



# **Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey Curriculum Overview 2025 - 2026**



Shortenills



Shortenills  
Abbey

## Curriculum Vision: A Curriculum for Belonging, Growth and Success

*Our vision is to create a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment where students are known and understood. We work together to achieve a love of learning and a desire to embrace challenge across all aspects of the curriculum. We aim to prepare students for life beyond school to ensure they can be the best version of themselves as they move onto their next chapter.*



At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, we deliver a curriculum that is developmental, inclusive and ambitious. We recognise that our learners' journeys do not follow linear or chronological paths. Instead, we meet each pupil where they are and build a carefully tailored curriculum that prioritises belonging, nurture and aspiration.

Our pupils may have experienced challenges in previous educational settings, faced significant adversity, or live with complex social, emotional and mental health needs. We design learning experiences that restore confidence, rebuild trust in education and promote self-belief.

We are unwavering in our belief that every pupil can achieve and thrive, and our curriculum exists to make that a reality.

Our curriculum is developmental, not chronological — meaning that we design learning starting from pupils' individual starting points rather than their age. It is ambitious and aspirational, focused on enabling pupils to grow into well-rounded members of modern Britain and succeed in life beyond Shortenills.



## The Role of Literacy and Personal Development in Accessing the Whole Curriculum

We believe that language is a lifeline. Without the ability to understand and express, pupils are cut off from connection, learning, and forming their identity. For that reason, literacy is intentionally taught and supported across all subjects and all ages. We believe in the power of story and much of our curriculum is built on high quality Literature from a range of eras and cultures. We use the power of stories as a bedrock for much of the rest of the curriculum.

Similarly, we know that pupils cannot learn effectively unless they feel safe, connected, and emotionally regulated. Personal development — including emotional literacy, confidence, resilience, and social skills — is therefore taught explicitly and modelled constantly.

This dual emphasis ensures that all pupils, regardless of need or history, can:

- Access and enjoy learning
- Understand and manage themselves
- Build meaningful relationships
- Move towards greater independence and future success

At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, **every pupil matters**. Our curriculum reflects that belief in its structure, delivery and outcomes.



## Aspire's Curriculum Questions

### The Beauty of the Curriculum

At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, we believe that a curriculum should not only educate but also inspire. The beauty of our curriculum lies in its capacity to spark curiosity, foster joy and cultivate a deep appreciation for learning.

We design learning experiences that are rich in wonder, creativity and purpose — rooted in real-life relevance and taken further with imagination and expression. Our curriculum celebrates:

- **Creativity and expression** – through art, storytelling and design
- **Connection with nature** – outdoor learning, connecting with the seasons and understanding our place in the natural world
- **Diversity of experience** – exploring different cultures, histories, perspectives, ideas and challenging the stereotype.
- **Moments of awe and wonder** – seeing science in action, encountering great literature, or experiencing something for the first time
- **Emotional and sensory richness** – a multisensory curriculum that engages the whole child

We believe beauty exists in relationships, in growth, and in the journey each pupil takes. Our curriculum is not just about what is learned — it is about how it feels to learn and to belong.

### The Human Benefits of the Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed not just to educate minds, but to nurture whole people. At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, we recognise that education must serve the human development of every learner — socially, emotionally, morally and relationally.

The human benefits of our curriculum include:

- **A restored sense of self-worth** – helping pupils see themselves as capable, valued and important
- **Emotional literacy and resilience** – equipping learners to understand and manage their emotions
- **Strong, trusting relationships** – fostering connection with adults and peers through consistent, caring interactions
- **A sense of belonging** – cultivating safety, identity and community within the school environment
- **Voice and agency** – enabling pupils to make choices, express views and shape their learning journey
- **Hope and aspiration** – igniting belief in future possibilities, no matter the past

Through these outcomes, our curriculum becomes a vehicle not only for academic achievement, but for identity-building and personal transformation.



## Powerful Knowledge and Curriculum Design

At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, we believe in the transformative power of knowledge. Our curriculum ensures that all pupils — regardless of prior experience or need — have access to the **powerful knowledge** they need to make sense of the world and thrive within it.

**Powerful knowledge** refers to concepts and understandings that go beyond everyday experience, enabling pupils to:

- Think critically and abstractly
- Access wider cultural and academic conversations
- Understand the world through different disciplines
- Build a strong foundation for future learning and life choices

Our long-term curriculum plans explicitly identify the powerful knowledge in each subject area. This allows us to:

- Sequence content in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way
- Build conceptual understanding over time
- Reinforce key ideas through retrieval and application
- Ensure coherence and ambition across subjects

In doing so, we open up access to the best that has been thought, said, created and discovered — ensuring that all pupils are equipped not just for exams, but for a richer, more informed life.



## Intent

Our curriculum is grounded in high expectations, nurture, and inclusion. Its design reflects our belief that:

- Children learn best when they feel safe, seen and valued.
- Pupils' developmental needs must be met before academic learning can flourish.
- Every young person, regardless of need or background, can succeed.

The intent of our curriculum is to:

- Rebuild trust in education and create a sense of belonging
- Equip learners with core academic knowledge, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- Develop personal attributes including resilience, confidence, emotional regulation and communication
- Provide therapeutic and relational experiences through a trauma-informed model
- Enable access to qualifications, meaningful learning experiences and future destinations
- Celebrate individual progress through bespoke Progress Pathways aligned with EHCPs
- Prioritise personal development and SEMH as the first building block in every pupil's journey
- Use our unique natural setting to foster environmental awareness, well-being and engagement
- Develop real-world readiness, including financial literacy, digital competence and independent living skills
- Cultivate responsible citizenship and a sense of contribution to community and society

We intend for all pupils to leave Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey equipped for life — emotionally, socially and academically.



## Implementation

### Four Interwoven Curriculum Pillars

#### 1. Literacy as Access

We prioritise literacy as the foundation for all learning:

- Targeted phonics and inference support
- Reading for pleasure, topic reading and reading to learn
- Vocabulary-rich classrooms and explicit language instruction
- Written expression across subjects
- Use of assistive technology to support access and expression

#### 2. Personal Development as Core Curriculum

Personal development is woven through every aspect of the school day:

- High-quality PSHE aligned with the PSHE Association and SMSC framework
- Careers, aspirations and independence learning
- Daily therapeutic and relational practice (e.g. ELSA, Draw and Talk)
- Explicit teaching of emotional literacy, resilience and communication
- Opportunities for cultural enrichment and pupil voice
- Structured wellbeing activities and check-ins

#### 3. A Strong Academic Core

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum across KS3 and KS4:

- English, Maths, Science, Humanities, Creative Arts and Forest School
- Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificates, GCSEs and vocational pathways
- English Language and Literature GCSE
- Maths GCSE
- Science Level 2 qualification
- Functional Skills and Entry Level in English, Maths and Science
- Art GCSE
- Level 2 BTEC in Cooking
- Level 2 Qualification in Personal Wellbeing
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Sequenced, knowledge-rich curriculum planning supported by cognitive science
- Cross-curricular links through enquiry questions
- Practical applications of core subjects to enhance engagement and life relevance



## **4. Nurture as Pedagogy**

### **Our nurture-informed classrooms provide:**

- Safe, predictable routines and physical environments
- Emotional co-regulation and relational consistency
- Curriculum adaptations responsive to developmental needs
- Clear transitions and reduction of anxiety through planned change
- Staff training in trauma-informed and attachment-aware approaches

### **Curriculum delivery model**

- Mixed-age, needs-led classes split broadly into KS3 and KS4
- Bespoke Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for every learner
- EHCP-aligned targets and classroom interventions
- Flexible grouping and curriculum adaptation to meet individual need
- Forest School and outdoor learning as a key component of curriculum delivery
- Thematic and enquiry-based planning at KS3 to build cognitive links

### **Forest School and environment-based learning**

- Learning in and about nature encourages confidence, curiosity and success
- Tasks are achievable and build self-esteem
- Promotes teamwork, communication, risk-taking and safety
- Connects pupils to the natural world and fosters conservation values
- Forest School and outdoor learning supports PSHE, art, wellbeing and sensory regulation
- Encourages physical activity, mindfulness and emotional regulation.

### **Principles of teaching in the classroom**

At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, our teaching is guided by evidence-based principles of instruction that maximise learning and support our pupils' varied developmental needs. These approaches ensure consistency, clarity and strong progress over time.

Key principles embedded in our practice include:

- Clear, concise teacher explanations to reduce cognitive load
- Modelling and worked examples to show pupils how to approach tasks
- Frequent checks for understanding through questioning and pupil discussion
- Guided practice before independent work to build confidence
- Daily and weekly review to support memory and retrieval
- Scaffolded support that is gradually withdrawn as pupils gain independence
- Deliberate practice of key skills and knowledge over time
- Feedback that is timely, specific and actionable



These strategies are applied flexibly to meet the needs of each learner, ensuring that instruction is both structured and responsive. Informed by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and adapted through trauma-informed and SEN-aware pedagogy, our teaching helps pupils build secure, lasting understanding.

### **Enrichment through extra-curricular activities and educational visits**

At Shortenills and Shortenills Abbey, we recognise that education extends beyond the classroom. Our extra-curricular activities and curriculum-linked trips are integral to our curriculum offer and aim to broaden horizons, ignite curiosity and build social and cultural capital.

#### **Curriculum-linked experiences include:**

- Theatre trips to support understanding of literature and drama studied in English
- Museum visits to enhance learning in history, science and art
- Visits to galleries and exhibitions to inspire creativity and expose pupils to cultural experiences
- Outdoor education centres and nature reserves to deepen environmental learning linked to science and forest school
- Local business and college visits as part of our careers and aspirations curriculum
- Workshops with visiting professionals, including artists, authors and scientists, to enrich subject learning and learn from other people's stories

#### **Benefits of enrichment activities:**

- Bring learning to life through real-world context and sensory experiences
- Support social development and confidence in new environments
- Reinforce classroom learning through experiential connections
- Build teamwork, independence, and problem-solving skills
- Help pupils see themselves as participants in the wider world

These opportunities are carefully planned to link with themes, enquiry questions and subject knowledge, ensuring that every visit or activity enhances curriculum intent and offers pupils new ways to engage, reflect and grow.



## Impact

We measure the impact of our curriculum through a blend of academic, developmental and relational outcomes. We use a set of powerful curriculum questions to quality assure the curriculum and its design.

### **At KS3 and KS4, impact measures include:**

- Academic progress through teacher assessment and qualifications
- Progress towards EHCP outcomes
- Boxall profiling to measure emotional and behavioural development
- Engagement in learning and attendance
- Pupil and parent voice
- IEP and EHCP reviews and interventions
- Behaviour data
- Destinations and post-16 readiness (KS4)
- Progress against Gatsby Benchmarks for careers
- Increased classroom participation and reduced dysregulation
- Readiness for transition and independence
- Use of CENTURY Tech software in English, Maths and Science to:
  - Track individual pupil progress
  - Identify learning gaps
  - Provide personalised, adaptive learning journeys
  - Generate real-time insights to inform teaching and interventions

### **Progress in other subjects is measured through clear before-and-after approaches such as:**

- Start-of-unit and end-of-unit mind maps or knowledge organisers
- Low-stakes quizzes and retrieval activities
- Annotated work samples and project outcomes
- Pupil reflection, self-assessment and end-of-unit reviews
- Learning walks, book looks and discussions with pupils to explore understanding, progression and engagement
- Evidence from pupil voice sessions, where learners describe their learning journey and knowledge growth
- Visual timelines, floorbooks and portfolios for project-based subjects
- Written and practical work showing progression over time
- Group and individual discussions with pupils that capture learning, skill development and personal growth.



## Outcomes for pupils:

- Improved literacy and communication skills
- Increased emotional regulation and social understanding
- Greater resilience, confidence and sense of self
- Repaired relationship with learning
- Meaningful qualifications and skills for adulthood
- A deeper sense of belonging and care for their environment
- Readiness for independent living, further education or employment
- Improved mental health and wellbeing

Our curriculum ensures that pupils not only succeed in the classroom but also grow as confident, capable individuals prepared to take their place in the world.





 **Aspire**