



John Grant School

Autism Policy John Grant School

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Introduction:

This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for the education of students with an autistic spectrum disorder at John Grant School. It forms the basis for the development of autism-specific practice in the school.

John Grant School works hard to effectively meet the needs of both young people with severe learning difficulties and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In line with the national and regional increase in students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder it has developed specific provision for autistic pupils.

The Autism policy document is an all encompassing document that covers the entire school and relates to individuals both in the autism specific class groups as well as those on the autistic spectrum whose needs are best met in the other class bases.

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 and characteristics of pupils on the autistic spectrum need to be taken into account. This needs to include all aspects of their school life, such as the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives.

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.



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- 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.
- Up to date current research relating to the education and well being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

Equal Opportunities and inclusion

At John Grant School we aim for all pupils to access the broad range of curriculum activities available in school. At the same time we plan for pupils on an individual basis according to their needs, learning styles and personal interests. All pupils with autism at John Grant School receive equal access to a broad range of curriculum activities in line with their needs which will include access to specialist rooms as appropriate, access to teaching delivered by subject specialists where appropriate, and access to therapy in line with their documented needs.

We aim for pupils with autism to have a range of opportunities for inclusion both within the school and in the wider community. Pupils have opportunities to mix with their 'non-autistic' peers at lunch time, during leisure options, in after school clubs, frequent full school events and some lessons. Where inclusion with non-autistic peers is a particular priority for individuals with autism they may have an internal inclusion timetable.

We aim to increase access to the community for our ASD pupils wherever possible. Post 16 pupils, who are able to benefit, access the local community as part of their ASDAN accreditation and many undertake employer based work experience placements.

Sensory Issues

The vast majority of autistic pupils experience sensory processing difficulties which have a significant impact on learning and behaviour.

Where appropriate, sensory profiles are drawn up for ASD pupils using a sensory assessment. These are compiled by experienced members of staff under the supervision of the Occupational Therapist in collaboration with parents/carers, teachers and class staff. The information gained from these is then used to plan appropriate activities to support specific pupil needs.



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Pupils in the ASD class bases take part in a daily Sensory Circuit, aimed at supporting sensory processing. Sensory Circuits are also accessed by pupils in other classes, where there is an identified need.

Physical Environment

Students on the autism spectrum benefit from a clear physical structure with emphasis placed on information shown in a visual format. The ASD class bases follow TEACCH style protocols. Schedules are used to assist individuals in transitioning both within the classroom and around the school and work tasks which present work in a highly structured, visually explicit format are also in place. A bank of individual tasks is continuously constructed and updated to suit individual needs. Individuals on the Autistic Spectrum who are taught outside of the ASD Department may need to access similar environments within their own classrooms.

By giving clear expectations within a structured framework backed up with visual support individuals are given the greatest opportunity to succeed. Calm working environments reduce degrees of anxiety and distress. Unfamiliar situations and the ability to increase flexibility are carefully managed so that positive outcomes are the norm.

Approaches and Interventions

The teaching philosophy for pupils on the ASD Spectrum at John Grant School is influenced by the rationale of the SCERTS approach which focuses on Social Communication, Emotional Response and Transactional Support.

However, in order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum we employ an holistic approach, incorporating a blend of established approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. These include a total communication environment at all times consisting of signs, symbols and speech. The Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), Intensive interaction, Attention Autism and programmes specifically written for individuals to follow from both Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists.

Assessment

All students are regularly assessed by teachers in each subject and by the class teachers in extra curricular subjects and targets relating to Individual Education Plans. Assessment is also carried out by Therapists dependent on individual student programmes. As for all pupils, assessment information is input into SOLAR and then passed onto the national database



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Caspa. Pupil's progress is closely monitored through regular meetings with the Senior Leadership Team, incorporating provision mapping and case studies where appropriate. We have also developed a Learning Behaviours Assessment, which focuses on areas not reflected in academic based assessments, such as working with others, or focussing on a task for a given amount of time.

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 processing are also necessary. We believe in providing functional opportunities whenever possible, 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 fully differentiated curriculum delivered in a way that addresses their individual barriers to learning. Differentiation occurs through the use of IEP's and individual target setting.

Students in key stage 4 and 5 are working towards ASDAN modules in a range of subjects that also place emphasis on gaining knowledge, understanding and practical experience relating to life skills and independent living.

Active Learning

As a school we recognise the importance of active and collaborative learning for all pupils, and have developed the curriculum accordingly.

Students with ASD may find this type of learning experience very challenging, due to its apparently 'unstructured' nature. For this reason, active learning may look very different within the ASD specific class bases, with collaborative skills scaffolded by adults, and paired and group activities planned in a more structured way, to maximise learning opportunities. It is hoped that students will then be able to generalise these skills within less structured learning environments.

Behaviour

Behaviour is seen as a means of communication and we endeavour to understand the function behind the behaviour. Specific strategies are used to reduce anxiety, promote feelings of well-being, to modify unwanted behaviours and promote more appropriate ones. Pupils have individual Positive Handling / Risk Management Plans and risk assessments. These documents are regularly reviewed and updated by staff and shared with parents/carers and other professionals working with the student, to ensure continuity. All class-based staff are trained in



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Norfolk Steps. These techniques are always used in a measured way, as a means of reducing harm – to themselves, other pupils, staff or learning. Parents/carers are always informed of any physical intervention, and it is recorded and monitored in line with legal requirements and best practice guidance.

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. The sharing of strategies enables students to consolidate on skills they have learnt.

Training

In line with the School Development Plan (2017), all teaching and support staff working in the specialist provision bases will access in house training on specific approaches in ASD. This training will be 'rolled out' for all staff in due course. John Grant School has a number of experienced staff who have worked with students with autism in a variety of settings. It is the intention that these staff members will continue to lead further staff INSET training.

Health

All students have an annual medical in school. At this medical parents have the opportunity to discuss issues they may be experiencing at home and gain advice. During this medical students are weighed and measured, if there are any issues arising from this, students will be referred to the Healthy Weight Clinic. From this medical other referrals can also be made.

We also have support from Starfish Learning Disability Child and Adolescent Health Service, who provide drop in clinics for parents to discuss behavioural / mental health issues and concerns.



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