

Bracken Hill School Curriculum Pathways

Bracken Hill's curriculum is built on an interconnected approach, with three distinct pathways designed to meet the diverse needs of all learners and support their progression throughout the school. Each pathway fosters resilience, confidence, and emotional regulation, with highly individualised timetables provided where necessary to ensure good progress. The pathways are as follows:

Explorers

Explorers are at early developmental stages, often using pre-verbal or emerging communication. They require high sensory regulation support and learn primarily through play, sensory experiences, and interaction. Engagement is brief and progress is seen through increased attention, communication attempts, and regulation. The focus is on building positive relationships, developing early communication, and creating the foundations for future learning and independence.

Adventurers

Adventurers learn in open, engaging environments with continued need for visuals and sensory support. They are curious, hands-on learners who can engage for short periods. They develop early functional academic skills, emotional understanding, and independence. Support focuses on communication, resilience, decision-making, and preparing for next educational steps.

Pioneers

Pioneers thrive in calm, structured environments where their sensory needs are supported. They engage in practical and purposeful tasks. Learning focuses on emotional regulation, independence, life skills and functional academics to prepare for adulthood, including literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and community participation.

	Explorers		Adventurers		Pioneers	
Key Stage 1	Caterpillars	Ants				
Key Stage 2	Beetles	Bumblebees	Ladybirds	Grasshoppers	Butterflies	Dragonflies
Key Stage 3	Creswell	Newstead	Welbeck	Clumber	Bestwood	
Key Stage 4	Thoresby		Rufford		Sherwood	
Key Stage 5		Wollaton			Kelham	

Explorers	Social Determination Theory: How Needs are Fostered			Expected Outcomes	Potential Progression
Key Characteristics and focus	Enjoy	Believe	Achieve	Regulation, Communication, independence.	Through the school and in future life
Continuous provision – engagement focus Are at very early stages of development May be preverbal or use early communication methods Require high levels of sensory regulation support Are learning how to engage, attend, and interact May not yet be ready for structured group learning Show learning through response, interest, or interaction rather than task completion Have fleeting engagement 2-5 minutes on a focused or preferred activity	Learning through play, exploration, and sensory experiences (Sensory stories, TACPAC) Activities built around individual interests and motivators Adults join pupils in play to create shared enjoyment (Intensive Interaction) Environments designed to feel calm, safe, and inviting Learning experiences are meaningful and motivating (Attention Autism and Engagement Bag) School is a positive, enjoyable place to be Supported to make choices Given time and repetition – continuous provision	Small steps and attempts are recognised and celebrated Communication is valued in all forms Adults model confidence and positive reinforcement Pupils are supported to take safe risks and try new experiences Trust in adults is built through consistency and care Pupils begin to see themselves as capable learners Revisiting tasks. Taking risks	Achievement measured through engagement and interaction Progress seen in increased attention, curiosity, (co)regulation, and communication Success defined by individual development rather than age expectations Foundations built for future learning and independence Improvement in transitions of places and activities.	Improved emotional and sensory regulation with adult support Increased tolerance of routines, transitions, and shared spaces Use of functional communication methods (AAC, symbols, gesture, vocalisation) Ability to express needs, choices, and preferences Growing independence within daily routines and activities Engagement in meaningful, real-life learning experiences Opportunities to achieve accredited outcomes, where appropriate, including ASDAN modules focused on personal development, independence, and life skills	Develop stronger engagement and attention Increase regulation with familiar strategies and support Build confidence and independence within predictable routines and environments Increased tolerance of shared spaces and interactions Functional communication for everyday life Sensory and emotional self-awareness Participation in meaningful activities within their community Wellbeing, dignity, and quality of life in adulthood Typical next steps from Bracken Hill may include: • Specialist post-16 provision (e.g. colleges with complex needs pathways) • Adult social care services • Assisted living or supported living arrangements • Day services, community-based support or specialist activity centres • Short breaks or respite provision

Adventurers	Social Determination Theory: How Needs are Fostered			Expected Outcomes Regulation, Communication, independence.	Potential Progression Through the school and in future life
	Enjoy	Believe	Achieve		
Open and engaging learning environments. Developing self- and co-regulation Mix of pre-verbal and verbal children signs, symbols and visual supports remain important. Fine motor and personal care skills can be challenging. Pupils are curious and enjoy hands-on, play-based and sensory learning,	Pupils are experiential learners who are curious, sensory seeking and able to focus for short bursts of time. Pupils learn in small groups or one-to-one to maximise engagement.	Support encourages confidence and independence. Pupils begin to make decisions, build resilience and perseverance. Pupils develop understanding of feelings, values and respect for others.	Clear routines and small-group or one-to-one support help pupils regulate and focus. Pupils have chances to develop functional academic skills across the curriculum. Adult modelling and questioning are used to extend thinking.	Pupils will communicate their needs, choices and ideas using the most effective method for them Pupils listen and respond to others, and show curiosity by asking questions. Pupils will develop confidence, self-belief, attention and resilience, including independent self-regulation and problem-solving skills, enabling them to persist with challenges and feel pride in their achievements. Tailored support ensures that pupils will be prepared for the next stage of education or adult life.	Develop an understanding of others' opinions and perspectives, responding appropriately to emotions and feelings through effective receptive communication. Engage confidently and independently with familiar and unfamiliar adults and peers, Express themselves clearly, Pupils will know how to access support, make informed choices about learning and daily routines, Use of effective self-regulation strategies, and develop independence appropriate to their needs, enabling pupils to lead happy, fulfilled lives and reach their individual potential. Work towards appropriate qualifications, including entry-level Maths and English, ASDAN PDP (Bronze to Gold), and AQA Unit Awards in Science and RE.

Pioneers	Social Determination Theory: How Needs are Fostered			Expected Outcomes	Potential Progression
Key Characteristics and Focus	Enjoy	Believe	Achieve	Regulation, Communication, independence.	Through the school and in future life
Calm learning environments with predictable routines. Strong relational trust between pupils and staff. High sensory needs including noise sensitivity and emotional overwhelm. Preference for practical, interest-based learning. Learners value safety, kindness, friendships, and quiet spaces. Core Focus Areas. Relevant, Experiential Learning. Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing. Independence and Life Skills. Develop functional skills in preparation for adulthood. Life beyond Bracken Hill.	Calm spaces to support engagement. Sensory support to develop independence. Positive relationships with staff and peers and engaging tasks.	Small-step goals to build confidence. Resilience building activities. Consistent routines provide reassurance Opportunities to celebrate success.	Functional academic progress. Develop improved communication and are able to apply it in a range of environments. Greater independence and self-regulation.	Functionally literate and numerate. Improved emotional regulation and independence. Increased confidence and self-help skills. Be able to live and work independently, plan effectively and problem solve, keep healthy, manage finances and travel independently.	Functional skills in Maths. Entry Level English. PDP Bronze Award. Sports Leaders Award. Bronze D of E. AQA unit awards in Science and RE. Functional skills in maths and English. PDP Gold Award. Bronze and Silver D of E. Amber/Green Travel Training. External progression: specialist colleges or supported employment options.

Routines, Communication and Environments across Curriculum Pathways

At Bracken Hill School we aim to provide a structured, communication-rich and low-arousal school experience that support regulation, learning and developing independence for all pupils. To do this we provide the following approaches to routines, communication and environment consistently across all pathways.

	Routines	Communication	Environment
All Pathways	Common routines are used across all pathways to promote safety, readiness to learn and independence. • Predictable daily structure to reduce anxiety and support engagement • Use of visual timetables appropriate to pupil need • Now and Next / sequencing supports to help pupils understand what is happening and what comes next • Clear start and end points to activities • Supported transitions using visuals, prompts, or sensory strategies • Preparation time built into lessons and transitions • Gradual development of independence within routines (e.g. managing belongings, preparing for work, tidying away) • Flexibility within structure to respond to regulation needs	All pathways share a commitment to accessible, consistent and meaningful communication. • A total communication approach, recognising that pupils may use multiple methods • Use of visual supports alongside spoken language • Consistent systems and language used by all staff • Communication embedded throughout the day, not only during lessons • Adults model communication and language consistently • Processing time given to allow pupils to respond • Communication supports independence, choice making and participation • Expectations that every pupil has a functional means of communication	Learning environments across all pathways are intentionally designed to support regulation, engagement and independence. • Clearly defined areas (e.g. workspaces, group areas, calm/regulation areas) • Calm, low-arousal design with minimal clutter • Resources that are clearly labelled and accessible • Displays that are purposeful and supportive of learning, not overstimulating • Availability of regulation tools or spaces • Environments promote safety, predictability and independence

Explorers	Routines	Communication	Environment
	• Clear but highly flexible timetable, with regulation prioritised before learning • Learning delivered in short, adult-led bursts (1:1 or small group) to match attention and regulation needs • Daily routines are explicitly taught, narrated and rehearsed by adults • Transitions are actively supported, not expected to be independent • Use of songs, timers, and concrete visual prompts to support transitions • Minimal expectation of waiting; pupils move quickly between supported experiences • On arrival, pupils are supported to transition at their own pace, with immediate access to settling or regulation activities • Relaxation times are needs-led and optional, focused on safety and readiness rather than participation or compliance • Independence within routines is heavily scaffolded, with adults supporting every step	• Total Communication is essential, as many pupils are pre-verbal or emerging communicators • Communication support is individualised and highly visual • Core functional words explicitly modelled throughout the day (e.g. <i>go, stop, more, finished</i>) • Adults narrate actions, routines and emotions, rather than relying on questions • Use of Makaton, symbols, objects of reference, photos and speaker buttons embedded into daily experiences • Lanyard symbols used by adults to give consistent, concrete visual cues • Strategic environments created to prompt communication (preferred items out of reach, visuals required to request) • Emotional literacy taught through in-the-moment modelling (e.g. naming emotions and offering regulation choices) • Communication is used to support regulation, choice and safety, not just academic learning • Every pupil is supported to have a functional means of communication, even if highly personalised	• Low-arousal, sensory-aware classroom design to reduce overwhelm • Clearly defined physical spaces to support understanding and regulation, including: group learning area, continuous provision, calm/regulation space, 1:1 workstations • Environment prioritises movement and sensory access, including frequent movement opportunities and access to outdoor spaces multiple times daily • Regulation resources are immediately available, not stored away (e.g. peanut balls, spinning chairs, yoga balls) • Displays are functional and interactive, not decorative • Visual supports (timetables, communication boards) are at pupil height and actively used by adults • Resources are accessible but carefully controlled to reduce sensory overload • Spaces allow pupils to withdraw safely without losing adult support

Adventurers	Routines	Communication	Environment
	• Daily routines remain predictable but place greater emphasis on engagement and participation rather than adult-led regulation • Learning activities are short, engaging and varied, with intentional opportunities for movement and sensory release built in • Pupils are given structured opportunities to practise independence, including: choosing between activities, tidying and organising resources, managing personal belongings with decreasing adult support, allocated classroom roles or jobs (particularly in older key stages) to promote responsibility and purpose • Supported personal care routines embedded into the day, including: handwashing, snack time, dressing/undressing when required • Snack and care routines are used as social learning opportunities, supporting shared attention and interaction • Increasing focus on pupils developing early self-regulation strategies, with adult support following dysregulation rather than pre-empting it	• Support for both pre-verbal and verbal communicators, with recognition and validation of all communication attempts • Increased emphasis on functional, purposeful communication, such as: requesting help, making choices, expressing wants, needs and early emotions • Use of choice boards and objects of reference specifically to support decision-making and autonomy • Adults model communication linked to everyday problem-solving and social situations, not just learning tasks • Focus on moving pupils from reactive communication towards intentional and spontaneous communication • Processing time remains important but expectations for active participation gradually increase	• Learning environments are designed to encourage curiosity, exploration and active engagement • Strong emphasis on play-based and sensory learning, including: water play, construction, messy play, role play • Classrooms are organised into purposeful learning zones that support: sensory exploration, creative learning, quiet or calming activities • Environments support the development of fine motor skills through targeted resources such as: threading, playdough, tweezers, mark-making and construction tasks • Calm spaces and sensory supports remain available but pupils are increasingly encouraged to: recognise when they need them and access them with guidance rather than direction

Pioneers	Routines	Communication	Environment
	• Visual timetables displayed in the classroom every day • Same daily structure across Key Stages 1–3, with adaptations in Key Stages 4–5 • Interventions available outside of the regular timetable • Independence encouraged throughout daily routines, including: making breakfast, packing bags, filling water bottles • Weekly assemblies • Homework set every Friday • Movement breaks built into transition times • Independent Travel Training delivered in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 • Pupils streamed into Maths groups	• Visual timetables used to support understanding and organisation • Word banks linked to current learning • Explicit explanations of new and subject-specific vocabulary • Symbols used in Pioneer classes where appropriate • Instructions kept short, clear and simplified • Direct teaching of functional communication methods, including: scripts, emails, notes, manners • Printed Learning Objectives (LO) and Success Criteria (SC) • Purpose of learning shared explicitly with pupils • Use of: calendars, countdowns to special events, menus, class noticeboards	• Main working area to support whole-class learning • Small breakout area for focused work or regulation • Grouped tables to support collaboration • Information displayed that pupils can independently access • Zones of Regulation board • Reading books readily available • Clearly labelled resources • Individual trays for organisation and independence • Displays focused on: English, Maths, one additional subject (where space allows) • Muted colours used where possible to maintain a low-arousal environment • Calm workspaces available • Use of: Interactive whiteboards (IWB), whiteboards, flip charts