



## Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy

At The Walnuts we acknowledge that the quality of our teaching directly affects how well our children and young people (CYP) learn. We aim to provide a safe, positive and autism friendly environment where good teaching and learning opportunities are of the highest quality, and where CYP can engage in personalised learning, facilitated by bespoke curricula, which meet their individual needs and enables them to achieve their full potential.

### Effective Teaching and Learning

The school aims to enable all our CYP, in so far as is possible, to become:

- **Successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **Confident individuals** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **Responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society.

Effective teaching and learning is the process by which we deliver our modified curriculum, which is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated to meet the needs of our pupils whilst having regard to the National Curriculum. The curriculum aims to provide relevant and challenging learning which responds to pupils diverse learning needs and overcomes potential barriers to learning.

We adopt an integrated approach to the curriculum which encompasses and extends the National Curriculum and is continually evolving to meet the wide ranging and ever changing educational and social needs of our CYP.

Our whole school curriculum model provides a natural progression from the developmental Early Years Foundation Stage, towards participation within the National Curriculum framework and beyond, with programmes designed for and implemented at an appropriate level. The curriculum prepares the children and young people for transition to adult life through programmes which promote independence, including extensive use of the local community.

At The Walnuts we recognise that pupils learn through their total experience of the school day, not just through learning planned for in lessons. Varied teaching methods and strategies will be used effectively and appropriately to accommodate differing learning styles. This policy guides all stakeholders and their practice in creating an effective and well-managed learning environment in which the individual needs of each pupil can be met. Our values include the conviction that all pupils are of equal worth regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, and circumstances or special needs.

At The Walnuts, we use principles and practices that are designed to create a structured and ordered daily schedule within an environment that supports learning and understanding. Our staff consider a wide range of teaching and support strategies and utilise those methods which are most productive and in keeping with the aims and ethos of the school. The overarching framework of TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children), provides the basis of structured teaching and an individual approach to the needs of each child and young person.

Included within the approaches used are elements of behaviour strategies and therapeutic approaches appropriate for learners with ASD. Being able to break through the fear and confusion of daily life is dependent on the creation of a secure and trusting environment. Only then will the children and young people be receptive to learning.

Whilst we believe our approach to teaching and learning offers our students the best possible opportunities for success, we recognise that other approaches also exist and aim to work in partnership with parents who may wish their child to follow an alternative approach. The school will not deliver or follow these programmes but will work in partnership with individual parents who wish to withdraw their child for part of the school week to deliver such programmes in the home, as long as the school considers the programme to be safe, ethical and appropriate. However, it must be understood by parents that frequent absences from school may impact negatively upon their child's attainment and progress and that the school cannot be held accountable for this. Parents should also be aware that absence or arrival/departure times other than the agreed school times may also be unsettling for children since they may miss the usual settling in activities and start or end of day routines.

### **Aims**

Teachers at The Walnuts value all pupils. In order for all pupils to reach their full potential, we need to ensure that in our delivery and planning of the curriculum, we allow children to access the full range of teaching and learning styles and develop pupil's skills effectively.

#### ***Teaching and Learning - We believe that pupils learn best when:***

- They are happy.
- They are safe.
- They are interested and motivated.
- They are confident, feel secure and are aware of boundaries.
- They achieve success and recognition for their achievements.
- They are given tasks that are appropriate to their level of need and ability.
- They are challenged and stimulated.

- Their teacher is enthusiastic, energetic and knowledgeable.
- They have the confidence to make mistakes and learn from them.
- There is a relationship of mutual respect between all the members of the school community.

***Teaching - Teachers will ensure they:***

- Are enthusiastic, energetic and knowledgeable.
- Have good command of curriculum content and specialist approaches.
- Plan lessons that have clear objectives that are communicated effectively to pupils.
- Use a range of teaching styles and resources that enable all CYP to learn effectively.
- Evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- Take into account individual needs.
- Celebrate good work and provide feedback to pupils about their learning and progress.
- Implement assessment and recording strategies relating to agreed criteria.
- Promote effective and positive interaction with pupils.
- Promote high expectations.
- Provide clear expectations that are fair and consistent.
- Provide clearly understood and manageable routines.
- Provide a safe and secure learning environment.
- Provide a well-managed and organised classroom or learning setting that is happy, friendly and well resourced.
- Through appropriate displays that support the learning process, create an attractive and stimulating learning environment which also reflects the needs of many of our pupils for low arousal areas.
- Recognise and manage effectively the support of other adults in the classroom.
- Promote a strong home and school working partnership.
- Promote equality of opportunity.

***Learning - Pupils will be encouraged to and have the opportunity to:***

- Work individually, in groups and as a class.
- To make decisions and work co-operatively.
- Be creative and discuss their ideas.
- Develop social skills and independence.
- To have high expectations of themselves and the quality of their work.
- To communicate clearly and confidently.
- To listen and respond appropriately.
- To use ICT to enhance their work and source information.

- To be enthusiastic about school and learning.
- To communicate what they have attained and how they attained it.
- To develop awareness of their own attainment, their learning approaches and contribute to plans for how these can be improved where appropriate.
- To become independent learners.
- To recognise, respect and value cultural diversity and the religious beliefs of others.
- To develop awareness of self and sensitivity to others, to develop self-discipline and a high level of acceptable behaviour.
- To learn to tolerate transitions and changes in life.

***Social, physical, creative and academic achievements are celebrated in many ways as an ongoing process in all aspects of school life by:***

- Praise by teachers, peers, Headteacher and parents/carers.
- Displays of good work.
- Opportunities to perform or share.
- The awarding of stickers, rewards and certificates.
- Celebrating achievements in group meetings/assemblies.
- Regular positive communication with home to raise parent/carers awareness of pupil achievement.

### **Achieving Our Aims**

The framework within which the school works is formed by principles and resources taken mainly from TEACCH, SCERTS, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and the use of Social Stories.

This leads to teaching environments which are uncluttered, maintain low arousal and are structured in their use of objects, symbols, pictures or the written word to represent what is happening throughout the school day in a way that is appropriate for individual pupils. Every class uses object, symbol or written timetables both for groups and for some individuals, which provide a clear visual structure to the day which also helps with transitioning and making the world a more predictable place.

Teaching and learning is a process of co-operative teamwork involving everyone in the school community.

**All members of the school community (teachers, therapists, support staff, parents and members of the school's Governors) work towards the school's aims by:**

- Sharing responsibility for facilitating access to the curriculum and mediating children's learning so that they make progress
- Regarding pupils as individuals and respecting their rights, values and beliefs.

- Fostering and promoting good relationships and a sense of belonging to the school community.
- Providing a well ordered environment with clear expectations for learning and behaviour.
- Offering equal opportunity in all aspects of school life.
- Encouraging, praising, and positively reinforcing good relationships, behaviour and work.
- Working as a team, supporting and encouraging each other.

***Teachers should work toward the school's aims by:***

- Providing a supportive, stimulating and challenging work programme designed to enable all pupils to reach high standards of personal achievement.
- Ensuring that learning is progressive and continuous.
- Being good role models, punctual, well prepared and organised.
- Maintaining an up to date knowledge of the school curriculum.
- Understanding how pupils' learning is affected by their autism as well as their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.
- Being aware of and knowing how to access, recent inspection evidence, and relevant research evidence on teaching pupils with autism.
- Planning their teaching to achieve progression through the identification of clear teaching objectives and content appropriate to the subject matter, specifying how these will be taught and assessed.
- Developing and implementing effective and appropriate curriculum planning at all levels (i.e. Long and Short Term).
- Setting tasks for whole class, individual and group work which challenge pupils and ensure a high level of pupil interest.
- Setting appropriate and demanding expectations for pupils learning, motivation and presentation of work.
- Making effective use of the time available in school
- Establishing and maintaining a purposeful working atmosphere.
- Setting high expectations for pupil's behaviour, fostering positive and purposeful classroom relationships.
- Ensuring that they are familiar with school policies and how to apply them.
- Making effective use of resources and organising and managing these effectively
- Writing, implementing and keeping records of I.E.P.s and producing Annual Review and/or EHCP documentation.
- Setting targets for children's learning and evaluating progress towards these effectively.

- Evaluating their own teaching critically and using this to improve their effectiveness.
- Continuously updating their subject knowledge and teaching practice in line with current developments and initiatives, and planning their own CPD with the support of their Head of Department.

***Pupils should be encouraged to work toward the school's aims by taking increasing responsibility for:***

- Attending school regularly, arriving on time and being prepared.
- Their actions and their property.
- Their learning and setting targets to achieve in their work.
- Contributing to and creating a co-operative atmosphere where all children can learn and are not distracted.
- Following class and school policies.
- Playing and working in a way that includes all children.
- Treating everyone in the school community with respect.
- Being familiar with and making good use of resources and equipment in school.
- Evaluating and assessing their own solutions and work and making suggestions for how the group should improve, change or extend tasks.

***Parents/Carers should work toward the school's aims by:***

- Ensuring pupils attend school in good health, regularly and punctually.
- Informing the school of a valid reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence.
- Supporting learning at home.
- Ensuring early contact with the school to discuss matters, which affect a pupil's happiness, progress and behaviour.
- Being realistic about their children's abilities, offering encouragement and praise whilst maintaining high expectations.
- Participating in regular discussions concerning their child's progress
- Allowing children to take increasing responsibility as they progress through the school ensuring they are suitably equipped with basic learning tools.
- Ensuring that the school is informed of up to date contact addresses and phone numbers.
- Informing the school of the pupil's medical background and needs and any changes thereafter, including providing a supply of appropriate medication where appropriate.

***Teaching Assistants should work toward the school's aims by:***

- Working collaboratively with the teacher following clear directions.

- Being involved in the planning for and assessment of specific pupils and/or groups of pupils in collaboration with teaching staff.
- Using resources to support learning in stimulating and interesting ways.
- Having clear expectations of and knowledge about specific pupils and groups with whom they are working.
- Accessing and using I.E.P.s and Behaviour Management Plans to support pupil's learning.
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Being on time and prepared.
- Informing the teacher of any concerns or changes in children's learning, individual needs, or circumstances.
- Maintaining a professional attitude to work.
- Participating in relevant training.
- Being clear about job descriptions, roles and responsibilities.

***Governors should work towards the school's aims by:***

- Meeting with curriculum leaders to discuss implementation of the curriculum; reporting findings to the governing body and addressing any issues that arise.
- Supporting, encouraging, and monitoring the relevant parts of the school development plan.
- Wherever possible, attending relevant subject training, network and staff INSET meetings.
- Ensuring a regular cycle of review of school policies so that they remain relevant and enhance teaching and learning.

**The Curriculum**

The Walnuts School aims to provide all pupils with strategies for dealing with their needs in a supportive environment, and to give them meaningful access to an appropriate and balanced curriculum, that has regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, the National Curriculum and a life skills based, practical curriculum for our older students. To help access for them, and to promote the highest possible attainment for every pupil, we place a strong emphasis on developing good mental health, raising self-esteem, extending communication and social interaction skills and encouraging independence. This curriculum aims to relate to all aspects of each pupil's life, and is a vehicle through which the staff and governors seek to achieve the following:

**Provide** a teaching and learning environment that ensures the best possible progress and highest attainment for all pupils, regardless of race, culture and/or gender

**Enable** access to the 24 - hour curriculum for those pupils who will benefit from residential experiences

**Develop** each pupil's sense of identity through knowledge and understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural heritage of our diverse society

**Support** and develop communication and social skills progressively throughout the pupil's school life and to develop their ability to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life as a young adult

Pupils are given the opportunity to access the curriculum in a variety of different ways and appropriate to their individual needs, in order to broaden their experiences and understanding, with the ultimate aim of achieving the highest possible attainment.

Pupils will access learning in the following ways:

**Encounter:** Pupils are present during an experience or activity without any obvious learning outcome, although for some pupils, their willingness to tolerate a shared activity may, in itself, be significant

**Awareness:** Pupils appear to show awareness that something has happened and notice, fleetingly focus on or attend to an object, event or person

**Attention and Response:** Pupils begin to respond, often not consistently, to what is happening, demonstrating the beginning of an ability to distinguish between different people, objects, events and places

**Engagement:** Pupils show more consistent attention to, and can tell the difference between different people, objects, events and places

**Participation:** Pupils engage in sharing, taking turns and the anticipation of familiar sequences of events, although these responses may be supported by staff or other pupils

**Involvement:** Pupils may actively strive to reach out, join in or comment in some way on the activity itself or on the actions or responses of the other pupils

**Gaining Skills and Understanding:** Pupils gain, consolidate or make general use of their skills, knowledge, concepts or understanding that relate to their experience of the curriculum

'Planning, Teaching and Assessing the Curriculum for pupils with Learning Difficulties: General Guidance' QCA 2009

In addition some pupils will:

**Apply skills and understanding in real life contexts**

**Planning the Curriculum**

*The school ensures the curriculum is effectively delivered through the following structures:*



- The Assistant Headteacher (Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Curriculum, or *TLAC*) has responsibility for overseeing coordination and implementation of the policy.
- Curriculum Leaders have over-all responsibility for the long term planning and development of their curriculum subject, and for ensuring medium term planning is appropriate. They also have responsibility for monitoring the teaching of their area across the school and knowing what achievement and progress looks like at different levels and in different Key Stages.
- Class teachers have responsibility for the development of short term plans and for implementation and delivery of the curriculum subjects which are delivered through a topic based approach.
- Key Stage 4 follow accredited ASDAN and OCR units of study across the curriculum areas, coordinated and planned by the Functional Skills Leader and Assistant Headteacher (TLAC).
- Key Stage 5 and some Key Stage 4 use OCR and other accreditation as appropriate, with increasing focus on vocational and work-related learning and post-school destinations.
- Foundation Stage (including Year 1) follows a foundation curriculum, planned and implemented by the class teachers, with support from curriculum coordinators. There will be an emphasis on learning through play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning.

### **Assessment for Learning**

Through Assessment for Learning (AfL) we aim to improve learning by providing pupils with feedback on where they are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. AfL is aimed at helping children learn rather than judging whether they have learnt, and at the Walnuts will not be related solely to academic attainment.

Key points to consider include:

- How do we give feedback?
- How do we help children to show what they know?
- What does self-assessment look like for our pupils?
- How do improved questioning and increasing waiting time translate for our pupils?
- How do we share the criteria for success with our pupils?'

Examples of AfL used at the Walnuts include:

- Verbal and non verbal feedback (including use of symbols e.g. good sitting, good listening) related to individual IEP targets and Learning Objectives
- Self, peer and teacher feedback
- Involvement in target setting, particularly IEP targets, where appropriate

- Talk and questioning appropriately supported by visuals and with time given to allow for processing difficulties
- CYP being shown a good example of what they are trying to do before they start work (product sample)
- Showing good examples of work at the end of a lesson
- Watching someone else do a task (modelling)
- Listening to someone explaining what has to be done (with visual support if appropriate)
- Having instructions/tips to support learning which can be referred to whilst working
- Sharing of learning objectives, success criteria and quality with CYP
- Having specific individual targets linked to the learning outcome
- Be given a framework, appropriate materials, key words, adult support in order to reach the learning objective
- Differentiated tasks
- Being shown or told when they have achieved the Learning Objective (verbally or visually)
- Opportunity to explain how work can be improved and time given to make improvements if appropriate (for some of our CYP it will not be appropriate to insist on improvements to 'completed' work)
- Being told what to do next time to improve their work
- Displays that support learning e.g. 'Look what we have learnt', 'Learning to Learn' 'We are learning about...' 'We are learning to...'

### **Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

Academic attainment will be measured in the following ways with frequencies as described below:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Type of Summative Assessment Used</b>
Foundation Stage and Year One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)</b> statutory required data annually</li> <li>• Early Years Steps Assessment termly</li> </ul>
Year One - Year Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wilson Stuart P Steps (WSPS)</b> termly</li> <li>• SATs in Years Two and Six annually</li> </ul>
Year Ten +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of life, functional and vocational skills acquisition in accordance with the external accreditations that are being worked towards termly</li> <li>• WSP Steps termly in PSHE, and in other areas for those students not working towards external accreditations</li> </ul>

## **Target Setting**

Curriculum targets are set in reading, writing and maths for every pupil at the end of each academic year. These targets are arrived at using the National Progression Guidance materials as a starting point, and following discussions between the Assistant Head (TLAC) and the class teacher about each individual pupil. Progress towards achieving these targets is monitored by the Assistant Head (TLAC) and this information is passed on to heads of department and class teachers for action where necessary.

## **Curriculum Leaders**

Curriculum leaders have a variety of roles and responsibilities. They provide professional leadership and management for a subject or area to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils. They are also responsible for ensuring progression and continuity in their area across the Key Stages. Curriculum leaders;

- provide leadership and direction for the subject/area and ensures that it is managed and organised to meet the needs and objectives of the school and the subject.
- have responsibility for securing high standards of teaching and learning in their subject as well as playing a major role in the development of school policy and practice.
- ensure that practices improve the quality of education provided, meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils and raise standards of achievement in the school
- play a key role in supporting, guiding and motivating teachers of the subject, and other adults.
- evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the subject curriculum and progress towards targets for pupils and staff to inform future priorities and targets for the subject, including monitoring progress data in their subject.
- identify needs in their own subject and should have an understanding of how their subject contributes to the school priorities and to the overall education and achievement of all pupils.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored termly through lesson observations carried out by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and members of School Leadership Team (SLT). The focus for the observation is agreed beforehand and points for development are identified following the observation. On-going reviews

takes place to focus on particular issues or to support where the need for development has been identified. Moderated observations will be carried out each year to ensure consistency.

The Assistant Head (TLAC) collates the results of observations termly. The results are then reviewed with the Headteacher and SMT to monitor standards and feed back is provided to the governing body.

The effectiveness of teaching and learning will also be monitored through the use of Learning Walks focusing on aspects of effective teaching across the whole school, e.g. AfL, behaviour management, use of ICT to support learning, effective questioning, effective use of TAs etc. Learning Walks may be undertaken by the Headteacher and governors or by other members of SMT or SLT and will be guided by a checklist of points to look for.

Class teachers are responsible for the progress of the pupils in their classes and for self-evaluation of their own professional development. Curriculum leaders are responsible for monitoring and evaluation teaching and learning in their curriculum area. All staff are responsible for contributing to, and monitoring the progression and well-being of all pupils, both socially and academically.

***The aim is to:***

- Identify and share good practice.
- Evaluate the quality of teaching in line with OFSTED criteria and set targets for improvement.
- Track progress on teaching and learning issues identified in the School Improvement Plan.
- Self-evaluation all staff and their contribution to the policies and vision of The Walnuts School.