



1. INTRODUCTION

The Eagle House Group run two independent special schools which provide a specialist education for pupils aged from 4 to 11 and from 11 to 19 who hold a statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP for autism, Asperger Syndrome and associated social, communication and learning difficulties. Pupils at both schools represent the full autism spectrum with a wide range of needs and abilities. The nature of pupils with autism creates an uneven academic profile both within the individual young person and within the year groups. Additionally, heightened anxiety and school refusal are frequent traits within our pupil group many of whom have experienced periods out of school and / or had a history of multiple placements. This poses particular demands on teaching in order to ensure that each pupil is able to learn relevant skills and achieve appropriate learning outcomes in all areas of the curriculum, and give them the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Accordingly we offer specialist teaching that meets the range of different needs, is permeated with autism-specific teaching and learning approaches and delivered within an ethos of empathy, understanding, and structure.

All staff have a responsibility to strive to deliver lessons where the teaching and learning is of the highest quality and where the learning needs of all pupils are met.

As there are many teaching and learning opportunities outside the formal curriculum we strive to provide young people with optimum conditions for achievement and development in all situations.

This policy aims to:

- Provide support and guidance to all staff on what constitutes effective teaching and learning within an autism specific environment
- Ensure the needs of all pupils are met effectively through a consistent approach to teaching and learning
- Ensure resources support effective teaching and learning
- Provide a focus for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- Promote a reflective school culture that regularly evaluates practice in order to improve outcomes for pupils

2. AIMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Eagle House aims, through successful teaching and learning, to develop the whole child, enabling them to become lifelong learners and achieve their highest level of independence. We recognise that all pupils have special skills, abilities and aptitudes and all have an entitlement to access a broad, challenging and appropriate curriculum. As well as this, every pupil is entitled to experience a variety of teaching and learning styles along with age appropriate and stage appropriate activities which address their learning needs and thus enable them to make good progress and achieve their full potential. At Eagle House staff are fully aware of the intrinsic link between teaching and learning and understand that pupils can only progress well if the quality of teaching is high.

Through our teaching we aim to:

- raise levels of attainment for all pupils, enabling them to achieve their personal best and to make the best possible progress in relation to their personal and social development and academic learning
- develop confident and enquiring learners who are able to make informed choices
- make learning an enjoyable experience
- build on the pupils' natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- promote self-esteem, self-confidence and ambition
- involve and stimulate pupils through active, multi-sensory learning
- set challenging but achievable learning outcomes and have high expectations for all pupils
- provide appropriate support
- provide opportunities for pupils to apply acquired skills, knowledge and understanding in new contexts
- create a climate of praise and positive reinforcement which enables pupils to experience success and feel a sense of achievement

3. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Eagle House believes that teaching and learning for pupils with autism is at its best when it is; pupil centred, multi-dimensional and multi-sensory. Through our experience we know that the most successful strategies for effective teaching and learning; take each pupils autism in to account and address the many additional barriers to learning that this can create for pupils.

In order to optimize teaching and learning opportunities for pupils at Eagle House all staff will:

- use augmented communication, including the use of photos, picture, symbols, signs and writing to support all communication and enhance pupils' understanding
- give clear and simple instructions, limit and pace their communication (visual and oral) in order to prevent overload for the pupils
- ensure levels of adult to adult talk are kept to a minimum throughout lessons
- model activities and interactions at appropriate levels for all pupils in order to reinforce and support desired learning outcomes
- provide pupils with sufficient time to process information and instructions;
- provide pupils with consistent and predictable routines throughout the school and throughout daily activities
- Incorporate *planned* changes into routines to support pupils in overcoming difficulties with change

- ensure that pupils have access to visual timetables at the start of each day and that these are in use at all times and that individual schedules reflect the needs of individual pupils
- ensure learning activities and opportunities are presented in small achievable steps
- display a positive approach to behaviour, ensuring pupils' behaviour is managed positively using agreed and consistent approaches in order to minimise the impact of behaviour on learning for the individual and for other pupils
- provide a calm, low arousal learning environment and support pupils to self-regulate their levels of alertness so that they can focus on the learning opportunities presented to them
- be flexible in terms of the organisation of the classroom, staff allocation, pupil groupings and the level to which the lesson plan is followed according to the changing needs of the pupils on a day to day and when necessary, minute by minute basis
- work in close partnership with parents /carers to facilitate learning beyond the school day
- recognise that non-academic activities such as playtimes and snack times provide valuable learning opportunities
- undertake professional development through training, sharing best practice and support from colleagues

4. AUTISM SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

In order to support and facilitate all of the above, Eagle House refers to and employs three main models of intervention.

1. Ziggurat Model

We use the Ziggurat Model to underpin all teaching and intervention. This model provides a process and framework for designing individualised, comprehensive intervention plans for individuals with ASD. It also promotes collaboration and communication among parents/carers and professionals.

A key premise of the Ziggurat Model is that the underlying needs and characteristics related to autism must be addressed.

This involves addressing each of the following 5 areas in a hierarchical structure when carrying out interventions:

- Biological and sensory needs
- Reinforcement
- Structure and visual/tactile supports
- Task demands
- Skills to teach

Each level of the Intervention Ziggurat impacts the others, and all levels must be addressed in order for an intervention plan to be comprehensive. If needs on each level of the Ziggurat are not addressed, the intervention will be ineffective and skills will not develop.

2. The TEACCH® approach

We use TEACCH principles to provide structure across all areas of the school. TEACCH also emphasises the importance of identifying underlying strengths and needs related to autism. It is therefore based on understanding the learning characteristics of individuals with autism and the use of visual supports to promote meaning and independence.

TEACCH identifies a “culture” of autism as follows:

- Relative strength in and preference for processing *visual* information (compared to difficulties with auditory processing, particularly of language)
- Frequent attention to *details* but difficulty understanding the meaning of how those details fit together
- Difficulty *combining* ideas
- Difficulty with *organising* ideas, materials, and activities
- Difficulties with *attention*. (Some individuals are very distractible, others have difficulty shifting attention when it is time to make transitions)
- Difficulty with concepts of *time*, including moving too quickly or too slowly and having problems recognising the beginning, middle, or end of an activity
- *Communication* problems, which vary by developmental level but always include impairments in the social use of language (“pragmatics”)
- Tendency to become *attached to routines*, with the result that activities may be difficult to generalise from the original learning situation and disruptions in routines that are upsetting, confusing, or uncomfortable
- Very strong *interests and impulses* in engaging in favoured activities, with difficulties disengaging once engaged
- Marked *sensory* preferences and dislikes

Principles of TEACCH

- Understanding the culture of autism
- Structuring the physical environment
- Using visual supports to make the sequence of daily activities predictable and understandable
- Using visual supports to make individual tasks understandable
- Emphasis on independence
- Meaningful individualised programmes
- Ownership
- Predictability to manage anxiety
- Encouraging and managing flexibility
- Increasing ability to process information
- Working with strengths to overcome weaknesses – past skills, emerging skills
- Structuring for success
- Teaching the concept of ‘finished’

3. 'the little group' Approach©

The Eagle House Approach work on attention stems from the philosophy of 'the little group'. This assumes that in order for an individual to learn from another, they must first pay attention to the adult's choice of activity; this needs to be taught explicitly since shared attention does not come naturally to people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This approach focuses on enhancing attention, and providing communication and practical, functional and meaningful experiences in learning.

Working on attention development is continuous, as without it there are no foundations on which to build new skills and teach other areas of learning. Many pupils are in the early stages of their attention development, i.e. they can pay rigid attention to their choice of activity but struggle to lend their attention to someone else's; they can do just one thing at a time. Attention control is extended through a structured and visually delivered approach so that the individual gradually learns to focus their attention on the learning opportunity, thus broadening and extending their skills in all areas.

Although the initial stages of developing good focused attention may be acquired in the early years, the need to consistently address this area is ongoing and appropriate across the autism spectrum and throughout the individual's educational journey irrespective of age. Therefore, attention development is always at the heart of every learning opportunity.

'the little group' Approach to attention development is to:

- Assess the pupil's true level of attention development and work forwards from there
- Work within an environment of controlled overall stimulation in order to reduce competing stimuli and increase the incidence of success
- Entice the individual to lend their attention by presenting exciting and motivating activities where the reward is in taking part
- Gradually increase the length of time for which an individual lends their attention by expecting just a little more at every opportunity
- Gradually increase the level of demand by presenting slightly more complex activities when the individual displays increased focused attention
- Work within a group setting so that the individual learns to focus in a group where both the social demand and the level of sensory information are increased compared to the 1:1 situation
- Present activities that are intrinsically motivating and fun in order to offer an irresistible opportunity for learning

In support of these three main models of intervention the school also uses the following range of specialist strategies, known to be successful in supporting the teaching and learning of pupils with autism:

Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)

PODD is a means of selecting and organising symbols so that people with complex communication needs and their communication partners can communicate more easily. Pupils may have individual

PODD books to refer to and individual PODD sheets may be used for pupils to refer to during teaching activities and playtimes.

Intensive Interaction

Staff know the types of sounds and actions that their pupils make, and can communicate with them by using the same sorts of sounds and actions building up a conversation by following the child's lead. This can apply also to play and more general body movements. It helps pupils who are often at a pre-language stage to feel accepted at their own level and to get a sense of what it is like to communicate with others. Gradually, it can also help children to build up their vocabulary of sounds, words, phrases and non-verbal communication.

The 'ALERT' Program and Zones of Regulation

The ALERT program supports children to choose appropriate strategies to change or maintain their state of alertness. It provides them with a range of activities that they can use as and when needed throughout the day to support the self-regulation of their sensory needs. The Zones of Regulation programme builds on the ALERT programme and enables pupils to 'fine tune' their ability to self-regulate.

Social Stories and Comic Strip conversations[®]

Social stories and comic strip conversations support people with autism to develop greater social understanding.

Social stories are used to help teach social skills to people with autism. They use short sentences to describe a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why as well as reassurance for the individual.

Comic strip conversations use symbols, stick figure drawings, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and colour to create simple visual representations of the different levels of communication in a conversation. For example, they can show:

- the things that are actually said in a conversation
- how people might be feeling
- what people's intentions might be
- What someone might be thinking during a conversation

By presenting these different elements visually, some of the more abstract aspects of social communication, such as recognising the feelings of others, are made more 'concrete' and are therefore easier to understand.

Makaton[®]

Makaton is a simplified version of British Sign Language. As with PODD, signs are never used without language. The signing reinforces the language in a way that our pupils find easy to understand. Children are not taught to sign but adults may sign keywords to facilitate comprehension of spoken language.

5. PLANNING, DELIVERY AND EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Planning, delivery and evaluation of teaching and learning is the responsibility of teaching staff, in close liaison with the school's Curriculum Access Team.

In order to support the planning, delivery and evaluation of teaching and learning, all teachers at Eagle House will:

- plan collaboratively with colleagues
- plan to provide pupils with differentiated, inclusive, engaging, meaningful, motivational, purposeful and challenging tasks which promote independence and self-esteem and which are both age appropriate and stage appropriate
- take each pupils' autism into account, be aware of the barriers to learning this can create and have regard to these when planning, delivering and evaluating teaching and learning
- employ the autism specific strategies detailed above and ensure that these are reflected in all planning delivery and evaluation of lessons
- utilise opportunities to address pupils PDP targets and ensure there is an 'across the day' focus on the development of key skills within the areas of: communication, behaviour, social skills, independence and thinking & learning skills as well as on academic skills
- be prepared for each teaching session in advance, ensuring appropriate resources are identified and available
- vary their teaching styles for different topics and lessons and at different times
- ensure the learning intention of each lesson is clear and is shared with pupils and staff at the beginning of each lesson
- set achievable learning objectives for each lesson or learning activity and make clear the criteria for success using 'I can' statements
- provide pupils with feedback in a range of ways that are appropriate to their levels of understanding so they gain an understanding of their own progress, know how well they are doing and can start to understand what they need to do to improve
- use ICT appropriately to support and promote effective learning
- take account of pupils' individual interests and use these to motivate and encourage pupils learning
- enable pupils to learn in a variety of ways which address a range of learning styles and include visual, auditory and kinaesthetic tasks and activities
- produce high quality teaching materials which meet the needs of all pupils in the lesson
- use formative and summative assessment information to ensure that teaching and learning builds on previous knowledge, understanding and skills

- utilise stimulating resources in ways which encourage pupils to become more independent learners
- evaluate the impact of their teaching on the quality of learning at regular intervals throughout each lesson or learning activity
- share all aspects of the teaching and learning process with everyone involved, acknowledging the importance of a team approach in breaking down barriers to learning and promoting all aspects of the curriculum
- maintain purposeful and informative planning, record-keeping and assessment documents, in line with the school's planning, assessment, recording and reporting policy
- plan opportunities for pupils to work individually, independently and collaboratively with staff and with other pupils
- provide time for pupils to think and communicate about their learning in a range of ways appropriate to their preferred mode of communication and level of ability
- encourage pupils to take an increasing responsibility for their rate of progress in order to promote active learning and increase engagement
- ensure all adults are clear of their roles and responsibilities within lessons
- build opportunities for reinforcement and consolidation into lessons
- build in opportunities for one-to-one interaction

Pupils' progress in their learning is evaluated and recorded on a daily basis by all class staff. Teachers complete summative assessments and evaluations for academic learning each term using BSquared which is the schools main system for tracking academic progress, or, for pupils undertaking accredited courses, the units /modules they have completed successfully each term. Teachers also evaluate pupils' progress towards their PDP targets on a termly basis Teachers take part in termly moderation activities for each of the core curriculum areas to ensure consistency in assessing pupils' academic levels.

6. KEY FEATURES OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

In order to provide the best possible learning opportunities at Eagle House the expectation is that all teaching will:

- enable pupils to access all aspects of the curriculum in line with their needs, aptitudes and abilities
- enable pupils to make good progress and show good attitudes to their work
- provide a range of well-planned, differentiated* learning activities that enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding personally, socially and academically
- have clear learning objectives and outcomes for all aspects of the curriculum which enable pupils to be actively involved in their learning and help them understand what they are learning to do / learning about, to measure whether they have achieved the objectives or not and to understand what they need to do to improve further

- reflect good levels of teacher subject knowledge including knowledge and understanding of autism
- engage and motivate pupils, encourage them to work independently, be curious about the unknown and develop a 'thirst for learning'
- challenge all pupils to achieve their best, 'give it a go', and be ambitious in their learning
- be based on a good knowledge of the pupils' needs using ongoing formative and summative assessment information
- be tailored to the range of pupils' individual needs and enable success
- be delivered in a professional manner by the teaching staff
- reflect what is understood to be good classroom practice within an autism specific learning environment

*In order to ensure that all pupils can fully access the curriculum at an appropriate level, differentiation is reflected in both medium term and short term planning. In addition, within each lesson or learning activity, teachers will ensure differentiation takes place through one or more of the following:

- the task
- the method of presentation
- the learning outcomes
- the level of adult support required

7. RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Each school has a learning resource assistant who oversees a centralised learning resource centre. This enables each teaching space to be equipped with a range of resources to enable effective teaching and learning, some of which is available for independent use by pupils, some under the supervision of staff and certain other resources which may only be used by staff. Staff endeavour to make sure that the resources are well maintained and well utilised in support of the pupils' learning. Pupils are taught how to use resources appropriately, correctly and safely, with care and respect and with regard for Health and Safety and eco-issues. Care is taken to ensure that resources reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of our society, are both age and stage appropriate and that all pupils have equality of access.

All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard and teaching staff should make appropriate use of this key resource to support teaching and learning. The use of this and other 'multi-media' materials and equipment such as computers, cameras, TVs ipads and DVD/CD players should be carefully planned as such resources do not automatically make a lesson 'multisensory'. To further support teaching and learning, the school makes full use of the resources which are available in the local and wider community, for example the local library, museums, leisure facilities and the wider environment.

Within Eagle House it is recognised that the staff are the most important resource for supporting teaching and learning and that the quality of learning for pupils is highly dependent on the

effectiveness of the staff and the relationships between the staff and the pupils. The class teams aim to provide pupils with the best and most appropriate learning opportunities possible. In order to do this successfully.

Teachers will:

- ensure their planning is made available and used by support staff
- ensure effective deployment of support staff to support the varying learning needs of individual pupils
- ensure support staff are clear in their roles within each lesson
- use support staff as a resource for teaching and learning for the whole class, engaging with them to promote a variety of teaching and learning styles, not just individual support
- ensure support staff are engaged in assessment for learning where appropriate
- utilize the strengths and skills of each member of staff
- support staff to gain and develop new skills
- conduct themselves as good roles models for staff and pupils
- promote the use of new and changing technologies to increase and enhance the learning opportunities of pupils

LSAs will:

- read and use the teachers' planning to understand and implement the structure of learning for the whole class and each pupil and their role in supporting this
- be aware of and focused on the success criteria for the pupils within each lesson
- consult with the teacher to prepare materials and resources to support learning as directed and ensure resources are well looked after and kept tidy
- conduct themselves as good learning role models for the children
- support good behaviour conducive to learning and intervene as required to ensure good order and discipline
- support the children with their learning in a way that promotes and supports their independence

8. APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF READING

Many pupils with autism do not necessarily learn to read successfully using a purely phonic based approach as they are unable to 'look for meaning' i.e. for them 'abc' and 'cat' are the same in that they are a group of 3 letters, they do not see the meaning within the second group of letters. This results in many pupils learning all the phonemes but being unable to blend them to make words or use them to de-code words. In addition many children with autism are visual learners. As such the school takes an eclectic approach to teaching reading which includes phonics, sight words, 'whole' words, labelling words in the environment, fiction and non-fiction books, structured reading

schemes and where appropriate, teaching the technical vocabulary linked to specific subjects. This enables the pupils to learn to read in the way that best suits their learning style.

9. MONITORING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The school has in place a planned annual cycle for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning which involves collecting evidence through classroom observations, learning walks, and other monitoring activities such as scrutiny of key documentation about aspects of teaching and learning throughout the school.

All staff have an important role to play in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning within school. If there are concerns that the quality of teaching and learning is falling below the required standard then staff should report this to a member of the schools senior leadership team so that appropriate support can be put in place.

The purpose of monitoring is to:

- strengthen the quality of teaching and learning
- improve outcomes for pupils
- share good practice
- identify whole school areas for improvement
- measure pupil progress, achievement and attainment
- promote continuity and progression
- audit resources
- prepare and produce reports
- inform areas for staff development
- check for equality of opportunity and access
- set targets for future development
- provide relevant support

Following any monitoring activity verbal and/or written feedback is given to the teachers involved and targets negotiated and agreed or guidance given in order to further improve practice and thereby improve the quality of learning for pupils.

Lesson observations, both formal and informal, are carried out at appropriate intervals throughout the school year by the Executive Headteacher, Head of Education, Deputy Head of Education, other members of the schools senior leadership team, external advisors and teaching peers. Lesson observations are shared with staff and the outcomes discussed in a two way conversation with the teacher involved so that the quality of teaching and learning is continually improved throughout the school.

10. POLICY REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher supported by other members of the schools' Senior Leadership Teams to monitor this policy. It should be reviewed annually or when new legislation is published. The Executive Headteacher reports on matters relating to both schools to the CEO/Directors.

11. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTATION

- ❖ Curriculum Policy
- ❖ Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy
- ❖ Staff Appraisal and Capability Policy
- ❖ Teacher performance management Policy
- ❖ Age Appropriateness Policy
- ❖ Marking and feedback policy
- ❖ Lesson observation policy and protocol

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