

## Red Balloon SEND Policy

### **Legislation and Guidance that inform this document**

- Children and Families Act (2014)
- SEND Code of Practice (2014 - revised 2015)
- Equality Act (2010)

### **Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one**

- Admissions
- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Disability and Discrimination
- Exclusions

### **Statement of Intent**

We are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum both wellbeing and academic, thus ensuring the best possible progress for all of our students whatever their needs or abilities.

### **Responsibility for Implementation**

Each centre head, supported by her / his trustees must ensure that their centre effectively meets the needs of all students referred and that centre practice complies with the requirements of the revised SEND Code of Practice. It is expected that a member of staff other than the head will be given day to day responsibilities for ensuring the requirements of this policy are adhered to.

## **Definitions of SEND**

Not all pupils with disabilities have special educational needs and not all pupils with SEND meet the definition of disability but we aim to meet the needs of each student according to their needs as identified by themselves, parents and carers, former providers, commissioning agents and ourselves once students are placed at Red Balloon. Students have 'Special Educational Needs' if they have, 'a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them': students with a disability have special educational needs if they have any difficulty in accessing education and if they need any special educational provision to be made for them, that is anything that is additional to or different from what is normally available in schools in the area '. A student may be classed as SEND if he or she requires special educational provision in order to access the curriculum and/or achieve his or her full potential. This provision will include learning difficulties, extending exceptional abilities (Higher Ability Pupils) and those with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)'. Four broad areas of need are described within the revised Code of Practice. Our intention is always to look beyond labels and not to fit young people into categories, but we do recognise the four broad areas of need:

- 1 communication and interaction,
- 2 cognition and learning,
- 3 social, emotional and mental health,
- 4 sensory and/or physical needs.

Whilst not all of our students have been identified as 'SEND', each one might be described as having 'special educational needs' as their needs are unable to be met in a mainstream provision, hence the referral to a Red Balloon Centre.

## **Red Balloon's capacity to work effectively with SEND students**

Neither our staff (in terms of their training) nor our buildings and resources make Red Balloon Centres suitable for students with extensive sensory or physical needs, or those with significant communication and /or interaction needs. We do, however, have real

strengths in supporting students who experience certain emotional and mental health difficulties, and, by the bespoke nature of all Red Balloon provision, we are able to meet certain needs in the area cognition and learning.

We will always consider referrals for students with EHC (education, health and care) plans, but will only admit a student if we, together with the student and her / his parent(s) / carer(s), believe it possible to meet the needs identified within the plan. It is also essential to state (see admissions policy) that a key component of our provision is that we provide a safe and supportive community for **every** student. The issue of individual rights as set against the rights of the broader community is a complex one. It is, however, the case that we will not allow any student to access or remain in a Red Balloon placement if they consistently refuse to respect the rights of other members of the community. We acknowledge that this may curtail our capacity to work with the full range of SEMH students, but we will always protect the community that forms the bedrock of our provision.

### **Red Balloon aims in working with SEND students:**

We aim to:

- ensure that we are fully aware of the needs of all students and that we devise individual plans to ensure those needs are met;
- ensure that students with special educational needs and disabilities are able to join in with all the activities available to the best of their capability;
- support all students to develop positive wellbeing;
- support all students to make the best possible academic progress;
- ensure parents/carers are informed of their child's special needs and that there is effective communication between parents/carers and Red Balloon to ensure that

learners express their views and are fully involved in decisions which affect their education;

- promote effective partnership with and the involvement of outside agencies when appropriate;
- ensure SEND students are provided with appropriate support to enable them to 'transition' either back to mainstream school or into education, employment or training (adulthood).

**In line with the recommendations of the revised Code of Practice we seek to (NB these principles match the practice that we have always pursued at Red Balloon):**

*Ensure students are central to decisions about their education*

The SEND Code of Practice places the child or young person at the centre of decision-making around their education. In practice, this means that students need to be actively involved in setting targets and evaluating their progress towards them. It also means they need to actively identify what is important to them now and in the future.

*Effectively utilise the expertise of parents / carers*

Parents and carers have the most intimate knowledge regarding their child, so the code recommends that schools work in partnership with them, involving them in decisions and making use of their knowledge.

To ensure this happens, we need to remember that many educational terms are incomprehensible to those outside teaching and that some processes teachers take for granted may be a mystery to parents and carers. If the latter are not given the tools and information they need, in an accessible way, they cannot contribute effectively.

### Use a graduated approach

SEND support should arise from a four-part cycle, known as the graduated approach, through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised. This will lead to a growing understanding of students' needs and what supports them in making good progress. This approach perfectly matches the action planning cycle identified in our assessment policy (plan, do, evaluate, do again).

It is essential to allow sufficient time for the action (do) 'element' to become embedded before reviewing / evaluating it.

### Practise in line with the shift from viewing difficulties in self management of behaviour from BESD (behaviour, emotional, and social difficulties) to SEMH (social, emotional and mental health difficulties)

The revised Code of Practice changed the way young people who struggle to manage their behaviour and emotions are referred to. Where before students were referred to as having "behavioural, emotional and social difficulties", in the new code this became "social, emotional and mental health needs" (SEMH). The change in wording asks practitioners to look past a student's behaviour itself to the underlying causes and focus on what that behaviour is communicating.

Again this matches Red Balloon philosophy and practice. We aim to listen, to understand and to support young people to make appropriate decisions for themselves.

### Understand the need to identify individual need rather than categorise

"The purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil in a category".

This means that practitioners should consider all of a student's needs, not just those with which they have been labelled, alongside their strengths. Support should be targeted wherever it is most needed at any one time, remembering that students' needs may cut across more than one area and may change with time.

## **Centre Practice**

Each centre will identify a person responsible for ensuring that practice is effective and meets the requirements of the revised Code of Practice:

S/he will:

- ensure that daily practice complies with the requirements of this policy;
- liaise with and support staff to ensure student needs are well met;
- coordinate provision for children with special educational needs;
- maintain the centre's SEND register and oversee the tracking information for all students with special educational needs;
- maintain and update resources for SEND;
- ensure that staff have access to appropriate resources;
- liaise with parents/ carers of students with special educational needs;
- attend/chair the EHC Plan reviews
- contribute to the training of all staff;
- liaise with external agencies including medical support services and social services;
- support the statutory Assessment process for students who may need an EHCP;
- ensure EHCPs are up to date and fit for purpose;
- ensure that appropriate access arrangements are in place for public examinations;
- ensure that appropriate data sharing and protection guidelines are adhered to regarding SEND information;

- ensure that student confidentiality is respected at all times;
- ensure that students are supported in making their own decisions, and encouraged to express their own views and opinions
- ensure student voice is heard and represented.

It is the responsibility of all teaching staff to negotiate provision with students in a manner that ensures any special needs are well met. All staff will endeavour to ensure that all students have full access to the available curriculum (academic, wellbeing and any additional activities).

It is in the very nature of Red Balloon provision that we treat young people as special and having individual needs because we negotiate provision with them and their parents / carers. Students are not slotted in to pre set timetables, rather a bespoke timetable is created for each young person at the time of admission. Thus we would not consider practice with SEND students to be demonstrably different from that with their peers, rather we see all students as individuals and aim to meet their needs regardless of how those needs have been identified prior to referral.

Policy reviewed and updated (March 2019) by Bob Sproson, Director of Education - for annual review.