

2026

Life Skills Policy



**Woolgrove School,
Special Needs Academy**

Live, Laugh and Learn
Together

Owner: Headteacher
Authored by: Subject Lead
Adopted by: SLT
Review cycle: Triennially
Next review date: 01/09/2029

WP0065

Version: 1.1

Intent

At Woolgrove School, we recognise that developing functional independence is an essential part of preparing pupils for life beyond school and for adulthood. Life Skills at Woolgrove focuses on developing the practical skills pupils need to participate as independently as possible in everyday life, according to their individual physical, cognitive, communication, sensory and developmental needs.

We recognise that independence will look different for every pupil. For some pupils, independence may mean completing an entire task without support. For others, it may mean completing part of a task, making a choice, communicating a need or participating actively in a routine. Our aim is to maximise each pupil's level of independence and enable them to participate as fully as possible in school, home and community life.

Life Skills may include:

- personal care;
- toileting;
- managing clothing;
- dressing and undressing;
- personal hygiene;
- eating and drinking;
- using cutlery;
- communication;
- making choices;
- everyday routines;
- caring for belongings;
- classroom responsibilities;
- community participation;
- safety;
- travel and transport;
- leisure activities;
- practical independence.

Provision is personalised according to each pupil's starting point, needs and future independence goals.

Implementation

Whole-school approach

Life Skills are taught both explicitly and throughout the school day.

Opportunities are embedded within:

- classroom routines;
- personal care;
- mealtimes;
- practical activities;

- transitions;
- classroom jobs;
- trips;
- Food Technology;
- PSED;
- leisure activities;
- everyday interactions.

Independence is developed through both planned lessons and opportunities throughout the school day. This ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to practise and develop their skills in meaningful everyday situations.

Personalised provision

Life Skills teaching is based on each pupil's individual needs.

Staff consider:

- current levels of independence;
- physical ability;
- cognitive development;
- communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- emotional needs;
- safety;
- personal care needs;
- level of adult support required;
- opportunities for practice;
- future independence.

Tasks are broken down into manageable steps where necessary. Pupils are given opportunities to practise skills repeatedly and to develop confidence before support is reduced.

Levels of support

Staff provide the level of support required for each individual pupil.

Support may include:

- hand-over-hand support;
- physical prompting;
- 1:1 support;
- modelling;
- gestural or pointing prompts;
- visual prompts;
- verbal prompts;
- initial prompts;
- environmental prompts;

- reduced adult support;
- independent completion.

Staff should aim to use the least intrusive support which enables successful participation while maintaining safety. Pupils should be given appropriate time to process information and attempt tasks themselves.

Personal care and toileting

Personal care is an important part of Life Skills provision.

This may include:

- toileting;
- washing hands;
- brushing teeth;
- washing the face and body;
- managing clothing;
- dressing and undressing;
- managing fastenings;
- developing personal hygiene routines.

Toileting is assessed through the school's separate Life Skills assessment statements. These statements identify individual pupil progress and next steps in toileting independence. Toileting is therefore part of Life Skills provision and assessment.

Independence in the classroom

Pupils are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning environment.

Opportunities may include:

- collecting equipment;
- finding resources;
- carrying belongings;
- organising equipment;
- completing classroom jobs;
- tidying;
- caring for personal belongings;
- preparing for activities;
- following familiar routines.

Staff should encourage pupils to participate in tasks wherever possible rather than completing tasks unnecessarily on their behalf.

Communication

Communication is fundamental to independence.

Pupils are supported to communicate:

- needs;
- wants;
- preferences;
- choices;
- requests for help;
- discomfort;
- when they have finished;
- when something is wrong.

Communication may include:

- speech;
- signs;
- symbols;
- gestures;
- objects of reference;
- photographs;
- communication books;
- communication devices;
- individual communication systems.

All appropriate forms of communication are valued. A pupil should not be required to use spoken language in order to demonstrate independence.

Eating and drinking

Pupils are supported to develop independence around eating and drinking.

This may include:

- using cutlery;
- drinking independently;
- making food and drink choices;
- managing food and drink items;
- following mealtime routines;
- clearing away;
- developing confidence with different foods.

Food preparation and cookery are taught through the separate Food Technology curriculum.

Food Technology

Food Technology is a separate curriculum area at Woolgrove.

It develops skills and knowledge relating to:

- using tools and equipment;
- preparing food;
- following recipes;

- kitchen safety;
- hygiene;
- healthy choices;
- food groups;
- nutrition;
- planning and evaluating food products.

Pupils may transfer Food Technology skills into Life Skills activities, for example when preparing food, using cutlery or participating in mealtime routines.

Community independence

Life Skills opportunities extend beyond the classroom.

Pupils may practise skills within:

- the school environment;
- local shops;
- cafés and restaurants;
- parks;
- leisure facilities;
- transport settings;
- community spaces.

Community learning provides opportunities to practise:

- communication;
- safety;
- social behaviour;
- following routines;
- making choices;
- managing money where appropriate;
- travel skills;
- independence.

The aim is for pupils to transfer skills learned in school into real-life situations.

Transfer of skills

A key part of Life Skills provision is helping pupils apply their learning in different situations.

For example, a pupil may be supported to:

- complete a handwashing routine in different areas of school;
- use cutlery at school and in a community setting;
- practise a shopping routine in different shops;
- communicate a need to different appropriate adults;
- follow safety routines in unfamiliar environments.

Staff should not assume that a skill demonstrated in one environment will automatically transfer to another. Pupils therefore need repeated opportunities to practise and generalise their skills.

Working with families

Woolgrove recognises the importance of working with families to support pupils' independence.

Where appropriate, staff may:

- share successful strategies;
- discuss independence goals;
- identify opportunities for practice at home;
- communicate progress;
- support consistency between home and school.

Any home activities should complement the school's provision and should be appropriate to the individual pupil.

Structured and visual support

Pupils may require structured approaches to help them understand and complete Life Skills tasks.

Staff may use:

- visual timetables;
- task sequences;
- photographs;
- symbols;
- modelling;
- objects of reference;
- checklists;
- step-by-step instructions;
- repeated practice.

Tasks can be broken down into smaller, manageable stages. This approach supports pupils to understand expectations, develop confidence and gradually reduce their reliance on adult support.

Safety and dignity

Life Skills must always be taught with regard to pupils' safety, dignity and wellbeing.

Staff will:

- follow relevant health and safety procedures;
- provide appropriate supervision;
- consider individual risks;

- respect pupils' privacy;
- support dignity during personal care;
- use appropriate language;
- respect pupils' communication and boundaries;
- follow safeguarding and intimate care procedures where applicable.

Independence should never be developed at the expense of a pupil's safety or dignity.

Assessment

Assessment is ongoing and focuses on what pupils can do and the level of support they require.

Evidence may include:

- observation;
- photographs;
- practical demonstrations;
- work samples;
- assessment records;
- communication records;
- community activities;
- everyday routines.

Areas of assessment may include:

- independence;
- communication;
- food preparation and kitchen skills;
- health;
- community safety;
- toileting;
- managing clothing;
- dressing and undressing;
- personal hygiene;
- food and eating.

Evidence of progress

Progress may be demonstrated when a pupil:

- participates in more stages of a task;
- requires fewer prompts;
- moves from physical to less intrusive support;
- initiates a task;
- communicates a need;
- makes a choice;
- recognises when help is needed;
- applies a skill in a different environment;
- completes a familiar routine with greater independence;

- completes a task safely.

Progress is therefore not solely defined as completing a task independently.

Staff responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to promote independence.

Staff should:

- provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise skills;
- encourage pupils to do what they can for themselves;
- use agreed communication systems;
- use appropriate prompts;
- allow processing time;
- recognise and celebrate progress;
- support transfer of skills;
- maintain dignity and safety;
- record relevant progress;
- share effective strategies with colleagues.

Consistency between adults is particularly important for pupils who benefit from predictable routines and structured support.

Impact

Through Life Skills provision, pupils will develop increasing opportunities to:

- participate in everyday routines;
- communicate their needs;
- make choices;
- develop personal care skills;
- manage aspects of their own lives;
- take responsibility for themselves and their environment;
- develop practical independence;
- apply skills in different environments;
- participate safely in the community;
- develop confidence;
- recognise when they need help;
- become increasingly independent.

The impact of Life Skills is demonstrated through pupils' ability to apply functional skills within meaningful everyday situations. Our ultimate aim is to maximise each pupil's independence and prepare them for adulthood for as full and meaningful a life as possible, reflective of their individual abilities and needs.