



Cherry Tree  
EDUCATION

# CHERRY TREE SCHOOL CURRICULUM INTENT POLICY

DATE AGREED / REVIEWED: SEPTEMBER 2017, SEPTEMBER 2018, SEPTEMBER 2019, SEPTEMBER 2020, SEPTEMBER 2021

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2022

HEADTEACHER SIGNATURE:

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR SIGNATURE:

ALL STAFF MUST HAVE ACCESS TO THIS POLICY, AND SIGN TO CONFIRM THAT THEY HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND WILL ADHERE TO ITS CONTENTS.

# Cherry Tree Curriculum Intent Policy

## Introduction

Square pegs do not fit into round holes so why keep trying the same? For some children, the traditional classroom setting does not work and can create even further barriers to their learning. This can often become a revolving door which adds to the loss of crucial real education time for the pupil. Cherry Tree is a detached building in a quiet residential area and has a warm homely feel and can cater for up to 10 pupils. The rooms are spacious and comfortable, and pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their school. The property also has a large safe garden area with working spaces where various 'hands on' projects can be carried out e.g. gardening and upcycling. At Cherry Tree our aim is to provide an excellent education for all our pupils. Our commitment for an engaging and bespoke curriculum is rooted in a desire to bring out the best in all pupils and prepare them for success in life. Our data gathering is constantly evolving to ensure we capture the personal achievements and personal development steps pupils take so they can celebrate their progression. Recognising positive change highlights and encourages their personal growth, self-esteem and individuality. For pupils who need an integrated plan to allow them time to settle into school life, a variety of environments can be accessed including classrooms without walls using the spacious outdoors of either the local beach or the Kent countryside. In our experience, pupils who have a history of sporadic education respond well when a variety of these learning environments are available. Through this flexible and adaptable approach, pupils have the time and space to discover their strengths and the way they learn best, which in turn creates the best possible environment 'fit' for the pupil to achieve their potential. We intend to ensure that our pupils are ready for the move to post 16 education or employment, with the ability to show resilience and the competence to interact with peers within society post 16 and beyond.

## The Working Memory Challenge

The focus of our whole school curriculum intent is to ensure that all pupils have a balanced, rounded and appropriate education, which meets their individual needs, ensuring it remains flexible to meet their ongoing mental health challenges. There are many mental health difficulties that our pupils have to learn to manage and or live with that affect everything they do, every day of their lives. These difficulties include depression, severe levels of anxiety, PTSD, self-harming, complex trauma, attachment disorders, ASD and many other learning difficulties. Severe levels of anxiety can overtake and consume our pupils on a daily basis not only linked to various diagnosis, but also when they are presented with new and stressful life situations they need to navigate their way through. When young people are under the influence of stress, trauma and or high levels of anxiety, the memory will often be working at a lower level than that of normal memory functioning. One part of the body affected by anxiety and stress is the nervous system, which plays a primary role in basic functions like memory and learning. As a result, persistent anxiety and memory loss can be overly affected. Working memory, or the short term memory, is critical for solving problems effectively and for managing chunks of information in the 'now'. There is a plethora of evidence which shows that young people with elevated anxiety are either unable to complete task, or take a long time to shift from one cognitive set to another during working memory tasks e.g. listening to a sequence of events in a story while trying to understand what the story means. When the working memory is not working properly, it will often present as the inability to complete tasks properly, difficulty concentrating, inability to multi task and often, errors are made. Our pupils often present with these difficulties in their lessons and so our challenge is to enable pupils to develop and move into new subjects and chunks of learning, while acknowledging that they may not be able to recall their previous learning on a regular

basis. As a school we balance the need for overlearning with the need to ensure pupils do not get 'bored' by constantly revisiting information or topics. This also presents the challenge for Cherry Tree to constantly evolve ways to ensure accurate, reliable and valid assessments methods are in place to measure individual pupils progress and achievements, which takes their working memory difficulties into account.

### **Meeting Individual Needs**

To ensure the individual needs of Cherry Tree pupils are met we will:

- provide for individual needs; responding to age, aptitude and additional educational needs
- provide access, at an appropriate level, to a relevant curriculum
- promote learning and personal growth and development within the context of the extremely complex lives the pupils have so far experienced
- meet the needs of young people, promoting care and respect and expecting high standards in all aspects of school life which continues into their home life
- prepare pupils for their adult and working life both with skills and knowledge but most importantly with their personal development and independence skills

The focus on meeting individual needs is based on the context of each pupil's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum set within developing positive relationships and improving behaviour.

### **Moving on when ready**

Some pupils need more time than others to catch up, work through their learning barriers and to be ready to engage in bigger groups and / or mainstream schools. However, some pupils may be ready to move on faster than others. To ensure that Cherry Tree continues to be the right provision for pupils, discussions will take place at every PEP and EHCP review to identify and start planning any future potential moves. This will not only ensure that there is a smooth transition plan in place but that everyone including the child, is involved in the decision making about their future.

All individual Curriculum Intents are available on request and can be accessed via the 'Our Curriculum' section on the website.

**This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and or the  
Management Committee**