



Charlton Park Academy Environment Policy

“The environment you construct around you and the children also reflects this image you have about the child. There’s a difference between the environment that you are able to build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment that you can build that is based on the child you see in front of you — the relationship you build with the child, the games you play.” Loris Malaguzzi

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish consistency, to ensure vision becomes reality.
- Establish clear expectations for teachers and LSAs
- Ensure that all learning environments promotes the school’s vision, aims, values and curriculum intent.
- Ensure a safe learning environment for all students.
- Support students learning
- Promote coherence and continuity across the school.
- Support behaviour for learning, establish and maintain safe and calm learning environment.

Rationale

The aim of this policy is to provide clear guidance and information that should reflect in the school values here at CPA. The environment, both inside and outside, of the school will encourage and promote our student’s independence and support our learning outcomes. We acknowledge that the learning environment should be both accessible and inclusive for all students here at CPA. Our approach and ethos for all members of staff, is to ensure that we all take responsibility for adapting, maintaining and monitoring the learning environment to suit the needs of our students.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that our school environment will:

- Be student-centred approach, learning through interactions.
- Plays a significant role in the effectiveness for teaching and learning.
- Enable students to access the curriculum and independence.
- Support with sensory, physical, social and communication needs of our students.
- Provide consistency throughout so that students can navigate and predict their surroundings.
- Provide a calm learning environment for all students.
- Enable students to feel confident and safe.
- Be attractive to parents, carers, and other outside agencies.
- Reduction of anxieties/ stress/ stimulation/ adrenalin system.

Policies, Guidelines and Legislations: This policy complies with the statutory requirements laid out in the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 (DfE 2015) and has been written with reference to the following national policies and guidelines and CPA policies:

- SEND Code of practice 0-25 (updated September 2024)
- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools DfE (updated June 2018)(updated January 2024)
- The National strategy for autistic children, young people, and adults 2021-2026 (DfE updated July 2021)
- Keeping Children safe in Education (DfE Updated September 2024)
- Every Child Matters 2003
- Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted updated July 2023)
- Teachers' Standards (updated December 2021)
- Positive Environments where children can flourish (updated October 2021)
- CPA Policy for Display – November 2017
- CPA Health and Safety – February 2025
- CPA SEN Policy Sept 2023
- CPA Safeguarding policy – Feb 2023 (Updated 11.12.24)
- Relationships and Behaviour Support Policy May 2025
- BFL Tier Model and Protocols March 2025
- CPA – Teaching and Learning Policy – April 2023
- Behaviour and Conduct Policy last reviewed October 2024
- Autism Policy July 2023 (Updated May 2025)
- Code of conduct October 2024
- Zones of regulation
- Interoceptive Curriculum
- Regulation Support Policy October 2025
- Communication Policy

Environments

By the term 'Environment' this policy refers to the *physical* environment, inside and outside of the school building, including classrooms, reception areas, corridors, therapy rooms, specialist teaching rooms, gym, hydro pool, offices, dining hall and any other open spaces. This term also refers to the climate of the school in which students learn. The policy also lends itself to the Behaviour and Conduct of all staff, it is essential that all staff working with students have a deep understanding of behaviour as a form of communication, and how their responses can directly impact a student's ability to access support and learning. Every individual brings their own unique beliefs, values, experiences, and attitudes, which shape interactions and influence relationships.

To support this, ongoing professional development is embedded across the school to cultivate and sustain a positive, inclusive culture for learning.

It is the responsibility of all to ensure that the learning environment is calm, clutter free, stimulating, and resourced place for our students to learn. The physical spaces will support students to access learning in a calm and positive way. By creating this type of environment students will:

- Engage with learning.
- Promote an interest in learning.
- Feel safe and confident in the environment.
- Students will be more independent in their transitions

Sensory Integration and Inclusive Environments

Our environment plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of students. When referring to sensory integration we are referring to the processing, integration, and organisation of our students and their environment. For most of our students present with sensory processing challenges, therefore our environment has an impact on their processing, therefore learning spaces should be adaptable to meeting the needs of the students.

Both our physical and social environments i.e., playground, classroom, sports hall, dining hall and other areas of the learning spaces are important to support our students sensory, physical, social and communication skills. These skills support our students to optimise learning, supporting with self-regulation reducing anxieties and challenging behaviours, working in conjunction with **'Zones of regulation', Interoceptive Curriculum and EYFS- Free flow play based curriculum.**

Implementation

The environment is designed to ensure that all students have access to a calm learning space. The designs of the classrooms have clear working areas, social areas, and individualised learning spaces, adapted to the students using it.

The characteristics of the learning environment are:

Low arousal approach

- Sensory clutter reduced to lessen over stimulation.
- Noise levels are kept low to support with self-regulation and sensory processing.
- Colour of walls and furnishings: soft colours i.e., grey, off white, creams, yellows, greens, blues, pinks, and neutral colours etc.
- Facilitates effective communication, using schedules and minimising the overuse of words.
- Offers opportunity to be relaxed.
- Ensures interactions are calm
- Reduces experiences and situations that may trigger anxiety, dysregulation or over stimulation.
- Avoids arousal levels that may lead to the risk of dysregulation.
- Identifies strategies to support with self-regulation.

Structure and Visual Supports

- Provides a clear structure through use of words, symbols, and pictures to make sense of the world around them, reducing anxiety, and opportunity to interact with others.
- Structure can be personalised to the individual., this will be differentiated depending on the cognitive and communication levels.
- Visual supports allow students to learn in a way that suits them the most.
- Equal opportunities to learn.
- Supports with critical thinking, decision making and problem solving.
- Enable students to complete tasks independently.
- Helps to understand complex concepts, attention and builds relationships.
- Promote independent learning.
- Improves confidence, encourages independence, understanding and reduces anxieties.
- Visual supports range from posters, photos, symbols, interactive screens, and PowerPoints.

Student-centred approach

- Involve students in own learning
- Feel confident in ability to learn.
- Encourage to be creative in learning trying new activities.
- Feel a sense of accomplishment in learning.
- Opportunity to learn from each other, through role-play and purposeful interactions.
- Following Rosenshein's principles within student centred approach.
- Utilising spaces inside and outside for learning to occur.
- Differentiate resources and materials to meet individuals' interests and needs.
- Assessing holistic progress achieved.

Social Interactions

- Opportunity to be part of a wider community.
- Have a sense of belonging.
- Communicate and interact with others.
- Develop relationships with peers and members of staff.
- Play skills enabling relationships to be developed
- Conversation skills developing communication
- Emotional Skills managing feelings.
- Problem solving skills decision making and problem solving

Accountability

Teachers and support staff are responsible for the learning environment and the classroom environments. Member of the Leadership team is responsible for checking the sensory room daily, and teachers and support staff are responsible for reporting any damages both directly to the member of the Leadership team responsible for the designated area and using Every platform to record damages to the premises team.

All learning spaces inside – minimal requirements

- Safeguarding Leaflet to be displayed in classroom.
- First aiders poster to be displayed in classroom
- Mental health first aiders to be displayed.
- Who I can talk to, poster to be displayed in the classroom.
- Rooms to ventilated and temperature checked. (Air purifiers utilised)
- Kettles to be emptied and stored away, metal flasks provided to be used for hot water.
- Class cupboards to be locked during school hours.
- Daily timetable to be displayed in the classroom.
- Class files to be kept up to date with relevant information.
- Classrooms to be kept clutter free and ready for learning.
- Areas around interactive screens and sensory guru boards to be kept distraction free.
- All personal belongings to be stored inside staff cupboard, mobile phones to be on silent or switched off.
- Individualised workstation areas to be clearly labelled in some classrooms.
- Display boards to be used to support communication and display students work, refer to the display policy.

- Be aware of smells: lunch, perfumes, deodorants, cleaning sprays etc.

Classroom Learning Environment – minimal requirements

Pathway 5 PMLD

- Student targets / My Learning Journals are readily available to support student learning.
- Where appropriate, the environment enables independence, i.e., drinks accessible for students to obtain, and learning resources available.
- The learning environment will match the arousal level of the activity, e.g., calm during massage, high beat / lively during sensory story.
- Display boards will be visually stimulating, incorporating appropriate strategies for students with VI needs.
- Students will have wheelchair/class chair trays readily available / height-adjustable tables set at the correct height / alternative equipment to support positioning to enable optimum learning.
- Staff to place themselves in the best position near the student to support optimum learning.
- Touch cues, OOR (objects of reference), sound cues to be used to support students in their learning environment as appropriate.
- Equipment to be readily available and labelled with student image/photos/ symbols as appropriate.
- The classroom will have areas for student-led learning, independent exploration, and mobility development.
- Lighting and temperature in the room to be considered for individual students' needs.
- Students will have access to outside accessible learning areas.
- Positioning of students within the classroom, including for group work, should be carefully considered according to their needs.
- Areas to be free of clutter, especially for those students with mobility difficulties and VI needs – potential trip hazards to be reduced as much as possible.
- Dark areas for students with VI needs.
- AAC to be readily available as appropriate.

Pathway 4 ASD Sensory

- Classroom areas to be clutter free from distractions.
- Access to outside areas of the classroom to support with play and self-regulation.
- Workstations clearly labelled and identified using student image.
- Chairs to be labelled with student's image.
- AAC devices to be readily available.
- Learning resources and materials to be labelled with symbols.
- Areas of the learning environment to be labelled i.e., garden, door, cupboard etc
- TEACCH will be evident all classrooms. Where TEACCH is used work boxes labelled 'start' and 'finished,' these will be colour coded green and red.
- Visual schedules will be individualised, and these may vary across the class groups where required.
- Student equipment to be labelled to create opportunity for students to become independent and organising themselves.

- Display boards will be limited as we are creating a low arousal environment, this will be dependent on the sensory needs of the students i.e., ASD Sensory Key Stage 3 display boards only, 1 for Communication and MLJ, KS4/5 Communication board/MLJ and PfA Destinations board.

Pathway 2&3

- Classroom areas to be clutter free from distractions.
- Workstations (if required) labelled with student image or name, this can be symbol or handwritten, depending on Pathway.
- Sensory or OT equipment is accessible to students.
- Classroom is organised and labelled to create opportunity for students to become independent and organising themselves.
- TEACCH will be evident in classrooms where required. Where TEACCH is used work boxes labelled 'start' and 'finished,' these will be colour coded green and red.
- Visual schedules will be individualised, and these may vary across the class groups where required i.e. daily timetables
- Student specific visual supports to encourage positive behaviour and communication.
- Class library accessible for all students.
- Display boards will be limited to 2 as we continue to create a low arousal environment, this will be dependent on the sensory needs of the students i.e. MLJ/ PfA destinations board, Timetable or Communication Information. If displaying a working wall this will be labelled 'We are learning' work to be linked to at least one curriculum area.
- Independent access to resources, labelled appropriately with words or symbols.
- Student specific visual supports to encourage positive behaviour and communication.
- Reading area clearly identified.
- Where required AAC devices or communication resources to be readily accessible.
- Areas of the learning environment to be labelled; cupboard, resources, garden etc.

Pathway 1

- Classroom areas to be clutter free from distractions.
- Independent access to learning resources and materials, labelled with words or symbols.
- Where required and appropriate workstations to be labelled with students' name.
- Display boards will be minimal to support with a low arousal environment.
- Where appropriate areas of the learning environment to be labelled i.e. staff cupboard, plates and cups etc.
- Visual schedules to be individualised where needed.
- Where required AAC devices or communication resources to be readily accessible.
- Display boards will be limited to 3 as we continue to create a low arousal environment, this will be dependent on the sensory needs of the students i.e. MLJ, PfA Destinations board and a working wall display.
- Where appropriate MLJ's targets to be displayed on individual desks.
- Student specific supports to encourage positive behaviour and communication.
- Lesson specific vocabulary to be added to displays

External Learning Environment outside spaces:

The design of the two **playgrounds** has created opportunities for collaborative play, to promote socialisations between peers, and to develop independence skills. Both designs create opportunities for student to sit and relax if they choose not to play using the picnic benches and shades provided. Areas of the playground are covered with shades; this will enable the use of the playground during the summer and winter months. Sand pits in the playground are to be monitored by staff, and these are to be covered over at the end of each school day.

- Staff to **engage** in play with students, building effective relationships.
- Staff to **model** how to use the equipment safely.
- Students to be **supervised** when using outside spaces.
- Students to have the opportunity to become independent learners in the outside space.
- Students to be able to sit, observe or relax should they not wish to engage in play.
- Frequent access to outside spaces and areas as part of self-regulation and structured movement breaks.
- Students encouraged to use the apparatus to develop gross motor skills and physical development.
- Playground to be used as a learning space i.e., games and sporting activities.
- Trugs to be kept tidy and maintained, to be labelled with class name, product that is being grown and colour card to enable students to identify specific trug, enabling learning to be practical and hands on experience.
- Promote students to keep outside areas clean and tidy by sweeping as part of work experience.
- Any damaged equipment must be logged using 'Every' sending to the premises team on the day that it is discovered and taken out of action if dangerous.

Health and Safety

To maintain a safe and low arousal learning environments for all students, particularly those with sensory, mobility and behavioural needs:

- Students must be supervised effectively during the school day.
- Adequate supervision will be adopted by class teams when using the outside spaces.
- Each class to risk assess classrooms and environmental spaces, reporting any damages or breakages or loose wires through the 'Every' system to premises.
- Class teams to check the temperature and ventilation of own classrooms, in the event of the classroom being too hot or cold, report to premises using Every.
- Equipment should not be on top of lockers in corridors.
- Electrical equipment should not be used unless PAT tested by premises.
- Kettles are not permitted to be left out in the classroom during the school day.
- No kettles, toasters, hot plates or drink-making equipment should be left out and should be stored away correctly.
- Metal flasks must be used in place of open cups when transporting hot drinks in designated staff-only areas.
- Staff must not walk through corridors or student areas carrying open mugs or cups of hot liquid.

- All sharp objects (scissors, knives, tools) to be stored away safely in locked cupboards and out of the reach of students.
- Classrooms to be cleaned and tidied ready for learning at the end of the school day, and ready for the next day by class staff.
- If required deep clean of classrooms or de-escalation rooms to be reported and logged on 'Every' for premises, and report to Nina via phone call if urgent.
- Class teams are responsible for daily checks and reporting of any concerns to the SLT team or through Every platform.

Monitoring and review

- Checklist to be completed by Pathway Leads once termly.
- The class teacher and staff team have the responsibility for maintaining a clutter free and tidy classroom.
- The school will ensure that classrooms are cleaned daily during term time.
- The school environment will be monitored by members of the Environment working group and SLT team.
- Health and Safety audits to be completed and feedback given to class teams within 72 hours of audit being completed.
- Governors will complete learning walks half termly, to assess the effectiveness of this policy.
- This policy will be reviewed yearly.
- Governing Body Of the school will review policy yearly.

Written by Heather Fraser

Date May 2023

Reviewed: May 2025

Updated: November 2025

Next review: May 2027

Further reading materials to support the implementation of this policy.

[The SPELL framework \(autism.org.uk\)](https://www.autism.org.uk)

[Visual supports \(autism.org.uk\)](https://www.autism.org.uk)

[Structured Teaching by TEACCH Staff | TEACCH® Autism Program](https://www.teacch.com/teacch-approach/)

[5 Key Principles of the TEACCH Method \(appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com\)](https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/)

[What is the Low Arousal Approach and How Can It Benefit My Family? - Autism Awareness \(autismawarenesscentre.com\)](https://www.autismawarenesscentre.com/)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/Supporting_pupils_at_school_with_medical_conditions.pdf)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9748440/#:~:text=Different%20hues%20have%20varying%20effects%20on%20autistic%20children%2C,changes%20in%20autistic%20children%20prone%20to%20light%20sensitivity.>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/11038128.2020.1832145>

<https://www.scottishautism.org/about-autism/research-and-training/design-autism>

<https://www.scottishautism.org/about-autism/research/research-facilitation>

[\(PDF\) Designing environments for autism spectrum disorder: An introduction to the available evidence \(researchgate.net\)](#)

[Learning Environment Types & Importance | What is Learning Environment? - Video & Lesson Transcript | Study.com](#)