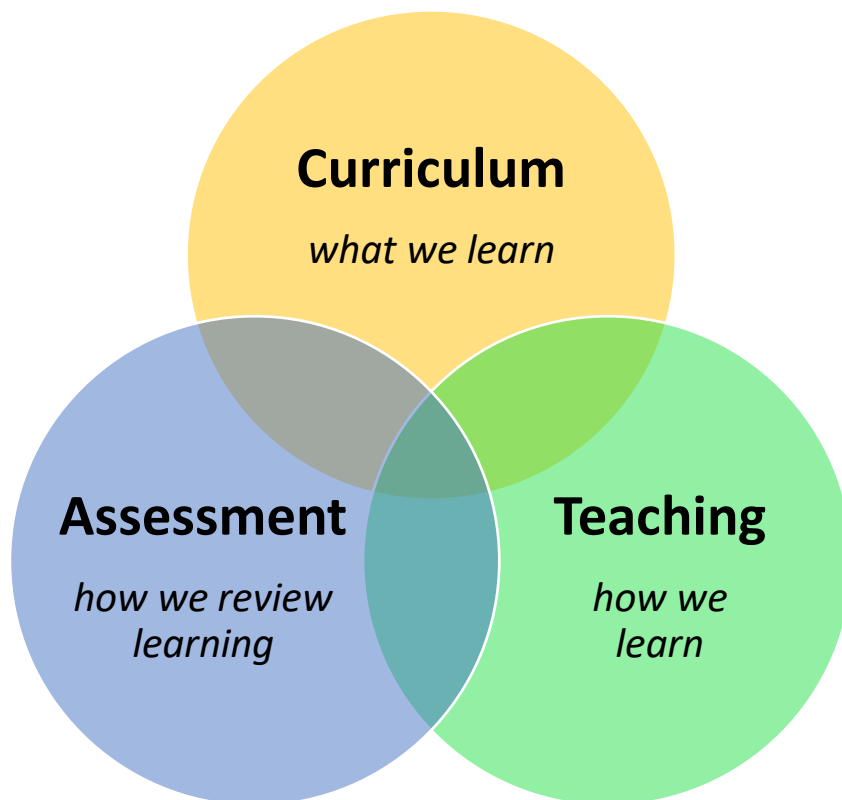




Community Special School

Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment Policy



Date: June 2019

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Signed by Chair of

Governors: _____



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1) Introduction

i. Our Pupils

Alfreton Park Community Special School is a specialist school in the heart of Derbyshire, providing a high-quality education for pupils aged 2 to 19. The pupils who attend our school have varying degrees of learning difficulties, including Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). We cater for pupils who are affected by a very wide range of specific medical and physical conditions, including but not limited to; Autism, Down Syndrome, Epilepsy, Sensory Impairment, and Physical Disabilities.

All pupils at Alfreton Park have their own unique Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which sets out their needs, the outcomes sought for them, and the help they should receive to enable them to make progress. Families, school staff, and professionals from other agencies (e.g. health, social care) collaborate to write, review and amend the EHCP, most notably through Annual Review meetings at school. Pupils' needs, interests, aspirations and voice are at the heart of this process.

ii. Our Approach

This policy brings together three central aspects of learning for pupils at our school; curriculum, teaching and assessment. We believe that education is most effective when a strong coherence exists between learning content, teaching methods, and assessment mechanisms, and we therefore aim to establish common themes and consistency in our approach to each of these areas at Alfreton Park. We subscribe to a pupil-centred philosophy of education, which can be briefly summarised as follows.

Curriculum – ‘what we learn’

The overall intent of our curriculum is that every pupil should gain the skills, knowledge and experiences they most need to grow in confidence and independence. Our starting point is to consider the specific needs and capabilities of the pupils at our school, and the future that may lie ahead for each of them. We use a multidisciplinary approach to identify learning priorities, and each pupil follows their own unique journey towards fulfilling their potential. We consult with families to set meaningful outcomes, and pupils' wellbeing and best interests are at the heart of everything we do.

Teaching – ‘how we learn’

We use our knowledge of the needs of our pupils to present learning opportunities in ways that are accessible and engaging. We tailor our approach to suit the strengths and interests of our pupils, through the implementation of a wide range of specialist strategies to deliver personalised provision. We place particular importance on the development and exercise of independence not just as a *goal*, but as a *method*, and feel that our pupils learn best when they are empowered to think, say and do things for themselves wherever possible.

Assessment – ‘how we review learning’

We evaluate progress by returning to earlier targets and plans to review their impact. Where we find a winning formula, we aim to repeat our successes, and where we encounter challenges, we aim to learn and improve. We recognise that progress is not just about assessment data, and we value the full range of pupils' efforts and achievements in the way that we track their holistic growth.



2) Curriculum

i. Moral Purpose

Our explanation of *what* we teach begins with a reflection on *why* we teach. What is the purpose of the education we offer? In short, we agree that it should be ‘a means of fostering learners’ opportunities to maximise their potential to do the very best they can do and to be the very best they can be, irrespective of their individual circumstances’ (Imray and Colley, 2017: 101). From this perspective it is clear to us that the National Curriculum’s ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is inappropriate for our school, since it is geared towards a model of adult life that doesn’t map onto the paths being followed by most of our pupils. In doing this, it fails to prepare them for the future they are more likely to face, and we therefore aim to provide an alternative curriculum, which better serves the different needs of our pupils. This involves more than simply changing our teaching *methods* (the same curriculum taught differently), in that it requires an adjustment to our teaching *content* (teaching a different curriculum altogether). Our curriculum begins with the individual needs of our pupils rather than externally mandated standards, and asks – ‘what will be most useful and meaningful for each young person to learn, so that they may achieve the growth and fulfilment that is most relevant and attainable for them?’. The answer to this question for some pupils may indeed be that they should access subject-specific learning as part of their education at Alfreton Park, but this is not the case for the majority of our pupils, and the National Curriculum is not the underlying framework in which it takes place.

ii. Areas of Learning

Our school population is highly diverse and each pupil is different, but something they all have in common is that they have an EHCP. These documents set out pupils’ needs, the support they should receive and the long-term outcomes they are working towards, organised according to the four areas of need outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (2015); 1) Communication and Interaction, 2) Cognition and Learning, 3) Social, Emotional and Mental Health, and 4) Physical and/or Sensory Development.

Our pupils may have an even spread of needs across these four areas, or there may be one or two areas that are particularly pertinent to them; but in either case, we recognise this framework to be a relevant, modern, holistic and meaningful way to summarise the work we do to prepare our pupils for the future. We take these four ‘areas of need’ and reframe them as ‘areas of learning’, then support our pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and attributes in each area that will enable them to manage their needs and achieve as much independence as possible.

We are drawn to this model because of its flexibility, and the potential it offers for creativity. It allows our curriculum to be broader than compartmentalised subjects on a timetable, and in fact we would not expect to see any of these areas of learning taught as a discrete ‘lesson’. Instead, these strands run through everything we do, and teachers are empowered to plan exciting and engaging cross-curricular activities, both inside and outside of the classroom.



The curriculum principles outlined here are made concrete and deliverable in practice by the guidance documents included as appendices to this policy, and through the planning that takes place at two conceptual levels across the school; the *particular* and the *universal*. We aim to deliver a balanced curriculum that serves each pupil's *particular needs*, within class groups that offer a broader learning framework of *universal goals* (Figure 1).

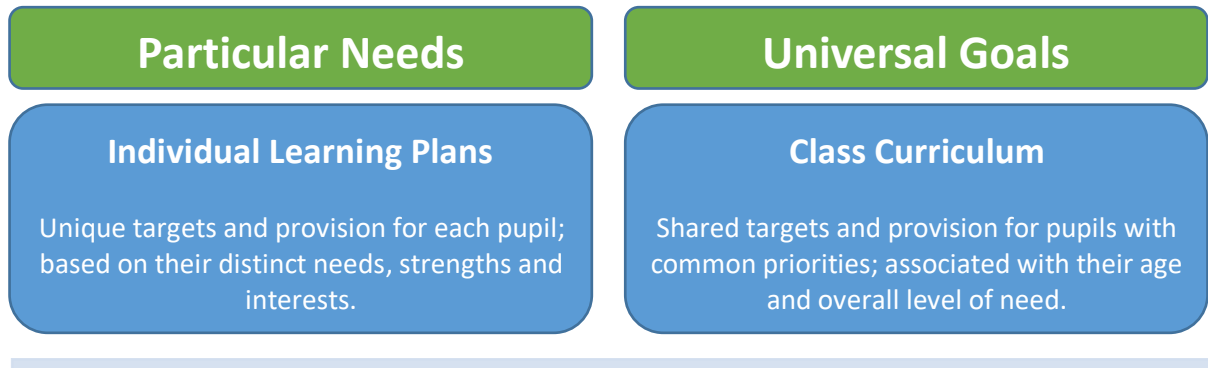


Figure 1: Balancing Particular and Universal Objectives

In the ideas presented above, a number of key concepts have been introduced; the moral purpose of our work, the four areas of need and learning, the particular and the universal, and the necessity of coherence between curriculum, teaching and assessment. These principles combine to form the Alfreton Park Pupil-Centred Learning Model (Figure 2), which is explained in depth throughout the remainder of this policy document.

Alfreton Park Pupil-Centred Learning Model

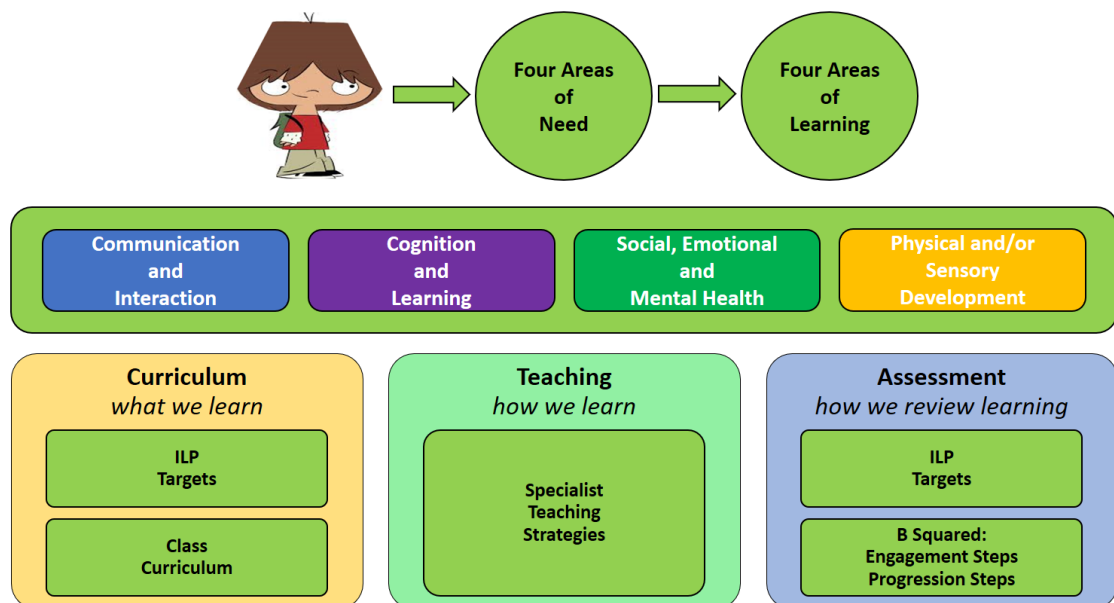


Figure 2: Alfreton Park Pupil-Centred Learning Model



iii. Individual Learning Plans

A core component of our curriculum intent is that each pupil will work towards meeting the personalised outcomes set out in their EHCP. These outcomes are usually quite broad and long-term, so in order to translate them into effective classroom practice, we break things down into smaller steps by writing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for every pupil at our school. The ILP consists of a set of more specific medium-term targets alongside an overview of the provision in place to support pupils to make progress. It is reviewed and updated on a termly basis, and is the method by which we ensure that the EHCP itself remains a 'living document'.

Clear guidance is in place regarding the approach we take to identifying suitable targets, and there are moderation systems to ensure relevance and maintain high standards. A crucial part of the process is that we seek input and collaboration from families (and pupils themselves where appropriate), aiming to establish agreement between home and school over the particular learning priorities for each pupil.

Teachers are expected to ensure that over the course of their regular weekly timetable, each pupil in their class has sufficient opportunity to work on and make progress towards all of their ILP targets. In some cases this may mean daily practice, but in others it may mean once or twice a week. Targets might be worked on as part of an independent or 1:1 activity where only that specific skill is being practised, or they might be addressed within whole class sessions with broader learning objectives.

We incorporate aspects of the MAPP Semi-Formal Milestones (Sissons 2018) into our approach to personalised target-setting, and a detailed explanation of our whole system for designing, delivering and monitoring ILPs can be found in our ILPs Information document (Appendix 1).

iv. Class Curriculum

As well as meeting the needs of each pupil through individually targeted provision, we aim to create valuable group learning experiences based around the universal learning goals within each class. Each class operates its own curriculum in accordance with our Whole School Curriculum Map (Appendix 2), which offers guidance on lessons to teach, topics to cover, and planning for progression in different classes around the school. This is how we support teachers to build a unique learning programme, comprised of the skills, knowledge and experiences that are most appropriate for their group. For this approach to be possible and effective, pupils in each class must have some things in common with each other, and there are two primary principles we aim to affirm when we organise class groups:

Age

We recognise the importance of promoting social inclusion by grouping pupils with peers their own age. Mixed ability groups value diversity, offering all pupils the opportunity to build valuable connections with those who may be different to themselves.

Need

We also recognise that the best quality educational provision is often most effectively delivered within groups of pupils with similar needs. This allows class staff to specialise in a particular area and not be over-stretched by a requirement to teach hugely diverse material within a single class.



At Alfreton Park, we believe in the value of both these principles, and we therefore refrain from pursuing just one approach at the expense of the other. Our aim as far as possible, is to balance both considerations in the way the school is structured, so that pupils may get the best of both worlds. The make-up of class groups is reviewed on an annual basis in order to meet the changing needs of the pupils and the school, and at all times we ensure that pupils access appropriate provision for both their chronological age and their level of need. Within this flexible model, two areas of the school fulfil a more specialist function; Early Years Foundation Stage, and Sixth Form.

Early Years Foundation Stage

As we are a provider on the Early Years Register, our work with pupils up to and including reception year must comply fully with the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017). This guidance describes seven areas of learning and development (*Figure 3*), which must be taught through ‘planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity’. Our specialist EYFS provision operates in accordance with this universal model, but without a strict upper age limit. We recognise that a play-based and child-led curriculum often remains appropriate for our pupils beyond reception year, and we therefore regularly accommodate children older than five within our EYFS provision, and incorporate aspects of the early years approach into our work within all classes at the school. The specific needs of each child inform our consideration over when might be the right time for them to ‘move up’ to a new class.

This diagram shows how the EYFS Framework maps onto our school curriculum. The coloured columns represent the four areas of need from the SEND Code of Practice, which correspond with our four areas of learning at Alfreton Park. The seven areas of learning and development from the EYFS Framework appear as bullet points below the area of our curriculum that they fall within.

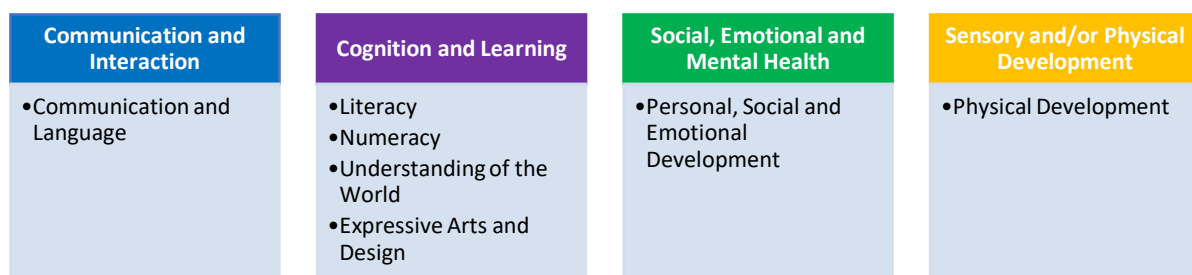


Figure 3: How the EYFS Framework maps onto the SEND Code of Practice and APCSS Curriculum

Post-14 Provision

Oak Class is our Post-14 provision, which supports older pupils at the school (school years 10-14) as they prepare to take their first steps into adulthood. This large class accommodates pupils of all abilities, and within this socially inclusive framework we place an emphasis on the development of universally relevant daily living skills for all pupils, through participation in shared activities such as; shopping, cooking, cleaning, gardening, self-care, and sex and relationships education. In addition to these mixed ability activities, pupils spend much of the weekly timetable in two smaller groups with more specialised functions; Oak Branches and Oak Roots (*Figure 4*). These groups offer targeted preparation for life beyond school, and our aim is to provide all pupils with the support they need most to succeed with their likely next steps, whatever they may be.





Figure 4: Oak Curriculum Branches and Roots

The imagery of roots and branches applies equally to the work done in both Oak groups, since we want provide all of our pupils with solid foundations, while challenging them to be all they can be. All Oak pupils are able to access the same opportunities, but the focus of the class curriculum is different for Oak Branches and Oak Roots, and the overall balance varies from year to year depending on the specific needs of the pupils in each group. Broadly speaking, Oak Branches aims to meet the needs of pupils who might go on to live partially or fully independent lives as adults, while Oak Roots caters for those who will probably continue to need high levels of support at all times.

Another key component of life in Oak Class is the 'Pathway Plan'. Sixth Form staff and our Family Support Worker collaborate with families to write these documents for each pupil. We begin by building a clear picture of what early adult life might look like for each pupil. What should their living arrangements be? Which settings and placements might they attend? What support and supervision will they need? Should they access further education or training? Could they find work? We work backwards from the answers to these questions to identify suitable provision for individuals and the whole group as they move through their final years at school, including which of Oak Branches or Oak Roots appears to be the most appropriate setting for them. SEND Officers from the local authority also have a role in supporting pupils and families through the transition into life beyond school.



3) Teaching

i. Lessons and Activities

Teachers plan for pupil progress within the curriculum outlined above by designing creative lessons and a weekly timetable to suit the needs of their pupils. It is up to teachers to decide which activities will best support their pupils to meet targets and make progress in a holistic sense, and there are only a few directed expectations of lessons that must be delivered for certain pupils or class groups. This model is a significant departure from an approach that dictates the number of hours each week that specific subjects must be taught, and we therefore offer guidance to help staff and families understand what teaching looks like on a day-to-day basis. Our 'Whole School Curriculum Map' (Appendix 2) provides an overview of the range of opportunities we aim to provide pupils of different age groups and across the ability spectrum, and details the sort of activities you might expect to see in different classrooms around our school. This document clarifies which activities are compulsory for which groups, and offers inspiration for teachers regarding the optional sessions they might wish to include within their timetable to best meet the needs of their pupils. Teachers and senior leaders review timetables and medium-term plans together on a regular basis.

ii. Teaching Strategies

In many ways, identifying *what* to teach and *why* to teach it are the easy parts of delivering our educational vision. Working out *how* to support our pupils to make progress is the real challenge, and we don't always get it right first time. Different approaches are suitable for different pupils, and we work collaboratively to establish the methods that work best for each individual. One thing we know for sure is that the classical 'chalk and talk' approach that might be employed in some mainstream settings is not suitable for the pupils who attend our school. So what do we do instead?

We have developed a resource for teachers and families that outlines some of the main teaching methodologies that might be effective for working with our pupils (Appendix 3). The strategies it describes are organised according to the four areas of learning within our curriculum, and we encourage teachers to consult this document as a first reference point when they consider how best to meet the needs of their pupils. Many of the approaches included are widely established as good practice within special education, and we therefore employ them as universal strategies for working with whole class groups, or as particular techniques for supporting individual pupils at our school. The development of this resource is an ongoing project led by middle leaders at the school, and we hope that the ideas within it will inspire effective teaching and outstanding progress for our pupils.

iii. Class Teaching

We have a commitment to both high expectations and high standards at Alfreton Park. We want our pupils to maximise their potential, and we know that they need consistently outstanding teaching in order to achieve everything they can in life. Teachers at Alfreton Park have collaborated to write a list of 'Non-Negotiable Lesson Characteristics' (Appendix 4), and our aspiration is that these features are evident in all learning activities throughout the school.



4) Assessment

i. Guiding Principles

We affirm the guiding principles for assessment set out in A Celebratory Approach to SEND Assessment in the Early Years (Pen Green Centre: 2018), and believe that these ideals should apply for all of our pupils, and not just those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- 1. That any assessment must honour both the child and their family*
- 2. That every child's progress should be demonstrated and celebrated and that, where possible, the assessment process adopted should be applicable to all children*
- 3. The voice of the child must be represented clearly and must inform and remain central to any assessment*
- 4. The voice of the family must be represented clearly and where appropriate the voice of peers and siblings should also be heard*
- 5. That the assessment is done in collaboration with, rather than to, the family and that it reflects their views and comments*
- 6. That the assessment is accessible and can be understood by the family*
- 7. That the assessment celebrates achievement rather than identifies 'underachievement' and that its language and style of presentation stays true to this principle*
- 8. That the assessment process offers a powerful means of identifying how the child can be best supported in their development and learning. This may be done through the consideration of next steps or 'Possible Lines Of Direction' for an individual child*
- 9. That the assessment provides insight and information that can be understood and used by others including external agencies and schools to which children may transfer*
- 10. That as the Rochford Review states "Equality is not always about inclusion. Sometimes equality is about altering the approach according to the needs of the child"*

In short, we believe that assessment should celebrate achievement, and that pupil voice and input from families should play a central role in discussions about progress, outcomes and next steps for pupils. These discussions take place in settings such as Annual Review and Parents' Evening meetings, where we tend to focus on discussing aspects of development that are harder to quantify. Are our pupils becoming more secure and confident as they grow? Are they forming meaningful relationships? Are they gaining independence and self-advocacy skills? Are they pursuing interests and ambitions? Are their health and social care needs well catered for? Are they, overall, making good progress over time in relation to their starting point?

We do conduct more formal assessments as part of our work, and the data we collect from these activities plays an important role in informing our discussions, but this sort of attainment data is only part of the picture when we consider the overall impact of our curriculum.



ii. Types of Assessment

At Alfreton Park, we understand the important differences between two principle types of assessment (Assessment Reform Group, 2002); Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment), and Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment). We recognise the importance of both types of activity, and our arrangements require both to be taking place at two main levels: the *particular* level of the individual, and the *universal* level of the whole class or school.

Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment)

This is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment)

This is any assessment that summarises where learners are at a given point in time - it provides a snapshot of what has been learned.

We use many different assessment activities to gain insights to feed back into the curriculum, drive pupil progress in class and inform school development planning. Teachers use the information they collect to aid them in planning and delivering effective lessons, while senior leaders analyse data at a whole school level to identify individuals and groups in need of support, and ways in which the school can work more effectively.

ii. Class Assessment

The most common assessment activities at Alfreton Park take place on a continuous basis within each class. Teachers use formative assessment principles to identify pupils' needs, abilities, next steps in learning, and plans for getting them there, and they use summative assessment principles to review work, monitor progress, retain evidence and collect data. Both activities take place at a *particular* level and a *universal* level (*Figure 4*).

Each class has its own distinct character and each teacher has their own working preferences. Our approach aims to respect these facts, and we therefore encourage teachers to develop assessment systems that will best serve the needs of their pupils and their own approach to teaching. There is some flexibility here, but teachers must work in accordance with the guidance set out in our Teachers' Handbook (Appendix 5) and our Marking and Feedback Policy (Appendix 6). Among other things, these documents clarify expectations in relation to; planning, evaluations, observations, evidence, marking, record-keeping, and use of pupil information.



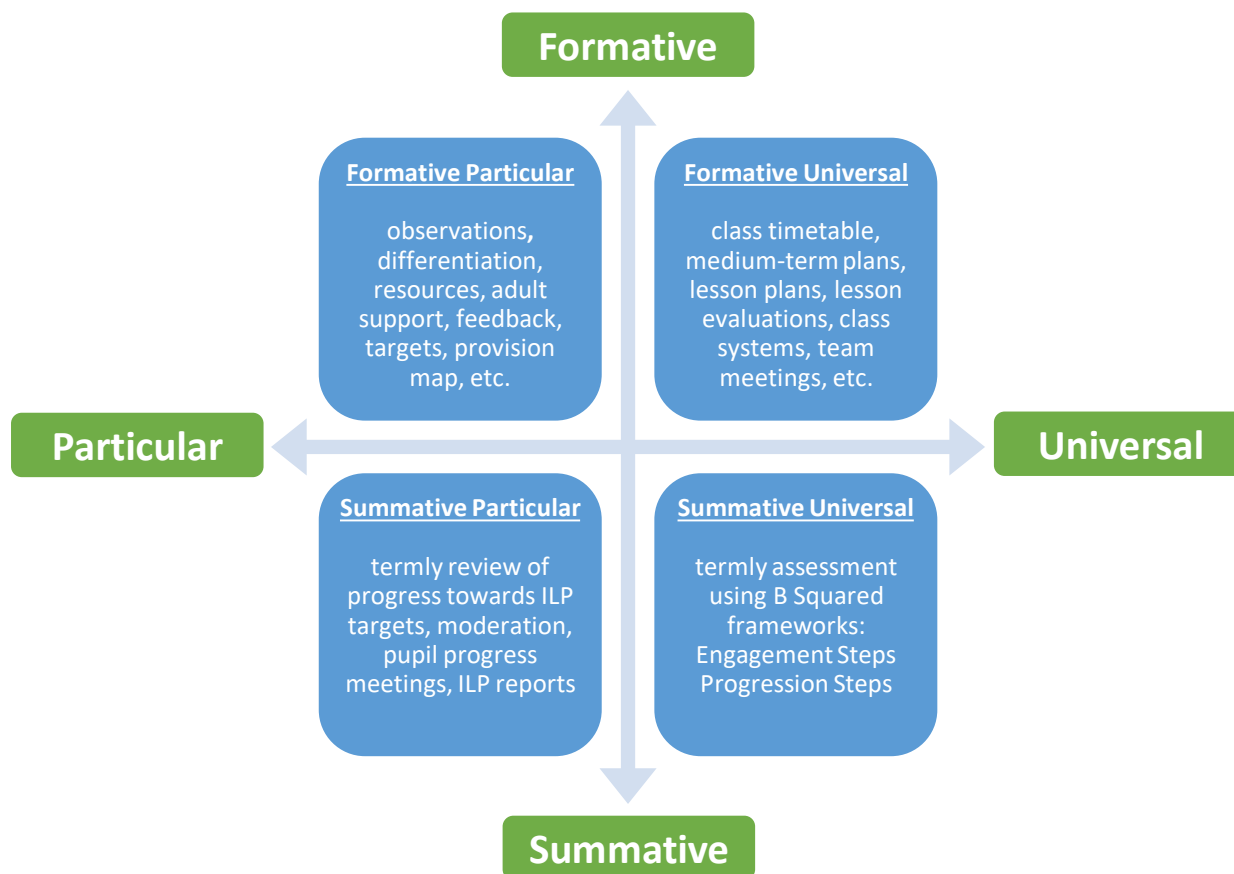


Figure 5: Formative and Summative Assessment at Particular and Universal Levels.

iii. Individual Learning Plans

Reviewing progress towards ILP targets is one of the two main summative assessment mechanisms we use at a whole school level. Towards the end of each term, teachers assess progress the pupils have made towards meeting their particular targets, using the following criteria:

| Assessment Criteria | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Unmet | Partially Met | Met | Exceeded |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Progress is limited or has not taken place with this target. | Progress is substantial, but this target is not yet fully met. | Progress is at the expected rate, and the target is fully achieved. | Progress is significantly better than expected with this target. |

Figure 6: Assessment Criteria for ILP Targets

In this context, our understanding of what exactly constitutes ‘expected progress’ is informed only by our knowledge of the particular pupil in question; they are not being assessed against any external framework or against each other. ILP targets are designed to challenge pupils to accomplish things that we might reasonably expect them to achieve over the course of a term, and the simple framework above is applied to review termly progress for all pupils at the school.

When it comes to the more formative process of setting targets for the new term, we need to decide what should happen to each of the previous term’s targets. Our aim here is to ensure that pupils’



targets are always as relevant as possible to their current needs, and we will therefore take one of the following actions upon reviewing progress towards each previous target:

| Next Steps | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Continue | Amend | Replace |
| Target remains relevant for this term | Adjust target for more suitable level of challenge | A completely new target needs to be set |

Figure 7: Next Steps for ILP Targets

ILPs are updated fully at the end of each term to include a summary of progress towards previous targets, a list of targets for the next term, and an overview of the support pupils will receive to meet their targets. Families are invited to contribute toward the process of reviewing ILP targets each term, and also at Annual Review, where progress towards longer-term EHCP outcomes is also considered.

iv. Whole School Assessment Frameworks

For almost twenty years, ‘P Levels’ have been used nationally to describe attainment and progress for pupils with learning difficulties working below the level of the National Curriculum. Following the changes made to the National Curriculum since 2014, and the subsequent release of the Rochford Review Final Report (DfE, 2016), the growing consensus is that P Levels are no longer fit for purpose. We share this view on the grounds that P Levels do not correspond with the curriculum we want to teach at Alfreton Park, which is now structured according to our ‘four areas of learning’, rather than National Curriculum subjects. Any suitable universal assessment framework for our school must therefore also be organised in line with these four areas.

At this moment in time, few available options meet this key criterion, but we have been impressed by the new resources released by the software company B Squared. Since Autumn 2018 we have been using their new assessment frameworks ‘Engagement Steps’ and ‘Progression Steps’, which cater for different ability ranges and are structured according to our four areas of learning. Detailed information on both can be found in materials published by B Squared, and the accompanying notes explaining our approach to using these resources at Alfreton Park (Appendix 7).

Something we like about these systems is the range of pathways that exist for pupils to learn new things and demonstrate progress. For learners who sometimes might take the ‘scenic route’, this feature of the B Squared software is of great value. In some cases, pupils might make *linear progress*, by developing skills and understanding at a new level, building upon things they have already learned. At other times, pupils might make *lateral progress*, through learning to apply skills and knowledge in new contexts. Another possibility is that pupils might demonstrate greater *mastery*, by displaying increased proficiency in an area of learning where they already grasp the basics. These different types of progress can all be captured through B Squared.

The Teachers’ Handbook (Appendix 5) offers guidance on how and when to complete Engagement Steps and Progression Steps assessments, and which framework should be used with which pupil. All pupils at the school are assessed on one of these two frameworks from Year 1 onwards, while pupils who are Reception or Nursery age are assessed against the Early Learning Goals on the B Squared Early Years Framework. Additional assessment frameworks may also be used in some classes or for some pupils only, where there is a specific extra benefit gained through using such systems (e.g. Move Programme for physical needs, Blank Levels for Speech and Language needs).

