



Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy October 2023

1. Introduction

All learners at Oaks Rise have SEND. As set out in our Admissions Policy, potential pupils may be offered a place at Oaks Rise if they meet all the following criteria:

- They identify as neurodivergent and may be formally diagnosed as autistic.
- Have the academic ability to follow an age-appropriate curriculum in the format offered at Oaks Rise, whilst recognising that many pupils will have gaps in their learning and as such may not currently be working at age-related expectations.
- Are considered to be someone who would benefit from attending Oaks Rise and for whose profile of needs the learning, physical, sensory, social and emotional environment are appropriate.
- Are currently able, or will soon be ready, to work in a small group environment.
- Are unlikely to display behaviour at Oaks Rise which would have a detrimental impact on other pupils or themselves. This includes children who may attempt to flee when overwhelmed and children who express their anxieties physically. Where a potential pupil has previously, or is currently, displaying challenging behaviour, the Admissions Team will consider the following: the extent to which this behaviour is likely to be due to unmet needs; the extent to which the Admissions Team is satisfied that similar behaviour would not occur during a placement at the setting; and the risks associated with the possibility of such behaviour arising at the setting, giving weight to the needs of existing pupils.
- Are someone whose attendance would not cause unreasonable detriment to existing pupils.
- Want to join Oaks Rise and become part of the community.

This policy has been written in line with the expectations and guidelines of the SEN Code of Practice (2015). Oaks Rise will fully comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Oaks Rise policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Community Guidelines
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Oaks Rise aims to provide specific and bespoke learning opportunities for all attendees.

When planning, our Learning Facilitators work together with learners to create suitable educational and developmental challenges and respond to personal interests and diverse learning needs.

Staff take account of the special educational needs presented by the learners and make provision to support individuals and groups of learners through their planning, training and knowledge of individual children and young people (CYP). This will ensure that all CYP are able to participate in appropriate activities and learning.

2. Definition of SEND

At Oaks Rise, we use the definition of special educational needs and disability from the SEND Code of Practice (2015):

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- *has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or*
- *has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.*

The SEND Code of Practice defines disability as per the Equality Act 2010:

a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

This policy complies with the statutory requirement laid out in the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

3. Education Inclusion

Oaks Rise offers a safe and secure environment underpinned by our belief in, and respect for, learners' inclusion and autonomy. We aim to help our learners achieve their full potential through the removal of barriers to learning and participation. We want all learners to understand that they are a valued member of our community.

Through individual curricular provision, we respect the fact that learners:

- Have different educational and behavioural needs and aspirations;
- May require some or all of the following;
 - consistent but flexible teaching approaches
 - holistic support

- concrete learning opportunities
- modified language to support their learning
- Acquire, assimilate and communicate information at different rates;
- Will benefit from a range of different learning experiences.

We are committed to:

- empowering our students to understand their needs, identify when they need support or breaks and act on this;
- implementing good practice that promotes and sustains the wellbeing of all learners;
- delivering an individual approach that enables all attendees to learn and develop;
- creating opportunities for interaction, social inclusion, independence, and self-reflection;
- training and supporting staff, parents, carers and stakeholders so they can best meet the needs of all learners;
- communicating clearly and appropriately with our community;
- providing a physical environment that is responsive to the sensory needs of students;
- working with other professionals to meet the needs of students and their families;
- promoting opportunities for all;
- celebrating each individual.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, directors, attendees, parents, carers, volunteers, Advisory Team members and visiting professionals who work with learners at Oaks Rise.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

We believe that it is the responsibility of all associated with the provision to assist in meeting the individual needs of our learners to the best of our abilities.

Our Education Coordinator has day to day responsibility for the implantation of this policy and the coordination of specific provision to support students with SEND. Georgia Rowe, Oaks Rise Director, has strategic responsibility for the delivery and updating of the policy.

6. Assessment and monitoring

Pre-admission

During the admissions process, before a learner joins Oaks Rise, our Learning Facilitators and at least one Oaks Rise Director read all relevant background documents². If a decision is made to progress, a meeting is arranged between an Oaks Rise Learning Facilitator, the potential learner and their parent or carer to solicit further information. This helps to identify

² Diagnosis and other professional reports, school reports, Individual Learning Plans etc.

their areas of interest as well as barriers and existing trauma. Our Learning Facilitators use this information to provide a starting point to inspire and support each attendee. At least one trial session is then arranged where the learner will spend time at Oaks Rise interacting with other learners and staff. Again, this provides a further opportunity to understand the needs of the learner, and ensure that subsequent education and well-being support is tailored to their needs.

Post-admission

Each learner has a Personal Profile that is drawn up by the Learning Facilitators with input from the learner, parents, carers, and professionals. Short-term targets are recorded on the Learner Pack together with expected outcomes. Progress is tracked weekly in the three main Oaks Rise curriculum areas - academics, wellbeing, and collaboration. Targets are reviewed as needed and at least termly, when progress reports are issued.

However, most assessment for learning will be formative, with learners encouraged to take an active role in this process. This will take the form of:

- Meeting with Education Coordinator to discuss progress.
- Talking through any challenges, ideas, or discoveries with learning facilitators.
- Self-reflection around challenges, ideas, and discoveries.
- Peer discussions about challenges, ideas, and discoveries (where appropriate).

Many CYP at Oaks Rise are supported by an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) which will be followed and respected, to the extent possible within the nature of our provision, and to the extent that's been agreed with parents and carers, local authorities and schools.

7. Supporting needs

The following four broad areas give an overview of the range of needs of the learners at Oaks Rise and the approaches we put in place to support them.

We are aware that learners often have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change on a day-to-day basis and over time. The support that we provide to an individual will always be delivered using a strengths-based approach.

7.1 Communication and interaction

Neurodivergent learners may have ongoing differences and difficulties with social interaction. They may also experience differences with language, and communication, which can impact on relationships. We appreciate that our learners will have a range of communication styles. Learners will be encouraged to communicate in the ways that make them feel comfortable and staff will respect and appreciate the individual communication needs of each of our learners.

7.2 Cognition and learning

Support for specific learning difficulties (SpLD), affecting one or more specific aspects of learning will be provided in line with the strengths and needs of each CYP. Examples include dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

7.3 Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties

All learners who attend Oaks Rise will have been identified as neurodivergent and some may have had traumatising experiences of their educational environment due to their academic, social, emotional and sensory needs not being met, alongside other adverse childhood experiences.

These factors can impact on how our learners communicate and express themselves, receive and process information, experience their environment, manage relationships, trust others, and regulate emotions. All staff recognise that these factors mean that our learners have huge amounts of challenges to navigate and that sometimes this leads to dysregulated behaviour. When behaviour becomes dysregulated, it is a sign of distress and overwhelm, not a reflection of who the learner is. Supporting the learner to regulate involves both environmental adaptations and learner strategies and the balance between these two must be right for the individual learner.

We are aware that the mental health of our learners will have been impacted adversely. Therefore, it is our aim at Oaks Rise to understand the whole learner, so that we avoid re-traumatising them. To achieve this, we work in a holistic way to support and develop each learner's academic, emotional, social and behavioural wellbeing so that we achieve the best outcomes for each individual. Our goal is to create happy, confident, fulfilled young people who understand themselves, recognise their own unique strengths and challenges, and are ready for their next steps.

7.4 Sensory and/or physical needs

Oaks Rise respects the differing sensory needs of each child and encourages them to make use of our flexible and inclusive environment to better understand their own profiles.

We aim to make our learning environment as accessible as possible to the needs of our individual learners. This may mean that the requirements of the space change over time.

As standard we will ensure:

- Learners have access to a range of sensory toys and devices.
- Learners are encouraged to use space however they need (provided they do so safely).
- Learners have space to and are encouraged to stim whenever they want to (provided this is safe for those around them - where it is deemed unsafe we will work

with the learner to develop new ways of stimming that are safe within the space and feel positive for them).

- Learners will have access to a low-sensory space that they can retreat to and utilise whenever they need.

8. Review Date

Last Review Date: August 2025

Next Review Date: August 2026