

WEST LANCASHIRE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
Autism Provision Policy



Date of Policy: March 2013

To be reviewed:

Person Responsible: David Mullen

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including the following policies, documents and guidance: Communication Policy.

Introduction

Pupils at West Lancashire Community High School have a statement of need that defines them as having a range of learning or physical difficulties. Some of our pupils also have a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition, the primary characteristics of which 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 ASD 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. This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for the education of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition at West Lancashire Community High School. It will form the basis for the development of autism-specific practice in the school.

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 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.

Scope

This policy is a whole-school policy.

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.
- School staff are kept up to date through CPD about 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.

Admissions.

Please see admissions policy.

Most parents will be directed to undertake a Without Prejudice Visit (WPV). As a school we will ask questions and discuss what the primary needs will be. When a request for placement is received, school will analyse relevant documents including the statement. From this a decision will be made whether to conduct an observation in the current placement. Senior Leaders at school will make the decision in conjunction with parents as to whether 'Generic' or 'Specific' provision will be the best way forward. Request for placement may also come from the local authority. In this case we would conduct a Suitability Assessment either in the home or at the current placement. This would form part of the information needed to decide if the placement would be beneficial to the needs of the student.

Equal Opportunities and inclusion

Pupils with an autistic spectrum condition may be taught in an autism-specific class or may be included within a generic class on a full or part-time basis. They may also access sessions in other Mainstream settings in both schools and colleges. The decision as to where a pupil is placed and their degree of inclusion will be based upon individual need; assessed and agreed at Annual or Interim Review.

Sensory Issues

Sensory profiles are drawn up for pupils in specific classes using a sensory assessment. Sensory profiles are devised by the Occupational Therapist who will conduct an assessment after referral by the ASD Leader if necessary. Sensory assessments are monitored and reviewed at Annual review. Staff will liaise with OT to ensure the programme is adapted as needs change. The Occupational Therapist will also liaise with parents to ensure a rounded profile of the pupil is gathered.

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 reduced and has a low level of visual and auditory stimulus.
- Providing pupils with a high degree of visual and physical structure.
- Providing pupils with a means of requesting withdrawal to a chill-out area (safe-space) when their levels of anxiety become raised.

Approaches and Interventions

The teaching philosophy at West Lancashire Community High School embodies some of the rationale of the TEACCH approach, where structured classroom systems support learning needs of students with Autism. However, in order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum we use an eclectic mix of established and researched approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. Interventions and approaches include PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and Intensive Interaction, Social Stories™, APEC, Signalong.

Use of visual prompts, rules and boundaries also support the student to self-manage and regulate their responses to a wide range of personal and inter-personal situations. Access to sensory increased or reduced environments help students manage throughout the school day by maintaining their level of engagement with the world around them. Staff also bring together a wealth of skill and experiences that work towards support being individualised.

Assessment

On entering school all pupils will have a pupil profile of need completed. This will highlight 'pro-active' interventions (interventions already known and being used. There is also space for 'reactive' interventions that reflect what we are learning as we work with our young people. Reactive interventions feed into the Pro-active. All pupils are assessed using B Squared. Evaluation of annual targets, IEP targets and behaviour plans reflect informal assessment against triad of impairment. Assessment outcomes are reported at Annual Review. All ASD students will have a pupil profile completed and an ASD specific education plan. These will be monitored and reviewed bi-annually.

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. We also take the view that if a student is not ready to learn

Behaviour

Behaviour is often a means of communication and we endeavour to understand the function behind the behaviour. 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 are offered the same behavioural opportunities as the school population. This will include access to reward systems, in-class reward methodologies or more personalized behavior programmes. Pupils may have Behaviour Support Plans/Positive Handling Plan that are regularly reviewed and updated with parents and healthcare and education professionals and form part of the documentation for Annual Review. All class-based staff are trained in positive handling (Team Teach™).

Continuity of Approach

We 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.

Training

Staff bring a wealth of skills and knowledge from a range of experiences. Alongside this, staff are offered a wide range of opportunities to develop their own professional skills and access a range of Autism, communication and sensory specific training. All records of CPD are kept by the Deputy Headteacher.