

Tweendykes School Autism Policy February 2020

Revision Date March 2022

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 our pupils 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 which can cause high levels of anxiety. As a result, our pupils with autism may develop and rely on their own systems of meaning and understanding: they may create routines and rituals to help them cope. If these routines are changed, pupils may become anxious and distressed. The consistent use of visual support is imperative in allowing us to create a shared understanding between the pupils and staff.

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 acceptable for us to shake hands to greet people whereas, in other cultures, a kiss on the cheek/cheeks is usual. Rules such as these follow no logical pattern and are dependent on us having a sense of ourselves and what our actions might make others feel. Therefore, these rules may need to be taught if the pupil has the ability to learn them or, alternatively, a different solution found.

Social Communication – the processing and understanding of language* can be very difficult for our pupils with autism. For some of these pupils, their understanding of language is often in advance of their ability to communicate. In contrast, some Pupils with spoken language may have a disparity between what they can say and what they actually understand of this. This is especially true for those that use repeated speech or echolalia: being able to speak does not mean they understand the words or are using them to communicate. As a result of a lack of flexible thinking, language may be processed very literally and have negative outcomes. This can lead to pupils being seen as defiant or rude. Many of our pupils with autism will never use speech to communicate so it is vital that we recognise, make available and encourage their identified method of communication. Visual support provides us with a language that is shared between staff and pupils.

*The word 'language' encompasses all methods of communication, both verbal and non-verbal

Sensory Difficulties – the lives of our pupils with autism may be severely affected by the way that their brain processed sensory information. This can affect the way that they see, hear, feel, smell & taste things but also may affect their balance and sense of where their body is within the environment. Many of our pupils try to regulate their sensory experiences using actions such as rocking, flapping, spinning and chewing: we should always respect their attempts to do so, whilst seeking to provide opportunities and resources for them to meet their sensory needs. By supporting their self-regulation, we are enabling them to be more active and engaged learners.

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 pupils
- 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, structure and routine, our use of language and the support staff provide.
- This consistency is assured through support from the communication team through regular training and coaching for staff, in-class support, observations and audits, and pupil assessment, intervention, target-setting and reactive support.

Transitions

- We recognise that transitions from one activity to another can be difficult for our pupils with autism and, therefore, support these through the use of developmentally-appropriate visual support
- We allow our pupils the time to process instructions, as well as time to self-regulate if needed.

Environment

- We recognise how important the environment is to ensure the well-being and engagement of a pupil with autism.
- We follow the principles of Structured TEACCHing: we give meaning and predictability to the environment enabling our pupils to organise themselves with more independence, and have a greater understanding of their day.
- The school has been designed with: break out spaces; links to outside areas; clearly defined work and play areas; access to sensory play and self-regulatory activities. Our environment allows our pupils to access time outside and a quiet space if needed. We are continually adapting it to meet the needs of our pupils.

Organisation of resources

- Great attention is given to ensuring teaching resources are developmentally appropriate and engaging
- Workstation activities are devised that are personalised to the student, are of high interest, and promote learning and independence.
- Following the principle of Structured TEACCHing, we aim to ensure that activities, work and resources are organised in ways which addressed the key questions:
 - What happens here?
 - Where am I going?
 - What am I going to do?
 - How am I going to do it?
 - When am I finished?
 - What happens next?
- As far as possible, we try to present resources that make apparent to the pupil the learning outcome of the task.

Methods

- The SCERTS model (Social Communication Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) underpins the schools methodology. This model recognises that social communication is the key area of difficulty for a pupil with autism.
- We use a range of methods and interventions that we know are effective in supporting pupils with autism, such as: visual support; Social Stories; Intensive Interaction; the TEACCH approach; low, mid and high tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC); sensory profiling; and ELSA support.
- Pupils have a transition document completed when moving classes which details methods that support them - for pupils who need a greater level of support or who are experiencing difficulties, the Communication Team assist in informing these documents and discussions around them.
- IEPs, Behaviour Support Plans, EHC Plans all outline supportive methods and strategies for the pupils too.

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 including via interactive platforms such as Marvellous Me and social media.
- We also support and train other agencies that support our students to ensure consistency across settings
- We liaise with other professional for specialist advice and support such as: Specialist Occupational Therapists; Sensory Integration Therapist; Learning Disability Nurses; Speech and Language Therapy; and Social Care.
- Our Outreach Service provides training and time-limited support for local early years and primary school settings in supporting identified children with SEN.