

Dear Parent,

We warmly welcome you and your child to St Thomas More Catholic Academy. We understand what a stressful time transition to High school can be for both children and parents and we want to make the transition as smooth and as happy as possible. With this in mind we have generated a number of frequently asked questions and answers for you. The list is not exhaustive but we feel it may help to settle your mind about our daily practices with pupils with Special Educational Needs.

As a school SENco I am passionate about Special Educational Needs and at all times strive to help young people to access the curriculum in a meaningful way. This process starts right at your child's primary school where links are made as early as year 5. Once we have received confirmation that your child will be joining us, a transition programme is put in place. This can be more or less intensive, depending on your child's particular needs. Below are a variety of questions and answers. I have tried to imagine the types of questions that I would want to ask if I was a prospect parent. However, anything that isn't addressed please do contact us. We do hope that your child will be very happy at our Academy and we will do everything possible to ensure that they are able to make sustained progress regardless of their ability. Please note, this also incorporates our SEND Policy.

NB. The SENco at St Thomas More Catholic Academy is **Mrs Diane Lovatt**

### **Overall Statement**

As an academy we feel that 'every teacher is a teacher of Special Educational Needs'. Therefore, we aim to ensure that if a child has a Special Educational Need, they are offered the same high quality teaching as their peers. This is evident in the way that each teacher differentiates their curriculum subject to match the needs of each learner. It is also evident in the high quality marking of the pupils' work, whatever their ability.

### ***What kind of Special Educational Need does St Thomas More Catholic Academy cater for?***

St Thomas More Catholic Academy provides education for students ranging from age 11 to age 18 (yrs 7 – 13). Many of these pupils have areas of difficulty in the areas outline below and outlined in the New Code of Practice:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and/or Physical Difficulties

### ***How does St Thomas More Catholic Academy know if children need extra help?***

We identify and assess students with SEND using information from the following sources:

- ❖ concerns are raised by parents/carers, teachers, or the pupil's previous school

- ❖ Our school data reveals that there is lack of progress
- ❖ basic literacy levels
- ❖ Basic numeracy levels
- ❖ Spelling ages
- ❖ Staff referrals
- ❖ Outside agency referrals
- ❖ Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – Equality Duty
- ❖ There is a change in the pupil's behaviour
- ❖ We also have strong links with our Primary schools. All information about your child will be transferred to the Academy with them and meetings between the Academy SENco and Primary SENco will take place to ensure a smooth transition. This will include year 6 NC levels.

## **What should I do if I think my child may have Special Educational Needs?**

- ❖ If you have concerns, you are able to contact: Mrs Lovatt (the SENco) or Mrs Templeton (Assistant SENco) on: (01782) 882941. Alternatively, the email addresses are as follows: Mrs Lovatt – [dwarren2@stmca.org.uk](mailto:dwarren2@stmca.org.uk) or Mrs Templeton – [ktempleton@stmca.org.uk](mailto:ktempleton@stmca.org.uk)

## **2. How will I know how St Thomas More Catholic Academy supports my child?**

St Thomas More Catholic Academy's arrangements for assessing and reviewing the progress of pupils with SEN is done in several ways:

- ❖ Each pupil on the SEN register will have a Personal Passport. This replaces the former IEP system that you may have had in your child's primary school. Your child's Personal Passport will be differentiated to match your child's individual needs and will be done with your child at the centre of the process. Personal targets will be set with you and your child. This may include additional general support by the teacher or teaching assistant in class, or use of particular resources (eg. a laptop or coloured overlays).
- ❖ If a pupil has needs related to more specific areas of their education or social skills, such as spelling, handwriting, numeracy and literacy skills etc. then the pupil may be placed in a small focus group. This is something that would be discussed with you the parent. The length of time of the intervention will vary according to need but will generally be between 10 and 12 weeks. The interventions will be regularly reviewed by all involved to ascertain the effectiveness of the provision and to inform future planning. These interventions will be recorded on a Provision Map). This is a record of the interventions, timings and cost of the intervention. The impact of the intervention is recorded separately on an interventions sheet. If you have any queries related to the interventions please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Lovatt, or Mrs Templeton.
- ❖ By carrying out the **Assess, Plan, Do and Review** process as set out in the New Code of Practice (2014). These Pupil Progress Meetings are held three times a year. The first meeting is an opportunity to meet all your child's subject teachers about general progress. You will also be able to meet the school SENco and Assistant SENco for a more focussed discussion about your child's individual special needs. The second and third meeting will take place separately. It is an opportunity to meet with your child's teacher, the Assistant SENco or the SENco. At this meeting you will be able to discuss your child's passport, targets and the results of any interventions that

have taken place. This shared discussion may highlight any potential problems in order for further support to be planned.

- ❖ Occasionally a pupil may need more expert support from an outside agency such as an Autistic Spectrum Disorder Specialist, Dyslexic Specialist etc. We always ensure that before we recommend any outside agency, parents are fully informed of our intentions and permission is obtained. Once this has taken place, referral forms are then completed and forwarded to the most appropriate agency. After a series of assessments, a programme of support is usually put into place that will target your child's particular area of need.

### **3. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's needs?**

- ❖ Your child's Personal Passport will be shared with your child's subject teachers. This is to inform them of any difficulties that your child has in the classroom. Once the subject teacher understands the needs of your child, they will differentiate their lessons to remove any barriers to learning and to enable your child to access the curriculum more easily.

- ❖ A teaching assistant may be allocated to work with your child in a 1-1 or small focus group to target more specific needs.

- ❖ If appropriate, specialist equipment may be given to your child eg. coloured overlays, pen/pencils grips or easy to use scissors.

### **4. How will I know how my child is doing?**

- ❖ You will be able to discuss your child's progress at the three Progress Meetings.

- ❖ If you have concerns about your child's educational needs that need addressing immediately, appointments can be made with Mrs Lovatt or Mrs Templeton by contacting them by phone (01782) 882941.

- ❖ Your child's updated Personal Passport will be sent home each term. It is very important to us that your child is supported by both school and home. It is also very important to us that your child is fully involved in all decisions that are made about their education.

## **5. How will you help me to support my child's learning?**

- ❖ Your child's subject teacher may suggest additional ways of supporting your child's learning through a note in their planner, at Progress Meetings or by arranging a meeting with you.
- ❖ Mrs Lovatt (SENco) and Mrs Templeton (Ass/SENco) may meet with you to discuss how to support your child. This would normally follow on from when a child has been assessed or discussed at the beginning/end of a period of intervention.
- ❖ Your child's Head of Year may meet with you discuss strategies to use if there are problems with your child's behaviour.
- ❖ If your child is part of our Nurture Group, you will be invited to our Parents' network meetings which take place once per term. These network meetings are a good means of meeting other parents and sharing information. They are also the perfect opportunity to talk to the people who work with your child to discuss how they are progressing and how you can further help at home.
- ❖ Outside agencies or the Educational Psychologist may suggest advice or programmes of study that can be used at home.

## **6. What support will there be for my child's overall well-being?**

The school offers a wide variety of pastoral support for pupils who are encountering emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

These include:

- ❖ Members of staff such as the Head of Year, form teacher, teaching assistants, SENco, are readily available for pupils who wish to discuss issues and concerns.
- ❖ The Academy's Mentor (Mrs Stacey) runs wellbeing groups targeting social skills, self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and anger management.
- ❖ Pupils who find lunchtimes a struggle are able to join the Reconciliation Centre run by Mrs Templeton and a number of experienced teaching assistants. If necessary, a quiet eating area is provided.
- ❖ Pupils with medical needs are also able to access this area. It is located on the ground floor and is easily accessible. There are also facilities on this floor for a disabled toilet.
- ❖ If a pupil has a medical need then a detailed Care Plan is compiled by the school nurse in consultation with parents/carers and the Academy SENco. With permission, this is discussed with all staff who are involved with the pupil.
- ❖ Where necessary and in agreement with parents/carers, medicines are administered in school where a signed Medi-Careplan is in place. Anti-biotics may be given in some circumstances on discussion with the office staff and on completion of a medication form.

## **7. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the school?**

At times it may be necessary to consult with outside agencies to receive their more specialised expertise.

The agencies used by the school include:

- ❖ SEND services – Mrs Marj Povey (Lead for SEND Services) – tel: 01782 233621

- ❖ Child Protection Advisors – Mrs Jamie Stubbs (Assistant Principal) tel: 01782 882913
- ❖ Educational Psychologist – Dr Valerie Legg – email: ed.psychology.admin@stoke.gov.uk
- ❖ CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- ❖ AAP (Attendance Advisory Practitioner previously known as Educational Welfare Officers)
- ❖ PASS (Physical & Sensory Service) to support pupils with hearing/visual Impairment – Mr Will Potts (HI) tel: 01782 234464 Mrs Jasmine Chadwick (VI) tel: 01782 232511
- ❖ Inclusion Team – Mrs Sue Francis (Senior SEND Advisor) – tel: 01782 232530
- ❖ Social Services - Tel: 01782 235100
- ❖ Children's Therapy Team (Speech & Language/Occupational Therapy) (0300) 123 1161
- ❖ School Mentor – Mrs Patricia Stacey – tel: 01782 882942
- ❖ School Nurse Service – tel: 0300 1240362

## **8. What training are the staff supporting children and young people with SEND had or are having?**

All staff who work with SEN take part in regular training related to SEND.

These have included sessions on:

- ❖ How to support pupils with a diagnosis of dyslexia
- ❖ How to support pupils on the autistic spectrum
- ❖ How to support pupils with behavioural difficulties
- ❖ How to support children with sensory issues
- ❖ The school is supported by the Speech and Language team
- ❖ The school also employs several teaching assistants who have received extra training, enabling them to deliver more specialised support

## **9. How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom including school trips?**

Activities and school trips are available to all pupils regardless of their Special Educational Needs.

- ❖ Risk assessments are carried out and procedures are put in place to enable all children to participate.
- ❖ If a health and safety risk assessment suggests that an intensive level of 1:1 support is required, an LSP may also be asked to accompany the child during the activity in addition to the usual school staff.

## **10. How accessible is the school environment?**

As a school we are happy to discuss individual access requirements.

Facilities we have at present include:

- ❖ A lift is installed in the main body of the school to make the site accessible to all. This leaves only a few classrooms that would be unavailable to a wheelchair user.
- ❖ toilets have been adapted for disabled users.
- ❖ Double doors are in place in many parts of the building.
- ❖ For our Visually Impaired pupils, we have access to a variety of resources to ensure that they are able to access the curriculum. Some of these include: enlarged IT keyboards and Ipads that link to each classroom etc.
- ❖ We are actively planning further improvements to make the school more accessible and have an up to date [Accessibility Plan](#).

## **11. How will the school prepare and support my child when joining St Thomas More Catholic Academy or transferring to a new school?**

St Thomas More Catholic Academy understands what a stressful time moving schools can be.

Therefore, many strategies are in place to enable your child's transition to run as smoothly as possible.

These include on entry:-

- ❖ A planned programme of visits in the summer term prior to the September start. This includes a visit with parents/carers to become familiar with the school site and to explain the various facilities available; visits with teachers from your child's primary school and several visits to the Nurture Club (if your child is part of this) \*see Nurture Club Heading
- ❖ Parent/carers are invited to a formal meeting at the school led by the Head Teacher and Head of Year 7 so that they know what to expect and are encouraged to share any concerns with the school.
- ❖ Our SENco (Mrs Lovatt) and Assistant SENco (Mrs Templeton) visit all children with Special Educational Needs in their primary setting. Where concerns are raised, Mrs Templeton or Mrs Lovatt may visit the setting and meet with parents to discuss any issues or concerns. In

some circumstances, individual arrangements may be tailored for starting school such as shorter hours.

- ❖ Mrs Lovatt meets the SENcos from the MAC Primary Schools on a termly basis to share information regarding SEN pupils.
- ❖ Opportunities to work with local primary schools are actively encouraged so that children are familiar with them (e.g. French taster sessions, Maths taster sessions, English taster sessions etc)
- ❖ The child's Primary school will forward your child's records to us. Where there are concerns the primary SENco will be contacted by phone.

## **12. How are the school's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?**

- ❖ The SEN budget is allocated each financial year. The money is used to provide additional support or resources dependant on an individual's needs.
- ❖ Further support or resources may be allocated to your child following assessments by school staff or outside agencies (e.g. SEND services).
- ❖ Funding may be used to buy in specialist support (e.g. Dyslexic assessment/tutor)
- ❖ Individual Pupil Premium payments are also used to support a pupil's learning. The money from Pupil Premium may be used in many ways, ranging from employing specialist staff to running breakfast clubs etc.

## **13. Who can I contact for further information?**

If you wish to discuss your child's educational needs or are unhappy about something regarding your child's, schooling please contact one of the following:

- ❖ Mrs Lovatt (SENco) Tel: 01782 882941/882914
- ❖ Mrs Templeton (Ass SENco) 01782 882941
- ❖ Miss Nuttall (Head of Year 7) 01782 882900
- ❖ Mrs Staton (Head of KS3) 01782 882912

Appointments can also be made with any of these staff through the school Office.  
Tele: 01782 882900

**I hope this has gone some way to answering any queries you may have. However, please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have further questions. We are always happy to help.**

**Mrs Diane Lovatt (SENco)**