TEACHING & LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT POLICY

Understanding the learner. Enabling learning.
Recognising progress.



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework
and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy sets out Riverside Bridge School's approach to teaching, learning and assessment. It establishes the expectations, principles and practices that support high-quality, responsive teaching and enable every learner to make meaningful progress.

At Riverside Bridge School, we believe that every learner is entitled to high-quality teaching that recognises their individual strengths, needs, interests and aspirations and enables them to make meaningful progress from their own starting points.

Our approach to teaching, learning and assessment is rooted in the belief that all learners can develop and achieve. Progress may look different for every learner and may be demonstrated through increasingly purposeful communication, engagement, knowledge, understanding, independence, self-regulation, participation, application of skills or preparation for adulthood. Our responsibility is to identify what progress means for each learner and provide the teaching, support and opportunities that enable it to happen.

Teaching at Riverside Bridge School is therefore responsive, ambitious and highly personalised. Staff know their learners well and use this knowledge alongside each learner's EHCP, Development Profile, curriculum pathway, communication needs and ongoing assessment to make informed decisions about what to teach, how to teach it and what support is required. We recognise that our learners require different pedagogical approaches. Effective teaching may involve explicit instruction, modelling, repetition, sensory exploration, experiential learning, structured teaching, intensive interaction, opportunities for practice and generalisation, or carefully scaffolded independent learning. No single teaching approach is appropriate for every learner. Staff are expected to select and adapt approaches according to the learner, the intended learning and the context.

Communication is fundamental to teaching and learning. Every learner must be supported to understand, express themselves, make choices, communicate preferences, participate in learning and influence what happens around them. The school's Total Communication approach therefore underpins classroom practice and is embedded throughout the school day.

Assessment is also an integral part of teaching rather than a separate activity. Staff continually observe, listen, interact, question and review in order to understand what learners know, understand and can do. Assessment informs teaching, identifies next steps and enables the school to recognise progress that may be small, significant, non-linear or demonstrated across different contexts.

In addition, high-quality teaching promotes independence. Adults provide the support learners need to succeed whilst continually considering whether that support can be reduced. Staff create opportunities for learners to initiate, problem-solve, communicate, make decisions, practise skills and apply learning with increasing independence.

Finally, teaching and learning extend beyond individual lessons and beyond the classroom. Learners are provided with meaningful opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills through the wider school environment, community participation, educational visits, work-related learning, enterprise, careers education and preparation for adulthood.

Through consistent expectations, reflective practice, professional development and collaboration between teachers, co-educators, families and other professionals, Riverside Bridge School seeks continually to improve the quality of education experienced by every learner. Our approach to teaching, learning and assessment ultimately serves the school's shared ambition of Inspiring communication. Empowering independence. Achieving brighter futures.

Our responsibilities to learners, families, staff and the wider community

For our learners, we will:

- know and value each learner as an individual;
- maintain ambitious expectations from individual starting points;
- provide teaching that is accessible, appropriately challenging and responsive to how each learner learns;
- ensure every learner has meaningful opportunities to communicate, participate and make choices;
- promote increasing independence while providing the support needed for success; and
- recognise and celebrate progress in all its forms.

For our families, we will:

- recognise parents and carers as valued partners in their child's education;
- communicate clearly about learning, progress and priorities;
- listen to and value families' knowledge of their child; and
- work collaboratively to support learning, transitions and preparation for adulthood.

For our staff, we will:

- establish clear and consistent expectations for high-quality teaching, learning and assessment;
- provide the professional development, specialist knowledge and resources staff need;
- recognise that effective teaching looks different across learners and Learning Pathways;
- promote reflective practice, collaboration and shared professional learning; and
- ensure that monitoring and professional dialogue support continuous improvement.

For our wider community, we will:

- create meaningful opportunities for learners to learn within and contribute to their communities;
- develop partnerships that extend learning beyond school;
- provide opportunities for community participation, careers, enterprise and work-related learning; and
- support learners to develop the knowledge, communication and independence needed for their future lives.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

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Section 01

APPROACH TO TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

Understanding individuality. Enabling participation. Recognising achievement.

Teaching, learning and assessment are central to Riverside Bridge School's purpose. The quality of education experienced by our learners depends not only on what is taught through the curriculum, but on how effectively each learner is enabled to access, understand, practise, apply and retain their learning.
This policy sits alongside the school's Curriculum Policy. While the Curriculum Policy establishes the curriculum intent, architecture, learning pathways and entitlement, this policy sets out the principles and expectations that guide how the curriculum is taught, how learning is supported and how progress is assessed.

Riverside Bridge School educates learners with a wide range of complex and often interrelated special educational needs and disabilities. Learners differ considerably in their communication, cognition, sensory processing, physical development, social and emotional development, independence and ways of engaging with the world. High-quality teaching cannot therefore be defined by a single teaching style, lesson structure or pedagogical approach. Effective teaching begins with an understanding of the individual learner. What constitutes high-quality teaching for a pupil developing intentional communication through sensory and experiential learning may look very different from teaching for a pupil developing increasingly abstract subject knowledge, undertaking accredited learning or preparing for employment. Both can represent ambitious, purposeful and high-quality education.

Teaching at Riverside Bridge School is therefore learner-centred and responsive to the learning pathway. Staff use their knowledge of the learner, alongside curriculum expectations, EHCP outcomes, Development Profile information, communication and sensory needs, ongoing assessment, family knowledge and professional advice to make informed decisions about teaching, support and appropriate challenge.

Communication is fundamental to learning. The school's Total Communication approach ensures that learners have appropriate ways to understand others, express themselves, make choices, participate in learning and influence what happens around them. Communication is therefore both an important area of development and a means through which learners access the wider curriculum.

Teaching also seeks to develop increasing independence. Adults provide the support required for learners to participate and succeed whilst remaining alert to the risk of unnecessary dependence. Support, prompting and scaffolding are used purposefully and reduced where appropriate as learners develop greater confidence, competence and autonomy.

Assessment is integral to this process. Staff continually observe and evaluate how pupils are responding to learning and use this information to adapt teaching, provide further opportunities for practice and consolidation, and introduce additional challenge where appropriate. Assessment recognises that progress may involve the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, but may also be demonstrated through greater fluency, independence, spontaneity, retention or successful application across different contexts.

Teaching, learning and assessment are therefore understood as interconnected processes. Together, they enable staff to understand how learning is developing, respond appropriately and ensure that every learner continues to experience an ambitious, meaningful and appropriately challenging education.

Ultimately, high-quality teaching at Riverside Bridge School is teaching that makes a meaningful difference to the learner, enabling them to develop knowledge and understanding, communicate more effectively, participate more fully, become increasingly independent and apply their learning within school, their community and future adult life.

Section 02

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

Maintaining ambition. Promoting inclusion. Empowering learners.

The purpose of teaching, learning and assessment at Riverside Bridge School is to ensure that every learner experiences education that is ambitious, meaningful, accessible and responsive to their individual learning profile. Our approach is guided by the following principles.

- ✓ **Every learner can make meaningful progress -** We maintain high expectations for every pupil regardless of diagnosis, starting point or level of need. Progress will look different for different learners, but all pupils should experience appropriate challenge and opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding, communication, independence and participation.
- ✓ **Teaching begins with the learner -** Effective teaching is based on a detailed understanding of how the individual learner communicates, engages, processes information and responds to different approaches. Staff consider strengths, interests, needs and barriers to learning when making decisions about teaching and support.
- ✓ The learning pathway provides an important framework for this, but does not replace individualisation. Pupils within the same pathway may require different communication approaches, levels of structure, resources, pacing and support.
- ✓ **Communication enables learning -** Every learner requires an effective means of understanding and expressing themselves. Staff create communication-rich environments and ensure that personalised communication approaches are used consistently throughout teaching and the wider school day.
- ✓ Learners are provided with meaningful Means, Reasons and Opportunities (MRO) to communicate, enabling them to participate actively rather than simply respond to adult direction.
- ✓ **Learning should be active and meaningful -** Learners make progress when they are actively involved in experiences that have purpose and relevance. Teaching should provide opportunities to explore, experience, practise, question, problem-solve, make choices and apply learning rather than positioning pupils as passive recipients.
- ✓ Where appropriate, learning is connected to authentic situations so that pupils understand its purpose and develop the ability to use their knowledge and skills beyond the original teaching context.
- ✓ **Independence should be actively promoted -** Support should enable participation without creating unnecessary dependence. Staff provide the level of assistance required for success whilst continually considering how prompting, scaffolding or adult intervention can be reduced.

Independence may involve completing a task without support, but also includes initiating communication, making choices, solving problems, managing routines, self-advocating and taking increasing responsibility.

- ✓ **Relationships and regulation support learning -** Learners are most able to engage when they feel safe, understood and appropriately regulated. Positive relationships, predictable approaches and an understanding of individual sensory, emotional and communication needs therefore underpin effective teaching. Staff recognise behaviour as communication and use Positive Support approaches proactively to understand and reduce barriers to learning.
- ✓ **Learning develops through practice and application -** Acquiring a skill or understanding is only part of learning. Pupils require repeated and appropriately varied opportunities to consolidate, deepen and apply what they have learnt. Teaching therefore creates opportunities for learning to become increasingly secure, independent and transferable across different activities, people, environments and situations.
- ✓ **Assessment informs teaching -** Assessment is an ongoing part of teaching. Staff observe and interpret learners' responses in order to understand how learning is developing and adapt teaching accordingly.
- ✓ Assessment should be purposeful and proportionate. Its value lies in improving understanding of the learner and the effectiveness of teaching rather than simply generating evidence or data.
- ✓ **Teaching is reflective and collaborative -** High-quality specialist teaching depends upon professional knowledge, reflection and collaboration. Teachers, co-educators, therapists and other professionals work together to understand learners and create coherent approaches to teaching and support.
- ✓ Staff are expected to reflect on the impact of their practice, engage with professional development and adapt their approaches where evidence indicates that learners would benefit from something different.

Section 03

HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING

Planning purposefully. Teaching responsively. Extending learning.

High-quality teaching at Riverside Bridge School cannot be defined by a single lesson format or set of activities. The diversity of our learners means that effective teaching may look very different across classrooms and Learning Pathways. The quality of teaching is therefore evaluated primarily through its impact on the learner rather than conformity to a prescribed teaching style. High-quality teaching is characterised by the following features.

- ✓ **Clear purpose -** Teaching has a clear learning purpose rooted in the curriculum and appropriate to the learner. Staff understand what learning is being developed and ensure that activities, resources and adult support contribute meaningfully towards it.
- ✓ **Appropriate challenge -** Learning builds upon what the pupil already knows, understands or can do. Expectations are ambitious but achievable, with sufficient challenge to promote development without creating unnecessary barriers to participation. Challenge is not synonymous with completing more work or moving rapidly to new content. For some learners, appropriate challenge may involve increased independence, greater consistency, deeper understanding or applying established learning in a less familiar context.
- ✓ **Responsive teaching -** Staff observe how learners respond and adjust their teaching accordingly. They may change the pace, level of support, communication approach, sensory demands, resources, questioning or structure of an activity in response to the learner. Planning provides direction, but effective teaching remains responsive to what is happening during learning.
- ✓ **Active participation -** Learners should be active participants in their learning wherever possible. Staff provide appropriate opportunities to explore, communicate, make choices, initiate, respond, problem-solve and take increasing responsibility. Adults should avoid completing tasks for learners or providing prompts before pupils have had sufficient time and opportunity to respond independently.
- ✓ **Effective communication -** Communication approaches are personalised and consistently used. Staff ensure that pupils can understand what is happening and have meaningful opportunities to communicate throughout learning. Adults model appropriate communication, allow sufficient processing time and recognise communication in all its relevant forms.
- ✓ **Skilled use of support -** Adult support is purposeful and proportionate. Teachers ensure that co-educators understand the intended learning and their role in supporting it. Staff use modelling, prompting, scaffolding and physical assistance where necessary but remain alert to over-support. Wherever appropriate, assistance is reduced to enable greater independence and agency.

- ✓ **Opportunities to practise and generalise -** Learners are provided with sufficient opportunities to revisit important knowledge and skills. Practice is purposeful rather than repetitive for its own sake and increasingly enables pupils to apply their learning with different people, within different activities and across different environments.
- ✓ **An enabling learning environment -** The physical, sensory, communication and social environment supports successful participation. Resources are accessible, routines are sufficiently predictable and unnecessary barriers to engagement are reduced. The environment is adapted according to learner need rather than expecting pupils to adapt to an inflexible classroom.
- ✓ **Meaningful assessment -** Assessment takes place throughout learning. Staff notice changes in understanding, communication, independence, fluency and application and use this information to make informed decisions about teaching. Evidence should capture meaningful learning rather than being created simply to demonstrate that an activity has taken place.
- ✓ **Reflection and adaptation -** Staff continually consider the impact of their teaching. Where a learner is not making expected progress or engaging successfully, the response is not simply to repeat the same approach. Staff consider what may be creating a barrier and adapt teaching, support or the environment accordingly.

Section 04

PATHWAY-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Recognising differences. Adapting approaches. Maintaining ambition.

Teaching at Riverside Bridge School is responsive to the learner's learning pathway and individual learning profile. The pathways provide a shared pedagogical framework, helping staff consider the approaches, communication, structure, pace and support most likely to enable each learner to engage successfully. The pathways do not prescribe a fixed teaching style. Learners within the same pathway remain individuals and may respond differently according to the curriculum subject, learning being developed, environment and their needs at a particular time.

Flow 1a

Teaching for learners within Flow 1a is **predominantly sensory, experiential and interaction-led.** Learning develops through carefully planned experiences that enable pupils to notice, respond, anticipate, explore and increasingly influence what happens around them. Effective practice may include:

- sensory and experiential learning;
- Intensive Interaction and responsive interaction;
- repetition and familiar routines;
- anticipation and cause-and-effect experiences;
- shared attention and interaction;
- personalised communication approaches;
- careful observation of subtle responses;
- sufficient processing and response time;
- opportunities for learners to initiate and influence interactions.

Adults remain highly responsive to changes in attention, expression, movement, vocalisation and other forms of communication. Teaching should create opportunities for pupils to become increasingly active participants rather than experiences simply being done *to* them.

Flow 1b

Teaching within Flow 1b builds upon experiential learning while providing increasing opportunities for purposeful participation, communication, choice and early independence. Effective practice may include:

- familiar and predictable learning structures;
- practical and experiential activities;
- purposeful choice-making;
- supported problem-solving;

- increasingly intentional communication;
- modelling and carefully graded prompting;
- repeated opportunities to practise emerging skills;
- opportunities to initiate and complete familiar routines;
- gradual reduction of adult support where appropriate.

Teaching enables learners to recognise connections between their actions and outcomes and to participate increasingly purposefully in learning and everyday activity.

Flow 2

Teaching within Flow 2 is predominantly practical, structured and application-focused. Learners are supported to develop understanding through concrete experiences and to use knowledge and skills increasingly independently across meaningful situations. Effective practice may include:

- explicit teaching and modelling;
- practical application of concepts;
- structured tasks and routines;
- visual and communication support;
- questioning and supported reasoning;
- opportunities for problem-solving and decision-making;
- repeated application across different contexts;
- increasingly independent completion of tasks;
- purposeful links between curriculum learning and everyday life.

Staff support pupils to move beyond successful performance within a familiar activity towards deeper understanding and increasingly flexible application.

Flow 3

Teaching within Flow 3 increasingly enables learners to engage with conceptual, subject-specific and abstract learning, whilst retaining the specialist adaptations required by the individual pupil. Effective practice may include:

- explicit instruction;
- modelling and worked examples;
- subject-specific vocabulary;
- questioning, discussion and explanation;
- retrieval and application of prior learning;
- reasoning and problem-solving;
- increasingly complex texts, concepts and tasks;
- independent and collaborative learning;

- opportunities to apply knowledge within unfamiliar contexts.

Where appropriate, teaching may support accredited learning, but accreditation does not define Flow 3 and is not restricted to pupils within this pathway.

Pedagogical flexibility

These distinctions should not create artificial boundaries between teaching approaches. A Flow 3 learner may benefit from practical or sensory experiences, just as a Flow 1 learner may demonstrate understanding that requires staff to increase challenge. Teachers use professional judgement to draw upon appropriate specialist approaches while remaining responsive to the individual learner. The question is therefore not “What teaching method belongs to this pathway?”, but “What approach will enable this learner to engage with this learning most successfully?”

Section 05

COMMUNICATION AS THE FOUNDATION OF LEARNING

Enabling expression. Creating opportunities. Strengthening agency.

Communication is fundamental to teaching and learning at Riverside Bridge School. Learners must have effective ways to understand others, express themselves, participate in learning, build relationships, make decisions and influence what happens around them.

The school adopts a Total Communication approach, recognising that learners may communicate through speech, signing, Makaton, symbols, photographs, Objects of Reference, AAC, gesture, body language, facial expression or combinations of approaches. The detailed expectations for communication practice are set out within the school's Total Communication Framework. This policy therefore focuses specifically on communication as an essential component of effective teaching.

Means, Reasons and Opportunities Staff ensure that learners have:

- Means - an accessible and effective way to communicate;
- Reasons - genuine purposes for communication;
- Opportunities - sufficient time and meaningful situations in which to communicate.

Communication opportunities should arise naturally throughout teaching and the wider school day rather than being restricted to designated communication activities.

Communication within teaching

Staff are expected to:

- know and consistently use each learner's communication approaches;
- make language accessible without unnecessarily reducing the intellectual ambition of learning;
- model communication systems appropriately;
- provide sufficient processing and response time;
- recognise and respond to intentional and emerging communication;
- create opportunities for initiation rather than relying solely on adult questioning;
- provide meaningful choices rather than tokenistic choices; and
- ensure communication resources and systems are available when and where learners need them.

Adults should be alert to the risk of dominating interactions. Effective communication practice creates space for learners to initiate, respond, reject, request, comment, question and express opinions.

Communication and learner agency

Communication is closely connected to independence and self-advocacy. Learners should increasingly be enabled to communicate preferences, indicate when something is wrong, request help, express agreement or refusal and participate in decisions that affect them.

Teaching therefore seeks not simply to increase the amount a pupil communicates, but to increase the purpose, effectiveness, spontaneity and influence of their communication.

Section 06

PLANNING, TEACHING & THE LEARNING CYCLE

Identifying learning. Responding flexibly. Building understanding.

Planning at Riverside Bridge School exists to support effective teaching. It should provide sufficient clarity about intended learning, curriculum progression and individual need whilst allowing teachers to respond professionally to what happens during learning. Planning should not become an administrative exercise or require unnecessary duplication.

- **Planning from the curriculum -** Teachers plan from the school's curriculum framework, including relevant Curriculum Subjects, Subject Areas of Learning and Stems of Learning. Themed curriculum maps provide contexts through which learning can be organised and revisited. Themes should support meaningful connections between learning but should not replace subject-specific progression or result in activities being selected simply because they fit a topic. Teachers identify the learning being developed before determining the activity through which it will be taught.
- **Planning for the learner -** Curriculum planning is adapted according to the individual learner's learning pathway, Development Profile, prior learning, EHCP outcomes, communication profile, sensory, physical and emotional needs, interests and motivators and level of support and challenge required.
- Not every learner needs to complete the same activity in the same way for teaching to be coherent. What should remain clear is the purpose of the learning and how the experience contributes to curriculum progression.
- **Teaching as a responsive process** - Planning provides direction but does not prevent adaptation. During teaching, staff observe how learners respond and make appropriate adjustments to pace, questioning, communication, resources, structure, sensory demands or adult support. Where a pupil demonstrates greater understanding than anticipated, teaching should provide additional challenge. Where a learner experiences difficulty, staff consider whether further modelling, repetition, consolidation, adaptation or a different approach is required.
- **Practice, consolidation and application -** Learners require sufficient opportunities to revisit important learning. Repetition should be purposeful and enable learning to become increasingly established rather than simply reproducing the same activity. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to: encounter and acquire learning → develop it through repeated meaningful opportunities → demonstrate increasing security and independence → apply it across different situations and contexts.

This reflects the school's Development Indicators of **Acquiring, Developing, Mastering and Generalising** without treating them as a rigid sequence or timetable for progress.

- **Learning beyond individual lessons -** Effective teaching considers where and how learning can be used beyond the original lesson. Opportunities for application may occur through routines, other curriculum subjects, community experiences, enterprise, work-related learning, enrichment and everyday interactions. Where appropriate, staff deliberately vary people, resources, activities and environments so that learners have opportunities to develop increasingly flexible and transferable understanding.

Section 07

ADAPTIVE TEACHING & PERSONALISATION

Removing barriers. Providing challenge. Developing independence.

Adaptive teaching at Riverside Bridge School means making informed adjustments that enable learners to participate in appropriately ambitious curriculum learning. It does not mean reducing expectations or providing disconnected activities simply because a pupil has additional needs. Adaptation begins with identifying the barrier to successful learning and considering what change will enable the learner to participate more effectively. Adaptations may include:

- communication methods and presentation of information;
- pace and processing time;
- sensory environment;
- physical access and positioning;
- resources and equipment;
- task structure and sequencing;
- modelling and scaffolding;
- questioning;
- method of response or recording;
- levels of adult support;
- opportunities for movement or regulation;
- the context through which learning is experienced.

Adaptations should be purposeful. Staff consider why an adaptation is needed, whether it is enabling successful participation and whether it remains necessary as learning develops.

- **Support without lowering ambition -** Accessibility and ambition are not competing priorities. A pupil may require substantial adaptation or adult support whilst engaging with appropriately challenging learning. Equally, simplifying curriculum content unnecessarily because of a learner's communication, physical or sensory needs may limit their opportunity to demonstrate what they understand. Staff therefore distinguish carefully between a learner's ability to access or express learning and their underlying knowledge and understanding.
- **Scaffolding and prompting -** Scaffolding provides temporary support that enables successful participation and is adjusted as competence develops. Adults should use the least intrusive effective level of support, allowing sufficient time for independent response before intervening. Prompting should be purposeful and, wherever appropriate, reduced systematically.

Staff remain alert to prompt dependency, particularly where a learner becomes reliant upon adult direction despite having the knowledge or skill required to participate more independently.

- **Personalisation without isolation -** Personalised learning does not mean that every learner requires an entirely separate curriculum or constant one-to-one teaching. Where appropriate, learners should experience shared learning, interaction with peers, collaborative activity and membership of their class community. Individualisation should enable participation within a coherent curriculum rather than unnecessarily separating pupils from it.
- **Integrated specialist support -** Therapeutic and specialist recommendations are incorporated into teaching where they enable curriculum access and development. Teachers work collaboratively with relevant professionals to ensure that communication, sensory, physical, regulation and other specialist approaches are understood and used consistently.
- Specialist support should enhance the learner's participation in education rather than create a parallel programme disconnected from curriculum learning.

Section 08

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Structuring environments. Supporting regulation. Enabling participation.

The learning environment plays an important role in enabling pupils to communicate, participate and learn successfully. At Riverside Bridge School, the environment is not viewed simply as the physical classroom but as part of the teaching approach itself. Learning environments should be safe, accessible, purposeful and responsive to the needs of the learners using them. What constitutes an effective environment will therefore differ across classes and Learning Pathways.

Creating enabling environments

Staff consider how the organisation of the environment supports or creates barriers to learning. Depending on individual and cohort needs, this may include consideration of:

- sensory stimulation and levels of distraction;
- accessibility and physical positioning;
- communication resources;
- visual information and environmental cues;
- organisation and accessibility of resources;
- predictable routines and structures;
- opportunities for movement and regulation;
- spaces for individual, paired and group learning;
- opportunities for interaction and collaboration; and
- opportunities for pupils to access resources and complete routines with increasing independence.

Environmental adaptations should have a clear purpose and respond to identified learner need rather than being applied routinely to every pupil.

Communication-rich environments

Learners should have access to the communication systems and resources they require throughout the learning environment, not only during designated communication activities.

Visuals, symbols, Objects of Reference, communication boards, AAC and other personalised approaches should be available where and when they are meaningful to the learner. Staff should also consider whether pupils can independently access their communication system rather than relying upon an adult to provide it. The environment should create opportunities for communication rather than simply display communication resources.

Environments that promote independence

Classrooms should be organised, wherever appropriate, so that learners can increasingly understand routines, locate resources, make choices and participate without unnecessary adult direction. Staff consider whether aspects of the environment inadvertently increase dependence. Where a pupil can safely access, organise, retrieve or complete something independently, the environment should enable them to do so.

Regulation and readiness to learn

Staff recognise that sensory and emotional regulation can significantly affect a learner's ability to access learning. Appropriate strategies, resources and spaces are therefore incorporated according to individual need. Regulation should not be viewed simply as something that must occur before learning can begin; for some pupils, movement, sensory experiences, co-regulation or changes to the environment are necessary components of successful participation in learning. Staff work with relevant professionals to understand individual sensory, physical, medical and emotional needs and ensure that agreed approaches are implemented consistently.

Learning beyond the classroom

The principles of an effective learning environment extend beyond the classroom. Corridors, shared spaces, outdoor areas, specialist facilities and community settings can all provide valuable contexts for teaching and learning. Staff consider how pupils can use these environments to practise and apply learning, communicate with different people, solve problems and develop increasing confidence and independence. The aim is not for pupils to succeed only within a highly adapted classroom, but, where appropriate, to develop the skills and strategies that enable them to participate increasingly successfully across a wider range of environments.

Section 09

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS & CO-EDUCATORS

Sharing expertise. Coordinating practice. Supporting learning.

High-quality teaching and learning depend upon effective teamwork. Teachers and co-educators bring different responsibilities to the learning process but share a common purpose to enable pupils to participate, learn and become increasingly independent. All adults working with pupils should understand the intended learning, the individual learner and the purpose of the support they provide.

Teachers hold professional responsibility for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within their class. Teachers are expected to:

- know their pupils well and understand their individual learning profiles;
- have secure knowledge of the curriculum they teach and its progression;
- plan learning that is ambitious, meaningful and appropriate to pupils' Learning Pathways;
- ensure that EHCP outcomes and relevant specialist recommendations are appropriately integrated into learning;
- use assessment to understand how learning is developing and adapt teaching accordingly;
- select and adapt teaching approaches in response to learner need;
- establish clear expectations for communication, participation and independence;
- ensure that co-educators understand the purpose of learning and how best to support individual pupils;
- deploy adults purposefully;
- monitor the impact of adult support and address unnecessary dependence or over-prompting;
- maintain appropriate assessment and evidence of learning;
- work collaboratively with families, therapists and other professionals;
- reflect upon and continually develop their own practice.

Teachers remain accountable for pupils' learning when other adults are supporting them. Deployment of a co-educator does not transfer responsibility for teaching or assessment away from the teacher.

Co-educators make an essential contribution to teaching and learning at Riverside Bridge School. Their role is not simply to supervise, support behaviour or help pupils complete activities. They actively contribute to pupils' communication, participation, learning and independence. Co-educators are expected to:

- know the learners they support and understand relevant communication, sensory, physical and emotional needs;

- understand the purpose of the learning taking place;
- use agreed communication approaches consistently;
- follow the teacher's direction while responding appropriately to the learner;
- model, scaffold and prompt learning using the least intrusive effective support;
- allow appropriate processing and response time before intervening;
- encourage pupils to initiate, make choices, problem-solve and participate actively;
- avoid completing tasks for learners unnecessarily;
- recognise and respond to communication in all its relevant forms;
- observe learning carefully and provide useful feedback to the teacher;
- contribute appropriately to assessment and evidence gathering;
- support pupils to practise and apply learning across different contexts;
- continually seek opportunities to increase learner independence.

Effective deployment

Effective deployment is based on the learning needs of pupils, not simply on allocating an adult permanently to an individual or group. Teachers consider where adult input will have greatest impact and how support can be organised to maximise participation and independence. This may involve adults:

- facilitating interaction between pupils;
- supporting communication;
- modelling a task or strategy;
- providing targeted teaching;
- observing a learner's response;
- supporting regulation or physical access;
- enabling participation within group learning;
- withdrawing support to create an opportunity for independent action.

Adults should avoid remaining unnecessarily close to pupils when their presence is no longer required.

Supporting rather than replacing learning

One of the most important responsibilities of all staff is to ensure that support does not unintentionally replace the learner's own thinking, communication or action. Before intervening, adults should consider: Can the learner do this independently? Have they had sufficient time to process and respond? What is the least support I can provide that will enable success? Can I reduce or remove this support next time? A completed activity is not evidence of successful learning if the adult has undertaken the thinking, communication or practical action on behalf of the pupil. The quality of support is therefore judged not by how much help an adult provides, but by how effectively that support enables the learner to participate and develop increasing independence.

Observation and professional feedback

Because co-educators frequently work closely with individual learners, their observations provide valuable information about how learning is developing. Feedback to teachers should focus on the learner's response, rather than simply describing the activity completed. For example, staff may notice that a pupil:

- initiated without prompting;
- required less support than previously;
- used a communication skill spontaneously;
- retained previously taught knowledge;
- applied a skill in a different context;
- demonstrated a misconception;
- responded differently to a particular adaptation;
- required additional opportunities for consolidation.

This information contributes to responsive teaching and assessment.

Shared professional responsibility

Teachers and co-educators should communicate regularly about learning, support and pupil response. Effective teamwork requires clarity, consistency and professional respect. Where approaches are not enabling successful participation or progress, staff should discuss and adapt them rather than continuing ineffective practice. All adults working with pupils are therefore expected to be active participants in the learning process, while maintaining clear professional accountability and responsibility.

Section 10

ASSESSMENT & EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Observing responses. Recognising progress. Informing teaching.

Assessment at Riverside Bridge School is an integral part of teaching and learning. Its primary purpose is to help staff understand how a learner's knowledge, skills and understanding are developing so that teaching can respond appropriately. Assessment is not a separate activity undertaken after teaching has taken place. It occurs continuously as staff observe, interact with, question and listen to learners and consider how they respond to different experiences, teaching approaches and levels of support. Assessment should be meaningful, proportionate and useful. The collection of evidence should support professional understanding of learning rather than become an activity in itself.

Formative assessment

Day-to-day formative assessment is central to effective teaching. Staff continually consider:

- what the learner already knows, understands or can do;
- how they are responding to the learning being presented;
- whether learning is becoming more established and secure;
- the level and type of support required;
- whether the learner can demonstrate learning with increasing independence;
- whether learning is retained over time;
- whether it can be applied across different activities, people or environments;
- whether teaching, support or the environment needs to be adapted.

This information enables teachers to respond during and following learning by providing further opportunities, consolidation, adaptation or increased challenge as appropriate.

Observing learning

For many pupils at Riverside Bridge School, skilled observation is an essential component of assessment. Staff may identify learning through changes in:

- attention and engagement;
- anticipation and response;
- communication and interaction;
- knowledge and understanding;
- accuracy or fluency;
- problem-solving;

- independence;
- levels of prompting or support;
- initiation and spontaneity;
- retention;
- application across different contexts.

Staff should be particularly alert to subtle but significant changes for learners whose responses may not be demonstrated through conventional written or verbal outcomes. Observation should focus on what the pupil demonstrates, rather than simply recording what activity they participated in.

Stems of Learning and the Development Indicators

The Stems of Learning provide progression within curriculum learning. Assessment considers how the knowledge, understanding or skill represented within relevant Stems is developing for the individual learner. Teachers use the school's Development Indicators (Acquiring - Developing - Mastering – Generalising) to evaluate the extent to which learning is becoming established, secure, independent and transferable. The indicators do not represent pupils' levels and should not be treated as a linear ladder through which every learner is expected to move at the same rate. A pupil's learning may develop differently across individual Stems and curriculum areas, creating the individual developmental profile that is characteristic of many of our learners. Judgements are made through professional assessment of the learner across meaningful opportunities rather than from a single performance or isolated piece of evidence.

Development Profiles

Assessment of relevant stems across curriculum learning contributes to each pupil's Development Profile. The Development Profile provides a broader picture of the learner's strengths and development across the curriculum. It enables staff to recognise patterns within learning and identify areas in which pupils may require further opportunities, consolidation, adaptation or challenge.

Once the relevant Stems across the curriculum have been assessed using the Development Indicators, the resulting profile contributes to the holistic consideration of the learner's learning pathway.

Learning Pathway placement is not determined by a single assessment score or individual curriculum area. The Development Profile is considered alongside the learner's communication, cognition, sensory and physical development, independence, social and emotional needs, EHCP outcomes and wider professional knowledge of the pupil. A learner does not move learning pathways simply because individual stems move from Acquiring towards Generalising. Pathway placement reflects the predominant approach to learning most likely to enable that pupil to flourish.

Evidence of learning

Evidence should be gathered where it adds value to assessment and supports an accurate understanding of progress. Depending upon the learner and the nature of the learning, evidence may include:

- staff observation;
- pupils' responses and communication;
- practical application;
- photographs or video where appropriate;
- learner-created products;
- questioning;
- completed work;
- evidence from community or real-life contexts;
- observations shared by other professionals or families where relevant.

Not every learning experience requires photographic or written evidence. The quantity of evidence collected does not determine the quality of assessment. A smaller amount of purposeful evidence accompanied by secure professional knowledge of the learner is more valuable than large quantities of evidence that do not demonstrate what has actually been learnt.

Levels of support

The level of support required by a pupil is an important part of understanding learning. A learner completing a task independently demonstrates something different from a learner completing the same task through extensive prompting or physical assistance. Staff should therefore consider the nature and level of support when interpreting evidence. Assessment should recognise when pupils are:

- requiring less prompting;
- initiating more independently;
- completing a greater proportion of an activity themselves;
- using strategies without adult direction;
- applying established learning without familiar support.

Reducing support can represent significant progress even where the curriculum content itself has not changed.

The Engagement Model

Where the statutory Engagement Model applies, it is used in accordance with current national requirements. The Engagement Model complements the school's wider assessment approach rather than replacing curriculum assessment. Its areas of engagement provide additional information about how relevant pupils engage with and respond to learning.

Section 11

FEEDBACK, RECORDING & REPORTING

Celebrating achievement. Recording progress. Sharing understanding.

Feedback, recording and reporting should support learning and provide an accurate, useful picture of each pupil's development. Approaches must be appropriate to the learner and the nature of the learning being assessed. The school does not expect one form of feedback, recording or marking to be appropriate for every learner or every learning pathway.

Feedback to learners

Effective feedback helps learners recognise success, understand the impact of their actions and, where appropriate, know how to improve or develop their learning.

Feedback may be provided through:

- verbal feedback;
- gesture, signing or symbols;
- acknowledgement and reinforcement;
- modelling;
- questioning;
- opportunities to correct or improve;
- immediate repetition or application;
- visual feedback;
- written feedback where meaningful;
- the natural consequence of an action or choice.

For many learners, immediate feedback within the learning experience is considerably more meaningful than written comments provided afterwards. Feedback should therefore be selected according to what the learner can understand and use, rather than being provided simply to demonstrate that marking has occurred.

Marking and annotation

Where pupils produce written or recorded work, marking should have a clear purpose and be accessible to the learner wherever possible. There is no educational value in extensive written marking that a pupil cannot access or understand. Annotation may be used where it provides important assessment information that is not apparent from the finished work. For example, it may record:

- the level of support provided;

- significant communication or interaction;
- an independent response;
- a strategy used by the learner;
- a misconception;
- an important observation;
- evidence of application or generalisation.

Annotations should be brief, relevant and informative. They should add information about learning rather than simply describe what happened during the activity.

Recording assessment

Teachers maintain sufficient assessment information to understand learning over time, inform teaching and contribute to wider evaluation of progress. Recording should be proportionate and should avoid unnecessary duplication across different systems. Assessment records may include:

- Development Profiles with Development Indicator judgements;
- assessment against relevant EHCP outcome information and Stems of Learning (the Personalised Targets);
- appropriate evidence of significant learning;
- teacher assessment and professional observations;
- statutory or accredited assessment where applicable.

The purpose of recording is to preserve information that is useful for understanding the learner and their development. Staff should not be expected to record every observation or learning interaction.

Professional judgement

Professional judgement is central to assessment at Riverside Bridge School. Teachers draw upon evidence gathered over time and across different learning experiences rather than relying upon isolated performances. Judgements should reflect what the learner demonstrates with appropriate consistency and should take account of the support, context and conditions in which learning occurs.

Where evidence is unclear, staff should seek further opportunities to observe the learning rather than making a judgement simply because an assessment point or reporting deadline has been reached.

Moderation

Moderation supports consistency and professional confidence in assessment. Teachers engage in professional dialogue with colleagues, curriculum leaders, senior leaders and, where appropriate, therapists and other professionals to consider evidence and discuss assessment judgements. Moderation is particularly valuable where:

- learning is demonstrated through subtle responses;

- levels of support affect interpretation;
- a judgement appears significantly different from previous assessment;
- learning is being demonstrated inconsistently across contexts;
- staff are considering significant changes within a learner's Development Profile.

The purpose of moderation is not to eliminate professional judgement but to strengthen it through shared understanding.

Reporting to families

Families receive a clear and meaningful picture of their child's learning and development. Reporting communicates:

- significant achievements and strengths;
- how learning has developed over time;
- relevant areas requiring continued development;
- progress towards EHCP outcomes;
- increasing independence and application where relevant;
- important priorities within the learner's ongoing education.

Reports should avoid unnecessary technical language and should enable families to understand what has changed for their child as a result of learning.

Formal reporting is complemented by ongoing communication with families and discussion through annual reviews, parent consultations and other appropriate meetings.

Reporting and transition

Assessment information supports effective transition between classes, phases and future provisions. Information shared during transition should help receiving staff understand not simply what curriculum content a pupil has encountered, but:

- what they know, understand and can do;
- how they communicate;
- what support enables successful learning;
- what they can do independently;
- where learning remains emerging or inconsistent;
- what strategies are effective;
- how knowledge and skills are applied across different contexts.

This ensures that new staff can build upon established learning rather than unnecessarily starting again.

Section 12

MONITORING, EVALUATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluating practice. Developing expertise. Improving outcomes.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is continually reviewed to ensure that every learner experiences consistently high-quality education. Monitoring at Riverside Bridge School is intended to support professional reflection, shared expectations and continuous improvement, while enabling leaders to identify strengths and areas requiring further development. Monitoring focuses on the impact of practice on learners rather than compliance with a single model of teaching. As effective teaching may look different across Learning Pathways and individual learners, staff are not expected to demonstrate a prescribed lesson structure or teaching style.

Evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

Leaders consider a range of evidence when evaluating the quality and impact of teaching, which may include:

- observation of teaching and learning;
- learning walks;
- pupil engagement and participation;
- communication and interaction;
- evidence of increasing independence;
- pupils' work and other evidence of learning;
- assessment information and Development Profiles;
- planning and curriculum implementation;
- the quality and impact of adult support;
- learning environments;
- pupil voice and learner experience;
- professional discussion with staff.

No single source of evidence is considered in isolation. Leaders build a broader picture over time, recognising the complexity and diversity of teaching within a specialist setting.

What monitoring considers

Monitoring considers whether teaching:

- has a clear and appropriate learning purpose;

- reflects curriculum progression;
- provides appropriate challenge;
- is responsive to individual learning profiles and Learning Pathways;
- enables meaningful communication and participation;
- uses adult support effectively;
- promotes increasing independence;
- responds appropriately to sensory, physical, emotional and regulation needs;
- provides opportunities to practise and apply learning;
- uses assessment effectively to inform teaching;
- enables pupils to make meaningful progress.

The central consideration is not **"**Did the lesson look a particular way?" but "What was the learner learning, and how effectively did teaching enable that learning to develop?"

Pupil voice and learner experience

Learner experience is an important part of evaluating teaching and learning. Pupil voice may be gathered through speech, AAC, signing, symbols, observation, choices, behaviour, engagement, interaction and other appropriate communication methods. Staff should not assume that conventional verbal feedback is the only valid way for learners to express their experience.

Leaders consider whether pupils experience learning in which they are safe, respected, appropriately challenged, able to communicate and increasingly able to participate and exercise agency.

Professional dialogue and feedback

Monitoring should lead to meaningful professional dialogue. Feedback identifies effective practice, considers its impact on learners and supports staff to reflect upon areas that could be strengthened. Where improvement is required, expectations should be clear and appropriate support provided.

The purpose of feedback is not simply to identify what happened during a lesson, but to consider why particular approaches were effective or ineffective and what can be learnt from this.

Professional development

High-quality specialist teaching requires continual professional learning. Professional development is informed by:

- school improvement priorities;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- curriculum developments;
- emerging learner needs;
- developments in specialist education and research;

- statutory requirements;
- staff reflection and identified development needs;
- the expertise available within and beyond the school.

Professional development may include whole-school training, pathway or subject-specific development, coaching, mentoring, modelling, peer observation, collaborative planning, moderation and opportunities to learn from specialist professionals.

Coaching and reflective practice

Coaching supports staff to reflect upon and develop their practice within a supportive but appropriately challenging professional culture. Coaching should enable staff to consider the relationship between their actions and the learner's response, identify practical refinements and evaluate whether changes improve participation and learning. Reflection is an expectation of professional practice. Staff should be willing to adapt established approaches where evidence suggests that learners would benefit from something different.

Continuous improvement

Where monitoring identifies inconsistency or areas requiring development, leaders consider the underlying reasons and determine the most appropriate response. This may include:

- professional development;
- coaching or modelling;
- increased collaboration;
- clarification of expectations;
- access to specialist advice;
- changes to resources or environments;
- more focused monitoring and support.

Where concerns about the quality of teaching persist despite appropriate support, these will be addressed through the school's relevant professional procedures.

Monitoring, evaluation and professional development therefore form a continuous cycle through which the school seeks to strengthen practice and improve the educational experience of every learner.

Section 13

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Clarifying expectations. Strengthening accountability. Securing consistency.

High-quality teaching, learning and assessment are a shared responsibility. Clear leadership and accountability ensure that expectations are understood, practice is supported and the quality of education is continually evaluated and improved.

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities in relation to teaching, learning and assessment;
- maintaining strategic oversight of the quality of education;
- holding school leaders to account for the implementation and impact of this policy;
- ensuring that appropriate resources and professional development support high-quality provision;
- reviewing relevant information about educational outcomes and school improvement.

Governors maintain strategic oversight and do not become involved in operational judgements about individual lessons or members of staff.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- establishing and communicating expectations for high-quality teaching, learning and assessment;
- ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently;
- maintaining oversight of the quality of education across the school;
- ensuring that teaching remains responsive to the needs of learners across all Learning Pathways;
- monitoring the impact of teaching, learning and assessment;
- identifying whole-school strengths and priorities for improvement;
- ensuring appropriate professional development, coaching and support;
- promoting collaboration between education, therapy and other specialist teams;
- ensuring that assessment information is used appropriately to understand learner progress and improve provision.

Subject leads are responsible for supporting high-quality teaching within their areas of responsibility by:

- developing staff knowledge of curriculum content and progression;
- supporting teachers to understand and use Stems of Learning appropriately;
- modelling and sharing effective subject-specific practice;

- contributing to assessment and moderation;
- monitoring how effectively curriculum learning is being taught;
- identifying strengths and areas requiring development;
- supporting the continued development of curriculum and teaching practice.

Teachers are professionally responsible for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within their classes. Their detailed responsibilities are set out in Section 9 and include planning and delivering appropriate learning, adapting teaching, deploying co-educators effectively, assessing pupils' learning, maintaining appropriate records and working collaboratively with families and professionals.

Co-educators contribute directly to pupils' learning, communication, participation and independence. Their detailed responsibilities are also set out in Section 9. Co-educators are expected to understand the purpose of learning, use agreed approaches consistently, provide appropriate levels of support, contribute observations to assessment and continually seek opportunities to increase learner independence.

Therapists and specialist professionals contribute expertise that supports pupils' access to teaching and learning. Working collaboratively with education staff, they may:

- provide specialist assessment and advice;
- contribute to communication, sensory, physical and regulation approaches;
- support staff to understand and implement recommendations;
- contribute to professional development;
- support assessment and review where appropriate;
- help ensure that specialist strategies are integrated meaningfully into curriculum learning.

All staff share responsibility for creating a culture in which learners are safe, respected, included and supported to achieve. Everyone working with pupils is expected to promote effective communication, maintain ambitious expectations, encourage independence, follow agreed approaches and contribute to a consistent and positive learning experience.

Section 14

RELATED POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

Connecting practice. Strengthening consistency.

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy should not be read in isolation. It sits alongside the school's Curriculum Policy and wider policies, frameworks and guidance that provide further detail about curriculum provision, communication, Positive Support, safeguarding and learner development. In particular, this policy should be read alongside:

- Curriculum Policy
- Assessment and Evidence Guidance
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Coaching Policy
- Total Communication Policy
- Positive Support Policy
- Preparing for Adulthood Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
- CEIAG Policy
- BridgeWorks - Structured Teaching Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Equality Information and Objectives
- SEND Information Report
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

High-quality teaching at Riverside Bridge School is ultimately defined by its impact on the learner. Through skilled, responsive and reflective practice, we seek to ensure that every pupil is enabled to communicate, participate, develop knowledge and understanding, become increasingly independent and use their learning to achieve the best possible outcomes for their future.