

SPECIALIST EDUCATION SERVICES

Curriculum Statement

Date created or revised: 0924
Date of next review: 0925

*SES Avocet Ltd (4926028) and SES Turnstone Ltd (7972485)
are subsidiary companies of Specialist Education Services Topco Ltd (13159680)*

CONTENTS

1	OUR VISION	2
2	OUR ETHOS	2
3	THE EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF SPECIALIST EDUCATION SERVICES	3
4	PORTFOLIO OF ACHIEVEMENT AND NEEDS (MY JOURNEY): OUR BELIEF IN A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY	4
5	24 HOUR LEARNING: A TOTAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	5
6	OUR CURRICULUM INTENT	7
7	PERSONALISED LEARNING – CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION	9
	7.1 Personalised Curriculum Pathways	
8	MEASURING PROGRESS – CURRICULUM IMPACT	11
9	POST 16 EDUCATION	12
9	Appendix	
	9.1 The Pan Process: Portfolio of Achievements and Needs: Integrating Learning And Care	14
	9.2 Trauma and Learning	15

1 OUR VISION

The SES vision is simply “**No Limits**”; this translates into care and education without limits.



“At first something seems impossible; then it becomes improbable; but with enough conviction and support, it finally becomes inevitable.”

Christopher Reeve – “Superman”, August 26th 1996

The SES No Limits vision reminds us that with hard work and creative thinking, what appears impossible can become possible.

Specialist Education Services is a forward-looking company, adopting a “learning without limits” philosophy. This means that adults in our establishments have a passionate conviction that all our children are able to achieve; adults are optimistic about success and accept no restriction on what is possible with the children in our care, and whose education is in our hands.

- ✓ we believe in a ‘no limits’ approach to helping children
- ✓ we believe in children’s abilities and potential
- ✓ we believe in unconditional positive regard
- ✓ we believe our children deserve fun and happiness in childhood
- ✓ we believe in a ‘can do’ philosophy
- ✓ we believe in success and learning from mistakes
- ✓ we believe intelligence is multifaceted
- ✓ we believe learning is a lifelong process
- ✓ we believe creativity and imagination are the keys to developing passions and talents, and preparing for life in a rapidly changing world
- ✓ we believe assessment of progress is based on improvements on ‘previous best’
- ✓ we are future orientated

We constantly strive to integrate health, social work and educational perspectives and incorporate best practice from the different approaches in a holistic, nurturing, learning environment.

2 OUR ETHOS

Our guiding community beliefs are captured in our SES Way ethos statement that drives our daily culture:

Be Curious, Show Love, Build Connections

Be Curious (Learning without limits)

- **Ask Lots of Questions:** It's great to be curious! We all ask questions to learn more.
- **Explore New Things:** We help each other to try new activities and discover exciting things.
- **Find Your Own Answers:** It's fun to figure things out by ourselves, we always have people around to help us all explore.
- **Keep Wondering:** We all keep wondering about the world and never stop learning.
- **Enjoy the Journey:** Learning is like an adventure. We are always excited to see where our curiosity will take us.

Show Love (Unconditional positive regard)

- **Be Kind to Others:** We share kindness and go out of our way to make others feel happy.
- **Help When You Can:** We encourage each other to help each other and show we care.
- **Show Appreciation:** We all show gratitude; it promotes love and makes everyone feel valued.
- **Listen and Care:** We all listen to and help each other; random acts of kindness are great!
- **Spread Love Everywhere:** We all spread love by being caring and understanding to everyone around us.

Build Connections (Every interaction is an intervention)

- **Make Friends:** We all reach out and develop strong enabling relationships and friendships, building strong connections with others.
- **Work Together:** We all work together, because teamwork helps us all grow.
- **Share and Listen:** We share our thoughts and listen to others, creating understanding and trust.
- **Help Each Other:** We believe in helping each other, because that's how we build a caring and connected community.
- **Stay Connected:** We stay connected by checking in and supporting each other every day.

3 THE EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF SPECIALIST EDUCATION SERVICES

The stated educational purpose of SES establishments is to achieve the highest possible standard of educational achievement, as measured by:

- ✓ A movement from disaffection to engagement in the learning process
- ✓ Improvements in behaviour conducive to learning
- ✓ A growing enthusiasm for learning
- ✓ Specific and generalised achievements
- ✓ Tangible accredited outcomes
- ✓ Emerging gifts, talents and passions
- ✓ National accreditation

In doing this our philosophy is to make the curriculum fit the child not the child fit the curriculum.

4 PORTFOLIO OF ACHIEVEMENT AND NEEDS (MY JOURNEY): OUR BELIEF IN A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Most if not all children admitted to our establishments will have been in repeated failure situations both in mainstream settings and possibly in previous special school settings. They generally arrive with a history of poor attendance, placement gaps and a multitude of exclusions from school, and have therefore missed significant periods of education. They will almost certainly have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).

Children often come from backgrounds of deprivation and have experienced significant childhood adversity and trauma throughout their lives. These both potentially impact on longer term health in adulthood, mental health, social skills and their stress regulation systems, creating significant deficits in their of learning experience due to the secondary behavioural barriers.

The needs of our children, including their barriers, starting points, their contexts on arrival, experiences and feedback, are what shapes our curriculum design. The breadth, diversity and complexity of their needs dictate our individual personalised approaches and pathways to scaffold education, health and care.

Their starting points are almost inevitably extremely low relative to their cognitive potential. There may well be a complicated picture of educational dysfunction and mental health issues labelled under such headings as:

- Complex Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties
- Attachment Difficulties
- General Learning Difficulties
- Specific Learning Difficulties
- Developmental Delay
- Attentional Problems

All of these require targeted individualised support. At the heart of our approach is a 'no limits' highly personalised education recovery package developed from the Portfolio of Achievements and Needs (PAN) approach (see appendices).

Our children need an holistic framework of care, support and guidance for them to start to re-engage in the learning process. SES provide this framework of high quality care and therapeutic intervention embedded in a highly personalised learning experience known as the **PAN My Journey Learning Model**.

Our PAN / My Journey learning model summarises the child's achievements and needs in six areas:

- Education training and employment (My Learning)
- Family and Relationships (My People)
- Identity (Who I am)
- Experiences and Leisure (My Opportunities)
- Health (My Health)
- Transition (My Future)



Although the Learning Centre ‘curriculum’ is the main focus of the ‘My Learning’ area, our blended therapeutic learning offer for children fully embraces all six areas. In other words, **every aspect of PAN My Journey is part of the personalised learning pathway for children.**

We accept no barriers to innovation, creativity and response in order to reawaken a passion for learning in each child.

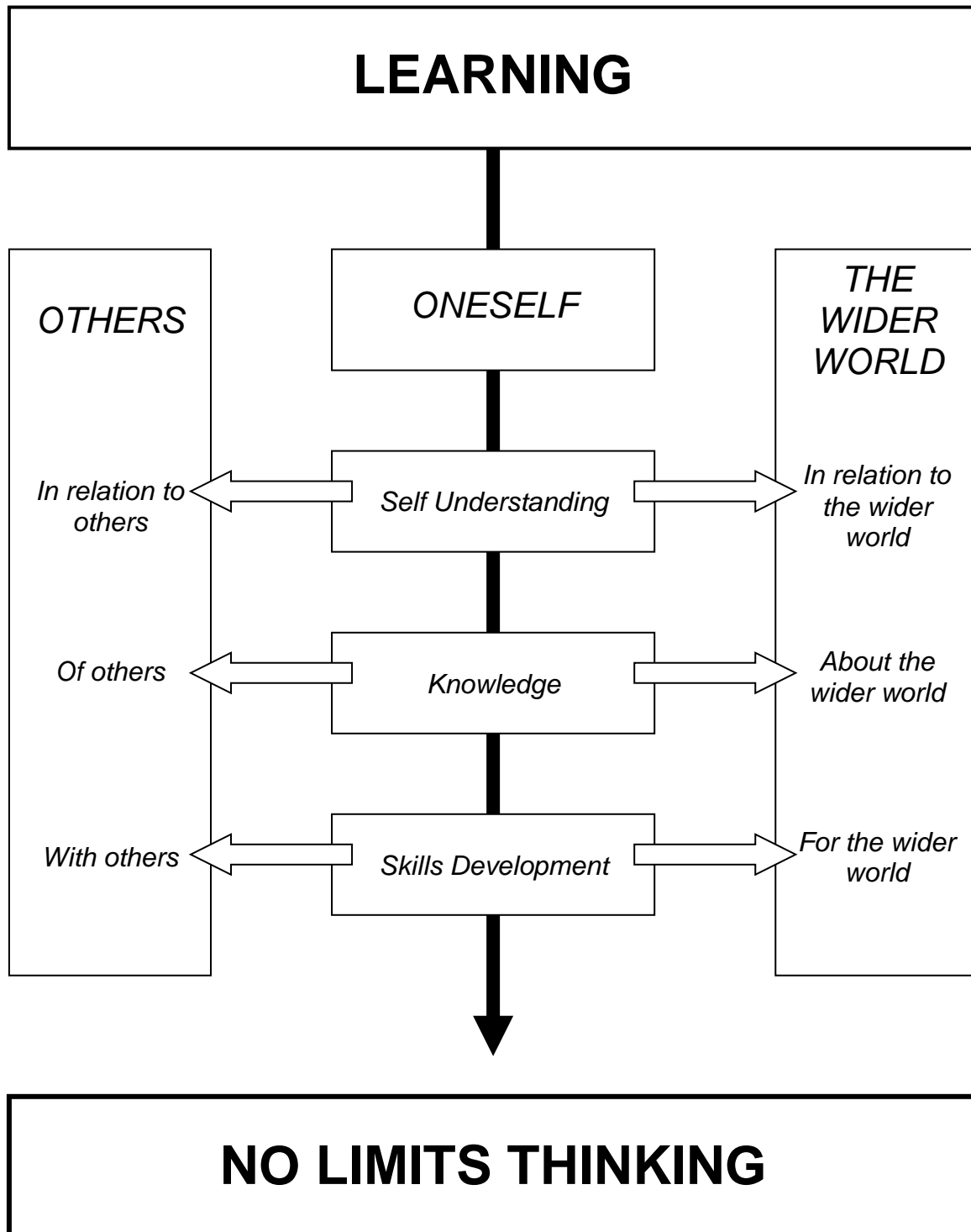
5 24 HOUR LEARNING: A TOTAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Learning is a life-long pervasive process not just a ‘classroom’ or ‘school’ process. It’s not even just the ‘academic’ process. SES believe it is essential that all children are provided access to a variety of experiences beyond the formally taught learning curriculum, for example experiential learning, learning in the outdoors, visits to theatres, concerts, museums, trips to historical, geographical and religious places of interest. These experiences also build cultural capital for our children. SES have designed our 99 Things to Do, ensuring children are provided with essential childhood experiences.

All our children have guaranteed unequivocal fair access to a rich, broad, balanced and experiential curriculum delivered across 24-hours of seamless learning opportunities. Experiences in residential care and after Learning Centre, including evening activities, membership of clubs, trips, cultural/subject/topic and learning celebrations, outdoor learning weeks, weekends and holidays away have very clear and tangible links within the curriculum offer. All children have access to creative opportunities, i.e. music, art, singing, dance, and play, as well as outdoor and progressive skills that build on prior experiences, develop and promote interests and talents. The curriculum is delivered via an integrated approach from staff across all disciplines including residential care team, Learning Centre, Occupational

Therapists, SaLT and Psychotherapists and is scaffolded by extensive consultancy. Staff are experienced and appropriately trained and they **ALL** work on the principle that there are no limits to success.

When we talk about a total learning environment we mean learning about oneself, others around you and the world around you. When you couple this with our “no limits” philosophy it is therefore unsurprising that at SES we take advantage of all opportunities open to us for extending learning across the 24 hour cycle:



This means that all staff will be ‘educators’ in the broadest sense and that all experiences relating to individual children can be planned, monitored and used to ‘accredit’ learning with Personal, Social and Health Education being but one obvious example. Indeed, there will be skills and experience across the care team that cannot be replicated in the Learning Centre team. We will take full advantage of this when planning and accounting for learning.

6 OUR CURRICULUM INTENT

Our learning curriculum, grounded in practice, evidence and pedagogy, aspires to broaden children’s horizons, stimulate their interest and discover a love of learning. Irrespective of their personal challenges and starting points, we believe all children have the potential to learn, be happy and become successful within society.

Our core responsibility to them all is to: diminish learning barriers; increase knowledge; teach positive behaviour and enhance skills and understanding; build self-esteem, confidence, strength and resilience, character and virtues. Our broad, balanced and ambitious offer provides substantial opportunities for personal development, bonded by dependable relationships. With careful scaffolding, we create a platform for engagement and a drive for moral and civically minded successful citizens. Our intention is to foster a sense of optimism that prepares them for their journey through life.

Specifically, our core curriculum aims for all children are:

- Experience learning opportunities that provide a rich childhood, building their dreams, aspirations, hopes, gifts, happiness and sense of fun.
- Be a functional reader and writer, alongside an increasingly broad and rich vocabulary to describe the world.
- Possess functional numeracy knowledge and skills.
- Have the ability to reflect, explore and solve problems.
- Embrace technology and be prepared for the 4th industrial revolution.
- To be physically fit and healthy.
- Achieve positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Have the necessary personal, emotional and social developmental skills for a successful quality of life.
- Understand how to play, develop friendships and sustain healthy relationships, transferring these skills into adulthood.
- Experience the outdoors as well as creative and expressive arts to unlock a sense of exploration.
- Develop a sense of resilience, determination and capability, allowing them to overcome personal barriers.
- Understand appropriate risk taking, make safe choices and foster a willingness to try new challenges.
- Be able to recognise their strengths, have the confidence to try new things, visit different places, meet different people, have confident conversations and make sense of the world around them
- To be equipped with practical life skills in the areas of finance, home management, self care, travel, and social skills and relationships.

- To develop experience and knowledge of enterprise, recognising the opportunities it affords.
- Possess respect for their own and other's identity, views, rights, faiths, beliefs and the law.
- Know where they belong, who they are and can be, discovering their personal potential and how they can contribute to society.
- Be ready to access further education, training or employment that prepare them for purposeful and fulfilling working lives.

Our curriculum places a high priority on the core skills of **Literacy, Numeracy, Relationships, Sex and Health Education**, as well as a broad exposure to stimulating spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences. Beyond that the curriculum response is specific and individually tailored to make it relevant and motivating.

As a result of their fragmented education and care, our children are likely to have missed positive early childhood learning experiences and may not have attained age related developmental milestones. Focusing on concepts including information processing, development of language and memory, and reasoning is essential to build the necessary skills for learning. Therefore, a focus on play, early reading and writing, numeracy, language acquisition and social interaction is often essential to enable children to progress to their next stage of development. Providing an extensive range of learning opportunities, including experiential learning, helps address these deficits and develop the language skills needed to be successful into adulthood.

In addition to their specific special needs and disabilities, they struggle with communication and literacy, which can severely limit their progress and development as independent learners. This is especially apparent with their vocabulary, with significant deficits and gaps in emotional language creating barriers to accessing the curriculum and emotional regulation, resulting in a high frequency of challenging behaviours.

We develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. **Literacy** is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for pupils, understanding the language provides access to the whole curriculum. Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects. We aim to develop reading skills through building understanding using a range of strategies, including synthetic phonics and other key approaches, such as disciplinary and reciprocal reading.

Teachers use every relevant subject to develop pupils' mathematical fluency. Confidence in **numeracy** and other mathematical skills is a precondition of success across the curriculum.

We plan for the development of **personal, social, health and emotional** capabilities in every area of their personalised curriculum. Sound development of individuals in the areas of; attention, organisation and working with others, are viewed as pre cursors of an ability to access the broader curriculum.

In recognition of the needs of the children, the curriculum looks to identify and prioritise a core body of knowledge and skills within the core SES subjects,

reinforced across the entire curriculum, ensuring that children both master and commit them to long term memory. The intention is to identify key themes and skills for each subject recognising what is most important, most readily accessible and what will best support children's access to wider learning and experiences and expand their cultural capital. For example, teaching in numeracy will prioritise an understanding of time, knowledge of times tables, simple measurements of volume, weight and length, accurate addition and subtraction.

Knowledge Sequences

SES has devised coherent knowledge sequences in the core subjects of literacy, numeracy, PSHE and RSE. These sequences are set out in knowledge bands from 1-16 (the equivalent of Key Stages 1 and 2) and bands 17 -32 (Key Stage 3 and beyond). The aspiration is for all children to achieve band 16 in these core subjects as a minimum; this provides the essential building blocks for life. Once this minimum aspiration has been achieved a personalised pathway will continue for children that strives to reach their full potential. In the core subjects, the bandings are approximately equivalent across literacy, numeracy and PSHE/RSE so that progress can be monitored and next steps planned for (see appendices for an example knowledge sequence).

All other subjects are defined as non-core and are set out in knowledge sequences that are arranged in steps. Teachers can match both bands and steps to age related expectations and equivalent year groups.

Our underpinning curriculum aim is to broaden children's horizons, stimulate their interest and inculcate a love of learning. Due to the nature of their specific needs and often difficult backgrounds, many children will experience periods when their progress will stall or even regress. This has to be a factor when designing a curriculum which will identify and reinforce the essential knowledge and skills which pupils need if they are to successfully access learning in Key Stage 4 and post 16.

SES is strongly committed to being at the forefront of educational thinking and practise, continually developing our pedagogical approaches to best suit the needs of all children.

7 PERSONALISED LEARNING – CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Personalised Learning is at the heart of SES philosophy. Personalised learning means:

- setting high expectations and giving every learner confidence they can succeed
- establishing what learners already know and building on it
- structuring and pacing the learning experience to make it challenging and enjoyable
- inspiring learning through passion for the subject
- making individuals active partners in their learning
- developing personal learning and thinking skills and personal qualities
- enabling children to develop the skills they will need beyond school

We demonstrate high expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of every child's

specific needs, as outlined in their EHCP (the legal document that describes their additional special educational needs). It means shaping teaching around the way different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every child.

At SES we incorporate our “no limits” philosophy with personalisation. This relies on re-exciting children with the idea of learning starting from the child’s strengths, interests, talents and passions as the gateway to success. Learning becomes something one does for oneself rather than something someone else does to you.

We are not bound by logistical structures that timetable large groups of children and classes – we literally individually timetable each child with a personalised learning package. We are equally not bound by a ‘standard’ teaching day, but we do guarantee to provide 25hrs per week of planned learning opportunities. At times, our approach may require a timetable that incrementally leads towards the full 25 hrs, especially after sustained periods without accessing education prior to their admission, or through periods of challenge and personal crisis.

Our schemes of learning are highly personalised, derived from our underpinning knowledge sequences and tailored to each young person, in order to support them in future pathways. The Learning Centre provides each child with a sequential curriculum, progressing through their planned pathway, at each point checking learning with recall and retention (using a multitude of methods) and developing learning over time. Whilst teachers understand the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage, the curriculum and its delivery addresses gaps in knowledge and understanding from individual starting points to ensure our children develop, consolidate and deepen understanding across all areas over time.

Policy and Practice documents exist for all National Curriculum areas and subjects. These documents carefully outline how the subject is integrated into practice and how they interrelate.

We believe that an individual’s capacity for learning is linked to their emotional well-being and that people learn in a variety of ways. We espouse an approach that allows for innovation and flexibility while guaranteeing an entitlement to high-quality educational outcomes. This embraces every aspect of school life including teaching and learning strategies, IT and Computing, curriculum choice, organisation and timetabling, assessment arrangements and relationships with the local community.

A hallmark of Turnstone House and Avocet House is high quality teaching and learning, and relationships between adults and children.

7.1 PERSONALISED CURRICULUM PATHWAYS

At SES we believe that the mainstream curriculum is only just catching up with what highly specialised environments have delivered for very damaged and disaffected youngsters where the priority has to be relevance and response to individual learning needs. The educational programmes and indeed wider learning experiences (24 hr learning) have to be holistic and therapeutically orientated, but rigorous in their evidencing of progress and outcomes.

On arrival, a child's initial curriculum will focus on establishing secure relationships through varied personalised experiences. Following curriculum pathways for younger children, and those with significant learning needs will be primarily designed to develop early communication and language, physical, personal, social, and emotional skills, literacy and numeracy, understanding of the world, and expressive arts and design. This may embrace imaginative learning projects, in a cross curricular approach, building on knowledge and help making sense of concepts; this is similar to an Early Years approach to build foundation learning.

As children progress at SES, most are ready for their next stage of personal learning and development. This includes more choices and opportunity to access academic and vocational study in areas of interest, knowledge and skill, whilst still providing access to the SES core subjects and the wider curriculum areas. There is also a strong emphasis on career pathways, work experience and vocational courses, which raise aspirations and re-motivates children.

At an appropriate stage of learning, children are introduced to more formal study options, including accreditation, that link to their career pathways and aspirations. Some of our young people access bespoke learning and development packages and are supported off site at local education and skills providers. Children are encouraged to complete their passport to the future, participate in work experience and develop the skills for independence, further study and employability.

The following documents are in place for all children to define their pathway at SES:

- Learning Centre Education Plan (this defines the rationale for the child's personalised curriculum with clear links to their EHCP outcomes).
- Curriculum Overview (summarises the knowledge being delivered in literacy, numeracy and PSHE/RSE for the current academic year).
- Long Term Planning Overview (provides the detail for an individual non-core subject for the year).
- Scheme of Learning (provides the planning, including knowledge and objectives, for a unit of learning).

8 MEASURING PROGRESS - CURRICULUM IMPACT

We believe that progress in learning should be judged against the National Curriculum and the usual range of accreditation available to all children. Access to the National Curriculum is an entitlement across all key stages and the relevant areas of the framework are used to assist in planning curriculum delivery. This means that despite pursuing individualised learning through children's strengths, gifts, talents and passions in an innovative and creative way, outcomes can still be mapped against the National Curriculum.

Due to the nature of their specific needs and often difficult backgrounds, many children will experience periods when their progress will stall or even regress. This has to be a factor when designing a curriculum which will identify and reinforce the essential knowledge and skills which pupils need if they are to successfully access learning in KS4 and post 16.

At SES, across our establishments, we are continually evolving a 'fit for purpose' assessment framework to support staff in planning for progress, and to ensure an effective, consistent and quantifiable measure of child progress.

Our SES tracking systems are underpinned by our core and non-core subject knowledge sequences; these have been designed and guided by the National Curriculum framework, referencing Age Related Expectations, to ensure the needs of our learners are met on an individual basis. Key additional progress measures also include engagement and attendance, and baseline standardised assessment.

Progress at SES is not limited to academic progress, and so each child's progress should be considered in line with their individual PAN My Journey planning structures. A wide range of systems, structures and processes support and inform views of both qualitative and quantitative progress. These include observation, questionnaires, surveys, activity analysis and cross professional communication, best practice progress meetings, subject and topic celebrations, learning lunches, celebration assemblies and governance etc., ensuring we track, amend and prioritise curriculum and wider work with individuals, groups and families.

Children's progress is monitored through their Student Progress Overview document; this summarises progress against the SES bands and steps, as well as recording standardised assessments, internal achievements, accreditation and life skills.

9 POST 16 EDUCATION

As part of the personalised learning response delivered by SES, the opportunity for children to continue their education beyond key stage 4, when appropriate, is critical. Post 16 learning is tailored directly to the individual needs of the child, with a continuing emphasis placed on their transition towards independence. We develop pathways using extensive baseline assessments and discussions with our children, which are then tailored to an individual's needs and aspirations. Throughout this process we deliver high quality independent careers advice, which enables individuals to make free and independent choices.

At the point of admission, we create a PAN My Journey Overview with six different areas of focus:

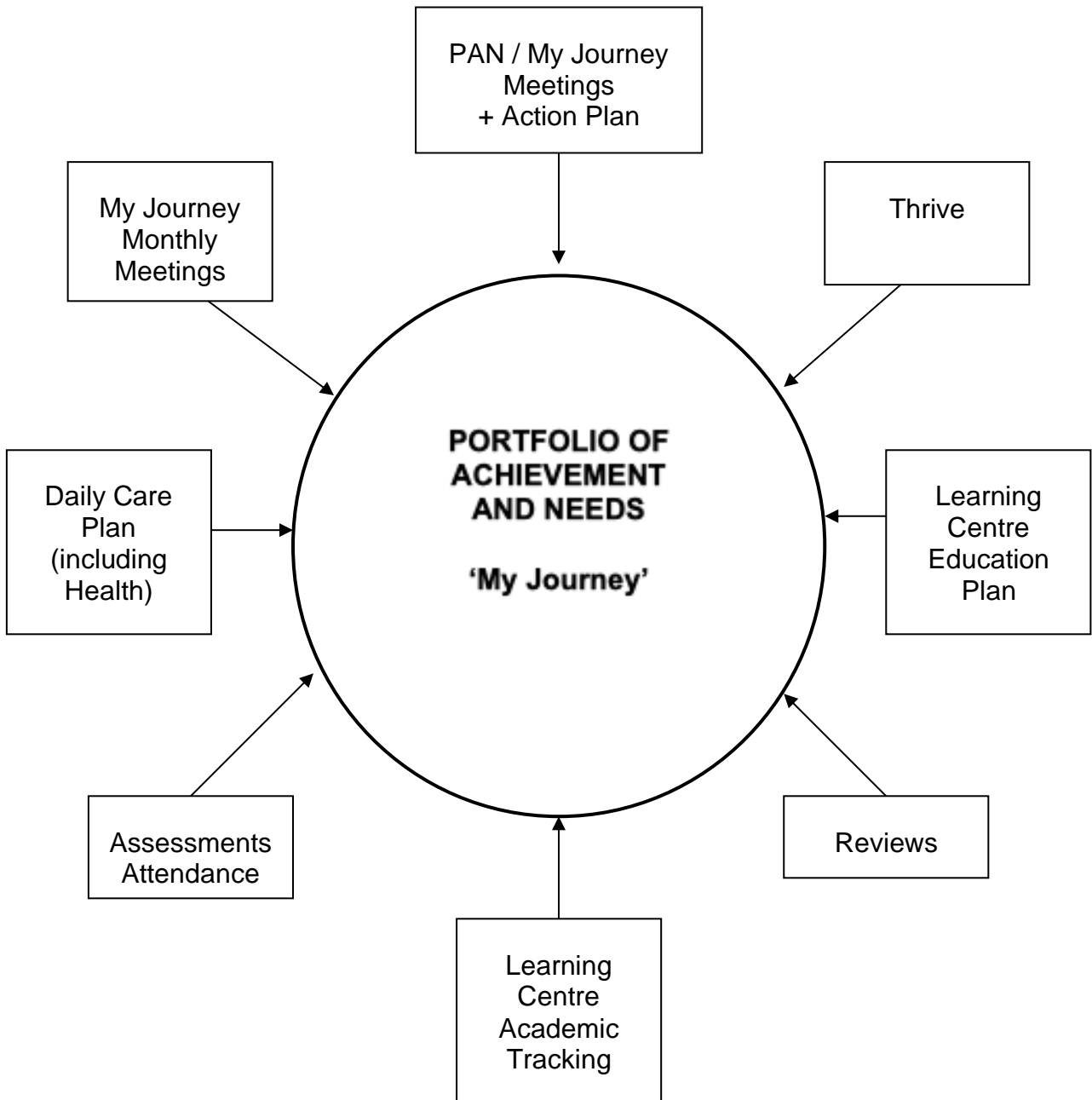
- Education training and employment (My Learning)
- Family and Relationships (My People)
- Identity (Who I am)
- Experiences and Leisure (My Opportunities)
- Health (My Health)
- Transition (My Future)

A full range of accreditation is available, alongside increasing opportunities to develop life skills, links with employment and access to college courses. The aim is to ensure the appropriate continuation of learning for all post 16 children. Turnstone House and Avocet House work in close liaison with college providers to ensure that suitable arrangements are made to support each individual through specific post 16

programmes of study, and further develop the personalised 24 hour curriculum to best ensure success at this stage of education.

9 APPENDIX

**9.1 THE PAN PROCESS: PORTFOLIO OF ACHIEVEMENT AND NEEDS:
INTEGRATING LEARNING AND CARE**



9.2 TRAUMA AND LEARNING

Children spend many of their waking hours in school. It is the place where they acquire academic knowledge and develop skills for the future. It is also where they develop friendships and learn to manage a complex social environment. For some children, however, the impact of trauma means that school becomes a difficult experience which, rather than providing positive opportunities, leaves them feeling anxious and excluded.

To learn effectively we need to be alert but calm. Traumatized children, however, can be in a constantly vigilant state ready to respond to danger. Instead of being ready to learn, they will be concentrating on survival. Even small schools have many adults and children in a restricted space, who may be perceived as potentially dangerous. When a child's baseline reactivity is high they may struggle to sit quietly and attentively and may attempt to regulate their stress by acts such as moving around the classroom, swinging on chairs or fiddling with possessions that evoke a disciplinary response from teachers. An alternative response is to cut off in a dissociative way which may avoid sanctions until their lack of attention becomes clear. Outside the classroom or in the playground children may interpret incidental or friendly contact as attacking and react aggressively. These responses are likely to alienate children from their peers and they can become seen as troublesome by teachers (Streeck-Fischer, 2000).

Most school learning requires the ability to understand sequencing and cause and effect. Telling stories, solving mathematical problems, understanding history or doing a science experiment all require this capacity. For many traumatized children, however, their earliest experiences laid down an expectation of chaos not predictability. Instead of the usual comfortable routine of sleeping, feeding, cleaning and play, many of them had a fragmentary and unpredictable experience of care. They may have no sense of cause and effect as their attempts to interact with the world resulted in random and unpredictable responses from their caregivers. Complex trauma can undermine the acquisition of executive functioning skills which allow people to integrate emotional and cognitive signals from the right and left brain so that they can set goals, plan, organise, persist in tasks and be flexible. Without these skills even highly intelligent children struggle to meet the demands of school learning.

Traumatized children may have serious problems with their sense of self and can see themselves as bad people. Formal learning involves the possibility of mistakes and failure. Many traumatized children are sensitive to shame-inducing experiences and react negatively to avoid them. Some disengage by truanting or refusing to undertake tasks, others 'act the clown' to avoid taking work seriously and many react to shame-inducing experiences with violence. Teaching staff can easily fail to recognise that such negative behaviour may be fuelled by anxiety rather than wilful disobedience.

Key points from research on trauma

- Children in care are likely to have experienced trauma but not all children who have adverse experiences will be traumatized. Every child is unique and their responses to the same adversity will differ.

- Trauma can affect brain development. Many traumatised children function at an earlier developmental level than their chronological age suggests.
- Traumatised children may struggle to develop regulatory skills needed for learning and social relationships.
- Some children react powerfully to sensory triggers related to their trauma by becoming hyperaroused or dissociating. These reactions often occur below the level of conscious awareness.
- If adults involved with traumatised children are unable to manage their own emotions, this can escalate children's distress.
- Effective help requires intervention that is congruent with neuroscience, developmentally relevant and relational.
- The key adults in helping children recover from trauma are their carers and teachers. They require relevant support and training to be most helpful to traumatised children.
- Crisis-oriented care organisations may exacerbate trauma and undermine the efforts of committed practitioners.
- Post-traumatic growth and resilience is possible. Traumatised children need hope and adults involved with them must believe in a positive future for them.

Many children in care experience severe neglect in their earliest years. Neglect occurs when physical, emotional or cognitive experiences required for normal development are either inadequate or absent. The impact is severe whether neglect is deliberate or the consequence of problems caregivers face in managing their own and their children's lives. The terror and helplessness experienced by neglected infants have led many theorists to describe early neglect as '**developmental trauma**' (D'Andrea et al, 2012). As babies' developing brains are organizing and developing neural pathways, a lack of appropriate stimulation and soothing can affect successful development of areas of the brain associated with cognitive, social and emotional skills. Children struggle to manage later traumatic events if they cannot regulate emotions or acquire reflective skills to make sense of what has happened to them.

Single terrifying events or experiences can have a lasting impact on individuals and some experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as nightmares, flashbacks or avoiding situations reminiscent of the trauma. Disabling though these symptoms are, the impact of complex trauma is more pervasive and harmful. **Complex trauma** occurs when terrifying experiences, caused by someone who should be a figure of trust, are the norm in children's lives (D'Andrea et al, 2012). Children adapt to this hostile environment and their baseline reactivity changes. Children can become over-sensitised to threat and may respond negatively to neutral and even positive cues.

These early experiences can have cascading and damaging effects throughout childhood and adolescence and well into adulthood. The impact of early neglect and trauma can cross every area of children's lives, negatively affecting their capacity to learn basic self-regulatory skills, develop a moral sense, manage a formal educational environment and make close, trusting relationships.