



Running Deer School strategic plan 2021-2024

“Progress comes from doing things differently.”

Our Strategic plan outlines our vision to grow this specialist small school into an exemplar and leading day school to support children and young people with special educational needs. The task of our case workers and teachers is to help our students become independent learners, to support our students on their journey through life, to provide a holistic and inclusive trauma informed approach to the social, emotional and learning development of the young person. With the emphasis on enabling them to become confident and self-reliant, be happy and contribute in their own meaningful way.

This strategy outlines our core objectives to develop the school that will inform our actions between now and 2024 and help us to achieve our goals. Our duty is to help each child, young person and staff member who attend Running Deer School to discover their strengths and talents and to encourage and support them to reach their full potential. We feel that many of the old objectives are now imbedded in everyday practice at Running Deer so we can look to set new ones based on how we think the school should develop. It is also vital that we work to maintain and strength our fundamental philosophies, so we do not lose what makes Running Deer such a special place.

The school feels it has a responsibility to the individual first. Ensuring that they have solid foundations and a strong sense of self with good self-esteem so that when that young person is ready to learn they can access their curriculum and progress at their pace. We strongly believe in the importance of a holistic approach to ensure learning is best suited to the individual. Many of our students have very negative feels towards and experiences of education and school settings. Many have been through many different settings and feel a sense of rejection from this. We feel passionately that we can play a role to undo impact of this and help engage these students back into lessons.

Our hope is that the students and staff who attend Running Deer School will leave with the confidence to pursue their goals, will have the ability to work functionally and achieve all their potential whatever that maybe.

The following strategy sets out our mission, aims, values and core objectives between now and 2024. I hope this document serves as a useful reference for everyone who is interested in the ongoing success and future of Running Deer School.

Nick Hurst
Head of School
Running Deer School

Our Core objectives for 2021-2024

1. To maintain a high standard of education, therapeutic interventions and pastoral care to ensure all pupils meet their potential and their EHCP goals.
2. To develop our “outdoor learning” to encompass more “adventitious activities” in order to support the personal development of individuals at Running Deer.
3. To build on our successes to broaden our offer to ensure that our young people and families are supported in the home, the community and are prepared for life after Running Deer.
4. To develop of package of professional outreach to support schools, colleges and other services in the region.
5. To form relationships with schools similar to Running Deer to allow us to lead the way in the Southwest as a Centre of Excellence.

Objective One

To maintain a high standard of education, therapeutic interventions and pastoral care to ensure all pupils meet their potential and their EHCP goals.

At its heart Running Deer is a school and one that has and wants to maintain the highest educational outcomes based on everyone's individual potential. We recognise that for this to happen we may have to put in place therapeutic and pastoral care to ensure that students are emotionally in a place to learn. We recognise that students will not make academic progress until all their other needs are met. Therefore, we need to meet these more fundamental needs first with some students. We recognise that during their time with us some students may never be ready to fully access learning for this reason. Therefore, we seek to use a range of different tools to measure the qualitative progress these young people will make.

- Ensure that all students have access to high quality differentiated curriculums delivered and/or monitored by qualified teachers.
- That Progress is recorded so that we can see an individual's development and progression over time.
- That record keeping involves both "traditional" and "nontraditional" methods.
- The embedding of MOTI to identify needs of a student giving us a structured approach that will give us measurable outcomes in terms of their emotional barriers to learning.
- To monitor the number of EHCP targets met.
- Create explicit links between some EHCP targets and teaching episodes and curricular in school.
- To utilise our surrounding, the woodland and our 3 different sites to offer the best therapeutic inputs we can.

Objective Two

To develop our “outdoor learning” to encompass more “adventitious activities” in order to support the personal development of individuals at Running Deer.

To help support and develop our impact on students’ wellbeing, self-esteem and resilience we would like to offer a greater range of activities that push them out of their comfort zones and shows them are they can do more than they think they can. To this end over the next three years, we are looking to:

- Secure funding streams that will allow use to purchase, store and maintain a range of equipment.
- Identify individuals and/or seek to employ people who either have qualifications or skills in adventurous outdoor activities.
- Provide training so that people hold the relevant qualifications to deliver activities in house.
- Look to be members of accredit schemes such as the Institute for Outdoor Learning, AALA, or any other yet to be identified organizations that can provide help and support.
- To ensure we have the correct policies, insurances and Risk Assessment in place to allow us to do this in the most effective way possible.
- To explore if this can be a source of income for the school, therefore ultimately self-funding.

Objective Three

To build on our successes to broaden our offer to ensure that our young people and families are supported in the home, the community and are prepared for life after Running Deer.

We have always sought to work closely with families to support them as much as possible to benefit the young person holistically. To that end we now have capacity to work in a more in-depth way with families that are in need of support. This would be a huge benefit to the school and to the community as a whole.

- To develop and offer a structured package to families of the school to help them support the young person at home.
- To identify what support we could offer to families as a school or to support Running Deer Family Support Service.
- To develop a specialist Sex and relationship curriculum designed specifically for ASC or students who are concrete thinkers.
- To look to export this curriculum and our expertise to other schools and families.
- To develop a Work experience package that will support the transition in for the next setting and adulthood.

Objective Four

To develop of package of professional outreach to support schools, colleges and other services in the region.

At Running Deer we know that we can offer a unique perspective on how things work. We have learned over the year what works well and what doesn't and we know feel that we in a position to share this with the wider education community. We want to share this knowledge in a formal and structured way that will allow us to not only to educate others but also to generate revenue streams which can use to expand the offer at Running Deer.

- To work with Sam Harris to develop an Outdoor School/Forest School Physical Intervention Package that could support other schools of this nature. *(Sam Harris has subsequently left Running Deer- This is reflected the school development Plan)*
- To work with mainstream schools, other settings, and services to develop and maximize their use of their outdoor spaces.
- To work with other schools and services to develop their PSHE curriculums to maximise their outdoor spaces.
- To offer staff wellbeing and team building sessions utilizing the woods.

Objective Five

To form relationships with schools similar to Running Deer to allow us to lead the way in the Southwest as a Centre of Excellence.

Strengths comes through unity, and if we want to be at the forefront of education in the outdoors then we need to look at how we can become the strongest, most resilient and robust provider we can be. This means we should be looking to meet with other such providers to learn from and teach them the ways in which we can be unified. As an originator and innovator in the South West we should be driving this forward.

- To identify key individuals and setting which we may want to form links with.
- To meet regularly with given time frames to discuss ideas, share progress and practice and for moderation purposes.
- To ensure Running Deer is at the front of and driving progress within sector.
- To allow cost sharing for the purchase of training/resources etc.

Running Deer School also aim to:

Sustain fulfilling and engaging roles that inspire and support staff in creating a positive environment for change that everyone at Running Deer.

This will be achieved through our commitment, creativity and support of our excellent staff - whatever their role is within the organisation. We aim to attract and retain high quality staff with experience and commitment of working with young people that have struggled in other forms of education. We seek to ensure that all staff are supported through regular supervision so that they can act as the emotional available adult to their student. We recognise that staff are a resource that require investment on a personal, professional and emotional level. We will always seek to support staff with this in mind.

The implementation of a Governing body.

In the run up to September 2021 it was decided that Running Deer school should have a separate governing in order to follow best practice. To this end elections were held, and nominations opened to appoint a governing body. The first meeting was held in early September, and they will meet half termly and in any extraordinary circumstance to support, monitor and act as a critical friend to the school leadership. The group consists of a number of different stakeholder and will operate within its own rational.

Monitoring our progress - Measuring our success

The last year has seen several disruptions to the smooth running for the school. Primarily this has been down to Covid 19 which has seen the schools leadership somewhat hampered in making the progress as a school we would of liked. Once this plan as been ratified and agreed with all relevant stakeholder then it will form the bases of the School Development Plan, which then in forms individuals Performance Management targets. Progress towards these long term objectives can be measured through small targets and tasks set to individuals.