



DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT

Autism

October 2022

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Autism

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This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including the following policies, documents and guidance: all Curriculum Polices, Assessment Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Child Protection Policy, Transition Policy, Communication Policy & Enhancing the Classroom Environment Policy.

Introduction

Pupils at Durants School have a statement of need that defines them as having a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition (ASC). An ASC is a lifelong, complex developmental disability. The primary characteristics of ASC are as follows; difficulties in non-verbal and verbal communication, social understanding and social behaviour, and thinking and behaving flexibly (rigidity of thought) according to the situation and sensory perception and responses. Pupils with an ASC commonly experience unusual sensitivity to sound, touch and visual stimuli. Reference to ‘a spectrum’ of difficulties is made because there is a change in the child’s needs over the years of his/her development and the difficulties vary.

In order to ensure that pupils at Durants school 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. Their needs should be taken into account in all aspects of their school life, including the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives.

This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for the education of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition at Durants School. It will form the basis for the development of autism-specific practice in the school over the next two years.

Principles

To ensure the following key principles underpin our practice to enable us to provide the best possible education for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

- Throughout the school there is Knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum condition. Training and support is given to new staff.
- Throughout the school there is Knowledge, understanding and implementation of established interventions and approaches that help pupils with Autism to access the curriculum (TEACCH, PECS, Communication books, Makaton, Intensive interaction, Approach and Therapeutic approaches).
- Throughout the school there is Knowledge and understanding of general and specific behaviours and behaviour management approaches.
- School staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

Procedures

Sensory Issues

All pupils will have a sensory assessment made by the class team working in collaboration with the occupational therapist. Teachers can refer pupils to be seen by the occupational therapist on a 1:1/ group

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basis. The occupational therapist will work with highlighted pupils and can also support class staff to work with pupils on sensory integration. Sensory assessments will be monitored and reviewed at Annual reviews. [Please read sensory policy]

Environment

Many pupils with an autistic spectrum condition have sensory difficulties which can result in unusual or uncomfortable perception of sound, sense, touch, sight and smell. This means that many children are unable to focus upon teaching activities and are distracted by noise and visual or other stimuli. This has a profound effect upon their ability to learn and impacts behaviour when sensory input causes extreme discomfort or pain. Pupils on the autistic spectrum also have difficulties with flexibility and require clear visual support to understand routines and expectations. Therefore we try to reduce environmental anxiety and distress by the following:

- Providing an environment which is calm, distraction free and has a low level of visual and auditory stimulus.
- Providing pupils with a high degree of visual and physical structure. (TEACCH)
- Providing pupils with a means of requesting withdrawal to a quiet area when their levels of anxiety become raised.
- Provide pupils with access to a range of therapeutic approaches: Dance and movement therapy, Sensory integration (Occupational therapy), Music therapy, Speech and language therapy and Psychotherapy.
- Provide pupils with a curriculum that is appropriate to their needs and gives them a broad and balanced experience.
- Provide pupils with small class groups and a high staff ratio.
- Provide pupils with a total communication environment that helps them to communicate their needs/wants.

Approaches and Interventions

In order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum at Durants the teaching philosophy embodies the rationale of an eclectic mix of established and researched approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use.

- TEACCH (Treatment and education of autistic and related communication handicapped children) approach developed by the University of North Carolina in the USA in 1966. This approach provides pupils with a structured, positive, empathic and low-arousal environment that helps pupils to work towards independence.
- Total communication approaches are used to help pupils to communicate to the best of their abilities PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), communication books/boards, Makaton and Intensive Interaction. [Please read Communication Policy]
- Good links are well established with outside agencies (Social services, CAMHS team). Regular Multi agency meetings are held to make sure pupils are managing and making good progress. Pupil concerns are highlighted and pupils can be supported through a multi agency approach.

Assessment

All pupils are assessed using 'I can statements' & AET targets Individual pupil targets and Positive behaviour support plans reflect triad of impairment. Assessment outcomes are reported at Annual Review. [Please read Assessment policy]

Curriculum

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Underpinning all teaching and learning is an emphasis on the development of independence, social interaction, social understanding and social communication. Lessons are planned to facilitate development in these areas but specific teaching, for example in social skills, life skills and sensory desensitization are also necessary. We believe in providing many 'real life' opportunities, for example, educational visits are used to help reduce rigidity, develop appropriate social skills such as waiting in shops or having snack in a café and learning about road safety. Pupils all access a full differentiated curriculum delivered in a way that addresses the triad of impairment and sensory issues. [Please read all curriculum related policies]

Behaviour

Behaviour is often a means of communication and we endeavour to understand the function behind the behaviour. At Durants specific strategies are used to reduce anxiety and promote feelings of well-being and to modify unwanted behaviours and promote more appropriate ones. All pupils have a clear Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS Plan) that helps staff to manage pupils consistently and effectively with the intent to help pupils to manage their own behaviours/difficulties to the best of their ability. PBS Plans are regularly reviewed and updated with parents, healthcare and education professionals and form part of the documentation for Annual Review. Incidences are documented in online individual behaviour logs so that staff can look at antecedents to behaviour and look for any patterns in behaviour. All class-based staff are trained in positive handling (Approach). [Please read Behaviour policy]

Continuity of Approach

At Durants we recognise the importance of generalising the skills that pupils learn across school, home and respite settings. Class teachers and senior management regularly liaise with multi-disciplinary teams through regular multi agency meetings (MAWS) and termly Team Around Durants (TAD) meetings. Class teacher/teams have regularly dialogue with relevant members of the therapy team. Class teacher/teams liaise daily through home school books, e-mails or telephone calls with respite workers, parents and carers to ensure continuity of approaches in and out of school.

Training

There is an induction course for all new staff that includes training on autism-awareness and good practice and an introduction to autism-specific practices and interventions such as PECS, TEACCH and Intensive Interaction. All new staff are given the two day Approach training to help them to manage the challenging behaviours pupil's at Durants can present, in a calm positive and effective way.

Equal Opportunities

All pupils at Durants school in Key stages 3 and 4 (Years 7-11) are entitled to access to the national curriculum adapted to meet their needs and abilities and enhance their learning experiences. All pupils in Key stage 5 (years 12-14) are entitled to a curriculum that is based on their needs and abilities and that will enhance their skills for future life. All pupils at Durants school will work towards relevant accredited courses in ASDAN and AQA units.

All pupils are entitled to a curriculum that helps them to manage their Autism and enhance their skills to reach their full potential. [Please refer to school vision]

All pupils at Durants will receive support from experienced staff that understand the challenges and difficulties that Autism places on a pupil. All staff will endeavour to help pupils in a calm consistent way to work through anxieties and difficulties helping them to manage these challenges as independently as possible.

Good Practice

- All staff should have an awareness of the challenges Autism presents and an understanding of established and researched approaches and interventions such as PBS, PECS, TEACH, Makaton and Intensive Interaction.

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- All behaviour should be seen as a communication and staff should work towards finding out functions of behaviours and helping pupils to use appropriate ways of communicating their needs/wants.
- Pupils should be provided with a means of requesting withdrawal to a quiet area when their levels of anxiety become raised.
- Durants school should be a total Communication environment and there is consistency across the school; any person with whom a pupil comes into contact should be aware of the systems and methods of communication used by that individual.
- All lessons should include experiences that help the pupil to enhance social and communication skills.
- Pupils' sensory needs should be taken into consideration and strategies should be put in place to help that pupil overcome or manage their sensory difficulties.
- Adults with whom the student comes into contact should always be sensitive to the amount of time that the pupil might need in order to process information and respond.
- Best practice occurs when there is a multi disciplinary approach in collaboration with parents, carers or respite workers.

The environment should be set up so that it helps to provide calm, distraction free areas of learning which have low level of visual and auditory stimulus. (see DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT Enhancing the Classroom Environment)

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- To minimise stress and maximise independence pupils should be provided with an appropriate degree of visual and physical structure to help them to know where they should be, what they should be doing and what they will be doing next. (TEACCH)
- All pupils should have a Positive behaviour support plan as well as IEP targets taken from their overarching targets agreed with parents from the EHCP plan so that there is a balance of consistency and challenge, according to individual needs.

Trauma Informed Practice

- Upsetting/confusing events are also called traumas. Traumatic events can cause people to feel afraid, upset, confused, helpless, angry, empty or numb. Many pupils arrive at school in a defensive state because they have been through trauma and have learnt the world is a scary place.

Durants is a trauma informed place to learn, where every child:

- is understood in the context of their environment and experiences
- has a safe caregiving environment
- has the support they need to regulate and integrate their experiences
- has the opportunity to develop the skills they need for a good life