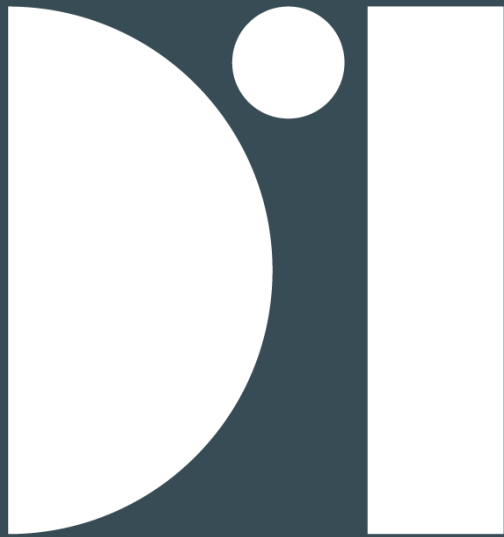




THE DONALDSON TRUST

The National Body for Neurodiversity

Curriculum Rationale

Version: 2

Date: September 2025

Owner: Angela Evans, Head of Learning Services

Table of Contents

Document Control	3
Version:	3
Next Review Due: September 2027	3
References:.....	3
Introduction	4
Scope	4
Curriculum Entitlements.....	4
Key Elements.....	5
Broad General Education (BGE)	6
Senior Phase	7
Sensational Learning Centre Curriculum	8
Sensational Learning Centre Curricular Drivers for BGE and Senior Phase	9
Shared understanding of the Curriculum.....	11
Personalised Support.....	12
Person-Centred Curriculum	13
Pathways.....	13
Appendix 1: Policy Landscape	15

Document Control

Version:

Version	Date	Owner	Reviewer	Approver	Amend
1	April 2023	Head of Learning Services	Kath Cooper	ELT	New
2	September 2025	Head of Learning Services	Angela Evans	George Finnigan	Update to reflect new secondary offering

Next Review Due: September 2027

References:

- Classroom Jotter, Organisation and Display Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Assessment Rationale
- Moderation Policy
- Quality Assurance Calendar
- Observation Form
- Forward Planning Documents

Introduction

The curriculum rationale ensures all pupils access a coherent, inclusive and high-quality education that meets their needs and prepares them for a changing world.

This policy provides clear guidance on the principles, values and expectations underpinning curriculum, maintaining consistency while allowing flexibility.

It will be formally reviewed every two years, with interim evaluations as needed, ensuring the curriculum remains dynamic, equitable and aligned with Scotland's national educational goals.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals directly involved in the delivery and support of education within SLC. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Pupils
- Teachers
- Head of Learning Services
- Principal Teacher
- Learning and Wellbeing Practitioners
- Therapists
- Parents / Carers
- Local Authorities

Within this document, all children and young people will be consistently referred to as pupils, and all staff involved in education delivery will be referred to collectively as colleagues, except where individual roles require specific mention.

Curriculum Entitlements

Pupils' rights and entitlements are central to Scotland's curriculum, and every pupil is entitled to:

- A coherent curriculum from ages 3 to 18
- A broad general education, with well-planned experiences and outcomes across all curriculum areas from early years through S3, including understanding the world, Scotland's place in it and the environment, as encompassed in Learning for Sustainability
- A senior phase after S3, providing opportunities to attain qualifications, awards and other planned activities that develop the four capacities, although earlier for some pupils where appropriate
- Opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work
- Support to maximise their individual potential, benefitting from appropriate personal challenge and guidance
- Assistance to progress into positive and sustained destinations beyond school

Translating curricular aims into practice is an ongoing process. The *How We Do It* section of the Refreshed Narrative provides guidance on key considerations, activities, and approaches to support effective curriculum planning and delivery.

Key Elements

Curriculum Levels

- The Broad General Education (BGE) up to S3 is structured across five levels: Early, First, Second, Third, and Fourth
- The Senior Phase, beginning in S4, builds on the experiences and outcomes of the BGE, providing pupils with opportunities to pursue qualifications and courses tailored to their abilities and interests, although earlier for some pupils at Donaldson's, where appropriate

Meta-Skills

Meta-skills are innate, timeless, higher-order abilities that foster adaptable pupils and support success across a wide range of future contexts.

From birth, pupils draw on these skills as they explore and engage with the world, and meta-skills serve as a foundation for developing other transferable and technical skills.

These skills must be explicitly recognised, understood, and nurtured across all phases of the curriculum.



Principles

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance

Broad General Education (BGE)

The broad general education begins in early learning and childcare and continues to the end of S3 (the third year of secondary school). Its purpose is to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes, and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

It is designed to provide the breadth and depth of education to develop flexible and adaptable young people with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive now and in the future. It aims to support young people in achieving and attaining the best they possibly can.

During the broad general education, children and young people should:

- Achieve the highest possible levels of literacy, numeracy and cognitive skills
- Develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work
- Develop knowledge and understanding of society, the world and Scotland's place in it, much of which is now included in Learning for Sustainability
- Experience challenge and success so that they can develop well-informed views and the four capacities.

There are eight curriculum areas: expressive arts, health and wellbeing, languages (including English, Gàidhlig and Gaelic learners and modern languages), mathematics, religious and moral studies, sciences, social studies, and technologies.

Each curriculum area is planned using experiences and outcomes. These describe the knowledge, skills, attributes, and capabilities of the four capacities that young people are expected to develop.

Curriculum for Excellence Benchmarks set out clear statements about what learners need to know and be able to do to achieve a level across all curriculum areas.

Learning in the broad general education may often span several curriculum areas (for example, a literacy project planned around science and technology might include outdoor learning experiences, research and the use of ICT). This is likely to be in the form of themed or project learning which provides children and young people opportunities to show how skills and knowledge can be applied in interesting contexts. The term often used for this is interdisciplinary learning (IDL).

Senior Phase

The senior phase, which takes place from S4 to S6, follows a pupil's broad general education, building firmly on the experiences and outcomes they will have experienced and achieved by the end of S3.

It enables them to extend and deepen their learning and continue to develop skills for learning, life and work, through qualifications and

through a range of opportunities for personal development (for example work placements and volunteering).

At the end of S3, pupils will make subject choices for part of their Senior Phase.

In years P1-S3 individuals have had the opportunity to experience subjects from all 8 curricular areas within Curriculum for Excellence. As they move from Broad General Education (BGE) into their Senior Phase they can choose subjects they wish to focus on and study, although this can be earlier, where appropriate, for pupil's at Donaldson's.

Sensational Learning Centre Curriculum

The curriculum at Sensational Learning Centre aims to enable pupils to develop confidence, independence, and the ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and preferences across the four contexts for learning: curricular areas, interdisciplinary learning (IDL), personal achievement, and the ethos and life of the school.

We provide an inspiring environment with high-quality experiences to ensure all pupils can succeed.

We are committed to Getting it Right for Every Child, upholding children's and young people's rights as outlined in the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (UNCRC articles 28 and 29).

Every pupil will feel supported, valued and encouraged, with opportunities to develop their knowledge and awareness of health and wellbeing and access to play.

Our pupils are supported in becoming curious, empowered and equipped with the skills needed to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Sensational Learning Centre works in partnership with parents, carers and other stakeholders, maintaining and developing strong links with the wider community.

The key principles of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) provide our school with the flexibility to offer pupils a curriculum that includes a highly personalised Broad General Education, designed to be challenging, engaging, and enjoyable.

The Senior Phase builds on this foundation, aligning with Developing the Young Workforce and placing a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for life, further education, training and future employment.

Our pupils face a diverse range of challenges, including communication difficulties, sensory impairments, social challenges, anxiety, trauma, vulnerability, emotional fragility and medical conditions or diagnoses. By recognising and nurturing each pupil's unique abilities, we aim to build resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

We acknowledge that a single curriculum model cannot meet the needs of all pupils, and our curriculum continuously evolves to respond to the complex, varied, and changing needs of those we support.

Sensational Learning Centre Curricular Drivers for BGE and Senior Phase

Across BGE and Senior Phase the foundation of our curriculum will be communication (developing independence and confidence), health and wellbeing (including the outdoors and mental health), literacy and numeracy. Play, skills for life and work will also form part of the core.

Communication

- Pupil voice and choice
- UNCRC Article 12 'I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously'
- Play (UNCRC Article 31 'the right to play')
- Interaction and turn taking
- Using language to successfully communicate with others

- Speech and language
- Conventions of social communication
- Total communication including digital supports e.g., ProLoQuo2Go
- Independence
- Visuals / Talking Mats
- BSL (British Sign Language) / Sign assisted English
- Reading, Writing, Listening & Talking
- Learning and communication difference
- Confidence
- Emotion Works
- Zones of Regulation

Health and Wellbeing

- Emotional wellbeing & physiology
- Self-regulation
- Play
- Mental wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- Equity
- Outdoors
- Mindfulness
- Yoga
- Physical education
- Therapy (Play / Equine / Lego / Speech and Language)
- UNCRC Article 24 'the right to the best possible health'
- Pupil voice
- Sensory integration
- Forest Schools
- Duke of Edinburgh

Positive Destinations and DYW (Developing the Young Workforce)

- Person Centred Planning
- Volunteering
- Local community
- Skills Development Scotland
- Links with local Colleges

- Enterprising events
- Liaison
- Work experience
- Networking
- Life skills
- Independence
- Numeracy & Maths
- Financial education
- Cookery
- Time management
- Travel organisation and independence

At Sensational Learning Centre, personalised learning pathways, supported by a combination of real-life and digital learning strategies, promote positive achievement, successful transitions beyond school and help close the attainment gap.

Pupil voice and choice are central to our approach, with all staff supporting pupils to express their needs, preferences, and aspirations.

Staff play a vital role in providing emotional support, and through the Person-Centred Planning process, teachers ensure pupils can articulate their concerns and priorities regarding both learning and daily life.

Digital learning reduces barriers, enhances literacy and numeracy, builds independence and helps pupils reach their full potential.

The school works closely with a dynamic network of partners to support these aims.

Opportunities for play, adventure and challenge allow pupils to take managed risks, build resilience, develop coping strategies and grow into confident, healthy adults.

Shared understanding of the Curriculum

All colleagues recognise that literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are particularly important and are regarded as the *responsibility of all*.

Staff also understand the value of creativity, enterprise, and global citizenship, including sustainable development and international education.

Pupils are supported flexibly across a range of activities and settings, with all staff working towards shared outcomes linked to targets set within each child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Teachers' forward plans clearly outline levels and targets across all curricular areas, with particular attention to health and wellbeing, literacy (including communication), and numeracy.

Celebration of achievement is embedded throughout school life and occurs in multiple ways, including weekly assemblies, the use of Seesaw, and ongoing communication between home and school, providing meaningful opportunities for pupils, staff, and families to share successes.

Personalised Support

At Sensational Learning Centre (SLC), through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework, we aim to ensure that both pupils and their families:

- Feel confident about the support being provided
- Understand what is happening and why
- Are listened to carefully, with their wishes acknowledged and respected
- Are appropriately involved in discussions and decisions that affect them
- Can access timely and suitable support as needed
- Experience a fair, coordinated, and consistent response from staff.

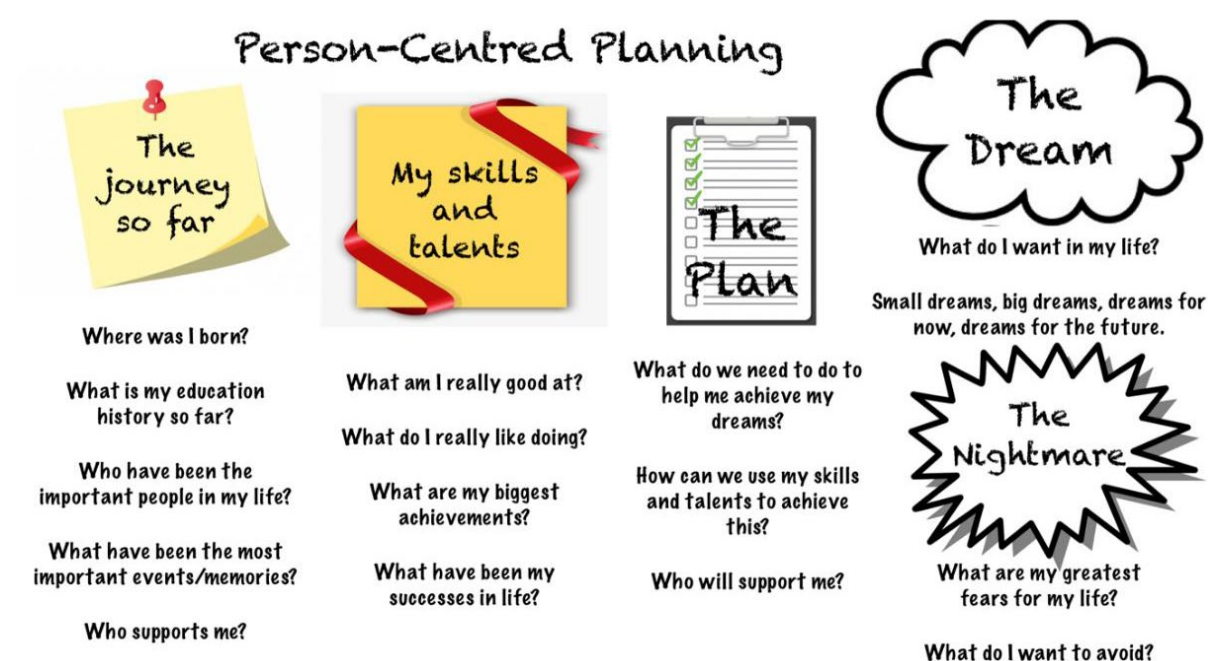
All pupils at SLC have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Education Plan, Risk Assessment, and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) to ensure their needs are fully met.

Person-Centred Curriculum

Following a robust admissions process, our pupils require an initial period of further assessment and observation to clarify strengths, and development needs to ensure that personalised curricular and achievement pathways are planned, delivered, carefully tracked and recorded.

This is recorded through a Person-Centred Planning approach.

The process is clarified in the diagram below:



The plan developed at the initial Person-Centred Planning (PCP) meeting, typically six to eight weeks after a pupil joins, informs a detailed Individual Education Plan (IEP) with targets specifically aligned to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

These plans are reviewed every three months and fully renewed every six months in collaboration with the pupil, parents/carers, and relevant professionals and partners.

Pathways

From Primary 1 to Secondary 3 pupils benefit from individualised pathways within the Broad General Education (BGE) aspect of CfE. Interdisciplinary

Learning (IDL) using special interests where appropriate is key to create relevance and meaning for pupils and supports with motivation and engagement, links being contextualized within planning.

Pupils at Secondary 4 and beyond at the Senior Phase, have carefully considered curricular pathway options to maximise their future opportunities and ability to demonstrate the four capacities.

Alongside core SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) National awards in HWB (Health & Wellbeing), Literacy (English & Communication) and Numeracy (Maths and wider skills), pupils will choose additional subjects. The school provides a range of opportunities for outdoors and sustainable learning.

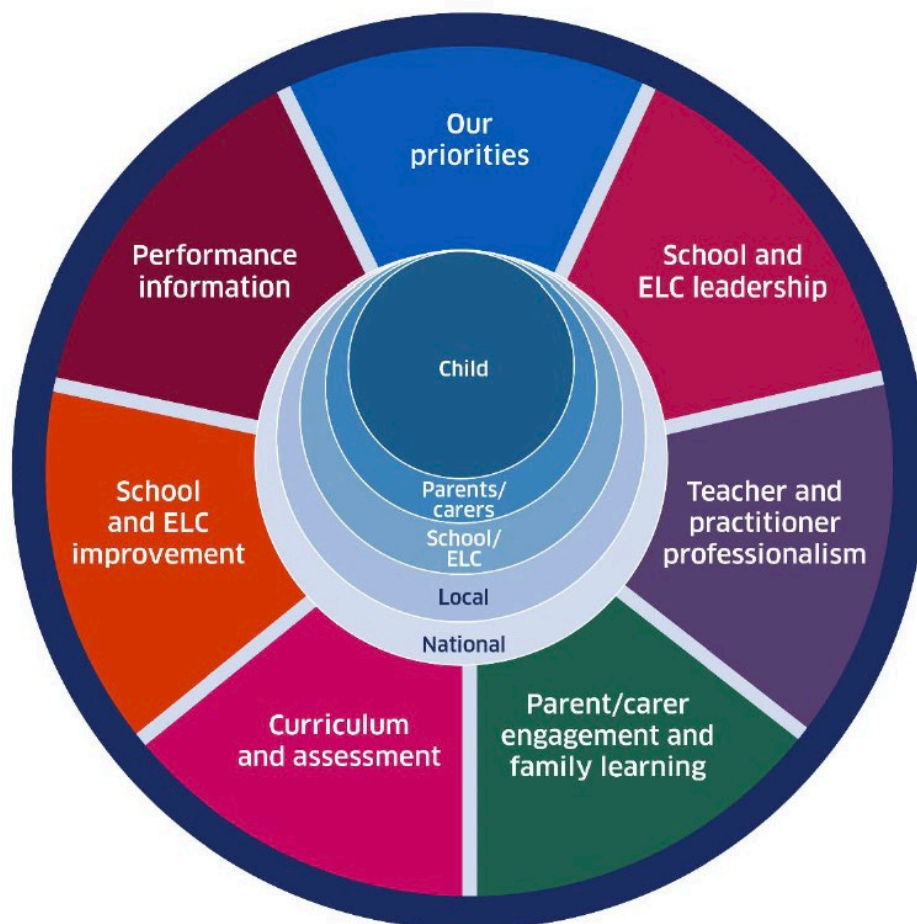
Our senior phase pupils access work experience within the Donaldson Trust campus and local community. There are links with West Lothian College where pupils can access age-appropriate courses in S5 and S6.

Transition plans discussed at PCP meetings identify future positive destinations in line with pupil choice and voice, all pupils will meet with Skills Development Scotland Partners to explore options in line with their personal skills and interests for positive destinations.

Planning, assessment and review allows evaluation of each pupil's pathway twice per session. Regular professional dialogue ensures curriculum pathways are suitably challenging and promote independence, pupil choice, attainment and achievement. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains in line with the most up-to-date research, resources, including digital support, and national initiatives.

Appendix 1: Policy Landscape

National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Improvement Plan



The Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework (NIF) continues to serve as the cornerstone for educational policy, focusing on raising attainment, closing the poverty-related attainment gap and improving health and wellbeing outcomes for pupils.

The 2024 Improvement Plan outlines priorities such as enhancing literacy and numeracy, strengthening leadership at all levels and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. A notable development is the introduction of a regular Curriculum for Excellence improvement cycle, which aims to review and refresh curricular areas systematically.

Education (Scotland) Bill 2024

The Education (Scotland) Bill 2024 represents a significant legislative effort to reform Scotland's education system.

The Bill seeks to implement reforms recommended by various reviews and aims to restructure national education agencies to improve the quality and consistency of education.

It also includes provisions for the establishment of a new qualifications body, aligning with the government's vision of a more streamlined and effective education system.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Assessment Reform

Curriculum for Excellence remains the framework guiding education from early years through to the end of secondary school.

In 2024, the Scottish Government initiated a regular Curriculum for Excellence improvement cycle, which considers curricular areas in a structured manner to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

Additionally, the Hayward Review of Scotland's Qualifications System has influenced a shift towards reducing the emphasis on examinations in favour of coursework and classroom assessments, aiming to provide a more holistic evaluation of pupil progress.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

In January 2024, the Scottish Parliament passed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act, incorporating the UNCRC into Scots law.

This legislation places a duty on Scottish Ministers to comply with the Convention and promote its principles, ensuring that the rights of children are central to policy and decision-making in education.

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is Scotland's national curriculum framework for pupils aged 3 to 18, designed to provide a coherent, flexible, and inclusive education.

CfE emphasises broad general education up to S3, followed by a senior phase that allows for personalisation and choice, preparing pupils for further education, training, or employment. There is flexibility within this with some pupils accessing qualifications earlier, where appropriate.

It encourages interdisciplinary learning (IDL), skills development and active engagement, ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential while meeting Scotland's educational standards and national priorities.

A refreshed narrative on Scotland's curriculum, placing the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) within the contemporary educational context, was published in September 2019.



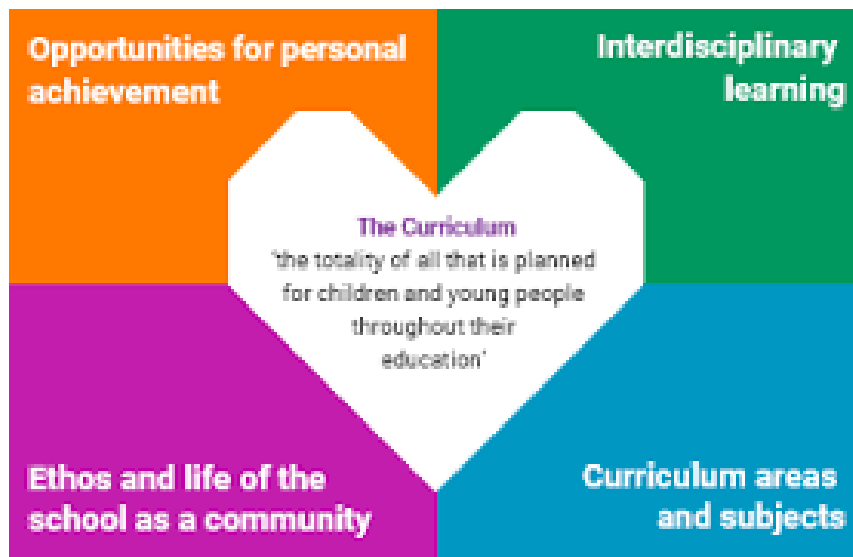
The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) places pupils at the heart of education, with its focus centred on four fundamental capacities. These capacities reflect the lifelong nature of learning and aim to support pupils in becoming:

- Successful learners

- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

These capacities emphasise:

- The importance of pupils understanding themselves as individuals while developing positive relationships within families, communities, and wider society
- The knowledge, skills and attributes pupils need to thrive in an interconnected, digital, and rapidly changing world
- The need to enable pupils to engage actively and responsibly in their learning, society, and future opportunities



As part of their educational journey, all children and young people in Scotland are entitled to a coherent curriculum from ages 3 to 18, ensuring opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to think critically, adapt, and flourish in today's world.

The curriculum is defined as the totality of all planned experiences for pupils, from early learning and childcare through school and beyond. This totality is delivered and experienced across four interconnected contexts:

- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary learning
- Ethos and life of the school

- Opportunities for personal achievement