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**Focus 1st Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment!**

Working in Partnership with North London Schools & Local Authorities since 2000

Accredited Independent School Status 2014 (Registration N0. 308/6003)

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Focus Inception

*Focus 1st Academy was set up in the year 2000 using European Social Fund to provide education and training and to-date has defied all the odds and was awarded the Independent School status in August 2014. This enables us to work in partnership with schools and local authorities to provide an alternative method of education for 14 to 16 year olds. Our student referrals are some of the most vulnerable young people and it is our duty to ensure that they are equipped with the appropriate skills and qualifications to ensure full participation within the modern workplace. Our team of professionals consisting of tutors, tutor assistance, pastoral support staff and mentors to nurture the students ensuring our work-based-learning approach alongside a variety of techniques are utilised and compatible to ensure the prevention of social and economic exclusion prior to adulthood which is underpinned through the subjects delivered whilst in classroom environment as well as on an individual basis.*

Focus Ethos

*Our programme fulfils the need of students who are disengaged from academic studies and may be exhibiting behavioural problems as a result. Our hands-on approach to learning creates an inspirational motivation for students wishing to pursue a career via the vocational route. The students are taught methods on how to improve their social skills in preparation for work/apprenticeship schemes and/or further education by learning in real-life situations and participating in sports, art and drama to express emotions. We believe that all individuals have a certain quality, which is sometimes concealed due to lack of confidence, mixed sentiments or disabilities. As such, recognising and coming to terms with barriers is a small part of the conflict, we are certain that all individuals are aware of their own weaknesses; the most vital part is engaging with professionals and adhere to individual training plans set which in turn prepares our students for economic and social integration into adulthood.*

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy

Introduction

Focus 1st Academy *primary’s* guiding principle is one of Inclusion, and we aim to provide equality of opportunity with Quality First Teaching for all our students. This includes appropriate differentiation for individual students, high quality resources, and effective use of additional adult support. We aim to identify and break down possible barriers to learning so that all our students experience success. This means treating all children as individuals and ensuring they have the required provision to achieve the best possible progress.

This Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) policy details how we ensure that the needs of all our students with SENDs are met. When carrying out our duties towards these children, we have regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 Years (2015).

Principles

• We value all children in our school equally.   
• All students are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum, which is differentiated to meet their individual needs and abilities.  
• All children are entitled to experience success.   
• All children are entitled to have their particular needs recognised and addressed.  
• All children should be helped to reach their full potential – we have high expectations for all.

Aims

• To ensure that we take the views of the child into account when planning and evaluating their SEND provision.  
• To develop and maintain partnerships and high levels of engagement with families.   
• To raise the aspirations of, and expectations for, all students with SEND.   
• To ensure that every child has his or her individual needs recognised and addressed through Quality First Teaching and effective additional support.  
• To ensure that all students have equal access to a broad, balanced curriculum which is differentiated to meet individual needs and abilities.   
• To ensure that students with SEND engage in all the activities of the school alongside students who do not have SEND.

This policy will contribute to achieving these aims by ensuring that provision for students with SEND is a matter for the whole school, and is a part of the continuous cycle of assessment and review.

Definition of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

A child or young person has a SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability that 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 educational facilities of a kind generally provided for students of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions (SEND Code of Practice: pp 15-16)

Children are not regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

Identification and Assessment of students with Special Educational Needs (If not already identified)

The identification of SEND is built into our overall approach to monitoring the progress and development of all students. This allows us to identify those who are making less than expected progress at an early stage. Inadequate progress might be that which:

• has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of their peers starting from the same baseline   
• fails to match or better their previous rate of progress   
• fails to close the attainment gap between the child and their peers

We are aware that a number of factors may impact on a child’s progress and attainment, including having English as an additional language, attendance and punctuality, and family circumstances. Therefore, we do not immediately assume that a child has a Special Educational Need; our first response to inadequate progress is high quality teaching targeting areas of weakness.

Most students will have their needs met through Quality First Teaching in the classroom. This may include appropriate differentiation of learning tasks, adaptations to the curriculum and learning environment, the provision of additional practical or visual resources, and time limited interventions. We focus on early intervention to ensure ‘gaps’ are targeted and intervention is put in place at the earliest possible opportunity.

Where progress continues to be less than expected, the teacher will complete a Record of Concern and work collaboratively with the SENDCO to assess whether the pupil has a SEND. The SENDCO will observe the pupil in class, and gather information from the child, their family, and the class teacher in order to develop a good understanding of areas of strength and difficulty, the child’s and family’s concerns and aspirations, the agreed outcomes sought for the child, and how to achieve them.

Special Educational Needs can be categorised under four broad areas:

• Communication and Interaction   
• Cognition and Learning  
• Social, Emotional and Mental Health  
• Sensory and/or Physical Needs

We recognise that, in practice, individual children often have needs that cut across more than one of these areas and that their needs may change over time. Our purpose is not to ‘label’ a child, but to work out what action the school needs to take to best support them. We consider the needs of the child holistically, and ensure that support is focused on individual need and personal outcomes rather than classification or label.

Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the students in their class, including those who have or may have SENDs, and who access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.

SEN Support

When a pupil is identified as having a SEND, we take prompt action to remove barriers to learning and put effective Special Educational Needs provision in place – SEN Support. Quality First Teaching remains our first response in relation to the identification of SEND, but we also ensure that the child receives high quality additional support and interventions carefully matched to their needs. We adopt the Graduated Approach and four-part cycle of ‘**assess–plan–do-review’** as recommended in the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

In successive cycles, provision is refined or revised depending on how effective it has been in achieving the agreed outcomes. Where a pupil continues to make less than expected progress despite the school’s best efforts, and with the agreement of the child’s parents/carers, we will involve appropriate specialists and outreach services.

SEN Support children will continue to have short-term targets, which the SENDCO and class teachers will support them to work towards. Progression towards these targets will be assessed at termly review meetings, and targets adapted as needed. These targets will be copied and given to the pupil’s family, the pupil themselves, and all teaching staff who support them. Families, class teachers and children, as well as any other professionals who are involved with the pupil, will be strongly encouraged to attend review meetings.

Some students will make accelerated progress and cease to require SEN Support following a period of targeted intervention, and these students will then be removed from the school’s SEND Register; however, we will continue to monitor their progress closely to ensure it is being maintained.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans)

A small number of children with the most complex needs may need the support of an EHC Plan to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes. If we believe that a pupil’s needs require provision and resourcing over and above that which we make available to our SEND students from delegated funding, we will request that the Local Authority conduct an assessment of the child’s needs, ensuring that the child and their family is central at every stage of the assessment process.

How Focus 1st Academy adapts the Curriculum and Learning Environment for students with SEND

It is the responsibility of teachers to make the appropriate adaptations to the curriculum and learning environment, so that students with SEND are able to access learning opportunities and experience success alongside their peers. Our teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of the SEND students in their classes and know a range of strategies that can be utilised to support them. They are able to draw on the expertise of the SENDCO, outreach teachers and professionals from other external agencies for advice as needed.

Support for students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties.

Some students’ Special Educational Needs relate to social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Whilst some children display their difficulties through challenging or disruptive behaviour, others can become withdrawn or isolated; these difficulties may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, or disorders including Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or Attachment Disorder. We address the needs of these students with individual or group interventions, liaising with relevant outreach services and health professionals as appropriate.

Specialist Provision, Equipment and Facilities

If a child needs specialist equipment due to physical or medical needs, the SENDCO will liaise with the relevant professionals (e.g. Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Educational Psychologist) to secure the equipment needed, and to ensure any necessary training for staff is undertaken.

How Focus 1st Academy evaluates the Effectiveness of its Provision for students with SEND

Intervention programmes are time-limited and the progress of children taking part is carefully monitored. If there is no evidence that an intervention is effective, we will either adapt the intervention to more closely meet the child’s needs, or we will plan a different type of provision.

How Focus 1st Academy assesses and reviews the Progress of students with SEND

We have robust tracking systems for monitoring the progress of all our students, including those with SEND. Pupil progress meetings are held termly, and are attended by the class teacher and SENDCO, who work together to identify slow progress and plan how best to support the child in the future.

The ‘assess-plan-do-review’ cycle ensures that we match provision closely to each child’s needs and that we respond quickly to any evidence of inadequate progress. The progress of SEND students in relation to the objectives in their Statement of Special Educational Needs/ outcomes in their EHC Plan is reviewed annually or if needed, an early annual review. Objectives/ outcomes are broken down into smaller steps, which are recorded as targets on the child’s Individual Education Plan, and reviewed termly. It is very important to us that the child and family are actively involved in all steps of this process.

Admissions

Students with SEND are admitted to the school on the same basis as any other child.

Roles and Responsibilities

Provision for students with SENDs and disability is a matter for the school as a whole, in line with the 2015 SEND code of practice. However, some key individuals and groups have particular areas of responsibility:

The Headteacher:

• to manage all aspects of the school’s work, including provision for students with SEND

• to work closely with the school’s SENDCO.

• to seek out and share best practice with the LA and other schools

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCO)

• to develop a clear strategic direction for SEND and to oversee the day-to-day operation of the school’s SEND policy.  
• to coordinate and develop high quality provision to meet the needs of students with SEND.   
• to support and advise teachers about differentiated teaching methods appropriate for individual students with SENDs.   
• to work with teachers to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and the progress made by students with SEND, and to liaise with the relevant Designated Teacher where a “looked after child” has SEND.   
• to work in partnership with families/carers of students with SEND to develop and review effective support for their child.   
• to advise on the deployment of the school’s resources.  
• to liaise with professionals from outside agencies, such as educational psychologists, outreach services, health and social care professionals, and independent and voluntary bodies, ensuring that appropriate referrals are made and strategies are implemented.   
• to liaise with referring schools to ensure that students make smooth transitions between school placements.   
• to work with the Headteacher to ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010), with regards to reasonable adjustment and access arrangements to promote the inclusion of students with SEND in the school community.  
• to ensure that the records of students with SEND are maintained and kept up to date.  
• to coordinate the effective deployment learning support assistants, providing support and training as needed to contribute to the in-service professional development of staff in relation to SEND.

Teachers

• to provide Quality First Teaching for all the students in their class, adapting teaching and learning environment as appropriate.   
• to be accountable for the progress of all their students, including those who receive additional support from learning support assistants and specialist teachers.   
• to work with the SENDCO to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and the progress made by students with SENDs.

Learning Support Assistants

• to support students with their learning under the direction of the class teacher and/or the SENDCO, implementing strategies recommended by the teacher, SENDCO or professionals from external agencies.   
• to develop the independence of the students with whom they work.   
• to provide feedback to the SENDCO on the progress of the students with whom they work in order to inform future planning and assessment.

Arrangements for Partnership with Parents

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents and families, since they hold key information and have knowledge and experience that contributes to a shared view of a child's needs and how to best support them. All parents of students with SENDs will be treated as partners, and supported to play an active and valued role in their child’s education.

We will always tell parents when their child is receiving help for their SEND, and will involve them fully in planning and reviewing any SEND provision. A child’s class teacher will work closely with parents/ families at all stages in their child’s education, and if families have concerns their first port of call should be the class teacher.

Pupil Participation/Voice

Students and young people with SENDs have a unique knowledge of their own needs and circumstances, and often have their own views about what sort of help they would like to help them make the most of their education. They will be encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes, including the setting and evaluation of targets. We are fully committed to developing more person-centred ways of working to make it easier for our SEND students to express their views.

Links with other Agencies and Voluntary Organisations.

External support services play an important part in helping the school identify, assess and make provision for students with SENDs. Other agencies and outreach services that the school works with include:

• Speech and Language Therapy service   
• Language Outreach Advisory Service   
• Occupational Therapy service   
• Motivation speakers through ‘Holla’  
• CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)   
• Virtual School for Looked After Children

• Social Care services

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