

CRIBDEN HOUSE SCHOOL

AUTISM POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including: the PSHCE Policy, Teaching & Learning Policy, Child Protection Policy, Curriculum Policy, SEN Policy and Behaviour Management Policy.

The Provision

Pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) are included in every class throughout the School. The primary characteristics of ASC are as follows:

Difficulties in:

- non-verbal and verbal communication
- social understanding and social behaviour
- thinking and behaving flexibly (rigidity of thought)
- sensory perception and responses.

Pupils with ASC can be affected by sensitivity to sound, touch and/or visual stimuli. Reference to 'a spectrum' of difficulties is made because there is a wide variation of difficulties and needs within the Condition and as a child grows and develops these may change. The pupils with ASC are supported by staff members who have specific training in aspects of Autism. In addition, many members of staff have received basic training in supporting pupils with ASC so awareness is spread across the school. Structure, visual support and individualised strategies appropriate for each individual are provided to aid a pupil's access to the curriculum.

Rationale

Autism Spectrum Condition affects communication, social understanding, and flexibility in thinking and behaviour. This is known commonly as the 'Triad of Impairments' In addition to this, there is often a strong tendency towards repetitive behaviour. All of which can result in unusual behaviour.

1. Impairment in social relationships/skills/interaction:

- lack of understanding others feelings & emotions
- very poor at interpreting other people's facial expressions and body language
- individuals may appear aloof, stilted, rude, aggressive, forthright, shy, thoughtless, immature &/or act inappropriately in social interaction situations and consequently fail to form 'real' lasting friendships

2. Impaired Imagination: is an inability to imagine things, which have not already been experienced, for example:

- New or different situations can be unimaginable and therefore perhaps frightening.
- Changes in routine are frightening / disorientating without the ability to imagine an alternative order of events.
- Do not realize/comprehend other peoples mental states are different from their own.
- An autistic person may not appreciate that other people have their own thoughts, perspectives, plans etc.
- Have difficulties with generalizations.

3. Communication and Language. Autistic people have trouble with expressing and projecting themselves and difficulty understanding all levels of communication, which may manifest as:

- A literal understanding of language. 'Pictorial language' can be nonsensical. For example, its raining cats and dogs, we're going '*down*' the road to the shops, get your skates on or we'll be late etc.
- "Don't do that". An autistic person may not know what the word '*that*' is referring to.
- People with autism have the same emotions as everybody else - but may not express them in a way that is easily understood, partly because they may fail to realize that language is one way of doing this.
- They may talk to somebody without taking any notice of that person.

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 their additional difficulties and characteristics are taken into account in all aspects of their school life, including the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives. The emphasis is on communication, social interaction, and the independence and emotional well being of the individual pupil.

Communication

Communication is fundamental to learning and therefore seen as a key area of development for all pupils. The school approaches this by providing a 'total communication environment', Using speech and symbols, as well as photographs and objects of reference if necessary, to provide clear and reinforced communication. If appropriate, pupils will access one to one intensive interaction, where staff will encourage pupils to respond to sounds in conversation like exchanges, which may lead to copying of words and phrases. Staff will also encourage turn taking exchanges within group situations. Individual communication/conversation books may be developed alongside the visual timetables to aid the pupil's communicative intent where necessary. The Speech and Language Therapists will develop this system along with the teachers and teaching assistants.

Approaches to Teaching pupil's with ASC

A visually intensive approach (based on the TEACCH Approach) is used to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them, and to enable them to anticipate what comes next. This involves the use of visual timetables, and a structured environment plus consistency of approach. There are direct 1-1 teaching times for the learning of new skills, as well as times when pupils are encouraged to work independently, or in a group with adult guidance. Regular physical exercise/brain breaks are incorporated into the daily timetable to help channel any excess energy that may cause anxiety. Life skills are an important part of the pupils' programmes, including 'Generalisation activities' which then lead on to life skills within a community-based education. Independence and emotional development of the pupils is highlighted in the PSHCE element of the curriculum. Social Stories are sometimes used to aid the understanding of the feelings of others and the consequences of actions.

Sensory issues

Some pupils with an autistic spectrum condition have specific sensory difficulties which can result in unusual or uncomfortable perception of one or more of the following: sound, sense, touch, sight and smell. They may become upset, distracted or react in an aggressive manner due to the discomfort or pain they feel.

We therefore try to reduce environmental anxiety and distress by providing the following:

- An environment which is calm and comfortable with few distractions
- An environment with clear structures and routines
- The knowledge that they can ask for help and it will be provided
- Specific sensory support to match their needs, to help them learn

Training

School staff have undertaken various levels of in house training over the last 2 years, this process is ongoing as the school continues the ASC Accreditation process. All staff will receive Level 1 ASC training during 2016-17 and members of the ASC team and all classteachers will receive level 2 training during 2016-17.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

Parents are regarded as essential partners in helping their children to learn. A meeting to discuss their child's progress and individual needs is offered every term. A coffee morning is held termly for parents of all pupils, and a variety of subjects discussed. Parents are welcome to arrange to visit the school, or can telephone to discuss any problems.