The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Curriculum Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Curriculum Policy	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

PACE shapes our curriculum because learning happens in relationship. A pupil who feels accepted, met with curiosity and held in empathy can take cognitive risks. The curriculum is planned and delivered with this in mind:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Curriculum intent

The New Walk School delivers an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum that prepares every pupil for the next stage of their education, training, employment and adult life. We do not narrow the curriculum because pupils have SEND; we adapt it. Our intent is that every pupil leaves The New Walk School with: meaningful qualifications appropriate to their ability and aspiration; functional literacy, numeracy and digital skills; strong life skills for independent or supported living; the relational and emotional regulation skills to maintain positive relationships; and a clear, supported plan for what comes next.

4. Curriculum implementation

Pupils are taught in small groups, with key stages broadly aligned to age but with flexibility to meet need. The school day balances academic learning, therapeutic input, life skills, enrichment and physical activity. Reading is prioritised across the school: every pupil is assessed for reading ability on entry, those reading below age-related expectations receive structured intervention, and there is a dedicated daily reading session.

Curriculum overview by key stage

The table below summarises subjects offered at each key stage and the typical qualification pathways. Individual pupils' pathways are agreed at admission and reviewed at every EHCP annual review.

Subject area	KS2 (7–11)	KS3 (11–14)	KS4 (14–16)	KS5 (16–19)
English	NC	NC	Entry Level / Functional Skills / GCSE	Functional Skills / GCSE re-sit / L2
Mathematics	NC	NC	Entry Level / Functional Skills / GCSE	Functional Skills / GCSE re-sit / L2
Science	NC	NC	Entry Level / GCSE Combined	Applied Science / Entry Level
PSHE & RSHE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Humanities (History, Geography, RE)	NC	NC	GCSE option / ASDAN	ASDAN / Personal Development
Computing & Digital Media	NC	NC	BTEC / Functional Skills ICT	BTEC / L2 Digital

Art & Design	NC	NC	Arts Award / GCSE	Arts Award / Portfolio
PE & Physical Activity	NC	NC	Sports Leaders / ASDAN	Healthy Living / Gym programme
Life Skills (cooking, travel, money, home)	Embedded	Embedded	ASDAN / BTEC Home Cooking	ASDAN PSD / Independent Living
Careers & Work-related learning	Introduced	Embedded	Encounters + work tasters	Supported work experience
Therapeutic curriculum (PACE-informed)	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily

5. Reading and literacy

Reading is the foundation that unlocks the rest of the curriculum. Every pupil reads aloud with a trusted adult several times each week. Pupils reading below age-related expectations receive a structured phonics or reading-fluency intervention matched to their need. Subject teachers explicitly teach the vocabulary and reading demands of their subject.

6. Personal development

Personal development is delivered through PSHE, RSHE, Citizenship, the careers programme, enrichment activities and tutor time. It includes mental health and wellbeing, online safety, healthy relationships, financial literacy, British values, equality and diversity, and preparation for the next stage of education and employment. The personal development offer meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards Part 1 and Part 2.

7. Careers

Careers education is planned across all key stages in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. Every pupil from Year 7 onwards has access to independent careers guidance. Detail is set out in the Careers Policy.

8. Assessment

Pupils are assessed on entry against standardised baseline measures and against EHCP outcomes. Progress is tracked through ongoing formative assessment, summative assessments at the end of each unit, and external accreditation at the end of each key stage. Assessment data is reported to parents at least three times a year. Detail is set out in the Assessment Policy.

9. Curriculum leadership and review

The Headteacher leads curriculum design, supported by subject leads. The curriculum is reviewed annually against pupil outcomes, destination data, EHCP outcomes met, and parent and pupil voice. Subject schemes of work are reviewed annually and updated to reflect curriculum changes and the needs of incoming pupils.

10. British values and SMSC

The curriculum actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven through every subject and is detailed in the SMSC and British Values Policy.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.