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

Teaching and Learning Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Teaching and Learning Policy	**Version**	V1
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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 is the model of the relationship in which teaching takes place at The New Walk School. Pupils who feel met, accepted and held with curiosity have the cognitive bandwidth to learn:

- 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. Our model of teaching

Teaching at The New Walk School integrates strong subject knowledge, evidence-informed pedagogy, and PACE-informed relational practice. We do not see therapy and teaching as separate; the relationship is the medium through which both happen.

4. Principles

- Plan from the pupil — every lesson begins with the pupils in the room, their starting points and their current state of regulation.
- Teach explicitly — concepts, vocabulary and skills are taught directly, modelled, practised and reviewed.
- Build schema — new learning is connected to existing knowledge, and over-learning is planned to support retention.
- Adapt, don't differentiate down — adaptation supports access while maintaining ambitious end-points.
- Use formative assessment in every lesson — circulating, questioning, retrieving, checking for understanding.
- Co-regulate before correcting — when a pupil is dysregulated, the teacher's first job is to help them regulate, not to demand the work.
- Repair routinely — when a learning moment ruptures the relationship, the teacher initiates the repair.

5. Lesson structure

A typical The New Walk School lesson includes: a connecting opener that re-establishes the relational climate; explicit teaching with worked examples; guided practice with feedback; independent practice scaffolded to the pupil; retrieval of prior learning; and a closing review that names what has been learned. Lesson timings are flexible to pupil regulation; the structure is consistent.

6. Curriculum-aligned planning

Schemes of work are developed by subject leads, sequenced to build knowledge over time, and aligned to pupils' qualification pathways. Planning identifies the disciplinary knowledge, vocabulary, common misconceptions and the assessment endpoints. Schemes are reviewed annually.

7. Reading across the curriculum

Subject teachers explicitly teach the reading demands of their subject — vocabulary, text structure, and comprehension strategies. Pupils reading below age-related expectations are supported through targeted intervention and through subject-specific scaffolds within lessons.

8. Quality assurance

Teaching is monitored through: planned observations focused on agreed development areas; lesson visits with pupil-voice questions; review of pupils' work and progress data; and pupil and family voice. Quality assurance is developmental, not punitive — feedback is specific and supports improvement.

9. Professional learning

All teaching staff receive a planned programme of professional development that includes PACE practice, subject-specific pedagogy, SEND-specific approaches, safeguarding, and assessment. New teachers are supported through structured induction; experienced teachers are supported to lead curriculum and pedagogical development.

10. Adaptive teaching for our pupils

Adaptations specific to our pupil population include: low-arousal classroom set-up; predictable routines and visual schedules; chunked instructions; sensory accommodations; processing time; co-regulation strategies built into lesson design; and explicit teaching of emotional vocabulary alongside subject vocabulary.

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.