Curriculum Policy

Document Control

Author:	Hannah Curry, Head of Centre
Version number:	3.00
Approved by:	RBET Trustees
Approved:	September 2026
Review cycle:	3 Years
Date of next review:	September 2027
To be published on website (yes/no):	Yes
Related policies:	Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Behaviour for Learning Policy PSHE Policy SEND Policy SMSC Policy Assessment Policy
Related documents:	National Curriculum (England) SEND Code of Practice (2015) DfE Statutory Guidance: Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2019) DfE Guidance: Promoting Fundamental British Values (2014) Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2026 The Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance DfE Guidance: Teaching Online Safety in Schools (2019) Assessment Policy

Version History

Version	Date	Changes made	Changed by	Approved by
2.00	13.06.2024	Original approved version.	Head of Centre	RBET Trustees
2.01	22.10.2024	Minor updates	Head of Centre	N/A
2.02	4.11.2025	Minor updates	Head of Centre	N/A

3.00	15.09.2026	Review of policy and change to review schedule. Minor updates to Careers and transition, Learners with SEND and additional section added (13).	Head of Centre	RBET Trustees

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1. Purpose

This policy ensures that the curriculum offered to young people seeking an alternative route to achieve their goals in education is adapted to their individual needs. The curriculum will provide ambitious, engaging and developmental programmes, both online and in person, where academic and personal growth can be attained.

2. Scope

Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir) provides for approximately 60 learners via a multi-modal delivery method, including both in-person and online approaches. Numbers are variable depending on different entry points during the academic year. Differences in starting points mean that the curriculum offer and initial assessment processes are flexible and can accommodate learners and their respective needs at any point in an academic year.

NB As an Alternative Education Provider, RBAir can only provide up to 15 hours of provision per week to each young person.

3. Provision statement

Description of learners

Learners who come to RBAir experience, or have experienced, significant difficulties in managing their mental health. This commonly results from diagnosed conditions such as Autism, ADHD and other associated emotional and clinical issues. Access to education has generally been affected by a reduced capacity to self-regulate acute anxiety, manage environmental and social demands, and cope effectively with mainstream learning environments. Impact on academic progress and attendance has been considerable, and in some cases, learners have not been in an education provision for up to two years.

At RBAir, we recognise that many Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) conditions and Special Educational Needs are linked to experiences of trauma. Our approach is therefore underpinned by trauma-informed practice, ensuring our environment is safe, nurturing, and supports recovery and learning**.** Many learners have, or are in the process of receiving, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The delivery of education at RBAir

In order to meet the full range of learners' needs, RBAir adopts a multi-modal delivery method, combining both online and in-person approaches. This supports the process of re-engagement with learning and enables the young person to work at their own pace to access the most appropriate pathway to recovery.

We aim to provide the following:

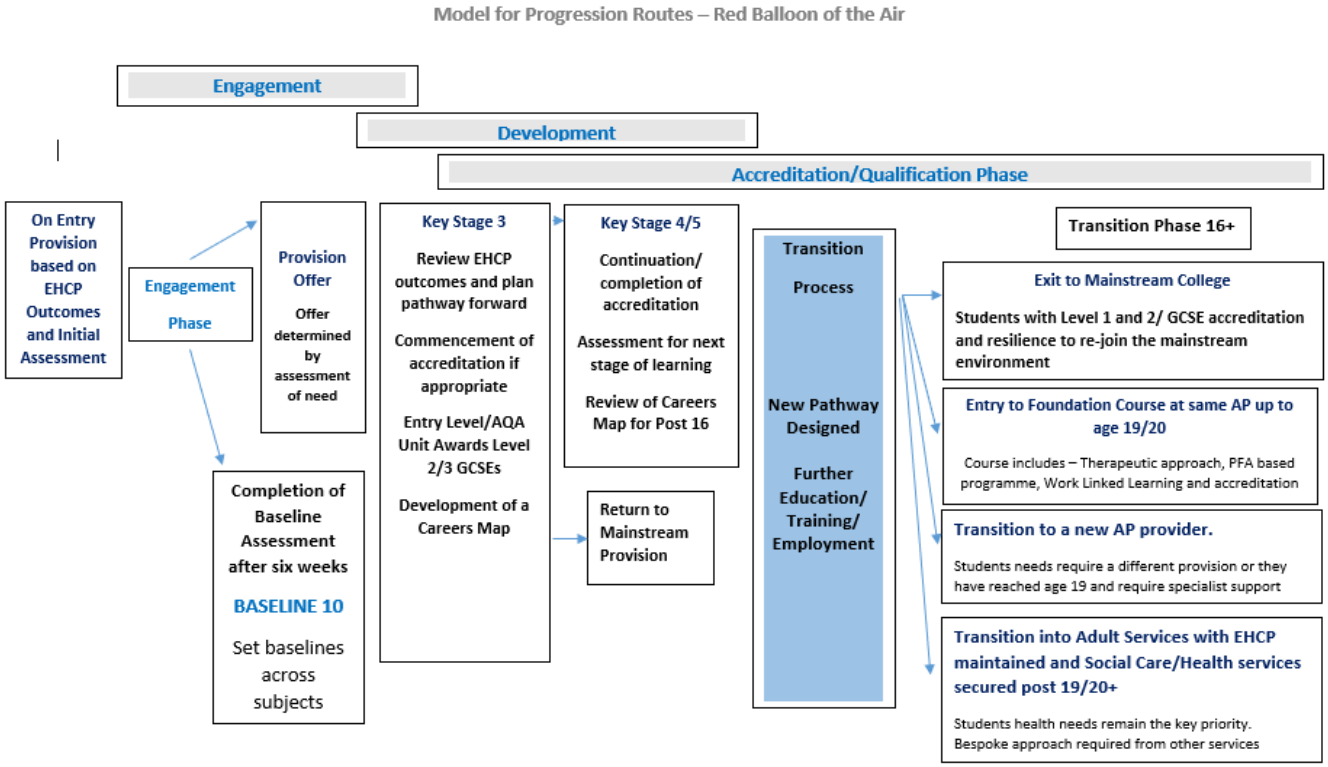
- **A safe and predictable environment:** Whether online or in person, we establish routines and clear boundaries, reducing uncertainty and supporting learners to feel secure.
- **A relationships-first approach:** All staff prioritise building strong, trusting relationships, recognising that positive connections are key to healing from trauma and developing confidence in learning.
- **A trauma-informed approach:** All staff are trained to recognise that behaviour often communicates underlying emotional needs or trauma, and therefore they respond with empathy and curiosity rather than with any punitive intent. De-escalation and restorative practice form the approaches to resolving any issues relating to behaviour, both online and in person.
- **Trained staff:** Our team receives ongoing professional development for SEND, trauma-informed practice, and equality and diversity objectives.
- **Personalised support:** We develop individual support plans, which may include mentoring, counselling, and regular wellbeing check-ins, tailored to each learner's needs.
- **Whole-provision culture:** Trauma-informed values underpin our policies and daily practice, ensuring all learners feel valued, understood and safe.
- **An engaging and enriched curriculum:** Whether online or in person, the learning experience for young people is designed to be responsive, flexible and engaging for them to begin to appreciate the benefits of re-engaging with education.
- **Family and multi-agency involvement:** We work closely with families and external professionals to ensure holistic, joined-up support for every learner.

4. Curriculum organisation

The RBAir curriculum is organised and delivered according to the starting points of learners and the nature of their needs as outlined in their individual EHCPs, if awarded. The multi-modal delivery approach incorporates both online and in-person experiences depending on how the programme has been co-created by RBAir, learners and their families. This negotiated process ensures that at admission, the learner has the best chance of successful re-engagement with education.

When learners come to RBAir at different stages of their education, the approach is to consider where they fit best onto the RBAir progression route. The provision at RBAir aims to prepare learners for an appropriate exit and where possible design a pathway that will lead them back into the mainstream education sector, particularly Post 16. The progression model (Fig 1) indicates the intention to support learners into the best provision for them following their journey at RBAir.

Fig.1



It is common for young people to start with a manageable online programme in subjects/projects of interest and personal strengths in the first few weeks, and then progress to a wider offer in line with the National Curriculum core subjects at an appropriate level, which may be outside the age-related Key Stage.

The multi-modal offer for each Key Stage, from KS3-KS5, provides an effective, high-quality experience of learning which includes a range of academic subjects, opportunities to

undertake national accreditation, and a full programme covering statutory elements of PSHE, RSE, integrated enrichment, personal development and a tailor-made Careers and Work-related Programme.

There are six sessions of 50 minutes available each day and programmes for learners are spread across a whole week. This means that individual needs can be accommodated, including reversed sleeping patterns, aspects of fatigue, anxiety and low resilience for sustained learning. Programmes for learners are constructed to be as free as possible from the barriers that may have caused absence and disengagement in the past.

The wider offer includes personal therapy with a qualified therapist and support from a Link Mentor, who will act as both advocate and programme co-ordinator for the learner, helping them to have a voice and choice in the direction of their programme.

An enrichment offer for all promotes social inclusion. Learners are given the opportunity to attend Willow Lounge, a social community session for different Key Stages, 1:1 engagement sessions, trips and visits, and sport/art activities organised on site. SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) is a core thread of the curriculum and is an integrated element in all learning experiences at RBAir. British values are intrinsic in the programme delivery across all ages and stages.

5. Learning programme development

The curriculum is organised from the point of entry to promote engagement, support learners to overcome barriers, and to maximise their potential for progress by providing the best possible alternative learning environment. The table below shows the organisation of the curriculum across the Key Stages:

1. Admissions process		
Initial Assessment - IA	Evaluation of needs (Panel)	Allocations
Following communications with the Local Authority and parents/carers, an IA is undertaken in the home. A comprehensive assessment of needs, interests and goals is established.	The Admissions Panel discusses the programme required to meet presenting needs and an offer to the LA/family is made.	The learner is provided with a team, and a timetable. Available data is appraised to match the programme to learning needs. An initial meeting will be held with all staff working with the young person to understand needs and levels (Team Around the Young Person(TAYP)).
2. Programme formation		
Core subjects/SMSC/PSHE	Projects of interest	Visits to the Centre
RBAir aims to include English, Maths, PSHE and community-based activity from the start of the placement. This may be a gradual process and may be incrementally increased over a period of weeks.	The bespoke programme will be designed by teachers to reflect the interests of the learner initially, e.g. project work on animation will cover the core subjects.	From the start, learners are given the opportunity to come into the Centre for therapy, mentoring sessions and for any enrichment activity.
3. Introductory period		
Individual / move into groups	Relationship building with staff	Baseline 10 Assessment
The learner may move into a small group and join existing learners in a more formal programme of study at the most appropriate learning level. At this point, the programme will begin to follow	Learners will be developing relationships with their teachers/mentor and possibly therapist. Learners are encouraged to voice their views and feelings in order to co-create the next phase of the programme.	After one term, staff will complete an assessment across a broad spectrum to identify the pathway the learner will take, including the accreditation route and personal development goals.

a prescribed pattern in line with the National Curriculum.		

Curriculum for each Key Stage		
Key Stage 3	**Key Stage 4**	**Key Stage 5**
• English • Maths Science • Project-based learning / discrete subjects where applicable • Integrated curriculum for foundation subjects • Online Safety • Arts Award • PSHE • RSE • Health-based PE • Careers and Work-related Learning • Community • Enrichment • Therapy	• English Language • English Literature • Maths • PSHE/RSE • Biology • Chemistry • Physics • History • Computer Science • Online Safety • Sociology • Psychology • Astronomy • Integrated Curriculum (where applicable) • Health-based PE • Arts Award • Enrichment • Therapy • Careers and Work-related Learning • Community • Transitions	• English Language • English Literature • Maths • PSHE/RSE • Biology • Chemistry • Physics • History • Computer Science • Online Safety • Sociology • Psychology • Astronomy • Health-based PE • Arts Award • Enrichment • Therapy • Careers and Work-related Learning • Community • Work Experience • Transitions
Accreditation		
• Functional Skills in English and Maths • AQA Unit Awards • Arts Award	• GCSE / iGCSE History • Functional Skills in English and Maths • Arts Award • AQA Unit Awards	• GCSE/iGCSE History • Functional Skills in English and Maths • Arts Award • AQA Unit Awards

The pathway for learners will be reviewed and evaluated on a termly basis to ensure the 'match' remains appropriate, and adaptations will be made to promote and maintain engagement and progress.

The Integrated Curriculum - Key Stage 3 and 4

The Foundation Curriculum is delivered via an integrated model for the Key Stage 3 and 4 cohort of learners. The integrated offer is available online or in person; this means that all learners, regardless of their learning profile, will have access to the programme. This element of the curriculum is called 'Curious Connections', which is taught for two hours each week, encompassing the foundation subjects. The programme builds on both knowledge and competencies derived from discreet areas of elements of the Foundation Curriculum.

In following this model, and in working with the limitations of time, the programme focuses on the Arts, History and Geography, with a health-related element added as part of the process. Supplementary elements involving Maths, English and Computing will enhance the breadth of study related to other areas of the taught curriculum. Key staff work collaboratively to establish a termly plan based on developing a planning framework which is coherent, sequential, and promotes deeper learning through linking concepts and ideas.

Example of an integrated approach

Units	**Subject A**	**Subject B**	**Subject C**	**Health-related PE**
Autumn 1 **Race Across the World**	Geography	History	Arts	Yoga Tai Chi
Autumn 2 **Race Across the World**	Geography	History	Arts	Winter walks Indoor activity e.g Boccia/target games

The Key Stage 3/4 Science Curriculum

Learners are encouraged on entry to participate in an integrated Science 'Carousel' which enables them to 'catch up' with science skills and knowledge if they have not studied the sciences for an extended period. Physics, Chemistry and Biology are approached through a

skills-based model and learners are able to build on their existing knowledge and prepare for examinations later on in their academic programme.

Enrichment

At RBAir, our enrichment offer is designed to complement and enhance the academic curriculum, fostering holistic development and preparing learners for life into adulthood. Enrichment focuses on curiosity, creativity, resilience, confidence and a sense of community. Enrichment builds:

- **Personal development**: Build resilience, independence and self-esteem.
- **Cultural capital**: Provide experiences that broaden learners' understanding of the world.
- **Skills for life**: Develop leadership, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.
- **Inclusion and engagement**: Ensure all learners, including those with SEND, have access to enriching experiences.

Key components

1. **Trips and visits**
    - Educational visits (museums, theatres, universities)
    - Outdoor learning
    - International exchanges or cultural trips

2. **Guest speakers and workshops**
    - Careers experiences
    - Arts workshops
    - Special Interest Days

3. **Curriculum enrichment**
    - Themed day activities / charity events, e.g. the shoebox challenge, MacMillan coffee morning
    - Cross-curricular projects

6. Roles and responsibilities

The Head of Centre is responsible for the overall quality of the education learners receive at RBAir and is accountable to Red Balloon Educational Trust (RBET) for ensuring that the offer

meets statutory requirements. The Assistant Head is responsible for maintaining the standards in teaching and learning, and in monitoring and reporting progress via assessments and evaluations, both online and in person. The SENDCo is responsible for ensuring that all learners' needs are planned for and accommodated in all programmes.

The Heads of Department oversee their subject planning and assessments in line with the Curriculum and Assessment policies

The Assistant Head and the SLT will assess the quality of the Curriculum by :

- Sampling Schemes of work, plans and subject progress measures
- Maintaining a robust observation and evaluation cycle with teaching staff
- Outcomes for accreditation
- Identifying where training and development is needed via line management activity

7. Promoting core competencies

The wider RBAir curriculum aims to promote lifelong attributes that will enable learners to participate with confidence in their communities, succeed in the workplace, live a happy and healthy life, and be able to form and maintain close relationships. Safeguarding is a primary focus at RBAir and the curriculum contributes to safeguarding by teaching learners how to recognise risk, seek help, develop healthy relationships, stay safe online, understand consent, and make informed decisions. Safeguarding themes are embedded across PSHE, RSE, online safety, enrichment and therapeutic provision.

i) Thinking competencies

RBAir promotes critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity across all subjects:

- **Mathematics:** Logical reasoning, problem-solving and fluency in numeracy.
- **Science**: Inquiry, hypothesis testing, and evaluation of evidence.
- **Computing**: Algorithmic thinking and digital problem-solving.

ii) Communication competencies

RBAir places a significant focus on literacy, communication and numeracy across all curriculum areas and are considered essential skills for future learning, employment and independence.

All learners will be encouraged to:

- develop vocabulary and build knowledge, negotiate, evaluate and build on the ideas of others;
- justify ideas with reasons, ask questions to check understanding;
- read fluently, read for meaning, understand extended prose, both fiction and non-fiction, and be encouraged to read for pleasure;
- develop stamina for writing, use accurate spelling and grammar, write for a range of audiences and purposes;
- participate in discussion, debate, and presentation.

iii) Personal and social competencies

These are supported through **PSHE**, **Citizenship**, and **Religious Education**:

- **PSHE**: Emotional literacy, relationships, health, and economic understanding.
- **Citizenship**: Rights, responsibilities and active participation in society.
- **RE**: Respect for diverse beliefs and values.

iv) Cultural and global competencies

These are developed through **Geography**, **History, PSHE** and the **Arts**:

- **Geography**: Understanding global interdependence and environmental responsibility.
- **History**: Cultural heritage, historical empathy and critical analysis.
- **Art, Music, Drama**: Appreciation of human creativity and expression.

v) Ethical and responsible decision-making

The curriculum promotes equality of opportunity and actively challenges discrimination. Learners are supported to understand and respect differences relating to age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The focus on equality enable is woven **PSHE, SMSC** and **Science**:

- **PSHE and SMSC**: Moral reasoning, ethical dilemmas and social justice.
- **Science**: Understanding ethical implications of scientific developments.

vi) Health and physical competencies

These are central to **Physical Education** and **Health Education**:

- **PE**: Physical fitness, teamwork and personal challenge.
- **Health Education**: Nutrition, mental health, and lifestyle choices.
- **Enrichment:** Engagement with community-based activity for well=being and social cohesion

8. Quality of teaching and learning

All learning experiences, whether online or in person, are planned sequentially in order for learners to make incremental progress. Subjects are planned in units in line with the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 and any programmes of study for formal accreditation. Subject Leaders prepare and deliver comprehensive curriculum maps and schemes of work, and these are shared across departments. Subject Leaders evaluate the appropriate match to the cohort of learners. Progress is mapped and recorded for each subject. Assessments throughout the schemes of work inform teachers of where the learner is in their development and feedback is given. *(Please see the Assessment Policy*)

All teachers have flexibility on how they deliver sessions and can work in a highly bespoke way to support learners to overcome entrenched anxieties about their abilities and progress.

All teachers build on prior learning and ensure that the time available is maximised to consolidate core competencies while progressing with discrete subjects and knowledge. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and to self-evaluate. This provides learners with a degree of autonomy that enables them to set goals which are achievable. The teaching and learning experience is designed to support learners' re-engagement with education and provides achievable starting points. The aims of the curriculum aspire to build confidence, restore positive learning habits and increase attendance, participation and readiness for future education, employment or training.

Staff are offered continuous professional development (CPD) in their departments, and in the wider teaching team, to ensure that standards are maintained and that delivery methods remain engaging and take into account a range of learners' needs and preferences, including those with a neurodiverse profile.

There is a Monitoring Cycle for tracking the Quality of Teaching and Learning, which enables staff to reflect on their teaching with a different focus for each monitoring activity. (Please see Teaching and Learning Policy) Add link

9. Examinations and accredited programmes

RBAir is a registered exams centre, and the majority of learners will sit national examinations at some point in their journey with the provision. Subject Leaders will determine which learners are ready to take exams and the level at which they are likely to succeed. RBAir offers GCSE programmes, Functional Skills, some AQA Unit Awards and the Arts Award.

Learners are prepared fully throughout the year, with mock examinations as follows:

- **Assessment week** – In November, learners will undertake timed assessments to determine next steps and to identify the need for Access Arrangements.
- **Mock exam for one subject** (exposure) – In January, learners will have the opportunity to practice exam conditions, understand more about how they feel when in a more pressurised situation, and how to utilise Access Arrangements.
- **Mock Exam** – In March, learners will experience a full mock examination process.

10. Learners and SEND

All learners will have an adapted programme to meet their needs. The SENDCo, Link Mentor and Team Around the Young Person (TAYP) monitor the progress of the learner and maintain a strong support network for both the learner and their family. Progress against EHCP outcomes is planned for and monitored via the Individual Provision Plan (IPP). These are maintained by the learners' Link Mentor (please see RBAir SEND Policy).

All teaching staff contribute to the monitoring process by:

- adding progress information to Annual Reviews;
- participating in TAYP meetings when required;
- adding information to Young Person's Team (YPT) groups – these are communication groups based around the learner.

The Plan, Do, Review model enables a feedback process where the learner's needs are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis.

11. PSHE / SMSC / British values

At RBAir, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) plays a vital role in the development of learners. The model of delivery of PSHE at RBAir is a sequenced, spiral programme which

allows for developmental progression by revisiting themes year-on-year, building on prior learning. This enables RBAir to fully equip our learners to enjoy healthy, safe, productive, responsible and balanced lives.

In weekly timetabled sessions, learners are given opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence, through a programme that is relevant and appropriate to the ethos of RBAir and the needs of every learner. Topics are regularly reviewed and updated to take account of any current issues which need to be included and changes to guidance and relevant laws.

PSHE sessions are designed to be inclusive and supportive of all learners, with a particular focus on neurodiversity and LGBTQ+ inclusivity. RBAir session guidelines, developed in collaboration with our learners, aim to create a respectful, inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

Online Safety

As a special educational provider delivering a multi-modal approach of online and in-person sessions, the delivery of high-quality online safety teaching and information sharing is a priority. This enables learners to enhance their awareness of working safely online. Therefore, all young people joining RBAir are required to complete a six-week Online Safety course; for those of statutory school age, this leads to joining a PSHE group, where online safety is an element of many of the PSHE topics.

PSHE across the Key Stages

Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Post-16	Bespoke

Learners explore and address the changes they will experience both physically and emotionally, and their increasing independence. They learn how to navigate and manage diverse relationships, their online lives, their physical and mental health, and the increasing influence on them of their peers and social media.	Learners revisit the themes explored in Key Stage 3; this enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding, to extend and rehearse vital skills, as well as exploring their own, and others' attitudes and values. The curriculum content reflects their needs, growing independence, and greater responsibility for themselves and others.	Learners have the option to continue PSHE. They follow a programme which is tailored to support them as they journey towards leaving home and living independently for the first time. We aim to ensure that learners are able to build on the skills and knowledge they have developed and extend their competencies, as they move towards the next stage in their education or careers.	Where necessary, we also design bespoke PSHE programmes for individual learners based around their specific needs.

RSE

At various points during the academic year, age-appropriate Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) sessions are delivered where learners have opportunities to ask questions that help prepare them for relationships of all kinds in the modern world, and include teaching about:

- intimate relationships;
- families;
- growing and changing, including puberty, personal hygiene and changing feelings;
- becoming more independent;
- keeping safe and understanding consent;
- sexual health, pregnancy and contraception.

SMSC/British values

RBAir delivers SMSC and promotes British values through the curriculum, therapy sessions, time with Link Mentors, Online Community (which invites small groups to agree on areas to explore, e.g. the environment, as well as linking with national recognition days, such as World Religion Day), PSHE, social activity opportunities, time with peers, clubs, trips and other activities. These all encourage mutual respect, inclusion and collaboration.

12. Careers and transitions

Embedded in the RBAir programme is information about careers and transitions. RBAir endeavours to deliver the eight Gatsby Benchmarks across the provision, ensuring an equality of offer for all learners. The wider curriculum supports 'Preparation for Adulthood' through opportunities to develop independence, self-advocacy, employability skills, community participation and healthy lifestyles.

A vocational profile approach is used to help learners identify the challenges and barriers they may face in larger educational settings, workplace environments and any other social situations. Focused discussions and targeted support allow staff to help learners find and transition to suitable next step placements, whether that be onward education, volunteering, apprenticeships or employment placements.

At Key Stage 3

Learners consider different careers and employment pathways in PSHE sessions and across the curriculum; additionally, they have access to individualised careers sessions. Link Mentors provide continued opportunities to discuss learners' thoughts and feelings about their future and to identify next steps through their regular weekly input.

Key Stage 4 and Post-16

Learners continue to be offered individualised careers and transitions guidance sessions but are also given access to our internal careers hub and Morrisby, our external careers platform. Work experience is on offer for KS4 individuals, and post-16 learners are strongly encouraged to engage with a regular work experience programme.

Careers and transitions support sessions

The careers and transitions guidance sessions are delivered by the Pathways Lead with support from the Pathways Assistant and Link Mentors. Learners are supported to:

- explore their interests and discover links to a broad range of careers and professions;
- consider different, and realistic, transition routes for post-RBAir;
- apply for suitable transitions pathways (bespoke education, mainstream college, apprenticeships or employment);
- develop CV writing and apply for jobs;
- work towards a positive transition into the next placement/setting.

13. Measuring Curriculum Impact

Curriculum impact is evaluated through:

- attendance and engagement measures;
- progress against individual learning goals;
- EHCP outcomes where applicable;
- accreditation outcomes;
- destination data;
- learner and parent voice;
- successful transitions.

The Senior Leadership Team is active in maintaining the quality of teaching and learning across RBAir and the Advisory Board carries out reviews of the curriculum termly