

Deployment of Specialist Therapist Policy



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE



Partnership Learning

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy establishes a coherent and comprehensive model for how specialist therapists from Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT), Occupational Therapy (OT) to Educational Psychology (EP), are deployed and integrated within the school. The aim is to ensure that therapeutic practice is woven into the heart of teaching and learning so that pupils receive consistent, high-quality support that enables communication, regulation, independence, and curriculum access.

The school is committed to delivering an approach where therapy is not viewed as an add-on to behaviour response, but as a core component of everyday provision. This policy sets out how therapists contribute to curriculum design, behaviour and sensory support, assessment of pupils' needs, staff development, family engagement, and Preparing for Adulthood progress. It also clarifies leadership, accountability, and operational processes.

2. Vision and rationale

The school's vision is rooted in the belief that pupils with complex needs thrive when therapy and education operate as a unified system. Therapy only becomes impactful when its principles are understood, adopted, and embedded by teaching staff within daily practice. Communication development, sensory regulation, emotional well-being, motor development, and social interaction are not isolated challenges; they shape how pupils engage with learning across the day.

For this reason, specialist therapists are positioned within the Teaching and Learning strand of the school. This placement supports a seamless link between therapeutic expertise and classroom pedagogy. It ensures that therapy strategies are integrated with curriculum plans, Flow pathways, assessment frameworks, staff coaching, communication systems and environmental adaptations. This alignment also ensures that therapist recommendations are consistent with school expectations, routines and values.

The rationale is that by embedding therapeutic teams within curriculum leadership, the school strengthens coherence, increases impact, and ensures pupils receive the right support at the right time.

3. Scope of the policy

This policy covers all aspects of practice carried out by SaLT, OT and EP teams within the school. It applies to their work with pupils, teachers, co-educators, behaviour support, leaders, families and external agencies. It also includes their involvement in planning, assessment, intervention, review and professional development.

The policy does not outline clinical policies or professional codes of practice for each therapy discipline; rather, it describes how therapy integrates into the educational context and the operational systems of the school.

4. Leadership, direction and integration within Teaching and Learning

Specialist therapy teams fall within the Teaching and Learning strand so that their work is directly connected to classroom delivery, curriculum priorities and pupils' outcomes. The Teaching and Learning Lead provides strategic oversight and ensures that therapeutic input aligns with curriculum expectations, Flow pathways, assessment systems, and whole-school practice.

The Teaching and Learning Lead ensures that therapists receive appropriate support, that caseloads are manageable and transparent, and that therapeutic targets fitted into classroom plans are realistic and

achievable. This leadership position also ensures that the language, methods and approaches used by therapists remain consistent with the school's pedagogical ethos, including Total Communication, sensory regulation frameworks, engagement models, and Preparing for Adulthood principles.

By situating therapists within Teaching and Learning, staff understand that therapy is not separate from the curriculum: it is the curriculum for many learners. This creates a culture where teachers and therapists collaborate naturally, where strategies are reinforced consistently across the day, and where pupils benefit from a unified approach.

5. Collaborative working with behaviour support

Although therapists operate within the Teaching and Learning structure, they work in continuous, close collaboration with the Behaviour Team. Sensory integration, emotional regulation, communication development and behaviour are interdependent, and it is essential that therapists and behaviour specialists contribute jointly to pupil support.

Collaboration occurs through shared assessment, co-produced plans, daily informal discussion, joint planning meetings and aligned professional advice. The Behaviour Team and therapists maintain open communication to ensure that strategies do not conflict but instead strengthen each other. For instance, a sensory-regulation recommendation must work alongside a behavioural framework for engagement, and communication supports must align with behaviour expectations.

The relationship between teams is deliberately non-hierarchical and built on mutual expertise. The Behaviour Team offers insight into patterns of behaviour, environmental triggers and functional analysis, while therapists bring specialist understanding of sensory processing, communication profiles and cognitive development. Together, they ensure that the school provides holistic, responsive and meaningful support for every pupil.

6. Intervention panel and multi-disciplinary decision-making

The Intervention Panel is the central mechanism for coordinated, multi-disciplinary support. It meets monthly and includes representatives from SaLT, OT, EP, the Behaviour Team and relevant curriculum leaders. The panel functions as the school's gateway for referrals, assessment planning, prioritisation and allocation of specialist input.

Teachers submit referrals to each assistant headteacher outlining concerns, observations and desired outcomes. The panel then discusses each case as a multi-disciplinary group, considering communication needs, sensory-regulation challenges, cognitive profiles, environmental factors, behaviour patterns and curriculum access. Recommendations are agreed collectively to ensure coherence and shared ownership.

This panel provides clarity for staff, ensures fair and prioritised deployment of therapists, and maintains a clear line of sight on workload and caseload distribution. Decisions are recorded, monitored and revisited regularly. The process creates a consistent rhythm of review and ensures that therapy input remains purposeful, targeted and aligned with the wider needs of the school.

7. Deployment of therapists in practice

Therapists are deployed according to a combination of pupils' need, curriculum requirements, teachers' capacity building, statutory expectations, EHCP outcomes, and school improvement priorities. Deployment is dynamic and reviewed regularly to remain responsive to changing needs.

Therapists may work directly with pupils through one-to-one sessions, group work, sensory regulation programmes, communication development or motor-skill interventions. Equally important is indirect work,

which includes observing lessons, coaching teachers, helping staff adapt the environment, co-producing communication or sensory plans, modelling strategies, and developing resources.

In a school where many pupils have complex needs, therapists also contribute substantively to curriculum adaptation, ensuring that teaching materials, tasks and routines are accessible. Their expert knowledge helps shape expectations and supports the school in designing learning experiences that enable meaningful progress.

Therapists also collaborate with families as part of the school's whole-school approach, contributing to home-support plans, attending meetings, and sharing guidance to strengthen consistency between home and school.

8. Assessment, planning and review cycles

Therapists are fully integrated into the school's assessment and review systems. They contribute to baseline assessments, developmental profiles, annual reviews, multi-agency assessments, transition planning, report writing, and the ongoing monitoring of progress.

Therapists help teachers interpret communication profiles, sensory needs, motor development levels and cognitive assessments. They generate plans that are practical, classroom-based and deployable by teaching assistants throughout the day. These plans are written using accessible, direct language so that staff can confidently implement them without needing specialist training.

These plans are reviewed regularly in consultation with teachers and the Behaviour Team. Therapists also gather data, track impact, monitor pupil engagement and adjust recommendations in response to progress. This ensures that therapeutic support remains dynamic and responsive.

9. Contribution to professional development and capacity building

Therapists play a vital role in the school's professional development framework. They deliver whole-school training, targeted CPD, coaching sessions, modelling, workshops, and in-class support to ensure that strategies become embedded across practice.

Training covers communication systems, sensory regulation, AAC, visual supports, motor development, readiness to learn, reducing barriers to engagement, and supporting independence. Therapists collaborate closely with teaching staff to ensure training is practical and links directly to classroom routines, Flow pathways and curriculum expectations.

This ongoing professional learning builds staff confidence and ensures that the benefits of therapy extend well beyond direct sessions.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance

The Teaching and Learning Lead is responsible for ensuring that therapy provision is effective, well-coordinated and aligned with school priorities. Monitoring includes observing practice, auditing plans, reviewing caseloads, collecting staff and pupil feedback, reviewing engagement and behaviour data with the Behaviour Lead, and triangulating evidence across teams.

Therapists are expected to record their work clearly, contribute to data reviews and impact evaluations, and maintain high standards of clinical and educational documentation in line with the school's expectations.

This systematic oversight ensures that therapy is accountable, purposeful and continually improving.

11. Governance and Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by senior leaders and governors. The review will consider statutory guidance, pupil needs, staffing capacity and emerging priorities within the school. Evaluations of therapy impact may be reported to governors as part of SEND or curriculum monitoring.

