



AUTISM POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies including: Teaching for Learning Policy, Communication Policy, PSHCE Policy, Behaviour and Safety Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Assessment and Recording Policy, Whole School Curriculum Policy, SEN policy and Plan and Health and Safety Policy.

Introduction

Pupils at Hedgewood School have either a statement of educational needs or an Educational Health and Care Plan that reflects their learning difficulties and most of them also have a diagnosis of Autism.

Pupils with Autism experience difficulties in the following areas:

- Social Communication
- Social Interaction
- Patterns of behaviour, activities and interests – these can often be restricted and repetitive.
- Sensory Sensitivities

This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for the education of pupils with autism at Hedgewood School.

Hedgewood will respond to the needs of its autistic population and ensure plans are in place that will form part of the annual School Development Plan. These will focus on:

- increasing the extent to which pupils with autism can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services.

The SDP will be reviewed and revised regularly and be available for inspection by any interested parties at reasonable times. The Headteacher in consultation staff, pupils, students, parents and any other relevant party will devise the SDP.

Rationale

In order to ensure that pupils with autism are able to access the broad, balanced and relevant curriculum offered throughout the school, their additional difficulties and characteristics are taken into account in all aspects of school life, including the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives. The emphasis is on

communication, social interaction and the independence and emotional well-being of each individual pupil.

Aims

To ensure that the following key principles underpin our practice to provide the best possible educational outcomes for our pupils:

- Knowledge and understanding of autism throughout the school
- Knowledge, understanding and implementation of positive behaviour management strategies
- Updating of staff on current and new research relating to the education and well-being of pupils with autism
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of provision for pupils
- To provide relevant interventions

Environment

Many pupils with autism experience sensory difficulties which can result in distortions in their perceptions of sound, sight, touch, smell and taste. They may also experience difficulties with their proprioceptive and vestibular senses. These can have a profound effect on both their ability to engage with learning and their behaviour.

We aim to reduce the impact of these difficulties by:

- Using SPELL small alterations to the physical environment and teaching approaches increases capacity and accessibility for children with autism or related disorders to learn more effectively.
- Providing an environment which is calm and distraction free with as low a level of visual and auditory stimulus as possible.
- Providing pupils with a high degree of visual and physical structures, adapting classroom environments for the needs of individual children
- Providing children with strategies they can use when their levels of anxiety are rising.

Consequently buildings will be audited in line with SPELL to ensure acoustics, lighting, smells, signage and classroom organisation are calm and ordered in such a way to reduce anxiety and aid concentration. In accessing the curriculum pupils with Autism and additional sensory and/or physical disabilities will have full access to all areas, provided at a suitable level and differentiated according to need.

Approaches and Interventions

Hedgewood School aims to incorporate the rationale of the SPELL approach developed by the National Autistic Society into its practice by providing a structured, positive, emphatic and low arousal environment with good links between home and outside agencies. However in order to understand and respond to the needs of all pupils across the Autism spectrum, a mix of approaches and interventions are use. These are continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure best practice.

These interventions and approaches include:

- Adapted TEACCH
- Speech Therapy
- PECS (Picture exchange Communication System)
- Symbol use
- Signalong
- Communication Aids
- Intensive Interaction
- Occupational Therapy
- Access to the OT run Alert programme
- Sensory Integration
- Attention Autism
- Positive Behaviour Support

Communication

Communication underpins all learning and hence is considered a key area of development for all pupils. The school uses a 'Total Communication Approach' using signing, symbols, photographs, high and low tech communication aids and objects of reference as appropriate to individual pupil's needs to provide clear communication.

Pupils will be supported to understand and use all appropriate forms of communication to ensure their needs, wants and opinions are communicated and understood, and there well -being is therefore enhanced. Opportunities will be planned for development of social communication skills and social understanding. This will be achieved through adult modelling and mirroring, individual pupil communication targets devised through a multi- disciplinary approach to include Speech and Language therapy and our ELKLAN friendly environment in supporting pupils with ASD in the classroom.

All staff at Hedgewood will be active 'listeners', sensitively attuned to understanding the communication of young people with autism and committed to enabling increased appropriate communication through each individual pupils preferred communication means.

Curriculum

Hedgewood aims to increase the extent to which autistic pupils can participate in the school curriculum. This will not only cover teaching and learning but the wider curriculum such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities or school visits. Hedgewood will use a variety of approaches when planning and delivering the curriculum to draw upon the different strengths and aptitudes of pupils. This might include using flexible grouping arrangements where pupils with autism can work with their peers, and encouraging peer support.

All pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum including the National Curriculum adapted as necessary to reflect their individual learning needs. There is also an emphasis on developing independence, social interaction, social understanding, social communication and emotional wellbeing throughout the school day and through extended school opportunities.

Behaviour

Hedgewood School has adopted the principles of Positive Behaviour Support that seeks to discover the function or communicative intent behind behaviours. It is a non-aversive approach where the focus is on positive reward and the teaching of new skills including communication. It emphasises community presence, choice participation and a person – centred approach to managing behaviours. For many pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder, seemingly incidental environmental factors will greatly increase stress levels, potentially leading to challenging behaviour and reducing their opportunity for learning. Response to these challenges for pupils is part of our use of NAS SPELL approach.

For some pupils an Individual Support Plan (ISP) is necessary to assist in the management of anxiety and related behaviours. This is shared with parents, staff and appropriate professionals involved with the provision of services to the young person with autism.

Hedgewood will develop targeted support for pupils faced with the most challenges through its Intensive Pupil Support Team. This team works closely with local support services such as CAMHS LD.

Assessment

All pupils are assessed using BSquared. This now includes the Autism Progress strand which aims to assess the impact of a pupil's autism and guide the development of targeted support strategies to assess development of communication, social understanding and flexibility of thinking. Individual Learning Programmes are set and reported upon twice yearly. Assessment outcomes are reported at Annual Review and at the end of the academic year.

Many pupil achievements relating to increased tolerance and ability to manage sensory input, development of self –reliance and independence and understanding of own and other's emotions are planned for and assessed in contributing to positive outcomes for each autistic individual.

Learning Journeys provide valuable recording of pupil's achievements in different contexts.

Training

All staff attend internal training on autism – awareness and autism specific practices /interventions such as the use of symbols for communication, TEACCH, sensory integration issues and Positive Behaviour Support.

Training is refreshed and developed to include new research and best practice to include interventions such as Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction, NAS Earlybird + and NAS Healthy Minds, Signing and understanding environmental factors on pupils with autism.

Bespoke training is implemented to reflect the specific needs of individual pupils in a class or year group team.

There is continuous monitoring and evaluation of the training provision to ensure best practice and positive outcomes for all pupils.

Working with parents and other professionals

Hedgewood is committed to working with parents and other professionals to increase positive outcomes for young people with autism.

Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to the work of the school and to feel welcome in every area of activity. As part of this partnership there is a positive and productive partnership between the home and school including training, work with the Family Support Team, including First Steps Family Group Therapy, and community focus to include coffee afternoons, Community Garden Project and regular parent open evening meetings. A strong partnership will be promoted between parents/carers and professionals, with effective liaisons to share aims and to work co-operatively together to ensure best interests of pupils.

Hedgewood liaises with arrange of professional including Educational Psychologists, Intensive Behaviour Support Services (CAHMS LD), to promote positive outcomes for pupils.

Hedgewood hosts a range of other professionals such as nursing and Initial Teacher training students to develop awareness of autism and understanding of strategies to support people with autism in different contexts in the community.

Hedgewood is committed to its Outreach programme to support other school to develop autism practice and also provided bespoke Individual learning Plans to enable pupils with autism in mainstream settings access learning opportunities and achieve positive outcomes.

