

HILLSIDE SPECIALIST SCHOOL & COLLEGE

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT POLICY

Introduction

Autism can be defined by difficulties in the areas of social communication, social interaction and rigidity of thought. Therefore, all children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) display, whether to a subtle or obvious degree, socially unusual or inappropriate behaviours. It is through these behaviours that a child will initially be diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum.

At Hillside School we aim to help the child with autism to relate to the world around them. By understanding the nature of their autism we hope to assist them to develop calm and positive behaviour patterns, which allow them to learn and develop to their potential.

It is recognised that inappropriate behaviours are often due to difficulties in communicating, interacting and thinking flexibly and by focusing on tackling these areas behavioural problems can be prevented or reduced. It should also be noted, however, that behaviours may be compounded by additional learning difficulties or other factors.

The Curriculum

Central to all areas of the curriculum is communication. Whether the pupil is participating in a science lesson or PE, aspects of communication will be included, allowing the pupil to develop methods of expression (see communication policy) and building in comprehension of language.

In the same way, social interaction is built into all lessons e.g. holding hands with another pupil in collective worship, taking messages to the school office during registration etc.

Through providing a safe repetitive framework in school, small alterations and choices are introduced to allow pupils to begin to think more flexibly without feeling out of control.

A high level of time within the curriculum is given to physical activities. It has proved beneficial for pupils, where necessary, to use a high level of energy in a structured PE session, and sensory integration sessions for individual pupils. The use of Sensory Integration strategies are being developed across the school to allow pupils settle focus and access classroom tasks. At Hillside School each class engages in daily physical activities. This can significantly reduce challenging behaviour.

The Learning Environment

The TEACCH approach (Mesibov) has been a significant influence in the way that classrooms at Hillside are managed. It provides clear structure and expectations, allowing pupils an area and time where they can engage in acceptable ritualistic behaviours as well as low stimulation areas where they are required to remain on task. It has been clearly established that pupils with ASD cannot and should not be stopped from carrying out ritualistic behaviours but these should be limited to avoid them becoming a block to learning and monitored to ensure that they don't become socially intolerable. It is helpful to remember that if a behaviour is eradicated by an overzealous adult it may be replaced by a worse behaviour.

Intervention

Staff will act as positive role models to pupils in how they interact both with all pupils and as a staff group.

Day to day interaction with pupils is positive, clear and consistent. With good, realistic expectations of a pupil and clear guidelines shared amongst staff many behaviours are successfully pre-empted.

Instead of saying 'no' staff at Hillside will give the pupil a brief instruction telling them what they are required to do. The pupil can then be praised for doing this, and the interaction becomes positive and non-confrontational.

Pupils are frequently redirected or distracted, and alternatives may be offered which are more acceptable e.g. Paper-shredding box for the pupil who is destroying books.

During a difficulty staff use calm, clear language or sometimes no speech at all as it is recognised with the pupil with ASD understands less speech when in a state of high anxiety and may become over-stimulated by a loud voice.

Structure and routine within the day help pupils to make sense of their environment, thus reducing difficult behaviour. Within this framework, choices and changes are brought in where appropriate to prevent them from becoming over dependant on routine as this can create additional problems unnecessarily.

Monitoring

A brief outline of how any inappropriate behaviours are dealt with, noting the frequency, duration and possible triggers is written for each pupil. All staff dealing with a specific pupil follow this and detailed information of specific incidents is noted on ABC charts and stored in class files. This gives a picture of what is happening before and during incidents, which should inform staff on how to avoid future reoccurrence.

Where a particular difficulty has arisen for a pupil and it is continuing to cause concern it may be helpful to carry out observations to attempt to ascertain triggers and therefore successful management and pre-emption strategies. There are also opportunities for staff to seek advice from others through regular drop-in sessions, class meetings and discussions with the behaviour coordinator.

Guidance when tackling inappropriate behaviour

1. Clearly define the nature of the behaviour and attempt to establish whether it occurs in other settings
2. Attempt to discover why the pupil might be doing this. What are the triggers? Is it a result of poor communication skills, anxiety, confusion, a physical problem or self-stimulation?
3. What is the pupil gaining from the behaviour? Does the adult make a big fuss? Does the pupil avoid doing the activity? Do they get comfort or enjoyment from a physical stimulus?
4. Can the triggers be avoided or changed? Can adults give a different (or no) reaction to reduce the pleasure gained from a satisfying response? Can the behaviour be pre-empted, redirected, replaced or limited?
5. A Positive Behaviour Support Plan should be written, with a clear and concise proactive and reactive strategies and shared with any adults concerned. A review date set and monitoring carried out. It should be expected that behaviours and strategies would need to change over time.
6. In some instances these general interventions will not be effective and physical intervention may be required to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. This will be detailed in the pupils Positive Behaviour Support Plan and a Positive Handling Plan written. All Restrictive Physical Intervention follows the Lancashire County Council Protocol.

It is important to remember that when devising and implementing a Positive Behaviour Support Plan with or without physical intervention it will require regular reviews and adjustments. It is not satisfactory to simply avoid trigger situations by for example always removing a pupil from a situation. At Hillside we aim to teach and help the pupils to deal with their difficulties, in order to equip them for life outside of school.