



New Direction School



Teaching & Learning Policy

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Statement of intent

At New Direction, our approach to Teaching & Learning is grounded in structure, clarity and relational practice. We are a specialist SEND provision, and our teaching is intentionally designed to reduce anxiety, remove barriers to learning, and create predictable, supportive environments for all students.

Our intent is for every student to experience success, feel regulated, and develop the knowledge, skills, and independence required for adulthood. Teaching at New Direction is explicitly aligned with our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy and the school-wide expectations of **Ready, Respectful, Safe**, ensuring that learning and behaviour operate within one coherent framework.

We use **Direct Instruction, Rosenshine's Principles**, and the **Six Nurture Principles** to ensure learning is broken down into small steps, modelled clearly, taught with consistency, and practised with guided support. Staff maintain **calm, consistent adult behaviour**, use shared routines across all lessons, and embed relational language that supports regulation and positive behaviour.

Our classrooms are designed to be emotionally and cognitively safe, offering predictable routines, visual structure, regulated transitions, and scaffolded learning experiences. All staff are trained to understand cognitive load, trauma-informed practice, and relational approaches that help students engage successfully in learning.

Our overarching intention is for every lesson to be accessible, successful, and anchored in the belief that behaviour, learning, and relationships work together to achieve positive outcomes for our students.

At New Direction Independent School, we are a specialist provision for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who have found it difficult to thrive in mainstream education. Our approach to teaching and learning recognises and responds to the diverse needs of our students, many of whom are working significantly below age-related expectations.

Our aim is to create a classroom environment that is both structured and supportive, enabling all students to access learning and experience success. We carefully adapt our environment, curriculum, and teaching approaches to ensure that barriers to learning are reduced, and every student is given the opportunity to progress, achieve qualifications, and secure positive outcomes comparable to those available to their peers in other settings.

We are committed to high-quality teaching that supports students to achieve their personal best. At the heart of our approach is the use of **direct instruction**, which research demonstrates is highly effective for all learners, particularly those with SEND. This method allows us to provide clear, small-step teaching, opportunities for frequent overlearning, and carefully guided practice led by the teacher. This structured approach gives students the security, clarity, and repetition they need to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence.

Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that every student at New Direction feels supported, experiences success in the classroom, and develops the resilience and independence needed to prepare them for their future.

All staff are trained to understand cognitive load theory in order to understand how the principals help to improve student learning.

Principles and ethos

At the heart of our approach at New Direction Independent School is the use of **Direct Instruction**, grounded in **Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction**. These principles provide a research-informed framework that enables our teachers to deliver clear, structured and supportive lessons that meet the diverse needs of our learners with SEND.

Rosenshine's 10 Principles of Instruction are:

1. Begin lessons with a short review of previous learning.
2. Present new material in small steps.
3. Ask questions and check for understanding.
4. Provide models and worked examples.
5. Guide student practice.
6. Check for understanding frequently.
7. Obtain a high success rate (around 80%).
8. Provide scaffolding for difficult tasks.
9. Require and monitor independent practice.
10. Engage students in regular review.

Whilst not every lesson will include every principle, they form the **teaching 'toolbox'** that underpins our classroom practice. Teachers are expected to draw upon these principles to ensure clarity, structure, and high levels of support for all students.

In addition, our teaching approach is closely aligned with our **Positive Behaviour Policy**, which establishes very clear routines to provide students with a **structured and predictable learning environment**. These routines help to reduce anxiety, create consistency, and maximise learning time. Examples of such routines include:

- **Starting the lesson** with clear expectations and a settled entry task.
 - Do Now Activity
 - Making Learning objectives clear
 - Activating prior learning
- **Transitioning between tasks** with clarity and minimal disruption.
 - Countdown to end a task
- **Questioning techniques** that promote participation and check understanding.
 - Cold Call
 - Hands up
 - Show me Boards
- **Practice techniques** that encourage overlearning and reinforcement.
 - Independent Practice

- Group Practice
- **Feedback routines** that are timely, constructive, and supportive.
- Individual feedback
- Group Feedback

- **Ending the lesson** in an orderly way that reviews learning and prepares for the next session.
- Exit task
- Tidy up

Together, these principles and routines ensure that all students are supported to access learning, achieve progress, and experience success in the classroom.

At New Direction Independent School, our curriculum is carefully designed to balance the development of **academic knowledge, key skills, and independence**, reflecting the needs of our students with SEND.

Our core classroom subjects include **English, Maths, and Science**, alongside **ASDAN Employability** and **Personal and Social Education (PSE)** as students progress through the school. These subjects support the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills and provide pathways to achieve **Level 2 equivalent qualifications**, enabling students to access outcomes that are nationally recognised. Teaching in these subjects follows a primarily **Direct Instruction** approach, ensuring lessons are structured, clear, and supportive. Where appropriate, we also make learning **practical and applied**, making use of our unique environment to enhance engagement and deepen understanding.

In addition, we provide a wide range of **practical subjects** that are designed to develop independence and life skills. These include **Cooking, Pony Club, Horse Care, PSHE, Independent Living, Forestry, and PE**. Whilst these subjects also embed principles of Direct Instruction, they place a greater emphasis on **learning by doing**, providing students with practical, hands-on experiences that build confidence, resilience, and transferable skills.

Our overall approach to teaching and learning is underpinned by the belief that education should prepare students not only for qualifications, but also for **independent, fulfilling lives**. The curriculum is therefore intentionally designed to:

- Develop academic knowledge and secure qualifications.
- Build life skills and independence through practical experiences.
- Encourage students to apply learning in real-world contexts.
- Support students to progress towards positive future destinations.

Through this approach, we ensure that all of our students are supported to access learning, make progress, and achieve outcomes that prepare them for adulthood and beyond.

Lesson structure

At New Direction Independent School, lessons are designed to be **structured, consistent, and responsive** to the needs of our students with SEND. We maintain **small class sizes** (maximum of seven students) and **short lesson durations** (30 minutes), supported by **frequent sensory breaks** (at least 15 minutes per hour). This structure helps to create an environment that supports regulation, focus, and learning for all of our students.

Every lesson follows a **familiar routine** to provide predictability and security, helping students to settle quickly and engage in learning. The structure includes:

- **Do Now Task**

A short activity completed immediately at the start of the lesson to engage students in learning from the outset and establish focus.

- **Learning Objectives & Prior Knowledge**

Teachers share the lesson objectives in a clear and accessible way, ensuring students understand the purpose of the lesson. Prior knowledge is activated to make connections with what has already been learned.

- **Teacher Input (Instruction)**

Direct instruction is used to introduce new knowledge or skills in small, manageable steps. This may include modelling, explanations, and worked examples.

- **Guided and Independent Practice**

Students move from scaffolded, teacher-led practice to more independent tasks, with support gradually withdrawn as confidence and competence grow.

- **Questioning for Understanding**

Teachers use targeted questioning throughout the lesson to check for understanding, address misconceptions, and adapt teaching to meet the needs of the group.

- **Feedback**

Feedback is embedded within lessons, given either individually or collectively as appropriate. Feedback highlights strengths in students' work and provides clear, constructive guidance on how to improve ("what went well" and "even better if").

- **Planned Ending**

Lessons conclude with a brief review to consolidate key learning, celebrate success, and prepare students for the next session.

This consistent lesson structure ensures that students are supported in a way that reduces barriers to learning, maximises engagement, and promotes progress in every subject area.

Formative assessment is a vital part of every lesson at New Direction Independent School. Teachers are expected to use a range of strategies—such as questioning, checking work, and discussion—to monitor student progress against the lesson objectives. This continuous assessment enables teachers to:

- Identify how well students are understanding new learning.

- Decide whether it is appropriate to introduce new material or revisit prior content.
- Adapt teaching in real time to address misconceptions and provide additional support where needed.

Lessons should only move forward when students have developed a secure understanding of the content. This ensures that learning is **consolidated and embedded**, rather than superficial.

Reading Across the Curriculum

Reading forms a core component of all lessons. Teachers will plan regular opportunities for students to engage with a variety of texts, supporting both **reading fluency and comprehension**. Reading is not only seen as a skill in itself but as a tool to access knowledge across the curriculum.

Medium-Term Planning

All lessons are underpinned by the school's **Medium-Term Plans (MTPs)**. These are written by subject teachers and reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant, sequenced, and knowledge-rich. MTPs:

- Break down learning into clear, progressive steps.
- Provide a structured sequence of knowledge and skills to be taught.
- Support teachers in planning lessons around clear, measurable learning objectives.

This approach ensures that teaching across the school is **coherent, consistent, and focused on long-term learning and progress**.

Retrieval Practice

An essential part of effective learning is the regular review of prior knowledge. At New Direction Independent School, all teachers are expected to plan **periodic retrieval opportunities** within their lessons to help students recall and strengthen what they have previously learned.

Retrieval practice typically takes the form of **short, focused tasks** (for example, 5-minute activities or low-stakes questioning) designed to bring earlier learning back into students' working memory. This approach reduces forgetting, deepens understanding, and supports students in making connections between past and current learning.

Retrieval activities must be **carefully mapped across the curriculum** to ensure that all key topics are revisited at appropriate intervals. This ensures that knowledge is consolidated over time and that students retain the essential building blocks needed for long-term progress.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Quality Assurance at New Direction focuses on **support, consistency, and continuous improvement**, ensuring that classroom practice reflects the expectations set out in the Teaching & Learning Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

Our QA approach aligns with the relational ethos of the school and prioritises accuracy, fairness, and developmental feedback. Monitoring focuses on the consistency of routines, the use of Direct Instruction, embedding of Ready, Respectful, Safe, relational regulation, and the delivery of small-step teaching.

Our QA cycle includes:

- **Daily informal drop-ins** to understand typicality, offer immediate supportive feedback, and reinforce consistency.
- **Half-termly learning walks** with a clear focus (e.g., modelling, routines, scaffolding, behaviour integration).
- **Peer observations** to share effective practice and strengthen staff confidence
- **Teaching & Learning Conversations** each half term to review strengths, progress, and next steps.
- **Curriculum monitoring** through MTPs, work scrutiny, and student voice.

The emphasis is on *coaching first, evaluation second*. Staff are supported through modelling, team teaching, shared planning, and StepLab coaching cycles.

Quality Assurance ensures the policy is not simply written but lived helping staff embed consistent, predictable, relational practice that supports learning and behaviour.

At New Direction Independent School, teachers and support assistants play a crucial role in reinforcing the school's shared values and attitudes that underpin high-quality Teaching and Learning. All staff are expected to:

- Follow whole-school and subject-specific policies relating to Teaching, Learning, and progress.
- Support one another by developing and sharing high-quality Teaching and Learning resources.
- Engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), contributing to whole-school, curriculum, and individual areas for improvement.
- Take responsibility for their own professional development needs and work in line with the Teachers' Standards at all times.
- Contribute positively to school-wide and curriculum monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Support the planning, delivery, and mapping of **PSHE, SMSC, and British Values** across the curriculum.

Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation

We recognise that formal lesson observations are not always the most effective method for evaluating Teaching and Learning in our specialist setting, as the complex SEND and SEMH needs of our students can significantly influence how a lesson unfolds on any given day. Instead, our approach prioritises **support, collaboration, and continuous improvement**.

- **Lesson Drop-ins**

Senior Leaders are actively present in lessons on a daily basis through informal drop-ins. This ongoing involvement allows for a more authentic understanding of classroom practice and provides staff with regular, developmental feedback on strengths and areas for growth.

- **Learning Walks**

Once per half-term, time is dedicated to focused learning walks to evaluate Teaching and Learning across the school. Findings from these walks are used to inform staff CPD, with feedback shared in a supportive and constructive manner. Where needed, additional support is provided through **team-teaching, shared planning, coaching, and targeted training**.

- **Peer Observation**

Teachers and support staff are encouraged to observe each other's lessons to share best practice, build confidence, and strengthen consistency in approaches.

- **Teaching & Learning Conversations**

At the end of each half-term, information gathered from drop-ins, learning walks, and peer observations contributes to a picture of "typicality" in teaching practice. This is shared during **Teaching & Learning Conversations** with SLT, which focus on:

- Strengths and areas for development.
- Curriculum coverage and consistency.
- Pupil progress and engagement.

These conversations are always **developmental in nature**, enabling staff to reflect on their practice and identify priorities for professional growth.

Impact on School Improvement

The information gathered through this Quality Assurance process feeds directly into the school's **self-evaluation and improvement planning**. In this way, Quality Assurance is not a one-off exercise, but a continuous cycle of reflection, support, and development that ensures the highest possible standards of Teaching and Learning at New Direction.

Staff CPD

Staff CPD at New Direction is structured, ongoing, and aligned with our Teaching & Learning and Behaviour Policies. CPD ensures staff develop strong relational practice, high-quality instruction, and consistency in expectations.

Our CPD model includes:

- **Weekly and half-termly training** focusing on Direct Instruction, Rosenshine's Principles, routines, modelling, scaffolding, and relational practice.
- **WalkThrus and StepLab coaching**, providing clear, video-supported, step-by-step techniques for improving practice.
- **Behaviour-aligned CPD** on scripts, relational language, calm consistent behaviour, Ready–Respectful–Safe, de-escalation, and restorative approaches.
- **Practical classroom coaching**, including modelling, team-teaching, guided practice, and one-to-one support.
- **Curriculum CPD**, ensuring teachers continue to strengthen subject knowledge and curriculum sequencing.

CPD is designed to be practical and directly linked to classroom application. Staff development is viewed as a collective responsibility; consistency is only achieved when all adults share the same expectations, routines, and language.

At New Direction Independent School, we view the investment in staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as essential to sustaining high-quality teaching and learning. CPD ensures that our staff remain up to date with the latest evidence-informed practices, technologies, and pedagogical approaches. In turn, this translates into improved student outcomes, greater engagement, and stronger progress across the curriculum.

Through CPD, staff gain new knowledge and skills that enable them to:

- Better understand and respond to the needs of our students with SEND.
- Adapt and refine their teaching strategies to maximise engagement and learning.
- Apply a range of assessment methods to monitor and support progress.
- Stay informed of developments within their subject areas.
- Design lessons that are relevant, purposeful, and engaging.
- Develop as effective communicators and collaborators, sharing best practice across the school.

We believe that high-quality CPD directly benefits our students, helping them to access learning, build confidence, and achieve qualifications and outcomes comparable to those of their peers.

Our key sources of CPD include:

- New Direction Teaching and Learning Handbook – a practical guide, tailored to our setting, outlining evidence-informed techniques for effective classroom practice.



- Tom Sherrington's Walkthrus – all staff have access to the Walkthrus website, which provides research-based strategies, supported by explanations and video demonstrations, to enhance teaching and learning.
- StepLab – a coaching and professional development platform that structures observations, feedback, and target setting. StepLab enables staff to record developmental meetings, set clear goals, access training materials, and monitor progress over time through follow-up observations and reviews.

Together, these resources form the foundation of our professional development culture. By investing in our staff, we ensure they are equipped, confident, and supported to deliver high-quality education that meets the needs of all learners at New Direction.

Assessment

Assessment at New Direction supports students' academic, social, and emotional progress. It is closely aligned with our structured teaching model and provides teachers with the information needed to adapt lessons, scaffold effectively, and plan next steps.

Our assessment approach includes:

- Frequent in-lesson formative assessment, including checking for understanding, cold call, mini-whiteboards, and questioning to assess progress in real time.
- Retrieval practice, planned and sequenced across lessons to strengthen long-term retention.
- Diagnostic assessment to identify gaps and adapt teaching accordingly.
- Summative assessments when appropriate, proportionate to the level of need and curriculum structure.
- Holistic assessment, capturing communication, regulation, independence, and social development.
- Assessment linked to EHCP outcomes, ensuring teaching aligns with core SEND needs.

Assessment is used to inform teaching not to burden students. The emphasis is on clarity, simplicity, and responsiveness so that all students experience progress.

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.

Appendices

The appendices included in this policy provide practical tools to support consistent implementation. They set out structured examples, templates, and clarity around the routines and strategies central to high-quality teaching at New Direction.

The appendices include:

- Lesson plan templates aligned with Direct Instruction and Rosenshine’s Principles.
- Ready, Respectful, Safe integration guidance for lessons.
- Examples of scaffolds, modelling frames, visual supports, and routines.
- The Six Nurture Principles and guidance on applying them in everyday teaching.
- Behaviour-integrated teaching prompts (e.g., using scripts, language frames).
- Curriculum planning templates and assessment guidance.

These appendices serve as a practical companion to the policy, ensuring staff have clear models of what good practice looks like.

Appendix 1 – 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: 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		

Appendix 2 – 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

