



Autism Policy

Person Responsible: Mairead Hill, Anne Clinton

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Next Review Date: January 2019

Introduction:

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

Oakland's School 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 school has developed a specific provision for autistic pupils.

The Autism policy document is an all encompassing document that covers the entire school 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 school 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 condition.

- Knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum condition 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.

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 stated 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, in after school clubs, 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 swimming baths and leisure centres. Sixth form pupils who are able to benefit access local colleges one day per week and many undertake employer based work experience placements.

Sensory Issues

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

Sensory profiles are drawn up for all pupils in ASD specific classes using a sensory assessment. These are created by the Occupational therapist in collaboration with parents/carers, teachers and class staff. From these, sensory diets are created for individual students. This information is detailed in each student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and is used during the planning and assessment of lessons. The activities on the sensory programme are then carried out by class teams throughout the day.

Staff receive training in sensory processing during their induction period so that they can respond to individual needs. Every effort is made in the current Oaklands building to provide appropriate environments and to protect autistic pupils from unnecessary sensory overload. Adaptations have been made to some classrooms in order to create appropriate environments.

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 are 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

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 B Squared's computer software programme Connecting Steps and then passed onto the national database Caspa. Student's progress is demonstrated by a Student Progress File which contains termly targets for each subject backed up with evidence sheets ranging from completed worksheets, witness statements, video evidence and/or annotated photographs.

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, 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. 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

All 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 referrals can also be made.

Signed by Chair of Committee:

Print Name:

Date: