

Elysian

Curriculum Policy



Date Agreed: April 2025

Date of next review: April 2026

Elysian is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy is applicable across all sites on which Elysian operates.

Curriculum Statement

Introduction

At Elysian, we provide a personalised, cohesive curriculum that integrates the natural farm environment with age- and ability-appropriate learning materials. Our approach prioritises knowledge progression through a well-sequenced, two-year rolling programme tailored to different year groups, supported by AQA unit awards. A key focus is on embedding functional skills in Maths and English across all learning areas, ensuring young people develop essential skills for everyday life and future opportunities.

Our curriculum is **skills-based**, with planning starting from the key skills we want our young people to learn. Activities are then carefully designed to support the teaching and learning of those skills, with meaningful, contextual links made to the farm environment. This approach ensures that learning feels relevant, practical, and engaging, while also deepening understanding.

We implement a spiral curriculum approach, ensuring knowledge and skills are revisited, reinforced, and extended over time. Rather than focusing on what young people are doing, our curriculum is centred on what they are learning—what they know, remember, and can build upon. Each session, regardless of subject focus, begins with a recap starter activity to revisit prior learning. This allows young people to clearly see how their existing knowledge connects to new learning, supporting the principle that if they know more, they remember more.

By grounding learning in hands-on, experiential activities, we ensure that abstract concepts become tangible and memorable. For example, mathematical concepts such as measurement and ratios are applied practically through animal care routines, weighing feed, and managing resources. Literacy skills are developed through tasks like writing care guides, storytelling inspired by the animals, or documenting observations.

At Elysian, many of our young people have uneven learning profiles, with varying strengths and challenges across subjects. Initial assessments, background reports, and ongoing observations give us a clear picture of each young person's current abilities and needs. This informs both mentoring and curriculum planning, allowing for tailored support and targeted progression.

Through bespoke learning packages and therapeutic engagement with the farm and animals, we address gaps in knowledge while promoting personal and academic growth. This allows every young person to progress in a way that is meaningful, achievable, and reflective of their individual journey.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the Young Person's responsibility to;

- attend the provision when required.
- try their best to be involved in the learning opportunities.
- accept help and guidance.

- ensure they do not stop others from learning.
- keep themselves, others, and animals safe.

It is the responsibility of all staff to;

- ensure staff, animals and young people are safe.
- follow policies.
- encourage young people to engage in learning opportunities, wherever appropriate to do so.

It is the responsibility of teaching staff, instructors and session leaders to;

- plan engaging and motivating sessions, based on individual learning pathways.
- have clear, relevant and targeted objectives for each session.
- have all materials and resources ready at the start of each session.
- assess and record learning which takes place.
- evaluate effectiveness of sessions on a regular basis, making changes where needed.

It is the responsibility of the Leadership Team to;

- support the staff who deliver sessions in any way required.
- ensure staff have appropriate training and resources to facilitate sessions.
- monitor and evaluate teaching, learning, curriculum content and outcomes.

Senior leaders at Elysian have a detailed and structured monitoring schedule in place to ensure consistency, quality, and progression in teaching and learning across all sites. This includes regular monitoring of half-termly planning, weekly planning, and young people's work, enabling us to track curriculum delivery and individual progress closely.

We also monitor progress against Functional Skills targets, ensuring that all young people are making clear progress from their starting points, with particular focus on literacy and numeracy development across all learning areas.

In addition, leaders carry out on-the-floor coaching to support staff in real time, offering guidance, modelling, and reflective discussions to strengthen day-to-day practice. Targeted CPD sessions are delivered in response to identified needs, and constructive feedback is provided to the teaching team to support ongoing professional development.

This monitoring schedule is shared and implemented across all sites, promoting a collaborative approach where staff support one another, share best practice, and work together to ensure every young person receives a consistent and high-quality educational experience.

Intent

Aims

Through the effective delivery of the curriculum at Elysian, we aim to;

- put young people at Elysian's core, putting their interests above those of the institution.
- promote a positive attitude towards learning so that young people enjoy coming to school.
- develop young people's resilience in a happy and safe learning environment.
- strengthen self-esteem, self-confidence and promote a strong sense of self-worth.
- have a curriculum that is fit for purpose, offering differentiation and personalisation.

- prepare all young people for a successful adult and working life in a 21st century global society.
- ensure that the young people understand and do not undermine fundamental British values.
- be committed to excellence and continuous improvement.
- value vocational and academic routes equally.
- nurture the talents of all and celebrate success.
- recognise the crucial role which parents/carers play in their children's education and make every effort to encourage parental involvement in their educational process.
- work with the young people's previous and future setting and parents/carers to ease transition.

Our school's curriculum vision is to meet each young people's diverse and unique needs through an inclusive, farm-based approach, providing opportunities for every young people to reach their full potential socially, emotionally, and academically. At Elysian, we recognise the daily barriers to learning that each young person encounters and understand the profound impact these challenges have on both learning and behaviour. Our curriculum is designed to flexibly adjust each aspect of the educational day, ensuring it aligns with and supports the individual needs of each young people.

Elysian's curriculum emphasises sensory processing, fully utilising the rich sensory environment of the farm setting. This approach supports young people in managing their sensory needs, helping them stay regulated and engaged, and creating an environment where learning can truly flourish.

Our curriculum content covers 8 areas of learning, often through cross-curricular sessions.

- Linguistic
- Mathematical
- Scientific
- Human and Social
- Technological
- Aesthetic and Creative
- Physical
- PSHE

In addition to these core areas, our curriculum integrates Sex & Relationships Education and PSHE in diverse ways that thoughtfully consider each young people's needs. These subjects are often linked to interactions with our animals or taught explicitly in small, developmentally appropriate groups. Furthermore, opportunities for Social, Moral, Spiritual, and Cultural Development are woven throughout the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on promoting British Values. This holistic approach ensures that young people not only gain academic knowledge but also develop a deep understanding of themselves, their relationships, and their place in society.

Implementation

Our curriculum delivery is carefully structured to acknowledge the unique starting points of each young people and the specific challenges faced by those with high anxiety in a school setting. While we prioritise adapting our approaches to meet these needs, we remain aspirational in our goal to support every young people in re-engaging with more traditional learning methods, preparing them for the next stage in their educational journey. Through close consultation among young people, therapists, and education staff, each young people begins their journey on one of three tailored pathways. Based on

their progress, mental health, and evolving needs, young people have the flexibility to move between pathways, ensuring a responsive approach to their development and well-being. These pathways are illustrated below.

The Engage Pathway

The Engage Pathway offers a highly individualised, support-led curriculum designed for young people in crisis. This pathway is meticulously differentiated, focusing on young people who have disengaged from education or require crisis intervention. Through a fully personalised approach, each intervention is planned with a solution-focused perspective to meet the immediate needs of the young people. The curriculum is tailored to provide a continuum of support, promoting confidence-building and facilitating re-engagement within the learning community.

Young people on the Engage Pathway have opportunities to achieve AQA Unit Award Certificates and to begin working on practical projects toward an Integrative Education (IE) Award. This pathway enables young people to grow and develop, ensuring they are mentally and socially prepared to transition to more formal education or training, whether that means advancing to another Elysian pathway or exploring post-placement opportunities.

The Explore Pathway

The Explore Pathway is designed to meet young people where they are in their learning journey. It offers a more vocational curriculum with overarching themes that resonate personally with each young person, providing meaningful and relevant contexts for learning. Through this pathway, young people engage in project-based learning with a strong kinaesthetic focus, encouraging them to experience success and develop a positive relationship with learning. These hands-on projects not only support young people in working towards the Integrative Education (IE) Award but also serve as preparation for undertaking Functional Skills qualifications.

The Explore Pathway also enables young people to concentrate on developing their functional skills alongside all other curriculum areas through a focused and targeted approach. This pathway provides structured support that tailors learning experiences to each young person's needs, helping them build core competencies while engaging in broader curriculum content. By combining vocational and academic learning, the Explore Pathway supports well-rounded growth and prepares young people for future educational and career opportunities.

The Inspire Pathway

The Inspire Pathway at Elysian presents a robust approach to fostering high achievement among young people by providing them with access to a challenging academic curriculum. Designed for high-attaining young people, this pathway not only raises aspirations but also actively supports young people in reaching new heights in their educational journeys.

The Elysian curriculum's spiral design allows young people to continuously revisit and build on essential skills and knowledge throughout the academic year. This approach reinforces learning by helping young people to solidify core concepts over time, creating a strong foundation for future learning. Lesson planning within the curriculum emphasizes immersion in specific concepts or tasks, enabling young people to explore and understand what success looks and feels like in each subject area.

Practical, hands-on activities are a key feature of the curriculum, giving young people ample opportunity to practice and refine new skills. This experiential approach is complemented by teaching that not only builds on prior knowledge but also encourages young people-led learning. Each unit concludes with young people applying their acquired skills and knowledge to real-life contexts, fostering relevance and deeper understanding.

As they progress, young people are prepared for Functional Skills exams, which play a critical role in their academic achievements. Moreover, the Inspire Pathway promotes autonomy in learning, enabling young people to pursue self-guided projects that culminate in the accomplishment of the IE Award, a significant milestone recognising their dedication and growth.

The Equine Pathway

At Elysian, our Equine Pathway provides young people with a comprehensive understanding of horse care, behaviour, and management, combining both theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience. This pathway is designed as a single level with extension exercises available for those who have a more advanced knowledge of equine studies.

Alongside this, we offer a structured **Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum** award scheme for our riding and groundwork curriculum, allowing learners to develop their skills in a clear progression.

To ensure a well-rounded educational experience, we integrate Functional Skills in Maths and English throughout the pathway. In Maths, young people apply numeracy skills in real-world contexts such as measuring feed quantities, calculating horse weights and rations, working with time and schedules for stable management, and measuring distances for jumps and exercises. Data handling is developed through tracking horse health indicators, recording exercise plans, and analysing progress. In English, young people build literacy skills through writing care guides, reading and interpreting equine health records, completing stable logs, and engaging in discussions or presentations on equine topics.

We also promote cross-curricular learning by linking the Equine Pathway to Science (exploring anatomy, biology, digestion, and health conditions), PSHE (focusing on teamwork, responsibility, and emotional regulation through animal care), and Physical Education (enhancing core strength, balance, and coordination in riding and groundwork). This interdisciplinary approach ensures that learning is practical, relevant, and engaging, equipping young people with the knowledge, confidence, and skills needed to explore future career pathways within the equine industry.

Through this structured and progression-focused approach, learners develop resilience, competence, and independence in a meaningful, hands-on environment.

Impact

The Elysian curriculum's impact is assessed through a comprehensive set of strategies that allow the teaching team to monitor and support each young people's progress. During learning sessions, teachers employ varied assessment techniques such as observations, targeted questioning, mini challenges, "show me" exercises, exploration invitations, and written tasks. All evidence is systematically logged on SEESAW, and individual progress is recorded on functional skills tracking sheets, categorising young people as emerging, embedded, or secure for each objective. This approach provides the teaching team with detailed insight into each young people's current understanding,

identifies areas yet to be covered, and highlights gaps in learning, empowering young people to take ownership of their progress and set personal goals.

Staff regularly review SEESAW entries and the functional skills trackers, to assess each young people's knowledge, confidence level, and next steps, which directly inform future planning. This reflective practice allows teachers to tailor activities to each young people's needs, often incorporating the young people's perspective in planning where appropriate. Over time, SEESAW evidence, coupled with "readiness to learn" ratings from the database and the trackers, builds a personalised learning journal for each young people, allowing staff to track individual growth and progression.

Progress in English and Maths is measured against the criteria of the Functional Skills program, providing a structured approach to monitoring achievement in these core subjects. For other areas, progress is demonstrated through functional skills tracking sheets and the completion of AQA unit awards, covering learning objectives from pre-entry to Level 2. These awards are tailored to meet specific learning outcomes in each subject area, building in complexity as young people advance.

Additionally, progress is documented against the IE Award outcomes on SEESAW, supported by inter-project review sessions that help young people reflect on their growth. Elysian also evaluates progress through a unique set of criteria that recognise the integral connection between young people's learning styles, social and emotional development, and behaviour. This holistic approach ensures that both academic and personal development are supported and celebrated throughout each young people's journey.

The Readiness to Learn criteria covers the following areas:

- ability to work independently;
- ability to work in a group;
- social and communication skills;
- ability to carry out directed learning;
- ability to direct own learning;
- level of resilience; and
- ability to regulate emotional and sensory needs.

Elysian's assessment framework includes session-by-session ratings of each young people against a set of social, emotional, and behavioural criteria. This approach enables continuous monitoring of progress, acknowledging the varied backgrounds and unique readiness levels that each young people brings. Collaboration between educational and therapeutic staff is central to this process, ensuring that each young people receives curriculum delivery in a manner tailored to their individual needs.

Young people have the opportunity to discuss their preferred learning styles with staff, whose observations and insights further shape the educational experience. Together, these perspectives inform decisions about timetables, activities, and teaching methods, creating a more personalised approach. Progression is not only measured through academic achievement but also in terms of engagement and the young people's capacity to handle increasing social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. This approach facilitates young people's emotional and intellectual growth, equipping them with the skills necessary to transition smoothly to new stages of learning and life experiences.

In this way, Elysian's curriculum supports holistic development, fostering resilience and adaptability while building foundational skills for future learning and personal success.

The role of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

At Elysian, every young person has an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), which guides the educational approach by setting essential requirements tailored to the young people's needs. Elysian's curriculum framework starts with the individual child at the centre, offering a program that meets their specific needs in an engaging and enjoyable way. Given the unique environment and therapeutic opportunities Elysian provides, the relevance of each young people's EHCP is reviewed one term after the young person begins their placement. If adjustments are necessary, an Interim Annual Review Meeting is held to ensure the EHCP accurately reflects the current needs and aligns with Elysian's supportive methods. Beyond this, EHCPs are reviewed annually to maintain alignment with the young person's progress and evolving requirements.

Long-term EHCP outcomes are used to create individualised learning plans that outline the goals and milestones for each young people. Teaching is infused with therapeutic practices, ensuring a compassionate and supportive learning experience. Additional therapies, including Occupational Therapy, Integrative Therapy, and Speech & Language Therapy, are integral to each young person's program and are incorporated into their timetable. The Therapy Team collaborates closely with the education staff through regular meetings, ensuring that therapeutic approaches are woven into the broader curriculum. Opportunities for joint work are actively identified and incorporated, supporting holistic development that addresses the academic, emotional, and therapeutic needs of each young person.

Age Range

Elysian operates a registered Independent Special School for young people aged 11-17, tailored to support diverse educational and therapeutic needs. Recognising the significant work required to prepare young people, especially those referred in Year 11, Elysian focuses on fostering readiness to learn and preparing young people for a successful transition to college. While Elysian does not generally accept young people solely for a Year 12 placement, exceptions may be made under specific circumstances, subject to approval by the Chair of Governors.

The Elysian Curriculum is designed to support personalised learning for all abilities and ages within the 11-17 range. This adaptability ensures that each young people receives an education that meets them at their level, providing the resources, therapeutic support, and academic challenges necessary for individual growth and future success.

Group sizes and 1:1 support

Elysian delivers its curriculum in small groups, typically with no more than six young people, to maintain an environment where each young people receives individual attention and support. Groups are thoughtfully composed to ensure compatibility, and for young people who cannot manage in a group setting or whose EHCPs specify it, a tailored plan is implemented. This may include 1:1 teaching or close supervision to allow them to work individually. This approach ensures that every young person feels secure, engaged, and capable of succeeding within their learning environment.

The curriculum is blended and customised for each young people, addressing their academic, spiritual, moral, social, and cultural needs in an engaging way. For young people who need 1:1 support to participate in education, the goal remains to help them gradually build the skills necessary to access group learning, enhancing their readiness for more integrated settings.

Elysian's unique setting on a working farm further enhances learning, using animal-assisted teaching to support emotional regulation and skill development. The animals provide a calming presence, offering a non-confrontational pathway to engage young people and impart valuable life skills. This context-rich learning approach makes lessons more meaningful, as young people can see the relevance of their knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios.

For young people who may be ready to transition back to mainstream education, Elysian provides full support to facilitate a successful reintegration. This commitment underscores Elysian's holistic approach, focusing on both immediate educational needs and long-term growth and readiness.

Co-ordination and Communication

At each Elysian site, the Heads of Education and Learning and Deputy's of Education and Learning oversee the curriculum's coordination, with individual staff members taking responsibility for specific subjects. Daily briefings, weekly meetings, and termly reports provide structured channels for communication, while the close-knit team structure fosters frequent informal interactions throughout the school day on the farm. This collaborative approach, facilitated by the small team size, ensures that all staff remain well-informed and aligned in their efforts.

The teaching team across all Elysian sites collaborates closely to plan each curriculum area, ensuring a unified approach to educational content. Once the initial planning is developed, it is shared across all sites, allowing each team to tailor the curriculum to the specific needs of their cohort and the unique attributes of their farm setting. This collaborative planning process ensures consistency in educational standards while accommodating the individual dynamics of each site, providing a flexible and responsive curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all young people.

To support cohesive planning and assessment, all staff utilise a secure app, which serves as a platform for sharing and updating information. This digital tool enhances accessibility to planning and assessment records, promoting seamless communication and ensuring that each team member can contribute effectively to the shared educational goals.

Involvement with Parents and Carers

Elysian is committed to fostering a strong partnership with parents, carers, and any professionals involved in supporting each young person's development.

This collaborative approach begins, where appropriate, with initial home visits from either a member of the Therapy team or a member of staff, providing an opportunity to understand the young person's environment and needs more fully.

Elysian's Therapy team also offers training, coaching, advice, and ongoing support to parents and carers, equipping them with effective strategies to reinforce progress and learning at home. Regular updates on the young person's progress ensure that families stay informed and feel encouraged to take an active role in their child's journey. By promoting open communication and sharing knowledge among parents, carers, teaching staff, and professionals, Elysian creates a supportive network around each young people, enhancing their overall development and success.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Heads of Education and Learning.

For the purposes of this policy, where the term Elysian is used, it refers to Elysian Animal Assisted Interventions Ltd including Elysian School and Elysian Assisted Therapy & Learning.

Appendix A – see our assessment policy for further details:

AQA Awards:

The AQA Unit Award Scheme (UAS) is a flexible program designed to recognise and celebrate learners' achievements.

Through UAS, learners receive a certificate for each unit of learning they complete, allowing them to build a portfolio that showcases their skills, knowledge, and experience.

This approach not only provides formal recognition for their efforts but also boosts confidence, engagement, and motivation, supporting learners' progress and inspiring them to continue on their lifelong learning journey.

Functional Skills:

Functional Skills qualifications are essential certifications in practical skills like numeracy, literacy, communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking, which are highly valued by employers and universities.

A Level 2 Functional Skills qualification is equivalent to a GCSE grade 4 (C), making it a recognised alternative to GCSEs for entry into further education, apprenticeships, and university programs, where a Level 2 in Maths or English is often required.

Functional Skills exams are designed with a focus on practical application, covering less content than traditional GCSEs, which makes them particularly suitable for adult learners with limited time or those needing their Level 2 certificate quickly.

Unlike GCSEs, which are scheduled twice a year at exam centres, Functional Skills exams are offered year-round and can even be taken from home, providing flexible options that fit around busy schedules.

Crossfields Integrated Project:

The Crossfields Integrated Project is a qualification for 14-16-year-olds, designed to deliver a broad, transdisciplinary curriculum through collaborative and individual project work.

It consists of three core modules and between five and ten optional modules, offering students a blend of formal, non-formal, and informal learning experiences.

Key features of this qualification include a strong emphasis on problem-solving, creative thinking, and personal and social learning skills, along with an Independent Project module that allows students to explore a personal passion or career interest in depth.

This qualification equips students with essential skills such as effective communication, teamwork, situational awareness, and the ability to generate new ideas—qualities that are valuable for higher education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The Crossfields Integrated Project thus supports students in developing the competencies needed to thrive in various future pathways.