

# The Coppice School



## Autism Policy

**Approved by the Governing Body of The Coppice School**

**Signed:** *H. Knell*

**Date: 08/05/2018**

**Proposed Date of Future Review: May 2019**



## Introduction

This policy is intended to ensure the effective provision for all pupils with autism throughout the school. It provides an overview of the school's aims and beliefs in delivering the curriculum to this unique group of young people.

The Coppice School is a community special school for children and young people aged 2-19 years, who have severe and or profound learning disabilities. In recent years there has been an increase in admissions of children and young people with ASD and those with complex medical difficulties.

## Policy Aims

The school aims to adapt the delivery of its broad and balanced curriculum to ensure that the specific needs of the autistic learner are met. All barriers to learning in the course of a school day and in their everyday life are addressed and, where appropriate, the environment and activities are adapted to enable them to sustain productive involvement within an activity. There is a particular focus on reducing the anxiety associated with transitions between places and activities.

- For all staff to have a knowledge and understanding of autism and its impact on the learning of the child/young person
- For all staff to have a knowledge of the key working practises which will support the child/young person throughout their school day and into their everyday lives
- To share specific information with all parties – child/young person, their family, all school staff
- To provide a range of curricular and non-curricular activities throughout the school day which provide aspects of both routine and familiarity yet providing appropriate challenge
- For staff to adapt the curriculum through modified Programmes of Study to give all pupils relevant and appropriately challenging work at all key stages. Staff should teach knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that match their pupils' learning styles and challenge their individual abilities.

## Specialist support

- From within school:** There is a wide variety of experience and knowledge amongst existing staff. As soon as possible, after joining The Coppice, staff receive appropriate, Nationally recognised training. There is a wealth of experience to draw on from staff well versed in meeting the highly individualised needs of ASD learners; this includes a member of the teaching staff with a specialist post graduate qualification in autism. Staff across the school are supported by those with specialist knowledge when needed and can be signposted to suitable continuous professional development opportunities.
- From external agencies:** The school is in the latter stages of the process of gaining NAS accreditation which requires a three-year commitment to further developing our whole school ASD provision. Active involvement of a named NAS facilitator supports the school's working party in the identification of strengths and priorities for development. From time to time, the school seeks the support of an Advanced Sensory Integration Practitioner who has specialised in providing sensory integration therapy assessment and intervention.

## Staff training

INSET will be planned and delivered where there is a need to update or improve staff knowledge. These will form part of the school's improvement plan and be linked to identified priorities. Staff new to the school receive a tailored induction that includes access to a named mentor and, where appropriate, opportunities for continuous professional development to enhance knowledge and awareness of autism. Systems for the appraisal of teaching and support staff provide individual staff with additional training in autism.



Regular meetings of the working party driving the NAS accreditation (which will remain an on-going focus) ensure that school practice is under constant review and that small changes can be effected to improve our provision, including the upskilling of staff.

### **Communication**

The development of communication is critical for pupils with ASD and the school places the highest priority on this aspect of learning. Our aim is that all pupils with ASD will develop the skills needed to meaningfully interact within their community. To this end the school adopts a 'total communication' approach and strives to thread opportunities for developing pupils' communication throughout each day (see Communication Policy). The school works closely with our specialist speech and language therapists and where appropriate pupils with ASD have a personalised therapy programme. A wide range of communication strategies and approaches are used to support pupils e.g.

- Intensive interaction
- Skilful interpretation of children's early communication when they are at the 'pre-requisite' stage
- Photographs and symbols
- Objects of reference
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Signalong
- AAC aids
- Derbyshire Language

Where appropriate, ASD pupils may also have a communication passport which details specific communication needs in written (and sometimes) photographic form.

### **Environment**

All effort is made to ensure that the school environment is sensitive to the varied needs of the autistic learner:

- Through the display policy we aim to create an environment that is supportive and calming whilst still being educationally stimulating
- Where necessary, individual portable work stations are used to help pupils focus on their activities
- In all classrooms visual, pictorial timetables are in use to help pupils follow the sequence of activities. Some pupils have individual timetables for the day or a session depending on their level of understanding or anxiety
- Lunchtimes are carefully planned to reduce environmental impact so that the focus can be on nutrition, with smaller numbers in the hall and an awareness of sound levels. Some pupils eat in class if this better meets their needs. Staff are made aware of individual food preferences; efforts are made to support pupils to make healthy choices while respecting other influencing factors
- Staff are careful to prevent pupils from unnecessary sensory overload in any setting, including heightened awareness on visits outside of school

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Meeting the individual needs of all children lies at the heart of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In line with Early Years guidance, Communication and Language (CL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) are given the highest priority in this setting. These two Prime Areas of Learning are pivotal and support development in all other areas.

The contribution from other professionals and parents is critical in ensuring that the individual needs of all children are met and the setting works closely in partnership with families and other professionals to share information and expertise.

### **Key Stages 1-3**



Transitions for pupils with autism from the Early Years to subsequent classes are managed on an individual basis. For example, a child may require a much longer transition period involving staff working very closely to ensure an effective transfer of information and knowledge.

All pupils from Key Stages 1-3, including those with autism, access a modified curriculum that has been altered and differentiated to match the needs of the individual through autism specific approaches, such as the use of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), SCERTS and visual timetables. We believe that all pupils should be enabled to reach their potential with a continued focus on the development of communication skills and social understanding. Staff use their thorough knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of children and young people with autism to support the setting of individual targets and the delivery of the curriculum.

Active communication between staff and parents supports all transitions for pupils from the end of Key Stage 3 to the 14-19 department as the school begins its work with families in considering next steps towards a post-Coppice placement.

### 14-19 Department

The school creates opportunities for the autistic young person to experience/explore different, unfamiliar environments whilst supported by familiar members of staff.

In the 14-19 Department, all students take part in Work Related Learning where they complete activities in different parts of the school e.g. delivering/ collecting registers and recycling. These placements build up slowly to allow the student to gain confidence in their new activity/environment before moving on to the next stage.

For some students with ASD, the opportunity to participate in a Work Experience placement with an outside agency, e.g. local industry provides them with a realistic insight into the world of work. At all times, students are provided with regular and timetabled opportunities to access the local community in order to increase their independence e.g. shopping and using the local cafes, library etc.

Residential holidays are offered to all pupils, including those with ASD, as part of their progression through the department. Overnight stays are an excellent way to promote independence, social and daily living skills through team work and co-operation.

### Assessment, recording and reporting

Staff at The Coppice School have high expectations of all learners and believe that every child can succeed. Assessment for learning processes enable staff to establish what learners already know and build on it using an intrinsic knowledge of the individual child/young person.

As each learner is unique, the school uses a range of assessment tools to support assessments made to include;

- **SCERTS (Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support):** The SCERTS model provides specific guidelines for helping a child/young person with ASD become a competent and confident social communicator, with a focus on overcoming barriers in order to develop positive relationships.
- **B Squared Connecting Steps:** Teachers record the small steps the pupils make and use these steps to build a bigger picture of the pupils learning and achievements.
- **Early Years Developmental Journal:** The specialist leader in the early years uses this tool to support a description of a child's level of attainment at the end of the EYFS, and to identify their future learning needs.
- **Routes for Learning:** assessment materials focus on early communication, social interaction and the cognitive skills that are crucial for all future learning.
- **ASDAN's Personal Progress Qualification (PPQ):** carefully planned modules of work that are assessed and accredited by the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

The school is an active member of the North West Specialist Assessment Group formed in response to the governments 'Assessment Without Levels' agenda. We are working collaboratively with other schools to implement a shared and consistent response to support inters school moderation activities, validate summative and end of key stage data and conversations with external partners.



## **Resources**

Resources are provided on an individual basis and form part of a directed delivery to build on current skills and to help the young person attain new ones.