UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA

Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy Policy

The Levels School exists to provide a nurturing environment in which students with specific learning difficulties and co-occurring diagnoses can develop their self-esteem and aspire to be independent young adults who value the rights, responsibilities and rules that exist to promote and support their future welfare. Our approach toward establishing this ideology is predicated to trauma-informed practice and an obligation to develop the social skills required to build their future aspirational communities. We exist to help them find their level.

This policy covers all premises known as The Levels School.

Date of policy	**September 2025**
Next review date	September 2026
Frequency of policy review (annually, every two years)	Annually
Policy owner	Claire Thomas – Head of Therapy
Published policy	Yes ☐ No ☒
List of connected policies	SEND, Curriculum, Behaviour, Staff Code of Conduct, Allegations against Staff, Lone/Alone working, Data protection policy and procedures, Social and Fine Motor Skills
Approved / Date	Governing Body

Reviewed by: Claire Thomas Reviewed: 7th October 2025

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA

The Board of Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. Governors undertake a review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.
The Board of Governors ensures the establishment of familiarity with and the effective operation through monitoring, of school policies, approving those requiring GB sign-off in line with a regular cycle of school policy reviews. This occurs through a cycle of governor committee meetings and full board meetings.

Therapy

Students at The Levels School may need Speech and Language Therapy and/or Occupational Therapy. When this policy refers to 'Therapy' it covers both Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy otherwise it will specify which therapy is being discussed.

Therapy is available at the school for pupils who have this particular need educationally, medically, psychologically or for social/emotional reasons. Therapy will be provided as determined by, and at the discretion of, the school's Therapist(s) for:

a) pupils whose EHCPs give specific Speech and Language Therapy and/or Occupational Therapy requirements or otherwise agreed during the consultation process.
b) pupils who are revealed by the admission assessment procedure (see below) to be in need of such help and support, even if not previously identified. In this case, funding of Therapy will need to be accepted by the local authority or parents as detailed below and added to the EHCP, if one is in place, at Annual Review.
c) pupils who through concerns expressed by themselves, their parents or carers, teachers or other involved parties are brought to the attention of the school's Therapist(s) will be seen for assessment and advice. Intervention will only be undertaken after consultation with parents and others involved and if agreement to intervention and charges is accepted by the parents, and local education authority or other party where applicable.

****

Therapy is chargeable on an annual basis at the rate notified with the school fees prior to the commencement of each academic year, payable in three equal termly instalments (See note on next page for details of provision/charge). Written agreement to the provision will be sought from the parents in all cases prior to the commencement of any programme of intervention. In the event of the

consent/funding not being readily forthcoming, discussions will be held with the SLT and appropriate correspondence and negotiations undertaken. The therapists' recommendations will be recorded on the pupils' files even if therapy is not accepted and parents will be asked to return a signed form if they decline therapy for any reason.

Therapy will only begin when signed consent forms from parents have been received and the funding for therapy has been confirmed. Funding for therapy will be charged at the start of the term prior to therapy sessions taking place. If the student has missed sessions, then these will be made up over the academic year. If therapy sessions have been missed for a valid reason as deemed by the Head of Therapy and Head Teacher then sessions will be refunded at the end of the term. If the student is in their last term and sessions have been missed then these will be refunded when the student leaves The Levels School.

Therapy will only begin when signed consent forms authorising this have been received by the school from parents, and funding has been received. Even when an EHCP includes therapy provision, this cannot be started until all the relevant documents and charges have been received.

Provision/charge: Therapy is charged at the same rate per session. If students require multiple sessions per week, then it is still charged at the same flat rate. The number of designated sessions will be as specified in the EHCP or agreed with the parents / carers. The sessions may be individual or shared, with the vast majority being individual. Provision also includes the cross-curricular support required and all liaison with staff, parents and other involved parties. This enables a whole school approach.

Assessment Procedure.

No pupil will be assessed until written consent is in place. Once consent to assess is gained the students will be assessed in order of consent received. Students will receive comprehensive standardised assessments in both Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy.

Speech and Language Therapy assessments involve the use of well-recognised standardised assessments which look at a range of areas which affect receptive, processing and expressive language as well as memory and pragmatic language skills. In addition to this, the therapists will seek the opinion of each pupil with regard to his/her own effectiveness as a communicator.

Occupational Therapy assessments involve the use of well-recognised standardised assessments which look at a range of areas of fine and gross motor skills, visual perceptual skills, functional and daily living skills and any sensory difficulties the students may experience.

The only exceptions to this procedure being followed will be those pupils whose assessments have been recently completed prior to entry to the school and on whom current valid reports are still available. These pupils will have an initial interview with the therapist to discuss and evaluate their needs in the light of information available and to complete assessment in any areas not previously covered. Pupils whose parents have not returned the consent form will not be assessed until this has happened; in the event of an undue delay, contact will be made with the families concerned. If a parent refuses consent, this will be recorded in the pupil's school file and in department records.

Following the assessment procedure, reports will be written indicating which pupils require immediate intervention, those requiring later review and possible follow up and those needing no further action. These will be included in the pupils' school files and on the Therapy drive. Both Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy aim to send out their assessment reports at the same time to parents to allow parents to see the full picture of their child's needs. Consent to start therapy (therapy funding agreement) with the terms and conditions are sent out to parents and the LA where appropriate, to seek consent to therapy and agreement to the charges.

These assessments will take place during a pupil's first year at the school and students will be prioritised by when their annual review takes place and depending on priority of need. **Pupils, parents and staff can ask the department to reassess a pupil at any time whether that pupil is currently receiving therapy**. The assessment will be prioritised depending on the severity of the concern after discussion with the parents and wider staff team. Before therapy begins, parents are required to return signed consent and the Terms and Condition forms should be signed prior to starting at The Levels School. If therapy is funded by the Local Authority, then it cannot commence until The Levels School have received funding from the LA. If therapy is funded by parents, then it will be charged at the start of the term, as part of the school fees.

Therapy Service

The service is administered by the Head of Therapy, currently a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, in conjunction with the SLT. The department includes an Assistant Head of Therapy who is a specialist Speech and Language Therapist and a Head of Occupational Therapy who is a specialist Occupational Therapist in addition to other Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

The therapists in post have a variety of backgrounds and experience. All posts are staff posts. All therapists are required to be members of The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)/The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) and to maintain their registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

All therapists are involved in the day-to-day running of the department with the Head of Therapy having overall responsibility and liaison as needed with the Headteacher. The department is an integral part of the school and takes a full part in its life.

The financial control of the department rests with the Headteacher and ultimately with the directors. Budgets for equipment are dependent on requests to the Headteacher. Training or other needs of the service are put forward annually for consideration by management, as are larger items which would be outside normal budgetary constraints. The service is largely self-funding through the charging system.

Staff training/continuing education
All staff are involved in inset training at the beginning of each term. Staff are also encouraged to become involved in and attend any courses of interest and relevance held either nationally or locally. Staff must ensure they fulfil their commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by attending courses, keeping up to date with reading etc. Weekly departmental meetings ensure that all therapists (Speech and Language and Occupational Therapists) are kept up to date with the developments and activities of the school as well as enabling regular updating of skills and knowledge. Staff undergo annual Staff Professional Development as well as attending regular supervision sessions with the Head of Therapy and an external supervisor who is a member of their same profession. The external supervision occurs once a half term.

Inset training is made available by members of the department to all staff from time to time by specifically arranged sessions. The therapists also ensure through induction that new staff have the opportunity to become aware of their role within the school

and how to become involved and support that work. Therapists also run twilight training sessions for staff during the Friday staff meetings.

Provision of Therapy.

The school uses a direct therapy model in order to address the specific needs of the pupils, many of whom have longstanding language difficulties for which they have received little or no therapy intervention prior to admission. Therapy will be provided on a one-to-one, paired or small group basis depending on the needs of the pupils concerned and others in need of similar therapy. Therapy may be short term to remedy a minor or temporary need or for a significantly longer period of time dependent upon the need.

It is not always possible to determine the relevant length of therapy at the outset but by the nature of the complex learning difficulties our students encounter it tends to be long-term and the pupils are likely to require therapy for a number of years.

Discharge from therapy occurs when a pupil leaves the school or when sufficient progress has been made for therapy no longer to be necessary; readmission to therapy is possible should the situation change. A discharge report will be put in department files, school files and will be sent home to parents. Information regarding access to Therapy services after leaving the school is provided if requested, for some students accessing the local colleges therapy may continue after they have left The Levels School through The Levels Therapy company. This ensures that students who require ongoing therapy throughout their college experience will have continued support from therapists known to them.

A pattern of persistent failure to attend leads to investigations as to the reason and a resolution is sought (e.g.: change of time, targets, therapist etc) but it is possible that therapy may be suspended or terminated if a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached after discussion with all parties.

Breaks from therapy may be offered but, in general, school holidays provide natural breaks. Sessions are normally on a once-weekly basis and each normally lasts thirty minutes (to fit with the school timetable, minimise disruption to lessons and to manage the impact extraction can cause); the optimum time for concentration and effect has been found to be about twenty minutes for individual sessions so activities within a session will change to minimise any drop-off effect. For pupils who require more therapy sessions each week, close attention is paid to keeping disruption to their

academic timetables to a minimum. Therapy is provided at the discretion of the school's Speech and Language Therapist/Occupational Therapist(s) within the restrictions of time available and obligations to EHCP and specifically placed pupils and in line with the provision and charging arrangements. Admission to therapy is achieved by assessment (either on admission or through previous reports) and obtaining the necessary consents. Methods of approach will vary to allow each pupil the optimum chance of benefiting from therapy whatever his or her preferred learning style, strengths and weaknesses. Therapy targets are sent home and therapy reports on the progress towards these targets as stated in the school's Assessment and Reporting Policy.

Second opinions will be sought as necessary or if requested by any involved party. A referral would be made either to the NHS or an independent practitioner at the request of the parents, the LA or staff after consultation and with the agreement of the parents; however, due to the very specific nature of the difficulties of these pupils reaching the provision at this school tends to have come after years of being unable to find appropriate support for their needs elsewhere and thus, in practice, the need for onward referral is uncommon. One area in which we have seen an increase over recent years is the need for outside assessment for those pupils who have auditory processing difficulties: Speech and Language Therapists can identify and assess for this difficulty but a diagnosis of Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) has to be made by a medical specialist: we refer pupils to Great Ormond Street Hospital or the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, the choice being dependent on the age of the pupil.

Pupils can be referred to an Educational Psychologist as needed through the school or parents. Other outside referrals are made through the appropriate channels.

Treatment plans are formulated after discussion with pupils, parents and relevant staff taking into account pupils' previous experiences, strengths and weaknesses, specific educational difficulties and current levels of interest and motivation. Pupils are encouraged to become actively involved in target setting and to monitor how well they are moving towards achieving their targets. Reflection and review of sessional work are very important aspects to enable pupils to realise the relevance of the work as well as to see their own progress and to develop involvement and ownership. All treatment plans are individually formulated and are modified in the light of each pupil's response to sessions as the weekly sessions take place. It is the intention that all

staff will be involved in supporting our work but will not have to assume responsibility for it.

Neuro-affirming approach – All therapy sessions are neuro-affirming. The neuro-affirming approach does not look at neurodivergent people as having deficits which need to be "fixed" but acknowledges that all neurotypes have unique strengths, interests and support needs. Therapists help students understand their individual differences and create strategies with them to affirm their neurodivergent identities. As a result, the students begin to self-advocate for their needs and independently use the strategies being recommended for them. This is further covered in the Social and Fine Motor Skills Policy.

Pupils and their families are informed that therapy will continue for as long as appropriate provided that

1) the need continues to exist
2) the fee continues to be paid
3) the pupil continues to be committed to attending and working

Parents may withdraw their children from therapy by letter, however they are encouraged to discuss the full situation and implications with the Head of Therapy beforehand. A term's notice is expected if parents decide to terminate therapy and where parents have responsibility for payment. A term's fees will be charged in lieu of notice if therapy is terminated without the due notice. This is made clear in the Terms and Conditions. Therapy for those for whom the LA pays will usually only be terminated after a decision at Annual Review, or, occasionally, therapy may have been agreed for only a limited time. Therapy may also be reduced or terminated on the therapist's advice after discussion with the parents and any other relevant parties if sufficient progress has been made or if there is some problem interfering with regular attendance.

Outcome is monitored termly by target review as well as by the more formal processes of reassessment, reports, staff reviews and for EHCP funded students whether outcomes have been met in the plan.

Other provisions of the Therapy service at the school.

Reports are written for a variety of purposes:

a) new pupil assessment reports – copies put in school files on the drive and sent to parents, with copies to other professionals if necessary
b) progress reports
c) assessment and progress reports for annual reviews (see *), for other professionals, for tribunals, for future educational establishments, for parents requiring further details etc.
d) for requests to general practitioners in the event of a pupil requiring referral to a medical specialist

PLEASE NOTE: any report about a child will only be sent to other parties with the consent of the parents, with the exception of the regular progress reports and contributions to IEPs and Annual Reviews.

* **Annual Reviews**: It is our policy to provide **detailed** reports for Annual Reviews **only if** these are specifically requested well in advance of the annual review. Normal practice is the therapist attendance at annual review where they contribute to whether the outcomes have been met or remain ongoing. LA representatives are welcome to ask for further clarification/explanation at the Annual Review.

Telephone and email contact are often a useful alternative to a face-to-face meeting especially when a query needs prompt attention. Telephone and email enquiries receive a prompt response, usually on the same day as they are received. If a delay is unavoidable while enquiries are being made, a message will be passed to that effect and a time scale given for a full response.

Cross curricular support is one of the prime considerations of the therapy provided at The Levels School as it is essential that such therapy is relevant to the pupils' overall educational programmes and needs and will facilitate and enhance their other learning opportunities. Attention is given to concerns expressed by staff involved with the pupils in determining the course of their therapy, and particular needs from other curriculum areas are integrated. Communication with, and feedback to, all staff concerned are possible through daily briefings and weekly staff meetings as well as by direct contact with individual staff. Therapists may also spend time in the classroom to see how the pupils under their care are performing functionally.

The therapists participate in daily briefings and weekly staff meetings. Attendance at these meetings is dependent upon the therapist's working week but all therapists contribute to meetings and documents as necessary. The therapists attend other meetings, such as annual reviews, by invitation. Other meetings to discuss any pupil's progress/problems will be convened and attended by such personnel as the situation

demands. The therapists act as mentors or keyworkers to particular pupils from time to time, especially when they are deemed to be the most relevant members of staff.

Record keeping is done within each pupil's therapy file as assessments/ reassessments are made. Case notes are recorded on an GDPR complient external case note software in joint progress notes with SALT and OT inputting their SOAP notes on one document. Test data is discussed at an appropriate level with pupils and their rates of progress are regularly reviewed with them. Parents may request data at any time, but such data should only be released with a full explanation or at a meeting when the therapist will be available to explain or answer any queries. Case notes are subject to peer review/audit to maintain adequate standards. Registers are kept to detail attendance and reasons for failure to attend.

Current therapy records (personal pupils' details, assessments and therapy) are kept in locked filing cabinets within the department rooms with all therapists having access to keys to all cabinets. Reports and records are also maintained on the school's computer system, under the Therapy Drive, with each therapist having an individual access. These records are confidential, but the contents are discussed with staff to facilitate programme planning and to aid the child's education. Parents, and pupils when they have reached the appropriate age, have the right to see these files upon request. Records are kept after the pupil leaves the school until the young person reaches the age of twenty five (in line with the data retention policy for all records containing information pertaining to health matters) and are then disposed of by pulping, shredding or burning.

Targets are drawn up for each pupil or group of pupils once a term. For the youngest and newest pupils these may be determined by the therapist alone after consultation with other staff but with the older pupils the targets are jointly agreed and determined. Each task set thereafter relates to an aspect of the targets and pupils respond positively to being able to see what it is that they are striving to achieve. Target review and feedback are made possible by updating the outcomes in the student's EHCP and at set reporting times throughout the year. Target information is shared to help staff support the therapy needs across the entire curriculum.

Reviews of progress are carried out regularly in order to assess the efficacy of therapy and the pupils' responses to it. Adjustments are made as required to therapy, targets and approach. Pupils are made aware that such reviews assess the therapist's work as much as their own and they are encouraged to be actively involved by being invited to comment on how they feel about various aspects of the work they have

done. Attainment is easily measured on an ongoing basis from response to therapy as well as by the more formal process of testing. Review by testing facilitates and enables decisions to be made about future therapy thus allowing for better planning and strategies for future work to be developed.

Feedback to pupils is an integral part of the review and therapy processes and is therefore an ongoing feature of the provision to these pupils. Feedback to staff, parents and professionals is, as already mentioned, through the process of reports and interviews. Pupils can receive immediate feedback during a therapy session by means of praise and by reward through the school behaviour policy.

Attendance at the sessions is recorded electronically. As well as maintaining a record of attendance, this facilitates data handling and planning with registers having coded entries making it possible to see why sessions are missed and to see if this influences the outcome of therapy. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for remembering to attend their sessions but a variety of tactics and strategies exists to support them in this (reminders to individual pupils/staff, additional individual strategies determined jointly by a pupil and therapist as required). If a pupil frequently misses sessions and is thought to be avoiding attending, a discussion will be held initially with the pupil with further discussion with tutors or parents as required. Discussions with pupils may result in an altered attendance, e.g.: coming out of a different lesson, paired therapy or replacing a missed session with another at a mutually agreed time. The system is designed to be as flexible as possible. If a suitable solution cannot be found, then the future of therapy will be reconsidered.

Service monitoring is carried out informally regularly between the Head of Therapy and Head Teacher. This reviews the numbers of pupils within each year group currently in need of the provision together with their status (funded, EHCP etc). This information is delivered to the governors through the Head Teacher's report. Additionally, the department has annual Staff Professional Development for all its members as part of the school's ongoing development and planning. The Head of Therapy has appraisals with the Headteacher.

Service/therapist information: the family of each pupil in need of therapy is contacted after the initial assessment has been carried out. At this point the therapist introduces themselves and the service to the family, providing as much or as little detail as they require at that time and making clear the accessibility and availability of the therapist to the families whenever they feel the need for contact. Parents are invited to make

appointments to see or to contact the therapists at any time. An introductory letter, Terms and Conditions and consent forms will then be sent to the parents of pupils requiring therapy.

Reviewed by: C. Thomas October 2025

The appearance of the RCSLT and RCOT member logo in this document is for promotional purposes only and does not constitute RCSLT/RCOT endorsement of the product of services being offered.