

Below are a number of frequently asked questions and answers that maybe useful for parent s / carers who have children with additional needs.

Frequently asked questions:

1. **What is the local offer?**

Our local offer is information for parents/carers of children who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a disability, and all of those who support children with additional needs. The information outlines the support and provision they can expect to receive whilst attending Penkford School.

2. **How are Special Educational Needs defined?**

Some children have needs or disabilities that affect their ability to learn; for example:

- Behavioural /social (e.g. difficulties complying with school rules and routines/difficulty making friends)
- Reading and writing (e.g. dyslexia)
- Understanding things
- Concentrating (e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
- Physical needs or impairments (GOV.UK, 2014)

3. **How will Penkford School know if my child needs extra help?**

All children and young people at Penkford School have been identified with special educational needs (SEN). The types of special educational needs catered for are social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH). Their needs and provision required to enable them to make progress are detailed in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which is issued by the Local Authority SEND Department.

4. **Who is the best person to talk to about my child's difficulties with learning / SEN?**

The child's form tutor can be contacted to discuss difficulties with learning.

Subject teachers can be contacted to discuss specific areas of the curriculum that the child is having difficulties with.

The SENCO (Mrs Janet Jackson) and a Learning Mentor (Mrs Karen Baldwin) manage referrals into and out of our Learning Support Base. The SENCO who is a Senior Middle Leader has responsibility for the coordination of support for additional needs. Parents/Carers are invited to attend an annual review of their child's EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan).

The Deputy Head teacher (Mr Dave Francis) oversees annual reviews.

5. **How will I know how Penkford School will support my child?**

Parents/carers will be invited to make an appointment to meet with their child and the form tutor in the first few weeks of each term to discuss their child's progress and set both short and longer term targets that in line with the provision outlined in their EHCP. A personal provision map will record the agreed targets and subsequent progress: the pupil, parent/carer and form teacher will have an input in this process.

Penkford School collects data every term on the progress the child is making in all subjects; this is reported to parents/carers.

Parents/carers will be contacted regularly by telephone or letter about things that have happened in school and arrangements can be made for a home/school diary if appropriate.

The planned learning will be explained via the school website with suggestions for how learning can be supported outside of school.

As a small special school, we know our parents/carers extremely well. We are in constant contact in order to work together to support our pupils.

6. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's needs?

A range of teaching and learning styles are used that reflect the child's preferred learning style. Appropriate learning objectives are set for all children to reflect their needs and abilities.

A 'middle school' approach enables our pupils to develop academic, social and emotional skills within a highly nurturing environment which prepares them for the most appropriate pathway into Key stage 4.

An imaginative curriculum which matches the needs of our pupils acknowledges that some of our pupils require a more personalised level of support. This can be due to a child's preference for vocational learning pathways or due to a need for one to one support.

A wide range of qualifications are on offer including traditional GCSE subjects, Entry Level Qualifications, Functional skills, BTEC and AQA Awards.

7. What support will be available for my child's overall well-being?

All children belong to a tutor group consisting of a teacher and at least one teaching assistant. Pastoral issues are initially dealt with by tutor group staff. Additional pastoral support is available from a higher level teaching assistant whose role is to oversee the emotional and physical wellbeing of our pupils. Risk assessments are in place for specific issues such as known allergies or medical conditions and all staff are trained in the appropriate prevention and response should situations arise.

A tracking sheet accompanies each tutor group as they access their lessons; teachers award points for the child's personal target, work and general behaviour. All children are encouraged to make the right choices and work towards the school's reward system of collecting points which can be exchanged for a variety of items.

All pupils are encouraged to seek a trusted adult when they need to talk about any issues they may have.

Attendance issues are addressed by the attendance officer, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and a higher level teaching assistant; regular home visits offer parents/carers support with issues relating to attendance.

8. What specialist services and expertise are available at Penkford School?

All members of staff are experienced in the particular needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and positive behavioural strategies designed to reduce anxiety and the risk of restraint.

The SENCO who is a specialist dyslexia teacher oversees an experienced Learning Mentor who provides one to one support for children with specific learning difficulties via sequential, multisensory phonics programmes, and phonics based strategies are promoted across the curriculum.

Pupils at Penkford can be referred or can self-refer to our on-site counsellor (Mrs Jill McCormack) who is in school one day per week. Mrs McCormack also provides counselling support as appropriate to our pupils who access their education off-site.

Pupils are offered an interactive programme called 'Heartmath' which incorporates a system of techniques that encourages them to transform stress, build resilience and boost performance.

9. What happens if my child has a high level of need?

Children who are finding it difficult to access the curriculum in a classroom setting are referred into our learning support base: this is a calm environment where purposeful learning can be delivered on a one to one basis.

Pastoral support is available from the learning support base and the higher level teaching assistant who oversees the emotional and physical health and wellbeing of our pupils.

Counselling services are available from our on-site counsellor and multi-agency involvement is utilised as appropriate to the needs of the child.

Some of our pupils experience extreme difficulties with sleep which can affect attendance and punctuality as well as learning: we have recently introduced an on-site 'Sleep Support Clinic' facilitated by qualified practitioners from 'ADDvanced Solutions' to encourage our pupils and their families to develop healthy sleep routines.

Our on-site ADHD Clinic facilitated by specialist ADHD Nurses promotes good communication between educational and health care professionals.

10. Are the staff who support children with SEND in Penkford School provided with appropriate training?

All staff are trained in 'Team teach' de-escalation and positive handling techniques with regular refresher sessions. Some staff have advanced 'Team teach' status.

All staff receive regular training sessions in 'Safeguarding' protocol and procedures.

11. How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom, including school trips?

A programme of outdoor education encompassing orienteering skills; kayaking; climbing and cycling is offered to Key stage 3 and 4 pupils throughout the year.

Opportunities for residential programmes to encourage the development of social skills and team building exercises are provided for example The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Subject teachers organise school trips that are connected to curriculum studies.

12. How accessible is the school environment?

- Single storey building
- All entrance doors have been replaced and comply with DDA regulations to ensure wide enough for wheelchair users.
- Front office reception area re- configured during refurbishment programme and again complies with DDA regulations in split height of visitor reception desk.
- Improved secure access to school site funded by local authority.
- Controlled access by use of key fobs to designated users and side gates are manual controlled at start and end of day by staff.
- All access to school is at ground level and ramps have been installed where appropriate, at main entrance from car park to office reception and from top playground to mobile unit.

13. How will Penkford School prepare and support my child when they are starting, leaving this school or moving to another year?

Allocation of places at Penkford School occurs three times annually via the placement panel meetings.

Once awarded a place, the child along with parents/carers are invited into school to meet key staff and have a look around. A higher level teaching assistant plans the admission programme.

Transition from Key stage 2 to 3 is supported by Key stage 2 staff. Career Connect advisor (Joanne Patten) plays a supportive role for transition from Key stage 3 to 4 and the Education Enhancement Team (EET) support students leaving Key stage 4.

14. What if my child needs transport to and from school?

School transport is provided via local authority and vehicles are directed into gated compound where staff supervise students on and off buses. Year 4 to Year 9 pupils are transported to school on school bus or taxi. All school transport staff (drivers and escorts) hold a current DBS clearance.

Year 10 and Year 11 pupils are provided with a free bus pass from School Transport Section for independent travel for each academic year. Any replacement bus pass caused by loss or damage to be funded by the parent/carer.

15. How is the decision made about how much support my child will receive?

All pupils at Penkford School have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which specifies the nature of support required. On arrival baseline assessments are conducted to indicate the level of support required both academically and behaviourally. Personalised programmes are developed which may include in class support, 1:1 tutorials or off-site re-engagement provision.

16. How will I be involved in discussions about and planning for my child's education?

Early on in the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms, parents/carers will be invited to bring their child to a target setting meeting with the form tutor to discuss academic and pastoral needs.

Additionally, as a small special school, staff know parents/carers well and communicate with them frequently to work in partnership with them to support the child's needs. Penkford School supports parents/carers via coffee mornings, pamper sessions, craft activities and outdoor activities.

17. Who can I contact for further information?

The first point of contact if something needs to be discussed about the child is the form tutor. Appointments can be made with the Senior Leadership Team or the SENCO through the school office.

Parents/carers get to know the staff well and feel confident contacting school to keep us updated or to ask for help and support.