

Art 23: Pupils on the Autistic Spectrum in Sperrinview have the right to lead a full and decent life with dignity and independence and to play an active part in the community (RRS team 2015)

Art 28: Every pupil in Sperrinview has the right to an education which will be differentiated to meet their individual needs (RRS team 2015)

Sperrinview Special School

Policy for the Teaching and Management of pupils with Autism

Rationale

Staff in Sperrinview School recognise that Autism is one of the most severe of the developmental disorders with which pupils present. The primary characteristics include:

Impaired Communication

Impaired Social Interaction

A restricted range of behaviours, activities and interests

Autism is not a single entity, but a series of behaviours with multiple causes and neurological mechanisms. In addition to the primary characteristics there are additional associated features which have serious implications for the education of pupils within the Autistic Spectrum. These will vary for each individual but may include:

Abnormalities in the development of cognitive skills

Abnormalities of posture and motor behaviour

Abnormalities in sensory responses

Abnormalities in eating, drinking and sleeping

Abnormalities of mood which may include self-injurious behaviours.

These characteristics make it difficult for most pupils with Autism to benefit from many traditional teaching methods employed with pupils who have severe learning difficulties. With this in mind, it has been decided to use elements of the TEACCH programme and a variety of visual structures, PECS and ABA techniques to assist pupils.

The elements of the programmes used for each pupil will vary according to the individual's needs but it should above all aim to provide a stable environment in which the pupil can learn and develop.

Global Aim

To provide the pupils with the necessary educational, social, emotional and physical skills to live, work, play and socialise.

General Aims

- To provide a relevant communication system for each pupil.
- To provide the routines and structured learning situations necessary to ensure the broad, balanced and relevant delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- To provide a stable and secure environment to promote appropriate and positive behaviour.

Objectives

That pupils will be able to:

- Develop the necessary social, emotional and independent living skills to function effectively.
- Use a relevant means of communication.
- Develop as many skills as possible to promote effective learning.
- Participate in a range of play/leisure and creative activities

Organisation

Staff in Sperrinview recognise that the programme offered provides an effective approach for the education of pupils with Autism.

Where appropriate, pupils integrate with their peers within other classes or in some instances in other schools. However, for some pupils a higher degree of structure is appropriate. Two classrooms [one in junior school and one which straddles middle and senior school] have been adapted to meet the requirements of pupils, whose disabilities and behaviour prevent them from learning in an integrated classroom. While full integration within the school remains a primary aim for all pupils, it is not at this point a realistic option for the pupils in question.

Roles

The co-ordinator for Autism is Mrs Shaunagh Duffin. The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy.

External Support

It is important, helpful and necessary to liaise with a broad range of people and agencies:

Community Paediatrician
Community Learning Disability Team
Educational Psychology Department
Child Development Clinic
EA Southern Region AAIS Team
Division TEACCH
Dungannon Branch of Autism NI
Autism NI Central Office
NAS
Local Schools and Colleges.

Close and regular contact with the parents of the pupils with Autism is essential.

Staff Development and Training

Staff receive training in the following areas:

The Nature of Autism

Basic Principles of TEACCH and its implementation

Use of Assessment Materials

All Therapy staff who have an input are made aware and kept informed of the TEACCH methods currently in use. Ancillary and supervisory staff are also kept abreast of developments which effect pupils with whom they have contact.

A Five Day TEACCH Workshop is occasionally offered in Northern Ireland and efforts are made to obtain places for teachers on such courses.

Resources

Staff should develop necessary resources for each individual pupil. Such items/materials should be transferred with the individual if and when there are class changes.

The current provision in the classrooms referred to above is one teacher and two-three classroom assistants. Occasionally pupils who present with severe behavioural difficulties may require additional staffing in order to meet the demand.

Monitoring and Evaluation.

This policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis through consultation with pupils, staff and parents.

Review

A sub-committee of the Board of Governors will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of a timetabled, on-going process.

Signed: _____ Date: _____