

The Crow's Nest: Therapeutic Sensory Room Rationale

Background and Need

Our school serves the St Ann's community and supports a significant number of children facing social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) challenges. Approximately 40% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding, and the school has a high proportion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Many of our pupils have experienced adverse childhood experiences, trauma, instability or barriers that can impact their ability to regulate emotions, engage with learning and maintain positive relationships.

Analysis of our on-call behaviour logs demonstrates a recurring pattern whereby pupils who become dysregulated frequently leave classrooms and run around the school site. This behaviour presents safeguarding concerns, disrupts learning, increases anxiety for the child and others, and can result in fixed-term suspensions or prolonged periods away from learning. These incidents often occur when children feel overwhelmed, unsafe, misunderstood or unable to communicate their needs effectively.

As a school, we are committed to developing a trauma-informed and inclusive approach that prioritises understanding behaviour as communication. We recognise that children cannot access learning when they are in a heightened state of emotional distress and that punitive approaches alone do not address the underlying causes of dysregulation.

Purpose of The Crow's Nest

The Crow's Nest will be a dedicated therapeutic sensory space designed to provide children with a safe, calm and nurturing environment where they can de-escalate, regulate and reconnect before returning to learning.

The room will offer a structured alternative to pupils leaving classrooms and moving unsafely around the school site. By providing a predictable and supportive environment, children will be able to access co-regulation from trusted adults, sensory tools and therapeutic strategies that help them manage overwhelming emotions.

The name *The Crow's Nest* reflects the idea of a place of safety, perspective and guidance. Just as a crow's nest on a ship provides a secure vantage point during challenging conditions, this space will enable children to pause, regain control and navigate difficulties with support.

Intended Outcomes

The Crow's Nest will support the school to:

- Reduce incidents of dysregulation escalating into crisis.
- Minimise pupils leaving classrooms and running around the school site.
- Improve pupil safety during periods of emotional distress.
- Reduce fixed-term suspensions and exclusion risks.
- Increase time spent in learning following successful regulation.
- Develop pupils' emotional literacy, self-awareness and self-regulation skills.
- Strengthen pupils' sense of belonging, trust and connection to school.

- Provide equitable support for vulnerable pupils, particularly those with SEND and SEMH needs.
- Promote a culture of understanding, compassion and restorative practice.

Therapeutic and Educational Use

The Crow's Nest will not only be used as a responsive intervention during moments of dysregulation but will also function as a proactive therapeutic space.

The room will be used for:

- Emotional regulation and de-escalation support.
- Sensory regulation for pupils experiencing sensory overload.
- Restorative conversations following incidents.
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions.
- Targeted SEMH support programmes.
- Small-group nurture sessions.
- One-to-one mentoring and pastoral support.
- Development of emotional literacy and coping strategies.

This dual-purpose approach ensures that pupils are supported both in moments of need and through preventative interventions that build resilience over time.

Alignment with School Values

The Crow's Nest aligns with our commitment to inclusion, belonging and meeting the needs of every child. It reflects our belief that behaviour is a form of communication and that children thrive when they feel safe, understood and valued. This equipment ordered will form part of a tool kit that learning mentors and Tas will use to support children around school as well as in the Crow's Nest.

By creating a dedicated therapeutic sensory space, we aim to remove barriers to learning, improve wellbeing outcomes and ensure that our most vulnerable pupils receive the support they need to succeed both academically and emotionally.

Monitoring & Quality Assurance

The planned provision in The Crow's Nest is overseen and managed by our Assistant Head who leads on Behaviour and Relationship policy, who is a fully. Provision and resourcing is supported by a HLTA (Higher-level teaching assistant) with links made with class teachers in every year group. A small team of other leaders and TA's help to deliver this provision with this oversight in place on a weekly basis.

The quality of this provision is monitored half-termly by senior leaders. Staff training time is allocated across each term to ensure high standards of provision are maintained. Senior leaders work closely with a network of schools and external bodies to continually review and develop this provision, in an evidence-informed way.

*Rational prepared by Hannah Pope, Assistant Head
July 2026
Reviewed annually*

