Cherry Willingham Primary School

Autism and Social Communication Procedures

These procedures have been written to supplement other current policies in the school and should be read in conjunction with but not limited to; the Accessibility Procedures, Anti-Bullying Procedures, Behaviour Procedures, Equal Opportunities Procedures, E-Safety Procedures, EYFS Procedures, Health, Safety and Welfare Procedures, PSHE Procedures, Safeguarding Procedures, SEND Procedures, Teaching and Learning Procedures and the SEND Local Offer.

The procedures consider the education of pupils with an Autism Spectrum Disorder or Social Communication difference, including Asperger's, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). The importance of this policy lies in recognising that there is a need for flexibility in the aforementioned policies due to the very unique difficulties of children across the autistic spectrum.

These are whole school procedures.

Rationale

Autism is a pervasive, developmental disorder. Difficulties experienced by those diagnosed with autism can vary in severity and should be considered in respect of a spectrum of need.

In order to ensure that pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to access a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, the additional difficulties characteristic of pupils on the autistic spectrum need to be taken into account [Appendix 1]. The curriculum in this respect is not solely academic but also should reflect opportunities to engage in activities that enhance their social and communication skills but also promote emotional well-being and emotional literacy. Their individual needs should be taken into account in all aspects of their school life, including the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives.

At school we use the SPELL approach [Appendix 2] which has been developed by The National Autistic Society. It addresses the desire of many young people with an autistic spectrum to have continuity and order in their life; to be able to predict events; to have access to an environment sufficiently modified to reduce anxiety and at the same time to be stimulating and promote learning. The approach has been developed to overcome or reduce the potentially disabling effects of autism by providing a broad and balanced curriculum, giving extra help in each of the areas of impairment.

Aims

Our aim is to ensure the following key principles underpin our practice, enabling us to provide the best possible education for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder or social communication difference:

- Good knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum disorder throughout the school, including recognising that children with autism often have additional needs linked to other conditions, such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, learning differences and mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression.
- Recognising the vulnerabilities of children with autism or a social communication difficulty in relation to bullying, discrimination, grooming and exploitation.
- Recognise and support that children with a social communication difficulty may need visual supports or alternate methods of communication, including PECS, Makaton, or BSL.
- Knowledge, understanding and implementation of established interventions and approaches, with flexibility to adapt these interventions and creativity to establish new ones.
- Knowledge and understanding of general and specific behaviours and behaviour management approaches, this includes recognising how these children may find positive handling especially difficult. Therefore, at times a child may follow a bespoke behaviour management system.
- School staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well-being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.
- Provision of pupils on the autistic spectrum is continuously monitored and evaluated as part of the self-evaluation process, with the voice of the child being of significant importance and influential in any plans made that relate to the individual child.

We aim to meet the needs of our pupils' with autism and/or social communication difference by:

- Offering a variety of consistent, high quality provision across academic education, emotional well-being and opportunity to learn life skills, with school being able to provide a range of specific interventions such as Lego Therapy, FRIENDS Programme, NESSY Programme, Emotional Literacy Support Assistant, Yoga, Sensory Circuits and our own Sensory Space called The Nook.
- Ensuring that all children have appropriate visual supports necessary to support their communication. We currently have staff within school that are able to sign in Makaton and BSL.
- Ensuring that staff have access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and support, with all staff being trained to at least National Autistic Society Tier 2 'Good Autism Practice'.
- Collaborating with a range of professionals and parents / carers, including the Working Together Team who provide high quality support to schools and academies working with students with a wide range of social communication and / or learning needs.
- Individualised planning to address the individual and specific needs of pupils with autism. This may be in the form of Individual Educational Plans, Pupil Support Plan, Educational Health Care Plan or Pupil Profile which will be drafted in collaboration with parents, child and other professionals following appropriate assessment.

- Delivering curriculum which balances social, emotional and academic needs through a holistic approach.

Support

Within school we have an identified Autism Champion who is the first point of contact for both parents and teachers, this is Mrs Lowe.

All children with Autism or Social Communication difference will have a Pupil Passport determining their specific needs and how best to support them. The information to compile these will be gathered through discussion with parents/carers, the individual child, SENDCo, external agencies supporting the child, and assessments. These assessments may include AET Progression Framework, PIVATs, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires and Sensory Questionnaires.

Children who are on the SEN register will also have a Pupil Profile, which will give similar information but will also consider their academic progress and include their 3 targets. Generally these will be 2 academic and one social/emotional target.

Examples of some of the approaches used in the provision to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum include:

- Special FRIENDS Programme
- Lego Therapy
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) interventions, such as Cherry Chums social skills intervention
- NESSY Programme
- Individual workstations with bespoke visual supports / prompts
- Yoga
- Elements of the TEACCH Approach (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children) including the use of structure, visual supports, independent work areas and routine
- Social Stories and Comic Book Conversations
- Sensory activities and access to the school's sensory area, called The Nook
- Low arousal work areas
- Play and Interaction, including role play

Working in Partnership

The experts in a child's life are the individual child and their respective parents. To enable us to get the most accurate understanding of a child's needs it is crucial to establish a positive working relationship with the parents.

As well as contributing to establishing Pupil Profiles and Pupil Passports, parents will also be essential partners in reviewing and updating these. Pupil Passports will be reviewed on a yearly basis, prior to transition to the next academic year, to ensure that the transition is an appropriately managed process. They can also be reviewed and updated across the year should the need arise, such as due to a change of family dynamics, or house move. Pupil Profiles will be reviewed each term and new targets set.

Our Autism Champions will ensure that any information that may be beneficial to parents will be forwarded to them, such as details of upcoming events or training.

The school will also work in partnership with a range of external agencies who may come in to school to work with the child, or may support the family outside of school. These may include, The Working Together Team, Dyslexia Outreach, Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Extended Speech Language and Communication Support for Students (ECLIPs), Specialist Teaching Team, Specialist Outreach Language Teacher and the Visual Stress Clinic. A delegate from school, will attend any multi-agency meetings in relation to the child to ensure that their social, emotional and academic learning needs are represented.

Training

All teachers and teaching assistants have completed Good Autism Practice (tier 2) training provided by The Working Together Team (a National Autistic Society (NAS) Accredited service). Our 2 Autism Champions have also undertaken additional training, including Leading Good Autism Practice (Tier 3).

All school staff have access to further e-learning and continued training opportunities to enhance and refresh their knowledge and understanding of Autism and Social Communication difference. They are also kept up to date of new research relating to the education and well-being of children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Teachers who require specific training in relation to an individual child's needs will be offered this, to enable them to be best placed to support the child.

As a whole school we are committed to achieving our AIM4Lincs Award (Autism Inclusion Mark for Lincolnshire Award), which will evidence our ongoing commitment to ensure that our good practice is for all, including those with a Social Communication difference or Autism. When we achieve this we recognise that we will be required to maintain this standard in order to retain the award.

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Appendix 1

Gosberton House School 2016, adapted with thanks.

Areas of potential difficulty	Impact	Strategies
• Communication and language skills.	• Difficulty in understanding, processing and following verbal information. • Difficulty in 'reading' and interpreting facial expressions, gesture, body language • Difficulty understanding nonliteral language.	• Get the attention of the child before giving instructions. • Use simple language with visual prompts. • Provide time to process the information. • Use of colourful semantics • Use activities, demonstrations, modelling, role play, rehearsing, overlearning and pictures. • Technology support • Avoid or plan and explain the use of idioms and metaphorical language.
• Communication and language skills.	• Difficulty in expressing needs or answering a question. • Difficulty in retelling / recalling /retrieving information. • Inference	• Using the child's name [pause] to gain his/her attention. • Some pupils are prompted through gentle touch to gain attention. • Providing visual supports to help in communication and recollection of personal experiences. • Use closed questions rather than open ended questions. • Scaffolding request • Options to write/draw 'problems' • Use of 3D mindmaps; objects of reference; mind mapping

• Social skills.	• Difficulties with the concept of personal belongings/ personal space	• Spend time in developing understanding of the concepts of private and public –social stories; cartoon conversations • Use of visual boundaries • Use visual prompts to support this. • Labelled personal items. • Consistent seating.
• Social skills and flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in following social 'rules', and socially appropriate behaviour. • Difficulty understanding and recognising emotions in themselves and others. • Difficulty in maintaining friendships.	• Have consistent, explicit routines for individuals. • Use Social Stories to explain the social rules and expected behaviour. • Specific social communication interventions such as ELSA • Self-esteem charts • Role play of situations – explore opportunities to possible solutions • Use of favourite characters from TV, books, films to explore feelings
• Social skills and flexible thinking.	• Can find it difficult to deal with sudden changes, leading to anxiety.	• Give advance notice of any changes. • Using visual timetables. • Give clear guidance, self-management strategies [access to calmers; distractors; self-regulation strategies etc.] and consequences. • Access to The Den. • Individual clear and relevant consequences to noncompliance • First/then boards

		• Specific interventions such as ELSA and/or Special FRIENDS. • Use of red/green anger, actions, words. • Relaxation exercises.
• Flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in understanding the feelings of other people and the effect of their own behaviours on other people.	• Work on understanding emotions. • Role play • Emotional literacy work- individual and group • Use strategies such as comic strip conversations. • Identification and support to use strategies for 'next time' • Use of film/visual prompts to cue and reinforce learning
• Flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in relating to a story or topic that requires imagination.	• Teach a new concept from concrete to abstract. • Use mind maps • Use 'What I want to Know' boards • Relate to the child's experiences / interests.
• Flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in using a learnt skill out of the learnt situation.	Teach each skill in all the possible contexts and in different ways. • Include generalisation as part of teaching every topic/concept. • Learn in a wide variety of environments • Visitors in classroom/ in school e.g. theatre groups; musicians; reenactors
• Sensory perception and flexible thinking.	• Resistance to certain activities or situations.	• Preparation and movement breaks; activate.

		• Introduce to sensation gradually. • Provision of alternative options. • Access to sensory supports e.g. ear defenders.
• Sensory perception and social skills.	• Finds it difficult to concentrate/focus on task.	• Access to a low arousal learning environment. • Realistic pictures, avoid complicated or very visually busy pictures. • Reduce the social demands while learning. • Permit time out if child is becoming over-stimulated.
• Sensory perception -Visual	• Flickering lights distraction, discomfort • Ability to self-organise / self-structure	• Classroom illumination is suitable for pupils with autism, wherever possible. • Fluorescent lights are regularly checked and changed. The effects of light coming into the room through blinds and creating distracting patterns are minimised • Light reflecting on objects such as metal or shiny surfaces in the classroom is minimised. • The classroom is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment. • The impact of wall displays is considered. • Designated areas for specific activities to give clarity to the classroom organisation. • Pupils have the opportunity to work on a single table or at the back to focus their attention, if necessary

• Sensory – noise/sound	• Distraction; discomfort; inability to focus on designated activity	• Sounds from classroom equipment are kept to a minimum.

• Screens, audio systems, lights and computers are switched off when not in use [to avoid a mains hum.]

• There are strategies in place to reduce noise when rooms are in use - Classrooms are carpeted to lessen noise created by the movement of people, chairs and desks.

• Hallways are carpeted to lessen the noise created by movement through the corridors.

• Consideration is made regarding sounds from outside the classroom

• Windows in The Den have film applied to reduce glare

• There are agreed strategies in place when noise becomes too much for individual pupils e.g. use of ear defenders.; movement away from the noise source

• There are quiet rooms available which provides a calm place for pupils to relax, notably The Den.

• Pupils are warned if a loud noise or bell is going to sound, whenever possible.

• Strategies are put in place to support pupils who find loud noises or fire bells very difficult to tolerate. |
| • Sensory –smell | • Difficulty tolerating aromas; distraction /hyper sensitivity | • Smells within the classroom are kept to a minimum. |

		• The smell of paints, glue, clay and cleaning fluids is minimal, whenever possible. • Staff are aware that the smell of perfumes and deodorants may be distressing. • Staff are aware that pupils may react to the smell of others. Smells from outside the classroom are monitored and reduced, where possible.
• Sensory –touch and feel	• Distraction/discomfort	• Uncomfortable clothing (seams, inflexible or itchy fabrics) is avoided, where possible, unless there are safety issues • The school uniform offers flexibility to enable pupils to be able to wear clothing they find comfortable.
• Social skills, flexible thinking and communication.	• Difficulty in developing play skills, and following game rules.	• Identify and focus on teaching necessary play skills such as turn-taking, negotiating etc. • Simplify the game rules. • Introduce a circle of friends or buddy system to help the child in building relationships. • Collaboration with local schools e.g. sporting activities • Specific interventions such as ELSA Cherry Chums or games club.
• General	• Heightened anxiety; challenging behaviours; non-engagement	• Pupils are supported to let staff know if they are finding an aspect of the environment distressing. • Pupils are relaxed when moving through corridors – movement is controlled, ordered, corridors are light, de-cluttered

		• Individual pupils can be allowed to leave the classroom slightly earlier or later than peers to avoid noisy corridors/ crowds. • Classroom organisation takes into account the individual needs of pupils. • Classroom organisation and individual seating plan takes into consideration individual concerns • Pupils who become anxious by the close proximity of others are allowed ample space around their seat • Consideration is given to individual pupils to reduce stress – e.g. eat in different room, sit on the periphery of a group or on their own table. • Pupils could enter the dinner hall before or after peers to avoid crowds • A system of support is available for pupils experiencing sensory overload. • Learning breaks can be built into individualised timetables. • There is a designated place and a clear system/routine for pupils to follow if they feel they need to withdraw.

Appendix 2

SPELL FRAMEWORK

Gosberton House School, reproduced with thanks.

Structure

The importance of structure has long been recognised. It makes the world a more predictable, accessible and safer place. Structure can aid personal autonomy and independence by reducing dependence on prompting from others. The environment and processes are modified to ensure individuals know what is going to happen and what is expected of them. This can also aid the development of flexibility by reducing dependence on rigid routines. Structure plays to the strengths of a sense of order and preference for visual organisation commonly associated with an autistic spectrum disorder.

Positive (approaches and expectations)

A programme of sensitive but persistent intervention in place to engage the individual child and develop his/her full potential. Having high but realistic expectations based on careful assessment which includes identification of the strengths and individual needs of the person, his/her level of functioning and an assessment of the support he/she will need. Aiming to support educational setting to seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self-esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.

Empathy

To see the world from the standpoint of the young person with an autistic spectrum is the key to the development of the art of working with young people with an autistic spectrum disorder. Starting from the position or perspective of the individual and gathering insights about how he/she sees and experiences the world, knowing what it is that motivates or interests him/her and also frightens, preoccupies or otherwise distresses him/her. Getting inside and respecting the experience underpins any successful approach, develops communication and reduces anxiety. In this, the quality of the relationship between the child, the child's family and staff is of vital importance.

Low arousal

Aiming for approaches and the environment to be calm and ordered in such a way as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration. There should be as few distractions as possible. As appropriate, particular attention is paid to potentially aversive or distracting stimuli, for example noise levels,

colour schemes, odours, lighting and clutter. Low arousal should not be confused with 'no arousal'. It is desirable that individuals are exposed to a wide range of experiences.

Links

Strong links between the various components of the child/young person's life promotes and sustain essential consistency. Open links and communication between people (e.g. parents, teachers and outside agencies) provides an holistic approach and reduce the possibility of unhelpful misunderstanding or confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.