories

Story time is interactive, using props, visuals and sensory materials to support understanding.

Early Number Awareness

Children begin to develop an understanding of number through:

- Exposure to number language in everyday routines
- Counting songs and rhymes
- Counting objects in practical activities
- Recognising small quantities (e.g., “one more,” “all gone”)

Sorting, Matching and Classifying

These skills form the basis of logical and mathematical thinking. Pupils are supported to:

- Match identical objects or pictures
- Sort items by colour, shape, size or function
- Group similar objects together
- Recognise similarities and differences

Structured play activities and visual supports help pupils practise categorisation skills at their own level.

Comparing and Measuring

Pupils begin to understand basic mathematical language such as:

- Big/small
- Long/short
- Heavy/light
- Full/empty

In Knockavoe, these concepts are introduced through water play, sand play, construction, cooking and outdoor exploration. Practical experiences allow pupils to physically explore and internalise mathematical vocabulary.

Pattern and Sequencing

Recognising and creating patterns supports later number understanding. Activities may include:

- Repeating colour patterns with beads or blocks
- Action patterns (clap, tap, clap, tap)
- Sequencing daily routines using visual timetables
- Ordering objects by size

We use visual cues and repetition to reinforce these skills.

Early Understanding of Time and Position

Children develop awareness of:

- Daily routines (now/then)
- Positional language (in, on, under, beside)
- Simple sequencing of events

Visual schedules and structured classroom routines are particularly important to build predictability and understanding of sequence.

One-to-One Correspondence and Counting Skills

Before formal counting, pupils need to:

- Touch or move one object at a time
- Understand that each object counted represents one number
- Recognise when a set has more or fewer items

Teachers provide repeated opportunities to practise one-to-one correspondence during snack time, tidy-up activities and play.

Transition Skills

We support children in developing the skills needed to transition smoothly between activities and environments. Visual supports and visual schedules are used to help prepare pupils for changes in routine. This approach is particularly effective in easing more challenging transitions, such as moving away from a preferred activity or engaging in a less-preferred task.

Self-Regulation and co-regulation Skills

We help children develop early self-regulation through guidance from adults and shared co-regulation strategies. Knowing that being 'calm and alert' supports learning, we provide personalised sensory activities, movement breaks, sensory equipment, and calming spaces like sensory rooms. These experiences give children the tools they need to manage their emotions, behaviour, and physical needs.

Personal Development/ Thinking Capabilities

Starting in Nursery, children are encouraged to practise key self-help skills, including dressing, toileting, and feeding. Structured teaching methods and resources such as individual workstations support the development of independence, enabling pupils to take greater control over both their personal care and learning experiences.