

Therapeutic Education at Spaghetti Bridge

At Spaghetti Bridge, we believe that our students will achieve their best possible outcomes on their way to Becoming Themselves and Changing the World if their learning journey integrates as seamlessly as possible the therapeutic and educational intentionality at the heart of their Enterprise Learning curriculum. This means that key aspects of our Enterprise Learning Approach, such as Enterprise Projects, our Relational Approach, and Beautiful Schools, are the vehicles for what might traditionally be separated into “therapeutic” and “educational” outcomes.

This approach differs from more traditional therapeutic practices, which often remove the student from their learning environment for isolated interventions. While this approach is necessary in some cases, too often it can be seen as the first step to be taken when a student is struggling within their school environment due to their particular needs.

Following current best practices within education, we have articulated our therapeutic education offer into a Three Wave model. Wave 1, our universal provision, is the therapeutic education offer available to all students.. The universal offer involves creating and maintaining a school environment that is based in biophilic principles and oriented towards fostering a sense of calm and focus. Through universal relational practices, our schools create a sense of connection, safety and belonging that reduces anxiety and encourages responsible risk taking and confidence in learning. Thirdly, a pedagogy founded in project-based learning enables us to adapt our curriculum to the starting point of each student, engage them through their interests, and then challenge them to try new things and encounter new ideas while simultaneously making their learning experience real, concrete, and meaningful for them.

While our universal provision is adapted to the needs of each individual, many students also require more targeted approaches to meet their particular needs. These needs are met through our Wave 2 targeted provision, which requires staff to be trained in the particular needs of individual students, such as working with specific presentations and diagnoses.

Some students at Spaghetti Bridge need more specialised approaches that can only be delivered by a qualified therapeutic professional, and we call this provision our Wave 3 offer. This can take the form of individual sessions with a therapist, but can also include therapists training the team around the student in how to meet their needs or reviewing support strategies for effectiveness.

The vast majority of our students’ needs can be met through the inclusive practices of our Wave 1 and 2 offer. This is because, when an individual’s needs are met consistently throughout their curriculum, these needs often do not then escalate to where they need specialised provision.

For example, if a student feels safe, valued, and that they belong in school, this leads to a consistent reduction in their anxiety, which in turn supports their ability to focus, communicate, process sensory information, and learn. Also, when students are intrinsically motivated to learn and interested in their work, engagement increases and negative behaviour declines. Calm and

aesthetically pleasant environments enable students to remain regulated within their learning space, in contrast to often overstimulating traditional school environments from which students need to be removed in order to regulate.

Implementing a therapeutic educational approach necessitates the training of staff in implementing therapeutic practices within their work and all Spaghetti Bridge staff receive comprehensive training in this area.

In short, we believe that many specialised therapeutic interventions are needed due to the nature of the universal and targeted offer of traditional educational environments and approaches, which could instead be met through a more inclusive therapeutic educational approach.

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