

# starleyhall *School*



## Learning and Teaching

2023 to 2024

# Our children and young people

At Starley Hall's school we offer placements for up to 24 primary and secondary aged children and young people. This can be for day pupils and for joint education and care placements. They can be enrolled during any stage in their education from and including Primary 6 until the latter stages of Senior Phase. We understand that our children and young people have often experienced disrupted early experiences of care and education. As such, we adopt a caring educational practice where children and young people experience safety within their learning. This is demonstrated through building structure, minimising unnecessary transitions, careful planning, and building positive relationships with adults. We recognise that unless young people feel safe, nurtured and cared for they will be unable to access their skills and capacity for learning.

We also recognise that many of our children and young people may exhibit features of developmental trauma as a result of adverse childhood experiences. Their developmental and cognitive functioning may be developmentally younger than their chronological age. In addition, some children and young people may have additional significant needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and mild to moderate learning disabilities.

For these young people we allow opportunities for growth more attuned to their social and emotional needs. This is often beyond that of the traditional classroom setting. Children and young people are given opportunities to recreate the world of earliest childhood and build experiences they may have missed but are crucial to development.



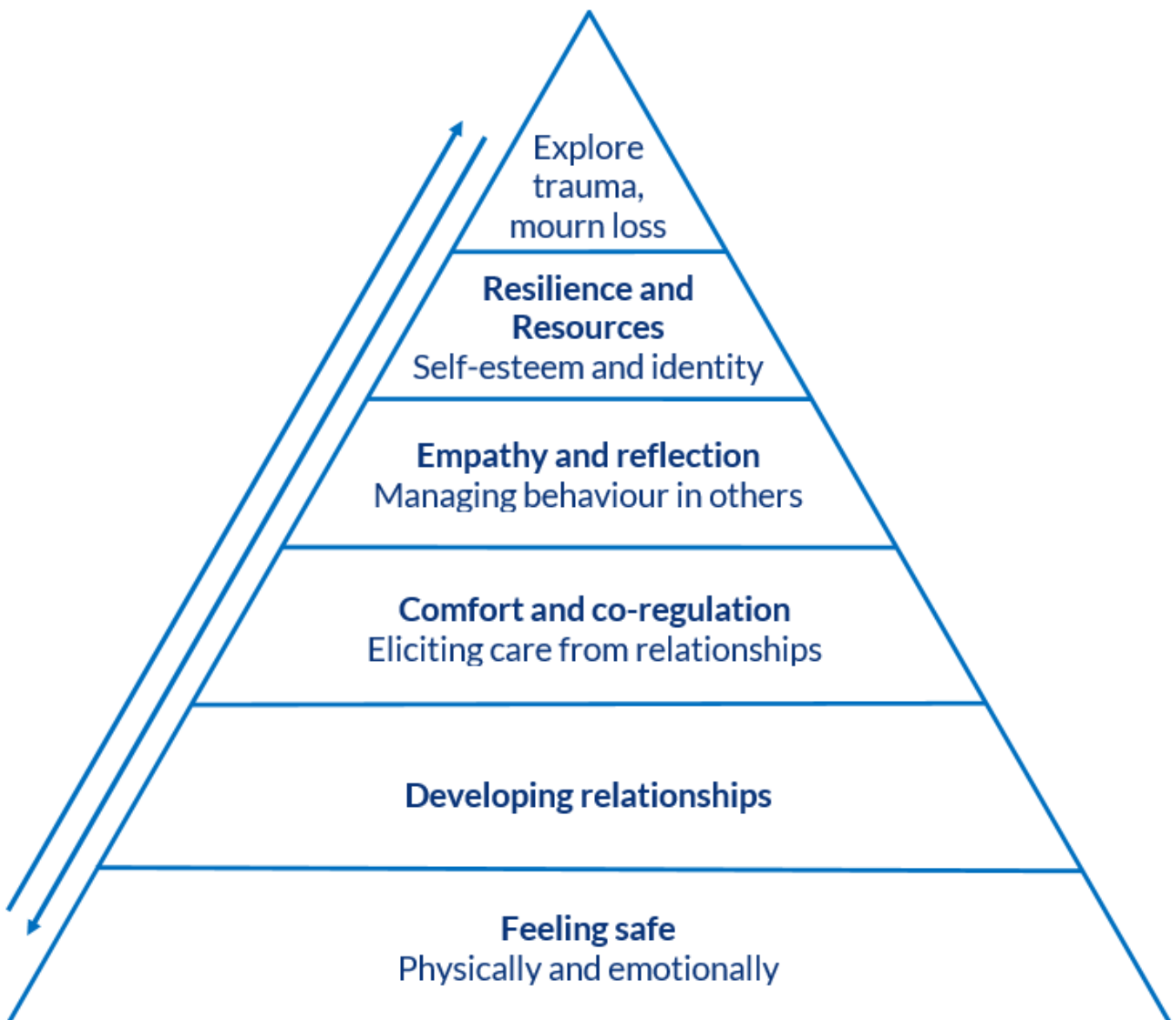
# Our vision

## Vision Statement

*“Starley Hall offers a therapeutic and nurturing environment to allow every child and young person opportunities to build confidence, develop resilience and reach their potential.”*

Our curriculum model has its foundations rooted firmly in the ‘Pyramid of Need’ (Golding 2007), recognising that young people need to first feel safe in order to access learning. The priority when a young person arrives is to build safe relationships through nurturing approaches.

Many young people are unable to access any formal learning experiences and innovative and creative approaches are required in order to begin the slow process of supporting young people to feel physically and emotionally safe. The model itself explores the wellbeing indicators recognising all the elements which need to be in place to allow young people to achieve and reach their potential.



# Our people

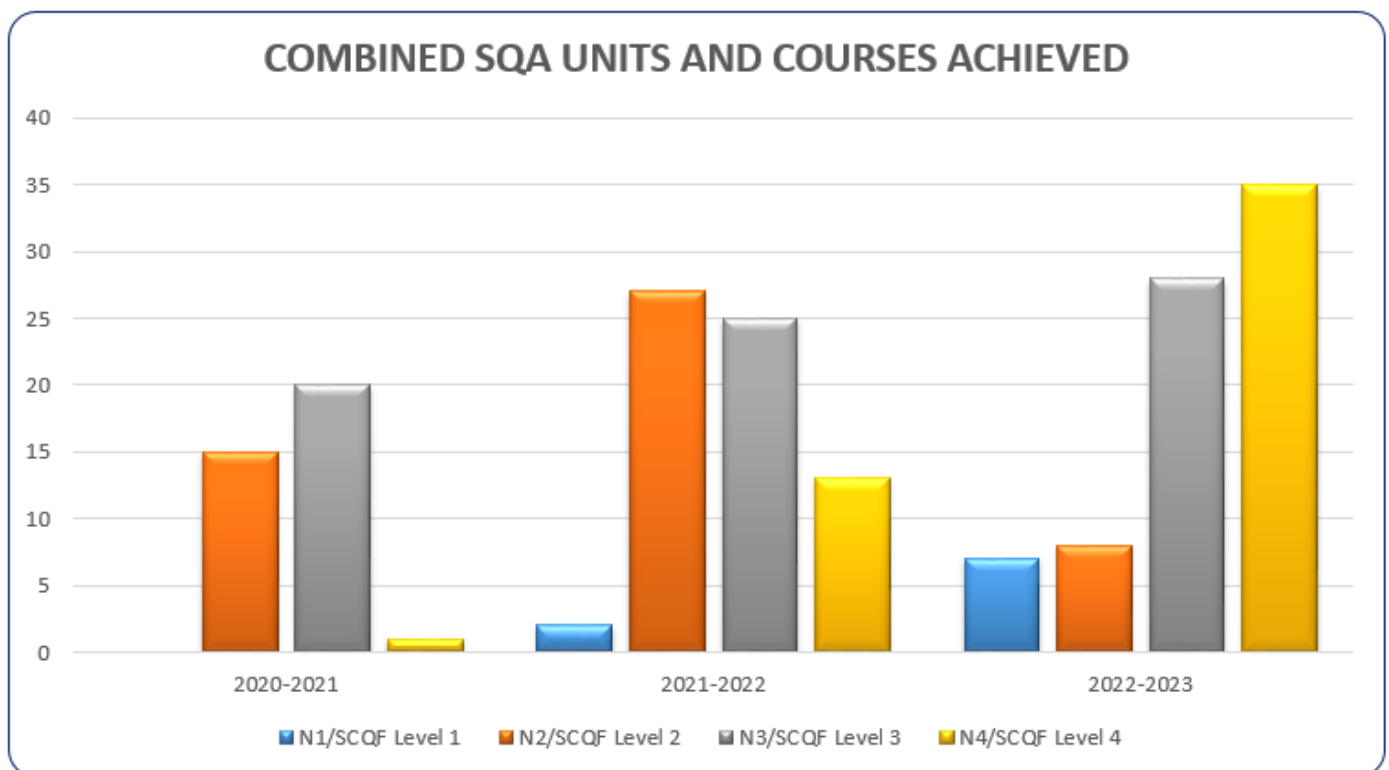
At Starley Hall, we recognise and value hugely the input and care of all of our staff in supporting the learning process; the support we receive from our stakeholders, external agencies and organisations; contributions, feedback and active participation from the parents and carers of our young people; and our young people themselves. All of these contributors form our 'school community'.

Our staff are committed to self-evaluation at all levels, leading to continuous improvement through our School Improvement Plan (SIP), and are aware of changes and development within Scottish Education. Effective and meaningful training through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is in place for all staff within Starley Hall.

Within our teaching team, we have five secondary trained teachers, one secondary trained Principal Teacher, one FE trained teacher, one primary teacher, and one Principal Teacher trained in primary education. Our teachers are supported by four Teaching Assistants. In addition, we employ a massage and relaxation therapist, and a music therapist.

Our primary trained teachers have lead responsibility for the planning and delivery of learning and teaching for children and young people of a primary age, additionally recognising that this may not match their developmental stage and cognitive abilities. These teachers offer all eight areas of the curriculum, supported by other members of the education team, within small groups of one to three young people.

Our secondary trained teachers deliver the BGE curriculum beyond the primary stage and into the Senior Phase and are able to offer a wide range of qualifications accreditation with a number subjects areas, up to and including Highers. Due to individual needs, aspirations and future transitions planning, some of these lessons may be taught solely on a 1-1 basis. Others may involve small groups working towards National Awards, taught by a teacher and supported by a Teaching Assistant.



# Transitions

We recognise that at every transition a young person makes there may be a sense of loss, an ending or having to let something go. All staff are trained in understanding and supporting the impact of transitions; we recognise they are a time of high anxiety for young people.

Transition periods are carefully planned and the plan for every young person is specific to their needs. Transition into the school involves a number of professional planning meetings. Parents and/or carers are fully involved in the planning process where this is possible and appropriate. Young people are offered opportunities to visit, spend time in class, share mealtimes and activities with peers and, where appropriate, stay over. The transition to Starley Hall can take a period of weeks or days dependent on the needs of the young person.

Profiles and risk assessments are compiled prior to young people commencing placement. Educational Psychologists, social workers and other relevant professionals meet with staff and share relevant information so that all staff have a sound awareness of the educational and care needs of the young person.

From the early stages on a young person's placement, staff, external professionals and the young person contribute towards ongoing assessments. This includes 'Screening Assessments'. Care and education staff make observations across a range of indicators. Diagnostic tools are used as required to gain an accurate integrated profile of each young person.

The key team around each young person meet and develop a 'GIRFEC Professional Action Plan'. In partnership, clear outcomes are agreed and included in the plan. Regular Focus groups are held with each young person having a lead manager. The lead manager audits and updates the plan and evaluates the impact of the strategies and interventions. These plans are shared with all staff and when planning the curriculum full account is taken of the unique profile of each young person.

We recognise this is just the start of the process and a great deal of planning goes into the day to day plans for each young person. Many of our young people find the transition from the house to school particularly difficult. We have established a number of strategies and interventions to support this. Morning routines in the houses aid young people to experience consistency and predictability. Visual planners and timetables enable the young person to know what will happen across their day and week. Staff advise and support them to be aware of any changes to their day. The school timetable follows a predictable routine with the same staff where possible and our aim is to keep unnecessary changes to a minimum.

During their placement young people grow and develop and are encouraged where possible to manage increased demands. For some young people the pace of this is very slow. In order to prepare them for future life we offer experiences which equip them with the skills required to manage change and increasing unpredictability. This is carefully planned. It is also recognised that progress is not necessarily linear and some children may go through repeated cycles where either current or previous trauma impacts on their capacity to make progress. At such times it is crucial that we reduce demand and respond to the needs of the young person while maintaining high aspirations for what our children and young people can achieve.

# Contexts of learning

Starley Hall offers a community which recognises and develops the skills and talents of young people and staff.

It is crucial to see each child and young person as an individual and build their personalised, and tailored, curriculum around their needs. Many young people require significant support to engage positively with learning and experience success.

Each young person has a key team consisting of care and education and health professionals who meet together regularly to plan the experiences and opportunities they need. This recognises the range of approaches required to offer adequate support to allow each individual to make progress in all aspects of their life including their learning.

Young people are encouraged to explore and develop their personal strengths across the curriculum. They are offered opportunities during the school day as well as during evenings, weekends and holidays to build on their talents and achieve at a personal level.

The school offers a range of inter-disciplinary learning opportunities. A thematic approach to learning which takes place during whole school events may be in relation to enterprise and fund-raising events, or based around a particular celebration.



Our young people have helped raise funds for a number of local charities, including 'Mel's VIPs' (a rabbit rescue centre), and Burntisland Hedgehog Haven over this session, and we received a very welcome visit from the 'Commando Chef'.



The school constantly explores opportunities for young people to develop a range of skills including, literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills through a range of approaches. This can include contextual learning opportunities, for example developing skills in using money and budgeting by accessing local shops as part of structured lessons, or through role-play. The curriculum is highly individualised to meet the complex needs of all the young people. All pupils follow the BGE curriculum until they begin their Senior Phase. For some it may extend beyond this depending on individual needs.

The curriculum is viewed in line with the needs of our children and young people and the context of the school. The education team take time to review, moderate and adapt the curriculum to respond to individual needs.

Expressive arts and creativity are key aspects of our curriculum, where young people enjoy using a wide range of media, materials and techniques.

This includes our annual Christmas Card design which is sent out to all of our partners.



# The curriculum

Central to the curriculum are nurture principles and this approach underpins all practice. For many young people entering the school 'the formal learning environment' poses significant risks and stress and many young people can find it hard to remain in a classroom, their 'fight or flight' responses is triggered and, if not careful, a negative cycle can be established.

## Nurture Principles

1. Children's Learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives

Children and young people at earlier stages follow a broad general curriculum (BGE). Many of the young people in the school have significant gaps in learning, some may have mild to moderate learning difficulties and/or have had previous negative experiences of learning. They require a significant amount of support to engage with the learning process and it takes time to help them develop the skills they need to be able to evaluate their own progress.

Ensuring that the curriculum is relevant is at the heart of the learning experience. Coherence and progression are monitored and evaluated and over time young people are encouraged to identify their strengths and areas they need to develop.

Our classrooms are bright and colourful, offering a range of different areas to learn in.





# Broad General Education

The BGE recognises the unique needs of each young person and builds in the experiences they need. As young people progress through the school the focus may change dependent on need.

There is a significant focus on developing emotional literacy; this is often through indirect and discreet approaches, recognising that not all young people are at the stage where they can access this and may need to be offered a range of experiences as the first step. Many young people do not recognise their own emotions and find any form of social setting challenging.

'Play' forms a large part of the curriculum, recognising that many young people may not have experienced play as part of their early years.

Once a young person begins to feel safe they also begin to access more formal learning opportunities, teachers are very skilled at delivering the curriculum in an accessible format using visual tools and active learning approaches.



# Senior Phase

It is crucial that the learning opportunities offered to young people are matched to their developmental and learning needs. The school has the capacity to offer a range of National Qualifications at all levels including Highers in a number of subject areas, and further opportunities for wider achievement through ASDAN and other routes. The curriculum at all levels is aimed to respond to the individual needs of the child.



Class groups are small and a high level of support is offered from both teachers and Teaching Assistants. There are also occasions where young people are offered individual support from a teacher or a Teaching Assistant. This may be to improve their literacy skills or to follow a particular National Award.

# Personalisation and personal support


Personalisation and choice runs throughout both the BGE and Senior Phase. This is as much about approaches to learning and choices within individual curricular areas as choice of subjects or experiences. The school needs to be flexible and adaptable in its approach to personalisation and choice and it can look very different for each young person.

We've been working for a wee while now on **fractions**, building on lessons before summer.

Read the comments in the blue column below and put a **big tick** on the face you think fits best for you!

This will help me try to plan lessons to best suit what you need! Thanks!

Hey...I've got a few questions if that's okay?



	Yep!	Maybe!	Nope!	Dunno...
Even though we don't use them all that often, do you enjoy working from textbooks?				
We've used worksheets quite a bit with LOTS of visuals like pictures, including LEGO and superheroes – does this help?				
Has it helped you SEE how fractions work with the projector where I draw and write onto the board using the Chromebook?				
We've worked more as a group this term – how have you enjoyed this?				

Staff use a range of resources to engage young people and gain their thoughts and feedback, including Talks Mats, Emotion Works, and visual feedback sheets.

Young people can use them to share 'how', 'when', 'why' they learn.

Focused work also takes place during the school day and this may be access to specific therapeutic input such as music therapy, additional literacy support or work centred on developing very specific areas of understanding and awareness, for example managing emotions, relaxation sessions, self-regulation, autism awareness etc. This can continue throughout a young person's placement in the school.

Some young people need a range of approaches to enable them to access learning and the school utilises the skills of a range of staff, both internal and external. The school also links with local businesses and other schools to ensure that each young person accesses an appropriate curriculum.

Our school is highly staffed and this is essential if we are to offer the individualised approaches children and young people require. The staff team access a range of training opportunities to build their understanding of the holistic needs of each child – this training is specific to the children we work with and the complexity of their needs.

# Positive Destinations

The main aim of our school is to help every young person feel safe, build and sustain positive relationships with others. We provide opportunities to recognise and build on their strengths and talents and go on to develop the skills they need for life. This will help enable them to grow into healthy and happy adults. We know that this will allow them to engage in the world of further education, training and employment. We also recognise that some young people may require an alternative pathway due to their level of need.

Progression planning for a young person moving on commences at an early stage and the school is committed to working in partnership with young people, their families and placing authority professionals to explore future plans. Young people are offered a range of experiences which allows them to build confidence. This may start with simple tasks of responsibility within the school, to being offered opportunities to work as volunteers with local organisations.

The school has excellent links with the local community, as well as a range of local businesses and colleges. The school continues to develop flexible learning pathways for all young people with a significant focus on developing skills for life and work.



Young people completed the Level 1 Construction course at the Community Trade Hub in Fife.



Many young people access work experience and/or college placements in their local communities during the Senior Phase in school. Links with SDS begin at an early stage and continue throughout their placement. Starley Hall is committed to Developing the Young Workforce and has robust processes in place to support this.

Through our wider service – Starley Care Services – we can offer highly individualised placements for young people as they move into adulthood.