



The Poplar Adolescent Unit
Therapeutic Education Department

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Accepted by the Management Committee:

November 2023

Review Date

September 2025

Teaching and Learning Policy

This policy is in line with the Local Authority's Policies and Procedures on Equality and Diversity. The Unit's Disability Equality Policy - Equality Duty - Accessibility Policy and Plan states a commitment to ensure that learners or staff are not discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, disability or marital status.

Our Vision

We aim to prepare young people for re-integration by identifying their individual curriculum requirements and supporting their personal, social, health and emotional needs within a safe and nurturing environment.

We aim to meet the young person's needs by:

- **Setting suitable learning challenges**

We plan our curriculum using National Curriculum programmes as the young peoples' starting point; however, we recognise that we must plan also according to individual need, as all the students are following different home school programmes, and differ in age and ability. Our short term planning is done on an individual level and differentiated to make the work accessible and enjoyable.

Appropriate challenges are set by individual learning plans, which are implemented by –

- **Carrying out an induction and evaluation**

When young people are admitted to the ward and undergo assessment, they are met by their Key Teacher who explains about the school, and asks them to complete a short set of information forms about themselves and their educational and emotional circumstances. This helps to inform academic planning and serves to introduce the young person to the rest of the team.

- **Effective liaison with the Home School**

On admission to the education centre, the home school is contacted, asking for a range of information such as attendance, grades/levels, key contacts etc.

- **Responding to young people's diverse learning needs**

Poplar Adolescent Unit is committed to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality for all its employees and users of the school facilities, and has implemented a vision statement to outline these objectives. The expectation is that all visitors and associates of this school act in an equally committed manner and observe this ethos.

We set high expectations and provide relevant opportunities for our students to achieve. As a staff group we are aware that students bring with them different experiences, interests, strengths and issues that influence the way they learn. We ensure that our planning and delivery encompasses a variety of approaches to teaching and learning to maximise accessibility for all learners.

Teachers can take specific action to respond to students' diverse needs by:

- **Creating effective learning environments**

We provide opportunities for students to use resources and software that they are familiar with, and used by many schools and establishments. Where possible we match like for like. The classrooms are set up so that students can work independently or as part of a small group. The high staff ratio gives plenty of opportunities for discussion and support. We also have appropriate space per student to meet Health and Safety guidelines in the workplace facilitating wheelchair accessibility and personal workspace.

- **Securing motivation and concentration**

The young person's motivation and concentration is often compromised by the reasons that brought them to hospital. Sometimes the effects or side effects of medication can play a part in impeding learning. A personalised timetable and close liaison with the key teacher can maximise the chances of the work being appropriately stimulating and at the right level. Our links with the clinical staff also ensure that we are kept in touch with current medication regimes and possible effects of these.

- **Providing equality of opportunity through teaching approaches**

Each young person completes a 'One Planning' style questionnaire, which is shared among staff. The information is detailed, giving indications of barriers that students are having to surmount to fully access learning. They also identify what strategies they, and staff may use to help overcome those barriers. In the first few days of admission, contact is made with the student's school to find out how they best learn in class and what their strengths and issues may be for their teachers.

- **Using appropriate assessment approaches**

A variety of assessment approaches are used currently, and more of these can be adapted for student use. Advisory teachers working for Essex County Council are there to offer support and ideas to make assessment fair, realistic and accessible to all our learners.

- **Setting targets for learning**

Target setting is an integral part of our work here. As the young people are regarded as having SEND during their stay in hospital, they are observed at work, then given individual work targets, which are set in agreement with the student. These are reviewed on a half term basis,

or whenever the young person has their CPA review. On a daily basis, IEP targets are shared on all individual session plans, and are revisited with their teachers for the student to recognise their relevance to the work that is being done.

- **Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment**

If the particular requirements of our young people are not met in the classroom, this could create barriers to effective learning. For these groups and individuals, we have access to specialist staff throughout Essex County Council. In our immediate environment we can adapt working materials to suit the learning style of the young person who might otherwise be compromised in participating. Resources can include 1:1 staff, observations, physical, academic or emotional support as needed.

Teachers can make learning and assessment most effective by:

- **Providing for those who need help with communication, language and literacy**

This provision can be met with high staff ratios, advisory specialists, and augmented communication aids where necessary. Learning and assessment tools can be provided in a visual manner, for example, to aid understanding where language processing is an issue. The teachers at Poplar have SEN backgrounds and work histories and can draw upon past experiences to help current students. For those with English as a second language, interpreters can be provided.

- **Planning, where necessary, to develop understanding through the use of all available senses and experiences**

Varied approaches to learning can be adapted to suit the preferred style of the learner. More specific needs can be tailored to the individual through use of advisory teaching and learning specialists, and bringing in of appropriate learning resources.

- **Helping students to manage their behaviour, to take part in learning effectively and safely**

It is vital from the outset to communicate our expectations in terms of behaviour in a context that the individual can understand and see relevant. A consistent approach is adopted by all staff members, down to key words or phrases that are effective, or trigger situations that may increase the student's sensitivity to unwanted patterns of behaviour. Each student brings with them educational experiences that impact on present abilities. Incidents are recorded on the Trust's on-line Datix system that is shared among the multi-disciplinary team.

- **Helping individuals manage their emotions, particularly trauma or stress, and to take part in learning**

This section is particularly relevant to our learning environment because of the reasons that bring young people here. Each student is assigned a “key teacher” who becomes familiar with the circumstances of the student. A position of mutual trust is the desirable outcome, where the young person, in conjunction with clinical staff, can be eased through periods of trauma to return to a mental state where learning can take place. Ongoing staff development with the ward and outside agencies keeps the teachers informed of current ideas and treatments for mental health issues, and this happens on a daily basis during staff handovers.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

- Regularly review performance against this teaching and learning policy
- Have a periodic review of individual performance through Observation of Teaching Learning and Attainment
- Identify areas for individual and service-wide development through both formal and informal procedures, i.e. whole team “Inset days”.
- Continue individual professional development on a planned, regular and recorded basis, through 1:1 manager supervisions each half-term.
- Work as part of a team to share good practice, with one another and the wider ward, and teaching and learning community.
- Provide professional guidance, where appropriate, for all staff
- Promote this and other policies at all times when working with others and / or representing the Service or Council