



Closing the Gap Policy

Reviewed Date: September 2023
Next Review due: September 2024

Key Terms

Closing the Gap: “narrowing the attainment gap between groups and individuals to ensure all students attain well and make the expected levels of progress.”

Intervention: “the strategies and methods used to narrow the gap between identified target groups and individuals to ensure all students attain well and make the expected levels of progress.”

I. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

This document has been created in conjunction with the Pupil Premium impact Review and Action plan and should be used alongside this.

At Thornhill Community Academy we recognise the importance of ensuring all students, whatever their background or circumstance, are provided with a relevant, high quality education. This will ensure that all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in life beyond the Academy.

At Thornhill Community Academy Closing the Gap should be an integral part of every lesson and all areas of the Academy. Within the classroom there should be a clear focus on narrowing the achievement gap between groups and individuals through well-planned and differentiated lessons that challenge and stretch all students. All staff are entitled to a programme of training that allows them to continually expand and experiment with a full range of teaching strategies and techniques to ensure that any achievement gaps are closed rapidly through the use of timely and appropriate intervention.

2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Key Aims of the Academy:

Closing the Gap Policy

1. To develop a clear direction and focus for Closing the Gap across all areas of the Academy, especially for disadvantaged students.
2. To embed 'Closing the Gap' across the whole Academy curriculum, using a range of resources and strategies.
3. To raise levels of attainment and progress and narrow the gap between target groups and individuals, specifically for disadvantaged students.
4. To improve staff knowledge and understanding of Closing the Gap strategies and interventions and to share good practice.

3. RATIONALE & CONTEXT

- ***Progress and attainment gaps exist for certain student groups and individuals.***

Gap analysis of Academy data shows that there are some gaps in attainment and progress in English and maths across different year groups. Appropriate and effective intervention and teaching and learning strategies need to be put in place to ensure these gaps close rapidly so that all students make at least the expected levels of progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

Recently there has been a swift improvement in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students in maths at Key Stage 4. Attainment and progress in English indicate there are still gaps and further work needs to be done to raise standards for all students as well as ensuring gaps are closed rapidly for disadvantaged students. Further work also needs to be done to close the achievement gap across all subjects to ensure positive progress outcomes.

- ***The nature of the cohort on entry is remains below national average.***

The popularity of the Academy is growing and the numbers on roll at Year 7 are rapidly increasing. Thornhill Community Academy is now first choice for over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Year 7 intake. However, the ability of the intake on entry in Year 7 continues to be below national average year on year. This difference is significant for some year groups in the Academy. Furthermore, the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average, as is the proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the Pupil Premium.

- ***A significant percentage of our students have poor literacy skills when joining the Academy.***

Low literacy levels are impacting on progress and attainment for a large percentage of students. These gaps need to be closed rapidly to ensure all students make at least the expected levels of progress by the end of Key Stage 4. The emphasis is being switched from KS4 to KS3 so that Year 7 is as much a focus for intervention and support as Year 11 in order to ensure gaps are closed early. A comprehensive literacy strategy and intervention plan is in place to address these issues.

- ***Pupil Premium and Catch-up Premium funding need to be used effectively to help close the achievement gaps.***

The Academy needs to continue to use the additional Pupil Premium and Catch-up funding made available to the Academy in order to further close the achievement gaps.

- ***Teaching and learning needs to ensure effective and appropriate strategies and activities are in place on a lesson by lesson basis to help close the achievement gap and meet the needs of all students.***

The quality of teaching and learning has improved over time with the number of students making good progress in lessons increasing. There is a clear focus on Closing the Gap students in the planning and delivery of all lessons to ensure that learning meets the needs and accelerates the progress of all students. A range of timely and appropriate interventions are in place, within and beyond the classroom. Work on this needs to continue to ensure the gap is narrowed rapidly.

- ***Further improvements in attendance and behaviour need to be made and sustained for disadvantaged students.***

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A key focus for attendance and behaviour is to ensure that disadvantaged students receive the support and guidance they require to narrow gaps in both areas. Attendance officers and TCA's *Behaviour TOGETHER* policy are both utilised to further improve the narrowing of gaps in these areas.

4. INTERVENTION

What is intervention?

Intervention is defined as 'the strategies and methods used to narrow the gap between identified target groups and individuals to ensure all students attain well and make the expected levels of progress'. This should be both within and beyond the classroom and should be timely and appropriate to the specific skills gaps and needs of individual students. There are **three** distinct waves of intervention that staff should follow.

Wave 1 - The effective inclusion of all children in high quality teaching & learning.

To include:

- A nurturing environment with relevant, tailored and differentiated opportunities for learning.
- Opportunities for small group experiences in a safe and secure space.
- Extra time for responses to questions or contributions to group discussion.
- Extra time for activities where needed.
- Scaffolding of activities and modelling of exemplar work and responses.
- Using practical activities and experiential learning.
- Opportunities for children/young people to transfer/generalise their learning in different contexts and between different subjects.
- A clear focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Opportunities for revision and over learning.
- Access to groups where students are working with peers of similar levels.
- Access to grouping that enables students to work with peers who will provide good role models for language and communication skills and for co-operative and independent application to task.
- Teaching and learning which is multi-sensory and well structured.
- Changing direction and re-shaping tasks to enhance student progress and understanding.

Wave 2 - Additional time-limited provision in the form of small-group intervention outside of the normal classroom.

When considering students for Wave 2 additional support, teachers should first consider whether the elements of Wave 1 provision are in place. It may well be the considered judgement that despite some of these elements not being in place, a student is sufficiently behind their peers to merit additional support. Nevertheless, the thorough implementation of quality first teaching should be a priority. Wave 2 interventions should be used for students who can be expected to 'catch up' with their peers as a result of the intervention.

To include: Small-group intervention for example after school booster classes; holiday revision camps, withdrawal classes during the Academy day, early careers intervention and opportunities.

Wave 3 - Specific targeted interventions for identified students outside of the classroom.

- Additional time-limited intervention and provision to enhance the progress of identified children where Waves 1 and 2 are not, on their own, having the desired effect.
- This will involve intensely focused teaching activities that tackle fundamental gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding which is preventing progress
- These would usually be conducted on a 1 to 1 basis where the teacher does not expect students to make the expected progress in a group situation.

5. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Accept overall responsibility for the delivery of the Academy's Closing the Gap Policy and Action Plan.
- Provide opportunities for staff training about Closing the Gap to take place on INSET days or during other times.
- Support departments they line manage to close the achievement gap and identify students for timely and appropriate interventions.
- Be role models in using strategies in their own teaching to close the achievement gap.
- Ensure strategic deployment and utilisation of Pupil Premium and Catch Up Premium funding to enable identified achievement gaps to be closed rapidly.
- Produce a Closing the Gap summary annually, making explicit to staff achievement, behaviour and attendance gaps for all student groups and individuals across all year groups.
- Ensure all staff are made aware of the key students, groups of students, and target groups identified within the Closing the Gap document who are not achieving, attending and behaving.
- Ensure timely and appropriate wave 1, 2 and 3 interventions are put in place.
- Track and monitor students who are below target for behaviour and attendance and ensure timely and appropriate intervention is put in place.

Governors will:

- Accept responsibility for challenging the Senior Leadership Team on the delivery of the Academy's Closing the Gap Policy and Action.
- Undertake appropriate Closing the Gap training opportunities provided by the Academy and external providers.
- Hold Academy leaders to account for effective spending of Pupil Premium funding and the monitoring of its impact upon disadvantaged students' progress.
- Ensure Closing the Gap is a standing agenda item on an appropriate Trustee sub-committee.
- Keep up to date with the Ofsted framework requirements for Closing the Gap and Pupil Premium funding.

The Inclusion and Pastoral Teams will:

- Utilise the Closing the Gap booklet to ensure timely and appropriate pastoral interventions are put in place, which support the academic achievement of target students and groups.
- Ensure literacy is promoted in tutor time activities.
- Assess and support students on Education, Health and Care Plans and SEN Support with appropriate interventions to improve reading ages following reading test analysis.
- Identify and support students with specific needs, such as dyslexia, and provide appropriate intervention.
- Provide intervention strategies using Lexia, catch-up reading, bespoke reading groups and programmes to support students in their literacy across the curriculum.
- To provide opportunities so that the Lexia programme is used as part of Year 6 to 7 Primary Transition and Year 7 Catch Up programme to develop students' literacy skills.
- Provide in-class support where necessary and one-to-one out of class support for students identified in the Closing the Gap booklet.
- Communicate with all staff the SEND needs of students who have difficulties and provide with strategies and guidance for supporting students in the classroom.
- Identify students in need of additional support during transition and ensure appropriate interventions are put in place before the start of Year 7.
- Ensure all interventions are recorded appropriately.
- Track and monitor students who are below target for behaviour and attendance and ensure timely and appropriate intervention is put in place.

The Literacy & Numeracy Coordinators will:

- Lead on delivery of the Academy's and Literacy and Numeracy strategies to improve literacy and numeracy of targeted Closing the Gap students.
- Provide opportunities for staff training about literacy and numeracy issues to take place on INSET days or during other times.

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- Advise other staff in the Academy on literacy and numeracy issues
- Co-ordinate tutorial and whole Academy literacy and numeracy initiatives.
- Organise programmes for literacy testing, liaising with the SEND team
- Monitor the impact of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies on students' progress and attainment.
- Identify students in need of Literacy and Numeracy intervention from the Closing the Gap document.
- Develop links with feeder primary schools to identify and support key students as part of the transition programme.
- Ensure all interventions are recorded appropriately.

Subject Leaders will:

- Effectively utilise assessment information, as well as Closing the Gap data, to track the progress and attainment of students.
- Utilise the Closing the Gap booklet to ensure timely and appropriate wave 2 and 3 interventions are put in place which support the academic achievement and pastoral support of target students and groups.
- Track and monitor students who are below target and ensure timely and appropriate intervention is put in place.

Teaching Staff will:

- Effectively utilise assessment information, as well as Closing the Gap data, to plan effective lessons which enable all students to make good progress.
- Ensure teaching is good on a daily basis and lessons are differentiated to meet the needs of all students, as identified in Wave 1 intervention below.
- Ensure opportunities are provided in all lessons for all students to make good progress.
- Utilise the Closing the Gap booklet to ensure timely and appropriate wave 2 and 3 interventions are put in place which support the academic achievement of target students and groups identified.
- Ensure Literacy and Numeracy is promoted in all lessons.
- Track and monitor students who are below target and ensure timely and appropriate intervention is put in place.

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EQUALITY IMPACT AUDIT AND ACTION PLAN

Put X in the PLUS column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a positive impact on a group.

Put X in the neutral column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a neutral impact on a group.

Put X in the MINUS column to indicate if you judge that the policy has a negative impact on a group.

In making a judgement *due regard* has been paid to the requirement to:

- i. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization
- ii. Advance equality of opportunity
- iii. Foster good relations

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS		PLUS	NEUTRAL	MINUS	ACTION
1	Age		X		
2	Disability	X			Should improve the equality of opportunity for SEND and students with a disability
3	Gender Reassignment		X		
4	Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
5	Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
6	Race	X			Should improve the equality of opportunity through targeted provision for key groups and students
7	Religion or Belief		X		
8	Gender	X			
9	Sexual Orientation		X		
Other					