

Additional Learning Needs Policy

All our pupils have a statement of special educational needs. That means not only are they special (very special) but they have difficulties which – through no fault of their own – are going to hold them back and go on for a long time. That's why all our staff want to help. Our aim is to make sure that pupils at Meadows leave us able to go to college, get a good apprenticeship, or get a job they enjoy doing and pays a good wage.

Sometimes, our pupils have been kicked out of school and left at home while their mates are still attending school. Gradually their learning falls behind everyone else. Reading and writing makes less and less sense. When they come to us they are well embarrassed by the difficulty they have trying to make sense of lessons. Can you imagine how boring it is to learn to read when you are already 14 years old? To spend time breaking down words into syllables and learning the blends – sh and ch and st? To be nearly an adult and still stuck with the “Oxford Reading Tree?”

We have a focused literacy team who work tactfully and privately with pupils of any age. They help them learn to crack the code. Our team knows how embarrassing it is. They also make sure that every time pupils get it right, they know straight away and can begin to feel proud of themselves.

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a different problem. Some people can't make sense of letters or words however hard they try. They look like a jumble of shapes. Others don't remember how to break words down into syllables or use different methods to work out what the text is saying. They find reading and writing extremely difficult and soon turn off their interest. Everyone else seems to be able to understand how to do it but for some of our pupils it is a mysterious code which is unbreakable.

Our focused literacy group helps these pupils, away from the spotlight of lessons. They make reading and writing a multi-sensory experience so touch, shape and space are also used to help as well as practising seeing, thinking and remembering.

We are realistic and we have very successful access arrangements for exams. They support pupils who want to take GCSEs to show the real knowledge being tested – not how well they can read or write. In ICT, PE, science or maths our pupils can have a scribe, a prompt or a reader so they can show what they actually know in these subjects.

MLD

Some of our pupils have always found learning difficult. They make slow and steady progress because there are few pupils and lots of help in class. They challenge themselves to improve against their own best efforts. Lessons are designed so that the struggle to learn is minimised and pupils experience success at their own pace in the company of their peers.

SOCIAL & BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

We have pupils who are described as having Autistic Spectrum Disorders. This includes Asperger's syndrome. Their world can be muddled because they find it difficult to predict what other people will do next or what will happen next. Sometimes they are expert at talking for long periods of time about their own interests, sometimes they don't like talking at all. We understand and as they gain confidence and settle in we encourage them to venture outside themselves and try and predict what others are feeling too. They have their own space in classrooms and are encouraged to use ICT to support learning. We help them explain and understand their difficulties and practice joining in new experiences in and out of school. They are challenged to follow relevant exam courses and engage in work experience. We are careful to build self esteem, work to develop independent young adults who are confident enough to celebrate their differences.

SOLO

"Speak Out Let Out" are small group sessions designed to help pupils know and manage their feelings, especially anger and aggression. They are led by Teaching Assistants and Care staff and overseen by a Brief Therapist. Popular weekly meetings are held in a specially decorated, attractive room. The group agree the rules so the work they do in SOLO is confidential. There are exercises like the "Rage Gauge," "Keep your cool kit," and "Anger Busters." Pupils learn to recognise triggers, remember what works to defuse aggression and use it outside, away from the SOLO room. Instead of allowing angry feelings to escalate into violent actions they can try to calm down using ideas and techniques they have invented in the group. All sessions end with a peaceful time; soft lights, calm music and relaxation stories help pupils build a happy place in their heads they can visit when every day life causes stress.