



ASD Policy

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Members of staff responsible	Deputy Head Teacher
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People involved	Deputy Head Teacher LGB
Signed by Chair of LGB	Christine Robertson
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Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders at Wyvern School

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the approach used in the ASD base classes in planning for and working with pupils who exhibit Autistic behaviours.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTISM

Autism is experienced differently by individuals, but there are three areas of difficulty which are commonly used to describe the condition, and are also used in the criteria when diagnosing autism. These are known as the 'triad of impairments'. While people may experience different degrees of impairment for each part of the triad, people with autism experience the following:

- difficulties with social interaction – finding it hard to understand, communicate and recognise how other people are feeling.
- difficulties with social communication – struggling with verbal and non-verbal language
- difficulties with social imagination – finding it hard to imagine what others are thinking or alternatives to their own routines.¹

Additionally pupils with Autism may experience challenges in the following areas.

- Sensory integration – individuals with autism may find it difficult to process sensory stimuli. They may be overwhelmed by sensory load or be driven to seek sensory experiences.
- Repetitive and restrictive behaviours – individuals with autism can develop patterns of behaviour that may become obsessive, to the exclusion of other activities.
- Experience extreme anxiety – this can be as a result of other factors combining, e.g. anxiety arising from being overwhelmed by sensory stimuli, confusion and fear as a result of not understanding the intentions/motivations of others and frustration as adults seek to restrict or prevent behaviours that feel purposeful to them. ²

3. APPROACHES

Across the school we use a structured approach, stressing the pupils' understanding of what is expected of them. Important to the approach are:-

- Organisation of the physical environment
- Assessment of sensory needs
- Establishing positive routines – daily schedules
- Established appropriate individual work systems
- Total communication
- Building trusting positive relationships.

These establish a meaningful way of working and help to alleviate or moderate issues associated with learning for an autistic pupil.

Organisation of the Physical Environment

The focus is heavily on how well the pupils can make sense of the environment and its expectations for them. To this end we have organised their immediate physical environment (i.e. their classroom) to help clarify tasks and boundaries and to minimise the visual, sensory and auditory distractions.

The structure in teaching and environment is important as it:-

- Helps the pupils to understand by reducing the anxiety about the environment
- Helps pupils reduce barriers to learning. The visual cues help the pupil to focus on the relevant information.
- Visual communication also helps reduce background noise (sensory load) by encouraging staff to be mindful of the complexity of their spoken communication.
- Helps the person with autism to achieve independence.
- Helps behaviour management. It teaches appropriate behaviours and then generalises the behaviour through visual systems.

In a TEACCH classroom areas are set up for:-

- Independent work
- Group work and snack time
- One-to-one teaching
- Play or leisure area for choosing activities
- Circle and instruction
- A calm 1:1 space

Positive Routines

The daily schedule refers to the overall classroom timetable, and outlines the events of the day. It specifies where and what each pupil will be doing throughout the day etc.. for example "group work", "work with teacher", "dinner", "P.E.". thus it shows pupils when they are working and when they are doing other things. It is on view for all to see, or some individuals have their own timetable. The timetable may be written, or in symbol / object form to take account of the understanding of individual pupils. Pupils have a personal schedule which gives them more individual detail about what they are doing and when. It helps pupils to know what will be happening next and where they should go. This lessens anxiety.

Use of a schedule and transition objects also helps to present transitions as consistent pattern based experiences. This helps to reduce the anxiety that some individuals may be experiencing when moving from one activity to another.

Individual Work Systems

Work systems provide the opportunity for pupils to practice and consolidate learnt skills independently. It is important that they are set up to follow a clear and consistent pattern. It may be that activities are provided in a work tray, or alternatively there may be a workstation mini schedule that shows where work should be collected from.

Work station tasks should be visually clear – the pupil should be able to see

- How much work is there? When is the task finished?
- What is expected within the activity? Tasks that are unclear create anxiety, the work station is a place for practicing tasks that have been done before.
- Where work is placed when it is finished – usually a finished tray.
- There should be a mechanism within the workstation where the pupil is prompted to collect their transition object upon completing their work.

Work systems should be individualised and completed independently.

Daily work schedules and individual work systems help to organise a smooth running classroom, manufacture teacher-time, individual / group work and foster independent work skills within pupils.

Teaching Methods

- Capitalising on the pupils' visual strengths and minimising verbal cues.
- Clear organisation of materials to be used
- Making clear what is important by highlighting / use of colour.
- Using visual instructions e.g. sequenced pictures, product sample ("Here's one I made earlier"), written instructions.
- Backward chaining
- Modelling
- Hand over hand (HOH) guiding
- Prompt Fading
- Developing attention skills through 'Attention Autism' sessions
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Difficulties arising from impairments in the areas of social interaction, communication and imagination are likely to result in pupils finding it more difficult to grasp the intent or purpose behind many educational activities. The above approaches may help pupils to have a clearer understanding of what they are being asked to do. Securing positive engagement remains a key priority. It is important to ensure that we work to develop positive relationships with pupils where they choose to engage because they are anticipating positive experiences.

Staff roles

Staff are deployed within in the classroom under the direction of the teacher. Each member of the staff team takes on a particular role for the day i.e. 'teacher', 'classroom manager', 1:1's for particular children and those staff members work with and care for, particular pupils throughout the day. Staff also supervise the 'choose' or 'play' areas of the classroom and make resources.

The duties of each staff role will be made clear by the class teacher and directed towards ensuring efficient use of time and effective teamwork. It is important that pupils learn to respond to different adults rather than becoming dependent upon an individual.

As far as is possible all staff must be consistent in their approach to, and response given, to the pupils. It is important that staff working with pupils are familiar with their individual needs and challenges. Documentation such as therapeutic thinking paperwork, pen

pictures, care plans, sensory diets etc should be shared with all staff working with the pupil.

A staff protocol for staff working with autistic pupils appears in Appendix one. New staff working with autistic pupils are given a pack of information relating to autism, sensory needs, structured teaching, using a schedule, working in an ASD class and using PECS (see attached sheet).

Assessment and Recording

A wide range of assessments contribute to our understanding of individual pupils and their needs profiles.

- Engagement profile
- Sensory observations
- Behaviour data
- Teacher assessment and video evidence to inform views of pupil progress.

When assessing we are looking for:-

- Emerging skills
- Strengths
- Interests
- Work habits

The movement towards independence involves:-

- One-to-one
- Independent within classroom; then
- Independent across a variety of environments.

Individual work and I.E.P. objectives are recorded on a daily basis by the staff. When objectives have been achieved, staff assess the next objective.

The recording of pupil progress is then used, along with video evidence, to update the pupil's database in Literacy and Numeracy. This is used to inform I.E.P.s, PCR reviews and progress reports.

4. CURRICULUM CONTENT

We use the school's schemes of work to enable our planning but within the class we give a priority to:

- Learning to learn – developing positive engagement
- Personal and social education
- Teaching effective functional communication

We place great emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy and have modified the Literacy and Numeracy hours to meet the needs of our pupils. We also place great emphasis on appropriate social interaction and the ability to go out into the community successfully.

Learning to Learn

We aim to develop pupil's independence in working.

The starting point for developing independent work is always developing positive engagement and fostering the desire to be an active participant in learning activities.

Pupils work on tasks mastered or nearly mastered at their independent workstations. Gradually we develop the period of time and number of tasks that they are able to achieve in a session. New tasks are introduced at the 1:1 teaching table.

P.S.H.E.

Autism is often characterised by difficulties understanding and interacting with others. Many children will also struggle to recognise and communicate their own emotional state. As a result of these additional challenges it is important that we work to develop pupil's emotional literacy, social understanding, promote positive relationships and interactions.

We also put great emphasis on developing self help and independence skills. As pupils get older working within the community becomes crucial to their overall independence and ability to widen their experience. Skills learnt in the classroom are transferred to work within the wider school environment and the local community. Pupils with autism find this sort of work extremely stressful and therefore need lots of practise because it is so much more unpredictable. Beginning training within the community at an early stage is important because these skills take much longer to learn, and fears need to be overcome as early as possible.

Communication

Functional communication is the prime life skill, accordingly it is the focus in every aspect of school life. We use the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and ProLoQuo2Go on the iPad as the main means of communication, particularly for those pupils who are non-verbal as it is a unique augmentative/alternative communication package developed for use with children with autism and other social-communication deficits.

The first communicative function PECS addresses is requesting. During the first phases of training, as requesting is being taught, the tangible rewards are paired with social rewards (praise, etc..) and as these social rewards become more effective at maintaining behaviour, more socially-based communicative function are introduced.

Across communicative behaviours, what is elemental to PECS is that the child learns, from the very beginning of training, to initiate communicative exchanges. This change is accomplished through the use of specific teaching strategies designed to limit and control the amount and type of prompts or cues that are used. Strict adherence to the teaching principles outlined in the initial two phases of training is vital if the desired outcome is a child that spontaneously initiates communicative interactions. Pupils use either a folder with PECS symbols or the iPad programme Proloquo2Go.

This is led by and supported through the SALT team

R.E.

The teaching of Religious Education presents particular challenges for pupils with autism, given their core difficulty in understanding all mental states, including belief. To this end, our work in this area centres on teaching an awareness of the self and others within the group and the wider school environment.

We also seek to explore experiences linked to other faiths and cultures with a view to expanding children's lived experiences and developing a sense of awe and wonder in relation to the world and experiences.

Post 16 Curriculum

Support continues for pupils with ASD in the Post 16 provision. The curriculum here is based on life and functional skills. There is an emphasis in learning and living in the wider community, and all the previously used strategies and support the pupil has had in their school career continue to be used.

Inclusion within the wider school environment

Where appropriate, opportunities for inclusion are given to pupils to work within larger peer groups for subjects such as P.E., Music, Drama and swimming. This happens on an individual basis according to the needs of those particular pupils. Opportunities for inclusion happen either for developing social skills (e.g. tolerance of larger groups, coping with different teachers etc..) or for a specific subject (e.g. Literacy, Science).

Wyvern School – Autistic Base classes

Staff Protocol

1. We work as a team. Any anxieties, concerns or worries are brought to meetings. These will be discussed by everyone to reach a consensus.
2. We have regular meetings. Anyone can call a meeting if there is something they wish to discuss.
3. We rotate roles within the classroom and take turns working with all pupils/students.
4. When working in the classroom we keep our language simple and to a minimum.
5. The classroom is a quiet, calm environment.
6. We always ask for or offer help to other team members. NEVER LEAVE A COLLEAGUE ALONE TO DEAL WITH A DIFFICULT INCIDENT. Help can take many forms – making a drink, getting another member of staff as well as intervening in a particular situation.
7. Difficult situations do arise – keep calm.

References.

1. [How is autism described? - SCIE](#)
2. [What is autism](#) NAS