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(ASC) Autism Spectrum Condition Policy

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Standards Committee on 24th January, 2018



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Where students *fly high* through the
expectation of *excellence* in *everything* we do

Siddal Moor Sports College Autism Policy

This Policy document sets out the aims, principles and strategies for the education of pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) at Siddal Moor Sports College. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including: the PSHCE Policy, Teaching & Learning Policy, Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Child Protection Policy, Transition Policy, Special Educational Needs 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 which are as follows:

- 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 (through the Autism Champion). In Addition, many members of staff have received basic training in supporting pupils with ASC to ensure 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

In order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum at Siddal Moor Sports College, we use an extensive range of established and researched approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. Our child centred approach, with emphasis on personalised learning, addresses the specific needs of each individual child. 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 create anxiety.
- Changes in routine are upsetting / disorientating without the ability to imagine an alternative order of events.
- Do not realise/comprehend other people's 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 generalisations.

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, it's 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 realise 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 wellbeing of the individual pupil.

We aim to reduce the barriers to learning and work towards the pupil spending increasing amounts of time in a more inclusive learning environment. Through our fully inclusive ethos we give all pupils the opportunity to access whole school activities.

Individual Needs of Pupils with ASC

Pupils whom are on the spectrum at Siddal Moor Sports College have a pupil passport which will reflect their personal needs against Wing's Triad of Impairments (Wing & Gould 1979) and be reviewed on a regular basis.

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 sign-supported 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 books may be developed alongside the visual timetables to aid the pupil's communicative intent where necessary. The Autism Champion will develop this system along with the teachers and teaching assistants.

Approaches and Interventions

At Siddal Moor Sports College we use a child-centred approach which addresses the specific needs of the individual child. We have a range of interventions which take account of the pupils' difficulties and seek to minimise them, enabling the pupil to feel calmer and thus able to access the learning experience.

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. Life skills are an important part of the pupils' programmes, including community-based education. Independence and emotional development of the pupils is highlighted in the PSHCE element of the curriculum. Social Stories (Gray 1997) 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.

Partnership with parents

Parents are regarded as essential partners in helping their children to learn. A meeting to discuss their child's pupil passport is offered, with coffee mornings being held for parents of all pupils. Parents are welcome to arrange to visit the school, or can telephone to discuss any problems.

Complaints Procedure

The school aims to be sensitive to the needs of the students and their parents/carers. The SENCO and Autism Champion welcome meeting with parents/carers at mutually agreed times to discuss the needs of their children and the school's provision for them, including aspects such as health, progress and behaviour, as well as further steps the school might take.

Informal complaints may be made through the Form Tutor, Head of Year or SENCO. Complaints will be acknowledged and a response given or a meeting arranged for further discussion as soon as possible. More formally, the head teacher will receive and investigate complaints and seek to resolve problems. Parents/carers who have a concern which they feel has not been properly addressed may put their concern in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Parents/Carers Right of Appeal

Parents/carers may value independent advice and support for their child, this can be sought from SENDIASS.

Autism Awareness

Internal training is regularly provided to all staff have on autism-awareness, behaviours for learning, preparing the environment and good practice delivered by the Autism Advisory Service and the SENCO. School staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

We have high but realistic expectations for all our pupils. We endeavour to provide the very best learning experiences through a personalised approach. To achieve this our provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum is continuously monitored, evaluated and adapted as part of the self-evaluation process.