

Mapledown School



Working & Learning Together to Achieve our Best

Educational Offer and Admissions Criteria

Name of School	Mapledown School
This policy was reviewed on	10 th November 2020 September 2021 September 2022 September 2023 September 2024 September 2025 September 2026
The policy is to be reviewed annually in	September 2027

Mapledown is a Secondary School maintained by the London Borough of Barnet. We educate young people with severe and complex learning difficulties aged 11 to 19. Many of the students have additional needs including emotional regulation difficulties, autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties, which include sensory, physical, medical, social and emotional needs. In addition to the main school, Mapledown also runs two satellite provisions.

- **Mapledown main site:** the school caters for up to 90 students. Our class groups are organised on the basis of identified needs, and we have three learning zones - SLD (Zone One) ASC (Zone Two) , PMLD (Zone Three).
- **Mapledown @Clarion:** this is an extension of our main site, catering for up to 18 students with complex learning needs, including autism, which can be addressed with fewer adjustments than on our main site. Students attending our Clarion provision access the main site facilities and specialist equipment.
- **Mapledown @Queenswell:** this provision opens in September 2026 and will cater for up to 24 learners who either have transferred into KS3 from primary schools, or KS3/4 students who have transferred from our main site (September 2026 only). This provision will grow by an additional class each year from 2027. All learners will have complex learning needs, including autism, and will benefit from an environment similar to that of our main site, including access to sensory integration equipment and outdoors equipment.

Each provision provides a unique educational offer in terms of its curriculum, pedagogy and environment. Admission criteria therefore may differ.

This document sets out Mapledown School's vision, curriculum, pedagogy and admission criteria of each of its provisions. The aim of the document is to provide essential information about our distinct sites so that young people, families and commissioners are clear about how, where and if the school can best meet individuals' needs.

Vision

At Mapledown, our ethos and vision are to provide a learning environment for all members of the school's community, where everyone can work and learn together. We aim to ensure our wonderful and inspiring students are given the dignity of challenge, and opportunities to be heard, become as independent as possible and achieve their very best. All young people have the right to have their individual needs met, and therefore Mapledown staff will be providing learners with a personalised curriculum which is focused on the successful acquisition of knowledge and skills which will have a positive impact on their lives and opportunities.

Any placement will have been the decision of the Local Authority in conjunction with the Headteacher.

Application for places can be made from other boroughs providing that they do not jeopardise places for Barnet residents.

The provision for each student is considered every year at the Annual Review of their Education Health and Care Plan.

The admissions criteria for the school has been approved by the Governing Body of Mapledown and agreed with the Local Authority. They will be reviewed annually.

Cognition and Learning

The overriding needs of the students at Mapledown will be centred on their cognition and learning. Students will be working well below age related expectations. A small number of students may be working at pre-key stage 1 or 2 standards or up to early KS2 attainment levels.

Communication and Interaction

All students attending Mapledown have significant communication needs which may be both diverse and complex. Pupils may need help and support in acquiring basic language, communication and literacy skills; using augmented and alternative means of communication, such as Touch Cues, Objects of Reference, Symbols, Makaton, PADD, and using a range of assistive technology. Communication is at the core of all learning; interacting, expressing likes and dislikes, opinions, learning to attract attention and to request are skills that are embedded in learning and practised throughout the day.

Sensory and/or Physical Development

Students experience a wide spectrum of sensory, multi-sensory and physical difficulties. Sensory difficulties range from profound and permanent hearing impairment and/or visual impairment; some students will have multi-sensory impairments and/or progressively degenerative conditions associated with deteriorating abilities and a poor long-term prognosis. Specialist support from LA advisory services for children with the above needs will be necessary.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Development

Some pupils may exhibit behaviour that may challenge their access to the service. There are also those pupils whose own needs are exceptional or who could prevent others from accessing the service or compromise the safety of others or themselves. For such students, additional funding and staff allocation will be necessary.

Medical

Pupils may have recognised medical conditions.

The school has access to a specialist nurse practitioner who is based at Mapledown.

Some pupils may have medical needs that compromise their personal safety in school. Additional staffing may be necessary to support them.

We aim to

- Provide expertise to deliver a personalised curriculum for each pupil's learning
- Develop our pupils' communication.
- Maximise their personal autonomy & independence.
- Enable pupils to form social relationships.
- Encourage maximum mobility.
- Prepare learners for the opportunities, experiences and responsibilities of adult life.

- Promote pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Broaden pupils' range of experiences.
- Work together with families and other agencies to ensure every pupil is valued, challenged and supported.
- Have the highest expectation that every learner will make sustained academic and personal progress.
- Ensure that every pupil is ready for the next step in their learning and is supported to participate in, and contribute to, life in modern Britain.

Mapledown Main Site and Queenswell site

Pedagogy:

We believe that each pupil has the right to learn within an environment that is caring, supportive, stimulating, enjoyable, age appropriate and challenging. We aim to provide an inclusive curriculum that has the scope to answer the needs of all learners within the school, and which celebrates all achievement. The curriculum is designed to encourage the pupils to be active participants in their learning, enabling them to achieve their potential and make progress by expressing preferences, communicating needs, making choices and choosing options that other people act on and respect. Pupils' medical, physical and care needs are incorporated into their individual educational plan. Our pedagogical approach is child-centred and methodologies used can differ across classes and learning zones, and where appropriate drawn upon SCERTS (Learning zones 1 and 2) and the Engagement Profile (Learning zone 3). The curriculum is organised as a continuum of skills, further divided into pathways (pre-formal, semi-formal, formal and reaching higher).

Curriculum

At Mapledown, we are committed to delivering a personalised curriculum, coherently sequenced to meet all pupils' needs, start points and aspirations for the future, whilst being ambitious for all. While developing our curriculum, we used "Preparing for adulthood" as a starting place. Recognising that the skills needed in adulthood are difficult to master, including teaching and promoting independence, and recognising that our learners need to practice skills over long periods of time, our aim is to provide learners with a curriculum focused on the successful acquisition of knowledge and skills which will have a positive impact on their lives and opportunities. Our staff use teaching methods which adhere to the principles of developing pupils' communication skills to ensure that pupils have an effective voice in the world. Teaching will also focus on the development of independence skills, resilience, learning skills that can be used and generalised in all areas of life, emotional regulation, self-esteem and emotional maturity. We want our pupils to be able to fulfil their potential and prepare for life beyond school. We want them to experience a curriculum that establishes a growing knowledge and awareness of the world around them, including, where appropriate, the world of work and what they, as young people, can aim for as they prepare for adulthood and Post 19 transition. As we aim to do this, we are also fully aware of the impact the inherent difficulties our pupils have due to the nature of their needs and diagnoses, and look to how we can start to overcome these barriers, working alongside them.

The curriculum is designed to encourage the pupils to be active participants in their learning, enabling them to achieve their potential and make progress by expressing preferences, communicating needs, making choices and choosing options that other people act on and respect. Our pedagogical approach remains child-centred and promotes further independence in learning and accessing the community with reduced support. Our staff use teaching methods which adhere to the principles of developing pupils' communication skills to ensure that pupils have an effective voice in the world. Teaching will also focus on the development of independence skills, resilience, learning skills that can be used and generalised in all areas of life, emotional regulation, self-esteem and emotional maturity. We want our pupils to be able to fulfil their potential and prepare for life beyond school. We want them to experience a curriculum that establishes a growing knowledge and awareness of the world around them, including, where appropriate, the world of work and what they, as young people, can aim for as they prepare for adulthood and Post 19 transition. As we aim to do this, we are also fully aware of the impact the inherent difficulties our pupils have due to the nature of their needs and diagnoses, and look to how we can start to overcome these barriers, working alongside them.

Communication is the key to independence, learning and developing relationships for all our learners, who are given the very best opportunities to learn to communicate autonomously, using a range of communication systems appropriate for the needs of each student. The following underpins our curriculum:

- Communication (for all our learners, including those with PMLD, so that they can express their most basic needs, make choices and take decisions)
- For all pupils to be physically involved in their own lives and personal care (including toileting, brushing their hair, teeth etc)
- For all pupils to be given daily opportunities to develop and practise dressing/undressing (including getting ready for PE or swimming), eating/drinking as appropriate, with increasing independence.
- Work related learning and preparing for adulthood- an emphasis on teaching and learning the skills preparing for adulthood throughout the school
- For all pupils to be able to develop, persevere and maintain skills (deep learning)
- Preparing for independence and adulthood: including life skills, self-care, dressing, mobility, access to the local community.
- Regulating emotions and sensory needs
- Friendships and making friends, social relationships - learning to be interested in people and the environment
- Keeping safe
- Resilience and self-esteem
- Opportunities for all pupils to do things they enjoy independently
- Computing skills and control technology
- Persistence, initiation, problem solving and thinking skills

The Pre-formal curriculum has been designed for learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), including complex Autism, and complex learning styles and learning needs. Although some consideration has been given to overlaps and links with National Curriculum subjects, it has been developed around the starting point of their individual needs, rather than from a forced attempt to make what is traditionally offered by schools “accessible”. Four key areas of learning are “taught” via a vast array of opportunities. The fundamental structures underpinning this level are the twin pillars of communication and cognition (Dr Penny Lacey [in preparation], *Educational Provision for Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties* (Research Report for Mencap). The other half consists of “physical development”, and “personal development” (including self-care and independence).

The semi-formal curriculum has been designed for our learners who have Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), including Autism. This group of learners also require repetition and a consistent approach. They may be able to demonstrate learning over time and some understanding that symbolic representation carries meaning. This curriculum builds on prior learning which has enabled the learner to demonstrate skills which allow developing relationships with others, effective engagement and understanding of cause and effect. This curriculum teaches through six main subject areas (Communication, Language and Literacy, Cognition, KUW, Personal development, physical development, and creative development). It is expected that there will be regular overlapping of teaching which will enable generalisation and transfer of the skills and knowledge taught.

The formal curriculum has been designed for our learners who have more moderate learning difficulties, including Autism, and working at Pre-Key stage 1 or 2 standards. This level allows these learners to straddle curricula and/or use the curriculum in its totality. There are eleven subject headings which are taught in more traditional discreet sessions. These learners continue to require practical opportunities, modelling and adaptive teaching approaches.

The Formal-Reaching Higher curriculum has been designed for learners with moderate learning difficulties, including Autism, but for whom this may not be their main barrier to learning, and who are able to work within the national curriculum, up to upper Key stage 2. It is expected that this level is only used for a very small number of learners, who have been able to demonstrate the ability to work independently in sessions with less adult input.

Admissions

All students attending Mapledown School (Claremont site or Queenswell site) must have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). On rare occasions a young person may be placed at the school whilst an assessment for an EHC Plan is carried out; this will only occur following a request from Barnet's SEN Assessments and Placements Team (Barnet SEN – 020 8359 7007). The aim is to ensure that parents are well informed as parental choice is paramount.

Placement at the school is agreed through the local authority Special Schools Panel, following detailed assessments of students' needs and full consultation with all partners in the process. As a secondary school, we have an annual intake of young people transferring from year 6 to year 7, mainly from Oakleigh and Northway special schools. The overwhelming majority of applicants and students live in the London Borough of Barnet, but out-borough applicants may also be considered, if places are available and upon consultation with the SEN Assessments and Placements Team

The criteria below reflect the primary duty of our main site to provide for children with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

All children admitted to the school will:

- have been offered a place following full consultation with the school, parents, children and the subsequent recommendation of the local authority SEN placement panel.
- have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming Mapledown School and describing primary learning needs within the severe and complex learning disabilities range
- have a need for continuous access to highly differentiated learning resources and environments, and small class groups to enable purposeful learning and progression to take place.
- benefit from accessing a pre-formal, semi- or formal curricula

In response to a consultation request the school may inform the local authority that a place at the school will not be offered if it is felt that:

- The school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability or aptitude or to his/her special education needs, or
- The attendance of the child at the school would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he/she would be educated, or
- It would be incompatible with the efficient use of the LA's resources.

If a student's secondary education can be met at Mapledown, we will observe/assess the young person at their current school or at home. Where possible the school will meet parents and current or previous school staff to understand how best to meet the student's needs. Choosing the right school for a young person is one of the most important decisions a parent makes in order to secure the best possible learning opportunities and support them to be prepared for life as an adult, therefore prospective parents are encouraged to visit the school so that we can talk about the provision we can offer. Following consultation, the school will aim to determine the appropriate funding banding level prior to the student joining the school.

Students placed on our Mapledown main site will need and be provided with:

- Access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which is differentiated and tailored to the needs of the pupils
- Small class groups – currently between six and ten pupils
- High staff/pupil ratios
- Assessment placement as described
- A Full time Specialist Nurse Practitioner
- Qualified support in Physiotherapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy
- Music Therapists who work with specific students or groups
- Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired specialist visiting professionals
- Specialist resources, equipment e.g. hydrotherapy pool, sensory room etc.
- Specialist teaching methodologies as appropriate e.g. MOVE, TEACCH
- Augmentative methods of communication e.g. Makaton, PECS, PODD

Students placed at our Queenswell site will need and be provided with:

- Access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which is differentiated and tailored to the needs of the pupils
- Small class groups – currently between six and ten pupils
- High staff/pupil ratios
- Assessment placement as described
- Qualified support in Physiotherapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy
- Music Therapists who work with specific students or groups
- Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired specialist visiting professionals
- Specialist resources, equipment e.g. hydrotherapy pool, sensory room etc.
- Specialist teaching methodologies as appropriate e.g. MOVE, TEACCH
- Augmentative methods of communication e.g. Makaton, PECS, PODD

We currently cannot offer suitable provision for those that require on-site nursing as we have no nurse on our Queenswell site.

Our pedagogy aims to provide teaching/learning spaces that reduce the sensory, environmental and/or social demands which can impact significantly on a young person's learning, well-being and progress. At the semi formal and formal stages, student numbers of 8, and no more than 6 or 7 in the classes offering a pre-formal or semi-formal curriculum to the very complex groups, are optimal to ensure best progress. Disruption to these numbers can lead to students' dysregulation and resulting behaviours that challenge which can lead to injury. What is more, our site has very small classrooms which can only safely accommodate a limited number of pupils and staff.

We have to consider the vulnerability of students when deciding on placements to ensure compatibility and wellbeing of all students concerned, as well as the needs and sensitivities of new applicants.

Mapledown @Clarion

This provision is an extension of our main site, co-located in Clarion Secondary school, adjacent to Mapledown. We can cater for up to 18 students.

Pedagogy and Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to encourage the pupils to be active participants in their learning, enabling them to achieve their potential and make progress by expressing preferences, communicating needs, making choices and choosing options that other people act on and respect. Our pedagogical approach remains child-centred. Students in our Mapledown @Clarion provision access our semi or formal curricula. They benefit from some of the strategies used on our main site (SCERTS approach, total communication environment) and can access our main site for Physical education, Rebound and to access our sensory studio. Our staff use teaching methods which adhere to the principles of developing pupils' communication skills to ensure that pupils have an effective voice in the world. Teaching will also focus on the development of independence skills, resilience, learning skills that can be used and generalised in all areas of life, emotional regulation, self-esteem and emotional maturity.

Communication is the key to independence, learning and developing relationships for all our learners, who are given the very best opportunities to learn to communicate autonomously, using a range of communication systems appropriate for the needs of each student.

The semi-formal curriculum has been designed for our learners who have Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), including Autism. This group of learners also require repetition and a consistent approach. They may be able to demonstrate learning over time and some understanding that symbolic representation carries meaning. This curriculum builds on prior learning which has enabled the learner to demonstrate skills which allow developing relationships with others, effective engagement and understanding of cause and effect. This curriculum teaches through six main subject areas (Communication, Language and Literacy, Cognition, KUW, Personal development, physical development, and creative development). It is expected that there will be regular overlapping of teaching which will enable generalisation and transfer of the skills and knowledge taught.

The formal curriculum has been designed for our learners who have more moderate learning difficulties, including Autism, and working at Pre-Key stage 1 or 2 standards. This level allows these learners to straddle curricula and/or use the curriculum in its totality. There are eleven subject headings which are taught in more traditional discreet sessions. These learners continue to require practical opportunities, modelling and adaptive teaching approaches.

Admissions

All students attending Mapledown @Clarion must have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). On rare occasions a young person may be placed at the school whilst an assessment for an EHC Plan is carried out; this will only occur following a request from Barnet's SEN Assessments and Placements Team.

The criteria below reflect the primary duty of our @Clarion site to provide for children with severe learning difficulties (including Autism). The site is fully accessible and can also cater for young people with physical difficulties.

Pupils admitted to the @Clarion site will:

- have been offered a place following full consultation with the school, parents, children and the subsequent recommendation of the local authority SEN placement panel.
- have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming Mapledown School and describing primary learning needs within the severe learning disabilities range
- benefit from accessing a semi-formal or formal curriculum

We cannot offer a pre-formal curriculum @Clarion, or a more bespoke individualised approach to cater for pupils' sensory processing or emotional regulation needs.

This is because we do not have the physical space to provide the frequent and intense, individual and specific adult interventions, or the personalised timetables that include extensive learning programmes delivered in a specific learning space, separate from class activity and typically with 1:1 engagement.

Mapledown @Clarion can only cater for learners at a semi-formal or formal stage of learning.

If we do not consider a child's needs can best be met at Mapledown / @Queenswell / @Clarion, we will make clear recommendations for an alternative placement to be named on their EHCP at the point of consultation.

We must limit our group sizes to match the staff and space available and so ensure the best outcomes for all students.

Working with parents

We believe that parents and school must work together in partnership to ensure that students' needs are met. Our philosophy is that parents know their children best, while we can offer expertise in the education of their child.

Opportunities for working with parents are available throughout their child's life at Mapledown. These begin with the Starting School process and continue with Coffee Mornings, workshops, Annual Reviews, support in classrooms etc.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.