

Values, Principles, and Approach



Our Mission and Values

“To empower our students to go further in learning and life by recognising their strengths and providing a respectful environment that builds confidence, raises aspirations and equips them to succeed.”

Bardwell School Mission Statement

At Bardwell School we consider ourselves to be a values-based school. This means that our mission, aims and values underpin all developments and processes at the school, from our day-to-day interactions with the children to class team meetings. They provide the foundation for us to provide a positive, stimulating and challenging learning environment. Below you can read our values and what we do to ensure that we deliver on them through our professional practice.

We believe that our students learn best when lessons are based on their interests, strengths and abilities and are delivered in a positive, stimulating and challenging environment. Therefore we:

- plan and deliver teaching and learning that inspires our students
- set targets tailored to each individual
- reflect on our methods and approaches to ensure we always provide the highest quality education

We believe that our students are unique individuals whose qualities, personalities and achievements will be celebrated. Therefore we:

- celebrate their personal qualities and attributes.
- encourage students to express themselves
- share achievements with their peers and the wider school community.

We believe our students achieve best when families and the school work in partnership. Therefore we:

- maintain open and honest communication with parents and carers
- encourage frequency of contact with parents via parents evening, school events, email, phone calls and Multi Me
- work with students and their families to set meaningful outcomes that impact their lives in positive ways

We believe that our students should be encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential and to be as independent as possible. Therefore we:

- structure learning to enable achievement with carefully considered levels of support
- plan to decrease support at an appropriate rate in order to develop autonomy
- support students to reflect on their learning

We believe all students should have equal and inclusive opportunities where their learning is tailored to individual needs. Therefore we:

- identify small steps to success for all students
- understand the importance of repeating and consolidating learning
- build whole class inclusion links with mainstream partners

We believe that friendships and relationships are central to happiness. Therefore we:

- support students to develop positive relationships with their peers and members of staff
- provide inclusive learning experiences

- provide stimulating shared play and social experiences for our students

We believe that all of our students should be valued members of their communities and play active roles within them. Therefore we:

- seek meaningful opportunities for our students to participate in their communities
- promote the strengths and abilities of our students in the local community and beyond
- organise opportunities that enable our students to share their talents and skills

Key Principles at Bardwell School

Knowledge and understanding of the learner

All of our learners are unique individuals. It is essential that we understand their strengths and qualities if we are to challenge them in their learning. We are a non-label-led school and believe that the strength of our approach comes from our depth of understanding of our students.

- It is important to develop a deep understanding of each individual student as a person. This includes but is not limited to their communication skills, likes and dislikes, fine and gross motor skills, preferred ways of engaging, and their relationship with the wider learning environment.
- It is vital that we identify the existing capabilities of each student and use these as starting points to ensure that learning is accurately targeted, and progress is matched to high expectations.

Positive relationships

Positive relationships grounded in mutual respect are the bedrock for any effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

- All staff work with all students in the class group at different times. The high adult-to-student ratio in classes facilitates a flexible approach in which we can dynamically plan for, and respond to, the needs of the learners in the classroom.
- Students learn from working with a range of adults. We want our learners to understand that their abilities and skills are transferrable and applicable across different individuals and contexts.
- Each adult brings a different set of skills and can support the students' learning in a different way whilst keeping routines and cues consistent. This consistency enables us to carefully build on the skills that learners have acquired to date while planning ambitiously and creatively for their future education.

Time, repetition and anticipation

We understand that the learners we are working with are individuals and need different amounts of time to respond and react. When working with all of our learners we ensure that:

- They are given appropriate time to react and respond based on our deep understanding of them as an individual. Adults working with learners need to be acutely aware that they may need to wait for a reaction or response before continuing. A 10-second pause is our agreed

starting point as a school, though some learners will benefit from even more time to process the information that has been presented to them.

- The adult must wait before repeating a comment, question or instruction to allow learners time to process and respond/react/anticipate.
- Repetition is valuable in supporting learners to learn to react, respond and anticipate what is going to happen next.
- In interactions, staff ensure that the learner has opportunities to take the lead. This can empower the student and may encourage them to interact and communicate.
- Adults need to adjust the way that they present themselves when responding to the needs of our learners. This may involve a need to exaggerate and be larger than life or, conversely, to place an emphasis on quiet contemplation. We expect all staff to be able to dynamically assess their interactions with students and adjust their approach accordingly.
- It is important that adults bear in mind how transitions may impact students, and factor in how much time students may need to anticipate future events. This could be in the short term (what is going to happen in 5 minutes' time?), as well as the long term (which class will I be in after the summer holidays?).

Multi-sensory approach

At Bardwell School, we understand that our learners will engage in their education in myriad ways. Rather than providing 'sensory' experiences for our students, we plan and deliver meaningful teaching and learning opportunities linked to their key developmental priorities, through a multi-sensory approach across the curriculum.

Age appropriateness and developmental appropriateness

It is crucial that our learners are able to work towards their developmental milestones through age-appropriate experiences and materials. In order to meet this need, teachers will need to think creatively given the paucity of materials that cater for older students working at developmental levels that do not match age-related expectations. We have a responsibility to expose children to a variety of age-appropriate stimuli, themes and experiences.

- Remember that whatever the **developmental level** of the student they still have an **age-related** range of experiences. For example, they may well have been experiencing certain songs from the age of two. There are a wealth and variety of songs and activities to promote engagement and interest in our students. Variety should be carefully balanced with repetition.

- Repetition is vital when working with students at the early stages of development. This does not mean that the same activities are used throughout the school but that the same skills are used in different ways.

Whole-class approaches

Generally speaking, we would not advocate the use of schemes or packages to be rolled out wholesale for any given lesson or curriculum area. This is because the needs of the students in any one class are likely so diverse that they lack the necessary specificity and detail that our students require. When using schemes or packages, as with any resource, careful thought and consideration should be given to the needs of the learner(s) and how they can be differentiated to enable students to be successful in their learning.