Ackworth School

Autism Resource Behaviour Policy

As an independent school, Ackworth is in the position to take into the autism resource those pupils whose needs we are able to meet. All the pupils in the resource present with very different profiles within the autism spectrum, but most would be regarded as having mild to moderate behavioural problems. When severe challenges are present we adapt the curriculum and inclusion to suit the needs of the individual. Behaviour issues are addressed within the resource.

Principles

The Autism Resource seeks to create a caring, positive and safe learning environment. We aim to promote self-esteem and positive relationships based on mutual respect, fairness and equality of all. We encourage a consistency of response to both positive and negative behaviour and promote a culture of praise in which pupils can achieve, recognise their achievements and progress, and take pride in their achievements. Principles of conflict resolution and restorative justice underlie our behaviour management.

Diffusing confrontations with pupils is undoubtedly the most demanding and challenging aspect of our work. Depending on the individual difficulties of pupils, staff are likely to experience verbal and occasionally physical challenging behaviours, but are expected not to take confrontations personally. Appropriate staff will be Securicare trained and these principles (including necessary paperwork) are followed. Pupils are given a 'fresh start' following incidents.

High levels of anxiety typically experienced by pupils with autism or Asperger's Syndrome, alongside low levels of confidence and self-esteem, contribute to behavioural challenges. Pupils have different anxieties, fears, interests and responses and our approach is individualised; pupils are listened to and then encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own behaviour and find constructive solutions and effective strategies. Staff are expected to understand and empathise with the pragmatic thinking and anxiety issues of pupils within the Resource, show positive role modelling and find constructive solutions and strategies. Positive relationships based on mutual respect will enable the implementation of more effective and long-term solutions.

The strategies listed under 'Advice' can help in preventing confrontations from developing, and where they do occur, to de-escalate them. None of the strategies should be used in isolation and different strategies will be effective in different situations and with different pupils.

The Autism Resource will comply with the school ethos and all other school policies under the line management of the Head and the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

The emphasis regarding behaviour is on early intervention. Good channels of communication with parents and other involved professionals are kept open and as far as possible potential triggers are identified, watched for, and communicated amongst Resource staff.

A structured timetable allows each pupil to be in control of their day, providing them with the knowledge of what is going to happen next, later, this afternoon etc, thus giving security and minimising the stress which can result in inappropriate behaviour.

Positive relationships with parents and carers are developed to encourage a shared approach and consistency of strategy.

Behaviour Management in the Autism Resource

The Resource will ensure that as far as possible the physical, visual, environmental and sensory structures are conducive to the learning needs of the individual child.

Staff, including teaching staff and learning mentors, are responsible for ensuring that a high quality learning environment is created and strategies are followed and consistently and fairly applied. Mutual support amongst all staff in the implementation of the policy is essential.

As a child with autism or Asperger's Syndrome will not learn positive behaviour by watching good role models, positive behaviour may be explicitly taught within PSHE sessions, throughout the curriculum, and during less structured social times.

Any pupil concerns will be listened to and appropriately addressed.

Parents/carers will be kept informed about any issues concerning their child's behaviour.

The Resource will encourage parents to work in partnership with the Resource to assist it in maintaining high standards of positive behaviour. They will be actively encouraged to raise with the Resource any issues arising from the operation of the policy.

The Resource will work positively with external agencies as appropriate and seek any appropriate support which will ensure that the needs of pupils are met.

Expectations regarding behaviour are communicated to pupils explicitly and simply, and understanding is checked.

Relaxation and self-calming strategies are explicitly taught.

An ethos of encouragement is central to the promotion of positive behaviour and rewards are an integral means of achieving this. Pupils will have an individualised reward scheme (e.g. stickers) if appropriate and will have a short period of 'free time' which is clearly and explicitly earned. If appropriate, desirable behaviour models or ways of earning 'free time' (or another appropriate reward – all pupils are different) will be displayed visually.

Pupils are supported on a 1-1 basis and each pupil is assigned a member of staff who will take a fuller pastoral role with that pupil.

If appropriate, an individual pupil may have a learning contract or behaviour management plan.

Appropriate strategies may be detailed in the individual risk assessment, IEP and behaviour management plan. **All Resource staff should be familiar with these and apply them consistently.**

Individual risk assessments are subject to regular review and may be updated if necessary.

All appropriate formal and informal opportunities to show that positive behaviour is valued (e.g. verbal encouragement) will be taken.

Staff should be careful not to create a confrontation by feeling that they should make a stand as 'the authority figure'. It can calm a situation to state that an issue will be talked about later when the pupil is less likely to be confrontational and defensive.

Humour can defuse a situation but care should be taken that this is not misinterpreted; staff should not insult a child or denigrate them in front of peers.

Staff should not display anger; it is imperative that any observation is directed at the behaviour and not the child. The adult could reflect their feelings and emotions in terms of sadness, disappointment and hurt. When the incident is over the child should still feel liked and valued, with their anxieties understood.

Sanctions will be appropriate and individual to the child (e.g. missing playtime or free time). These will only be issued if all other agreed strategies have been employed and have not achieved a desirable outcome. Sanctions will be clearly defined and explained at the time of the misdemeanour and the pupil will be clearly and explicitly informed of what changes in behaviour are required to avoid further sanctions.

Any issues with challenging behaviour will be dealt with as detailed within this policy and explored during the individual pupil's annual review.

Appropriate training and updates on all aspects of behaviour management and related issues will be sought (see separate entries).

Strategies

Challenging behaviour is only challenging when perceived so. Wherever possible ignore, as responding to the behaviour only may lead to a misinterpretation of their needs. Jordan (2001) argues that

'... an understanding of the fundamental difficulties faced by an individual at the psychological level is crucial to developing a programme and a working approach that addresses the individual's needs.'

- Identify the triggers of the behaviour - be critical and minute in appraising this.

- If the behaviour is constantly challenging, provide reinforcements whenever the behaviour is not challenging. At first, this may be after every few seconds/minutes etc. Stretch the time so that 2 minutes becomes 3 minutes then 5-10-15 minutes. Aim to have as long a time as possible between rewards. GO SLOWLY and reward with the most important thing for that individual.

- What is gained by the behaviour? If it is attention, could they be rewarded by removal from the lesson/activity? If this is the case, ensure that removal is less attractive than the previous situation

- Identify what motivates and try to work through this. Use reinforcements that are the MOST IMPORTANT for the pupil. Anything less may not have the desired effect.

- Provide a concrete structure (ie written or visual timetable) to avoid stress and to show the pupil what comes next. Stress often comes through the pupil not knowing what is to follow as they cannot read the 'signs'. Wherever possible convey how long each activity will take and when it will end.

- Ensure that the daily timetable is individual to each pupil.

- Transition times can be particularly difficult for pupils and clear, advance, visual and verbal information should be given with 'backchaining' (e.g. 5 minutes' experience, then 10, then 15 etc.) if appropriate. Pupils should be prepared to cope with change and involved in this where possible.

- Allow the pupil to eliminate activities from the timetable board when they have been completed. As they progress, incorporate change into this timetable and ensure the alteration takes place.

- Allow the pupil to be in charge of cancellations and alterations. Once a pupil becomes comfortable with this system ensure changes take place to teach flexibility.

- If appropriate, incorporate a question mark '?' on the board wherever there is a change to provoke their thinking. At this point let them choose an activity from 2 or 3 specified ones. Be consistent and don't be swayed by their alternative choice i.e preferred routine activity. This could be incorporated next time AFTER they have fulfilled your criteria.

- Have a weekly timetable as well as a daily one that the pupil can refer to as they progress. This is a good strategy for teaching time - ie days/weeks. Also a way of teaching the concepts of 'before and after' as a labelled arrow can be used to point in both directions.

- Try not to reprimand as this is less profitable than reinforcement. The latter may take longer to set up but results far outweigh the former as this has the added advantage of increasing motivation.

- When a behaviour trait is being eliminated, staff and parents should have the same approach, even to the point where a set sentence or phrase is always used in a particular situation. This should be the same at home and school to avoid the pupil perceiving this as an area where they can continue to be dominant and inflexible. *'All behaviour is a form of control'* (Ros Blackburn, 2001)

- If a pupil has an obsessional behaviour (that is not too antisocial), allow them some time to do this at the end of a session, as this can be their strategy for stress relief. However, ensure that your preferred activity is done first. 'First this..., then ... (their choice)', use the same words to convey this concept each time.

- The pupil may not recognise the label that is given to a specific behaviour, so it is important to teach what we mean by that behaviour and teach common terms. Pictures and photographs can be a useful tool for this.

- Good teamwork is essential. All staff should follow the same programme and use the same terms, but 'one voice at a time' is necessary to avoid confusion or sensory overload. Staff may feel that in a confrontation it is their professional responsibility to see it through, but a new face can diffuse a situation. This should be seen as a strength of team-working and in no way as a disempowerment of a member of staff dealing with the initial issue. Staff should be vigilant and alert to potential triggers and signs of threatening escalation. They should be ready to step in if the situation requires it (e.g. with an understated 'would you like a cup of tea? Or 'I am available to help?') but should be aware of a 'help script' (e.g. 'thank you, you could help by ...' or 'could you just give us five minutes?') and not take over if the first member of staff is already dealing effectively with the issue. All staff should take responsibility for ensuring that other pupils are safe and calmly removed from the Resource if necessary if one pupil is experiencing a difficult time.

Severely Challenging Behaviour

If an individual pupil is likely to present or presents with challenging behaviour then the following will apply:

- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Head as appropriate will be informed of any potential behaviour issues with an individual pupil.

- The Resource acknowledges that 'sometimes behaviour is a child's only voice' and that behaviour has four main functions:
  o Escape or avoidance
  o Attention seeking
  o Attainment of tangible reward
  o Self stimulation

- Every effort will therefore be made to understand the behaviour and assess potential harm or loss of dignity.

- Each situation will be assessed on an individual basis and ahead of a response; this will be detailed in the appropriate paperwork.

- As far as possible, and with the needs and abilities of the child taken into consideration, the individual child will be made aware of the choices they have and their related consequences.

- Either behavioural or cognitive approaches may be used according to the needs of the individual child.

- Visual support will be used where appropriate to back up spoken language.

- If a pupil is known to display challenging behaviour, any triggers and patterns will be identified and documented and all staff will take responsibility for ensuring that agreed strategies and intervention techniques are both employed and documented.

- Major issues with an escalation of challenging behaviour resulting in injury or severe damage will be dealt with with the involvement of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Head, or, if not available, with another member of the Senior Management Team. Staff will show and provide written evidence to show how appropriate de-escalation techniques and strategies had been employed with reference to individual behaviour plans if this is appropriate. The appropriate paperwork will be signed by both the Deputy Head and the Head.

- Physical intervention ('the use of minimal force to briefly prompt, guide, contain or direct free movement, in circumstances in which there is no extended or extreme resistance') may be used. If physical restraint ('to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control') is judged by staff to be necessary in extreme circumstances to prevent harm to the child, to others, or to property, this should be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent and the minimum needed to achieve the desired result, and should be recorded and reported on the appropriate paperwork. The outer doors may be locked if this is to ensure safety, but a member of staff should be in attendance at all times to monitor welfare and provide support as necessary. Support (and, if appropriate, reflection/restorative practice), is always offered following an incident and should also be recorded.

- Should the Head, the Senior Management, the Head of Department and AR staff consider that the nature of any incident warrants suspension or exclusion; a further discussion about the ability of the school to meet the child's needs, the child's family, the relevant Local Authority and any other appropriate professionals involved will be informed as soon as possible and

a meeting set up to discuss this. *The school's Exclusions Policy will apply in these instances and the child may be suspended whilst these discussions take place.*

If a child is obviously distressed or negative behaviour patterns are threatening to escalate, the following advice is given to staff:

- Use your voice first.
- Assess the situation. **All responses must be considered, reasonable, and proportionate to the circumstances.**
- Talk slowly and quietly in a low, calm tone. Use positive vocabulary focusing on guidance and safety.
- Engage the child by name and say your own name and that you are there to help.
- Use simple, clear, brief language – those with autism or Asperger's Syndrome can misinterpret ambiguous statements or requests.
- Avoid making eye contact – this can be interpreted as confrontation.
- State/describe the obvious ("I can see you are upset ...")
- Do whatever is 'do-able' ("Why don't we ...").
- State a positive outcome ("We can sort this out ...").
- Listen to what they have to say. Give your full attention, use open-ended questions and reflect back what they say to show you have understood.
- Allow adequate time for processing. Pupils in a state of high arousal may say 'no' immediately but then comply.
- Approach from the side and try to keep arms still. Maintain personal space (about three feet if possible). Be aware of your body language (e.g. pacing, shadowing) – this can be interpreted as intimidating.
- Offer reassurance.
- Offer 'time out'.
- Remove any audience and withdraw to somewhere private if possible.
- Divert or distract – offer another activity or topic of conversation.
- Provide clear choices.
- Explain your reasoning simply and clearly and re-iterate it calmly as appropriate.
- Use restraint only when necessary to resolve the incident – the minimum force required lasting for the shortest practicable time- the purpose should be restraint and the reduction of risk.
- Positive restraint only to be used by those trained. The purpose is to protect the child from hurting themselves or others.
- If a pupil runs at you, make sure you are side on.
- Never strike blows or retaliate.

- Document any issues on the appropriate paperwork and ensure that the Head of Department is fully aware. Include the pupil's views where possible.
- The Head of Department will inform the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

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If a pupil runs out of the Unit, one member of staff should ensure the safety of other pupils and other members of staff as appropriate should:

- Follow the child and keep them in sight if possible. (If contact can be made offer support and reassurance, de-escalate and gain trust).
- If it is not known where the child is, go to the main exits (river and road).
- Employ school Missing Pupil Policy.
- Inform Senior Management and Head of Department as soon as possible.

This policy will be reviewed each September and as new pupils are received into the Resource. Parents will receive a copy of this Policy and an Individual Behaviour Management Plan if appropriate.