THE EDUCATION VILLAGE ACADEMY TRUST

Autism Policy

EVAT Version Control Document

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Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed every **3 years** by the Policy Owner: **Caroline Green**

The scheduled review date for this policy is **March 2022**.

The Education Village Academy Trust
Where learning has no limits

Where learning has no limits

At The Education Village Academy Trust, all children, young people and adults are valued both as individuals and as part of the wider Trust community. We aim to provide a safe, happy and caring environment within which everyone can thrive.

Core values

Our Trust's activities are informed by our core values, which mean that we:

1. recognise the **worth** of each **individual** by valuing the personal qualities they demonstrate in their learning, living and working

2. recognise the **experiences** of children and young people by valuing the **talents** and **skills** they bring into their schooling, and we commit to ensuring that schooling enhances these talents and skills

3. embrace **difference** and **harmony** by valuing **diversity**

4. display **integrity** and **authenticity** by valuing **openness**, **trust**, **fairness**, **honesty** and **respect** for all people

5. foster **ambition, high aspirations** and **independent** spirit by valuing each individual's abilities, aptitudes and desire to create, explore and grow

6. commit to **hard work** and **high standards** in provision, behaviours and outcomes

7. help, support and enable others by valuing **relationships** with all stakeholders, being **emotionally intelligent**, building **resilience** and being **forward-looking**

8. acknowledge the role of **networks** by valuing the ways in which people can live together, collaborate and make positive contributions as **citizens**

9. acknowledge the place of school in the **community**, including the broader **global** community, by valuing the essential nature of the relationship between schools and the social and economic environments in which they operate

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, are based on these key principles.

Contents

N.B. Where reference is made to an 'Academy' or a 'School' the intention is that the policy is universal and applies to both.

AUTISM POLICY

Definition

Autism is a condition, which is the combination of four particular areas, known as The Four Key Areas of Difference.
The Four Key Areas of Difference comprises:

- Interacting
- Processing Information
- Sensory Processing
- Communication

In addition to these impairments, people with autism may be affected by learning disabilities and difficulties, which can vary in severity. Such pupils often also have sensory processing difficulties.

Each person with autism has their own individual personality and is a unique individual.

Rationale

Due to the nature of Autism, all daily activities are approached using strategies which take The Four Key Areas of Difference into account.

Planning Structure

To enable pupils to learn, the following strategies may be employed:

- TEACCH system.
- Visual Timetables.
- Now and Next cards.
- Preparing pupils for any transition or change.
- Social stories.
- Highly visual delivery of curriculum content.
- Use of minimal language which is concise and relevant.
- Multi sensory approach.

- Makaton.
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).
- Intensive Interaction.
- Daily opportunities for physical activity.
- Behaviour management through Team Teach approach.
- Colourful Semantics.
- Hydrotherapy.
- Rebound Therap.
- Use of laptops/IPads/tablets.
- Emphasis on life skills appropriate to each pupil's needs.
- Individualised sensory diets.
- Occupational Therapist input and strategies.
- Speech and Language Therapy input and strategies.
- Sensory breaks and use of quiet rooms to support self-regulation.
- Positive Behaviour Support Plans, autism specific, reflecting behaviour management strategies through a pupil's position on the curve of arousal.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Pupils with autism may find whole group teaching more difficult at times and thus the curriculum may be delivered in a small group basis, subject to the individual's unique needs. Staff need to be creative and flexible in their approach to cater for the pupils' distinctive styles of learning, sensory needs and individual personalities.

Due to the visual learning style of many pupils with ASC, the following resources may be used to the delivery of the curriculum:

- Materials which are relevant and meaningful to individual pupils.
- Edible and sensory reinforcers.
- DVDs and CDs.
- Access to computers, tablets, interactive whiteboard and appropriate software and apps.
- Access to the internet.
- Multi-sensory materials including story sacks, play-dough, puppets, sand etc.
- Access to multi sensory equipment providing proprioceptive and vestibular input, where appropriate.

Collaboration with Other Professionals

In EVAT, there is a great deal of collaborative working with other professionals linked to pupils with ASC. These professionals and services are contacted for advice and support on a pupil-by-pupil basis.
Our collaborations include:

- Liaison with Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), both internally and through the NHS.
- Liaison with Occupational Therapy (OT), both internally and through the NHS.
- Educational and Clinical Psychologist involvement.
- Social Services department of Children's Services.
- Outreach work with mainstream schools, nurseries and the Learning Support Service, catering for pupils with ASC.
- Learning Disabilities CAMHS team.
- Physiotherapists.
- School Nurse.
- Dieticians.
- Behaviour support.
- Other medical personnel.
- School transport services.
- Respite and short break provision professionals.
- CDC transition meetings for EYFS and secondary provision.

Collaboration with Parents

In The EVAT, there is a great deal of collaborative working with parents and carers linked to pupils with ASC. These positive relationships and support strategies enable us to gain a holistic view of the young person with ASC and provide the best possible education and support for their individual needs. These collaborations, as with our collaborations with professionals, are applied on a pupil-by-pupil basis.

Our collaborations include:

- Home visits.
- Transition meetings for parents offering training in PECs, TEACCH and sensory issues.
- Parent Forums.
- Communication through FROG app., telephone conversations and in school meetings.
- Parents Evenings.
- Open evenings for transition pupils.
- Annual Reviews.
- Supporting and advising parents with behaviour/sensory difficulties outside school.
- Provision of Social Stories for home life.

COMMUNICATION POLICY (with emphasis on ASC)

Preamble

EVAT is a large community and therefore, there exists a developing range of language opportunities, strategies and situations that offer access to

communications and interactions for every pupil within the Trust. Through developing inclusive strategies and collaborative working, it is envisaged that all staff across EVAT will become deliverers of appropriate communication strategies and opportunities for their pupils.

ASC The Four Key Areas of Difference

The aspects of the areas are all inter-linked. Each strand will interact and affect the others.

Interacting
…the way they interact, play and develop relationships

Processing Information
…their attention, interests and how they learn.

Sensory Processing
…taking in and perceiving sensory information. This may include hyper (high) or hypo (low) sensitivity to the 5 senses, as well as balance and body awareness.

Communication
…the way they communicate, understand and use language.

Rationale

Effective communication is paramount in EVAT. EVAT recognises that it is essential to ensure that all pupils have access to appropriate communication opportunities that enable them to interact, socialise, choose and relay their feelings and needs. In EVAT special schools, many pupils have been diagnosed with a communication difficulty, which may be defined as a persistent difficulty in the understanding and / or use of spoken or written language.

Pupils with communication difficulties may include those with impairments, such as Down's Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Autistic Spectrum Conditions, physical disability (e.g. cleft palate), hearing impairments or neurological disorders. It may also be that a pupil has a greater receptive understanding than expressive ability.

In pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Complex and Additional Needs (CAN), there is a great emphasis upon sensory resources and interactions. There is an emphasis on consistency of staffing, to support the development of positive relationships and a secure knowledge of each pupil is in effect. This ensures that all responses, can be interpreted and acted upon on an individualised basis.

Where applicable, pupils Speech and Language Therapists' (SALT) reports are followed by classroom staff and regularly reviewed.

ASC pupils are often challenged by their inability to interact at a social level. They are supported by experienced teachers and Teaching Assistants in taking positive steps to develop these skills and are consistently encouraged to make social interactions, in support of their own individual needs and preferences.

Communication difficulties can isolate the individual and early detection, identification and intervention in communication disorders is essential.

Teaching Strategies

Staff have an understanding of the child development process and have regular training in disability awareness and new strategies techniques and technologies for communication. There is an emphasis upon personalised learning and planning targets for individual pupils.
Methods of communication and interaction include:

- PECS.(Picture Exchange Communication System).
- Makaton.
- On body sign.
- Intensive Interaction.
- Spoken language.
- LINK signing.
- Gestures.
- Eye pointing and Eye Gaze technologies.
- Facial expressions.
- Touch.
- Written communication.
- Symbolic "writing".
- Electronic communication including the use of tablets/laptops.
- Reading.
- Communicate in Print.
- Flashcards.
- Talking tiles.
- Colourful Semantics.
- Apps, such as Chooseit! Maker and Grid Player.

Given the breadth of need displayed by the pupils, there will be considerable variability in the approaches used, ranging from mirroring the child's sounds (intensive interaction) through to complex explanations. Staff have agreed a range of effective strategies for communicating with pupils, dependent upon need. These include some strategies that are appropriate for all children within EVAT. The accepted approaches in include:

- Using the pupil's name first when addressing the pupil (special schools only).
- Using gesture and non-verbal cues to supplement verbal interactions.
- Using visual cues to support verbal interactions.

- Using positive statements rather than negatives e.g. "John, walk please" rather than "John, do not run".
- Aiming not to use the word "No" if another can be used such as "finished".
- Use of intonation when speaking to emphasise key words.
- Giving the pupils time to analyse what is being said and then time to respond.
- Using a calm but firm voice.
- Modelling the pupil's response to a question or the phrase or statement you think is most appropriate. For some young people, this may be the only way that verbal interaction takes place.
- Where a pupil engages in repetitive language or questions try a range of strategies such as turning the question back to the pupil, diversion and redirection.

Considerations

The language used with young people with communication difficulties, should be of a concrete nature (here and now). In many cases, the pupils have a much higher level of understanding than they can express. Therefore, care should be taken when speaking in front of young people, as they may understand what is being said and a professional manner maintained at all times.

Staff should also be aware that although they may greet pupils appropriately e.g. by saying "hello", there may not be the expected response; social skills and social interactions may need to be taught and modelled.

It is often beneficial to the pupil's understanding if the amount of words used is limited to the specific requirements; this is a useful strategy to use with young people with learning difficulties.

If using signing, as a form of communication, be receptive of the pupil's individual level of understanding and in some cases, sign only the key words. This will support the pupil in following what is being signed.

Many pupils with an ASC tend to interpret what we say in a very literal way. They will have problems understanding jokes, sarcasm and turns of phrase, particularly those that use a play on words.

Although these strategies and recommendations are applicable to pupils with an ASC and in some cases other disabilities, it is important to remember the following:

- Many pupils cannot cope with over complex language and may need adults in the classroom to limit their interactions.
- The appropriate communication environment needs to be established within each class and for each child.

PROCESSING INFORMATION AND SENSORY PROCESSING

ASC – The Four Areas of Difference

The aspects of the areas are all inter-linked. Each strand will interact and affect the others.

Rationale

As autism is not a physical disability, the condition can be "invisible" to the rest of the world, hence the difficulties faced in raising awareness and fostering an understanding of the condition.

A majority of people with ASC lack flexibility of thought and find difficulties in processing information. Often, they cannot easily grasp the concept that other people have thoughts and emotions of their own. Individuals with ASC can have a unique and often literal way of thinking about people and objects and may not perceive things the way that other neuro-typical people do.

Differences in the way individuals with Autism process information can have a positive impact on their progress and development, enabling pupils to focus intensely and strive for perfection. However, this can also create boundaries to learning in terms of appropriate behaviours, transitions and organisation, which can negatively affect focus and interaction.

Processing Information

Pupils with ASC may have difficulties in using imagination to problem solve and predict outcomes on a day-to-day basis. Difficulties link to the ability to reflect back on ones own thinking and learning may be further compounded by limited ability with regard to thinking about experiences they have not already encountered. This includes the ability to engage in pretend play, role-play and take part in curriculum activities that involve abstract thinking and the use of personal imagination. The effect this can have on the pupil with ASC is that they may have difficulty predicting what could happen next or determining what is expected of them, this may lead to pupils becoming

reliant on establishing routines and rituals to secure a familiar outcome in environments that are constantly changing. Pupils with ASC can sometimes resist attempts to change and adapt these routines.

Pupils with ASC may behave differently and it may be difficult to understand their behaviours. Due to difficulties in communication and information processing a pupil with autism may not be able to explain their feelings, which may result in negative and inappropriate behaviours. Teachers should develop strategies for supporting pupils to convey emotions and self-regulate their own behaviours.

A pupil with an ASC may:

- Find abstract thinking difficult.
- Have difficulty with transitions.
- Find difficulty in generalising skills from one setting to another.
- Have a limited range of imaginative activities.
- Be reluctant to initiate or join in with pretend play activities.
- Display a tendency to focus on minor aspects of objects in the environment rather than the whole e.g. focusing on the wheel of a car rather than the whole vehicle.
- Copy others' actions and pursue activities in a rigid or repetitive way e.g. hand flapping, rocking, spinning things, watching the washing machine.
- Develop an intensive interest in a hobby or collecting things e.g. memorising train timetables.
- Develop intensive interests in particular objects, often with inappropriate responses such as sniffing/smelling them, feeling textures.
- Find it difficult to separate fact from fiction.
- Lack an awareness and understanding that other people have feelings, thoughts and plans that might be different from their own.
- Lack the ability to generate new ideas (without suggestions) or make decisions around their next actions.
- Be unable to predict outcomes and events and develop a high degree of insecurity and anxiety.
- Have poor levels of incidental learning and limited imitation skills.

Considerations

Staff need to remember that:

- Altering the environment even in a minor way e.g. moving a picture, can alter the individual's perception of that environment.
- Changes in routine or environment are unsettling for a pupil with ASC , who may strive to maintain the "sameness" which may result in major incidents/anxieties for the pupil.
- The pupil may have a need for security which manifests in a very restricted range of interests – staff need to utilise these interests to plan individualised programmes

- An individual with ASC may develop their own coping strategies to counteract anxieties, which may appear to conflict with school expectations.
- It is necessary for the school to ensure that pupils are accurately and sensitively assessed to determine appropriate strategies and programmes.
- Each pupil is an individual and social interactions and intentions need to be in accordance with the pupil's behaviours, academic abilities and sensory needs.
- Everyone working with the pupil needs to have awareness raised of ASC and understand the associated behaviours of the individual.
- They should talk to the pupil about what is intended and explain what they need to do using literal language.
- Misconceptions around ASC should be dispelled e.g. that people with an ASC do not want to interact with others, or that they are insensitive.
- Each pupil with ASC is unique and thus stereotypical associated behaviours, should be dispelled.
- There is a need to work closely with the home to ensure consistency of approaches.
- Careful assessment of individual needs and preparation for micro and macro transitions is vital.

INTERACTION

ASC – THE FOUR AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

The aspects of the areas are all inter-linked. Each strand will interact and affect the others.

Interacting
…the way they interact, play and develop relationships

Processing Information
…their attention, interests and how they learn.

Sensory Processing
…taking in and perceiving sensory information. This may include hyper (high) or hypo (low) sensitivity to the 5 senses, as well as balance and body awareness.

Communication
…the way they communicate, understand and use language.

Rationale

As autism is not a physical disability, the condition can be "invisible" to the rest of the world, hence the difficulties faced in raising awareness and fostering an understanding of the condition.

People with ASC may find it difficult to understand how the world and the people around them operate. They may also find it hard to interact. In particular, people with ASC may have trouble learning, understanding and interpreting the unwritten rules of social interaction and relationships that many people without ASC take for granted.

Social Interaction

Pupils with ASC may find it challenging to interact with others because they may find difficulty in developing the appropriate social skills. Often people with ASC can have problems interpreting the actions and intentions of others and can have difficulties understanding social situations. This may lead to them reacting differently or inappropriately to social norms. They may withdraw completely from interactions in order to cope. One common misconception surrounding ASC is that people with autism choose not to interact with others, in most cases it is likely that, in truth, they do not have the knowledge and understanding to do so. Impairments in social interaction may be expressed in a variety of ways. A pupil with ASC may exhibit the following characteristics:

- Appearing less interested in people, resulting in difficulties in forming friendships and positive social relationships.
- Appearing not to care about the distress of others and lacking awareness about others' feelings.
- Joining in only if an adult insists and assists them.
- Experiencing difficulties relating to others.
- Making social contacts but being unable to understand "social rules" e.g. standing too close, greeting inappropriately.
- Having difficulty in turn taking and group work.
- Having difficulty with waiting.
- Needing to control conversations and situations to decrease anxiety.
- Have difficulty with adjusting and generalising accepted behaviour in different social situations.

Considerations

- It is necessary for the school to ensure that pupils are accurately and sensitively assessed to determine appropriate strategies and programmes.
- Remember that each pupil is an individual and social interactions and intentions need to be in accordance with their behaviours, academic abilities and sensory needs.
- Staff and multi professionals need to know, understand and have awareness raised of the condition and the associated behaviours.
- Staff should talk to the pupil about what is intended and explain what they need to do, using literal language.
- Misconceptions around ASC should be dispelled e.g. that people with an ASC do not want to interact with others, or that they are insensitive.

- Each pupil with ASC is unique and thus stereotypical associated behaviours, should be dispelled.
- Staff need to work closely with the home and other agencies such to ensure consistency of approaches.

Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In preparing or amending this policy, the author has given due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; that is they have considered any potential impact on people who share certain protected characteristics. These protected characteristics are defined as: race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.