

Ramsden Hall Academy
Ready to Learn Policy

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Intent

Welcome to Ready to Learn – this document will ensure you have a good understanding of our intent, how we achieve what we set out to do, and the impact that we have on our students. This should be read alongside our behaviour policy, our MAPA policy and KCSIE.

Our main intake of Ready to Learn students arrive in September and we expect our year 6 and 7 pupils to bring with them a variety of experiences from their previous educational settings. Some have had very little input e.g. 1 hour per day at a unit, while others may have been able to manage mainstream education with 1:1 support and usually a reduced timetable. They have all had some negative experiences at school due to the nature of their complex SEMH needs and many have gaps in their learning.

Many of our students have unfortunately also had several Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which will have put them at greater risk of exclusion from mainstream settings but are also a barrier to them being able to learn effectively in any context, build relationships and live happy lives. For many of our students, the very thought of attending school can be very daunting and can cause significant anxiety. Many of our students have attachment difficulties which can make it very tricky for them to access learning opportunities, and to make progress academically.

Students are in Ready to Learn if they are in Key Stage 2 or 3. Our aim is that students will make significant progress in their ability to regulate, build confidence, develop relationships and gain positive experiences of learning with others. By building this foundation, students can access their tailored KS4 curriculum and make good progress, gain qualifications and be successful in their post 16 education.

The Ready to Learn department provide pupils with a base in the school. A certainty of response, a consistent and caring, reliable group of classrooms and staff, where pupils know they can regulate first – then work. Ready to Learn staff are highly skilled at seeing behaviour as a form of communication, not taking behaviour personally, and giving lots of opportunities to try again. We forgive quickly and move on to allow our pupils to move on too, to provide them with the skills they need to become effective learners whilst they are at Ramsden Hall. We form attachments with our students to help them feel cared for and worthy of praise. For some students this happens quite quickly, yet for others this can take years of reassurance and persistence from us all. As a team we work closely together to share what we can about our pupils, to help others build relationships with them too. We always act with the best intentions of the students wellbeing being our top priority.

Students make good academic progress in Ready to Learn. For some students this may be easily measured in their progress in their attainment levels. For other students this may be more discrete e.g. in their ability to work with increasing independence or their ability to attempt a more challenging task. We can recognise progress through the 9 phases of learning.

Implementation

Co-regulation and the 9 phases of learning

In Ready to Learn we have to recognise that our pupils will not be able to access academic learning opportunities if they are not regulated. As staff we are skilled at knowing when it is a good time to develop academic knowledge and skills, and when we need to use the time to develop other skills needed for lifelong learning.

These are identified in the 9 phases of learning which we assess each half term. Ready to Learn students are expected to make progress towards achieving at least phase 5 by the time they enter KS4. The 9 phases of learning are:

Transition, Anxieties,
Communication,
Social Interaction,
Sensory Needs,
Independent skills,
Safe Base,
Emotional Support,
Continue assess and review.

We understand that while children are in the Red zone of the 9 phases of learning, children may not make the expected levels of progress, however, investing time in developing their learning skills, will benefit their overall ability to access lifelong learning and we can show progress in this way.

The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

In Ready to Learn we adopt a nurturing approach, which is also in line with our Trauma Perceptive Practise training. Nurture is listening, being responsive, remembering and engaging in reciprocal shared activities such as play, reading, talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and being thought of as individuals. This involves calling the children by their name, noticing and praising every small achievement; actively holding them in mind. In Ready to Learn we adopt the six principles of nurture:

Six important principles underpin the organisation and ethos of nurture and Ready to Learn:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally

The foundations of learning begin at birth and develop via a close relationship with an adult. Independence develops through dependence. Social empathy as well as learning develops from being thought about, valued and encouraged. Staff in the Ready to Learn department respond to each child, at whatever emotional or social age he appears to be in with the appropriate degree of control and nurture. The quality of this response enables the child to move on. Children's developmental progress is assessed through the PLT 9 phases of learning. If a child is experiencing difficulty in settling in to school we use a Boxall Profile Assessment to assess how we might be able to support the child further.

2. The nurture room offers a safe base

There is a structure to the day which is predictable, there are adults who are reliable and firm and can set boundaries without being punitive. Children see two adults working together and supporting each other. This provides security and reassurance. Ready to Learn classrooms offer a balance of educational and domestic experiences aimed at supporting the development of children's relationship with each other and with the staff. E.g. in Redwood students can make a hot drink (with support if needed), and a snack. Classrooms have sofas and games to play as well as educational resources to support their academic learning.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing

Nurture involves listening and responding. In a nurture group 'everything is verbalised' with an emphasis on the adults engaging with the children in reciprocal shared activities e.g. play / meals / reading / talking about events and feelings. Children respond to being valued and thought about as individuals, so in practice this involves noticing and praising small achievements. The approach in Ready to Learn includes us knowing our students well enough so we can recognise when they need to regulate, then supporting them in this process.

4. Language is understood as a vital means of communication

Language is more than a skill to be learnt, it is the way of putting feelings into words. Nurture group children often 'act out' their feelings as they lack the vocabulary to 'name' how they feel. In Ready to Learn the informal opportunities for talking and sharing, e.g. welcoming the children into the class and playing a game are as important as the more formal lessons teaching language skills. Words are used instead of actions to express feelings and opportunities are created for extended conversations or encouraging imaginative play to understand the feelings of others.

5. All behaviour is communication

Understanding what a child is communicating through behaviour helps staff to respond in a firm but non-punitive way by not being provoked or discouraged. If the child can sense their feelings are understood this can help to diffuse difficult situations. The adult makes the link between the external/internal worlds of the child. This principle underlines the adult response to the children's often challenging or difficult behaviour. 'Given what I know about this child and their development what is this child trying to tell me?'. In Ready to Learn we use our knowledge of the pupils to quickly recognise anxiety level behaviours before they escalate to defensive and risk behaviours. If behaviour escalates, we are skilled in working with the child to help them through the incident and to discover what the meaning might have been behind their behaviour.

6. Transitions are significant in the lives of children

The nurture group helps the child make the difficult transition from home to school and from primary, special education or home-school, to Ramsden Hall. However, on a daily basis there are numerous transitions the child makes, e.g. between sessions and classes and between different adults. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and need to be carefully managed with preparation and support.

Our Classrooms

Students in Ready to Learn follow a weekly timetable consisting of 6 lessons per day. Throughout their week this will include lessons in Ready to Learn (outlined below), and in the main school for more specialised learning. We have 4 specific classrooms in Ready to Learn, each with a clear aim and purpose. These are outlined below.

Redwood - Humanities in Ready to Learn

Redwood is a classroom where pupils explore and make progress in their half termly topic. This will include a History or Geography themed focus which is identified on our Redwood scheme of work. Pupils explore different themes through crafts, short activities and discussions. Our 'English in Ready to Learn' refers to tasks in Redwood supporting student progress in handwriting, reading, and writing skills. In Redwood we also focus on connecting experiences. Staff use their knowledge of the pupils to design appropriate learning tasks, and lessons regularly include reading activities. Redwood classroom is well equipped with drinks and snacks. Pupils are encouraged to take part in helping themselves and serving others at an appropriate time, and some are able to do this independently. Redwood has sofas and chill out areas as well as games and activities, and pupils are encouraged to take part in social time with their peers. It is a safe space for pupils and there is always options available so that they have a choice in which activities they do. Redwood lessons encourage pupils to develop and make progress on their 9 phases of learning. The timetable is organised so that pupils with a higher level of need have sessions that are more regular in Redwood. Our lower level of need students have fewer lessons here and access their humanities curriculum through the main school. Lessons in this room are designed to support pupils in asking for help from staff, realising it is ok to make mistakes and not be fearful of the work. If the student is unsettled and needs help regulating, they can stay in the room and have toast and drinks and use it as a safe place. Pupils who complete the academic learning tasks are praised and rewarded through the behaviour policy with their points and positives.

Greenheart - Lifeskills in Ready to Learn

Greenheart is a classroom where pupils are encouraged to develop their social skills and where the PSHCE including RSE curriculum is delivered. Pupils take part in planned learning tasks and practical activities and games, which help to develop different themes over the course of the year. Lessons are planned considering the needs and preferences of the groups e.g a group that struggles to work together in the classroom, may benefit from sessions in the forest to develop group cohesion and to learn outside. The lessons are geared towards developing positive interactions between peers. Sometimes this requires a high level of support, e.g. a teacher led activity. For others this is an independent activity, e.g. 2 pupils playing a game together/building lego together and sharing ideas without the need for the teacher to be overseeing. The timetable in Greenheart is organised so that pupils with a higher level of need have sessions that are more regular in Greenheart. Pupils take part in practical learning tasks and activities, which help them to recognise their own emotions and emotions in others. Pupils explore a variety of themes including peer pressure, online safety and building relationships. Greenheart lessons encourage play and free flowing activities as

well as discussion about the student's experiences. Pupils are encouraged to work together and develop their self-esteem as a group.

Birch - English in Ready to Learn

In English in Ready to Learn, our primary focus is supporting students to break down their barriers to learning, especially in English, so that they can fully engage with the learning and make progress. In order to do this, we start by scheduling just one lesson of English each week into their timetable for the first term. The aim of this is to help students to build confidence in the subject, feel at ease in the English classroom and build relationships that lead to students feeling safe and able to learn in English. During this term differentiated work is set, however the confidence building task is designed to do exactly this, by making students feel capable of learning and making progress in English. Students select their own levelled task during these lessons because the focus is accessing English learning and building confidence for learning.

Running in parallel to the teaching and learning occurring in these lessons, a reading challenge is set with targets to meet and rewards to earn. Students can elect to work towards their reading challenge target in place of the learning task should they wish to, as long as they are attending their English lessons and completing a learning task during this time. This approach has shown great results in improving reading and confidence for learning, thus supporting students to be 'ready to learn'. Practising the skill of reading and developing a love of reading is a key part of the learning in English in Ready to Learn. Students are enthusiastically encouraged to read, visit the library, and listen to a story being read by an adult or peer to develop their enjoyment of reading.

Though we only explicitly timetable one English lesson during the first term in Ready to Learn, reading, writing and comprehension are all taught implicitly in Topic lessons in Redwood. Handwriting development is also a skill that is practised during Redwood lessons. As the Spring Term commences, students are then timetabled two English lessons each week, with continued implicit English and reading being taught in Redwood. This builds students' stamina for learning in English. The level of expectation increases, and students are directed as to which levelled learning task is best suited to their abilities. Students are encouraged to give green pen feedback and respond to next steps to support their learning and progress. The reading challenge continues so as to encourage independent and shared reading, which in turn can be seen in the progress that students make in the WRAT assessments which measure a students' reading ages.

As part of our therapeutic approach which is applied across the entire Ready to Learn unit, we use the breakout rooms during English lessons when the English classroom or relationships with peers become a barrier to learning. These can be used in one of two ways. The first is that an adult identifies that a student needs to self or co-regulate, and facilitates this by allowing a student to use a break out room to either read a book, have some quiet time, play a game with a calm student or even complete the work in an environment more suited to their need for calm and quiet in order to learn. The second is that the student reflects and identifies in themselves and in the way that they are feeling that they would benefit from

some time in a break out room to self-regulate. This is a skill that we work hard with students to build and shows great awareness. The aim of using these break out rooms to regulate is that once they feel in the right mind set for learning, that they return to the work set. A further benefit is that negatives and use of restrictive physical intervention have drastically reduced in Ready to Learn since this time last year when break out rooms were not available due to being in the old building.

The final way that we ensure a positive experience in English for learners in Ready to Learn is by maintaining good relationships with the English Lead in the main part of the school. At monthly meetings we are able to discuss and develop the curriculum and build links between Ready to Learn and the rest of the school, which in turn support transition for students between the two. We are also trialling a 'reading buddy' system between Ready to Learn students and Year 10s to develop confidence for reading and build relationships.

Maple – Maths in Ready to Learn

Pupils in Ready to Learn go to Maple for their maths lessons. Our subject teacher plans an appropriate scheme of work which allows pupils to work at a level that they are comfortable with, allows us to identify gaps in pupil knowledge and also build their confidence in learning in this area of the curriculum. Differentiation is key: The definition of differentiation is tailoring instruction to meet individual needs of pupils. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction. Within the mathematics learning environment in Maple class at Ramsden Hall Academy, we pride ourselves in the ability to support each child individually and create personalised academic goals that are achievable and attainable for all children. The objective of differentiation is to lift the performance of all students to help them strive to achieve the best version of themselves. Within Maple Class this is achieved through the consistent nurturing environment the staff create and continuous positive relationship building. We believe a positive and enriched learning environment can positively impact the learning of pupils at Ramsden Hall Academy. In addition, the use of break out rooms within the department also contributes to the development of a positive learning environment. These specifically designed learning spaces allow our students the opportunity to develop their understanding of their learning in a more practical and child led environment. It also allows them to develop their social and emotional develop as they have an opportunity to learn and interact with their peers.

Bonsai

Bonsai is our breakout room which gives pupils the opportunity to use percussion instruments. Some students have found that this is an excellent way to regulate and others just enjoy the activity. As some have found this an enjoyable room, we have begun to teach some music theory here as an additional activity.

Cross curricular Topic

During week 3 of each half term, subjects outside of Ready to Learn will contribute to the learning Topic mainly delivered in Redwood. The contributing subjects are: DT, Food Tech, Science, Forest School and Art. This gives pupils an opportunity to broaden their knowledge within the topic and have experiences outside of Ready to Learn connected to their topic. This helps them to connect Ready to Learn to the wider school environment and gain a greater depth of learning.

Broad and balanced curriculum

Pupils in Ready to Learn follow a broad and balanced curriculum which aims to give them a variety of experiences, the opportunity to develop a variety of practical skills and develop their curiosity and excitement for learning. During a week timetable, in addition to English, Maths and Topic pupils will have lessons in:

- Science
- Art
- Food Technology
- Design Technology
- ICT
- Forest School
- PE
- Lifeskills (PSHE including RSE)

Identifying Gaps in learning

Across Ready to Learn we recognise the various starting points for our pupils and endeavour to find gaps in their learning as they continue their education with us. We use WRAT assessments to gauge literacy and numeracy skills and have a spiral style curriculum model in Maths and life skills. Students revisit topics each year, building upon their previous learning in this topic, and allowing students to work from their own start point. Students are discreetly assessed during their first half term to guide teacher planning and develop appropriate teaching resources to support the pupils' levels of attainment and their confidence level. Our Maths and English teachers liaise with the whole school subject leads to ensure cohesion and collaboration between KS3 and KS4 and to aid transition. We have an English and a Maths teacher who teach Ready to Learn blue group (maths) and Ready to Learn Red and Blue group (English). Communication is well maintained between teams of teachers to develop appropriate schemes of work and to aid transition as students move through the groups. For grouping details, please see below.

Our Groups

All new pupils in year 6, 7 and 8 to the school are placed in a Ready to Learn group. Before they start they have a number of taster days and the KS3 Pastoral Coordinator visits the student in their previous placement, or at home if they are not currently at school. The transition manager and KS3 Pastoral Lead work collaboratively to ease students into school life at Ramsden. Through taster days, transition sessions, communication with parents and previous educational settings, and staff observations we decide which of the five groups would best suit their emotional and academic needs. The criteria for each group is as follows:

Yellow

Our most vulnerable pupils who need the most support to regulate themselves. These students are generally very low in their 9 phases of learning assessment and tend to be diagnosed as having ASD. They will eat in the Blue dining room and some pupils with a higher level of need will have a special provision of having lunch in access. They will have 13/26 of their lessons in the Ready to Learn classrooms.

Green group

Our green students are vulnerable but often present more aggressive behaviour. They tend to enjoy sport and are usually diagnosed as having ADHD as well as ASD or similar conditions. Our Green group may score a little higher in their 9 phases of learning but will be inconsistent. They will require a high level of support to regulate and learn. They will eat in the Red dining room at break and lunch times. They will have 13/26 of their lessons in Ready to Learn classrooms.

Purple Group

These students are generally year 7 students who made good progress in year 6 and are ready for slightly less contact with Ready to Learn. They still require a high level of support with regulating, but they are more able to manage around the school. Depending on the pupil's preferences, they can eat in either Red or Blue dining room - but this will be fixed once the decision is made. They will spend 11/26 of lessons in Ready to Learn classrooms.

Red Group

Red group are generally our older or more mature KS3 students who can manage a timetable with largely reduced contact with Ready to Learn. These students tend to be those who would have previously been in green group due to their more violent and predatorial tendencies. Red group eat in the Red dining room and have 6/26 lessons in Ready to Learn classrooms.

Blue Group

Blue group also tend to be our older or more mature KS3 students who can manage a timetable mostly away from Ready to Learn classrooms. They have their PSHCE including RSE lessons in Ready to Learn and are able to spend activity time in Redwood too. Blue Ready to Learn students eat in the Blue dining room.

Movement between groups

It is sometimes difficult to place a pupil in the correct group first time. Initial observations can be misleading about the needs of the student, or sometimes, the relationships and dynamics in a group may mean that it is not the correct place for certain pupils. This means that we are required to be flexible with the criteria for each group - the main focus for our groupings is that all students are able to access their timetable and able to learn in a safe place. Generally, we try to only change the groups after a half term - but sometimes mid half term changes are needed depending on the pupil's need. This is always done in consultation with staff and form tutors and with communication with parents/carers and the pupil too.

The Staff Team

Vicki Eldred	KS3 Pastoral Lead - Nurture Accredited Teacher/NPQML
Leigh Neilsen	English and Topic Teacher (0.6)
Ayesha Hussain	Maths and Topic Teacher
Liz Field	HLTA and Forest School
Sandra Wren	LSA
Danny Taylor	Apprentice LSA
Paul Makinde	PE instructor and LSA

This staff team work together to ensure we give every student positive interaction with adults every single lesson. The staff team is diverse, and pupils tend to find the staff that they can really relate to and build a strong bond with. This initial relationship can be the start of the pupil trusting other adults in the school, so it is vitally important. Ready to Learn staff are skilled and resilient staff members. We listen, we try new ways to engage the students and we try again when things are unsuccessful or do not have the impact we thought it would. We are flexible and we are well planned, but sometimes we have to think on our feet. When cover is needed we try to ensure there is always a Ready 2 Learn staff member in the class. E.g. if the Teacher and LSA are absent – we would shuffle staff to spread Ready to Learn out rather than leave a class without a Ready 2 Learn staff member.

Interventions and Breakout rooms

We have break out rooms which are available to use in any lesson. They are sometimes used in response to a student being unsettled or for restorative work to happen in quiet place.

We have a specialised Counsellor who works specifically with students in Ready to Learn one day per week. She spends the first half term getting to know students and by working with them in their learning groups they are able to build a relationship with her without the pressure of being labelled as “going to counselling”. After the first half term, the intervention becomes more formal as students are more open to 1:1 time with her and the counselling sessions can therefore be more tailored to the individuals need.

Impact

In Ready to learn we are successful in building positive relationships with our pupils. We bridge the gap so they are able to take part in lessons in the main school, but they know that they have a safe base in ready to learn which they can use if they need to. Those who attend school regularly attend Ready to Learn based classes and receive positive rewards for their behaviour. This is well reflected in the points system and the ratio of positive to negative events recorded on sleuth. Ready to Learn pupils are very rarely logged for missing learning in Ready 2 Learn lessons, and they make good progress, both academically and in their SEMH.

Pupil Feedback

Pupils in Ready to Learn report positive experiences of attending Ramsden Hall compared to their previous settings:

Current year 7 JH:

"This school is much better than my last school. I used to get told off but here teachers help me and understand me"

Current year 8 WB:

"I like being at Ramsden Hall – I like Redwood even though I am in in 8 blue now – I can still use it in activities"

Current year 10 JW:

"Being in ready to learn helps you get better at being in school – my mum used to worry about me but she knows I'm ok here now – Ready to learn helped me"

Current year 8 DR:

"Ready to Learn staff are helpful. They let you in if you are struggling – as long as you don't disrupt others they let you in to settle down."

Parent Feedback

Parent of Year 8 (2019)

"I feel like you really get him – and I know he is going to be ok at Ramsden"

Parent of Year 9 (2020)

"Support during lock down was really helpful for me and our family – thank you"

Parent of new year 7 during Parent Open Afternoon (2021)

"He has never wanted us to come to school – he would refuse to come to events like this – we have never seen him so proud to be a pupil at a school."

Carer of Year 8 LAC during Parent Open Afternoon (2021)

"This has been such a lovely afternoon – you clearly know him well and he has been a lot more settled at home since returning to more normal circumstances here." (Relates to the covid restrictions)

Case Study

JW started at Ramsden as a Year 7 student from a local referral unit. He was completing an hour per day there but was very negative about school. He spent most of the first few weeks outside of the school refusing to come in. He refused to write as he was so worried about his low ability and poor reading skills. He gradually built a relationship with a member of Ready to Learn and would spend his day in Redwood – his safe space. He would constantly ask to go home, but would stay for the day. There were many incidents of violence to peer and damage, and also several incidents of leaving the school boundary. Through 2 years in Ready to Learn, building relationships with staff and with support, building a small friendship group, this student is now a flourishing year 10 very close to gaining senior status. He gradually let us know about his insecurities regarding his English skills and we were able to support him with 1:1 and an English group where he felt safe. With support from Ready to Learn he built a positive relationship with his year 9 English teacher, and now he attends well, completes his work and is making good progress academically. He still comes to Ready to Learn regularly, and Ready to Learn staff are still amongst his preferred adults, but he has grown in confidence, self esteem, and can ask for help when he needs it. Without the supportive, nurturing base of Ready to Learn through the turbulent early terms at Ramsden Hall, there is doubt that this student would be where he is today.

Transition to KS4

Through the positive experiences that the pupils obtain by being members of Ready to Learn, they build up positive connections in the school and are able to feel confident in their own ability to go on to KS4 to gain their qualifications. Although they graduate from Ready to Learn at the end of KS3, students are very welcome back when they are in year 9. This is often as a guest in lessons and for some, as a peer mentor. We have a year 10 student who is spending agreed period of time with younger groups to be a role model, a mentor and an extra helpful person in the class. This is having a positive impact on the whole department and the pupils involved.

During activity time Greenheart classroom is open for KS4 pupils only – this gives older students the opportunity to come back into the R2L classrooms for a catch up with staff and reiterates the notion that we are still there to support them even though they are now in KS4. Some choose to use it while others do not feel the need to.

Academic and Social Independence Skills Data

Go4Schools data shows that pupils are making good academic progress in R2L. Where this is not reflected, work scrutiny, SIS data, 9 phases of learning assessments reveal that students are making progress in these areas.

Arrangements to Monitor and Review

This policy was written in consultation with staff and Governors. It should be read alongside other policies in school (Behaviour, SEN, Equal Opportunities etc)