



THLCIC Ethos Statement

Treasure House (London) CIC was founded in 2010 in order to address a particular group of vulnerable young people who suffer from problems such as social isolation, school phobia, anxiety, high functioning ASD and other special educational needs. These young people nearly all have a history of being missing from education for real and understandable reasons. By teaching them to love the learning process again they become excellent attenders, confident people and effective young citizens. Our safe and supportive atmosphere and very small class sizes provide young people with the space to heal from trauma, regain confidence and to make academic progress.

At Treasure House we put the onus on our students to engage in education and in life. We create an atmosphere which encourages them to want to learn, take an active part in the community that is made up of students and staff and develop strategies to make their own lives better.

Behaviour

We have very few incidences of violent or destructive behaviour, particularly by avoiding the 'pressure cooker' effect that the student might have been subject to at school. Incidents that occur due to a strict set of rules and prescriptive behaviour that must be adhered to are therefore avoided. In other settings, these incidents often lead to an ever escalating set of sanctions, these sanctions are, often unavoidably, imposed without first considering the underlying reasons for the perceived negative behaviour. We work hard to identify the triggers for incidents, such as the student's situation at home, unpredictable demands of school, anxiety from navigating a large building full of students or not having their learning needs met as part of a large group. It is then easier for us to support our students to overcome these barriers to learning.

Child-centred learning

From the moment that we meet a new student, we work hard to identify a safe starting point from which we can support them in finding ways to address their issues. We use the Robin Hedderly Sentence Completion Test to find out more about them. The test uses a list of statements to be completed in order to assess dyslexia, but we have adopted it as a quick way to find out about the young person. Statements range from 'School is' to 'My greatest fear'. This provides an excellent initial basis to build on when working to identify the position from which the student has arrived. In addition, the subject assessments and the Parent, Student and Director meeting are used to negotiate an initial programme of study. It is important that arrangements are flexible to enable us to negotiate any difficulties the student may have in coping with certain subjects. For example, we may temporarily delay in engaging students in groupwork to allow them time in which to become comfortable with being at Treasure House.

There are clear indicators that tell us more about the emotional state of a student than attendance at school or completed work. They tell us how at ease the student feels and how much commitment they have to the school and their education. These may range from taking

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their jacket off or eating with the group to using good eye contact and going straight to lessons without resistance. We monitor these closely and they inform our subtle approach in making progress.

Whole-school approach

Due to the small group sizes, which usually number one teacher to every two or three students and rarely exceed six students to one teacher, the hands on experience of our teachers is vital in creating a fuller picture of barriers to learning, problems outside of school, ability and progress, and how we are responding to SEN needs. Each member of staff is committed to the wellbeing of the student and they take their responsibility to promote a safe and supportive atmosphere very seriously. It is important that training is provided to support them. In the future we hope to develop this further and we are currently also considering a whole-staff supervision session to take place on a regular basis. During INSET we discuss each student in depth, looking at positives, concerns and actions for each. The Directors have ultimate responsibility for communicating with parents, professionals and students and dealing with any issues that arise. When issues emerge that may be a common theme amongst our students, or an incident occurs, this triggers an assembly, PSHEE session or whole-school discussion to elicit from the students what is going wrong, how they want and deserve to feel at school and in the wider world, and what they can do in order to support this to happen. As part of our daily practice we also use the Lesson Review on the reverse of the Lesson Plans to inform us on individual student progress and communicate concerns or praise to parents. We regularly review school rules, pointing out that some are not debatable, but putting the onus on the students to identify positive steps they can put in place to ensure staff and students feel safe and supported.

It is explained, at interview stage, that responsibility to support other students is a criteria for entry to Treasure House. Most students find this refreshing. They do not have to be firm friends with every student, but they do have to treat them with respect and recognize that the sort of issues which have led to them attending Treasure House are a common theme among the whole student body.

Communication with Parents and Referrers

Communication quite frequently happens on a daily basis where there are issues such as low attendance, poor punctuality or anxiety. More likely is a regular call to report positive behavior to parents to encourage praise at home, this encourages the student to achieve and, often, a report of improved relationships at home follows quite quickly after joining Treasure House. If there are issues, these are usually tackled within 24 hours and parents are requested to attend a meeting to find solutions if the problem persists.

Parents are encouraged to call whenever they have worries and both of the Directors share their mobile numbers, emails and the school contact numbers in order that parents can communicate with us effectively. Absences are noted and if a student hasn't arrived by 11am, this triggers a call home. Due to the small size of the setting, it is impossible not to note absence. This can be verified by the signing-in book in the lobby in the unlikely event that a teacher has let a student in themselves.

Where a student's behavior is threatening or violent, an extremely rare situation at Treasure House, the student will be sent home upon agreement with the parent in order to provide a 'cooling off' period. The parent then agrees to meet with us so that a plan can be made to avoid a recurrence of the behavior. In the cases where the parent refuses to, or cannot, attend a meeting, alternative arrangements will be made, such as the student working from the office until the problem has been resolved.

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Most solutions are joint responsibility – thus Treasure House may change circumstances or behaviours, which will also be asked of the student, in order to avoid a recurrence. This may include a change of subjects offered, a different working space or a change of groupings. However, it is important not to undermine the student's need to make personal changes and compromises as they would have to when negotiating in a workplace or other setting. The vital element is the communication around what is going wrong and how it can be put right, within parameters that cannot be changed. It is not acceptable, for example, that a student decide not to attend for any reason or who to work with, based on gender, age, race, culture or religion.

We value the support of our referrers and training that has been made available to us by Southwark and realize that collaboration with other professionals provides us with a wider set of possibilities with which to support our students.

Feedback

At the end of each year the experiences, opinions and feelings of students, parents and referrers are invited via a feedback form and collated for analysis by the Directors. This informs decisions about service provision for the following year and beyond.

Much of what happens at Treasure House is carefully orchestrated without seeming so. We carefully make plans in order that we can maintain non-confrontational control and allow our students to feel that they have made positive changes and decisions themselves, as learning through experience and owning the change that happens in their lives is paramount to their continued development.