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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

## 2.0 Definition of Special Educational needs

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Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Children have learning difficulties if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or
  - have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

*SEN Code Of Practice (2015)*

### 3.0 AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

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Our aims are:

- To ensure that all students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to their needs
- To provide an individual curriculum appropriate to the needs, ability and interests of each student.
- To ensure that all students take as full a part as possible in all school activities
- To ensure that parents/carers of all students are kept fully informed of their child's progress and attainment
- To ensure that all students are involved, where practicable, in decisions affecting their future provision

Whilst many factors contribute to the range of difficulties experienced by our students, we believe that much can be done to overcome them or lessen their effect, by parents, teachers and students working together.

### 4.0 WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US

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- I want to put it in a bottle and distribute it everywhere in the world. Yes, of course, they can have some interesting and eventful days at the school. But, what you find there, no, it is nothing like Bedlam, no, it is a peaceful, relaxed, slow, human atmosphere, with every person's inner state and difficulties with what is going on around them, being taken fully into account in the outlook and doings of the staff. What they do is so shatteringly simple, it is bewildering that most other services - everywhere - struggle to attain or practice this outlook, and these young people are at Higford as a result. Finally, an island of understanding for them.  
- *Dave Hewitt, Co-founder of the Intensive Interaction approach.*
- The amazing staff have made him into the wonderful young man he is today! P sat through the whole school celebration. Not too long back, he could only be brought in for a very few moments. You can see how happy he is. His dad, Mike and I feel so blessed that Peter went to Higford school. Both the school and the care home staff have gone over and above what we'd ever expected of them.  
- *Parent.*
- "We can't fault the school at all. School is a great weight off our shoulders, especially as it remained open during the lockdown."  
- *Parent*
- The progress he made through all your persistence is amazing and there are not enough words to express our gratitude. Our only regret is he didn't arrive at Higford earlier.  
- *Parent*
- We have seen such a change in T the last year, and it has been fantastic. A real credit to the skilled staff and support at Higford.  
- *Parent.*
- Here is somewhere, where he is valued and can build his self-esteem interacting with staff and pupils. The joined up work of the clinical and teaching staff is very impressive.  
- *Parent*
- We have been hugely impressed in how quickly [our son] settled at Higford, how excellent the education, care and facilities are. He has made significant progress in all areas. We feel with this setup he will continue to develop and gain the skills required for transition at aged 19 including accessing and "living in" the outside world.  
- *Parent*

- We particularly value the school's holistic approach - the clinical team work closely with teachers and support staff, but they also liaise with outside organisations, e.g. our child's social worker and sensory therapist, to ensure everyone is kept in the loop and providing a consistent approach.  
- Parent
- What has made school effective for our son is the willingness of staff to offer him the warmth and unconditional acceptance to build relationships that allow him to progress. Our son has already been to two special schools, but this is the first that has been able to meet all of his needs and not try to fit him into someone else's framework.  
- Parent
- An extremely dedicated team of staff across education and care ensure the highest level of support to myself and my child.  
- Parent
- Effective sensory strategies, informed by a deep understanding of each individual student, contribute to the high levels of emotional well-being.  
- Autism Accreditation awarding body report.

## 5.0 WHAT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS DOES OPTIONS HIGFORD CATER FOR?

Options Higford caters for students with autistic spectrum condition, challenging behaviour and additional complex difficulties.

There are currently 28 students on role between 8 and 19.

The students have difficulties in all four areas of need as defined by the SEN Code of Practice:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs

All students have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

## 6.0 WHAT DO WE PROVIDE AND HOW IS IT DELIVERED?

We use the principles of the National Autistic Society (NAS) SPELL approach in order to maximise access to the whole curriculum as well as being trauma and mental health informed.

- **Structure:** through using principles from TEACCH to organise the environment, use of personal schedules and systematic strategies to work. *So creating a highly structured and predictable environment.*
- **Positive:** approaches and expectations through sensitive but persistent intervention based upon thorough individual assessment, including Intensive Interaction and play-based approaches. *Supporting children to develop the capacity for self-regulation; a 'no matter what' approach.*
- **Empathy:** based upon respect for personal experience to inform what motivates and what may frighten, preoccupy or distress each individual. *Relationships, connection and belonging are central to our school ethos; one size does not fit all and we are adaptive to the needs and requirements of each child.*
- **Low arousal:** based upon individual sensory profiles and the use of PRICE for the positive management of potentially challenging behaviour. *Creating an environment of psychological and physical safety is fundamental; behaviour is viewed as communication and with curiosity.*

- Links: through a thematic approach to the curriculum and a multi-disciplinary team-work approach across the service and with families / significant others. *Whole school ethos that has a common language, consistency and understanding, based upon neuro-science.*

All students are taught within small groups with a high staffing ratio. All students follow an adaptive and flexible curriculum which utilises the skills and knowledge of school staff.

Students' needs are met through a range of approaches including principles of Intensive Interaction, a total communication approach and sensory diets. We also use mental health/ trauma informed approaches throughout as well.

Students also have access to a range of facilities, onsite and offsite, where relevant, including the sensory hub, care farm, weekly Forest School and community facilities.

## **7.0 PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS**

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At Options Higford we recognise the importance of working with other professionals.

Onsite we have a clinical team which consists of:

- Clinical psychologist
- Speech and language Therapists
- Occupational Therapist
- Assistant psychologist
- Nurse.

The clinical team is a crucial part of Options Higford and make regular assessments of students, using these to create individualised profiles. They also work with both the education and care teams to monitor individual provision and set linked and appropriate targets.

## **8.0 PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

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Options Higford firmly believes that partnership with parents plays a key role in promoting a culture of co-operation between parents, schools, Local Authorities and others. This is important in enabling our students to achieve their potential.

Parents should be supported so as to be able and empowered to:

- recognise and fulfill their responsibilities as parents and play an active and valued role in their child's education
- have knowledge of their child's entitlement within the SEN framework
- make their views known about how their child is educated
- have access to information, advice and support during assessment and any related decision-making processes about special education provision

When students attend Options Higford on a residential basis or are "looked after" by the local authorities and living away from home, every effort is made to ensure that parents are encouraged to continue to play an active role in their children's education.

## **9.0 STUDENT VIEWS**

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Options Higford involves students in their education and decision making as much as possible.

Each student has a 'My Views' document which is completed by students, where possible, and other advocates including parents, class staff, the clinical team and key workers. This document sets out the student's views about key aspects of their time at Higford including what they do and do not enjoy. A student council has also been set up to provide students with a voice and there is one class representative per class. The clinical team use talking mats to encourage students to share views on a range of matters.

## 10.0 HOW IS PROVISION EVALUATED

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To ensure provision is appropriate we continually monitor and evaluate approaches through:

- IEP target data using MAPP.
- Progress against engagement steps.
- EHCP reviews.
- School development plan
- Company governance.
- Reports by professionals.

## 11.0 PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

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The Post 16 curriculum focuses on developing life skills, social skills, community access and functional literacy and numeracy. Students working in Post 16 also work towards the ASDAN Personal Progress and Personal and Social Development qualifications.

The aim of this life skills based curriculum is to prepare students for adulthood and develop independence. Throughout their time in Post 16 regular transition planning meetings take place to organise future provisions and ensure the students' needs and view will be met and heard.

## 12.0 WHAT TRAINING IS PROVIDED FOR STAFF

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All staff undertake a two-week induction prior to beginning their role at Options Higford.

This induction includes:

- Support in understanding lesson preparation and planning
- Positive Behaviour Support via PRICE training
- Awareness of Autism and of Autism Specific strategies via SPELL training
  - Copies of key policies and procedures and knowledge of where all policies are located for reference
  - Safeguarding

Ongoing staff training is also completed in a range of areas including support to implement a range of approaches, awareness of new policies and procedures, health and safety, safeguarding as well as individualised professional development.

## 13.0 LA LOCAL OFFER

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Although the students come from a range of local authorities, Options Higford is based in the Shropshire local authority.

For their local offer, which sets out how to access services, the pathway and processes your child, young person, or family might travel through you can visit their website at:  
<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/local-offer/>

## 14.0 COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Concerns will be dealt with under the terms of our Complaints Policy, which is published on our website.