

## Autism (ASD) Policy

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### **Introduction**

This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for the education of students with an autistic spectrum condition enrolled at New Oaks Primary and High Oaks Secondary, collectively known as Oaklands School Group. It will form the basis for the development of autism-specific practice in the school.

Oaklands Schools Group is a special school in the London Borough of Hounslow. It has a history of outstanding provision in meeting the needs of both young people with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In line with the national and regional increase in students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, Oaklands Schools Group has developed a specific provision for autistic pupils.

The Autism policy document is an all encompassing document that covers the entire group of schools and relates to individuals both in the autism department as well as those on the autistic spectrum whose needs are best met in the other departments.

### **Rationale**

In order to ensure that pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to access the broad, balanced and relevant curriculum offered to pupils throughout our group of schools, the additional difficulties characteristics 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.

### **Aims**

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

- Knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum disorder throughout the school.
- Knowledge, understanding and implementation of established interventions and approaches.
- Knowledge and understanding of general and specific behaviours and behaviour management approaches.
- Up to date current research relating to the education and well being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

### **Working with Parents**

Within Oaklands we recognise the particular challenges faced by parents raising children with autism, and we aim to provide whatever practicable support we can.

We endeavour to work in close partnership with parents and families in the interests of all our pupils. We employ a Family Support Officer specifically for this purpose.

The range of activities and services we provide includes training for parents, support in accessing quality services for children, groups on particular issues such as health



information or managing behaviour, and individual support for children and their parents through one to one work, or signposting to specialist services.

We aim to provide a range of services that are responsive to the needs of individual families.

At Oaklands we:

- work in partnership with parents and carers
- recognise, value and respect the uniqueness of each family and their differing needs
- work from a child-centred perspective
- provide autism-specific help and advice
- provide a range of family support services which families can access at different times depending on need
- draw on the expertise of a range of professionals in order to provide a holistic service

### **Equal Opportunities and inclusion**

At Oaklands we aim for all pupils to access the broad range of curriculum activities available in school. At the same time, we plan for pupils on an individual basis according to their needs, learning styles and personal interests. All pupils with autism at Oaklands receive equal access to a broad range of curriculum activities in line with their needs which will include access to specialist rooms as appropriate, access teaching delivered by subject specialists where appropriate, access to community based learning, access to therapy in line with their assessed needs.

We aim for pupils with autism to have a range of opportunities for inclusion both within the school and in the wider community. Pupils have opportunities to mix with their non-autistic peers at lunch time, during leisure options, frequent full school events and some lessons. Where inclusion with non-autistic peers is a particular priority for individuals with autism they may have an internal inclusion timetable.

All pupils have weekly outings in the community to learn a range of skills, and to generalise their classroom learning. Pupils also use community facilities such as local areas of interest and leisure centres. Sixth form pupils with support from job coaches have access to work placements both in and out of school.

### **Sensory Issues**

Many autistic pupils experience sensory difference which can impact on learning and behaviour.

All students have access to weekly therapy focus sessions, designed and regularly reviewed by the Oaklands School Therapy Team. They have an Occupational Therapy report drawn up with highlighted strategies delivered across the school day by classroom staff. These activities are carried out throughout the day to ensure students sensory needs are met and that they are regulated and able to access learning.

Staff receive training by our school Occupational Therapists regarding sensory processing during their induction period. This ensures that all staff have a clear understanding on the impact of sensory regulation for our young people.

### **Physical Environment**

Students with autism benefit from a clear physical structure with emphasis placed on information shown in a visual format. All the classrooms in the ASD Department use physical structure in line with the TEACCH Model. Schedules are used to assist individuals in transitioning both within the classroom and around the school and work systems which



present work visually are also in place. A library of individual tasks is continuously constructed and updated to suit individual needs. Individuals on the Autistic Spectrum who are taught outside of the ASD Department access similar environments within their own classrooms.

By giving clear expectations within a structured framework backed up with visual support individuals are given the greatest opportunity to succeed. Calm working environments reduce degrees of anxiety and distress. Unfamiliar situations and the ability to increase flexibility are carefully managed so that positive outcomes are the norm.

### **Approaches and Interventions**

The teaching philosophy at Oaklands embodies the rationale of the SPELL approach developed by the National Autistic Society; provision of a structured, positive, empathic and low-arousal environment with good links between school, home and outside agencies.

However, in order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum we use a blend of established approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. These include a total communication environment at all times consisting of signs, symbols and speech. The Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), Intensive interaction and programmes specifically written for individuals to follow from both Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists

### **Transition**

All students identified as candidates to Oaklands school are observed during a visit to their current school by the Head Teacher and Head of school. Families are then invited to attend an assessment morning at Oaklands School. These small sessions are led by the AHT and Head of School. The therapy team attends to observe the sensory and communication needs of the student. A meeting is then held to discuss best placement of that student within the school taking into accounts observations in current school, at the assessment session and by the therapy team before a place is offered. A transition plan is then discussed with the current placement depending on the student's needs.

### **Assessment**

All students are regularly assessed by subject teachers in each subject and by the class teachers in extra curricular subjects and targets relating to Individual Education Plans. Assessment is also carried out by Therapists dependent on individual student programmes. Assessment information is inputted into SOLAR a computer software programme. Student's progress is demonstrated by an online Progress File which contains electronic evidence such as completed worksheets, witness statements, video evidence and/or annotated photographs. All students on starting at Oaklands are re baselined using P levels in Key stage 3 and 4 and M levels in Key stage 5. When students move to key stage 5 they are re baselined using M levels (adult curriculum). This then informs teachers of a starting point for their learning. Data is gathered twice a year to check if students are on track to meet their targets. If a student is identified as not being on track to meet their target a targeted support plan is put in place.

### **Curriculum**

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, community 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. Differentiation occurs through the use of ILP's and individual target setting. Students in key stage 4 and 5 are working towards NOCN modules in a range of subjects that also place emphasis on gaining knowledge, understanding and practical experience relating to life skills and independent living.

### **Behaviour**

Behaviour is almost always a means of communication and we endeavour to understand the function behind the behaviour. Specific strategies are used to reduce anxiety, promote feelings of well-being, to modify unwanted behaviours and promote more appropriate ones. Pupils have individual Positive Handling Plans (PHP's) and risk assessments. These documents are regularly reviewed and updated by staff and shared with parents/carers and other professionals working with the student, to ensure continuity. All class-based staff are trained in positive handling (Team Teach). Any form of restraint is used as a last resort and only if the student is putting themselves/others at risk. Any form of restraint is recorded in the 'Restraint' book.

### **Continuity of Approach**

We at Oaklands recognise the importance of generalising the skills that pupils learn across school, home and respite settings. Class teachers regularly liaise with multi-disciplinary teams, respite workers, parents and carers to ensure continuity of approaches in and out of school. The sharing of strategies enables students to consolidate on skills they have learnt.

### **Training**

All new staff have attended internal induction training in autism-specific practices and interventions such as TEACCH, Intensive Interaction, PECS and sensory processing. All staff have attended internal training on autism-awareness and good practice. Oaklands school has a number of experienced staff who have worked with students with autism in a variety of settings. These staff members regularly lead staff INSET training.

### **Health**

Some students have an annual medical with the school doctor. At this medical parents have the opportunity to discuss issues they may be experiencing at home and gain advice. During this medical, students are weighed and measured, if there are any issues arising from these students will be referred to the borough dietician. From this medical, other referral can also be made.