

EXETER HOUSE SCHOOL LOWER SCHOOL CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



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In Lower School at Exeter House School, we are determined to provide all students with a full and broad learning experience that supports them in overcoming their barriers to learning, develops their skills and knowledge. We build on their prior experiences in the Early Years Department, and prepare them for the next stage of their education journey.

The curriculum we have designed enables us to develop increasingly independent students who become successful young people and can transition into adulthood as effectively as possible. Developing communication and independence is central to meeting the needs of our students and this is embedded throughout our curriculum across the age range and need of our students. We design personalised learning programmes that provide an appropriate balance between academic and personal development for each individual. We pride ourselves on looking at each of our students as an individual and creating an educational journey through the school that enables them to develop the core skills needed in life and learning.

We strive to support each student to maximise their potential and are determined not to put a ceiling on what they can achieve. We aim to provide an education that changes lives through increasing aspiration and ensuring access, opportunity, and possibility for all.

Lower School Department Organisation

We understand that children all develop at different rates and we aim to deliver a curriculum with the flexibility to reflect this. Within the Lower School Department, we provide specialist pathways for those pupils who have more complex learning and support needs. These pathways whilst offering a more specialist educational experience offering pupils a personalised programme which combines a specialist curriculum and elements of the departmental curriculums.

Hérons, Swans and Swallows Classes – Lower School Progression Curriculum

In Lower School we prepare the children for a life of learning, whatever their specific needs may be. We build on their early-years' experience and provide a broad and balanced curriculum designed to meet the individual needs of the pupils at this phase of their journey, and to prepare them for the next. We want each child to be fully engaged in their learning. We aim to equip our children with the ability to communicate effectively and have an awareness of themselves and others. We develop their social, attention and engagement skills through a play-based curriculum which allows the children to explore and experience their environment at

their level. We celebrate achievements, however small they may seem; we know that they are in fact significant and meaningful. Our children leave the department confident in their own abilities and ready for the next challenges that they are offered.

Penguins and Swifts Classes - Autism Spectrum Specialist Pathway

This pathway is designed for those learners with more complex Autism and who therefore require a more specialised learning environment and approach to teaching and learning.

Within these classes we understand that the students all have their own specific barriers to learning and require a personalised curriculum tailored to meet individual needs.

Each class follows the **Autism Education Trust (AET) Progression Framework** in conjunction with the Lower School planning framework.

Kingfishers Class - Complex Needs Specialist Pathway

This pathway is for learners with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) and those who have more complex learning needs and therefore require a more sensory based approach to learning. Within the PMLD/Complex Needs specialist class we understand that the students all have their own specific health, physical and/or cognitive barriers to learning and require a personalised curriculum tailored to meet individual needs.

Kingfishers Class follow **The Equals Pre-Formal Curriculum** in conjunction with the Lower School planning framework. A few pupils may also access aspects of Development Matters and The Semi-formal Curriculum as part of their personalised learning.

At every stage of their education, each students' strengths and needs are considered carefully and the best Curriculum pathway for them is chosen and reviewed regularly. This means that challenge is pitched at just the right level for each learner to make the best progress possible. We want all students to be fully engaged in their learning and to develop the skills to enable them to become independent thinkers and learners. We want all our pupils to reach their full potential, develop a love of learning and leave the Lower School Department fully prepared for the next stage.

Lower School Curriculum Pathways

Exeter House Lower School Progression Curriculum	Exeter House Lower School Progression Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communication & language ➤ Physical Development ➤ Personal, Social & Emotional Development ➤ Literacy ➤ Maths ➤ Understanding the World ➤ Expressive Arts & Design 	Autism Curriculum	Autism Education Trust (AET) Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Communication Social Interaction Social Imagination & Flexibility Sensory Processing Learning Emotional Awareness & Self Awareness 	Complex Needs PMLD The Equals Pre-Formal Curriculum	The Equals Pre-Formal Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and Social Sensory Physical Cognition and Challenge Self-Determination and Independence Creative Well-being
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Exeter House Lower School Progression Curriculum

Students following the Lower School Progression Curriculum learn by playing, exploring, being active and through creative thinking and problem solving. This learning takes place both indoors and out. Our bespoke curriculum is adapted from the Development Matters Framework and includes strategies such as Attention Autism and communication support.

There are 7 areas of learning and our teaching is approached in a holistic and flexible way designed to engage each individual. We are proud to be child centered and all of our staff are skilled in developing incidental learning opportunities whenever they occur.

The Three Prime Areas

Communication and language

Pupils will be immersed in a holistic communication environment. Speech and language development will be supported by Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction, Makaton signing, photos, symbols and Assisted Communication Devices such as GridPlayer and Super Core. Pupils will be given opportunities to develop listening skills and be encouraged to express themselves.

Physical development

Pupils will be provided with opportunities to be active. Skills such as co-ordination, gross and fine motor control and movement are developed through Outdoor Play, Riding, Rebound therapy, PE, and Sensory Integration.

Personal, Social and Emotional development

Pupils will be encouraged to have confidence in themselves and to form positive relationships with others.

The four other areas which strengthen and develop all of the core areas:

Literacy – Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of story and books. We have an excellent on-site library facility containing a range of reading materials including sensory stories. Pupils have daily phonics sessions and are encouraged in early writing with a wide range of mark marking materials.

Mathematics – Pupils will encounter the language of maths in everyday situations e.g. counting pupils, sharing items, and singing number songs. They are encouraged to develop an understanding of number, shape, space and measures.

Understanding the World – Pupils are encouraged to investigate, explore and find out about their environment and the world around them. We like to enjoy trips relating to our topics throughout the year, and regular trips out in our local community are an important aspect of weekly timetable. All students have weekly Forest School sessions with a trained leader.

Expressive Arts and Design- Pupils are encouraged to share their thoughts feeling and ideas through a rich variety of creative activities such as Art, Music, role play and Design Technology.

AET Curriculum Framework

Within the Autism Spectrum specialist classes, we understand that the students all have their own specific barriers to learning and require a personalised curriculum tailored to meet individual needs.

Each class adheres to the **Autism Education Trust (AET) Progression Framework** in conjunction with the Lower School planning framework.

Communication and Interaction Including: *Engaging in interaction *Making requests *Communicating information *Listening and understanding *Greetings *Conversations	Social Understanding and Relationships Including: *Being with others *Interactive play *Positive relationships (supporting adults) *Positive relationships and *Friendships (peers) *Group activities	Sensory Processing Including: *Understanding and expressing own sensory needs *Responding to sensory interventions *Increasing tolerance of sensory input *Managing own sensory needs
Interests, Routines and Processing Including: *Coping with change *Transitions *Special interests *Problem solving and thinking skills	AS Curriculum Framework (based on the AET Progression Framework)	Healthy Living Including: *Keeping healthy *Personal care *Relationships and sex education
Learning and Engagement Including: *Learning through play *Motivation and engagement *Organisation and independent learning	Emotional Understanding and Self-Awareness Including: *Understanding and expressing own emotions *Managing emotions and behaviour	Independence and Community Participation Including: *Independent living *Personal safety *Road safety and travel *Leisure

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Understanding and following rules, routines and expectations *Evaluating own learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Understanding others' emotions / intentions *Self-Awareness *Developing confidence and self-esteem 	
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The Equals Pre-Formal PMLD Curriculum

Within the PMLD/Complex needs specialist Kingfishers class we understand that the students all have their own specific health, physical and/or cognitive barriers to learning and require a personalised curriculum tailored to meet individual needs.

Students follow The Equals Pre-formal PMLD Curriculum in conjunction with the lower school planning framework. Some pupils may also access aspects from Development Matters and The Equals Semi-Formal Curriculum as part of their personalised learning.

Communication and Social	Physical	Sensory
Self Determination and Independence	Equals Pre-Formal PMLD Curriculum Areas	
Creative	Well-Being	Cognition and Challenge

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning take place through:

Child initiated activities – Activities selected by the student. Staff observe, model, extend and introduce learning opportunities.

Teacher directed activities – Planned activities with learning objectives based on individual needs. Students work either individually, in small groups or occasionally as a class.

Individual Targets – Personalised targets agreed with parents during structured conversations that take place three times a year. This ensures that parents can be

fully involved in their child's education. These targets are related to the specific needs of each individual.

In addition to classroom-based activities we make full use of our excellent onsite shared facilities. These include soft play, hydrotherapy, jacuzzi, forest school, library, sensory integration room, and sensory room.

Each class has access to offsite activities. These include swimming at Five Rivers Leisure Centre for our older Lower School students, opportunities for therapeutic riding at RDA in Wilton and trips into the community to learn independence and life skills.

Students have access to a range of therapeutic opportunities including rebound therapy, music therapy, therapeutic riding and sensory integration therapy.

Communication

Development of communication is central to all teaching and learning and we aim to provide a total communication approach. At Exeter House School we have an onsite Speech and Language Therapist and support from a Communication Lead.

Communication methods include Makaton, Objects of Reference, speech, gestures, body signing, speech, communication software with AAC devices, EyeGaze in our PMLD class and Intensive Interaction. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is widely used for pupils in the department.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development. This technique involves having fun, playing and sharing attention with another person as well as aiming to develop non-verbal communication such as gesture and body language. This technique is used extensively by all staff during planned discrete sessions and incidental learning opportunities throughout the day as appropriate for each pupil.

Sensory Integration

Sensory integration is the ability to process, interpret and use information received through the senses. Sensory integration (a balanced nervous system) develops through typical childhood activities and experiences. It is the foundation for more complex learning and behaviour.

There is a link between a person's ability to deal with sensory input effectively and their behaviour and emotional development. For many students at Exeter House School, sensory integration development is atypical. These students may experience difficulties in learning, motor skills and behaviour.

A person's response to sensory input will affect their arousal state. To be able to function, a person needs to be able to maintain an optimal level of arousal, that is, to be in a state of readiness to learn and respond appropriately.

Students have access to individual sessions in the sensory integration room and staff integrate sensory strategies into daily classroom activities. These interventions help students to modulate their level of sensory arousal to achieve the 'calm alert' state required to engage and participate.

Attention Autism

Our Attention Autism or 'bucket' sessions are a highly motivating and creative approach to building attention and early communication skills. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication using visually based, highly motivating activities. The primary objective is that the sessions are fun and offer an irresistible invitation to learn. In Lower School classes we often use this method to introduce new vocabulary, concepts in phonics and maths, and practice skills across the curriculum.

Aims of Attention Autism are to engage attention, improve joint attention, develop shared enjoyment in group activities, increase attention in adult-led activities, encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting, increase non-verbal and verbal communication through commenting, build a wealth and depth of vocabulary and have fun!

The Attention Autism programme progresses through a series of stages, building on each skill level. Each new stage is introduced when the child is ready to expand attention skills.

Stage 1 – The Bucket to focus Attention

Stage 2 – Building Attention

Stage 3 - Interactive Game (turn-taking and Re-engaging attention)

Stage 4 – Individual Activity (focus shift and re-engage attention)

Reading

At Exeter House School we believe in seeking out the extraordinary in everyone. We aim to ensure that our students have the best access to education, increasing opportunity and possibility for all and enabling them to flourish and feel a valuable part of society. The life skill of reading is vital to this aim and we place huge importance in ensuring that our students build confidence in their own ability to be able to read and experience the world around them through a love of books and reading. Teachers model reading regularly and engage in sensory sessions for students who need support to access reading and listening with props and sensory experiences. Classrooms are language rich environments with key vocabulary displayed. Children are encouraged to take reading books home to read and share with parent/carers.

Phonics

Students in Lower School join in with Attention Autism phonics sessions, discrete phonics teaching, continuous provision activities, workbox TEACCH approach activities and personalised intervention programmes. We focus on providing highly engaging, visual and sensory activities which are engaging and support students' overlearning and developing skills. As students progress, we use Bug Club phonics scheme to support learners with their knowledge of phonemes/graphemes, blending and segmenting and early reading skills.

Cued Articulation

Our Cued Articulation phonics alphabet was designed specifically to meet the varying needs of our students and to allow them to develop their phonic skills in a meaningful and accessible way. We have used a combination of approaches which allow the students to link letter sounds to specific actions, therefore increasing their recall and memory of the letter sounds. Each hand movement represents one sound and the cue gives clues as to how and where the sound is produced. Cued articulation is used to support students to make the sound clearly and we practice this skill during Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) sessions and phonics to support their reading development.

Colourful Semantics



Colourful semantics reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then colour codes them. The approach is used in stages and helps children develop language and vocabulary in addition to grammatical structure. It can be used to help children who are starting to develop language and have limited vocabulary to confident

talkers who struggle to organise the grammatical content of their sentences. This approach is built into daily routines such as Story Sharing, SALT sessions and Workbox activities.

Writing

Across all environments, writing is explicitly seen throughout the environments in print form, supported by Widgit symbols to help aid the visual elements to learners. Each pathway across the school allows for writing to be explored in a meaningful way with different resources. In regards to traditional approaches to writing, there are many different resources such as crayons, sensory items (flour, sand, foam etc.), pencils and paper to aid mark making.

As the fundamental foundations to writing are based on fine and gross motor skills, classes are provided with different items to help with these developments. Within PE sessions, gross motor skills promoting gross motor skills are frequently worked up, no matter the strand or age of the individual. Each class also has plenty of resources to aid fine motor skills such as threading, scissors, tweezers and other toys to promote bi-lateral movement to aid crossing the midline alongside finger and arm strength to manipulate tools. This is taught through fine motor sessions to practise threading, twisting, weaving etc. In order to aid development, items such as a variety of pencil grips help refine pencil grip development alongside writing slopes.

Within Exeter House School, we have access to an Occupational Therapist (OT) who can provide specialist support and also delivers regular CPD training to all members of staff to help aid progression of these skills. They allow for elements such as correct seating arrangements, provide information on sensory integration and other intervention methods to allow all students to make progress.

Maths

Maths for students in Lower School is highly practical. Students enjoy maths tasks in TEACCH workboxes, discrete taught Maths sessions, maths themed Attention Autism sessions, mental maths, continuous provision activities in the setting and personalised maths intervention sessions. Students are supported to generalise the skills learnt and we revisit concepts which allows students to apply their mathematical skills in 'real world' situations.

TEACCH

Each class follows the TEACCH programme of structured teaching.

This addresses:

- Organisation of the physical environment (minimising distractions, segmenting the environment to add meaning)
- Use of individual schedules (helping students to know what is happening during the day)
- Visual structure (including visual instructions, visual organization and visual clarity)
- Work systems (a system to inform students what work and how much work needs to be completed)

PSHE

We follow a SEND framework for PSHE. It covers the following topics and themes within both KS1-2: Self-Awareness (Me, who I am, my likes, dislikes, strengths and interests), Self-care, Support and Safety (Looking after myself and keeping safe; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education.), Managing Feelings (Understanding feelings, and that how I feel and how others feel affects choices and behaviour; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education), Changing and Growing (How I and others are changing; new opportunities and responsibilities; aspects of Relationships and Sex Education), Healthy Lifestyles (Being and keeping healthy, physically and mentally), The World I Live In (Living confidently in the wider world)

Assessment

We assess students on Evidence for Learning (E4L) - and track their progress towards their EHCP targets and 'small steps' in their curriculum goals. It supports an **Inquiry-based approach** to education and provision, that allows both parents/carers and

school to gather photo and video evidence, linked to the individual's learning goals as well as any key skills frameworks. Observations can be annotated and tagged to reflect the curriculum area. We track students' Lower School attainment data on E4L.

Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Strands

Regardless of which Curriculum Pathway learners take there are five overarching strands that are built into all aspects of our curriculum. At each phase of their educational journey the balance of these strands may be different based on the identified priorities for that age group and/or individual. However, each phase is designed to build on what has come before and prepare for what is coming next, with the overarching aim of preparing all learners for life after school. These 5 strands are evaluated within the Annual Review process as well as being tracked through the core curriculum targets. **Annual Reviews** are held to discuss progress in all areas and are attended by the whole team around the child.

Overarching Curriculum Strands

- Social and Emotional
- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and Physical
- Independence

Overarching Curriculum Strands

		Social & Emotional	Cognition & Learning	Communication & Interaction	Sensory & Physical	Independence
Lower School	EH Lower School Progression curriculum	Personal, Social & Emotional Development	Literacy Maths Understanding of the World	Communication & Language	Physical Development Expressive Art & Design	Physical Development
	Autism Curriculum	Emotional Understanding and Self Awareness Healthy Living	Learning and Engagement Interest, Routines and Processing	Communication and Interaction Social Understanding and Relationships	Sensory Processing	Independence & Community Participation
	Pre-Formal	Social relationships Creative Well-being	Cognition and Challenge	Communication		Life Skills

Overarching Curriculum Strands

Topic Cycles

A rolling programme of termly themes are in place across the departments to provide a context for learners to engage with the curriculum. Themes have been selected with the age of the learners in mind and to motivate and stimulate pupils to engage with the learning process. Following a theme for a term ensures sufficient time is given to provide depth and coverage, as well as to ensure pupils have plenty of opportunities to practice and consolidate new skills.

Year	Term	Lower School
Year 1	Autumn Term	Traditional Stories
	Spring Term	Night and Day/Time and Space
	Summer Term	Weather
Year 2	Autumn Term	At Home and Around the World
	Spring Term	Animals
	Summer Term	Plants
Year 3	Autumn Term	Me and My Friends
	Spring Term	Prehistoric Creatures
	Summer Term	Under the Sea