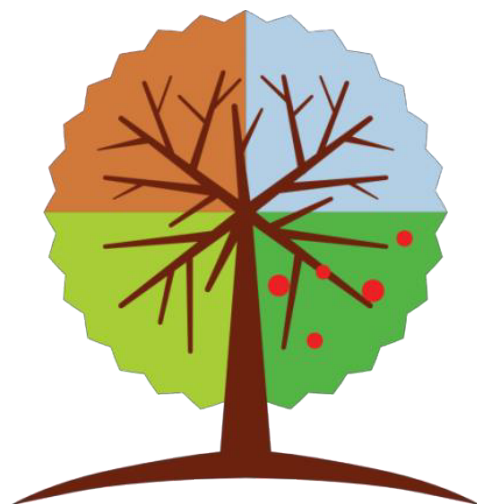


TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

2026-27



Serenity School

Policy owner	Director of Education
Policy holder	Headteacher
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Contents

1. Purpose and Aims.....	3
2. Core Principle: One Pedagogy, Different Application	3
3. Serenity's STEP Pedagogical Framework.....	3
4. The Serenity Four-Part Lesson	4
4.1 Application Across Pathways	4
5. Teaching Expectations Across Pathways.....	4
5.1 Formal Pathway	4
5.2 Semi-Formal Pathway	4
5.3 Nurture Pathway: EQUALS, MAPP and STEP	5
5.4 Early Years Foundation Stage.....	5
5.5 Vocational, Practical and Technical Learning.....	5
6. Planning.....	6
7. Assessment for Learning and Progress	6
8. Feedback, Daily Tick and Flick and Weekly Marking.....	7
9. Learning Environments and Classroom Display.....	7
9.1 Formal and Semi-Formal Environments.....	7
9.2 Nurture Environments	7
10. Progress Partners	8
10.1 Pupil Caseload Responsibilities	8
10.2 Progress Partners Within Lessons	8
10.3 Quality Assurance of Progress Partner Practice	9
11. Literacy, Numeracy, Communication and Preparation for Adulthood	9
12. Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning	9
13. Teaching Quality Judgements	9
14. Feedback, Support and Follow-up Following QA.....	10
15. Roles and Responsibilities	10
15.1 Director of Education.....	10
15.2 Executive Headteachers and Headteachers	11
15.3 Heads of School / Deputy Headteachers	11
15.4 Teachers.....	11
15.5 Progress Partners	11
16. Professional Development	12
17. Monitoring, Review and Related Documents	12

1. Purpose and Aims

Serenity Education Group believes that every pupil is entitled to high-quality teaching which is ambitious, purposeful, inclusive and responsive to individual need. Teaching should enable pupils to build knowledge, skills, communication, independence, confidence and the capacity to apply their learning in meaningful contexts.

This policy establishes the Group's common expectations for teaching and learning across Formal, Semi-Formal and Nurture provision. It is intended to secure consistency of standards without requiring identical classroom practice for pupils whose developmental, communication, sensory, regulation and academic needs differ.

- secure consistently high-quality teaching and learning across all Serenity schools;
- establish STEP as Serenity's common pedagogical framework;
- ensure teaching is appropriately ambitious from each pupil's starting point;
- ensure curriculum pathway, EHCP outcomes and assessed needs inform teaching;
- set clear expectations for learning environments, assessment, feedback and the deployment of Progress Partners;
- provide a consistent framework for quality assurance, professional development and follow-up.

2. Core Principle: One Pedagogy, Different Application

STEP is Serenity's common pedagogical framework across Formal, Semi-Formal and Nurture provision. All teachers are expected to apply STEP pedagogy.

Consistency does not mean uniformity. The way STEP is implemented and evidenced must reflect the curriculum pathway, subject or area of learning, age and developmental profile of pupils, and individual communication, sensory, regulation and learning needs.

For Nurture pupils, EQUALS provides the curriculum framework and teacher assessment is recorded through MAPP. EQUALS and MAPP do not replace STEP: STEP remains the pedagogical framework through which teaching is planned, delivered, reviewed and quality assured.

Adaptation must never become a reason for reduced ambition. Leaders and teachers must be able to explain what pupils are learning, why it is appropriate, how teaching is adapted, how progress is identified and what happens next.

3. Serenity's STEP Pedagogical Framework

STEP is the agreed Serenity framework for high-quality teaching. Teachers are expected to use the framework intelligently rather than as a rigid lesson script. Effective lessons may move between elements of the framework according to the learning, the pupils and the context.

Across STEP, teachers are expected to:

- know pupils' starting points, prior learning, EHCP outcomes and barriers to learning;
- identify clear and appropriately ambitious learning intentions and success measures;
- connect new learning to prior knowledge and experience;
- present new knowledge, concepts or skills in accessible and manageable steps;
- model, explain, question and scaffold effectively;
- provide opportunities for pupils to construct meaning, practise and apply learning;
- check understanding throughout teaching and respond to misconceptions promptly;
- promote independence and reduce unnecessary adult dependency;
- review learning and use assessment to determine next steps;
- adapt teaching without unnecessarily narrowing the curriculum or lowering expectations.

The detailed STEP descriptors and fine-grading criteria are maintained within Serenity's current STEP quality-assurance framework and Flourish. This policy does not reproduce those operational descriptors so that the policy remains aligned when the observation rubric is refined.

4. The Serenity Four-Part Lesson

All teachers are expected to use Serenity's four-part lesson structure as the normal framework for lesson delivery. The four-part lesson provides consistency, clarity and predictable routines for pupils and staff. STEP remains Serenity's pedagogical framework and defines the quality of teaching expected within and across the four-part lesson.

The four-part lesson and STEP are therefore complementary rather than competing frameworks: the four-part lesson provides the lesson structure, while STEP provides the pedagogy.

The four-part structure must not be applied as a rigid or mechanical checklist. Teachers may move between, revisit, combine or adapt elements where this supports learning. The structure must be implemented in a way that is appropriate to the subject, curriculum pathway, intended learning and the developmental, communication, sensory and regulation needs of pupils.

4.1 Application Across Pathways

Within Formal and Semi-Formal provision, the four-part lesson should provide a clear and purposeful structure through which pupils are prepared for learning, taught new knowledge or skills, given opportunities to practise and apply learning, and enabled to review or demonstrate what has been learned, as appropriate to the lesson.

Within Nurture provision, the four-part lesson remains the expected lesson structure but may look substantially different. It must be compatible with the EQUALS curriculum, teacher assessment through MAPP and the needs of the pupils. Elements may be shorter, repeated, embedded within practical, sensory or communication-based learning, supported through AAC or other communication systems, or revisited several times.

A Nurture lesson should not be judged by whether four conventional or visibly separate lesson sections can be identified. Leaders should consider whether the four-part structure has been applied meaningfully and whether STEP pedagogy is enabling the intended learning for the pupils concerned.

The current Serenity four-part lesson guidance defines the detailed expectations for each part. Those operational descriptors should be used alongside this policy and the STEP framework.

5. Teaching Expectations Across Pathways

5.1 Formal Pathway

Teaching within the Formal pathway should provide a structured, appropriately challenging curriculum with clear progression in knowledge and skills. Teachers should use subject expertise, modelling, explanation, questioning, guided and independent practice, assessment and feedback to secure learning. Where pupils are working towards qualifications, teaching must prepare them appropriately for the demands of the relevant course and assessment.

Adaptive teaching should enable access while maintaining ambition. Pupils should increasingly be expected to think, communicate, apply learning and work independently.

5.2 Semi-Formal Pathway

Teaching within the Semi-Formal pathway should retain clear curriculum intent and progression while providing the additional structure, repetition, modelling, visual support, communication support and

practical application required by the cohort. Learning may require smaller steps and more opportunities for consolidation and generalisation.

STEP remains the pedagogical expectation. Evidence of learning may be demonstrated through written work, practical activity, communication, observation, performance, application or other appropriate forms.

5.3 Nurture Pathway: EQUALS, MAPP and STEP

Pupils within Nurture access an EQUALS-informed curriculum appropriate to their developmental profiles and individual needs. Assessment is through teacher assessment using MAPP. Teachers use professional judgement, informed by observation and evidence gathered through teaching and learning, to assess progress against personalised learning intentions and to inform subsequent planning.

Nurture staff are expected to follow STEP pedagogy. The application and evidence of STEP must, however, be appropriate to the pupil. Effective Nurture teaching may include progress in engagement, cognition, communication, interaction, regulation, independence, functional skills and the generalisation of learning.

For pupils who are non-speaking, have limited functional communication or use alternative communication systems, participation and understanding must not be judged solely through speech. Staff must use the pupil's established communication approach, which may include AAC, symbols, signing, objects of reference, visual supports, gesture or other appropriate systems.

Learning intentions and review do not have to take a conventional whole-class or verbal form. A pupil may demonstrate understanding through selection, action, anticipation, communication, application, reduced prompting or successful generalisation. The pedagogical expectation remains high even where the evidence looks different.

5.4 Early Years Foundation Stage

Where a Serenity school admits pupils within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), teaching and learning will meet the requirements of the current statutory EYFS framework alongside Serenity's wider teaching and learning expectations.

Teaching will be developmentally appropriate and responsive to each child's individual needs, interests, starting points and stage of development. Learning may take place through a combination of adult-led, child-initiated, play-based, practical and experiential opportunities, with appropriate emphasis on the prime areas of communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and physical development.

Serenity's STEP pedagogical framework and four-part lesson structure apply within EYFS but must be interpreted and adapted appropriately to the EYFS context. They must not be applied in a way that requires EYFS teaching to resemble a conventional formal classroom lesson or restrict appropriate play-based, child-initiated or continuous-provision learning.

Planning, assessment and the learning environment will reflect the requirements of the current statutory EYFS framework and the individual needs of children, including children with SEND. Where pupils require additional communication, sensory, regulation or developmental support, this must be appropriately incorporated into teaching and provision.

I would use "where a Serenity school admits pupils within EYFS" rather than naming Eltham and Croydon. That keeps the Group policy usable if school age ranges change.

5.5 Vocational, Practical and Technical Learning

Vocational, practical and technical subjects are subject to the same expectations of high-quality teaching, ambition, appropriate challenge and progress as other areas of the curriculum. Serenity's STEP pedagogical framework and four-part lesson structure remain applicable but must be implemented appropriately to the nature of the subject, activity and qualification.

Teaching may appropriately include demonstration, modelling, supervised practice, repeated rehearsal, practical application, workplace simulation, project-based learning and assessment of practical competence. The organisation and sequence of learning may therefore differ from predominantly classroom-based subjects.

Where learning leads to an externally accredited qualification, teachers must understand and comply with the requirements of the relevant awarding organisation, qualification specification and assessment methodology. This includes, where applicable, requirements relating to practical assessment, portfolios, observation of competence, controlled assessment conditions, witness evidence and the collection or authentication of assessment evidence.

Where an awarding organisation or qualification specification prescribes a particular assessment or evidence methodology, those requirements must be followed. Serenity's internal teaching and learning expectations should be applied in a way that supports, and does not conflict with, the requirements of the qualification.

Teaching must not become limited to the completion of assessment evidence or portfolios. Pupils should be taught the underlying knowledge and skills required by the curriculum or qualification and be given appropriate opportunities to practise, apply and increasingly demonstrate these independently.

Practical teaching must be planned and delivered in accordance with relevant health and safety requirements, risk assessments, supervision arrangements and requirements for the safe use of equipment, materials and specialist environments.

When quality assuring vocational, practical or technical teaching, leaders must take account of the subject, activity, qualification level and any relevant awarding-organisation requirements. Effective practical teaching should not be judged negatively simply because its organisation differs from a conventional classroom lesson.

6. Planning

Planning must be purposeful, proportionate and informed by curriculum expectations, prior assessment and pupils' needs. Planning should enable teachers and Progress Partners to understand the intended learning, required adaptations, key resources and their respective roles.

- Schemes or sequences of learning must be ready in accordance with school curriculum arrangements and reviewed as learning progresses.
- Planning must reflect the relevant curriculum pathway and pupils' starting points.
- Learning intentions must be meaningful and appropriately ambitious.
- Teachers must anticipate likely misconceptions, barriers and communication or sensory needs.
- Planning must identify where modelling, scaffolding, practice, application and assessment are required.
- Progress Partners must receive sufficient information in advance to support learning effectively.
- Planning for Nurture must reflect EQUALS learning and the personalised intentions assessed by teachers through MAPP.

7. Assessment for Learning and Progress

Assessment is integral to teaching. Teachers must continually establish what pupils know, understand and can do, identify misconceptions or barriers, and use this information to adapt teaching and determine next steps.

Assessment evidence must be appropriate to the pathway and pupil. It may include written work, questioning, observation, practical application, communication, pupil response, performance, recorded evidence and teacher assessment.

Detailed assessment arrangements, including baseline and standardised assessment requirements, are set out in the Academic Assessment Policy. Within Nurture, teacher assessment on MAPP is the principal means of assessing and recording progress against personalised learning intentions.

8. Feedback, Daily Tick and Flick and Weekly Marking

Serenity requires teachers to acknowledge pupils' work daily through the Group's 'tick and flick' approach and to provide formal marking and feedback at least weekly. These are Group expectations and apply across the curriculum, with implementation adapted where necessary to ensure feedback is meaningful and accessible to the pupil.

The detailed marking codes, frequency requirements, presentation expectations and feedback procedures are set out in the Marking and Feedback Policy.

Feedback should help pupils understand achievement and, where developmentally appropriate, what they need to do next. For pupils who cannot meaningfully access conventional written feedback, pupil-facing feedback may include verbal feedback, symbols, visual feedback, stickers, modelling, AAC-supported feedback or another accessible method. The requirement for teachers to assess and acknowledge learning remains.

Teachers should use professional judgement so that feedback supports learning and does not overwhelm pupils or create unnecessary workload without educational benefit.

9. Learning Environments and Classroom Display

Serenity has high expectations for the presentation, organisation and learning environment of every classroom. Classroom displays are not optional. They must be current, purposeful, well maintained, accessible and relevant to the pupils and curriculum being taught.

Consistency of standard does not require identical displays. The content, density and presentation of the environment must be suitable for the cohort.

9.1 Formal and Semi-Formal Environments

As appropriate to the subject, phase and cohort, environments should include relevant pupil work, key vocabulary, literacy and numeracy support, curriculum information, exemplification or models, visual supports, learning prompts, celebration of achievement and information which promotes independence, aspiration and wider curriculum understanding.

9.2 Nurture Environments

Nurture classrooms must meet the same high standard of presentation while being explicitly sensory-sensitive. Staff must consider visual load, colour, contrast, positioning, quantity of information, movement, lighting and other environmental stimuli. Displays must support learning and communication without creating unnecessary distraction or sensory overload.

Where appropriate, Nurture environments should include visual timetables, Now/Next or sequencing supports, symbols, AAC and communication supports, objects of reference, pupil work and achievements, relevant EQUALS learning, visual vocabulary, regulation supports and prompts which promote independence.

A sensory-sensitive classroom is not an empty or underdeveloped classroom. It should be welcoming, purposeful and clearly reflect learning and achievement. Where individual sensory profiles require particular environmental adaptations, these must be reflected consistently in practice.

All learning environments must be orderly, safe and ready for learning. Resources should be accessible and organised, and displays should not contain outdated, irrelevant or inaccessible material.

10. Progress Partners

Progress Partners are an integral part of Serenity's teaching and learning model. In addition to supporting teaching within the classroom, Progress Partners operate a pupil caseload model. Individual pupils are allocated to a Progress Partner so that the Progress Partner develops a detailed understanding of those pupils' needs and the approaches required to support their access, engagement, communication, regulation, learning and independence.

Allocation of a pupil to a Progress Partner's caseload does not transfer responsibility for teaching, curriculum planning or teacher assessment. The teacher retains responsibility for the teaching, learning and assessment of every pupil and for the strategic deployment of adults within the lesson.

10.1 Pupil Caseload Responsibilities

- develop a strong working knowledge of each allocated pupil, including their EHCP, identified SEND, strengths, interests, communication profile, sensory and regulation needs, barriers to learning and agreed strategies;
- understand the pupil's curriculum pathway and the approaches required to enable the pupil to access learning;
- know the relevant pupil outcomes, targets and agreed support strategies;
- work closely with teachers and relevant professionals so that agreed strategies are understood and implemented consistently;
- identify gaps in their own knowledge or skills in relation to pupils within their caseload;
- undertake targeted training and professional development relevant to the individual needs of pupils within their caseload so that they are adequately trained to support them;
- apply learning from targeted training consistently in practice and contribute to evaluating its impact;
- contribute relevant observations and information to teachers and other professionals, while recognising that formal teacher assessment remains the responsibility of the teacher;
- promote communication, independence and self-advocacy and avoid creating unnecessary adult dependency; and
- support continuity by ensuring that important strategies and relevant information are understood and applied consistently.

10.2 Progress Partners Within Lessons

Teachers must deploy Progress Partners strategically according to the learning and needs within the class. A pupil's allocation to a Progress Partner caseload does not mean that the Progress Partner should remain permanently attached to that pupil during lessons.

Pupils with the most complex needs must continue to receive appropriate direct teaching from the teacher and should not routinely be delegated to a Progress Partner. Progress Partners should be actively involved in teaching and learning and should not routinely undertake unrelated tasks while pupils are learning.

- support individuals or groups in accordance with the teacher's direction;
- facilitate communication and access, including the consistent use of AAC and other agreed communication systems;
- support engagement and regulation so that pupils are able to access learning;
- reinforce teacher modelling and provide appropriately scaffolded practice;
- support pupils to apply and generalise learning;
- gather relevant observational information and communicate this to the teacher; and
- promote independence by adjusting and reducing support where appropriate.

Teachers must ensure that Progress Partners understand the intended learning, relevant adaptations and their role in supporting pupils.

10.3 Quality Assurance of Progress Partner Practice

Progress Partners are subject to regular quality assurance of their practice. They are evaluated against Serenity's separate Progress Partner Framework and are not observed against the STEP Teaching and Learning Framework used for teachers.

The Progress Partner Framework uses Serenity's Beginning, Developing, Secure and Enhanced judgement structure together with the applicable fine-grading. The detailed descriptors and fine-grade definitions are contained within the current Progress Partner Framework.

Quality assurance should consider the quality and impact of Progress Partner practice, including their support for teaching and learning and, where provided for within the Progress Partner Framework, their work with pupils within their allocated caseload.

Progress Partner observations and associated teaching-and-learning QA evidence are recorded on Flourish in accordance with Group QA arrangements.

Where areas for development are identified, clear actions and appropriate support must be agreed and followed up to establish impact. Support may include targeted training, coaching, modelling, mentoring or observation of effective practice.

11. Literacy, Numeracy, Communication and Preparation for Adulthood

Teachers should reinforce literacy, numeracy and communication wherever these are relevant and meaningful within the curriculum. Expectations must reflect pupils' developmental levels and communication profiles.

Teaching should also promote independence, personal development, functional application and preparation for adulthood. For some pupils this will include academic qualifications and progression to further education or employment; for others it may include communication, self-care, community participation, relationships, regulation and greater independence.

12. Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning quality assurance is designed to establish the quality and consistency of classroom practice, identify strengths, secure improvement and inform professional development.

Serenity uses the QA cycle: Standard -> Evidence -> Review -> Action -> Follow-up -> Impact.

Evidence may include formal lesson observations, learning walks, drop-ins, work scrutiny, curriculum review, assessment information, pupil voice and other relevant evidence. Leaders should triangulate evidence and should not normally use a single lesson observation in isolation to determine a teacher's overall effectiveness.

Formal lesson observations and relevant teaching-and-learning QA are recorded on Flourish. Teacher observations use the STEP Teaching and Learning Framework. Progress Partner observations use the separate Progress Partner Framework.

Teacher observations consider both the appropriate implementation of Serenity's four-part lesson structure and the application of STEP pedagogy in the context of the pathway and pupils being taught. The four-part lesson must not be treated as a rigid checklist. Nurture teaching is judged with appropriate recognition of the EQUALS curriculum, teacher assessment through MAPP and pupils' communication, developmental, sensory and regulation needs.

13. Teaching Quality Judgements

Serenity's current teaching quality framework uses four stages:

Judgement	Purpose
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Beginning	Practice is at an early stage of meeting the relevant Serenity expectations and requires identified development and support.
Developing	Relevant expectations are increasingly evident but are not yet sufficiently consistent or secure.
Secure	Relevant Serenity expectations are consistently demonstrated in practice.
Enhanced	Practice demonstrates highly developed and consistently effective application of the relevant Serenity expectations.

Each stage is fine-graded within the current Serenity framework (for example E1, E2 and E3 within Enhanced). The detailed fine-grade descriptors and their ordering are contained within the current STEP/Flourish rubric. The rubric, rather than this policy, is the authoritative source for individual fine-grade definitions.

Judgements should identify both the overall quality of practice and the particular STEP elements which are strengths or require development. Group and school leaders should use aggregated information to identify patterns, training priorities and areas requiring wider support.

14. Feedback, Support and Follow-up Following QA

Teaching and learning QA is intended to support improvement as well as provide assurance. Following an observation or other QA activity, staff should receive clear feedback identifying strengths, areas for development and any required actions.

- Feedback and action: required improvements should be specific, evidence-based and proportionate.
- Support: where development is required, support may include coaching, modelling, mentoring, observation of effective practice, training, collaborative planning or support from school or Group leaders.
- Follow-up: identified actions must be reviewed within an appropriate timescale to determine whether improvement has been secured.
- Impact: leaders should establish whether support has resulted in sustained improvement in teaching and pupil learning.
- Escalation: where concerns are significant, repeated, or improvement is not secured despite appropriate support, the matter should be escalated to the Headteacher and/or appropriate senior leader and managed under the relevant staff procedure.

A Beginning or Developing judgement does not, by itself, automatically trigger formal capability procedures. The response must take account of the specific concern, the fine-grade, the wider evidence base, previous support and the extent to which required improvement is subsequently secured.

Detailed operational arrangements for observation scheduling, Flourish recording, support plans, follow-up timescales and escalation are set out in the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance SOP and relevant HR procedures.

15. Roles and Responsibilities

15.1 Director of Education

- sets Group expectations for teaching and learning and maintains the STEP framework;
- provides strategic oversight of teaching quality across the Group;
- uses QA evidence to identify Group priorities, support and professional development;
- ensures this policy remains aligned with curriculum and assessment arrangements.

15.2 Executive Headteachers and Headteachers

Headteachers retain overall accountability for the quality of teaching and learning within their school. Day-to-day leadership may be delegated to Heads of School or Deputy Headteachers in accordance with the school's leadership structure. Executive Headteachers provide strategic oversight, challenge and moderation across their allocated schools.

- secure implementation of this policy within their schools;
- ensure QA is timely, evidence-based and followed through;
- ensure staff receive appropriate support and development;
- maintain high expectations for curriculum implementation, classroom environments and pupil outcomes.

15.3 Heads of School / Deputy Headteachers

Depending on the leadership structure of the school, the Head of School or Deputy Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day leadership of teaching and learning within their allocated phase or area of responsibility.

- lead the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Policy, Serenity four-part lesson structure and STEP pedagogy within their phase;
- maintain regular oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and classroom practice within their phase;
- undertake and contribute to formal observations, weekly QA drop-ins, work scrutiny and other relevant QA activity in accordance with the Group QA SOP;
- review evidence from Flourish and other QA activity for their phase, identifying strengths, inconsistencies and priorities for improvement;
- ensure agreed actions, coaching, training and follow-up are completed and that impact is checked;
- support teachers and Progress Partners to understand and meet the expectations relevant to their roles;
- ensure provision is appropriately adapted for Formal, Semi-Formal and Nurture pathways, including EQUALS and MAPP arrangements where applicable;
- report the teaching and learning position, material concerns and required support to the Headteacher; and
- escalate significant or persistent concerns promptly in accordance with the Teaching and Learning QA SOP.

15.4 Teachers

- plan and deliver teaching using Serenity's four-part lesson structure, STEP pedagogy and the relevant curriculum pathway;
- know pupils' needs, starting points and intended learning;
- assess learning and use evidence to adapt teaching and plan next steps;
- meet Serenity's daily tick-and-flick and weekly marking requirements;
- maintain a high-quality, cohort-appropriate learning environment;
- direct Progress Partners effectively and promote pupil independence;
- engage with feedback, professional development and agreed actions following QA.

15.5 Progress Partners

Progress Partners are responsible for developing detailed knowledge of pupils within their allocated caseload, completing relevant targeted training, applying agreed strategies consistently, and supporting teaching and learning in accordance with the teacher's direction.

- support teaching in accordance with the teacher's direction;

- promote engagement, communication, learning and independence;
- use agreed communication and regulation strategies consistently;
- contribute relevant observations to teacher assessment without assuming responsibility for teacher judgements.

16. Professional Development

Professional development should be informed by individual, school and Group QA evidence. Support may include STEP training, coaching, modelling, peer observation, curriculum or subject development, SEND-specific practice, communication and AAC, sensory-sensitive practice, assessment and pathway-specific training.

Where strong or Enhanced practice is identified, leaders should consider how effective practice can be shared without creating a requirement for all classrooms or pathways to look the same.

17. Monitoring, Review and Related Documents

The Director of Education will oversee implementation of this policy through the Group's teaching and learning QA arrangements. Headteachers are responsible for ensuring that expectations are implemented consistently within their schools.

This policy should be read alongside the current:

- Academic Assessment Policy;
- Marking and Feedback Policy;
- Curriculum and pathway documentation, including EQUALS arrangements for Nurture;
- SEND Policy and relevant pupil EHCPs;
- Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance SOP;
- STEP observation and fine-grading framework within Flourish;
- relevant staff performance, capability and professional development procedures.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there is a significant change to Serenity's curriculum, pedagogical framework, assessment arrangements or relevant requirements.