



New Direction School



Teaching & Learning Policy

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1. New Direction Approach to Teaching and Learning

We are an independent special school for children whose needs cannot be met in mainstream settings. For this reason, our practice does not seek to imitate what you might see in a secondary classroom. Instead, we use a trauma-informed, instructional approach that integrates knowledge about adverse childhood experience, special education and the way children learn.

2. Principles and ethos

Like mainstream schools we aim to work within the statutory guidelines set out in the National Curriculum, however as all our children have a statement of SEND, we understand that adaptations need to be made to the curriculum and learning environment to support the varying additional needs of our students. As such all of our practice is guided by the founding principles of nurture, which are;

- Children's learning is understood developmentally.
- The classroom offers a safe base.
- The importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
- Language is a vital means of communication.
- The importance of transition in children's lives

Our approach to teaching and learning combine elements of nurture into routines and activities throughout each day utilising additional interventions where necessary. The following interventions and methods are used to adapt the curriculum and learning environment when needed:

- Differentiation of tasks and resources, for example, simplifying the readability of the text or adapting it to meet personal interests.
- Targeted in-class support using Support Assistants
- Small group/individual support sessions for English, maths (literacy and numeracy skills) and social, emotional development
- Use of ICT to support preferred learning styles.
- Access arrangements for examinations and in preparation exams

3. Teaching and Learning priorities for 2024-25

Whole school reading strategy that is implemented in every classroom.

Intent

Our intent behind having a whole school reading strategy is to promote and improve reading skills and overall literacy among our students. Our approach emphasises the importance of reading as a fundamental skill that is essential for success in all areas of learning. By implementing a consistent and comprehensive reading strategy throughout the school, we are aiming to create a culture of literacy and provide students with the tools and resources they need to become confident and proficient readers. This can lead to improved academic performance, increased engagement in learning, and greater opportunities for success in life.

Implementation

1. **A phonics first approach to the teaching of reading** - focus on teaching the relationship between sounds and letters, which can improve reading accuracy and comprehension. In order to help students, decode unfamiliar words and develop their spelling skills.
2. **Strategies to develop language capability** – focus on improving students communication skills and ability to express ideas and themselves.
3. **Strategies to improve fluency and comprehension** – focus on improving confidence and enjoyment.
4. **Reciprocal reading** – building into our teaching time for students to take turns in leading discussions about what they are reading, summarising, clarifying predicting and questioning -
5. **The study of a diverse range of texts** – focus on the improvement of comprehension, vocabulary skills and the fostering of cultural awareness.
6. **Dedicated time for whole class and individual reading** – incorporation of this practice into our daily routines to encourage a love for reading and to help build comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency.
7. **A wide range of interventions for those who require additional support** – one-to-one instruction, small group, intensive phonics instruction, sight word instruction, repeated reading, and the use of assistive technology.
8. **Delivering a curriculum which is rich in vocabulary development** – explicit instruction, a range of texts and opportunities for practice.

4. Quality Assurance and Monitoring of Teaching & Learning

Subject Co-ordinators Quality Assurance

- Subject Leads should ensure that teachers follow the whole school T&L policy.
- Subject Leads should develop the curriculum policies in line with the whole school policy for T&L.
- Subject Leads should reinforce the school's shared values and expectations that support high quality T&L.
- Subject Leads should support the development of high-quality T&L resources and share good practice through sourcing and developing quality schemes of work.
- Subject Leads should encourage individual CPD to develop effective Teaching and Learning and to support colleagues at all levels to reflect and improve their own practice.
- Subject Leads will contribute to the planning, delivery, and mapping of PSHE, SMSC and British Values education.

Classroom Teaching Quality Assurance

- The classroom teacher/support assistant has a crucial role to play in reinforcing the school's shared values and attitudes that support high quality Teaching and Learning.
- Teachers/support assistants should follow school and subject policies relating to T&L and progress.
- Teachers/support assistants should support each other by developing high quality T&L resources.
- Teachers/support assistants should participate in staff development (CPD) working on whole school, curriculum, and individual areas for development.
- Teachers should contribute positively to the whole school and curriculum area systems of monitoring and evaluating T&L.
- Teachers should take responsibility for their own CPD needs and work within the teacher standards at all times.
- Teachers/support assistants will contribute to the planning, delivery, and mapping of PSHE, SMSC and British Values education.

Learning walks/work looks

Lesson observations may not be the most effective method for evaluating teaching and learning in our setting, as the complex needs of our young people and their SEND/SEMH needs can have an impact on how a lesson is delivered on any given day. Therefore, SLT support in lessons daily via lesson drop ins. Through this continuous involvement within lessons, evaluations of Teaching and Learning takes place. All feedback is developmental and SLT will discuss the strengths of the lessons and areas which could be developed regularly with teachers.

For one week in each half-term time will be devoted to complete learning walks to evaluate Teaching and Learning. Information from learning walks will be used to support teachers with their CPD. Strengths and areas for development will be discussed and where necessary, SLT will offer additional support through team-teaching, shared planning, coaching, and CPD.

Colleagues will also have the opportunity to observe each other's lessons to share best practise.

A picture of typicality will be built throughout each half term and feedback for individual teacher strengths and areas for development for the following half-term will be fed back during T&L conversations with SLT.

Information gathered during the Learning Walks will be used to inform school self-evaluation and school improvement strategies.

Teaching & Learning Conversations - The purpose of these are developmental. Teaching and Learning Conversations will always focus on areas of strength and areas for development based on:

- The evaluation of Teaching and Learning
- Curriculum coverage and pupil progress

All of the above will be shared with staff termly to aid them in being reflective practitioners and to aid direction for their personal professional development.

5. Lesson structure

Clear lesson structure is essential at New Direction School to ensure effective learning outcomes for our students. Our school believes that having a well-structured lesson helps to create a positive learning environment and promotes student engagement.

A clear lesson structure enables our teachers to organise their teaching materials in a logical manner, making it easier for our students to follow and understand. By providing a clear structure it contributes to ensuring that all learning objectives/outcomes are explicit and facilitates the process for them being met.

By having this structure, we hope to ensure students understand what is expected of them and what they will be learning. This helps to reduce confusion and anxiety, allowing them to focus on the task at hand and learn more effectively.

It is imperative that our students have a safe, and structured learning environment. We believe structure facilitates a sense of continuity and consistency in our teaching approach which helps students to develop a sense of routine and familiarity. Our hope is that this will make them more comfortable and confident in their learning and environment.

As part of our approach, we:

- Begin each lesson with a review of previous learning.
- Present new material in small steps
- Ask a large number of questions to all students.
- Provide models and worked examples.
- Practise using new material.
- Check for understanding frequently and correct errors.
- Obtain a high success rate.
- Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks.
- Require and monitor independent practice.
- Plan daily, weekly, and monthly reviews
- Plan opportunities for students to activate /retrieve prior knowledge.

6. New Direction Classroom Expectations

Clear classroom expectations are essential for a positive learning environment at New Direction School. These expectations provide structure and consistency for both students and teachers. When everyone is aware of what is expected of them, it creates a sense of safety and predictability in the classroom. This, in turn, helps students feel more comfortable and engaged in the learning process.

Having clear classroom expectations also helps to promote accountability and responsibility. Students are more likely to take ownership of their actions when they understand the consequences of their behaviour.

When expectations are clearly communicated, we believe students are better able to understand the impact of their choices and make informed decisions. This helps to establish a sense of community within our classrooms. When students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to work collaboratively and support one another. This can create a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and respected.

Through implementing our lesson structure and clearly communicating our expectations we are able to create a more efficient learning environment, promote accountability, responsibility, community, and academic success.

As such the following sets, out our basic expectations:

- Teachers must have high expectations for all students which they teach, using SMART targets and rewards to promote academic and behavioural expectations.
- Lessons follow the scheme of learning, with feedback on learning informing the next lesson.
- Learning should be organised with visible timetables and established routines. Learning objectives/outcomes and the purpose of the lesson are shared.
- Learning is personalised to allow All students to make progress within the lesson and over time (differentiation).
- All pupils are stretched and challenged.
- Lessons are planned to allow pupils to make progress towards EHCP targets. SMSC is evident in every lesson.
- Learning is engaging, relevant and when possible, fun. Pupils understand why they are learning what they need to learn.
- Teachers and Support Assistants (SAs) communicate well whilst working as mini teams. Resources, learning objectives and planned outcomes are shared before the lesson. SAs feedback to the teacher about pupil progress at the end of the lesson.
- Feedback, both written and verbal focuses on next steps for progress.
- Opportunities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening and/or maths are embedded across all lessons.
- Behaviour expectations and boundaries are embedded and visible in routines and positive behaviour.
- All Staff work relentlessly to build relationships with our pupils.

7. Staff CPD

Intent

At New Direction School we see the investment in staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as crucial, as it ensures that they stay up to date with the latest best practices, technologies, and pedagogical techniques. This, in turn, translates into improved student outcomes and overall progress.

When staff participate in CPD, they acquire new knowledge and skills that enable them to better understand their students and tailor their teaching to meet their needs. They also learn new assessment methods and strategies to support students in their learning, which leads to higher levels of engagement and motivation which is particularly important in our specialist setting.

CPD also helps staff to keep up with the latest developments in their subject area, which enables them to design and deliver more relevant and engaging lessons. As they gain new insights and perspectives, they are better equipped to help students develop critical thinking skills and become autonomous learners.

Furthermore, CPD can help staff to become more effective communicators and collaborators, which is essential for working in a team environment. This, in turn, can lead to better student outcomes as our staff are able to work together to share best practices and support each other in their work.

At New Direction we see continuous professional development as essential as it contributes to the improvement of student outcomes and overall progress. When staff are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills, we believe they are better able to understand our students, tailor their teaching to meet their needs, and support them in their learning journey. By investing in CPD, we endeavour to ensure that their staff are equipped to deliver high-quality education that meets the needs of all learners.

8. CPD 24-25

Staff should refer to the New Direction Teaching and Learning Handbook upon which Staff CPD is based. A brief overview of the Teaching and Learning aspects is below:

Walkthrus - Tom Sherrington's Walkthrus are a series of instructional videos that provide educators with a step-by-step guide on how to teach certain concepts or skills. These videos are highly beneficial for both new and experienced teachers, as they offer a range of advantages.

Intent

Our intent in utilising Sherrington's Walkthrus is to:

- Provide staff with a clear and concise understanding of how to teach a particular topic.
- Break down the complexities of teaching into smaller, more manageable steps, making it easier for teachers to plan and deliver effective lessons.
- Offer a consistent approach to teaching. By following the same format for each video, teachers can ensure that they are providing a consistent learning experience for students. This can lead to better student outcomes and improved learning outcomes.
- Promote teacher collaboration and professional development.
- Use these videos to share teaching practices and techniques with colleagues, enabling them to learn from one another and improve their own teaching skills.
- Offer clear and concise guidance, promote consistency in teaching, and encourage collaboration and professional development among our staff.

Rosenshine's Principles

Intent

Our intent in utilising Rosenshine's principles is to:

- Improve student learning outcomes and increase teacher effectiveness.
- Develop a better understanding and implementation of evidence-based teaching practices,
- Increase teacher confidence and job satisfaction.
- Improve collaboration and communication among staff which can further support student learning.

Cognitive Load & Retrieval Practice

Intent

Our intent in utilising Cognitive Load and retrieval practice CPD is to:

- Increase their understanding of how to support students in:
- Improved learning and retention of information
- Better time management and study efficiency
- Reducing stress and frustration during learning
- Developing problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities
- Increasing motivation and engagement in the learning process.

Formative assessment techniques

Intent

Our intent in implementing CPD in formative assessment techniques is to equip staff with the skills to:

- Improve student learning outcomes by providing timely and constructive feedback to students.
- Enhance teacher effectiveness by enabling them to identify areas of weakness and target their instruction accordingly.
- Increase student engagement through the use of interactive assessment techniques.
- Develop a culture of continuous improvement, where teachers and students are constantly striving to improve their performance.
- Improve communication and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and students.
- Increase accountability, as teachers and students can track progress and identify areas for improvement.

Climate for learning

At New Direction we believe creating a good climate for learning is crucial for effective teaching and student success. A positive learning environment can significantly impact student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

Intent

Our intent in implementing Climate for Learning CPD is to:

- Equip teachers with the tools to create a positive climate for learning.
- Develop effective classroom management techniques,
- Establish clear expectations, create a safe and inclusive environment, and providing opportunities for student participation and collaboration.
- Develop skills to enable students to feel comfortable and confident, allowing them to ask questions, share ideas, and take risks.
- help reduce stress and anxiety levels in students,
- Foster a sense of community and belonging among students,
- Promote positive relationships and social-emotional growth.
- Provide the right conditions for learning for our students with their varying needs.
- Enhance teacher-student relationships, leading to better communication, respect, and trust. When students feel supported and valued, they are more likely to engage in learning and develop a growth mindset.

Trauma Informed Practices

Professional development in Trauma Informed Practices (TIPs) is essential for staff as it equips them with the knowledge and skills to support students who have experienced trauma. TIPs are designed to create a safe and supportive learning environment for students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, neglect, and violence. By providing staff with training in TIPs, we can create a healing environment that promotes resilience and fosters academic and social and emotional success.

Intent

Our intent in implementing Trauma Informed CPD is to:

- Help teachers understand the impact of trauma on students' behaviour and learning.
- Develop understanding of how trauma can manifest aggression, anxiety, and depression.
- Provides teachers with strategies to recognise and respond to trauma triggers, reduce stress levels, and promote self-regulation.
- Help teachers build positive relationships with our students.
- Support staff in creating a safe and supportive learning environment, based on trust and rapport with students who have experienced trauma and to create a sense of community and belonging.

9. Assessment

Assessment is a crucial component of education at New Direction. Our approach to assessment is tailored to each individual student, taking into account their unique needs and abilities. We use a variety of assessment tools and techniques to ensure that our students are making progress and achieving their full potential.

One of the key assessment tools we use is the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). This is a legal document that sets out a student's needs, goals, and the support they require to achieve those goals. EHCPs are reviewed annually, with input from parents/carers, teachers, and other professionals involved in the student's care.

We also use a range of formative and summative assessments to track student progress. These include diagnostic assessments to identify areas of strength and weakness, ongoing assessments to monitor progress, and end-of-term assessments to measure achievement against learning objectives.

We use a range of informal assessments to gain a deeper understanding of each student's learning style, interests, and motivations. This enables us to tailor our teaching approach to meet the needs of each individual student.

At New Direction, we recognise that assessment is not just about measuring academic achievement. We also assess students' social and emotional development, communication skills, and independence. This is achieved through a range of observational assessments, as well as through feedback from parents/carers and other professionals involved in the student's care.

We believe that assessment should be an ongoing process that supports students to achieve their full potential. We provide regular feedback to students and their families on progress and achievement, and work collaboratively with them to set goals and develop strategies to overcome any challenges.

Our approach to assessment is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion and diversity. We recognise that every student is unique, with their own strengths, challenges, and learning needs. We strive to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment that enables every student to thrive.

Assessment is a critical component of education at New Direction. Our tailored approach to assessment ensures that every student receives the support they need to achieve their full potential. We are committed to ongoing assessment, regular feedback, and collaboration with families and professionals to support student progress and achievement.

10. Appendix 1- Quality Assurance

At New Direction School, we place a high value on Quality Assurance (QA) of teaching and learning. This systematic process ensures that our education offer meets the highest standards of quality and effectiveness. It involves the continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of our teaching practices, curriculum, and student outcomes.

One of the key benefits of QA is that it helps us to identify areas where our teaching or curriculum offer can be improved. By regularly assessing our teaching and learning processes, we are able to identify any gaps or weaknesses in our curriculum and make the necessary adjustments to ensure that our students receive the best possible education.

QA also helps us to maintain consistency in our teaching practices. By establishing clear standards and guidelines for our teachers, we ensure that all students receive the same high-quality education, regardless of which teacher they are assigned to. This helps to promote fairness and equality in our offer.

By regularly seeking feedback from our students and their families, we are able to ensure that our education offer is meeting their needs and expectations. This helps to build trust and confidence in our school and ensures that our students are satisfied with their educational experience.

11. Appendix 2 - Quality Assurance Calendar for T&L

Learning Walks/Work looks - These will take place at least once during each half-term.

- October 2023
- November 2023
- January 2024
- March 2024
- May 2024
- June 2024

Teaching and Learning Conversations with SLT - These will take place at least once during each half-term.

- October 2023
- December 2023
- February 2024
- March 2024
- May 2024
- July 2024

12. Appendix 3 – Lesson Plan Structure/Template

Curriculum Year Group	Beginner/Novice/Expert/Level 1/ Level 2					
Term	Autumn 1, Autumn 2, Spring 1, Spring 2, Summer 1, Summer 2					
Subject						
Topic						
	Key Vocabulary	Overall Topic Big Picture/ Key Questions	Key Sequenced Knowledge points	Resources	Cross-curricular Links	Potential trips/events/Local links
	Key words that students may not have encountered before or need a definition to help them access the learning	What are the key themes through the topic and linking it to the subject as a whole. Include any AQA units here. For example: the continuity and change of Crime and punishment through the period of c1000 to present day.	What are the key steps through the topic (breaking down the big picture) For example: Different Definitions of Crime The feudal structure of England and how Laws were developed. Crimes in Anglo-Saxon England How Crimes altered in Anglo-Saxon England	What resources are needed to aid in the delivery of the topic. Anything you need to make, find or would like purchasing (we wouldn't be able to purchase everything but gradually over time we would hope to be able to resource the curriculums fully. For Example: Books Practical resources Knowledge organisers	Detail Links to other subjects and why For Example: English: Essay writing techniques, interpreting written sources as a form of reading and comprehension RSE: Looking at Law and Order, how Laws are made, how they are viewed and how they are enforced. RSE: Religion and its role in Law enforcement in Anglo-Saxon England	Any trips linked to the topic, including local interest. Any events or competitions the students could enter
	Learning Outcome			Main Activities/Tasks		
Week 1	<p>A good learning should be clear, specific, measurable, and achievable. It should describe what students are expected to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of a lesson, unit, or course. Here's an example of a clear learning outcome for a history lesson:</p> <p>For Example Learning Outcome: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to analyse primary and secondary sources to evaluate the causes and consequences of a historical event.</p> <p>In this example, the learning outcome clearly states what the students should be able to do (analyse sources to evaluate causes and consequences) and provides a context for their application (a historical event). It is specific, measurable (through the analysis of sources), and achievable within the lesson's timeframe.</p> <p>Keep in mind planning a series of lessons rather than each individual lesson, you're learning objectives should link together to make a coherent sequence of knowledge and skills that will be covered over the weeks series of lessons.</p>			<p>Here you start to plan out the activities and tasks you will use to allow students to meet the learning outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure the activities/tasks can be modelled first and allow for differentiation.</p> <p>Try to think creatively with the activities, practical and creative tasks are great for our students but ensure your thinking about how these are being recorded.</p>		
Week 2						
Week 3						
Week 4						
Week 5						
Week 6						

13. Appendix 4 – The Six Principles of Nurture

1. Children’s learning is understood developmentally.

Children are at different stages of development – socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually – and need to be responded to at their developmental level in each of these areas. Responding to children ‘just as they are’, with a non-judgemental and accepting attitude, will help them to feel safe and secure.

2. The classroom offers a safe base

A classroom environment is inviting and nurturing for all. The classroom offers a balance of educational and social, emotional, and mental health experiences aimed at supporting the development of children’s relationships with each other and with staff. Adults are reliable and consistent in their approach to children and make the important link between emotional containment and cognitive learning.

Where possible, predictable routines are explained and practised, and there are clear expectations and positive models of how all adults in our school relate to children and young people, both in and out of the classroom. Our setting needs to be a safe place – physically and emotionally – for our pupils, staff, parents, and carers. We need to consider we promote structure and predictability. It is also important that our classrooms or nurture space have quiet zones and reflections of home.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

Nurture involves listening and responding; everything is verbalised with an emphasis on the adults engaging with pupils in reciprocal shared activities. Children respond to being valued and thought about as individuals. In practice this involves noticing and praising small achievements – nothing should be hurried.

4. Language is a vital means of communication

It is important for children and young people to be able to understand and express their thoughts and feelings. It is also crucial for adults to understand the importance of their own language towards children and young people, and how this can impact them. Children often ‘act out’ their feelings as they lack the vocabulary to name how they feel. Informal opportunities for talking and sharing are just as important as more formal lessons teaching language skills. This enables words to be used instead of actions to express feelings, and imaginative play can be used to help children understand the feelings of others.

5. All behaviour is communication

People communicate through behaviour. It is the adult’s role to help children and young people to understand their feelings, express their needs appropriately, and use non-threatening and supportive language to resolve situations. Our first responsibility in dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour, after safety, is to try to understand what the child is trying to tell us.

The outward behaviour is often the ‘tip of the iceberg’, and so it is important to consider the immediate environment and what occurred just before the incident happened. School events, the time of year, and home circumstances can also give us clues. Adults need to be calm and consistent and understand that children may communicate their feelings in

different ways. Children and young people need to be encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and understand how to express their emotions appropriately.

This does not excuse the behaviour but helps us to ask why the behaviour is occurring. Given what we know about this child and their development, what are they trying to tell us? It helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way by not being discouraged or provoked. Having a quiet area to help students to become calm and giving them time before a discussion can often help, as well as recognising potential triggers and anxieties that could be avoided or reduced.

6. The importance of transitions in children's lives

Children and young people experience many transitions throughout their lives, and on a daily basis; transitions from home to school, between classes and teachers, from breaktime to lessons, or moving from primary to secondary school. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and young people, and school staff need to help the child to transition with carefully managed preparation and support.

Pupils should be included in the planning of support, as well as parents and carers where possible, and information should be shared at key transition points. Staff need to understand the emotions that may be triggered by both small and large changes, and children should be pre-warned or reminded about changes in routines, using visual timetables to emphasise this.

We need to consider periods of transition for our children; is there inexplicable behaviour just before the end of the day? Do staff feel frustrated by pupils who cause disruption as they move around the school? Children and young people may feel calmer if time can be made to discuss how they feel when things change, in an open and honest way, to help them put coping strategies in place.

These six principles help our staff to focus on the social and emotional needs and development of children and young people, ensuring all pupils are ready to learn.

Adapted from Nurture UK