

## **Teaching and Learning Policy**

**1. This policy is part of a group of policies at TreeHouse School focusing on outcomes for pupils.**

**2. Our values and beliefs about teaching and learning in the TreeHouse context**

- all of our pupils can learn. We have high expectations for their progress and need to teach in a way that they can learn most successfully
- in order to overcome the barriers to learning associated with their autism and realise their potential, our pupils need outstanding teaching, learning and support through a behavioural model of practice
- a carefully personalised curriculum, planned and delivered using an evidence based behavioural approach, has the potential to remove the barriers to learning faced by each of our pupils
- teaching and learning activities should be age appropriate, whatever level a pupil is working at
- every pupil is an individual, with their own abilities, needs and aspirations
- pupils learn from each other as well as from adults
- pupils with autism may require more repetition than typically developing children in order fully master concepts and skills
- just like typically developing children, our pupils have different learning styles (e.g. auditory, visual or kinaesthetic)
- effective, robust assessment procedures are a crucial foundation of effective teaching and learning
- implementation of sound planning practices are necessary if teaching and learning is to be outstanding on a day-to-day basis
- outstanding teaching and learning always incorporates practical, functional application and it is vital for our pupils to generalise the skills they learn, particularly as they start to prepare for life after school
- outstanding teaching and learning practice should be identified, celebrated and shared.

**3. Our aims for teaching and learning**

In addition to providing the planned school curriculum and promoting pupils' knowledge and understanding, we also recognise through teaching we also promote the development of pupils' attitudes and attributes.

As such through our approach to teaching we aim to:

- Improve the quality of life, through outstanding teaching and learning underpinned through an evidence based behavioural approach, of children affected by autism and those of their families
- Develop the necessary pivotal skills as building blocks for future skill acquisition and independent learning in other settings
- Enable every pupil to achieve their academic potential and aspirations
- Enable our pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding
- Ensure that each pupil is motivated to maintain, apply and generalise the skills that they have learned, beyond school and in the natural environment
- Nurture each pupil's functional independence with self-help and daily living skills

- Equip each pupil with the tools necessary to positively influence and manage their own life, with as great a degree of independence as possible
- Enable each pupil to develop the skills and strategies needed to participate in and meaningfully contribute to their local community
- Develop in each pupil an awareness of self and others
- Ensure that each pupil is equipped as fully as possible for adult life: including confident use of a functional communication system; self-management of any behaviours that act as a barrier to learning or participation; development of vocational and careers skills and a portfolio of independent life and leisure skills
- Make the ordinary possible.

#### **4. Our Behavioural Approach - School Wide Positive Behavioural Support (PBS)**

An evidence-based Behavioural approach underpins all teaching and learning at TreeHouse School. This approach is based on our values and enables learners to access learning opportunities across their personalised learning plan and to achieve their full potential. The focus of all behaviourally based intervention is on the individual and their learning needs. We work closely with the child or young person and their families to identify the things that are important to them, and use these aspirations, in combination with a robust assessment of their abilities, interests, prior learning and experience, to plan an appropriate learning programme. It is this personalised and collaborative approach which enables us to provide the highest quality teaching, learning and support.

We support the pupil to identify the eventual outcome he or she wants to achieve. Individual or group learning plans underpinned by behavioural teaching methods are then designed for each pupil or group of pupils with behavioural principles used to strengthen the successful achievement of appropriate learning goals. These plans ensure that consistency in teaching approaches is achieved, research indicates this is important for successful learning for children and young people with autism. Tasks are analysed and considered along side the pupil's learning style (identified through assessment of learning) in order to identify the most appropriate and effective teaching technique to use for each target. The model of school wide behavioural support determines the degree of input each pupil requires to successfully complete each task.

#### **5. Our Delivery of Teaching and Learning**

##### **5.1 Personalisation and Differentiation**

In accordance with statutory inclusion guidelines, each pupil's curriculum at TreeHouse takes account of the type and extent of any difficulties associated with their SEN. All pupils at TreeHouse are working at a level below the age-related norm. This means that pupils are working towards targets drawn from Programmes of Study relevant and meaningful to them; below those accessed by their typically developing peers. Skills and knowledge are taught using age-appropriate resources and learning opportunities. Each pupil's curriculum is personalised. Learners who are able to learn successfully from group-based teaching contexts will have more of their teaching and learning delivered and accessed via group lesson plans with Individual Lesson Plans supporting access to group teaching. This will not be appropriate for all pupils. The breadth and weighting of individual, paired and small group, teaching is individually planned for each pupil based on on-going assessment of the learning style. The school ethos is that all learners should be enabled to participate in small group settings as their learning skills develop and therefore the acquisition of group skills forms part of each learners personalised curriculum

## **5.2 How we decide what and how to teach each individual pupil**

Each pupil's progression and the appropriate model for meeting their needs is identified through a person-centred planning process. Decisions are driven by the pupils EHCP which should reflect what is important to the individual and the family concerned. Targets are regularly reviewed at termly meetings and through statutory annual reviews.

## **5.3 When and Where is Teaching and Learning planned?**

**Routines:** A pupil's personalised curriculum also includes incidental learning opportunities, both through regular routines within school and through introducing new learning opportunities.

**Events:** All events create opportunities for pupils to rehearse skills, learn curriculum content, generalise mastered skills into different contexts and/or develop their personal characteristics. Events include the Christmas Show, Sports Day, Healthy Eating events, Red Nose Day, visitors, reverse inclusion, vocational placements and residential.

**Contexts:** Learning does not have to take place at a desk, indeed much of the best learning occurs beyond the classroom. At TreeHouse we plan for learning to take place and be generalised at internal and external locations across the school, in the community, locally or further afield, on regular trips and on irregular educational visits.

**Audiences:** In supporting pupils in recognising the purpose of a skill and being able to apply the skills appropriately, it is important that they have opportunities to employ their skills with a variety of clear audiences.

## **6. Who plans, leads and supports teaching and learning?**

We believe that the quality of the pupil's experience is largely determined by the quality of interaction between individuals and the staff who support them and therefore we commit significant investment to the expertise of our practitioners. Our highly skilled teachers, behaviour analysts and allied health professionals work closely together to provide specialist, integrated and appropriate teaching, learning and support.

**Relationships:** Building a positive rapport between each pupil and teacher underpins the success of any educational programme, and a pupil's motivation to learn.

**Progression to less restrictive ratios of support:** Although our pupils require the educational support of a 1:1 pupil:teacher ratio, there are many planned and incidental opportunities to work with others throughout each day.

**Learning environments** that encourage appropriate relationships to be fostered are carefully planned in order to give each pupil the best learning potential. Whilst being mindful of a pupil's academic year and chronological age, TreeHouse designs classes and teaching groups with peer groups in mind.

**Home interventions:** Research indicates that children diagnosed with autism make optimum educational gains where intervention is consistent between different environments. As such we aim to work closely with parents to enable them to continue teaching their child, to manage any behaviours that challenge learning and participation and to generalise their mastered skills to the home and community environments.

## 7. Teaching and Learning Environment and Resources

Pupils learn well when the environment in which they find themselves is well ordered and well managed, where there is discipline and clarity about expectations. Environments will vary depending on the curriculum content or the characteristics that are being developed. Environments change from being the classroom, a 'quiet space', school corridors, school halls, the community, the home or play equipment in the school grounds. TreeHouse does not specifically aim to teach within a low arousal environment because it is difficult for pupils to generalise skills taught in a low arousal environment to other more natural environments. The classrooms at TreeHouse are, therefore, deliberately not low arousal environments and look much as one would expect from a typical (mainstream) class.

## 8. Space and Furniture:

- Our building is equipped with specialist teaching areas providing an even greater range of contextual and meaningful learning opportunities for our pupils
- We believe that learning opportunities can take place in all environments, teaching is planned in outside spaces and in the community, for example at local tennis courts, parks and swimming pools
- Space is used flexibly throughout the school.
- Multipurpose rooms are equipped with age appropriate furniture.

## 9. Resources to deliver and support teaching and learning

- In order to maximise learning and teaching opportunities, we operate an extended school year (41 weeks).
- The majority of TreeHouse staff are graduates (often with Psychology degrees), with many additionally having post-graduate qualifications, Teaching Assistant diplomas, and some with teaching qualifications.
- We run a two-year tutor training programme with a new intake each July. All trainee TABS participate in a robust competency-based training programme using the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Competency Framework. The framework is divided into seven main areas: Autism; Providing high quality education, care and support environments; Functional, contextual and skills based assessment; Behaviour change procedures for skills teaching; developing and implementing a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP); Reducing behaviours that challenge; and Professionalism.
- All staff in the organisation receive a thorough induction training, including an Introduction to Autism, Introduction to PBS, Curriculum training and practical training on our approaches to teaching and learning. Appropriate training and opportunities for professional development are on-going for staff in all roles
- There is a robust cycle of performance management which allows all staff to set targets and review and evaluate their practice.

## Materials and apparatus:

- The provision of age-appropriate materials and apparatus is always a consideration.
- In order to best meet the learning needs and preferred learning style of each pupil, we design many of our own teaching resources.
- Adapted equipment is provided as necessary to meet pupil's needs

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