

Title	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
Cross References	External: • Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 • SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years • Equality Act 2010 • Relevant Awarding Body and Qualification Requirements Internal: • Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Policy • Quality Management Policy • SEND Policy • Student with Medical Needs Policy • Online Safety Policy • Self-Evaluation Framework
Date	October 2026

1. Principles and Purpose

Teaching and learning are at the heart of Apricot Online. The purpose of this policy is to set clear expectations for high-quality online teaching, learning and assessment so that every student receives an educational experience that is ambitious, inclusive, engaging and responsive to their individual starting point.

Apricot Online provides alternative education to students with a wide range of abilities, prior experiences, SEND, health needs and barriers to attendance or engagement. High-quality teaching within Apricot therefore combines strong subject knowledge and curriculum ambition with flexibility, adaptive teaching, positive relationships and a clear understanding of the individual learner.

Teachers use professional judgement to select the methods most appropriate to the intended learning. Online participation may include audio, chat, whiteboard tools, shared screens, multimedia, questioning, written work and other approved interactive approaches. Participation should be purposeful and accessible rather than requiring every student to interact in the same way.

2. Aims

Apricot Online aims to:

- provide consistently high-quality teaching across one-to-one and group provision;
- ensure teaching is informed by available information about prior learning, SEND, medical needs, safeguarding and barriers to engagement;
- maintain appropriate curriculum ambition while adapting teaching to individual need;
- use assessment intelligently to identify what students know, understand and can do and to inform subsequent teaching;
- provide feedback that helps students recognise success and understand their next steps;
- support students to re-engage with education, build confidence and develop independence;
- prepare students effectively for qualifications, progression, reintegration or transition where these form part of the placement objectives;
- share effective practice and support continuing professional development; and
- evaluate the quality of teaching through its impact on students rather than through a single prescribed lesson style.

3. Understanding the Learner

Effective planning begins with understanding the student. Apricot teachers use the Student Information and Risk Assessment (SIRA) form and other information provided by the commissioner to inform teaching. This may include prior attainment, curriculum information, SEND, EHCP provision, health needs, safeguarding information, known triggers, reasonable adjustments and strategies that have previously been effective.

Apricot recognises that prior learning is not always fully known at the start of an alternative provision placement. Teachers should establish starting points through appropriate questioning, low-stakes assessment, discussion, review of available work and observation of the student's responses. Assessment should support learning rather than create unnecessary barriers to early engagement.

4. Core Elements of High-Quality Provision

4.1 Subject Knowledge and Curriculum Expertise

Students learn best when teachers are secure, knowledgeable and confident in the subject they teach. Apricot uses Department Heads, curriculum planning, quality assurance and continuing professional development to support strong subject knowledge and appropriate curriculum sequencing.

Teachers should understand the relevant curriculum and, where applicable, examination specification and awarding-body requirements. They should identify the knowledge, concepts and skills that matter most and teach these in a coherent sequence.

4.2 Planning and Sequencing

Planning should identify what students need to learn and how new learning connects with prior knowledge. Teachers should select, design and adapt tasks that provide appropriate challenge and enable students to make progress.

- Learning aims should be clear and meaningful.
- New material should be introduced in manageable steps and connected to prior learning where possible.
- Key knowledge and skills should be revisited and retrieved over time.
- Tasks should be purposeful and appropriately paced.
- Planning should anticipate likely misconceptions and barriers.
- Resources should be suitable for online delivery and accessible to the learner.

4.3 Adaptive Teaching and Inclusion

Teachers should respond to differences in students' knowledge, understanding, communication, SEND, health and engagement without unnecessarily lowering expectations. Adaptation may include changes to explanation, modelling, task structure, pace, questioning, resource presentation, processing time, method of response or the level of scaffolding provided.

Reasonable adjustments should be made in accordance with Apricot's SEND and equality arrangements. Camera use, verbal participation and other forms of interaction should be considered in the context of the individual student and the agreed provision.

4.4 Engagement and Online Classroom Practice

Apricot lessons should create a purposeful culture of learning. Teachers should build positive professional relationships, establish clear expectations and use the online environment actively to support thinking and participation.

- use questioning to check understanding rather than simply to maintain activity;
- use whiteboards, chat, audio, shared screens, multimedia and other approved tools where they add value to learning;
- provide appropriate thinking and processing time;
- encourage students to explain, apply and connect their learning;
- recognise that some students may initially demonstrate engagement in small steps;
- avoid mistaking SEND, anxiety, technical difficulty or health-related fatigue automatically for unwillingness to learn; and
- follow safeguarding and behaviour procedures where concerns arise during an online lesson.

4.5 Intervention and Removing Barriers

Where a student is not making expected progress or is experiencing barriers to learning, teachers should adapt their approach and communicate concerns through the appropriate Apricot route. Intervention may include additional explanation, recap, altered scaffolding, targeted practice, changes to pace or discussion with the Department Head, commissioner or other relevant staff.

Interventions should be reviewed for impact. Significant changes to the commissioned programme, timetable or placement objectives should be agreed through the appropriate commissioner process rather than made unilaterally by the teacher.

4.6 Independent and Home Learning

Independent learning may be set where it supports the student's programme and is appropriate to their needs, capacity and commissioned hours. Tasks should have a clear purpose and should not be set simply to generate additional work.

For students with health needs, SEND, anxiety or disrupted education, the quantity and format of independent work should be considered carefully. Completion of home learning should be interpreted in context.

5. Assessment for Learning

Assessment is an ongoing part of teaching. Teachers should use it to understand what students have learned, identify gaps and misconceptions, and decide what needs to happen next.

Assessment may include:

- questioning and discussion;
- observation of student responses and participation;
- low-stakes quizzes and retrieval activities;
- written, verbal or practical responses;
- formal assessments and mock examinations where appropriate;
- coursework or assignment evidence where relevant; and
- review of progress against curriculum, qualification or placement objectives.

Assessment methods should be proportionate and accessible. A student should have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate learning in different ways where reasonable adjustments are required.

6. Feedback and Marking

Feedback should help learning move forward. It may be verbal, written, delivered within the online classroom or provided through approved learning systems. The method should reflect the task, subject, student and intended impact.

Effective feedback should, where appropriate:

- recognise what has been achieved;
- correct important misconceptions or errors;
- help the student understand how to improve;
- focus attention on the most useful next step;
- be timely enough to influence subsequent learning; and
- avoid excessive marking that creates workload without improving learning.

Students should be given opportunities to respond to feedback, revisit learning and recognise their own progress.

7. Progress and Achievement

Apricot assesses progress from the student's individual starting point and within the context of the commissioned programme. Academic progress remains important, but for some students early progress may also include improved attendance, increased lesson tolerance, greater participation, confidence, independence or successful re-engagement after a period out of education.

Where students are working towards formal qualifications, assessment and reporting should support accurate understanding of their progress towards the relevant specification and expected outcomes.

Teachers should celebrate genuine achievement while maintaining accurate and appropriately challenging expectations.

8. Literacy, Numeracy, Communication and Wider Skills

Teachers should support the development of literacy, numeracy, communication, problem-solving and other relevant wider skills where these arise naturally within the subject and programme. This should enhance subject learning rather than become an artificial checklist within every lesson.

9. One-to-One and Group Provision

Apricot provides both one-to-one and small-group learning. High-quality teaching principles apply to both, but delivery should reflect the different opportunities and demands of each model.

In one-to-one provision, teachers should use the opportunity to personalise pace, questioning, explanation and support while continuing to promote appropriate independence. In group provision, teachers should create an inclusive environment in which students can participate safely without requiring cameras or personal disclosure and should manage interaction so that all learners have appropriate opportunities to contribute.

10. Quality Assurance and Professional Development

Apricot uses quality assurance to understand the quality and impact of teaching and to identify strengths, support needs and areas for organisational improvement. Quality assurance may include lesson observation, review of lesson recordings, student work, assessment information, progress data, student and commissioner feedback, curriculum review and professional discussion.

Quality assurance does not seek to grade an individual lesson as Good or Outstanding. Evaluation should consider the quality of education over time, the appropriateness of teaching for the learner and the impact on students' knowledge, skills, engagement and progress.

Feedback from quality assurance should support professional development. Department Heads and senior staff will share effective practice and identify relevant CPD where appropriate.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 Teachers

- plan and deliver high-quality, safe and inclusive online teaching;
- use available student information, including the SIRA, appropriately;
- assess learning and use the information to adapt subsequent teaching;
- provide useful feedback and maintain appropriate assessment records;
- raise concerns about progress, engagement, SEND, safeguarding or the suitability of provision promptly;
- maintain subject knowledge and complete relevant CPD; and
- follow Apricot policies, curriculum expectations and awarding-body requirements.

11.2 Department Heads and Senior Leaders

- support curriculum quality, subject knowledge and consistent expectations;
- monitor teaching, assessment and student progress through proportionate quality assurance;
- support teachers with intervention, adaptation and professional development;
- identify themes and areas for improvement; and
- liaise with commissioners where significant changes or concerns require wider review.

12. Safeguarding and Professional Boundaries

Teaching and assessment take place within Apricot's safeguarding framework. Staff must maintain professional boundaries, use approved systems and follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Online Safety Policy. A concern arising during teaching must not be treated solely as a teaching, attendance or behaviour issue where safeguarding may be involved.

13. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through Apricot's quality assurance, curriculum review, assessment and professional development arrangements. The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where changes to statutory guidance, qualification requirements or Apricot's operating model make this necessary.

Authorised by: Jodie Phillips, Operations Director

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