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Statement of Purpose and Function



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1. Aim

Our vision is to create an environment where diversity is valued and embraced and which is free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment for all our pupils, employees and volunteers.

It is our responsibility to help make sure High Close School is an inclusive and considerate place to work.

High Close abides by and adheres to the Children's and Families Act 2014 and the Education Act September 2011 for non-maintained special schools in England.

2. What is High Close School and who does it cater for?

High Close is a non-maintained Co-educational Residential and Day Special School catering for young people who have Special Educational Needs arising from Social, Emotional and Mental Health Issues (SEMH) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). The range of additional specific complex needs with which the school is working is broad and includes young people with the following individual and comorbid needs:

- ADHD/ADD
- High-functioning Autistic Spectrum Conditions
- Attachment Disorders
- Conduct Disorders
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Alcohol Related Neurological Disorder
- Mental Health issues
- ODD
- Speech and Language difficulties
- Social Interaction difficulties
- Sensory Impairment

We also work with a number of adopted and fostered young people, young people under Special Guardianship Orders and children in Local Authority care.

We are unable to support:

- Students with primary speech and language needs
- Students with significant criminal involvement
- Students involved with significant substance misuse
- Students with significant or persistent levels of violence
- Students with a history of arson
- Students with complex physical needs
- Students whose behaviour is likely to significantly impact negatively on fellow members of our school community, for example by increasing anxiety in other students
- Students with learning needs that require bespoke provision
- Students presenting significant suicidal risk
- Students presenting high risk behaviours (e.g. significant levels of absconding, significant self-harm)
- Students who are unable to access Therapeutic Crisis Intervention.
- Students with demand avoidant behaviours that will prevent them from accessing the curriculum and TCI

The school is part of the Barnardo's Organisation and is situated in the town of Wokingham, Berkshire.

The school promotes social inclusion and aims to give each young person the opportunity to develop in such a way that when they leave the school they will have the social skills to be a successful participant in society.

High Close has the Department for Education approval to take up to 94 young people aged from 7 to 18 years. We can provide residential provision for young people post-16 to support them accessing further education opportunities. However, we do not have post-16 education provision on site.

All pupils should have an EHCP (Education & Health Care Plan); draft ECHPs may be considered by negotiation regarding a timetable of completion.

The school admits pupils on 38-week placements and operates on the normal three-term system. Residential placements are weekly boarding, term time only (Monday morning to Friday afternoon). It is imperative that all pupils have an alternative care base at all times but especially for these half terms, weekends and during holiday periods.

The pupils who are placed at High Close will have experienced significant difficulty and disadvantage in mainstream education or other specialist provision mainly due to their complex needs. These difficulties may or may not also contribute to family tensions that could benefit from residential respite and the additional work completed by residential staff to support home relationships and development of skills via the waking day curriculum including relationship building. Some of the pupils placed at the school may have suffered abusive experiences in their past. The effects of these experiences may have had serious consequences on their ability to function in an appropriate manner and may impact on their ability to interact appropriately with others.

The consequences of these early experiences can be overwhelming and often result in feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem, which create a sense of failure. In many cases the young people have very poor emotional maturity and find it difficult to share in activities with other pupils. Many of the pupils placed at the school are desperate for reassurance but are reluctant to accept any emotional attachment. Pupils may also be very vulnerable to sexual, criminal, or other forms of exploitation.

To benefit from a placement at High Close pupils need to recognise their inappropriate behaviour and, through the support given to them, develop more positive ways of expressing their feelings and gradually develop more effective coping strategies through the framework of Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. Pupils will be supported through academic and social experiences which aim to help them to feel safe, make informed choices and take responsibility for their actions now and in the future. Working in partnership with parents and carers is key to the success of the placements for our young people.

High Close School is a safe school but not a secure school¹.

3. Meeting the Needs

Each pupil is treated as an individual with their own specific needs at High Close School. High Close School has a high staff to pupil ratio for both Care and Education.

The majority of the pupils placed at the school will need considerable adult or multi-agency support. There are regular reviews of a pupil's progress as required and where appropriate, namely; multi-agency planning meetings, Statutory Annual Reviews and Child in Care Reviews and Personal Education Plans as per statutory Guidance. These meetings take place at the school or via Microsoft Teams and the appropriate individuals are invited to attend and

¹ 12.7. No school restricts the liberty of any child as a matter of routine or provides any form of secure accommodation (NMS Residential Special Schools April 2015)

pupils are encouraged to participate. Where a pupil is causing concern, additional meetings might also be called in order to help find solutions, review objectives and/or set new targets.

On occasion, following consultation with the Local Authority, additional support may be requested in order to sustain a pupil's place at the school. This could be in the short or long term but will always be under review.

We are also mindful of individual needs regarding culture, religion and background. We ensure all needs are taken into account including dietary requirements and preferences through promotion of choice, inclusion, tolerance, celebration and education.

4. Referrals and Admissions

Referrals are usually initiated by either the Education Department or the Social Care Department of the Local Authority seeking a placement. There is an expectation that the Local Education Authority take the lead role in the referral. The first contact can be by telephone or by the submission of documentation relating to the young person to the referrals email address referrals@highclose.org.uk. The school is unable to accept referrals direct from parents, carers or other individuals outside of the placing Local Authority.

The Senior Leadership Team need to be in receipt of relevant documentation before a pupil can be considered for a place at the school. The documentation, which the Senior Leadership Team requires is:

- the EHCP
- recent educational psychologist reports
- current levels of educational attainment (e.g. SATs, standardised tests, progress and attainment against Age-Related Expectations)
- most recent education report
- social history of the young person, including family composition
- Safeguarding information
- any relevant Social Care involvement
- most recent Child In Care/PEP reports where relevant
- medical conditions and the need for any specific input (including any reports from professionals/consultants involved)
- details and description of any relevant behaviour patterns, including details of any exclusions and suspensions
- any other relevant professional reports

The Senior Leadership Team will not consider referrals for a placement without all the relevant information for the young person being referred.

Visitors and potential pupils to High Close will meet the senior staff, teachers and care staff and be able to look around the school and to ask questions.

In order to ensure appropriate placement at High Close, visits to our school may be combined with visits by our senior staff to the current school or placement and/or home.

If the school decide they may be able to meet need, then at least two taster days will be arranged and for potential residential pupils at least one overnight stay will also be arranged. Taster days will not be able to proceed without all relevant consent forms.

The Senior Leadership Team will then take the decision as to whether or not a placement can be offered to the Authority. A start date will be negotiated with parents/carers and the Local Authority and an Admissions Meeting arranged. Confirmation of acceptance of the offer letter must be received from the Local authority before the start

of any placement. Parents/carers and or social workers must attend an admissions meetings either before or on the young person's start date.

An informal Induction Programme to familiarise each young person with the premises, the location, and the routines of the school is commenced upon arrival. The programme is monitored by staff and the progress made is evaluated continuously. In addition, we may conduct a full range of assessments to build a detailed profile of the young person and to identify any areas of need not identified in the referral documentation. In circumstances where assessment evidence identifies additional needs not previously identified then an emergency annual review may be called to consider whether the school remains able to meet need or any additional support which is required to continue to meet need.

Throughout this process the emphasis is on the particular needs of the pupil and if the school can meet these needs and how we can provide an education and care provision which will enable them to overcome the difficulties or experiences which have necessitated them being placed at the school.

High Close does not provide emergency placements, however, may on occasion provide emergency respite to day pupils where there are safeguarding concerns. Local Authorities will be expected to fund emergency respite and provide appropriate information to the residential units to ensure they can care for the young person appropriately. An emergency admissions meeting will need to be carried out as soon as practicable and the Local Authority would be expected to attend alongside any other relevant professionals. Emergency respite for existing pupils will only be a short-term measure to ensure the safety of the young person and the Local Authority will be required to ensure a long-term plan is in place or a residential place is requested for the young person. Individual and group impact risk assessments will be completed to ascertain whether the school can offer an emergency respite place.

5. The Environment

The school is situated in 7 acres of grounds within the Berkshire town of Wokingham. The location provides easy access by road, train and bus. There are many places of interest nearby and within easy travelling distance.

The school buildings provide excellent educational and pastoral resources for all our pupils. The school also provides excellent residential accommodation in purpose-built houses which safely cater for groups of young people with varying needs.

6. Education

High Close delivers not only academic education through the school day but also social and emotional education and support for residential and day pupils. A holistic and multi-disciplinary approach is taken with regard to pupils' specific difficulties. High Close employs specialists, consultants and therapists to address these. The school operates a waking day care curriculum for residents, which means that pupils are constantly being guided and supported in achieving their specific individual goals and targets through identified work, discussion, role modelling and activities with staff.

The first task on arrival in school is to assist the pupils' access to learning and to motivate them in the classroom situation. To achieve this class groups are kept to maximum of 8 pupils. Teaching tasks are differentiated according to individual needs. Some young people at High Close have an Individual Support Worker which is negotiated with the Local Authority.

The school aims to create an environment where each pupil is supported to ensure they achieve in their education as far as their abilities will allow.

The Curriculum is followed and differentiated to meet the needs of the individual pupils. This ensures that they are not placed at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers in mainstream schools.

Pupils may be placed in groups that are not based on school age but dependent on their learning and special needs. In these classes pupils may follow a more differentiated curriculum for their educational needs to be met and additional staffing may be provided to facilitate this. This is often identified at the referral stage via the EHCP.

Upon transition to KS3 year 7 pupils are taught by their form tutor for approximately 50 % of their timetable. This continues in year 8 with approximately 30 % of the timetable taught by the form tutor.

In the Primary school, there is a Nurture Group for lower KS2 pupils to support them in accessing the basic demands of school.

Pupils are entered for specific external examinations where appropriate; GCSE, BTEC, Entry Level, Functional Skills, Level 1 and 2 qualifications and others. Importance is placed upon Personal Social and Health Education and Relationships and Sex Education throughout the school there is a robust programme of Careers Education, links with local colleges and Work Experience, as well as wider Preparation for Adult Life at Key Stage 4.

There are also vast opportunities to develop skills outside of traditional classroom learning such as via Forest Schools High Close talent shows and Master Chef competitions.

7. Care Provision including residential

An Individual Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment and an Individual Health Plan is prepared for each pupil. Key workers (residential pupils) and link workers (day pupils) are allocated to each young person on admission and work with young people and their families and carers to identify individual targets which are linked to their ECHP, any other presenting issue that they need particular support with and for residential pupils, from ongoing assessment of their specific presenting needs throughout the waking day. An 'Independence' programme is designed to support in preparing young people for the outside world and when they leave High Close School. Residential and care staff work closely with education staff and the therapies team to ensure that there is effective communication and consistency of approach within our waking day curriculum. The pupil independence grid is in use across the care and education provision and embeds knowledge and skills through staged and repeated learning and complements educational learning.

Night cover is provided within the units by residential staff with a senior member of staff providing additional support on an 'On Call' basis. CCTV is installed to cover communal corridor areas of the residential units and the school employs waking night staff to monitor the cameras which ensures that pupils can be provided with support during the night if needed.

There is a Family Resource Team which is available to families and pupils throughout term time and holiday time.

The school employs an Independent Visitor agency to provide external scrutiny for the residential units. Independent Visitors have free, regular access to the school and provide reports to the governing body. The visitor has responsibility to visit all residential units every half term. They are truly independent and are available to listen to pupils and staff confidentially, without prejudice. Barnardo's South East region has its own Children's Rights Officer who is also available to pupils.

Young people in residential units also have access to an Independent Person through monthly visits and through a monitored email service where they have the opportunity to access independent support and advocacy for any concerns they have.

The care governor also visits the residential provision 3 times per term (focus on each residential unit once per term). The care governor is also sent the independent visitor and independent person reports for oversight.

8. Behaviour Management

The pupils at High Close School can often exhibit oppositional and challenging behaviour, which at times can result in emotional and physical outbursts. This may require some measure of physical intervention.

All staff are trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, (TCI). TCI is a Behaviour Management package accredited by BILD (British Institute for Learning Difficulties) which aims to create a trauma-sensitive environment where children and adults are safe and feel safe.

All intervention is consistently and appropriately applied by all staff, all holds are in keeping with the guidelines issued under the Children's Act (1989) and Department for Education (February 2014) 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools' and the 'Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies'. Heavy emphasis is placed on early intervention, personal responsibility and de-escalation within the TCI system through

- Pro-actively preventing and/or de-escalating potential crisis situations with children
- Managing a crisis situation in a therapeutic manner, and, if necessary, intervene physically in a manner that reduces the risk of harm to children and staff
- Process the crisis event with children to help improve their coping strategies

Reports of all serious incidents and incidents of physical intervention are documented and parents/carers and, where appropriate, Placing Authority are informed.

9. Staff

Administration and Ancillary staff support the education, care and therapies staff in the smooth running of the school.

In line with the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Department for Education, September 2023), all staff employed are checked through references and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). These checks are required of all staff prior to them taking up a position working at High Close School. Relevant staff are trained in Safer Recruitment. The school's Single Central Record is overseen by the Office Manager/Leader of Care.

Staff training and development is ongoing and opportunities are made available for staff to attend both in-house and external courses and conferences. Specialist training is offered in specific cases if a need arises.

There is a full programme of in-service and external staff training according to the requirements of the individual disciplines.

A variety of staff are employed to provide the multi-disciplinary input needed to meet the pupils' needs. Pupils have access to an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, a Cognitive and Dialectical Behavioural Therapist and Learning Support. The school also has access to person-centred counselling and works with external providers to ensure young people have access to any specific additional therapy required.

All residential staff have, or are in the process of completing, Level 3 Diplomas in Residential Child Care.

Staff supervision arrangements can be viewed via the line management staff organogram. All staff have access to high quality supervision via a line management structure. Supervisors are trained in supervision skills. There is also external support available to staff via the Employee Assistance Programme.

10. Child Protection

Child Protection and the Safeguarding of pupils is given the highest priority at High Close. The school's Designated Safeguarding Leads are;

- Natalie Potter (Lead DSL/Leader for Care)
- Baljeet Hodges (Family Resource Team Manager)
- Gail Wild (Senior Family Resource Worker)
- Wendy Gosling (Principal)
- Vicky Kinsman (Unit Manager)
- Nathan Belgrave (Unit Manager)
- Matt Lilley (Rowan Day Unit Manager)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead/s liaise with the relevant Local Authority Social Care departments and Wokingham LADO if, and when appropriate. All procedures follow 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018), 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023), our local policy 'Child Protection and Safeguarding' and Barnardo's Safeguarding procedures.

The parents/carers and placing authorities will be notified of safeguarding and child protection issues where appropriate.

11. Anti-bullying

High Close School strives to create an environment where young people can be supported in addressing their educational, emotional, spiritual and social needs and strive towards their full potential. All forms of bullying interfere with achieving this aim. Therefore, such behaviour will not be ignored. The staff team are proactive in their use of the strategies and systems in place to address bullying at all levels while providing opportunities for change for those who are bullying and those who are bullied.

Bullying happens when one person exerts some form of power, in a negative and/or oppressive way, over another person. Bullying is an abuse of power and High Close School has a robust and clear policy to address this. The school has an anti-bullying charter, which all pupils sign. Anti-bullying is an integral part of the role of the student council.

12. Complaints

Complaints can arise in four ways, from a young person, parent/carer, from a member of staff or from an outside agency.

The emphasis at the first stage of a complaint is on problem solving by project staff and their managers. The aim is to address concerns and solve problems at the earliest stage. It is however, important to respect the rights of pupils to have their complaint investigated further if they are not satisfied with local attempts to resolve the problem. In this situation the complaint will be processed through Barnardo's Service User Complaint Procedure. They may also make a complaint to the Local Authority or Ofsted.

Where a complaint is received from a parent/carer, the complaint will be processed through the appropriate Barnardo's procedures.

Where a complaint is received from a member of staff this is referred to a senior manager and attempts are made to resolve this at a local level. If the member of staff is not satisfied with any resolution, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Principal.

If the complaint originates from an outside agency it would be handled by one of the Senior Leadership Team in the hope that it would be resolved by discussion between the parties. Again, if the issue is not resolved at a local level it will be referred to a more senior regional manager.

13. Health

In most cases pupils will be registered at their local GPs to ensure continued access to medical services in their home area, however if there is a need for a medical appointment during the school week, residential young people can be registered as 'temporary' patients at the local surgery. Residential staff can also support young people attending CAMHS appointments, external therapy appointments, hospital appointments.

On admission parents/carers are required to complete a Medical Consent Form authorising the school to address any medical concerns, though those giving consent are kept informed of any action taken by the school.

Whenever necessary, arrangements are made for consultations and emergency treatment by dentists and opticians for residential pupils if parents/carers are unable to do so. Where required by Local Authorities, they may commission the Wokingham School Nurse service to provide annual medicals for Children in Care.

In line with current practice smoking or vaping by pupils is not allowed in High Close School. Similarly, alcohol and drugs are forbidden. Education programmes to assist pupils give up smoking are in place and advice may be sought from the Wokingham School Nurse service and/or GP in order to assist this process.

Staff complete regular training in administration of medication to ensure medication routines are adhered to during the school day/residential week.

Staff also complete regular training in specific health conditions

Dietary requirements are catered for via the main school kitchen and through liaison between the domestic and catering staff and care staff.

14. Inspections

The school is subject to inspections by Ofsted, The Health and Safety Authority, the Fire Service and the Environmental Health Officers. High Close also receives approval visits from all its user authorities and is subject to an annual Quality Assurance inspection from the Children's Cross Regional Arrangements Group (CCRAG) Legally issued reports are available from the school on request.

15. Review

The Statement of Purpose and Function will be reviewed annually by SLT