Hedgewood School

Personal Development Policy

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Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of governors Date: _____

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Statement of intent

Hedgewood School is designated for pupils with Complex Moderate Learning Difficulties, including Autism. Personal Development (PD) sits at the heart of everything we do. Our core and foundation subjects are delivered through the umbrella of PD, enabling pupils to make sense of the world around them in meaningful and connected ways.

Our curriculum is deeply connected to Hedgewood's vision and values, which place children at the heart of all we do. The curriculum embodies our core ethos: **"be nice – work hard – be happy,"** by fostering kindness, respect, and resilience in pupils. It nurtures a positive, warm, and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe and supported to learn and grow.

By addressing pupils' communication, social, emotional, and independence needs, the curriculum strengthens the vital home-school partnership, ensuring families are engaged and supported in reinforcing learning. Personal Development at Hedgewood has focuses on safety, respect, and wellbeing which directly contributes to pupils' happiness and readiness to learn, reflecting our commitment to creating a fun, engaging, and secure learning environment.

We believe that all pupils, regardless of their abilities or communication challenges, have the right to understand themselves, their relationships, and how to keep safe and healthy in an increasingly complex world. Our intent is to provide a curriculum that is accessible, relevant, and meaningful, enabling pupils to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to build positive relationships, understand their bodies and emotions, and navigate social and digital environments safely.

Our curriculum is therapeutic, developmental, and highly personalised. Learning is carefully matched to pupils' developmental stages rather than chronological age, ensuring that each child's individual needs, strengths, and readiness to learn are fully recognised and supported.

We aim to empower pupils to develop and use strategies that support self-regulation at school, at home, and within the wider community. This enables them to achieve positive outcomes, stay safe, and experience high levels of wellbeing. We strive to create an environment that is caring, protective, and supportive, where no individual feels humiliated, intimidated, or abused.

For our pupils, developing understanding is often a journey that takes time. For staff, this means consistently modelling positive and appropriate behaviour, and continually developing our own capacity to understand and develop skills that lead to quality of life for our pupils. This shared commitment underpins our positive and supportive approach to Personal Development.

Our approaches to Personal Development (PD) is designed to deliver high-quality special education while upholding dignity, respect, and compassion in all aspects of our provision, with careful consideration given to pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Objectives & Aims

The objectives of our Personal Development offer are to enable pupils to:

- develop communication, independence, and emotional regulation skills critical for lifelong wellbeing
- Make informed choices regarding their own health, safety and wellbeing.
- Increase the extent to which pupils can participate in the wider school community to support their well-being and engagement; including how staff understand and engage with pupils and their individual profiles, highlighting the importance of building rapport with pupils and involving them in decisions about their educational experiences.

Through personal development we aim to:

- adopt a strengths based approach which, while addressing pupils needs and barriers to learning and wellbeing, incorporates pupils' strengths interests and

preferences to provide meaningful experiences which directly promotes well-being.
- Increase the extent to which pupils can take advantage of education and associated services, including making adaptations which promote engagement in play and social opportunities where desired, and adaptations support autistic pupils well-being and engagement.
- Equip pupils to be as independent as possible through the teaching of tolerating skills.
- Foster an ethos of positive role models to enable caring interactions.
- Ensure pupils feel safe, secure, and ready to learn through a low-arousal environment.

Personal development in the curriculum

We see Personal Development (PD) as the centre of all that we do. Our core and foundation subjects are taught under the umbrella of PD to help pupils make sense of the world. Our strategy is based on a therapeutic, developmental, and highly personalised curriculum. We ensure learning matches developmental stages rather than chronological age.

Every child has a **Personal Learning Plan (PLP)**, shaped by their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and ongoing evidence-based assessments. We use a range of assessments to help identify and understand the specific challenges our pupils face in their learning and Personal Development. These tools support us in recognising individual needs and enable us to plan targeted support to help pupils build learning to learn skills specifically for communication and interaction, Independence, social emotional and mental health and sensory & Physical needs.

The outcomes of these assessments are used to inform each child's Personal Learning Plan (PLP), ensuring that their learning remains purposeful, personalised, and focused on key areas of development. The PLP targets are linked directly to EHCP outcomes. Parents and carers are key partners in this process, working with teachers to achieve the best outcomes.

As there is a large overlap between the Personal Development, RE and Science, aspects of the Personal Development are taught through RE and Science lessons that are adapted to meet the needs of all our pupils. It is also very important to make links with the online safety & Computing curriculum. Pupils should recognise ways they could put themselves at risk through the use of technology. We hold annual Safer ‘Internet Day’ to teach digital Literacy and Online using learning resources from Project Evolve to support pupils to understand the risks to their emotional and physical wellbeing and safety and their personal reputation. It is important to explore the risks, the law as it pertains to the sharing and downloading of images and information and safe ways of sharing personal information, social networking, and sharing images. Pupils are helped to make connections with their learning and life experiences.

Our curriculum includes real life experiences and additional enrichment in order to raise achievement and widen opportunity for the pupils. The curriculum is interwoven into a very carefully planned year of events for the whole school community which include many special days and events and learning festivals including Science weeks, Arts week, Sports weeks, Key festivals, Safer Internet day, world downs syndrome day, Mental Health and Wellbeing week and many more.

Approaches & Interventions

We incorporate the rationale of the SPELL approach developed by the National Autistic Society into our practice by providing a structured, positive, empathetic and low arousal environment, all resulting in positive levels of regulation for pupils, with good links between home and outside agencies. In order to understand and respond to the needs of all pupils, a mix of approaches and interventions are in use, firmly embedded in a

person centered approach that puts the strengths, interests and preferences at the core of support.

Approaches are evidenced based and commonly used within the autism practices but ultimately always personalised to each individual's profile of strengths and challenges.

There are some clear definitions in approaches and protocols used within certain phases at Hedgewood, but all compliment the stage of learning of each pupil and allow for movement between phases as each pupil's interest and need is identified. These approaches are continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure best practice.

A transdisciplinary approach which integrates therapy and education includes, but are not limited to, the following approaches;

- Speech Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- TEACCH
- Applied Behaviour Analysis
- PCS (picture communication systems), including communication belts
- Symbol use
- Signalong
- Communication Aids
- Essentials for Living 'Necessary Nine' skills
- Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Programme
- Intensive Interaction
- Zones of Regulation
- The Alert Programme
- Sensory circuit/diets/ sensory Integration
- Attention Autism
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Prevent-Teach-Reinforce behavior-function based intervention to support behaviors of concern
- Studio 3/Low Arousal techniques

Physical Education & development: a foundation for Personal Development

Physical education and Personal Development is not viewed as a standalone but as a fundamental prerequisite for learning and emotional wellbeing. By developing coordination, motor skills, and an awareness of their own bodies, pupils are empowered to explore and interpret the world around them, leading to more independent and healthy lives.

1. Physicality for Sensory and Emotional Regulation

We recognise the profound link between physical movement and internal emotional states. Physical activities are explicitly taught as **therapeutic interventions** to support sensory regulation.

- **The "Ready to Learn" State:** Using individualised sensory diets and the **ALERT programme**, staff provide controlled vestibular and proprioceptive input (e.g., through the Occupational Therapy swing room) to help pupils achieve a **calm, alert state**. This physical regulation is the essential first step for any subsequent personal or social development.

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- **Interoception and Emotional Literacy:** We prioritise the teaching of **emotional literacy** by helping pupils understand their own physical states. This understanding of interoception—the physical sensations of emotions—underpins the management of anxiety and behaviours of concern.

2. Physicality as a Vehicle for Social Communication

Physical development provides a motivating and natural context for building caring relationships and social interaction.

- **Joint Engagement:** Environments such as the swimming pool or adventure playground are utilised to promote joint attention and turn-taking, which are core PSHCE goals.

- **Confidence and Persistence:** Through physical challenges on the trim track or in the sensory garden & sensory art shed, pupils develop the resilience and self-confidence needed to take risks and persist with difficult tasks, directly reflecting our core ethos to "work hard"

3. Motor Mastery for Personal Autonomy

The development of physical skills is a primary driver for a pupil's Functional Skills and Independence.

- Independence in Daily Living: Fine motor development, supported through programs like "Writing Without Tears," is linked directly to self-care targets in pupils' Personal Learning Plans (PLPs).

- **Transfer of Skills:** We ensure that physical skills are taught across various environments. This allows pupils to consolidate and transfer skills to community and leisure facilities, broadening their life opportunities beyond the school gate.

4. Integrated Transdisciplinary Support

Physical development is a non-negotiable backbone of our inclusive practice.
Achievement in physical and sensory needs is tracked year-on-year, with Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy advice seamlessly integrated into daily classroom routines and PE sessions.

Pupil Voice & The Speaker Initiative

Pupil voice is a fundamental pillar of our value system. We ensure every pupil is valued and heard through appropriate communication systems. Our **"Speakers Initiative"** ensures every child has a vocal profile assessment to establish a preferred method of communication that is **Continuously Available, Frequently used, and Effortless (C.A.F.E.)**. This allows all pupils, regardless of verbal ability, to contribute ideas and opinions to school life.
Achievement in Communication is tracked termly through Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) and year-on-year, with Speech & Language Therapy advice seamlessly integrated into daily classroom routines.

School Council

Our school council is a formal group of pupils who act as representatives of their classmates in discussing school issues with the council lead, Phase Leader, Co-headteacher and staff. It's a brilliant way of representing and contributing to Pupil Voice in our school.

The Council promotes a sense of community within the school and is used to support and develop citizenship. It encourages teamwork and helps to improve speaking and listening skills.

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We hold elections annually in order to get pupils to elect their classmates to the school council, it brings on board an advisory body of volunteers who work together to provide ideas and opinions to help the headmaster make the school a better place for learning. These councils are in place so that pupils have a voice and are involved in decisions about the school that affect them.

Eco Council

We care deeply about our environment. Hedgewood integrates environmental awareness into the "The World I Live In" RHE focus area, where pupils learn about taking care of the environment and belonging to a community. We utilise outdoor learning as an integral part of the day, allowing pupils to meet sensory needs through physical play and planned engagement in our adventure playground and Forest School areas.

Our Eco Council is a committee responsible for carrying out environmental reviews and creating an operational plan for the school to follow in order to support sustainability and environmental responsibilities.

Meetings are held regularly to ensure that targets are met and to discuss further environmental targets. We hold elections annually in order to get pupils to elect their classmates to the eco council, it brings on board pupils who have shown an interest in looking after their immediate environment. All pupils learn about their environment through the topic and PSHE sessions.

Rights Respecting School

Promoting Fundamental British Values ('Human Values')

The DfE identified the need "to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs."

We promote British values in ways that are meaningful to our pupils. Much of this promotion is achieved through day to day practice supporting pupils in building and maintaining relationships with each other and staff. It is also woven into the delivery of the whole curriculum as well as having a specific focus in PSHCE teaching and learning. It plays a key part in our SMSC focus as well as all collective worship and assemblies.

These values are our interpretation of British Values ('Human Values')and will form a core part of our teaching:

British Values	Hedgewood Version
Democracy	Everyone has a voice - you are valued
Rule of Law	Follow the rules
Tolerance of cultures and religions	Try to understand others
Mutual respect	Show respect for all
Liberty	Freedom to access opportunities
Understanding Autism, anxiety etc *	Accepting difference
Safety*	Feeling and Keeping safe

*not specified as a British Value by the DFE added by Hedgewood as considered to be particularly important in our context

As pupils move through school, where it is appropriate, pupils may move to using the words

used within the British Values too.

These values will form the themes for Assemblies across the school, in addition they are a major focus of our focus on development of Social Understanding and Social Context in the Curriculum.

Democracy: Pupils and their parents or carers have a powerful influence on how we structure teaching, learning and all forms of support at Hedgewood. Listening with respect and responding appropriately, is modelled by all staff. We demonstrate and expect our pupils to contribute and co-operate and also consider the views and needs of others. Our pupil voice policy ensures that pupils are powerful contributors.

The Rule of Law: We consistently reinforce our high expectations of our pupils' behaviour. Whenever appropriate, pupils are taught the reasons behind our expectations (rules) and their value; that they are there to protect and support us. Emphasis is placed on each person's responsibility for their own words and actions. This is underpinned by consistent consequences when rules are disregarded.

Individual Liberty: Within the school environment pupils are actively encouraged to make choices, knowing that they are safe and supported in doing so. We guide pupils to learn what constitutes a good choice and they are encouraged to express their views and opinions. In delivering the curriculum we respond to pupil preferences and interests in the way we plan teaching and learning opportunities.

Mutual Respect: Staff demonstrate and model respect in all relationships and promote the behaviours and attitudes in pupils that are the foundation of positive relationships. The strong school ethos, apparent in everything we do, encourages everyone to consider and support others and celebrate the worth and individuality of each member of our school community.

Tolerance of those of Different Faiths and Beliefs: A key theme within our teaching is understanding the world around us; this includes providing experiences from different faiths, beliefs and cultures.
As a staff we are sensitive to anything that may constitute extremist political or religious views or any form of intolerance of others, whether this is expressed directly or more public forums such as social media. Should a situation arise within the school community, it is dealt with swiftly and with appropriate confidentiality and sensitivity, following national and local procedures and guidelines.

Understanding Autism, anxiety: Staff demonstrate and model respect in all relationships and actively promote a culture of accepting differences. We focus on developing pupil's communication, independence and self-confidence.

Safety: We recognise our pupil's social vulnerability and create a environment where pupils understand they can trust staff in school completely. All staff recognise that challenging behaviour is an anxiety. Pupils are taught strategies to keep themselves safe through unpicking social situations they find tricky. Through teaching social understanding, learning about social context it will develop of pupil's positive emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Through these approaches the world for our pupils will begin to make sense which in turn has a positive impact on self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional wellbeing and reliance of our pupils

All our visitors are made aware of our behaviour code and expectations.

RHE & PSHE

Personal development is an integral part of our PSHE & Wellbeing programme, delivered through the Jigsaw PSHE frameworks**.**

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- **RSHE Delivery:** Taught as a discrete unit within PSHE. ,It is tailored to the "Necessary Nine" functional life skills for our most complex learners.
- **Body Autonomy:** We use the **NSPCC 'Talk PANTS'** rule to teach personal boundaries. Consistent with recommended practice, we introduce correct names for private body parts (penis, vagina, bottom) from EYFS to build confidence and communication.
- **Digital Safeguarding:** Online safety is embedded across all curriculum pathways, addressing the four categories of risk: Content, Contact, Conduct, and Commerce.

How We Protect Pupils from Extremist Views, Including Religious and Political Extremism:

Our Religious Education covers the main world religions and promotes tolerance and understanding of different world views.

We teach pupils to:
• Hold secure values and beliefs and be able to distinguish right from wrong.
• Challenge injustice and be committed to the rights of the human being to live peaceably with others.
• Reflect on the impact of religion and belief in the world. We help pupils to consider the importance of interfaith dialogue and to have some understanding of the tensions that exist within and between religions and beliefs.

Pupils visit different places of worship. Educational journeys include opportunities to experience and learn about different cultures. Parents and members of the wider community are invited into school to talk about their religions, cultures, customs and beliefs.

Pupils may come into contact with extremist views, literature or propaganda at any time, including when on school trips. Staff leading or accompanying trips are vigilant to this possibility. Our duty is to support pupils who may be distressed or frightened by what they read or see. We help pupils to have a balanced view as well as give them coping strategies when dealing with what may be external pressures.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)

We work to promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development by ensuring these characteristics are considered in all subject areas. SMSC is personalised at Hedgewood; for example, cultural development is supported by providing first-hand sensory experiences of world music, traditions, and food. Our transdisciplinary approach integrates Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy into the daily curriculum to maximize progress in social understanding.

We are committed as a school to developing SMSC beyond the curriculum. This is done through:

- Arts, Music and Cultural Specialists visits to school over the year
- Assemblies give pupils an opportunity to explore aspects of SMSC
- Our supportive interventions support aspects of SMSC – Swimming, Dance, Multi skills sports,
- Visiting the dentist room and the development of Forest school practices in the sensory garden and sensory art shed
- lunch time & holiday clubs.
- Enrichment opportunities for all our pupils where teachers plan and carry out visits linked to our curriculum topic
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in curriculum focused activity days across the school

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- Whole school events such as Christmas performance, Pantomimes, Music and Dance Assemblies, graduation for leavers in KS2

In order to reflect further on the impact of all our work on SMSC:

- We engage governors, families and community
- Hear our student voice
- Observe staff and pupil interactions
- Support Social Behaviour
- Complete learning walks reflecting on resources and practices.

Safeguarding

We recognise that our pupils are extra risk because of their special educational needs. We believe that by teaching them to communicate, to make positive relationships in school, to manage their behaviour and to learn about themselves, we are helping to keep them safe. We train all staff on safeguarding when they join the school and deliver regular refresher sessions. We give staff clear guidance on the use of touch and on supporting pupils with challenging behaviour (Behaviour & Wellbeing policy).

Protected Characteristics

Hedgewood is committed to the Equality Act 2010. We actively promote the nine protected characteristics through our school ethos and curriculum. we want all our Pupils to develop into Pupils who are proud and respectful of themselves and each other regardless of their characteristics.

We want our pupils to be able to celebrate and respect the diversity in our society and community. There are nine characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 which are:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity

The 9 Protected Characteristics are actively promoted at Hedgewood through:

- Our school ethos statements, SIP, and SEF
- Our school core values: ‘be nice, work hard, be happy” ‘
- Our school PSHE, RSHE, safeguarding and behaviour policies
- Conscious role modelling by all adults in the school community
- Active engagement and communication with parents and carers
- Celebration Assemblies.
- British Values themes for a day, week and term
- Discussions within curriculum subjects leaders,
- Enrichment weeks
- Festivals, e.g.: Sport Pantathalon festival, Junior Citizenship
- Lunch clubs to promote interests of our pupils
- DNA-V Connect PSHE wellbeing interventions
- Individual Physio sessions
- RE festivals
- Arts week
- Outdoor learning sessions

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We teach about the society in which pupils are growing up, fostering respect for difference, including LGBTQ+ inclusivity and same-sex parents, in an age-appropriate manner.

Community Relations

Hedgewood recognises the importance of global citizenship and community leadership. We proudly serve as the Hillingdon Hub for the National Autistic Society's (NAS) Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN)**,** providing professional development and practical strategies to support autistic learners across the wider community. Through our **Outreach Program**, we share evidence-based research in Autism, Communication, and Sensory Needs with mainstream settings, fostering a culturally inclusive partnership beyond our school gates.

Assessment

Assessment is robust and tracks the critical small-step progress necessary for our learners. The outcomes of these assessments are used to inform each child's Personal Learning Plan (PLP), ensuring that their learning remains purposeful, personalised, and focused on key areas of personal development. The PLP targets are linked directly to EHCP outcomes.

Personal Learning Plans (PLP) are set and twice a year. Assessment against EHCP outcomes are reported at mid-year review Annual Review and at the end of the academic year.

Many pupil achievements relating to ability to manage sensory input, development of self – reliance and independence, and levels of regulation and understanding of own and other's emotions are planned for, and assessed in contributing to positive outcomes for each autistic individual.

Teachers record learning using **Seesaw** Online Learning Journeys, giving parents real-time updates through photos, videos, and comments. This provides valuable recording of pupil's achievements in different contexts.

We utilise the National Autistic Society's (NAS) Advanced Accreditation as a quality assurance program to evaluate our person-centered provision. Monitoring Through an assess, Plan do, review cycle which includes planning scrutiny, Learning walks Seesaw audits, and lesson observations to ensure specialist methodologies and pedagogy is embedded in classes and are effectively supporting pupil outcomes.

Monitoring & Review

This policy is reviewed at least annually by the DSL and the Co-headteachers. Monitoring of personal development occurs during the year by the Phase Leaders, Senior Leaders – e.g., checking class timetables, planning, learning walks, observations as well as liaising with Subject Leaders, TAs, school governors. External consultants are also enlisted to evaluate the personal development curriculum.

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National Autistic Society | Neuroinclusive Education Network

Signalong Friendly

Accredited by Elklan, AptEd and Afasic as Communication Friendly