



Joseph Clarke
School

Special Educational Needs Policy

Key Elements

This document outlines how Learning in Harmony Trust meets the needs of children and young people with SEND.

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Aims and Values

Our Mission

Our mission is to enable children and young people to flourish, lead independent and fulfilling lives, and make a positive impact on the world. We do this by providing them with opportunities, through the highest standards of specialist education, care and support, in partnership with the wider community.

Our Education Charter

We are a 'learning organisation' that constantly strives to improve. In all our work we commit to:

Promoting the safety, welfare and happiness of our children and young people through:

- Ensuring the right policies and practices are in place to keep our children and young people safe;
- Making sure everyone is responsible for safeguarding and equipped with the skills and knowledge to do this;
- Making every day a positive, safe and meaningful learning experience for children, young people and staff.
- Developing and using evidence-based trauma informed practices in our work.

Providing enjoyable, high-quality holistic learning opportunities through:

- Providing a curriculum and enrichment so our children and young people gain knowledge and skills to meet their needs alongside developing their love of learning;
- Placing strong emphasis on language, communication, personal and social development;
- Providing positive approaches to behaviour and therapeutic support that enables the children and young peoples' access to learning and quality of life;
- Nurturing and celebrating each child and young person's individual abilities and talents;
- Offering a range of recognised, reputable qualifications and pathways enabling pupils to progress successfully to their next stage in education, training, employment or placement;
- Giving children and young people the best technology to assist them in their learning and lives.

Acting as strong advocates for special needs, positively influencing education policy and practices through:

- Championing the valuable contribution people with special needs make to society;
- Empowering our young people to be advocates for their abilities and talents;
- Sharing our specialist expertise within the vision impairment community, contributing to national policy, other schools, trusts and organisations including the Police, transport operators and employers.

Allowing everyone to thrive through:

- Providing parents and carers with tools to support their child's learning and welfare;
- Expert governance provided by dedicated governors to provide support and challenge to enable our school's continuous improvement;
- Sustaining strong partnerships with our host and commissioning local authorities, helping them to successfully meet the needs of their local communities.

Identifying Individual Needs

Joseph Clarke School caters for children and young people aged between 3 and 19 with vision impairment and/or additional needs.

Most children and young people who join the school already have an Education, Health and Care Plan which describes their Special Educational Needs. A few children and young people join one of the schools for a short period so that their needs can be assessed.

The school makes their own detailed assessment of what the child or young person can do and the areas where they need support. This assessment will be discussed with parents at a meeting in the first term. Class teachers assess achievement and progress in all lessons and identify any further needs and to identify the next steps for learning. Parents are invited to two meetings each year to discuss their child's progress. Education, Health and Care Plans are reviewed every year, taking account of the assessment made throughout the year.

Parents who think that Joseph Clarke School may be the right place for their child are welcome to make an informal visit. If they then decide that they would like their child to attend the school, they need to ask their local authority to make an official referral. There is a link to the Admissions Process on the school website for further information.

Curriculum

Joseph Clarke School is committed to a curriculum which can be adapted for individuals, which develops the whole person and equips children and young people to take their place in the community.

The curriculum is supported by research and practice in the fields of vision impairment, learning difficulties and autism. It is designed to provide experiences which are engaging and challenging and structured so that all children and young people, whatever their needs, can make progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers assess each pupils' abilities and work with families and any linked professionals to target the pupils' next key steps. These are agreed through 12-month outcomes set as part of the EHCP process and are reviewed yearly with parents/carers.

As part of the current School Improvement Plans, senior leaders review the curriculum in order to ensure it continues to prepare children and young people for the next stage in their lives in a changing world.

The school has a Curriculum statement that sets out what the curriculum sets out to achieve (Intent), how the curriculum will be demonstrated (Implementation) and how outcomes and achievements will be measured (Impact). There is a link to the Curriculum Intent Statement on the school websites for further information.

At Joseph Clarke School we want our curriculum to:

- inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for the future, including gaining a range of qualifications where appropriate,
- to be ambitious yet accessible to students of all abilities.
- To be scaffolded by the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (CFVI)
- promote excellent progress on an individual basis matched to pupils' ECH plan outcomes
- enable those who have not yet achieved age-related expectations to work at a personalised level that shows sequencing and progression.
- develop high quality personal, learning and thinking skills
- support pupils to be able to use functional skills, including key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
- equip pupils with the skills and knowledge required to keep themselves safe and healthy

- support pupils to develop resilience, confidence, and strong self-advocacy skills
- actively promote pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development
- promote British Values throughout, supporting all pupils to experience these concepts at a level that is meaningful for them

Our curriculum is underpinned by the principles of the Curriculum Framework for children and young people with a Vision Impairment (CFVI) which defines the specialist skills development and best practice to promote equity, inclusion and personal agency. [CFVI-Framework](#). Access to this Framework is determined by individual needs and provision is personalised. It may include teaching compensatory skills such as; Braille or tactile communication. It will often include independence, mobility and orientation skills. A key learning area for all pupils accessing this framework is developing the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves at all ability levels.

The following resources are available to support teachers and support staff with implementation of the curriculum:

- Our specialist onsite reprographic officer to convert all resources to be accessible for pupils with vision impairment e.g. converting printed text to Braille
- Sequenced frameworks to support teachers e.g. RWI to teach early reading and phonics
- Assessments – retrieval practice examples as well as end of unit tests
- School and cluster subject specific staff training with other schools

The Curriculum Pathways

At Joseph Clarke School pupils follow either an **Informal Curriculum** or a subject specific **Formal Curriculum** across all key stages.

Our **Informal Curriculum** focuses on “learning by doing” in practical contexts. Our pupils learn to communicate by interacting with people in meaningful ways. They learn about maths through cooking, shopping, playing, building etc. It is built on the principles of the new EQUALS curriculum and the areas of the Curriculum Framework for Vision Impaired children and young people (CFVI).

Learning intentions are broad areas of work (or ‘projects’) based on each pupil’s individual need. Within each broad learning intention there are many possible ways for a pupil to make progress. The pupil will direct the course of their own learning by responding in their own unique and often unpredictable ways.

The Informal Curriculum approaches teaching and learning as a process of action research in which both practitioners and pupils are learning together.

Our pupils do not make progress in linear or predictable ways, and so our curriculum is not based on linear models or SMART targets. Instead, we create broad learning intentions which offer a large area to explore, allowing a pupil to create their own learning journey and establish individual success criteria.

Medium-term planning in the Informal Curriculum is there to establish a flexible structure for teaching & learning. It consists of a set of questions which might be explored and ideas that might be tried.

Over the course of the term, practitioners record what happens as a result of this exploration. and use the outcomes to pose further questions or perhaps design new learning intentions.

The key focus areas within the Informal Curriculum are:

- Communication (SALT programmes and narratives)
- Literacy and accessing Information (including Functional Braille and tactile symbols)
- Play and Leisure
- Thinking and Problem Solving

- The World Around Me
- Maths (Pre- Key stage standards)
- Health (Social, Emotional, Mental and Physical)
- Habilitation (Orientation and Mobility)
- Habilitation (Independent Living Skills)

Because our learning intentions are very broad, we do not measure progress purely by whether a learning intention is achieved or not.

We record extensively all the things that do happen, all the pupils' responses, and our assessment is purely qualitative. There will be many smaller achievements within a learning intention, and this is our definition of progress.

Most of our work is process based. This means the most important thing is 'how' something happens. The best way to capture this process, so that it can be evaluated and shared, is through video. Video evidence also allows us to evaluate progress over the duration of each pupil's school career accurately and in detail.

Video of each learning intention is uploaded on the Evidence for Learning (EFL) and entries include comments and observations on what is happening in the video, as well as ideas or further questions to be explored later.

EFL entries are shared with parents and families. Feedback from parents is always encouraged and responded to. Parents can leave comments on EFL entries, and this can lead to a productive dialogue around the learning. It is one kind of formative assessment where families take a key role.

Pupils that are able to engage in subject specific learning follow the **Formal Curriculum**.

Pupils in the **Primary Department** follow a broad and balanced curriculum with coverage of all subjects of the national curriculum:

Where appropriate to a student's academic ability they take part in the following formal National assessments:

Year 1 – Phonics screening test

Year 4 – Multiplication tables check

Year 6 – National tests in English reading, maths, and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teacher assessments in English writing and science

Pupils in the **Secondary Department** study the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Geography, History and Religious Studies are taught within Humanities and pupils have the opportunity to learn a Modern Foreign Language. In addition, pupils take part in Drama, Music, Art, Food Technology and Computer Science. All pupils access physical activity each week. Lessons are taught by subject specialist teachers and follow a secondary model where classes both between teachers and specialist rooms following an hourly timetable.

Pupils following the Formal Curriculum also receive targeted intervention sessions each week which focus on aspects of their EHCP or the CFVI Framework.

Pupils study for Entry Level qualifications and Functional Skills and GCSE qualifications in English and Maths. Where appropriate pupils may attend our partner mainstream school (Highams Park School) to study for additional GCSE, BTEC and A Level qualifications.

Students in the **Post 16 Department** may continue to follow the Informal Curriculum with learning opportunities personalised to their needs. Some will continue to study for qualifications under the Formal Curriculum pathway with additional learning opportunities designed to give them future choices in work, college and independent or supported living.

Our **Impact** - Progress for our pupils can be demonstrated by:

- Pupils making progress towards/achieving their intended outcomes set with parents/carers within the EHCP annual meetings. These outcomes are informed by any relevant professionals working with the pupils
- Pupils making progress towards outcomes in 6-month review meetings with parents/carers.
- Pupils making progress/achieving in their curriculum pathways
- Annual reports to parents
- Enjoyment and attitude to learning
- Attendance at school
- Destinations at the end of secondary or post 16
- Achieving external accreditation s
- Supported transition within, in and out of the setting.

Key aspects of the curriculum are:

- the development of effective communication with other people in school, home and community through a range of systems - speech, sign, gestures, symbols, objects, pictures and photos, the use of technology and direct communication
- the development of reading and phonics
- the development of functional skills in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT
- the use of Braille and other specialist approaches for vision impaired children
- the development of strategies for social behaviour and working alongside other people
- the development of strategies to support mental health and emotional wellbeing e.g. self-expression, sensory regulation, understanding emotions
- the development of physical skills for functional movement, life skills and sport
- the development of independence skills including mobility and orientation skills for children and young people with vision impairment
- the development of life skills on site and in the community
- experiences and provision in the area of expressive arts of a rich variety which can be enjoyed at all levels
- opportunities for inclusion within and beyond the school
- enriched extracurricular activities with access to a range of experiences including clubs before or after school

The school works to prepare young people for the future through the above curriculum and through:

- Project Search, an employment-based route available to some young people at the end of their time in school, teaching job skills and providing career opportunities then supporting students in the workplace
- work experience in the community, with charitable organisations and within the Joseph Clarke Cafe
- mini-enterprise projects
- identifying appropriate routes to examinations and accreditation
- supporting children and young people to be as independent and self-reliant as possible and to take responsibility within school
- working with young people and their parents to identify the activities which they will enjoy once they have left school and to find placements which will provide the right care and occupation and further and higher education where appropriate.

Teachers and the Family Support Officer work with young people and their parents and with professionals from the local authority to plan for adulthood.

Teaching Approaches and Strategies

Within Joseph Clarke School class groups are small (typically between 6 and 12 children or young people depending on their needs). Each class teacher works with one or more support assistants. Teachers and support assistants are trained to use a range of teaching approaches. Key approaches are:

- Total Communication, where children and young people are supported to develop effective communication through speech, sign, gestures, symbols, objects, pictures, braille and photos, the use of technology and direct communication
- precision teaching, which involves specific, targeted teaching of key skills. Learning objectives are broken into small steps and each small step is celebrated.
- mastery curriculum, where children are building new knowledge on solid foundations through thematic units
- specific interventions for English and maths such as Read Write Inc and Numicon where children are developing their reading and numeracy skills through a structured, consistent approach tailored to their individual needs
- functional learning, where key skills including mobility and orientation skills and independent living skills are taught in the context of activities on site or in the community which are meaningful to the children and young people concerned
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) where behaviour is seen as a form of communication. Adults interpret what the child or young pupil's behaviour is telling them and work to avoid reaching a situation where the child or young person feels anxious, angry or distressed. Children and young people are helped to understand boundaries and to express their needs.
- learning through play and practical activities, where children and young people are supported to learn 'hands on' in contexts which are interesting and meaningful to them
- intensive interaction, where children and young people learn fundamental communication skills with individual support
- small group and individual work which enables children and young people to focus on new learning with close support from an adult and in a way that is highly tailored to individual needs. This may take place within the classroom as part of a class lesson or may involve working away from the classroom.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the collective responsibility of all of our staff who come into contact with our learners and their families. We provide regular training for our staff as well as weekly safeguarding scenarios. Our designated safeguarding lead is Lorraine Boyse. A number of our senior staff have also completed DSL training.

Our Safeguarding Policy can be found on our website.

Staffing

Joseph Clarke School is committed to recruiting the highest quality staff with the values, attitudes and skills which will enable them to provide an outstanding education. It funds professional development so that staff are well equipped for their roles.

The school maintains positive staff: pupil ratios to meet the needs of children and young people. Every effort is made to provide consistency and continuity of staffing so that the children and young people can establish strong and positive relationships.

Staff:

- are committed to their role
- are committed to keeping children and young people safe
- have high expectations of all children and young people within the schools
- listen to what children and young people are saying, however they express themselves, act as their advocates and support those who can to advocate for themselves
- provide a high level of care
- undertake training and other types of professional development to improve skills and expertise
- work together to share expertise and ideas
- work in partnership with parents and other professionals maintain high standards of professional conduct

Partnership Working

Joseph Clarke School recognises the benefits of a team approach. As well as the crucial partnership with parents (see section 6), the school makes every effort to build strong partnerships with other professionals.

Speech and Language Therapists and physiotherapists employed by the local Healthcare Trust come into the schools to assess children and young people, advise staff and design programmes which are carried out in class.

The school 'buys in' additional speech and language therapy, peripatetic music teachers and occupational therapy as appropriate. Where specialist assessment is needed, the Trust will purchase this from external providers.

The school works with other mainstream and special schools and colleges to provide inclusion programmes and to enhance the curriculum as necessary.

The school also works with other groups such as artists and sporting organisations to provide a rich experience beyond the classroom.

Supporting Children and Young People with Medical Conditions

Joseph Clarke School is able to admit children and young people with medical conditions and has nursing support three days a week and staff are able to seek advice from a member of the Special School Nursing Team at other times. Nursing staff are responsible for case management, setting up clinics and providing healthcare advice. Specific school staff are trained to administer and record medication during the school days. The school has a team of first aiders.

When a child or young person with medical needs is offered a place at Joseph Clarke School, their needs are discussed with the Special School Nursing Team who may carry out a nursing assessment. The Nursing Team and school staff will work together to put a plan in place so that the medical needs are met.

School staff may undertake training relating to individual medical conditions (e.g. how to respond to seizures or how to support children and young people with asthma). A small number of pupils require 1:1 support from people other than school staff in respect of significant medical needs. Teachers plan to include children and young people with medical conditions in all aspects of the curriculum, adapting lessons as necessary as part of individual planning.

See the Trust policy on Access to Education for Pupils with Medical Needs for further details.

Working with Parents

The school believes strongly that children and young people are happiest and make the best progress when parents and school work together and maintain strong channels of communication. To this end the school employs a Family Support Officer; however, it is the responsibility of all staff to work in partnership with parents.

The school seeks to work with parents in order to:

- establish communication between home and school
- identify shared priorities and educational goals for school and home
- work with parents in planning for the future
- share key information about individual needs and strengths
- enable them to meet the professionals working with their children
- provide specialist training
- provide practical and emotional support for parents on an individual basis
- assist parents to build networks and support one another
- encourage parents to join in class activities and special events
- meet the cultural and religious needs of all children and young people

Where necessary, the school will arrange an interpreter so that parents can take a full part in meetings.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Joseph Clarke School has high aspirations for all its staff and therefore seeks to provide the highest quality of specialist professional development so that all staff can develop their knowledge and expertise within individual areas of specialism. This increases job satisfaction for staff and contributes to outstanding provision for children and young people.

The range of opportunities for professional development is matched to staff roles and career stages.

- Staff new to the school follow an induction programme which includes training in curriculum, Positive Behaviour Support and safeguarding
- All teachers undertake the Mandatory Qualification for teachers of children and young people with a Vision Impairment (QTVI)
- Teachers have further opportunities to complete Masters courses and to gain qualifications in school leadership as their career progresses
- Teaching Assistants have the opportunity to complete NVQ courses at levels 2 and 3 and Foundation degrees in Early Years and Special Educational Needs
- Continuing professional development includes refresher training in key areas, information on teaching strategies and the curriculum, support to learn sign language and Braille and opportunities to share good practice
- All staff who work directly with children and young people have regular accredited training in +Proactive behaviour support strategies
- Teachers have annual appraisal meetings and other staff agree targets for their professional development annually
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through a regular programme of learning walks followed by developmental feedback
- Staff who are not class based also attend training which is relevant to their roles

Monitoring and Evaluation

Class teams monitor the progress and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care on a daily basis. A home-school book is used to share information unless parents are in contact with the school team in other ways. Achievement and progress is recorded and reported to parents in an annual report, part of the Person Centred Review (PCR) and informally during review meetings at other times in the year.

The Senior Leadership Teams evaluate achievement and progress across the school by reviewing the records of individual children and young people and by monitoring the outcomes of assessment. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through lesson observation and informal visits to classes and through reviewing records.

Other data which is used to monitor the wellbeing of children and young people includes safeguarding notes, attendance levels, records of challenging behaviour and accident reports.

Class teachers and members of the Senior Leadership Team will also follow up any information from parents which suggests that a child or young person is not making sufficient progress or is not happy in school.

Every year parents, children and young people are asked to complete surveys to show whether they are satisfied with what the school has to offer. The information given is followed up by the Senior Leadership Team.

Staff have the opportunity to share their views through the staff appraisal process, through staff meetings and focus groups.

Summaries of all the above information are shared with Governors to support them in evaluating the schools.

Storing and Managing Information

Joseph Clarke School collects and uses personal information about children and young people in order to provide a high standard of education and care which is matched to individual needs. Every effort is made to ensure that information is stored safely and only shared with people who need to know it. Where information is stored electronically it is protected by passwords. Staff are expected to maintain confidentiality.

See the Trust's GDPR policy for further information.

Responding to Complaints

If parents have any concerns about the quality of teaching, learning and progress or any other aspect of their children's experience within Joseph Clarke School they should approach the class teacher or Vice Principal in the first instance. The Family Support Officer will help them to arrange a meeting if needed. Most concerns and complaints can be dealt with at this level.

If parents feel that the issue has not been fully dealt with they should write to the Principal of the school or ask for a meeting with her. She will make every effort to find a way forward.

If parents continue to have concerns and wish to take the matter further they should make a written complaint to the CEO or Chair of Trustees at the Learning in Harmony Trust address. They will investigate the issue and meet parents to share her findings and work towards a resolution.

For full information on how to make a formal complaint and the process that the Trust follows, please see the Complaints Policy document, available on our website at

https://www.lihtrust.uk/docs/sharedfolder/policies/LiHT_Complaints_Policy_and_Procedure_2025.pdf

Appendix 1: Early Help Offer

This may be achieved at one of four levels.

Level 1

As Keeping Children Safe in Education reminds us, all school staff have a duty to identify and support children and young people in need of early help. It is the responsibility of all staff to work in partnership with parents to support children's progress and wellbeing. To this end, classroom staff may, for example;

- share any concerns with parents regarding eating, medical issues, mood etc.
- work with families to provide a healthy diet, teach self-care, skills or encourage self-occupation
- put a programme in place to help with any difficulties at home e.g. where families find it difficult to take their child into the community
- share strategies to encourage learning in the community
- share strategies to develop effective communication
- use Pupil Premium to buy resources with which to teach self-occupation
- liaise with healthcare staff – occupation therapists, speech and language therapists, nurses, physiotherapists

The school also provides After School Clubs and a breakfast club as part of its early help offer.

Level 2

The Family Support Team may offer additional support to families who face particular issues but do not meet thresholds for social care. This may be offered on an - 1:1 basis or as part of training and may include:

- support to liaise with school staff
- advice and support around housing/social benefits
- signposting to other agencies e.g. Housing
- encouraging families to engage positively with social care
- helping families to understand their children's special needs and support them
- providing a listening ear
- guiding/supporting parents through difficult situations and key decisions
- liaising with the short break service
- advice on accessing CAMHS and support to work with them and follow their recommendation
- liaising with healthcare staff – OT, SALT, nurses, physio
- providing opportunities for parents to meet, discuss their children's needs and support one another
- encouraging and supporting parents in the challenges of raising a child with SEND
- sharing and celebrating achievements of children, young people and families
- increasing parents' self-confidence and self-esteem so that families can build resilience

Level 3

Where the school feels that a family needs support above and beyond what the school can provide we will seek advice from the Early Help Coordinator before making a MASH referral for help and support if appropriate. The FSO will also work in partnership with the local authority Early Help service to access services available through the local offer.

Level 4

Where there is evidence that a child or young person is at risk of serious harm the school must make a MASH referral for care and protection. We will inform the family (unless there is reason to think this may put the child at further risk) and support the family through the process.

Appendix 2: Positive Behaviour Support Manifesto

- We are here to improve the quality of children and young people's lives – to help them enjoy life, learn things which are useful to them and feel good about themselves
- We see behaviour as a form of communication. It is our responsibility to work out what it is telling us
- We talk calmly and positively to children and young people
- We use what we know about children and young people to think ahead and avoid reaching a place where they feel anxious, angry or distressed
- We celebrate success and help children and young people to do the same
- We offer activities which children and young people enjoy and where they will want to learn
- We give children and young people real choices which matter to them
- We help children and young people to contribute to the school and the community
- We respect and value all members of the school community equally
- We make decisions based on the evidence, not on our feelings or opinions
- After a difficult incident we move on and help the child or young person to do the same
- We work as a team to support one another and help the children and young people in our care
- We are willing to ask for help and to help other people