



APTCOO – A Place to Call Our Own

Independent Special School: Curriculum Policy

Introduction

A Place To Call Our Own (APTCOO) is an independent special school for young people aged 5 to 19. Our school offers a warm and welcoming environment where a positive education allows our young people to experience success. Our ethos is the belief that a positive, supportive, and nurturing culture is essential for creating a thriving school that meets the needs of young people that it serves. We believe pupils need an understanding environment in which to rediscover success, self-belief and re-engage with learning.

Prior to coming to APTCOO it has been identified that our young people have not been able to make progress in either mainstream or special schools and need the specialised nurturing environment that APTCOO provides. These are often young people at the highest level of need, who will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that identifies but is not limited to neurodiversity, social, emotional, and mental health needs and/or early life trauma.

Curriculum Pedagogy

At APTCOO we offer a coherently planned curriculum that reflects the SEND Code of Practice 2014, this is underpinned by a therapeutic approach and offers a balance of teacher led and project-based learning. The curriculum at APTCOO incorporates elements of the National Curriculum that are embedded and carefully differentiated with special consideration to age appropriateness and development level.

There are exceptionally high aspirations for all of our pupils and these aspirations are achieved through the delivery of a bespoke curriculum; one which is inclusive of personal interests, promotes independence and problem-solving skills, yet nurtures creative thinkers and inspires passive learners.

“We embrace the importance and power of learning, enabling us all to try things out without the fear of failure, changing the emphasis from surviving into thriving!”

From Year 9 onwards (age 13+) learners also follow a Preparing for Adulthood pathway and APTCOO provides holistic support for their transition into adulthood. Learners enjoy targeted careers support and follow the Gatsby Benchmarks that are an essential element of their PSHE curriculum. The Preparing for Adulthood outcomes and individual career aspirations also become part for the young person’s EHCP annual review at this stage.

EAL (English as an Additional Language) EAL is not seen as SEND specifically but may impact upon progress, attainment, and/or outcomes. If EAL learners are referred into APTCOO

additional services are found to provide guidance after their admission. APTCOO will work together with the relevant professionals to provide support in whichever way facilitates access to the full curriculum offer.

Our Vision

APTCOO's vision is to support young people to achieve their full potential in life. We have a variety of unique spaces and places in which to explore life opportunities, education employability and a movement towards greater independence. Our approach removes 'barriers to learning' through confidence building, exploration of potential and raising their aspirations for adult life.

The nurturing environment of APTCOO is consistently both physically and emotionally safe so young people quickly develop trust and confidence. Learners are not the passive recipients of our help; they will have opportunities to make a positive contribution to life within APTCOO and the wider community. The enterprise and vocational emphasis of our curriculum promotes understanding of the link between work and reward and other essential ingredients of achieving economic well-being.

APTCOO is commissioned to admit complex young people who require APTCOO's intensive nurturing environment to improve their self-esteem and emotional stability; this allows other forms of educational development to take place. Educational attainment is woven into this process allowing for learning to take place over time. Our aim is to deliver measurable outcomes that demonstrate:

- Improved self-regulation (managing own emotions and behaviour)
- Improvement in coping with uncertainty and change (decreasing anxiety)
- Increased ability to make and sustain meaningful reciprocal relationships
- Increased independence
- Improved quality of life with reduced stress for pupils and their families

We actively promote the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development, of our young people through planned themes and off-site experiences. Fundamental British Values are also promoted as stipulated in the Prevent Strategy, which are Democracy, Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect, and tolerance of individuals with different belief systems and anti-radicalisation. These values will be actively embedded within our curriculum and will be tailored to reflect the developmental needs of each young person.

Intent

At APTCOO we implement our curriculum using a thematic approach where tutors skilfully incorporate personal interests, whilst planning for new and exciting experiences linked to the half termly themes. Schemes of work have been written to support each theme, that honour links to National Curriculum subjects where appropriate and are typically written for young people of all ages. Differentiation is built in at every stage for learners that would not typically be working at age related expectations.

Implementation

At APTCOO our curriculum is implemented through individual personalised approaches.

- Differentiated and personalised learning activities to match the ability and special educational needs of the individual
- Careful planning and well-structured individual, small group, and larger group lessons
- Well resourced, scaffolded resources and materials that include differentiated and challenging work tasks
- Tutors provide consistent positive behaviour support strategies taken directly from the individual 'Learner Context' documentation and the school's Relational Policy
- Tutors provide regular verbal and written feedback to learner in order to systematically check for understanding and acquisition of new skills
- Tasks and activities which are stimulating, engaging, and exciting whilst being appropriately challenging
- A range of evidence-based approaches are used by tutors for example, PLACE approach principles and Trauma Informed Practice, which are firmly embedded into all interactions with our young people

Impact

Impact at APTCOO is measured and valued in a range of ways, we have high expectations of all of our young people and strive for them to achieve to their absolute best. We measure progress in the following ways;

- Annual EHCP Review
- Skills Forward baseline assessments (English and Maths)
- Assessment tracking – individual subjects
- Accreditation outcomes
- Standardised assessments in English- Salford Reading Scale, Maths-Sandwell Numeracy
- SALT/OT Assessments

We have a focus on the holistic evidence and value progress shown over time, this is gathered in the following ways;

- Subject specific 'workbooks' (learners accessing subject specific teaching)
- Trello-Learning journals, daily learning, and samples of WOW work

In summary, types of evidence for ongoing use: quantitative and qualitative

- Pupil assessments and Functional Skills exams
- Learning walks
- Quality assurance of teaching and learning collated information (attendance, bullying, accidents, incidents, etc.)
- Observations of behaviour and attitudes towards learning, curriculum engagement
- Views from focus groups (young people, parents, staff)

- Sampling (e.g., work scrutiny)

In addition, we highly value progress for our pupils which cannot always be measured.

Cultural Impact of the School (Implicit Curriculum)

At APTCOO we maintain a strong ethos and strive towards the following principles:

- That we continually provide a happy, safe, positive, and calm learning environment
- We foster a strong sense of community and belonging – i.e., mutually beneficial relationships and positive attitudes, values and beliefs which facilitate strong self-discipline and responsible citizens, who in turn value and can co-operate with others
- We provide a personalised approach to learning and behaviour (designed around meeting individual needs and built on positive relationships)

These principles and expectations are consistently taught through all aspects of the explicit and implicit curriculum.

Assessment

Owing to the unique nature of learning and development for children and young people attending APTCOO and working below pre-key stage standards, we have taken a creative and tailored approach to our curriculum and assessment.

Developing a personalised curriculum begins with a six-week initial assessment period called the nurture period; this facilitates individual requirements and the development of behavioural and communication strategies to meet each young person's holistic needs. The assessment includes information from previous schools, families, carers, and a range of other professionals such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, CAMHS and health care professionals. We use this background information together with observation and direct learner input to initially assess and baseline our learners in terms of their academic capabilities and behaviours, together with their needs, wants and choices.

Recognising the multiple difficulties faced by the young people placed with APTCOO their individual learning journeys are unique. In the same way that the curriculum is creative, our assessment process is designed in a complimentary way. Due to the small number of young people placed with APTCOO added to the high staffing ratios planned activities are created using the 'Plan-Do-Review' process. The ongoing assessments are used to identify short term individualised targets in order to meet the outcomes within each young person's EHCP and additional areas of academic progress, this assessment in turn informs half-termly progress review meetings between tutors and the leadership team.

Assessment methods as described will be varied and creative to suit the needs of the young people at APTCOO who may not be able to fully articulate their understanding and progress verbally or in written work.

Vocational Accreditation

We are ambitious for our young people and as such where they can authentically achieve an accredited qualification we will encourage and support them to do so. We offer a range of accredited vocational qualifications through our partnership with ProStart that promotes the future aspirations of our learners, along with Functional Skills in English and Mathematics. In addition, we have a strong vocational emphasis encouraging the development of skills and attributes relevant to employment and further lifelong learning through the AQA Unit Award Scheme.

Appropriate internal verification and external verification will take place to meet the requirements of the relevant awarding body alongside our partner organisation ProStart. Authentic achievement is central to the dignity of our young people and will accurately reflect their unique capabilities, future potential for learning and ongoing independent support needs.

APTCOO's strategy for managing and supporting the appropriate use of accreditation will include:

- That impartial careers advice and guidance has been implemented and the chosen vocational pathways reflect this.
- Ensuring a clear rationale for the choice and use of accreditation is matched to the individual and is pitched at the correct level for success.
- Reviewing the effectiveness and relevance of accreditation as part of our ongoing quality assurance.
- Keeping up to date with the requirements of accrediting bodies to maintain and develop good teaching practice to ensure authentic achievement takes place.
- Ensuring tutors access current training and CPD opportunities to ensure teaching practice continuously develops to meet individual needs.

Resources

PSHE/RSE: <https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/planning-framework-pupils-with-send>

Careers Advice and Guidance: <https://www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/support-and-tools/send>

Preparing for Adulthood: <https://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/preparing-for-adulthood-all-tools-resources>

Relationship to other policies

Our school curriculum embraces the following policies and procedures;

Admissions Policy

SEND Policy

Relational Policy

Careers Advice and Guidance Policy

PSHE/RSE Policy

This policy should be reviewed annually and as required by legislation.			
Action:	Reviewer:	Policy Amendments:	Date:
Policy Created	Michaela Ledsham: Head Teacher	Published on the school website.	November 2023
Policy Update	Michaela Ledsham: Head Teacher	Weblinks added for quick access to chosen PSHE/CIAG frameworks.	November 2023