



Teaching and Learning Policy 2025

Aim

At Hope Tree School our aim is to provide all students with high quality learning experiences that result in:

- All students achieving their academic potential.
- All students becoming confident, resourceful, enquiring, independent and resilient learners.
- All students being able to build positive relationships and respect the cultures, ideas, values and feelings of others.
- All students being able to make informed choices and participate fully as citizens in their community.

Students of all backgrounds and abilities will be given equal opportunities to learn in order to make progress and achieve their potential.

Principles of Teaching and Learning

To maximise learning, these key areas need to be effective:

- Learning environment
- Engagement
- Curriculum and planning
- Quality of teaching

Learning Environment

The learning environment incorporates areas both indoors and outdoors. They cater for not only academic learning, but also social skill development, physical learning, life skill learning, and sensory regulation. It facilitates the curriculum in a way that promotes access to learning and the development of key skills, taking into account the sensory needs of the students.

We maintain small class sizes for all students in order to provide a calm and quiet place to learn.

Classrooms are well resourced, provide a stimulating and purposeful learning environment, and will be arranged to facilitate learning and the development of independence while providing comfort and security. Students have their own desks to

facilitate the feeling of comfort and security.

Where Continuous Provision is used, areas of the learning environment will be designed to ensure opportunities for a range of practical activities, which will develop appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding.

In keeping with research findings, the classroom is intentionally decorated in neutral colours, with minimal displays. Where displays are used, these are specific to the class and their needs.

Engagement

At Hope Tree School we believe that students learn best when:

- they feel relaxed, healthy, and alert
- they understand the purpose and instructions of a task
- they feel secure – in terms of environment, relationships and learning
- they feel valued – the teachers and other adults care about their wellbeing, want them to achieve
- staff take the time to establish what they need to achieve
- they have opportunities to explore and take risks
- they are actively involved, making choices, and taking responsibility for their learning
- they have an element of control and can work with independence, with support on hand if needed
- their tasks are matched to their ability and confidence
- their learning is built on existing knowledge, experience, and presented in small, logical steps
- they have opportunities to talk about their work, reflecting, discussing and sharing ideas
- they receive timely, personalised feedback and praise for achievements (see the Assessment and Feedback policy for further information).

As our students are autistic and often have school-related trauma, engagement might look different for each student at different stages of their educational journey at Hope Tree School. Typical coping strategies used by students in lessons may include wearing headphones, drawing, use of sensory items, facing away from the teacher, sitting in a beanbag or on the floor. In these circumstances, it is important to remember that these coping strategies are not an indication of disengagement, but rather the means by which they are able to tolerate staying in the classroom.

Curriculum and Planning

Students starting at Hope Tree School often have a history of disrupted schooling. The school first aims to re-establish the concept of learning as a positive and enjoyable experience to ensure each student reaches their true potential.

Hope Tree School delivers a broad and balanced curriculum, balancing the National Curriculum with the needs of the individual students.

Our curriculum emphasises the need to acquire fundamental skills across all subjects, with a focus on literacy, numeracy, and science. Units of work are planned to align with the National Curriculum at a level appropriate to the students' ability, in addition to considering what each student can tolerate, taking their previous trauma into account.

Any student who, despite a period of intensive support, is still not able to access the KS1 or KS2 curriculum, will be provided with a learning programme that meets their needs.

Alongside academic progression, the curriculum is designed to accommodate and support each student's self-confidence, resilience, independence and personal emotional and social development.

New Students and Knowledge Gaps

When new students join the school, due to their significant levels of anxiety in addition to their disrupted educational journey, staff focus on establishing positive relationships and communication as the student becomes more familiar with the environment and routine. Staff pay particular attention to the student's interests, which they later use to employ carefully chosen tasks to engage the student and start to build a picture of their abilities and knowledge. This allows for teachers to identify a student's strengths, in addition to their gaps in knowledge.

As teachers become more familiar with each student and their gaps in knowledge, teachers will adapt the student-facing resources (as detailed in the Curriculum Policy) to differentiate and engage. Targeted support aimed at closing gaps will be built into the lessons, with the aim being to enable students to achieve age-related expectations.

Quality of Teaching

Teachers can use a range of pedagogical approaches while recognising that our students require a level of consistency, and new approaches may need to be introduced at a pace appropriate to each class.

Quality teaching takes into account a student's prior learning and must ensure continuity and progression. It will also demonstrate:

- confidence – staff will have good subject knowledge and ability to set appropriate objectives, and are able to adjust these in the moment to accommodate a student's current needs.
- empathy – staff know individual students' emotional, social and behavioural needs and tailor their approach accordingly.
- enthusiasm.
- high expectations – there is optimism about, and high expectation of, success.

It is important to note that our students require manageable tasks in order to reduce feelings of overwhelm, and this must be carefully balanced to ensure high expectations do not add undue pressure and lead to student disengagement.

- an interactive approach – students' contributions are welcomed, encouraged and extended in line with the needs of the students.
- good pace - which matches the ability, stamina, and attention of the students being taught.
- effective, focused feedback – timely and delivered using a method best suited for individual students (this is further discussed in the Assessment and Feedback Policy).
- a range of methods for learners to communicate their understanding. This is likely to be individual for each student, especially at transition points.
- opportunities for developing social skills, speaking and listening, and teamwork will also be facilitated during some sessions.

Measuring Progress

The school has a team approach: teachers, teaching assistants, therapists, and other professionals are all involved in monitoring student's progress.

Teacher assessment is used to guide the progress of individual students through each lesson by identifying misconceptions, building on previous learning, and identifying the next stage in their learning.

Recording Progress

Google Drive is used on an ongoing basis to record students' work. This acts as a workbook, where electronic files are saved alongside photographs of work completed on paper.

The Tracking Spreadsheets (see Assessment and Feedback Policy) evidence all types of engagement and communication of learning, including verbal responses.

Judgements are based on a number of sources including:

- individual questioning, answers and discussions
- feedback through checking of written work and marking
- group discussions and activities
- observations
- short tests and quizzes
- specific assignments for individual students
- self and peer assessment.

Reporting

Written reports are provided for parents at the end of each term. Parents are invited to attend their student's annual review as part of their EHCP once a year. Parent

consultations are held once a term. These consultations provide teachers and parents the opportunity to discuss progress towards the EHCP targets, in addition to academic progress. Parents are able to request an update on their child at any point of the year.

Visitors and Trips

The use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum is important as a means of enhancing teaching and learning. These occur throughout the school year to widen students' experiences and support learning across a range of subject areas. Further information can be found on page 6 of the Curriculum Policy.

Parents and Students

Parents are encouraged to support their child's learning by:

- ensuring that their child arrives at school regularly and brings the necessary equipment
- providing support for their child in consultation with school staff
- participating in discussions concerning their child's progress and attainment
- ensuring early contact with school to discuss any issues that may arise.

Students are encouraged to support the school's aims by:

- attending school regularly and punctually
- coming to school with a positive attitude and a desire to learn
- conducting themselves thoughtfully and communicating any worries or concerns
- taking increased and age appropriate responsibility for their own learning.

Monitoring and Evaluation

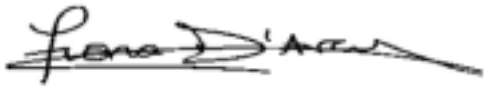
Formal monitoring by senior staff will take place at least once a term. This will involve classroom observations, looking at student work, student interviews/discussions and scrutiny of planning across a range of subjects.

Beginning in the 2024/25 academic year student progress meetings will be held termly by senior staff with class teachers. The results of monitoring will be evaluated and used to inform improvements in teaching and learning within the school. A report of the findings and actions planned/taken will be presented to the Advisory Board (see Monitoring and Evaluation Policy).

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gandy".

Head of Learning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liana D'Amico".

Head of Pastoral Care

Date: October 2025

Review Date: October 2026