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TWEENDYKES SCHOOL

AUTISM POLICY

Date of Original Policy: February 2014
Review Date: November 2017

Statement of Intent

We aim to provide an outstanding education and support for all our students with autism to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Ethos and Values

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the vision of the school and take into account our policies for Communication and Interaction, Care, and Curriculum, Assessment and Recording.

At Tweendykes we believe that children and young people with autism should have the following entitlement:

- To be fully included in the school
- To have a relevant , exciting ,engaging and personalised curriculum
- To be supported by skilled staff
- To be supported to be effective communicators
- To develop themselves as individuals to the best of their ability
- To be as independent as possible and participate fully in their community

Key principles

At Tweendykes we recognise that a child or young person with autism will have barriers to learning and making sense of the world in the following areas:

Social Imagination- meaning that they cannot easily work out what others are thinking, feeling or what they will do next. This makes the world and the people in it hard to understand and predict causing high levels of anxiety. Finding the hidden meaning is very difficult and an instruction including the words “well just” will most likely be misunderstood. As a result our pupils with autism may develop and rely on their own systems of meaning and understanding and create routines and rituals to help them cope. If these routines are changed it can lead to high levels of distress and anxiety. This is why the use of consistent visual support is so important for our pupils with autism.

Social understanding – the social rules that we all live by are hard to understand and are often dependent on our cultural setting. For example in the UK it is usual to be expected to eat with a knife and fork in other cultures it is acceptable to eat with our fingers. Rules such as these follow no logical pattern and are dependent on us having a sense of ourselves and how we might make others feel. Therefore these rules need to either be learnt rather than worked out if the pupil has the ability to do so or alternatively a different solution found.

Social Communication – the processing and understanding of language can be very difficult for our pupils with autism. For those pupils with language they often have a mismatch between what they can say and what they can understand. This is especially true for those that use repeated speech or echolalia as being able to say it doesn’t mean they can understand it. As a result of a lack of flexible

thinking language is processed very literally for example “pull your socks up”. This can lead to people being seen as defiant and rude. Many of our pupils with autism will never use speech to communicate and must always have their identified method of communication recognised and available whether this be through for example, intensive interaction, objects of reference or symbols.

Sensory Difficulties – It has become more readily accepted that the lives of those with autism can be severely affected by the different way that their sensory input is processed by the brain. This can affect the way they see, hear, feel, smell & taste things but also their balance and sense of where their body is in space. Many of our pupils try to regulate their sensory experiences by such actions as rocking, flapping, spinning and chewing and we should always respect their attempts to do so and seek to provide opportunities and resources for them to meet their sensory needs to enable them to be available for learning.

Supports we provide to students

Staff

- We have a staff team who are knowledgeable, well trained, compassionate and are solution focussed.
- We have a specialist team of highly trained staff to ensure assessments, target setting and the right support is in place for autistic students
- We aim to recruit staff who are motivated and want to ensure high quality provision for autistic students

Consistency

- We aim to provide consistency across the school in visual support, the language staff use and the support staff provide.
- This consistency is assured through support from the communication team when a student moves classes or has difficulties, through lesson observation and audits.

Transitions

- We recognise that transitions from one activity to another are difficult for autistic students and therefore support these through use of objects of reference, now and next strips, and visual timetables
- We also allow students processing time, and time to self -regulate if this is required

Environment

- We recognise how important the environment is to ensure the well -being and engagement of a student with autism
- The school is planned with break out spaces, links to outside areas , clearly defined work and play areas, and access to sensory play and self-regulatory activities. These allow the students to access a quiet space if they need it, time outside if they need it, and to organise themselves in the classroom.

Organisation of resources

- Great attention has been made to ensure teaching resources are appropriate and engage students.
- Work station activities have been devised that are personalised to the student, are of high interest , and promote learning
- Sensory resources are built into most activities and students are encouraged to interact with these and make choices
- As far as possible we try to present resources that make apparent to the student the learning outcome of the task.

Methods

- The schools methodology is underpinned by SCERTS (Social Communication Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support). This model recognises that social communication is the key area of difficulty for a student with autism.
- We use a range of methods to support the student including PECs, objects of reference Intensive Interaction, Visual support –including visual timetables, now and next strips, in session work strips, and TEACCH
- Pupils have an intervention record sheet which lists the methods that support them and when these are reviewed.

Working with parents/ other partners

- We aim to support parents as fully as we can by providing training, individual meetings, home visits, joint assessment, and sharing successes.
- We also try to support and train other agencies that support our students to ensure consistency across settings
- We liaise with other professional for specialist advice and support this includes SALT, and Specialist OT