



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**BASKERVILLE SCHOOL**

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# Teaching and Learning Policy

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## **TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY**

**Issue date:** September 2025

**Review date:** September 2026

**Headteacher:** Allan Lacey

## VISION STATEMENT

To provide outstanding educational provision where all students achieve exceptional academic and social outcomes through an inclusive, evidence-informed approach that recognises and celebrates neurodiversity while preparing them for fulfilling, independent lives.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy articulates our shared commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, informed by the latest educational research, National Autistic Society guidance, and UK government policy. It establishes a framework for consistent, high-quality practice that enables all students to thrive regardless of their starting points, learning differences, or individual needs. It should be read alongside our Curriculum, Assessment, Behaviour Support, SEND, and Neurodiversity policies.

## 2. PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Establish a consistent, evidence-based approach to teaching and learning grounded in educational research
- Provide clear guidance for staff on effective pedagogical practices for all learners, including autistic students
- Ensure all students have access to high-quality, inclusive learning experiences
- Support continuous improvement in teaching practice through evidence-informed decisions
- Clarify expectations for all members of our school community
- Provide a foundation for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education
- Embed autism understanding and neurodiversity-affirming practices throughout our provision

## 3. EVIDENCE-INFORMED APPROACH

### 3.1 Research-Based Principles

Our teaching and learning approach is informed by the latest educational research, which identifies high-impact strategies:

- **Feedback** - Providing effective, timely feedback to improve pupil learning
- **Metacognition and self-regulation** - Teaching pupils to think about their own learning
- **Oral language interventions** - Structured approaches to developing speaking and listening
- **Reading comprehension strategies** - Explicit teaching of strategies to understand texts
- **Small group tuition** - Intensive support in small groups
- **Mastery learning** - Ensuring secure understanding before progression

### 3.2 Autism-Informed Practice

Following National Autistic Society recommendations and the National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults (2021-2026), our provision recognises that:

- Seven in ten autistic children and young people said school would be better if more teachers understood autism
- All staff require autism understanding to create truly inclusive environments

- Autistic students benefit from predictable routines, clear expectations, and sensory considerations
- Communication differences should be recognised as diversity, not deficits
- Strengths-based approaches celebrate autistic students' unique contributions

## **4. OUR APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **4.1 Core Principles**

We believe that effective teaching and learning:

- Adapts to the diverse needs of all students, celebrating neurodiversity
- Builds on students' strengths while addressing barriers to learning through evidence-based interventions
- Focuses on developing both academic skills and personal development
- Involves collaboration between education professionals, students, families, and external specialists
- Is informed by robust assessment, EEF research, and evidence-based practice
- Prepares students for their next steps in education and life
- Creates predictable, calm environments that support regulation and learning
- Recognises and accommodates different communication styles and sensory needs

### **4.2 Learning Pathways**

We recognize that students follow different pathways according to their needs and learning profiles:

#### **Formal Pathway**

- Subject-based curriculum leading to appropriate qualifications and accreditation
- Emphasis on academic knowledge, skills, and understanding using high-impact strategies
- Clear progression through subject disciplines with explicit instruction
- Appropriate for students who can access subject-specific learning
- Incorporates autism-friendly adjustments such as visual supports and structured routines

#### **Semi-Formal Pathway**

- Topic-based, thematic approach with elements of subject-specific learning
- Focus on functional skills, communication, and life skills using total communication approaches
- Opportunities for accreditation where appropriate
- Suitable for students who benefit from a more integrated approach to learning
- Emphasises social skills development and emotional regulation

#### **Pre-Formal Pathway**

- Based on the engagement model with focus on exploration and experience
- Emphasis on early communication, sensory engagement, and regulation
- Personalised to individual needs and developmental stages using structured teaching methods
- Designed for students with complex needs who require a highly specialised approach
- Incorporates sensory circuits and regulation activities

Some students may follow blended pathways that combine elements of these approaches, reflecting their unique profile of strengths and needs.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **5.1 School Leadership**

- Set the vision and direction for inclusive, evidence-informed teaching and learning
- Ensure effective curriculum design and implementation based on educational research
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning using appropriate metrics
- Provide professional development opportunities, including mandatory autism training
- Create a culture that celebrates excellence, innovation, and neurodiversity
- Remove barriers to effective teaching and learning for all students

### **5.2 Teachers**

- Plan and deliver engaging, appropriately challenging lessons using EEF high-impact strategies
- Employ evidence-based teaching strategies informed by latest research
- Assess student progress and adapt teaching, accordingly, including for autistic learners
- Create positive, supportive, predictable learning environments
- Use total communication approaches and visual supports as standard practice
- Collaborate with colleagues, therapists, and families
- Engage in professional development to enhance practice, including autism understanding
- Maintain high expectations for all students while providing appropriate support

### **5.3 Learning Support Assistants**

- Support the implementation of teaching strategies, particularly for students with SEND
- Assist students in accessing learning activities using person-centered approaches
- Provide feedback to teachers on student engagement and progress
- Participate in planning and reflection with teaching staff
- Develop expertise in supporting specific learning needs, including autism
- Contribute to assessment and recording of student progress

### **5.4 Students**

- Actively engage in learning activities at their developmental level
- Take increasing responsibility for their learning as appropriate to their abilities
- Respect the rights of others to learn in their preferred ways
- Respond to feedback to improve their work
- Communicate their needs and preferences for learning using available methods
- Celebrate their achievements and progress, however small

### **5.5 Parents and Carers**

- Support their child's learning at home using consistent approaches
- Communicate regularly with school about their child's development and needs
- Participate in setting and reviewing educational targets
- Attend school events and parent/carers meetings
- Provide insights into their child's interests, strengths, and support needs
- Share effective strategies that work at home

## **6. ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

### **6.1 Planning and Preparation**

- Clear learning objectives aligned to curriculum and individual student needs
- Well-sequenced learning activities that build on prior knowledge (EEF evidence: mastery learning)
- Differentiated approaches to meet diverse learning needs, including autism considerations
- Collaborative planning between teachers and therapists where appropriate
- Consideration of physical, sensory, and communication needs
- Integration of visual supports and structure as standard practice

### **6.2 Teaching Strategies** Based on high-impact educational interventions:

- **Explicit instruction** with clear modelling, explanations, and success criteria
- **Feedback** that is specific, actionable, and timely
- **Metacognition** strategies taught explicitly to develop self-regulation
- **Oral language** development through structured speaking and listening activities
- Multisensory approaches to engage different learning styles
- Appropriate pace and chunking of information, particularly for autistic learners
- Regular checks for understanding and responsive teaching
- Strategic use of questioning to promote thinking and discussion
- Opportunities for practice, application, and consolidation
- Technology to enhance learning and communication, including AAC where needed
- Visual supports to aid understanding and promote independence

### **6.3 Learning Environment**

- Clear routines and structures to support regulation and engagement
- Appropriate sensory considerations (lighting, acoustics, visual displays, quiet spaces)
- Resources that are accessible and promote independence
- Positive behavioural support strategies consistently implemented
- Celebration of diversity, achievement, and different ways of learning
- Safe spaces for self-regulation and sensory breaks when needed
- Predictable timetables with advance notice of changes
- Autism-friendly adjustments integrated as standard practice

### **6.4 Assessment and Feedback** Following research-based guidance on effective feedback:

- Regular formative assessment integrated into teaching
- Meaningful feedback that highlights strengths and identifies specific next steps
- Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning using metacognitive strategies
- Evidence of progress captured in various forms appropriate to individual needs
- Summative assessment to measure progress over time
- Personalised targets that are challenging yet achievable
- Recognition of different ways students may demonstrate their learning

## **7. SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS**

**7.1 Communication and Interaction** Incorporating National Autistic Society guidance:

- Total communication approach incorporating speech, sign, symbols, and technology
- Structured opportunities to develop social interaction skills
- Visual supports for understanding language and expectations as standard practice
- Alternative and augmentative communication systems where needed
- Regular opportunities for collaborative learning activities
- Respect for different communication styles and preferences
- Clear, literal communication avoiding idioms and ambiguous language

**7.2 Cognition and Learning** Using evidence-based approaches:

- Appropriate curriculum pathways based on cognitive abilities and learning profiles
- Multisensory teaching approaches with explicit instruction
- Structured teaching methods (e.g., TEACCH) where beneficial
- Scaffolded learning with gradually reduced support (EEF: mastery learning)
- Opportunities to apply skills across different contexts
- Technology to support access and engagement
- Recognition of cognitive differences as diversity rather than deficits

**7.3 Social, Emotional and Mental Health** Following autism-informed approaches:

- Positive behaviour support plans based on understanding of individual needs
- Regular opportunities to develop emotional literacy and regulation
- Structured teaching of social skills and relationship building
- Predictable routines with advance preparation for changes
- Safe spaces and regulation activities readily available
- Celebration of individual and group achievements
- Recognition that challenging behaviour often communicates unmet needs

**7.4 Physical and Sensory Needs** Incorporating sensory-informed practice:

- Adapted resources and equipment to support access
- Consideration of positioning and physical comfort
- Integration of therapeutic programs into daily activities
- Sensory activities to support regulation and engagement
- Environmental adjustments to reduce sensory barriers
- Recognition of sensory differences and provision of appropriate accommodations

## **8. CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION**

### **8.1 Long-Term Planning**

- Curriculum maps showing progression across key stages
- Clear sequencing of knowledge and skills using mastery learning principles
- Balance between academic, personal, and social development
- Opportunities for enrichment and broader experiences
- Integration of autism understanding across all subjects
- Recognition of special interests as learning motivators

### **8.2 Medium-Term Planning**

- Termly or half-termly plans breaking down curriculum objectives
- Integrated approach between education and therapy
- Identification of key vocabulary and concepts with visual supports
- Cross-curricular links and application of skills

- Consideration of individual autism profiles and support needs

### **8.3 Short-Term Planning**

- Weekly and daily plans responsive to student progress
- Clear differentiation and personalisation for all learners
- Specific strategies and resources identified, including autism-specific adjustments
- Integration of Education, Health and Care Plan targets into daily activities
- Flexibility to accommodate individual needs and preferences

## **9. AUTISM-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS**

### **9.1 Mandatory Training** Following National Autistic Society recommendations:

- All staff receive comprehensive autism training delivered by qualified providers
- Annual refresher training to maintain and develop understanding
- Specialist training for staff working with autistic students
- Training includes understanding of autism as neurodivergence, not disorder
- Focus on strength-based approaches and reducing barriers

### **9.2 Environmental Adjustments**

- Quiet spaces available for regulation and sensory breaks
- Fidget toys and movement breaks permitted and encouraged
- Visual timetables and schedules displayed prominently
- Clear signage and navigation support
- Sensory-friendly lighting and acoustic considerations
- Designated calm spaces for when students feel overwhelmed

### **9.3 Communication Supports**

- Exit passes available for students who need breaks
- Clear, consistent communication methods
- Visual supports integrated into all teaching
- Social stories to prepare for changes or new experiences
- Regular check-ins to assess understanding and wellbeing
- Recognition and support for non-speaking students

## **10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **10.1 Quality Assurance Activities** Using evidence-informed approaches:

- Learning walks and lesson observations focused on inclusive practice
- Work sampling and moderation considering diverse ways of demonstrating learning
- Student progress meetings including autism-specific considerations
- Student voice activities adapted for different communication needs
- Parent/carer feedback through multiple channels
- Data analysis of progress and outcomes for all student groups
- Regular review of autism-friendly adjustments and their effectiveness

### **10.2 Professional Development** Following research-based implementation guidance:

- Regular coaching and mentoring with focus on inclusive practice
- Targeted training based on identified needs, including autism understanding
- Opportunities to observe best practice in autism-informed teaching
- Research-informed approaches to teaching and learning
- Collaborative planning and reflection
- Access to latest educational research and National Autistic Society guidance

### **10.3 Reporting and Review**

- Regular progress updates to parents/carers using accessible formats
- Annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans
- Termly assessment and target setting
- Ongoing recording of significant achievements, however small
- Celebration of progress through various means
- Recognition of different forms of progress and achievement

This policy will be implemented through:

- Comprehensive staff induction including autism awareness training
- Regular professional development activities informed by latest educational research
- Integration into monitoring and evaluation cycles
- Discussion at staff meetings and governance forums
- Partnership with National Autistic Society and local autism services
- Engagement with latest research and evidence-based practices
- Regular consultation with autistic students, families, and advocacy groups

#### **Key Implementation Priorities:**

1. Mandatory autism training for all staff (September 2025)
2. Environmental audit and adjustments (October 2025)
3. Review and update of visual supports and communication aids (November 2025)
4. Integration of high-impact strategies across all teaching (ongoing)
5. Development of autism-friendly assessment approaches (January 2026)

The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains aligned with current research, statutory requirements, National Autistic Society guidance, educational evidence, and the evolving needs of our school community.

#### **References and Evidence Base:**

- Educational research on high-impact teaching strategies
- National Autistic Society Education Report (2023)
- National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021 to 2026
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Research guidance on Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools

**Approved by:** Governing Body

**Date:** September 2025

**Headteacher:** Allan Lacey