

Rationale: Assessment of Therapeutic and Non-Sequential Subjects

Status: Appendix to the Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy

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Purpose of this Rationale

This appendix sets out why More Than Ed assesses its therapeutic and non-sequential subjects — including, but not limited to, cooking, art and similar provision — differently from core academic subjects, and how progress and impact in these subjects are evidenced. It should be read alongside the main Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy. Its purpose is to make explicit a position the school holds deliberately, so that the reasoning is transparent to staff, families, commissioners and regulators, and so that it endures beyond the individuals who currently hold it.

Our Position

Therapeutic subjects at More Than Ed are not assessed against a linear, sequential progression model, and this is a considered pedagogical decision rather than a gap in our assessment framework. As our wider approach makes clear, the progress our students make rarely follows predictable patterns, and forcing therapeutic provision into standardised measurement would both misrepresent our work and risk harm to our students by imposing inappropriate expectations.

Subjects such as cooking, art and executive functioning are vehicles for engagement, regulation, communication, independence and self-expression. Much of their value depends on their being low-stakes and not formally graded. Introducing a sequential attainment ladder would change the nature of the activity — turning a therapeutic experience into another arena in which a traumatised child is judged — and would undermine the very outcomes the provision exists to support.

These subjects are designed first and foremost to build the underlying skills our students need in order to learn and to manage daily life. Through cooking, executive functioning and similar provision, students develop self-regulation, sequencing, planning and organisation, working memory, task initiation and persistence, flexible thinking, and the independence and life skills that support them beyond the classroom. The activity itself — preparing a meal, completing a project, following a multi-step process — is the means through which these executive functioning and self-regulation skills are practised and strengthened. It is this skill development, rather than any subject-specific attainment, that the provision exists to deliver, and it is therefore these skills that our evidence seeks to capture.

Why Sequential Progress Tracking Does Not Apply

- These subjects are not structured as a sequence of skills to be mastered in order. A student may return to the same activity many times, each time for a different therapeutic reason.
- Progress in this context is lateral and relative to individual starting points, not linear. Doing a familiar activity with less adult prompting, while more dysregulated than before, alongside a peer, or generalised to a new setting, all represent genuine progress that a progression ladder cannot capture.
- For many of our students, successful emotional regulation within a session is itself the achievement. Remaining engaged in a cooking or art session without becoming dysregulated is a significant outcome that is invisible to academic-style measurement.

- A single sequential measure would also drive decision-making in isolation, which is contrary to the triangulated approach set out in our Assessment Policy.

How Progress and Impact Are Evidenced

The absence of a sequential progression model does not mean these subjects are unmonitored. Progress and impact are evidenced rigorously, using the same triangulated methods applied across the school, but with the emphasis placed on engagement, contribution to individual targets, and qualitative distance travelled rather than on subject-specific attainment data.

Lesson observations

Therapeutic subjects are included in the school's programme of lesson observations on the same basis as all other subjects and staff. Observations evaluate the quality of provision, the appropriateness of adaptation, and the engagement and wellbeing of students within the session.

Evidence for Learning

Staff capture photographs, annotated examples and observations of learning on Evidence for Learning, building a holistic portfolio of academic, social and personal development outcomes. For therapeutic subjects this provides the primary qualitative record of engagement, participation and distance travelled.

Contribution to IEP and EHCP outcomes

Therapeutic subjects are frequently the context in which individual targets are evidenced — for example self-regulation, sequencing, planning and organisation, task initiation, working memory, fine motor skills, turn-taking, sensory tolerance, communication, or emotional regulation. These are precisely the executive functioning and self-regulation skills that subjects such as cooking and executive functioning are designed to build. The progress is real and tracked; it is recorded against the student's individual plan, with the therapeutic subject acting as the setting in which the outcome is demonstrated rather than as a separately assessed subject.

How subject outcomes are judged

Success in these subjects is judged through the behaviours and dispositions students demonstrate rather than through subject-specific attainment. Indicators include observable changes in students' behaviour over time, and an increased ability to learn across the curriculum as a result of their executive functioning lessons, as students become better able to plan, initiate, organise and persist with tasks in their other subjects. A further indicator is a reduction in racist, homophobic, sexist and similar discriminatory behaviour recorded on CPOMS, reflecting students' greater understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. Alongside this, a growing understanding of British Values is evidenced through students' increased respect for others, tolerance and self-discipline within and beyond these sessions. Taken together, these behavioural indicators show whether the underlying skills and understanding the provision is designed to build are being realised.

Focus Friday

Focus Friday is the vehicle through which More Than Ed embeds equality, diversity and inclusion, British Values, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It provides a dedicated, structured space for students to explore these themes, and its impact is evidenced through the behaviours described above: a reduction in discriminatory behaviour recorded on CPOMS, and a growing respect for others, tolerance and self-discipline shown within and beyond the school day. Focus Friday, alongside Lifeskills, also provides the opportunity for much of the PSHE and RSHE curriculum to be delivered, ensuring these statutory areas are taught within provision that is meaningful and accessible to our students. As with our other therapeutic provision, the success of Focus Friday is judged through students' engagement and the understanding they demonstrate in their behaviour, rather than through formal attainment measures.

Subject Lead quality assurance

The Subject Lead for each therapeutic subject carries out half-termly learning walks to quality assure the delivery of their subject. They also meet with their teaching team to gather feedback on the content of the subject and on how students engage with it, and draw on Evidence for Learning records and direct student feedback to build a rounded view of how the subject is experienced. This information is used to inform and adapt provision. In keeping with the principles of this rationale, Subject Leads judge the success of students through their engagement rather than through outcomes, ensuring that quality assurance reinforces, rather than undermines, the therapeutic purpose of the provision.

IEP and EHCP reviews as ongoing quality assurance

The cycle of IEP and EHCP reviews provides a further, constant layer of quality assurance for these subjects. Because reviews draw together evidence of how each student is progressing against their individual targets, they also surface how students are engaging with and enjoying the various subjects that act as the setting for those targets. Patterns identified through reviews — of engagement, enjoyment or disengagement — feed back into the planning and adaptation of therapeutic provision, ensuring it remains responsive to each student's needs over time.

Triangulation

As with every other area of the curriculum, no single source of information is used in isolation. Lesson observations, Evidence for Learning records, engagement data, individual target evidence and pupil voice are drawn together to form a robust and honest picture of each student's journey within these subjects.

Summary

More Than Ed does not track sequential progress in its therapeutic and non-sequential subjects because a sequential model is the wrong instrument for provision whose purpose is regulation, engagement and trust. These subjects are nonetheless observed, evidenced and triangulated with the same rigour as the rest of our curriculum. This is assessment done differently, on purpose, for sound pedagogical reasons — consistent with our conviction that meaningful assessment empowers our students rather than measuring them against benchmarks that were never designed for them.