



# Welcome Pack

## Discovery Special Academy Background Information



Discovery Special Academy caters for pupils age 4 – 11 with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and is an academy within the Tees Valley Education Trust.

The Academy is dedicated to delivering outstanding inclusive practice through a culture of co-production, experiential learning and growth where carers and professionals work together to support the holistic development of the child in which all therapies are an integral part of pupils' education. This is reflected in our academy motto:

### **Through Discovery We Grow**

Discovery Academy is committed to enhancing the lives of all the pupils in its care to enable them to secure the best possible life chances as they move through their educational career and beyond. We ensure pupils are confident, tolerant and resilient by offering a challenging and exciting curriculum through which they can take risks and grow with each and every learning opportunity.

Pupils at Discovery work collaboratively and independently. This allows them to develop high levels of self-esteem, communication and interaction across the day through both learning and therapies. In this way, all pupils are supported to reach their full potential and develop the life skills they need.

Therefore, the principles of the Discovery Special Academy are to achieve **excellence and enjoyment for all** by building a learning community that ensures **all** pupils are well supported, can reach their personal potential and are equipped with the necessary life skills they need to become effective citizens of the 21st century.

Miss J Duncan

Head Teacher



## **Curriculum**

The curriculum at Discovery offers a stimulating, nurturing and safe environment in which pupils can develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. It is focused on ensuring that pupils are effective communicators, supporting their learning with objects of reference, Makaton, visual cues and communication aids.

The academy aims to help every child develop as successful, happy and independent learners by:

- providing a broad and balanced curriculum;
- providing a safe, caring and stimulating learning environment, with a variety of educational experiences, that increases the range of pupils' educational achievements;
- providing a personalised approach to learning that caters for all needs and learning styles;
- ensuring a thematic, cross curricular and flexible approach to curriculum planning underpinned by developmental and sensory curriculum foundations;
- developing a learning journey based on personal outcomes and intentions drawn from a range of sources and expertise to ensure progression for each pupil according to their needs;
- using of a wide range of academic and therapeutic areas both inside and outside and a range of state of the art resources that support learning and emotional wellbeing; and
- promoting equal opportunities and provide access to all areas of the curriculum.

## **Therapies**

Central to the success of the curriculum is the use of therapeutic approaches. All therapies are considered an important part of your child's education and will be carefully planned with specialists working together. The whole team working with your child work together to encourage independence, provide opportunities for greater access to the curriculum and promote the development of children's physical and social wellbeing.

These include:

- PECS – Picture Exchange Communication
- Makaton
- Alternative and Assistive Communication (AAC)
- Interactive Interaction
- Sensory diets and Sensory integration programs (working in partnership with Treetops OT)
- Sensory stories and multi-sensory approaches
- Visual supports (timetabling, schedules, key rings)
- Objects of reference
- Inclusive technology (switches, eye gaze)
- Fun with Food
- Proprioceptive massage

- TAC PAC
- SCERTS
- Movement programmes/ Sensory Circuits

### **Enrichment**

#### **Trips and residential visits**

Trips and visits form an essential part of the academy curriculum. Your child will be offered a variety of trips and experiences linked both to topic work and as part of their social and emotional development. All trips and visits will be carefully planned and organised with accessibility of venues and areas considered. Some of these additional educational experiences may take place on the academy site through specialist companies such as 'Zoo Lab' who bring a range of animals into the academy for pupils to handle or visiting artists or drama groups who re-enact events from history.

In Y5 and Y6, pupils will be offered the opportunity to attend a residential visit at an outward bound centre. This will be at a centre that is fully accessible and has staff who are able to support your child's needs.

#### **Additional Enrichment activities**

- Charity days
- Residential visits
- Business & Enterprise themed weeks (upper KS2)
- Out of hours learning (After school clubs, holiday clubs, sports events, etc.)
- Community projects/festivals
- Cultural Visits e.g. theatre trips
- Competitive sports events

### **The Academy Day**

The academy times of the day are:

- 8:50am Children are collected from transport or from parents
- 9:00am Registration - The day begins
- 10:15 to 10:30am Morning break
- 11:45 to 1:00pm Lunch
- 2:50 – 3:00pm Pupil collection by parents and transport
- 3:00pm The academy day ends

Teachers and support staff carry out playtime supervision and lunchtime supervision is carried out by support staff and lunch break supervisors.

### **Lunches**

On the SIMS information form, you have specified if your child will be having a school meal or a packed lunch. If you are entitled to free school meals, you will have completed the FSM form and this will also be recorded on SIMS. If you want to change your child's meal choice from school meals or packed lunches, please give the academy office two weeks' notice.

## **Uniform**

We believe that wearing an academy uniform helps promote a strong sense of identity within the academy and the community which creates pride in the children and their academy. It makes them feel part of our academy family.

The uniform consists of:-

- Grey/Black skirts, pinafores or trousers
- White or purple polo shirt
- Purple sweatshirt or cardigan
- Purple and white gingham dress which can be worn in the summer
- Black sensible shoes. For those who wear orthopaedic shoes or boots (such as Pedro), these should also be black.

The PE uniform consists of:-

- Pair of shorts or jogging bottoms
- T-shirt
- Black plimsolls or trainers

Uniforms are available to order from the academy office or can be placed directly with our supplier, please ask the office for further information. The sale of uniforms is a non-profit making venture.

Jewellery is not allowed in the academy. If your child has pierced ears they should wear small studs and will need to take them out themselves for swimming or PE.

## **Attendance**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend their academy regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should be appropriately prepared for each day.
- Pupils, in line with both attendance and safeguarding policy, should be encouraged to talk to their teacher / member of academy staff about any problems that prevent them from attending the academy.

For your child to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that they attend on time, every day unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality with us are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work.

Your child will be classed as persistent absentee if their attendance falls below 90%

Should your child be absent, it is very important that you let us know the reason as soon as possible on the first morning of absence. You can contact the academy via telephone on 01642 248333. If we do not have a reason we will contact you on the morning of your child's absence to ensure their whereabouts and safety.

Persistent absences or invalid reasons for your child's absence (which will be recorded on their record as unauthorised) will warrant involvement from internal and external agencies.

These may include any or all of the following: Education Welfare Officer, The Local Authority or our Parent Support Advisor.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be kept to a minimum. Pupils of school age must, by law, attend regularly. Leave of absence for holidays in term time can seriously disrupt pupil's continuity of learning. The Department for Education Regulations state:

- The current law does not give parents any entitlement to take their children out of education for a holiday during term time.
- Parents must complete a 'request for leave of absence during term time' form.
- Any application for leave of absence must only be in 'exceptional' circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are 'exceptional' and warrant the granting of leave.
- In 'exceptional' circumstances, a request for absence must be made in advance, to the Headteacher, who will inform you of his/her decision prior to the booking of your holiday.
- If a request for leave is not authorised by the Headteacher and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which then stays on a child's permanent record.

### **Medical Matters**

- If your child takes ill or has an accident in the academy, you will be contacted as quickly as possible. First aid trained staff will, in the meantime, take any emergency action which appears necessary. If your child has a minor injury for example, a graze or bump, a 'Bump Note' will be sent home explaining the incident and any first aid given.
- At Discovery Special Academy we understand that not all medication can be administered at home. Medications can be issued from the academy by a trained member of staff. Medicines must have been prescribed by a medical professional and dispensed from a pharmacy, clearly labelled with your child's name, the date and the correct dosage. All medications must be brought to and from the academy by a responsible adult. We need to have your written permission to administer medication, please call into the academy office to complete a form or download one from the academy website.
- Discovery Special Academy takes its responsibilities to pupils with special medical care needs very seriously. Care plans are put into place and reviewed regularly. Where necessary we will arrange further training for our staff to ensure your child's medical needs are met in the academy.

### **Parents in partnership**

At Discovery Special Academy we see parents/carers as full partners in the education process, playing a vital role in the life of the academy and impacting directly on the progress our children make.

We welcome parental involvement in the life of our academy. You can help in many ways, including listening to children read in the classroom, helping on academy trips, and helping your children with their homework and talking to them about their day. We believe that by working together, we can all maintain the high standards we have set for ourselves.

### **Home - Academy Communication Books**

- It is the academy policy that all children will be provided with a home - academy communication book. Staff will write in these as regularly as possible. However, it may not be possible or appropriate to write each day. All messages will be dated and include the initials of the member of staff who has written the message. We ask that you let us know that you've read each message in the book by writing your initials at the end of the message.
- In addition, we would ask that you use the home - academy communication book to let us know what your child has been doing at home and for any successes or concerns you wish to share with us. Family activities – visits to see family, shopping trips or other visits are useful to know to help us communicate with your child about their life outside of the academy. If you wish to speak to your child's teacher and would rather note this in the home – academy communication book, please do so. Communication books are checked on a daily basis.

### **Academy letters**

- During the year we will write to you with information about activities that will involve your child – these could be educational visits, sporting activities or special events in the academy. Please let us know if you would like this information to be emailed or posted to you rather than sent home with your child.
- Additionally, if you need letters in large print, braille or translated into your home language, please let us know and we will do our best to ensure this happens.

### **Newsletters**

- The headteacher will write newsletter each half term. This will provide general information for parents and carers in addition to items of news and events. Parents and carers will be sent a Marvellous Me notification when the newsletter is distributed. Newsletters will be published on the academy website and will be available to download.
- In addition, the academy publishes a newsletter at the end of each term which has articles and lots of colour photographs about some of the activities that have taken place at the academy during the term.
- Teachers will also send home a newsletter at the beginning of each half term to inform you of the class topics, PE times and detailing how you can support your child in their learning journey.

### **Marvellous Me**

- The academy encourages parents to sign up to the Marvellous Me app. We will use this to send home information about your child's success and keep you up to date with events and activities that are happening at the academy. A letter will be sent home at the beginning of the academy year with details on how to sign up the Marvellous Me. This will be our main means of communicating with you about

academy updates and notices such as unforeseen school closures, reminders about trips and visits. If you need any further information, please speak to your child's class teacher who will be able to help you sign up.

### **Text messages**

- The academy uses a text messaging service where we are able to send group and individual messages to parents. This is an effective way of communicating short pieces of important information to parents quickly. Please ensure you inform the academy if you change your mobile telephone number.

### **Annual Review Meetings**

- Each year we will arrange a review meeting to discuss your child's progress, health and well-being and agree targets for their educational, social and emotional development. We will inform you of the arrangements for this meeting as soon as possible at the beginning of the academy year. If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact the academy office as soon as possible and we will arrange an alternative date and time. When we inform you of the date of your child's review we will also ask you if there is anyone in particular that you would like to be invited to your child's review meeting – please let us know as soon as possible. We will invite the other professionals who work with you and your child to attend.

### **Consultation meetings**

- In addition to annual review meetings, we will arrange consultation meetings in the autumn and spring terms to discuss key learning and therapy priorities for your child. These meetings will be arranged after academy hours and will provide an opportunity for a 15 minute consultation meeting with your child's class team. We do encourage you to attend these meetings so you have the opportunity to see your child's work and the classroom in which they learn. However, in exceptional circumstances we can arrange for your child's class teacher to hold a telephone consultation or a home visit for you to discuss your child's learning priorities.

### **Stay and share events**

- At the beginning of each academy year we will hold a stay and share event for each class. This will provide an informal opportunity to meet your child's new class team early in the academy year. We will then hold a stay and share afternoon each term so you can learn more about the activities and therapies your child is accessing.

### **Open afternoons**

- At the end of each term, we will hold an open afternoon where you have the opportunity to come and visit the academy and share your child's learning journey with them. There will also be the opportunity to talk to other members of the academy team involved with your child.

### **Website**

- The academy website contains information on the academy curriculum, newsletters, academy policies, term dates and other important and useful information. If there is anything you feel we should include on the website that we have not already, please



Speak to your child's class teacher who will ensure this information is passed to the senior leadership team.

### **Family Support**

Pastoral and Welfare support for families is important and we work with parents and carers to help them overcome some of the things that get in the way of their child being able to make the most of what the academy has to offer. If you are having problems or would like some advice please contact the academy for free confidential information.

### **Staffing**

Headteacher	Miss Jennifer Duncan
Deputy headteacher	Mrs Annmarie Titchener
Business manager	Mrs Carole Tonner
Level 3 Administrator	Mr Lee Sinton
Apprentice Administrator	Miss Mae Thomas

### **Teaching staff**

Reception teacher	Mrs Rebecca Hill
Reception Teacher	Mrs Tracy Hanger
Y1/2 teacher	Miss Hanna Kirk
Y1/2 teacher	Mrs Zahida Khan
Y1/2 teacher	Mr Chris Shields
Y2/3 teacher	Mrs Leanne Colebrook
Y3 teacher	Mrs Grace Brock
Y3/4 teacher	Mrs Michelle Armour

<b>Level 3 teaching assistants</b>	Miss Michelle South Mrs Nicola Noel Mrs Terri Lodge Miss Mollie MacSween Mrs Sian Lamb Mrs Kendra Hawkins Miss Amita France
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<b>Level 2 teaching assistants</b>	Miss Emma Hanlon
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<b>Care assistants</b>	Ms Julie Innerd Mrs Tanya Quinn
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<b>Lunchtime supervisor</b>	Mrs Kelly Nimmo Mrs Joanne Breeze Miss Kellie Richardson
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### **Equal Opportunities**

The academy recognises its responsibilities under the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act and Disability Discrimination Act to eliminate discrimination and to promote good race relations. Equal opportunities is the responsibility of the whole academy community and is reflected throughout the organisation of the academy. All staff, parents /guardians and pupils are involved in the developing, implementing and monitoring of equal opportunity policy and practice to prepare our pupils for life in an ethnically and culturally diverse society.

### **Safeguarding Statement**

At Discovery Special Academy, the health and safety of all children is of paramount importance. Parents send their children to the academy each day with the expectation that the academy provides a secure environment in which their children can flourish. We therefore have to ensure that this expectation becomes reality. In order to do this a wide range of measures have been put in place which are outlined in our Safeguarding Policy.

### **Academy Policies**

The academy has detailed policy documents on all statutory areas and these are available on request from the office. Please do not hesitate to ask us for any of our policies. Some policies are also available for download from our website.

### **Complaints Procedure**

If you are worried about your child's learning or welfare at the academy, your child's class teacher is the best person to approach first. You can request a call from your child's teacher using the academy – home communication book or contact the academy office asking the teacher to get back to you.

If the teacher can't help, or you are not satisfied with their response, you can talk to Miss Jen Duncan, the Head Teacher, or Mrs Ann Titchener, the Deputy Head Teacher. A meeting or a telephone conversation with the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher can be arranged through the office. If you feel you can't resolve a problem informally, we have a formal complaints procedure that you can follow. This can be obtained upon request from the academy office or is available to view and download on our website.

### **Contact Information**

Discovery Special Academy  
C/ O Brambles Primary Academy  
Kedward Avenue  
Brambles Farm  
Middlesbrough  
TS3 9DB  
Tel: 01642 248333

Email: [enquiries@discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk)