

Planning for the implementation of Foundation Learning

Case study

Rethinking the Key Stage 4 curriculum in light of the Foundation Learning reforms

Introduction

A new curriculum for Key Stage 4 will be in place across Maplewell Hall School from September 2009. This will allow the school to take full advantage of the opportunities offered within Foundation Learning and to expand the range of units and options available to learners.

Provider profile

Name of organisation	Maplewell Hall School is a 11–19 special school. The majority of the 140 students are at Entry Level and many need to progress laterally and/or combine elements of learning at different levels. Students attend the school because of moderate learning difficulties. Many are on the autistic spectrum.
Location	Maplewell, Leicestershire
Contact	Steph Beale 14-19 Coordinator
Type of organisation involved in the case study	Special school
Approximate number of staff involved in the case study	2 (a 14-19 coordinator and the Head of PSHE)
Approximate number of learners involved in the pilot phase	2
Level of experience at start of pilot	Basic awareness of Foundation Learning

Aims and intended outcomes

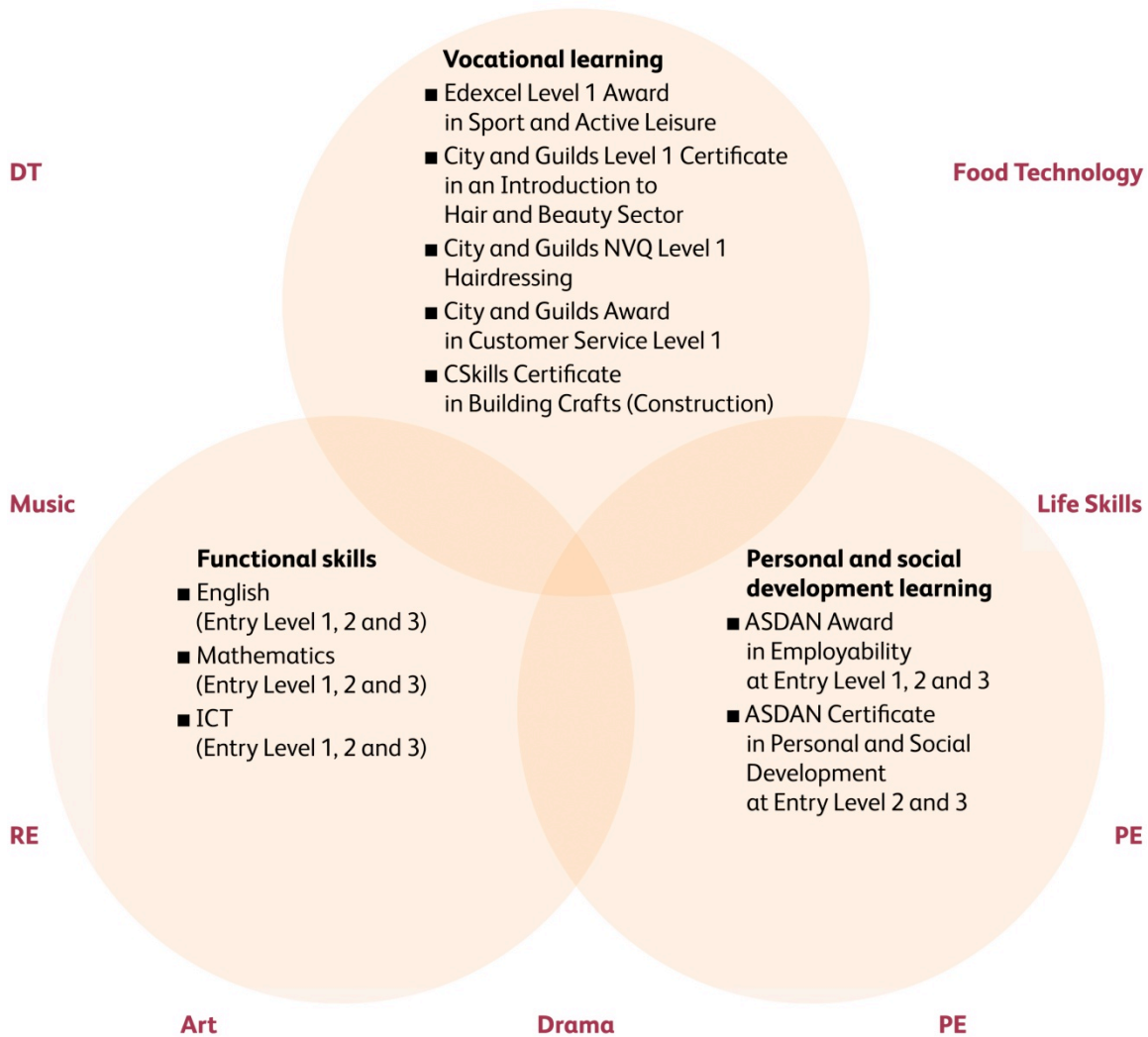
- To change our perspective on the curriculum
- To accredit learning in new ways
- To encourage the sharing of ideas and strategies with other special schools and to learn from each other
- To explore ways of broadening vocational opportunities and to be more adventurous

Implementation

The school planned a curriculum offer based on Foundation Learning effective practice principles.¹ The initial offer included a choice of vocational learning that the school hope to expand with partner schools in the future. Learning was embedded across the elements of the Foundation Learning curriculum, alongside other aspects of the core curriculum, and was delivered in a number of ways through interest projects and options in response to individual need. The intention was to embed the personal and social development (PSD) skills and functional skills (FS) within the vocational areas and in other aspects of the core curriculum, as illustrated in the diagram below.

The 10 effective practice principles issued by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) have now been replaced by the characteristics of effective delivery.

Our Foundation Learning programme 2009/2010



This formed the basis of a more personalised offer that the school hope to build on in the future.

Working with the Deputy Head, the school looked carefully at the existing curriculum offer for Key Stage 4. Historically elements of the national curriculum were divided up across the week. This did not fit with the design of personalised learning programmes nor give sufficient choice to students.

Firstly, it was determined that functional skills (FS) could continue to run alongside core subjects. The school was familiar with embedding English, mathematics and ICT across the curriculum, which was functional in nature and largely at Entry Level. However, the arrangements for the PSD elements and the vocational subjects posed a problem.

Hairdressing, Duke of Edinburgh and customer care options used to be run in parallel with life skills. The school was aware from reviewing students' individual learning plans (ILPs) that they have a wide and diverse requirement for life skills, none of which was covered in their vocational option. In the new model, life skills are offered on a rolling programme across the year with food technology and design technology, leaving students free to extend their life skills and follow a vocational option, where appropriate.

To accredit broader aspects of life skills within Foundation Learning, additional opportunities to accredit such skills had to be planned. The separate periods dedicated to personal health, personal finance, and citizenship are now combined in flexible ways and used to accredit PSD using the ASDAN Certificate in PSD at Entry Level 2–3 (four credits) and the ASDAN Award in Employability at Levels 1, 2 and 3 (12.5 credits). The school worked closely with the Head of PSHE to identify these PSD elements.

There has been great success at offering hairdressing in the school's own salon, working closely with a vocational expert who comes into the school. The school is validated by the City and Guilds to offer the Certificate in an Introduction to the hair and beauty sector.

All these changes started with Year 10 in September 2009.

Successes

Maplewell Hall is very pleased with the flexibility that their model provides. The school believes it is critical to have a champion as coordinator and therefore has chosen someone who is comfortable with both embedding and accrediting vocational learning and PSD. This coordinator has been directly involved at all stages in the planning process, has attended ASDAN training, and will be coordinating the Year 10 FLT group from September 2009.

Challenges

Many of the school's teachers were unfamiliar with the demands of awarding bodies, and have therefore found the prospect of collecting evidence for elements of Foundation Learning rather daunting. For example, the type of evidence required to assess and accredit the PSD units is varied. The school has taken steps to support teachers to use a variety of forms of evidence - photos, video clips, computer animation, team tasks, student-made artefacts and verbal reports; and to collect evidence from a variety of sources, including evidence from activities chosen by students themselves, peer and self-assessment, and by directly observing students demonstrating skills they have learnt. This is still new to the school and they are providing ongoing training to support this approach.

Impact and outcomes

The table below details changes to the curriculum to accommodate the school's strategy for Foundation Learning.

Key Stage 4 planning grid

Subject	Number of lessons for Year 10	Qualifications, including those from the QCF
English	1	Entry 1–3 GCSE from 2010
FS English		Entry 1–3
Key skills communication		
Mathematics	1	Entry 1–3 GCSE
Science	1	Entry 1–3 GCSE
Drama	1	–
RE	1	GCSE
ICT	1	Entry 1–3
Art	1	Entry 1–3
Music	1	Entry 1–3
PE	1	–
Personal health Personal finance Citizenship	1 1 1	ASDAN Award in employability at Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3 (12.5) credits ASDAN Certificate in PSD at Entry Levels 2–3 (4 credits)
Non-Foundation Learning options • Duke of Edinburgh	2	City and Guilds Level 1 Certificate in an Introduction to the hair and beauty sector

<p>Foundation Learning options</p> <p>2008/09</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hairdressing • Customer service <p>2009/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport and leisure • Building crafts 		<p>City and Guilds NVQ Level 1. (The school has its own salon at which places are made available to other special schools.)</p> <p>City and Guilds Award in Customer service Level 1</p> <p>Edexcel Level 1 Award in Sport and active leisure</p> <p>CSkills Certificate in Building crafts (construction)</p>
<p>CAROUSEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design technology • Food technology • Life skills 	2	
	25	

Conclusions and next steps

As a small school, Maplewell Hall continues to be challenged by the logistics of small groups working together at different levels. Although this is managed well in the core subjects, it poses challenges for delivering accredited vocational programmes, and support for staff requires enhancement. As the school wishes to extend its vocational options, it intends to make a number of visits to other schools in the pilot, including mainstream ones, to see how this is managed elsewhere, and in particular to look at the implications for supporting staff.