Breakspeare's Autism Curriculum Framework

Curriculum statement

1.1 Introduction

Our mission is to equip our students to access and benefit from a breadth of learning opportunities at school. We aim to address the skills and understanding that pupils may find difficult as a result of their autism, as well as build on their strengths and interests to improve students' learning and well being. We believe that the following areas are a priority for our students, which will lead to more positive outcomes for later life:

➢ **My Social Communication**

➢ **Myself:**

  ▪ Regulation of emotions and behaviour
  ▪ Social development
  ▪ Independence

➢ **My Sensory Processing**

➢ **My Transitions**

These 4 areas of development are facilitated through individualised **transactional supports**, which include:

  ▪ Visual structure and routines
  ▪ Timetables, now and next books
  ▪ Visual organisation of learning activities
  ▪ Adjustments to the sensory environment
  ▪ Equipment to support sensory processing differences
  ▪ Visual communication systems
  ▪ High adult ratio
  ▪ Supportive trusting relationships with staff
  ▪ Clear, direct, positive language matched to pupils' receptive language skills
  ▪ Choices for alternative learning spaces.

All of these must be in place for pupils to feel happy, safe and ready to access more subject specific learning within pathway 2 and 3 of the Breakspeare curriculum. Learning opportunities are supported throughout the school day, across a range of locations and extends beyond adult directed lessons.

1.2 Description of Learners

In some classes, the students' primary need is to address the core areas of difference within the autism spectrum and to directly teach the priority skills that will enable them to access a greater breath of learning opportunities. These students have not been able to access the formal and semi formal curriculums in school successfully and have been identified as needing a highly individualised approach. This is facilitated with a higher staff ratio to enable transactional support to be successfully implemented across a range of contexts in school.

1.3 Curriculum Intent

Our intent is to prepare students to respond positively to a greater breadth of learning opportunities and to contribute to positive shared experiences by learning to regulate their emotions and behaviours.

The priority is to teach students to successfully communicate their wants and needs, regulate their arousal levels and emotions and be motivated to interact. They are supported to cope with transitions and be able to tolerate being part of a social group.

The curriculum is tailored to meet the individual needs of students, to address their barriers to learning and build on their strengths. We offer differentiated learning opportunities and support according to the students' educational needs and individual interests. Teaching and learning is delivered across a variety of contexts, meeting the child where he/she feels happy and safe to learn. This could be at times as part of a whole class lesson, or in smaller groups or on an individual basis anywhere in the school community.

The students learn to develop their social communication skills by:

- Establishing functional communication systems which enable them to become understood and be able to make decisions and choices in their life
- Building attention skills.
- Encouraging interaction with others and predicting what they need to do in relationships with familiar people and strangers.
- Managing and contributing to social situations in different environments
- Developing positive self-esteem and self-image by discovering their strengths and fostering special interests and talents.

The students learn to have greater emotional regulation skills:

- Their sensory processing needs are met through individualised sensory profiles including daily sensory diets and adjustments to their learning environments. They are supported to become more independent when managing their sensory needs.
- They are taught the skills needed to regulate their emotions enabling students to manage different feelings and have a better means of expressing themselves rather than using behaviour.
- A wider range of interests is developed as well as support to discover a joy for learning.
- Functional independence skills enable students to access the wider community, from social experiences within the classroom, to special school events, to beyond the school environment.

The students learn to develop independence through the use of transactional support:

- Visual structure and routines enable pupils to predict expectations, make sense of the world around them and lower their anxiety.
- Visual supports and social stories help them to manage transitions and cope with change.

- Visual supports and modelling of skills support students to manage unknown and unfamiliar situations
- Visual sequences and individual programmes develop Functional self-help skills: eating/drinking, dressing, hygiene, keeping themselves safe to promote their independence.
- Time is given for students' special interests, to develop leisure skills that bring them joy and engagement whilst supporting them to be fit and active

1.4 Curriculum Implementation:

The physical environment is altered to be autism friendly and visually supportive. The day is highly structured with predictable routines and visual timetables. The sensory features of the environment are adjusted to account for individual sensory processing differences. We recognise that some students need separate learning bases or spaces when they are not able to access the main classroom.

A high staff ratio enables transactional support to happen at any time throughout the school day. Students must be emotionally ready before accessing lessons; therefore staff can be supporting students to access their individual sensory diets as and when needed. Learning activities are supported visually through photos, symbols, modelling, sequencing or social stories.

We use an eclectic approach drawing from a range of autism specific interventions within the framework of Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support SCERTS (Prizant et al 2003).

SCERTS – priority goals focusing on the development of social communication and emotional regulation with transactional supports.

TEACCH – morning regulating activities, visual organisation of learning activities, visual structures across the day, such as now and next, part day and whole day timetables.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) – functional communication skills, to make requests and comments.

Makaton signing

Colourful semantics – extend creative language.

Attention Autism – to develop shared attention as part of a group and independent completion of an activity.

Intensive interaction – to develop early communication and interaction skills and as a tool for transactional support.

Yoga/massage – therapeutic approach to develop self-regulation skills and body and spatial awareness.

Herts Steps – therapeutic approach to behaviour, with a focus on the promotion of positive experiences throughout the school day. We aim to promote prosocial behaviours and decrease unsocial/anti-social behaviours.

1.5 Curriculum Impact

➢ Achieving a state of flow

Our students will be supported to be emotionally ready to access learning and be in a state of flow that is rewarding and differentiated. This will lead to greater communication, independence and social skills for now, later life and at home.

Students will be motivated to engage in a wider range of learning opportunities, broadening their interests and becoming an active learner in our community.

Students will be explicitly taught the skills that make a positive impact on their social, emotional, independence and learning needs.

"Most enjoyable activities are not natural; they demand an effort that initially one is reluctant to make. But once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person's skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding."

'Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience'