

Anstruther House

An outline to our approach

Information for parents and
professionals

Anstruther House is a Specialist Provision attached to Marlborough Primary School. It is a 16 place setting which meets the holistic needs of pupils, aged from 3-11 years, who have a primary diagnosis of autism and have a Statement of Educational Needs or an Education Healthcare Plan (EHC) which identifies the need for autistic specific provision. The provision consists of two classrooms, a body shop, a sensory/therapy room and an outdoor space. Each child would be linked to a mainstream classroom.

This pamphlet sets out some of the main areas we believe are key to success.

Basic Approach

- Employing a range of strategies and approaches that support the teaching of the curriculum
- Being consistent in order to give children security
- Being firm but fair
- Following a total communication approach eg. signing, visual prompts, iPad schedules
- Providing opportunities for meaningful and purposeful learning experiences
- Knowing and understanding the individual child and the autism
- Treating children as individuals as no two children are the same
- Differentiation - in teaching style, planning, support etc.
- Having high expectations, and clear boundaries – both in the environment and for behaviour
- Being flexible and adaptable in order to meet children's needs
- Working as a team, including parents
- Staff act as a support network
- Encourage independence and life skills with strategies for self-management

Autistic Friendly Environment

- Structure and routines are essential for security and meeting the need for 'sameness'

But we

- Plan and prepare for pupils for change, as it is sometimes unavoidable
- Ensure a low distraction / arousal / low noise environment
- Use visual cues – timetables, visual aids, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), signing – to support focus and understanding
- Provide each child with the opportunity for one to one, paired and group learning and inclusion within the mainstream school
- Provide some children with a learning space based on TEACCH (autistic specific) approach

Behaviour

We understand behaviour in the context of the SCERTS approach (Social, communication, emotional regulation, transitional supports) which helps us to understand negative behaviour which is often the result of frustration, an inability to communicate, or a misunderstanding of contexts etc. It is important to let the child know you dislike the behaviour and not them.

Communication

All children with autism will have some level of language difficulty – either expressively and/or receptively. Staff use Makaton signing, visual symbols, PECS and iPads as aids to communication. All pupils will have a SCERTS pen portrait which includes information on:

- What they like and do not like
- How they communicate and how best to communicate with them
- Their interests
- Their learning targets and how to meet them

Staff need to:

- Facilitate independence
- Know what each child can tolerate
- Be aware of literal thinking / understanding
- Give clear instructions, often with reduced language
- Use the child's name to attract attention
- Secure attention before giving instructions
- Instruct – do not request unless the activity is optional
- Use positive language – say what to do, rather than what *not* to do
- Be aware that labelling what a child has done wrong, may serve to reinforce that negative
- Channel interests and motivations
- Allow processing time – this can be up to 10 seconds. If you repeat instruction too soon, processing will have to start again, especially if you rephrase the instruction / comment
- Ensure learning tasks are clear

Attitudes that adults need...

Sense of humour, enthusiasm

Patience and a calm approach

Being a team player

Ability to remain in control, of yourself and the situation

To be a good role model re behaviour and attitudes but also practically – model play, how to be in social settings

To be prepared to get down to child's level

Sensory Issues

Sensory issues are part of the diagnostic criteria for autism.

In the provision we work within the SCERTS framework which encourages Social Communication by ensuring Emotional Regulation through Transactional Supports. As well as benefitting a child's communication, this approach ensures they are in the optimum emotional state to learn. It helps to address the sensory needs which are intrinsic to the makeup of the majority of people with autism.

Sensory profiles are useful to identify more specifically the challenges which sensory differences present but an awareness of the child's needs is also beneficial.

- Allow regular movement breaks and / or sensory input – some children need this planned for them, others can voice when they need it
- Adults must be understanding of the needs of individuals
- Some children have 'low mood' and need to be aroused whilst others need calming strategies
- Reaction to sensory input can fluctuate – what a child can tolerate one day, they may not be able to the next
- As well as the well-known 5 senses we need to bear in mind the vestibular and proprioception systems
- People with autism are often monotropic – that is, they can only use one sense at a time so they may be able to look at you but then cannot listen, if their mind is on one thing they may not be aware of what is going on around them.
- The provision has access to a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist

This is a very brief guide. If you have further queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Marlborough Primary School
0207 589 8553
info@marlborough.rbkc.sch.uk