



Autism Policy

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How do we cater for pupils with autism at Red Gates School?

Introduction

Red Gates caters for pupils from 4 to 11 years with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Many of these pupils have autism (ASD). Other special and mainstream schools in the borough also cater for pupils with autism. A pupil's level of ability will affect autistic educational provision. Therefore a pupil with autism and SLD is likely to be suitably placed at Red Gates.

The aim of this document is to give an insight to parents and professionals regarding provision for pupils with autism at Red Gates. Our practice will actively reflect the Statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality, and equality of opportunity and good race relations across all areas of school activity.

The school believes in the philosophy that pupils with autism have an entitlement to be integrated into their peer group classes, thus benefiting from other behaviour models and pupils who interact and socialise.

To clarify this specific provision within Croydon the following aspects will be explored:

- What is autism?
- Teaching approaches and classroom organisation
- Meeting needs within the curriculum
- Inclusive education
- Working with parents – review of provision and placement

What is autism?

It is important to identify the nature of the autistic spectrum disorders, which will indicate the curriculum required to meet the very specific needs of pupils with SLD or PMLD and autism. The National Autistic Society (NAS) define Autism as 'a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them'. (NAS, 2018)

It is also recognised that pupils with autism have sensory processing difficulties. Other features may include repetitive and obsessive patterns of activities and interests, an inability to make sense of experiences, to relate past memories and past events, and an inability to predict what might happen

next. Pupils with autism find it difficult to make sense of the world and therefore find it hard to learn from the experience.

To summarise, the impairments of communication, social interaction and flexibility of thought may prevent a pupil from naturally joining in games with other pupils, participating in activities which require thought and imagination and forming interactive relationships with other people. There may be limited understanding of or interest in other people.

Teaching approaches and classroom organisation

A variety of evidenced based strategies are implemented to support pupils with ASD. The challenge for the family and school is to find the most suitable approaches to meet the individual needs of pupils. Choosing the most suitable approach can provide a good foundation for subsequent teaching and learning.

Experiences are presented within meaningful and real contexts. Pupils are encouraged to experience and experiment within their environment, thus helping them to cope with different situations in every day life.

Opportunities for working within the area of information communication technology (ICT) can be particularly motivating for pupils with autism and are fully explored across the curriculum.

It is the policy of the school that school staff work closely with therapists and other relevant professionals through a multi disciplinary team (MDT) approach, enabling pupils to access the curriculum. Teachers specifically liaise with the Occupational Therapists to develop a sensory integration approach and sensory strategies, as appropriate. There is a wide range of equipment across the school and various sensory rooms to support this approach.

The learning of a new skill may require various teaching approaches and groupings, e.g. one to one sessions, small group activities. Pupils are then supported to generalise these new skills in a wide range of situations.

A structured and multi-sensory teaching approach is vital. Cues in the form of symbols/photos, signing, songs, objects of reference and clear structure to the school day are necessary to provide routine. Anxiety or stress can be minimised through predictability and when events are clearly explained to the pupil. Transition and waiting times are carefully planned for.

An interactive approach is advocated at Red Gates. Pupils need to be encouraged and given opportunities to take control of their environment, beginning with making choices. Many pupils with autism may find this in itself difficult, requiring a structured teaching approach to understand what is meant by 'choice' and to develop the skill.

Some pupils with autism benefit from a TEACCH approach as part of their daily routine. The primary aim of the TEACCH programme is to enhance the

development of people with autism, allowing them to live or work more effectively at home, school and in the community. TEACCH consists of familiar routine and activities that make the day more predictable and promotes independence for pupils. The approach focuses on the strengths and interests of pupils in order to create motivation, and leads to a reduction of anxiety which positively affects behaviour.

Attention Autism is used across the school, an approach that aims to develop pupils' attention skills through motivating and engaging activities. This approach supports pupils to maintain, increase and shift their attention, thus improving their access to learning and development of independence skills.

Meeting needs within the curriculum

At Red Gates, Personalised Plans (PPs) are devised between parents and teachers, focusing on specific targets and reflecting the pupil's Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Therefore, a pupils' Personalised Plan is a framework through which to support individual needs. Specific skills can be developed, practised and generalised through meaningful activities within the context of appropriate learning activities. Life skills need to be incorporated and taught in 'real' situations. The following areas will provide a focus for the PPs:

Communication
Interests
Friends and Family
Independence Skills

The class team will create and monitor activities for identified targets, which the teacher will discuss with parents.

Occasionally, pupils find it difficult to work as part of a group for the whole day, so require an individual timetable for part of the day.

Communication

The initial aim is for the class staff team and Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) to observe any communicative intent by the pupil (i.e. how the pupil is trying to communicate) and to provide the means by which the pupil can communicate (e.g. symbols). Observations will be recorded and inform future planning.

Language is taught within a socially communicative context. Objects of reference, photographs, pictures and symbols, picture exchange communication system (PECS) and also individual communication books are used to facilitate understanding and spontaneous communication. Makaton signing provides an augmentative means through which a pupil can learn to communicate, supported by speech and symbols. It helps the adults to focus communication on key concepts, thus making the meaning of spoken language and communication situations clearer to the pupil. It is important that language used by staff with pupils is clear, precise and consistent.

Music is motivating for many pupils with autism. It encourages self expression and non verbal communication and can provide a range of positive experiences. Songs and musical cues are used to provide a clear structure for learning and a routine for the day. All pupils at Red Gates have a music curriculum lesson. Individual and small group music therapy sessions with the school's music therapist are offered on a referral basis to meet specific needs, and all pupils have the opportunity to take part in whole class music therapy sessions.

Socialisation

Pupils need a wide range of social and play experiences. Play can be difficult for pupils with autism. Situations can be engineered to involve the pupil in interactive activities with peers and adults. Role play, acting out emotions, drama games and learning the social and communicative skills that go with these activities require direct teaching. Social stories are used to enable the pupil to understand social situations and routines, where appropriate.

Behaviour

Pupils who have severe learning difficulties and autism may display behaviour that challenges. Behaviours need to be observed, analysed and when necessary addressed through a behaviour support plan (BSP) or behaviour support needs (BSN), devised in conjunction with teachers, parents and PROACT-SCIPr-UK® Instructors. The BSP/BSN will contain positive, preventative strategies, including communication strategies. The agreed strategies can then be carried out at school and at home. Unusual or socially inappropriate behaviour can impact on family life and so working in partnership with parents is paramount. The school works with other agencies to further support parents at home. This includes a Family Liaison Officer, who works closely with families on a referral basis.

Physical development

Pupils benefit from a range of interactive play facilities to develop different physical skills. This is achieved by the adult leading and facilitating movement experiences. Pupils may have a low sense of body awareness and poor body image. Through movement and the development of body awareness an increased self awareness will emerge. This may lead to a gradual awareness of others, early communication, interaction and socialisation skills. Pupils take part in daily physical exercise routines as well as PE lessons. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 have the opportunity to go swimming for one term during the year. Use of extensive playground equipment provides a range of physical and fun opportunities. Red Gates is proud to have achieved a Bronze Healthy Schools Award.

Inclusion

Pupils with autism at Red Gates are integrated into their pathway classes. There are a range of inclusion opportunities for pupils, including links between classes, with the co-located Gilbert Scott primary School and the wider Selsdon Education Partnership schools. A link for any pupil has to be very carefully considered, planned and reviewed. There are many benefits to the inclusion links; however, not all links may be appropriate for every pupil.

Working with parents – review of provision and placement

It is the school's policy to involve parents as much as possible in their children's education. They are the most knowledgeable about their children's abilities and needs. Staff members aim to work in partnership with parents, advocating a positive approach to pupils' education.

Policy reviewed October 2018

Headteacher

Date

Chair of Governors

Date