

The Thomas Group Statement of Intent

The Thomas Group (TTG) is a small, nurturing, educational setting that focuses on children who have stopped attending mainstream school. It has a quiet classroom dedicated to its own exclusive use where personalised and effective education is provided for KS4 children presenting with social, emotional and psychological difficulties. The aim is to support and motivate children to stay connected to their normal world and to prevent them from falling behind or suffering educational failure. Instead of feeling *excluded* the goal is to help them feel that they once again *belong* and are *part of a group*, with the same opportunities and life chances as other young people.

We work collaboratively with staff to meet pupils' needs and incorporate activities that play to the strengths of every individual. We encourage students to participate fully in all lessons and ensure all their cultural and religious festivals are recognised, valued and fully explored. Bespoke timetables are agreed but group activities are encouraged so pupils feel *included*.

Intent

- To enable continuity of education for children and young people, who are currently facing significant barriers to their learning
- To provide personalised learning support and intervention
- To provide opportunities for progress and achievement
- To support reintegration back to mainstream education or another alternative provision such as Futures
- To work collaboratively with parents, carers, professionals and schools to improve the overall well-being of children and young people
- To enable pupils with medical and mental health needs to reach their full potential
- Create a happy, secure, supportive and safe learning environment that develops confidence in expressing own ideas and creativity
- Place the child's voice at the centre of education, health and care planning
- Offer every pupil full and equal access to all areas of the curriculum, taking into account health or developmental needs through personalised learning programmes
- Help each pupil achieve the greatest possible degree of independence
- Prepare each pupil for life beyond school, encouraging a sense of self-worth and recognition of themselves as part of the community.
- Integrate therapies with curriculum activities where appropriate.
- Value all adults' and pupils' contributions to the group's progress, and celebrate success and achievement.
- Build self-confidence, resilience and respect for self and others.

Implementation

Students have the opportunity to engage in the following subjects, taught by specialist teachers in preparation for the Futures GCSE class:

- Art
- Drama Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Equine Therapy
- English Language/Literature
- Maths
- Science
- History
- Citizenship
- Sport
- PSHE

There is a standard TG timetable but new students are not always able to access all subjects initially. During Inductions we discuss and agree in the presence of parents/carers, the subjects more easily accessible to the student in supporting their return to education and re-engagement in learning. The prime focus is on areas of strength and interest to encourage a return to the classroom in a non-threatening, safe, learning environment. Drama therapy is encouraged in the initial weeks to support any arising anxieties or concerns around returning to school. Music Therapy also helps students to connect as a group, share musical preferences and play as part of an ensemble and Enrichment (Equine Therapy, provides an opportunity to learn through horses, in a group and in an outdoor environment.

Once a student feels settled and more confident in their new learning environment, the core subjects of English, Maths and Science are introduced. Most of them have lost their confidence when they arrive in the TG but by starting on a reduced timetable consisting of creative and therapeutic subjects they gradually build the confidence to re-engage in academic subjects.

Impact

The TG offers a space where young people are encouraged to embrace change and develop independence and resilience. The progress that students make is at least good and, in many cases, outstanding relative to their starting points. Progress may appear slow at the start but gradually, attendance and engagement in lessons and other activities improves and in many cases friendships and group identity begins to develop. Some young people return to mainstream education, others transition to Futures or other educational provisions according to their individual needs. Many of the Thomas Group students who transition to Futures do extremely well in both their social and academic development, achieving remarkable GCSE grades despite the significant disruption to their educational journey.