

# DEEP DIVE:

Curriculum area: English



**Belle Vue  
School**

**Cornfields  
School**

*'Improving life chances'*







# INTRODUCTION

In September 2019, Ofsted introduced changes to the inspection framework. They continued to report on all aspects of a school, as set out in section five of the Education Act 2005, but changed the judgement headings and introduced a 'quality of education' judgement.

The revised inspection methodology, which supports the education inspection framework, has combined aspects of the previous key judgements of 'teaching, learning and assessment' and 'outcomes' to provide a more holistic view of standards, particularly focusing on the curriculum.

The new methodology also saw the introductions of 'deep dives', which involves gathering evidence on the curriculum intent, implementation and impact. The Ofsted deep dive is one of the key elements of the new Ofsted inspection framework's curriculum focus.

In any school, the primary focus must be the education pupils are receiving day to day in the classroom. In order to establish if what pupils are receiving in the class is a quality education, we must be clear on the purpose of what we are delivering.

We have therefore utilised the Ofsted 'deep dive' framework as a system to ensure we are focussed on the quality of education and are able to accurately direct resources to achieve an outstanding curriculum. Our staff have looked at the subjects we offer and our cohort of pupils. Our staff have reflected and asked the questions.

1. What is the intention of this programme of study? (Intent)

Only when we can answer this question do we move on to the next question.

2. How should we best deliver this programme of study? (Implementation)

Only when we can answer this question do we move on to the next question.

3. How will we know we have been successful? (Impact)

At the core of our deep-dive approach is to consider and evaluate how education flows from intention to implementation to impact within our school. Without doing this, it would be impossible to form a valid judgement on the quality of the education we provide. Moreover, in completing the deep dives, we are able to ask ourselves pertinent questions and are able to accurately identify areas for improvement, from which we are able to quickly respond to provide necessary improvements in the quality of the education we deliver.

In summary, the deep-dive approach adopted by Ofsted has been developed to allow for accurate assessments of the quality of education to be made. It has been seen that this assessment process is a highly effective tool and we have embraced this tool as a regular feature of our self-assessment process in considering the quality of education we offer.

# CURRICULUM AREA: ENGLISH

## Intent

Our intent is for all pupils to be functionally literate. Through rigorous and sequential assessments, building on existing knowledge and skills, all pupils will learn to read, write, speak and listen at a level as close to age-appropriate level as possible.

New knowledge and skills will build on what has been taught before and retained. We will address social disadvantage by ensuring our pupils have every opportunity to become functional readers, writers, speakers and listeners.

They will be able to demonstrate their competence in English by using it in real-world situations as well as demonstrating a sound grasp of basic English knowledge and skills. We will carry out assessments of our pupils' existing and underpinning knowledge as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts. We will provide a foundation for progression into employment or further education and develop skills for everyday life.

# Implementation

English is prioritised and at the heart of our curriculum. We recognise that having a 'functional literacy age' (age 8.0 years+) is pivotal in enabling our pupils to access a broader and richer curriculum. We address social disadvantage by ensuring our pupils have every opportunity to achieve this 'functional reading age', thus improving life chances.

On entry, many of our pupils have rapidly fallen behind their peers therefore we act quickly to close the gap and work towards accelerated progress. Our assessments identify barriers to learning and gaps in knowledge and skills. From this starting point, we implement a bespoke programme, using high-quality multi-sensory/dyslexia-friendly resources. Weaknesses are addressed quickly so that potential can be unlocked. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a problem-solving mindset and in doing so, build resilience and independence.

Our systems inspire us to ask the hard questions:

- Are we teaching what we think we are teaching in English?
- Are pupils learning what they are supposed to be learning in English?
- Is there a way to teach English more effectively/differently, thereby promoting better learning/progression?

Our bespoke assessment/teaching of phonics correlates directly with 'Letters and Sounds', allowing us to rectify and target gaps in learning – and to evaluate impact. PM Benchmark Running Records are carried out by a specialist teacher (The Reading Doctor). Barriers to learning are identified in order to implement tailor-made programmes with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing – to unlock the potential of our struggling learners.

We use a variety of high-quality reading schemes that adhere to the colour book banding system. This allows pupils to be flexible in their approach, reading a variety of genres across different publishers. It also provides us with an accurate tracking system and assessment tool for measuring impact. It enables the evaluation of pupils' knowledge and skills against those expectations for each colour bands, literacy age, National Curriculum year group standards and Functional Skills levels. These are made explicit in The Reading Doctor support materials. The texts we use provide opportunities for speaking, listening and communicating/reading/writing texts. They connect closely to our pupils phonics knowledge.

Our systems, methods and resources facilitate reciprocal links between reading and writing and ensure that all pupils have every opportunity to gain phonics knowledge and language comprehension. These skills are necessary to read for meaning and provide pupils with the skills to communicate, allowing for positive future learning experiences and better outcomes in life, including employability.

The structured teaching of phonics is used to teach students at Entry Level for reading and writing.

# Impact

Due to the bespoke and relevant nature of our curriculum, our pupils have good attendance and engagement levels. They are/will be functionally literate and prepared for the workplace and modern world. They will fulfil their potential in English, having overcome any barriers to learning and will leave Cornfields or Belle Vue with relevant qualifications:

## **AQA Unit Awards:**

These are records of achievement in English that lay the foundations for future, recognised qualifications. They offer our pupils the opportunity to have their achievements formally recognised with a certificate each time a short unit of learning is successfully completed. They are a vital stepping stone in terms of creating a pathway to engagement, self-belief and success. The vast range of topics and the differentiation, make them accessible to all our pupils.

## **Functional Skills English for Entry Levels:**

(AQA Step Up To English – Entry Levels 1 and 2 (Silver Award), Entry Level 3 (Gold Award) – a qualification that demonstrates the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English. Also demonstrates the ability to apply this knowledge and these skills in familiar situations. Achievement of these qualifications will provide the basis for further study at Levels 1 and 2.

## **Functional Skills English for Level 1 and Level 2:**

A qualification for work, study and life. Achievement of the qualification demonstrates the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and to apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and in other real-life situations.

## **AQA GCSE English:**

Some of our pupils will be working at/towards this level. Existing skills and knowledge will be assessed and their gaps addressed by a qualified teacher/tutor. They will ensure that the breadth and depth of the GCSE English curriculum is covered so that pupils are well prepared to sit the exams.

# IN SUMMARY

The core purpose of our schools is to 'improve the life chances of children'. In short – we aim to reverse and eradicate the known correlation between poor outcomes in life – and factors that have made pupils vulnerable to underachievement at school. We achieve this by going above and beyond, setting high expectations and improving outcomes by working together with others.

We have a clear and compelling vision about the knowledge and skills that pupils need in order to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Our school ethos and curriculum are firmly embedded with a belief that we can powerfully address social disadvantage.

We are clear about the end points the curriculum is building towards – and what pupils need to know and be able to do to reach those end points. Our school curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught previously.

Ofsted has outlined that schools who take a radical approach to the curriculum – with effective sequencing, structure and implementation – will be assessed favourably. We welcome this autonomy and believe that the curriculum needs to be radically reviewed, as doing more of the same will result in the status quo of underperformance of disadvantaged groups being the norm.

A well-constructed, well-taught curriculum will lead to pupils learning more and – and therefore achieving positive results. We aim to ensure that all of our pupils acquire the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

