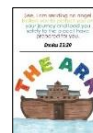


The Ark



St Michael's
CofE Primary Academy

Social, Emotional and Mental Health SEND Unit for 4–11-year-olds

“See, I am sending an angel before you to protect you on your journey and lead you safely to the place I have prepared for you.” Exodus 23: 20

Ethos and underpinning principles

At the heart of The Ark is a commitment to providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment where every pupil is valued, understood and empowered to succeed. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that all of our pupils regardless of their background or experiences can flourish, develop resilience and achieve positive outcomes with the right support. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and that pupils within our provision may present with complex emotional needs arising from trauma adverse experiences or unmet developmental needs. As such our approach is underpinned by trauma informed and attachment aware practices ensuring that staff respond with empathy, consistency and understanding rather than judgement. Through this our aim is that our pupils feel safe and have a sense of belonging. At St Michael's we offer a nurturing environment where forgiveness, reconciliation and second chances are given; and we ensure the principles of a nurturing environment underpin the curriculum we offer, namely that:

- Positive respectful relationships are central to our work.
- Our provision is tailored to meet the pupils' individual needs strengths and interests.
- We provide clear structures, routines and expectations to reduce anxiety and create a secure environment.
- We focus on repairing relationships and promoting accountability. Pupils are supported to reflect on their actions, understanding the impact on others and develop more positive ways of relating.
- Well-being is prioritised alongside academic achievement with emotional literacy, self-regulation and resilience being explicitly taught.
- Partnerships with families, carers, external agencies and the wider school community are central to ensure a consistent approach.

At 'The Ark' we support pupils whose SEMH needs are identified as their primary area of need on their EHCP. The service is positioned to support pupils whose SEMH needs are as a result of early childhood trauma which makes them vulnerable. This includes attachment needs, anxiety, low mood, low self-esteem etc. While sometimes these underlying difficulties may result in challenging, aggressive and complex behaviours, this should not be the pupil's primary form of communication. The Ark is not appropriate for pupils who exhibit primarily physical behaviours in the absence of underlying SEMH needs.

Safe and Trusting Relationships

Positive relationships are at the core of effective practice in The Ark. Staff prioritise developing safe and trusting relationships with pupils through consistency, empathy and care recognising that many young people may have experienced disrupted or unsecure relationships in the past. By taking time to understand each pupil's individual experiences, triggers and strengths adults in the setting foster strong relational connections that create a sense of safety, predictability and belonging. These connections provide the foundation for learning enabling staff to support emotional regulation, model positive interactions and guide pupils in developing appropriate emotional skills. Through this relational approach pupils are encouraged to engage, take risks in their learning and begin to build healthier more secure connections with both peers and adults.

Our intention is that pupils leave The Ark as kind respectful individuals that are able to regulate their emotions, form safe and trusting relationships and feel ready to embrace the next chapter of their educational journey and future lives with optimism and self-belief. Grounded in our Christian vision and values we strive to nurture each pupil's potential enabling them to flourish academically, socially and spiritually as a child of God, within a passionate and inclusive community.