

Teaching & Learning Policy

More Than Ed | Independent School

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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

Explain how we create a trauma-informed and nurturing environment at our school where students learn best and enjoy doing so

Identify the many different learning activities we utilise in order to develop each student's ability to learn

Summarise expectations to make sure everyone is committed to achieving a consistent approach to teaching and learning across our school

Promote high expectations and raising standards of achievement for all students in our school taking into account their individual needs and abilities

Involve students, parents, external agencies and the wider school community in students' learning and development

2. Our guiding principles

As a trauma-informed school we are able to support young people who suffer with trauma, attachment or mental health problems and whose anxiety and dysregulation act as a barrier to learning.

Trauma-informed pedagogy is an educational approach that recognises the impact of trauma on students and leads us to choose teaching methods accordingly. It involves understanding how trauma affects the learning and behaviour of our students and adapting the school environment to their needs. Teaching must be inclusive and supportive in order for students to learn, and teaching strategies employed should promote resilience and healing. Key principles of trauma-informed practice in schools include safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and self-reflection. This approach has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety among students and improve educational outcomes. All staff receive training in Trauma-informed practice.

Major public health studies that have shown that when children who have suffered more than four Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs,) often go on to suffer severe mental and physical ill-health. All our students have, unfortunately, suffered more than four ACEs.

We believe students learn in different ways and want to provide active and functional learning experiences to engage students' minds as much as possible.

Through our teaching we hope to:

- Develop children's self-esteem and self-awareness
- Develop children's understanding of mutual respect
- Enable children to become resourceful, curious and confident individuals
- Enable children to understand their community and to help them to feel valued within it
- Help children to develop into positive, confident and reliable citizens of the future

All learning at our school is:

- underpinned by Social-Emotional learning (SEL)
- placing the child and their mental health at the centre of the learning experience
- relevant, purposeful and matched to student need
- grounded in Mindset Theory
- delivered using attachment aware and trauma-informed practice
- inclusive of the 3 principles for improving outcomes for children. (*Harvard Centre for the developing child 2017*).
- Bourdieu's Theory of Capital

Whilst acknowledging the importance of statutory core subjects, we have designed a bespoke, but broad and balanced curriculum underpinned by the specific learning and emotional needs of our cohort. The aim of our multi-faceted and bespoke curriculum design is to address three key areas of deficit that we identify in our students.

- Literacy
- Executive Functioning Skills
- Mental Hooks (Schemata)

Effective Teaching

Effective learning requires effective teaching, and we include the following in our planning and teaching:

- Clear learning objectives
- A range of learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic)
- Use of visual prompts and concrete objects to support learning
- Planning takes into account executive functioning deficits and cumulative dysfluency, therefore, repetition is vital
- Planning which adapts National Curriculum content and skills to suit our learners
- Clear outcomes and assessment for learning (AfL)
- Effective teacher modelling
- Enthusiasm
- Organised and engaging resources
- Timely feedback
- Effective use of questioning
- SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) in our daily teaching across the curriculum helps develop self-awareness, self-regulation and interpersonal skills that students with SEMH needs find challenging.
- Creative activities which promote curiosity and exploration

Teaching is based on our understanding of each students' prior knowledge, their significant gaps in learning, and their lack of mental hooks, alongside their mental health and wellbeing challenges.

Learning Environments

We deliver both indoor and outdoor learning activities, both on-site and off-site. Visits to Places of Interest develop cultural capital, social responsibility, life-skills, and an understanding of the environment and nature. Biophilia is very important to regulation and our school is surrounded by large gardens which can help students to learn and to regulate.

Students learn best at our school when they:

- Have their emotional and physical needs understood, and met
- Feel secure, safe and valued
- Have an appropriate adult available at all times
- Are engaged and motivated
- Can see the relevance of what they are doing
- Are taught in very small groups, or on 1:1
- Are taught in short bursts, ensuring sensory breaks as necessary
- Understand the task, and do not feel overwhelmed
- Have the physical space and the tools required
- Work in a warm, comfortable environment
- Can develop resilience in their learning, supported by their trusted adult
- Can develop their Executive Functioning Skills in order to help them regulate when learning
- Recognise that all learners make mistakes, and mistakes can help us learn

3. Roles and responsibilities

Teaching and learning in our school is a shared responsibility, and everyone in our school community has an important role to play. Parents, commissioners, students and staff all play an important role in ensuring that each child's curriculum and learning is appropriate, challenging, and achievable in line with their EHCP.

This is how we will create the above conditions for students' learning at all times:

Teachers and Tutors at our school will:

- Follow the expectations for teaching and professional conduct as set out in the [Teachers' Standards](#) and the TA Standards
- Actively engage parents/carers in their child's learning by speaking to them each day on pick-up and drop-off
- Update parents/carers on students' progress daily, and produce a written report on their child's progress
- Know students well and plan to meet their individual learning needs
- Support teaching and learning with flexibility and resourcefulness
- Use agreed assessment for learning strategies
- Use effective marking and feedback as required

- Engage in providing inspiring lessons and learning opportunities
- Demonstrate and model themselves as learners
- Meet the expectations set out in our Relational Policy, Marking Policy and Safeguarding Policy.
- **5.2 Subject Leads at our school will:**
 - Help to create well-sequenced, broad and balanced curriculum plans that build knowledge and skills
 - Sequence lessons in a way that allows students to make good progress from their starting points
 - Drive improvement in their subject working with all staff to identify any challenges
 - Moderate progress across their subject by, for example, systematically reviewing progress against a range of evidence and reviewing qualitative and quantitative performance data
 - Improve on weaknesses identified in their monitoring activities
 - Create and share clear intentions for their subject
 - Encourage staff to share ideas, resources and good practice
 - Meet the expectations set out in linked policies.

Proprietors and Senior Leaders at our school will:

- Have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive education to all
- Celebrate achievement and have high expectations for everyone
- Hold staff and students to account for their teaching and learning
- Plan and evaluate strategies to secure high-quality teaching and learning across the school
- Manage resources to support high-quality teaching and learning
- Provide support and guidance to other staff through coaching and mentoring
- Input and monitor the impact of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to improve staff's practice and subject knowledge
- Promote team working at all levels
- Address underachievement and intervene promptly
- Meet the expectations set out in all linked policies

4. Planning

Effective and bespoke planning is essential for our students, many of whom have not been in formal education for extended periods of term. All students have EHCP's and Assessed Plan, Do, Review cycles. Looked After Children in the setting have EPEPs. Unsuitable and generic planning will quickly result in students disengaging from learning, and losing the self-confidence and self-efficacy necessary to continue learning.

To this end, regular reviews are vital:

- Maths and English learning is reviewed on a weekly basis by individual student planners, informing planning for the next week.
- Data is collected for all tracked subjects at the end of each half-term and analysed. This informs planning for the next half-term, allowing for gaps in learning to be addressed. It is important that all learning is sequential and caters for the diverse needs of all students, enabling each one to progress and learn at their own pace.

5. Differentiation

Teaching and learning at our school will take the backgrounds, needs and abilities of all students into account. Students' bespoke curriculums ensure differentiation of the highest level.

Each subject taught has a long-term plan available to all staff. Subject Leads direct staff as to the topic(s) to be covered on a particular week. Staff then plan the most appropriate way to teach that content to a particular student based on the student's interests, and the tutor's knowledge of how to engage that particular student. (Please see examples in the Appendix)

6. Marking and feedback

Instant feedback and a sense of control is essential for our students, as their poor working memory and lack of resilience requires repetition of learning, and constant recognition of their efforts.

The rigor of marking varies according to the student, their abilities, and their resilience to learning, however, we would never overmark, use crosses, or red pen.

Marking takes a number of forms:

- Live marking is essential as our students require instant feedback and recognition
- Verbal feedback linking to the lesson objectives
- Written feedback relating to the learning objective is given on EFL and teachers mark on the planning sheet whether each part of the lesson has been completed independently or with support, enabling teaching to follow on smoothly in the next lesson.
- A tick would identify when the objective is met and an arrow requires further work.
- Green pen is always used and this initialed by the staff member.

7. Assessment and Tracking

Assessing and tracking student progress is not straightforward at More Than Ed. There are number of immediate challenges we face:

- Students join the school based on their identified need being recognised, or their EHCP being awarded. This can be at any age; at any time of year.
- As we have a number of children who are LAC, their entry or exit can be extremely hurried due to relocation or breakdown of their foster placement.
- Our young people can suffer extreme fluctuations in their mental health, often dependent of external circumstances beyond either their or our control. Serious

fluctuations can result in a young person being too unwell to attend school for an extended period.

- All our students are working significantly below ARE, and their numerous gaps in knowledge and skills are random – this has led to cumulative dysfluency in their learning.
- Very often SCLN make it extremely difficult for our students to draw inference or make predictions based on information given.
- Data received from previous placements tend to be unreliable as the young person could not be assessed effectively due to their extreme behaviours.
- The EHCP does not always show a true reflection of the young person, and targets are unsuitable or too vague.
- Previous negative school experiences have led to low resilience, therefore, students become extremely anxious during any sort of assessment

It is, therefore, essential that any assessments are continuous and sensitive to each of our student's needs, and that both progress and regression are recorded. Regression can almost always be linked to a serious disruption in the young person's life and emotional wellbeing. Upon admission, all students undertake a number of baseline assessments as soon as possible including:

- Baseline data
- CELF-5 Speech and Language
- TOPS – Test of Problem Solving 2: Adolescent
- GL Assessment Progress Tests in Maths and English
- Student Passport
- Reading Age (Salford Reading Test)
- Executive Functioning
- Pre-learning Assessments
- Continuous Assessment
- Observation

Evidence is recorded in a number of ways based on the special needs of our cohort:

- Evidence for Learning (EfL)
- IEPs
- Workbooks
- Photographs and Videos
- Conversation Log
- Formal summative assessment trackers (Maths and English)

8. Monitoring and evaluation

We will monitor teaching and learning in our school to make sure that all of our students make the best possible progress from their starting points.

Subject Leaders will monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching on students' learning through:

- Learning Walks
- Book scrutiny
- Planning scrutiny
- Observations
- Performance Management

9. Work Scrutiny

Process of work scrutiny:

- Staff meetings - working together to gather evidence, viewing books together to ensure consistency
- Creation and implementation of robust marking policy
- Implementation of a framework for collecting data - all staff involved in this process to ensure everyone is aware of expectations
- Several cycles of data already collected and used to inform developing curriculum overviews
- Subject leads regularly gather evidence from books and from EFL to ensure progress, coverage and consistency of teaching
- Evidence from scrutiny of work and marking used to inform staff training (Whole school and 1:1)

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed every year by the Headteacher. The Policy will be shared with Commissioners

11. Links with other policies

This policy links with the following policies and procedures:

- Relational Policy
- Curriculum policy
- SEN/SEND policy and information report

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