

INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents/Carers,

We warmly welcome you and your child to St Thomas More Catholic Academy. We understand what a stressful time transition to High Academy 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 Academy 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 Academy 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 Academy
- Our Academy data reveals that there is lack of progress
- Standardised tests
- Staff referrals
- Outside agency referrals/recommendations
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – Equality Duty
- There is a change in the pupil's behaviour
- We also have strong links with our Primary Academies. All information about your child will be transferred to the Academy and meetings between the Academy SENco and Primary SENco will take place to ensure a smooth transition. This will include year 6 NC levels.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy is a fully inclusive academy and most of the Academy's students follow a highly differentiated National Curriculum. The Academy places students in appropriate teaching groups (via data from their primary Academy and other tests). All of the Academy's teaching and educational support staff have been given training to enable them to provide high quality teaching and learning for students regardless of SEN status.

Teaching staff have been provided with a toolkit that incorporates SEN resources in order to provide Quality First Teaching for those students with SEN and this will be reviewed annually. The Academy operates an open door policy whereby teaching staff can visit the SENco for guidance should they require it. Staff members regularly have the opportunity to access specialist training on SEN.

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

If you have concerns about your child, 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 – dlovatt@stmca.org.uk or Mrs Templeton – ktempleton@stmca.org.uk

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 has a Personal Passport. This replaces the former IEP system that you may have had in your child's primary Academy. Your child's Personal Passport will be differentiated to match your child's individual needs and will be compiled 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 impact of the intervention. If you have any queries related to the interventions please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Lovatt, or Mrs Templeton.

We follow 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 Academy 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 Senco or the Assistant 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.

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 specialist scissors etc.

How will I know how my child is progressing?

- 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 or email: dlovatt@stmca.org.uk or ktempleton@stmca.org.uk
- 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 the Academy and home. It is also very important to us that your child is fully involved in all decisions that are made about their education.
- You will be invited to Parents' Evening where you can discuss your child's progress with their individual subject teachers
- A data and progress report will be sent home prior to Parent's Evening

What support will there be for my child's overall well-being?

St Thomas More Catholic Academy 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 Heads of Key stage, Head of Year, Key stage 3 and 4 support workers, form teachers, teaching assistants and SENco, are readily available for pupils who wish to discuss issues and concerns
- 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 required, we are happy to provide a quiet eating area
- 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
- The Academy has access to a number of agencies for pupils with emotional and social problems
- If a pupil has a medical need then a detailed Care Plan is compiled by the Academy 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 Academy 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

What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the Academy?

At times it may be necessary to consult with outside agencies to receive their more specialised expertise. The agencies used by the Academy 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) -please paste this link into your search engine
http://media.wix.com/ugd/9e1af9_28e04bf4fd7349c9acf5791d2a722268.pdf
- The Dove Service (Bereavement Counselling and Support) 01782 683155
- 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
- Academy Nurse Service – tel: 0300 1240362

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 (The Academy will have Dyslexia Friendly level 1 Status by December 2016)
- How to support pupils on the autistic spectrum
- How to support pupils with behavioural difficulties
- How to support children with sensory issues
- Using multi-sensory approaches to teaching
- The Academy is supported by the VI (Visually impaired) and HI (Hearing impaired) team who have delivered training on how to provide support for pupils with hearing and visual impairments
- The Academy also employs several teaching assistants who have received extra training, enabling them to deliver more specialised support in Nurture and other specialist intervention

How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom including Academy trips?

Activities and Academy trips are available to all pupils regardless of their Special Educational Needs. We actively encourage our SEN pupils to join our drama groups, student voice panels, to become prefects, to join in assembly items etc.

- 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 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 Academy staff

How accessible is the Academy environment?

As an Academy we are happy to discuss individual access requirements. Facilities we have at present include:

- A lift is installed in the main body of the Academy 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 l pads that link to each classroom etc.
- We are actively planning further improvements to make the Academy more accessible and have an up to date Accessibility Plan. ([Hyperlink to plan](#)).

How will the Academy prepare and support my child when joining St Thomas More Catholic Academy?

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 spring and summer term prior to the September start. This includes a visit with parents/carers to become familiar with the Academy site and to explain the various facilities available; visits with teachers from your child's primary Academy and several visits to the Nurture Club (if your child is part of this)
- Parent/carers are invited to a formal meeting at the Academy 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 staff.

- 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 Lovatt or Mrs Templeton may visit the setting and meet with parents to discuss any issues or concerns. In some circumstances, individual arrangements may be tailored for starting Academy such as shorter hours.
- Mrs Lovatt meets the SENcos from the MAC Primary Academies on a termly basis to share information regarding SEN pupils.
- Opportunities to work with local primary Academies 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 and an updated Pupil Passport. Where there are further concerns the primary SENco will be contacted by phone.

How are the Academy's resources allocated and matched to students' 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 Academy 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 and buying specialist resources

The Nurture Group

The Nurture Group began in September 2012 and has proven to be extremely successful. Students are recommended by their primary schools to go into the Nurture Group if they have emotional difficulties or if they would find the transition from Primary to Secondary school difficult. The Nurture Group provides a caring and supportive environment for students who attend each day for an hour. During the Nurture session, qualified Learning Support Practitioners provide extra Literacy and Numeracy sessions, life skills lessons and focus on Emotional Literacy. A network meeting is held for parents of the Nurture Group three times per year so that parents are able to track their child's progress and see their work in more detail.

How the Governing Body involves other bodies including Health and Social services, LA support and voluntary organisations in meeting the needs of students with SEN and their families

The governing body welcomes other organisations to provide information, advice and guidance on students with SEN. If an external body or agency is already involved with a particular student then they will also have the opportunity to attend any consultations or reviews concerning that student.

The Academy will recommend any other agencies or bodies to the family where necessary via Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection, Annual Reviews and Parents' Evenings.

Mrs Jane Johnson is the Local Academy Representative who is linked to the SEN department and holds regular meetings and consultations with both the SENco and Head Teacher regarding SEN matters. She is there to ensure that provision is robust and that it is having an impact on the progress of the SEN children in the Academy.

Support Services for parents/carers

The Stoke on Trent Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) provide a range of information from education law to related law on disability, health and social care to help parents/carers, children and young people in making informed choices enabling them to play an active role in relation to education decisions. They can offer support if you have concerns with or without an Education Health Care Plan in place for the child or young person. They can be contacted by telephone, letter or email:

Tel: 0178 234701

Email: iass@stoke.gov.uk

Stoke on Trent Information, Advice and Support Service
The Mount Education Support Centre
Mount Avenue
Penkhull
Stoke on Trent
ST4 7JU

Who can I contact for further information?

If you wish to discuss your child's Special Educational Needs or other aspects of their provision at St Thomas More Catholic Academy, please contact one of the following:

- Mrs Lovatt (SENco) Tel: 01782 882941 (for SEN issues)
- Mrs Templeton (Ass SENco) Tel: 01782 882941 (for SEN issues)
- Miss Nuttall (Head of Year 7) Tel: 01782 882900 (for Pastoral issues)
- Mr Millington (Head of year 8) Tel: 01782 882900 (for Pastoral issues)
- Mrs Powell (Head of year 9) Tel: 01782 882900 (for Pastoral issues)
- Mrs Richards (Head of year 10) Tel: 01782 882900 (for Pastoral issues)
- Mr Harvey (Head of year 10) Tel: 01782 882900 (for Pastoral issues)
- Mrs Staton (Head of KS3) Tel: 01782 882912 (for Pastoral issues)
- Ms Whitmore (Head of KS4) Tel: 01782 882912 (for Pastoral issues)

Appointments can also be made with any of these staff through the Academy Office.

Tel: 01782 882900

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

Mrs Diane Lovatt (SENco)