



KESTREL HOUSE SCHOOL TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Introduction

All pupils at Kestrel House School have a diagnosis which falls within the Autistic Spectrum and everything that we do in the school takes account of their needs in relation to being on this spectrum. All staff are trained in and have an understanding of Autism and are equipped to work out and understand why children behave in the way that they do. Additionally, all staff take note of how each child responds to their autism so that we can take an individual approach that will suit each child.

All staff share a responsibility to contribute to the delivery of the broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. In addition they individually have a responsibility to strive to deliver lessons where the teaching and learning is of the highest quality and where the learning needs of all pupils are met.

As there are many teaching and learning opportunities outside the formal curriculum we strive to provide young people with optimum conditions for achievement and development in all situations.

This policy aims to:

- Provide support and guidance to all staff on what constitutes effective teaching and learning within an autism specific environment
- Ensure that we meet the needs of all pupils effectively through a consistent approach to teaching and learning
- Ensure resources support effective teaching and learning
- Provide a focus for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Promote a reflective school culture that regularly evaluates practice in order to improve outcomes for pupils

Aims of Teaching and Learning

Kestrel House aims, through successful teaching and learning, to develop the whole young person, enabling them to become lifelong learners and achieve their highest level of independence. We recognise that all pupils have special skills, abilities and aptitudes and all have an entitlement to access a broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. As well as this, every pupil is entitled to experience a variety of teaching and learning styles along with age appropriate and stage appropriate activities which address their learning needs and thus enabling them to achieve their full potential.

At Kestrel House School staff are fully aware of the strong link between teaching and learning and understand that pupils can only achieve well if the quality of teaching is high.



Through our teaching we aim to:

- raise levels of attainment for all pupils, enabling them to achieve their personal best
- develop confident and enquiring learners who are able to make informed choices.
- make learning an enjoyable experience
- build on the pupils' natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- promote self-esteem and self confidence
- involve and stimulate pupils through active, multi-sensory learning
- set achievable goals and have high expectations for all pupils
- provide appropriate support
- provide opportunities for pupils to apply acquired skills, knowledge and understanding in new contexts
- create a climate of praise and positive reinforcement which enables pupils to experience success and feel a sense of achievement

Autism Specific Approaches to Teaching and Learning

Kestrel House School delivers all teaching and learning within an eclectic approach 'The Kestrel House Approach' which places the pupil at the centre of all teaching and uses a range of specialised strategies that are proven to be effective for learners within the autistic spectrum. These include:

SPELL (National Autistic Society)

Structure:

- Visual timetables
- Clearly defined learning areas
- Known routines
- Preparation for known changes
- Variety of visual cues to support spoken language (PECS, Makaton signs and symbols, objects of reference, etc)
- Simplified language

Positive ethos

- All staff respect pupils for who they are
- All staff encourage pupils to have a sense of self-worth and to feel safe, happy and secure
- Small steps of achievement are celebrated
- High staff: pupil ratio ensures each child's needs are known
- ASD Specialist curriculum supported by the in-house multidisciplinary team which promotes the development of pupils' social communication and interaction skills

Empathy and understanding of the disability

- All staff are trained in autism (autism induction, TEACCH, PECS, Sensory Integration, Makaton, Intensive Interaction, and Team Teach)
- Full time Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational/Sensory Integration Therapist and Psychologist input
- Head and Multi-disciplinary team keep up to date with current autism research
- Staff teams assess how autism affects each child, and plan accordingly
- IEP's have individual, SMART targets which focus on developing pupils' skills within the ASD specialist curriculum
- Behaviour is viewed as communication, pupils are positively supported to change inappropriate behaviour
- Staff teams write 'working with me packs', which clearly define the child's triggers, what makes them anxious, what calms them, etc.
- The school has good links with home through home-school books, emails, telephone and meetings
- Staff will support families in meeting with other agencies and services
- Many opportunities for parents and carers to network with each other and with school staff

Low arousal environment

- Noise levels are kept to a minimum, except during whole school events, where pupils will be taken out if they find the stimulus distressing
- Classrooms are clutter free
- Display areas are clearly defined
- Individual workstations are available in all classrooms
- Ear defenders are available for all who need them
- Where needed, classes have quiet areas for the pupils to go to when over-stimulated.
- Pupils have access to designated calm rooms if required
- Adults speak softly and use simplified language

Links with families

- Daily communication through home-school book
- Telephone calls, emails
- Meetings: annual reviews, parent/carer consultation evenings, etc
- Families attendance at special assemblies and shows
- Parent workshops
- Initial paperwork from families to tell us all about their child
- Home visits
- Support for meetings with other agencies and services

Each class is organised in line with the principles of TEACCH, that is:

- Visually delineated with an obvious social area, group working area and individual work stations for those who need them, so that pupils can easily see which parts of the room are for which particular function
- Work stations for those who need them for individual work with limited distractions
- Box work for individual work that can be started and finished independently
- Visual timetables so that pupils have visual support to understand what is next, when it starts and when it finishes

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

PECS is used in conjunction with language. It never replaces the spoken word, but supports the spoken word in a visual way so that our pupils can understand. It encourages initiation of communication and increases vocabulary. All staff are trained in PECS.

Makaton

Makaton is a simplified version of British Sign Language. As with PECS, signs are never used without language. The signing reinforces the language in a way that our pupils find easy to understand. Children are not taught to sign but adults sign keywords to facilitate comprehension of spoken language.

Intensive Interaction

Staff know the types of sounds that their pupils make, and can communicate with them by using the same sorts of sounds, building up a conversation by following the child's lead. This can apply also to play and body movements. It helps pupils who are often at a pre-language stage to feel accepted at their own level and to get a sense of what it is like to communicate with others. Gradually, it can also help children to build up their vocabulary of sounds, words, phrases and non-verbal communication.

The 5P Approach; Practical behaviour management solutions for children and teens with autism

The 5P Approach provides a practical framework which can be used by professionals and parents who want a better understanding about the behaviour of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders and how to prevent problems from arising, and who want help with the process of managing behaviour change.

SCERTS

The acronym SCERTS refers to the focus on

SC = Social Communication – development of spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression and secure and trusting relationships with children and adults



ER = Emotional Regulation – Development of the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress and to be most available for learning and interacting

TS= Transactional Support – Development and complementation of supports to help staff response to the child’s needs and interests, modify and adapt the environment and provide tools to enhance learning (e.g. picture communication, written schedules and sensory supports)

Planning and Delivery

Planning and delivery of teaching and learning is carried out by teaching staff supported by our LSAs. Teachers are responsible for creating Medium and Short Term Planning documents for the pupils in their class, which will facilitate the pupils making progress. Short-term plans will include the following:

- Groupings, organisation and use of LSAs
- Differentiation & personalisation; informed by the ‘Working with Me’ packs, IEPs, ongoing assessment and therapeutic input
- Clear and appropriate learning objectives and success criteria
- Activity and resources required
- Evaluation of learning outcomes for pupils.

In supporting the planning and delivery of teaching and learning all teachers at Kestrel House will:

- be prepared for each teaching session in advance
- be flexible in terms of the organisation of the classroom, staff allocation, pupil groupings and the level to which the lesson plan is followed according to the changing needs of the pupils on a day to day basis
- plan to provide pupils with inclusive, engaging, meaningful, motivational, purposeful and challenging tasks which promote independence and self-esteem and which are both age appropriate and ‘stage’ appropriate
- ensure each pupils’ autism is taken into account and that their planning and teaching reflects this
- focus on the development of key skills within the areas of: communication, social awareness, behaviour, self-regulation and life skills
- use ICT wherever possible to support and promote effective learning
- take account of pupils’ individual interests and use these to motivate and encourage pupils learning
- enable pupils to learn in a variety of ways which address a range of learning styles and include; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic tasks and activities
- produce high quality teaching materials which meet the needs of all pupils in the lesson
- use assessment information to ensure that learning builds on previous knowledge, understanding and skills
- utilise resources in ways which encourage pupils to become more independent learners



- evaluate the impact of teaching at regular intervals
- share all aspects of the teaching and learning process with everyone involved, acknowledging the importance of a team approach in breaking down barriers to learning and promoting all strands of the curriculum
- maintain purposeful and informative planning, record-keeping and assessment documents, in line with the school's assessment, recording and reporting policy

Quality of Teaching

In order to ensure that the learning at Kestrel House School is of a high standard, the expectation is that all teaching will:-

- enable pupils to access all aspects of the curriculum in line with their needs, aptitudes and abilities
- enable pupils to make good progress and show good attitudes to their work
- prepare and plan activities that enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding within both the ASD specialist curriculum and the academic curriculum
- have clear learning objectives and outcomes which enable pupils to be actively involved in their learning by helping them to understand what they are learning to do / learning about and to measure whether they have achieved the objectives or not.
- reflect good levels of teacher subject knowledge
- engage and motivate pupils and encourage them to work independently
- challenge all pupils to achieve their best
- be based on a good knowledge of the pupils' needs using ongoing formative and summative assessment information
- be tailored to the range of pupils' individual needs and to enable success
- be delivered in a professional manner by the teaching staff
- reflect what is understood to be good classroom practice within an autism specific learning environment

Differentiation

Teachers will differentiate the curriculum by:-

- task
- method of presentation
- outcome
- Level of visual support required - object, photo, symbol, written
- level of prompting / adult support required

Record-keeping and assessment

In order to establish pupil progress and levels of attainment within all aspects of the curriculum, on-going formative assessments, supported by regular summative assessments are carried out for all pupils.

For the ASD specialist curriculum formative assessment is achieved via each pupils IEP and through some elements of the BSquared assessment tool. For the academic curriculum formative assessment is achieved via the BSquared assessment tool. For pupils who fall within the Early Years Foundation Stage, summative assessments are achieved via the BSquared 'Early Steps' assessment tool. For more information on record-keeping and assessment procedures please refer to the Assessment Recording and Reporting Policy.

Classroom Management and Organisation

Kestrel House School operates a range of teaching and learning contexts which are designed to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and also the demands of different activities. The main types of contexts for teaching and learning are:

- whole class teaching
- small group work
- one to one teaching
- collaborative learning in pairs
- independent learning
- classroom based learning
- school based learning
- community based learning

The classrooms and other teaching spaces will be organised to facilitate learning and the development of independence. This may require flexibility in the organisation of furniture and learning environment to better suit the needs of individuals.

Resources

Each teaching space is equipped with a range of resources to enable effective teaching and learning. All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard and teaching staff should make the best possible use of this key resource to support teaching and learning however they should be aware that use of the IWB does not automatically make a lesson 'multi-sensory'.

Pupils will be taught how to use appropriate resources correctly and safely, with care and respect; and with regard for Health and Safety and eco-issues. Care will be taken to ensure that resources reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of our society, and that all pupils have equality of access.

All resources made in school, including items such as visual supports and worksheets will be of a high quality clearly laid out and easily accessed by the pupils they are intended for.

Support for Learning

Teachers will:-

- ensure that daily schedules are in use at all times and that individual schedules reflect the needs of individual pupils
- vary their teaching styles for different topics and at different times to ensure that all lessons contain visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning opportunities
- always give clear and simple instructions
- use augmented communication, including objects, photos, symbols and signs where appropriate to support teaching and learning
- build opportunities for reinforcement and consolidation into schemes of work
- build in opportunities for one-to-one interaction
- set achievable short-term targets and make clear the criteria for success
- make clear to pupils how they can improve within an individual lesson and over time
- acknowledge, reward and celebrate achievement
- teach the technical vocabulary linked to each subject
- promote the use of new and constantly changing technologies that increase and enhance the learning opportunities of pupils with SEN
- encourage pupils to take an increasing responsibility for their rate of progress in order to promote active learning and increase engagement
- ensure effective deployment of support staff within the classroom to support the flexible learning needs of individual pupils
- undertake professional development through training and accept support from colleagues in order to ensure a high level of teaching, learning and support expertise
- ensure pupils' behaviour is managed positively using agreed and consistent approaches

Use of Support Staff

Teachers are responsible for the effective deployment of other staff within their lessons to ensure learning is supported in the best way possible. In order to achieve this, support staff should:

- Read and use the teachers' medium and short term planning to understand and implement the structure of learning for the whole class and each pupil and their role in supporting this
- Be focussed on the learning outcomes for young people
- Consult with the teacher to prepare materials and resources prior to the lesson in order to support learning
- Ensure resources are well looked after and kept tidy
- Conduct themselves as good learning role models for the young people
- Support good behaviour conducive to learning and intervene as required to ensure good order and discipline
- Support pupils in completing work tasks for themselves in ways which avoid completing the work for them



- Support young people with their learning in a way that promotes and supports their independence, and avoids the phenomenon of prompt dependency, by using minimal levels of prompting and reducing the intensity of the prompting in line with the following continuum:
Physical → verbal → gestural → visual → independent

In order to assist support staff, teachers should:

- Ensure their planning is made available and used by support staff
- Ensure planning provides details of the role staff will play in each lesson
- Ensure support staff are clear of their roles within lessons prior to the lesson
- Use support staff as a resources for teaching and learning for the whole class, engaging with them to promote a variety of teaching and learning styles, not just individual support for young people
- Ensure support staff are engaged in assessment for learning where appropriate

The Role of Parents

We believe that parents, are their child's primary educators and, as such, have the responsibility to support their children and the school in implementing school policies. Parents therefore have a responsibility to:

- Share their knowledge of their children's abilities and difficulties
- Ensuring their child has the best attendance possible.
- Attend meetings and participate in discussions concerning their child's progress and attainments.
- Having a realistic outlook about their children's abilities and offering encouragement and praise.
- Informing staff as soon as possible if there are matters outside of school that are likely to affect a child's happiness, performance or behaviour at school.
- Supporting the behaviour management policy and procedures of the school
- Promote a positive attitude to school and learning in general

The Role of Pupils

Whilst taking in to account the need of our pupils in relation to them having an autistic spectrum disorder, we believe that each pupil has a responsibility to strive to:

- Come to school regularly and punctually
- Participate as fully as possible in the learning opportunities on offer to them
- Work well with peers and be tolerant of others
- Behave appropriately and show respect for themselves and others
- Be polite and helpful to other pupils and adults in school
- Be an active participant in their own learning



- Take pride in their work and develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Quality of Teaching and Learning

Kestrel House School sets in place a published timetable for its cycle of monitoring and evaluation. The school employs lesson observations and learning walks, both formal and informal, as its main tool for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school and to support school development and improvement as a whole. Lesson observations and learning walks are carried out at appropriate intervals by the Head Teacher, Lead for Teaching and Learning, Principals of other Acorn schools, Acorn Advisors, and staff peers. Verbal and written feedback is given to teachers following formal lesson observations and the outcomes discussed so that ongoing progress and development can be achieved. Where necessary teachers are supported via the use of a personal action plan, which clearly defines targets for the teacher to achieve within a set time scale in order to improve practice. These, in turn, link to teacher's performance management.

Policy Review

We are aware of the need to review the teaching and learning policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school. This policy will therefore be reviewed at least annually to ensure it meet the needs of all learners.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The curriculum policy
- The assessment, recording and reporting policy
- The performance management policy
- The lesson observation policy
- The age appropriateness policy

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