Curriculum policy

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1.Introduction

This Curriculum Policy forms part of the wider Phoenix Bay School offer. It articulates our intent, the principles guiding our implementation, and the ways in which we recognise and celebrate impact for every young person.

Our curriculum has been shaped collaboratively by the Head of School, Proprietor, consultants, staff, students and parents/carers. It continues to evolve in response to the voices, strengths and needs of our school community.

At Phoenix Bay, we understand that a broad curriculum is not defined by the number of subjects offered, but by the depth of experience, relevance, and opportunity it provides. We prioritise learning that restores confidence, builds competence and prepares young people not only for employment, but for safe, fulfilling and independent adult lives.

2.Our Mission

To create authentic, meaningful opportunities within a trauma-informed educational setting, enabling students to thrive beyond the classroom and feel prepared for the opportunities and challenges of everyday life.

We are committed to supporting every student to:

- Rediscover their capacity to learn
- Develop intuition, agency and self-awareness
- Build resilience through secure, trusting relationships
- Reach their potential at a pace that respects their developmental readiness

3.The Phoenix Bay Way: Vision

Phoenix Bay School is a trauma-informed independent school providing therapeutic education to support students in developing increasingly independent lives and flourishing in adulthood.

We offer a small, nurturing environment for students who have experienced trauma and who have found larger or mainstream educational settings overwhelming or unsafe. Many of our students have experienced exclusion, disrupted education, or difficulty accessing previous specialist provision.

We believe:

- Every child is a capable learner.
- Behaviour communicates need.
- Emotional safety precedes academic progress.
- Strong, consistent relationships are the foundation for growth.

We recognise that many students arrive functioning emotionally or developmentally below their chronological age due to adverse experiences. Our approach honours their developmental stage and prioritises readiness for learning over age-based expectations.

For many, formal education and large-group settings have previously triggered anxiety, dysregulation, withdrawal or distress behaviours. At Phoenix Bay, learning begins with safety. Through small groups, predictable routines, relational consistency and individually tailored learning pathways, students begin to re-engage with education — sometimes for the first time in a positive way.

Readiness for learning grows when students:

- Feel emotionally and physically safe
- Trust the adults supporting them
- Experience success
- Have meaningful choice and voice

From this foundation, curriculum content becomes the vehicle for curiosity, mastery and enjoyment.

We work closely with parents and carers to ensure a joined-up approach that places each student’s emotional wellbeing and lived experience at the centre of planning. Through relational support and restorative approaches to peer conflict, students develop the confidence and skills needed to participate in larger groups and, where appropriate, transition into mainstream education, further education, training or employment.

4.Phoenix Bay Way: Curriculum Values

Our curriculum is rooted in the following values:

- **Empowering** – building agency, independence and belief in self
- **Therapeutic** – supporting regulation, attachment and emotional growth
- **Voice** – honouring student perspectives and lived experience
- **Choice** – fostering autonomy within safe, structured boundaries
- **Authentic** – grounded in real-life application and purpose
- **Inspiring** – nurturing curiosity and hope
- **Achieving** – celebrating progress in all its forms

5.Curriculum Aims

The Phoenix Bay School Curriculum integrates meaningful education, care and therapeutic understanding. It is designed to:

- Rebuild healthy attachment to learning
- Raise self-esteem through consistent experiences of success
- Address gaps in knowledge, skills and developmental progression
- Support emotional regulation and resilience
- Provide purposeful pathways toward adulthood

We aspire for our students to become:

Successful Learners

Young people who rediscover enjoyment in learning, make meaningful progress and feel safe coming to school.

Confident Individuals

Young people who develop self-belief, self-awareness and the ability to thrive beyond the classroom.

Responsible Citizens

Young people prepared for adult life, able to contribute positively and engage thoughtfully with the wider world.

Independent Adults

Young people equipped with the practical, emotional and interpersonal skills needed to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

6.Designing Bespoke Curriculum Pathways

At Phoenix Bay, student voice sits at the heart of curriculum design.

Each student has a bespoke learning pathway shaped by:

- Their interests and aspirations
- Their developmental readiness
- Their emotional regulation needs
- Their long-term life goals

Staff support students to understand that certain core areas of learning are essential for widening opportunities in adult life. These form part of every timetable, while a significant proportion of learning time is shaped by student choice.

Students select option subjects from the Phoenix Bay School Six Faculties offer. The balance across faculties varies according to starting points, ambitions and evolving interests. As our community grows, our curriculum continues to expand to meet individual needs.

During secondary years, careers education is embedded through all eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Careers guidance meaningfully informs subject choices and ensures that learning pathways connect to realistic and aspirational next steps.

7.The Common Offer

While personalised, our curriculum includes shared experiences that reflect our core values and entitlement for all learners.

Literacy

Reading is central to our curriculum. We nurture a love of story through our Reading Ripple Framework, recognising its role in:

- Emotional development and regulation
- Identity formation
- Employment opportunity
- Lifelong wellbeing

Writing is embedded across subjects to provide authentic purpose and meaningful audience.

Numeracy and Financial Awareness

Daily opportunities to develop number, shape and measurement skills are provided in practical, relevant contexts. Financial literacy is taught through mathematics, real-life experiences, and community-based learning to support independence and informed decision-making.

PSHCE, RSE and British Values

Personal, social, health and citizenship education is central to our curriculum. Through focus days, themed weeks and integrated teaching, students explore:

- Relationships
- Emotional literacy
- Consent and boundaries
- Health and wellbeing
- Diversity and inclusion
- Democratic values

RSE and Health Education are delivered in line with current statutory guidance, in a manner that is sensitive, inclusive and developmentally appropriate.

Physical Education, Fitness and Wellbeing

Movement and physical wellbeing are prioritised as tools for regulation, resilience and self-confidence. Students are supported to understand the connection between physical and emotional health.

8.Real-World Learning

Many of our students have previously found traditional core subjects challenging. At Phoenix Bay, these subjects are delivered through authentic, real-life contexts wherever possible. Community access, enterprise activities, creative projects and vocational experiences give purpose to academic learning and strengthen engagement.

This approach:

- Reduces anxiety around abstract learning
- Builds transferable life skills
- Strengthens resilience

- Supports generalisation of learning beyond the classroom

9.Developing Essential Life and Employability Skills

Through core lessons and enrichment, students develop the soft skills that underpin adult success, including:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Creativity
- Task planning and organisation
- Customer service
- Adaptability

Self-confidence is built gradually and intentionally. We recognise that confidence grows through co-regulation, repeated experiences of success, and feeling valued. Over time, this develops into resilience — one of the strongest indicators of positive adult outcomes for our students.

10.Measuring and Celebrating Impact

At Phoenix Bay, impact is not measured solely by examination outcomes. We recognise progress in:

- Emotional regulation
- Relationship building
- Engagement in learning
- Attendance and participation

- Independence skills
- Academic achievement
- Aspirational planning

We celebrate growth in all its forms and ensure that success is visible, acknowledged and shared with students and families.

11.Phoenix Bay Pathways to Post 16

The Phoenix Bay School offer for KS4 is designed to ensure a smooth transition for Students into KS5 education and beyond. Central to the offer is the provision of six distinct pathway options for Students to follow: being delivered within a nurturing class-based, therapeutic education offer. This pathway model will enable KS4 education at Phoenix Bay School to be implemented.

Some specialist choices as well as the style and level of outcomes will differ to match starting points and pathway choices, creating a truly bespoke offer. Collectively, the carefully chosen subjects and experiences will cover the intended Phoenix Bay School outcomes of preparing our students to thrive as independent adults, with strong foundations to continue their education as lifelong learners.

We know that to thrive as adults, our students will need to have the widest range possible of employment options. Phoenix Bay School will utilise local community strengths and opportunities to build programs of vocational learning and experiences of the World of Work. As fitting with the Gatsby benchmarks for excellence in Careers Provision, the Phoenix Bay School KS4 Curriculum will also provide the core skills and 'soft' skills that employers seek, preparing Phoenix Bay School Students for sustainable employment in adulthood.

12.Personal Development and Well Being

Along with academic progress, Phoenix Bay School places great importance on the personal development of each Student. Formal and informal opportunities to make progress in this aspect of their development will be provided onsite and beyond (see RSE summary at the end of this policy). This area of progress will be tracked and suitably celebrated. A well-being passport will ensure that the recording of student progress in their personal development is neither forgotten, nor narrow in its definition.

13.Assessment and Qualifications

The assessment and recording of progress in KS4 and beyond will also be individualised, with some students requiring the measurement of learning progress to be recognised through internally driven benchmarks and certification, while most will access a range of standardised accreditation with transferable points for further education.

To provide the broadest range of options, where a pathway is chosen that requires an exam not able to be administered by Phoenix Bay, the school will decide on the best method of delivering that choice for the student. This will include the possibility of registering Students for exams with a partnership school/organisation.

14.Teaching and Learning- The Phoenix Bay Way:

At Phoenix Bay School we know that high quality teaching and learning supported by a holistic therapeutic approach is the key to success for our students. We understand that our students may have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills across all curriculum areas and ensure that our formative and summative assessment procedures provide us with dynamic information to ensure a bespoke plan for each child in every subject area.

We follow Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction to ensure that students gradually gain confidence and independence as they master new skills. Regular retrieval, guided practice and independent practice ensure that students embed new knowledge into their long term memories.

Planning of learning is bespoke to each individual child and their student profile, pen portrait and EHCP targets and teachers gather this information in an S plan for each student for each subject area. These S plans ensure that all areas of need are taken into consideration when planning each learning episode.

Rosenshein's Principles of Instruction.

Retrieval practice	Presenting information in small steps.	Questioning	Provide models and worked examples	Guided practice/High success rate.
Check student		Review and monitor	Weekly and Monthly learning	

understanding	Scaffolding	independent practice	reviews.	

15. Measuring the impact of the Curriculum

In order to evaluate the impact of the Phoenix Bay School curriculum, we will answer the following questions based on our agreed accountability measures:

Does every Student enjoy school?

- Optimum attendance
- Positive engagement
- Participation
- Achievements

Is every Student a reader?

- Meeting ambitious Reading targets annually
- Reading ability not preventing students from achieving the highest level of qualification within their individual capabilities

Do we have aspirational expectations for all Students?

- Staff and Students share ambitious targets and goals.

Is every Student sufficiently improved in confidence?

- Able to participate in society and make their voice heard.
- Significantly more confident than on arrival at Phoenix Bay

Is every Student sufficiently equipped with numeracy and literacy to take their place in the world of work?

- Clear pathways to employability

Is every student a Leader?

- A leadership role in school and/or beyond
- School delivers the knowledge, understanding, skills and experience to be a leader.

Is every Student sufficiently independent to thrive as adults in society?

- Significant progress along Phoenix Bay Independence descriptors table

Do all Students have the knowledge and understanding to make healthier lifestyle choices?

- Completed PE, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Passport
- Living significantly healthier lifestyle than on arrival at Phoenix Bay

16. Relationships Education, Sex Education and Health Education at Phoenix Bay: A summary

Phoenix Bay School works on the basis that Relationships Education is compulsory in all primary schools, Sex Education is compulsory in all secondary schools and, although Health Education is not compulsory for independent schools, it is advisable.

Our students are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. Although this presents positive and exciting opportunities for them, they need to know how to be safe and healthy.

Our guiding principles are that all subject content will be age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate for our students and always with the aim of providing them with the knowledge they need of the law. All content (see below) will support the wider work of the school in helping to foster student well-being and develop their resilience and character that we acknowledge are fundamental to them going on to be happy, successful and productive members of society. Alongside the specific content Phoenix Bay School will support the development of personal attributes such as kindness, integrity, generosity and honesty.

Parents and carers have a right to request to withdraw students from part or all of sex education (but not Relationships or Health Education). If such a request is submitted, the school will be informed by the process for headteachers to follow in considering such a request, as detailed in the DfE RSE statutory guidance.

The bulk of the taught Relationships and Sex Education at Phoenix Bay School will be delivered as part of the PSHE program. School staff will be mindful not to duplicate content covered in national curriculum areas such as citizenship, science, computing and P.E.

Phoenix Bay School is aware that for the majority of our students, the distinction between the online world and other aspects of life is less marked than for some adults. Our students need to aware that social media users are sometimes prepared to say things in more extreme, unkind or exaggerated ways than they might in face-to-face situations and some users present highly exaggerated or idealised profiles of themselves online. Phoenix Bay School students should also be aware that certain websites may share personal data about their users and information collected on their internet use, for commercial purposes.

Phoenix Bay School recognises that Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education must be accessible for all students and that this is particularly important when planning teaching for students with special educational needs and disabilities. High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will be the starting point to ensure accessibility. Phoenix Bay staff will be mindful of the preparing of adult outcomes, as set out in the SEND code of practice.

In RSE, Phoenix Bay School will ensure that the needs of all students are appropriately met, and that all students understand the importance of equality and respect.

Phoenix Bay School will not unlawfully discriminate against students because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics).

When it is appropriate to teach students at Phoenix Bay School about LGBT, the content will be fully integrated into the programs study for this area rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson.

RSE Primary:

- Families and people who care for me.
- Caring friendships
- Respectful relationships
- Online relationships
- Being safe

RSE Secondary:

- Families
- Respectful relationships including friendships.
- Online and Media
- Being Safe
- Intimate sexual relationships, including sexual health.

Physical health and mental well-being Primary:

- Mental well-being.
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco
- Health and prevention

- Basic first aid
- Changing adolescent body

Physical health and mental well-being Secondary:

As above - revisited

For full details please refer to the Phoenix Bay School policy for Relationships Education and RSE, established in consultation with parents, governors, and the wider community.