



## **RADLETT LODGE SCHOOL LOCAL PROCEDURE FOR:**

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At Radlett Lodge School (RLS) we acknowledge that the quality of our teaching directly affects how well pupils learn; we also understand that whilst our pupils have the same broad educational needs as other children and young people, they require an approach that is always highly individualised and often relatively specialised.

Class groups at RLS are therefore small; from between 5 and 8 pupils, with an appropriate ratio of staff to pupils. Small group and individual teaching will ensure that pupils are offered education to meet their needs.

#### **AIMS**

The aim of *Teaching and Learning* at Radlett Lodge school is to provide and develop a range of services for children and young adults with autistic spectrum disorders which are specialised, innovative, high quality, well-resourced, and continually seek to improve models of good practice which are internationally recognised.

All teaching and learning which takes place reflects the philosophy of RLS to put the needs of its pupils first and to create and maintain a positive approach to their development. The school believes in the rights of its pupils to be treated as any other children with dignity and respect; and that the attitudes and behaviour of staff should reflect those associated with good parenting together with the objectivity of the caring professional.

The school also believes in a strong partnership with parents. No one knows a child better than the parents and guardians who have cared for that individual from birth. Staff in school and other professionals have specialist knowledge and expertise of a different kind; shared aims and practical cooperation draw on all these strengths.

The teaching approach is pupil centred and the school believes its principle focus should be on the special learning difficulties associated with autism. A high priority is placed also on PSHE to maximise opportunities for personal autonomy and enhance quality of life.

The school believes that structure and positive intervention with built in opportunities for change and risk taking, achieve the best results for our autistic pupils.

The school believes pupils learn best when teaching approaches allow for generalisation and concentrate on real-life situations rather than abstract concepts.

The school recognises that many of its pupils have very special difficulties but believes that compassion, tolerance and positive intervention effect change. The culture and ethos of the school is open and non-judgmental.

This teaching and learning policy sets out the specific aims for curriculum delivery at RLS.

## DEFINITIONS

Teaching is defined as the imparting of skill, knowledge and behaviours through the provision of appropriate experiences; encompassing the following skills:

- Show good command of curriculum content and specialist approaches to curriculum access;
- Plan effectively, with clear learning objectives and suitable teaching strategies;
- Interest, encourage and engage pupils;
- Challenge pupils;
- Create a stimulating environment for learning within the classroom;
- Use methods and resources that enable all pupils to learn effectively;
- Evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, considering any feedback given;
- Make sure everyone in their classroom uses time efficiently;
- Insist on pupils performing at the best standard of behaviour they can manage;
- Find ways of reinforcing and extending what pupils have learned, outside the classroom;
- Assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively;
- Use assessment to inform planning and target-setting to meet the needs of individual pupils and groups.

Learning is defined as the cognitive process of acquiring skills, knowledge and behaviours through relevant experiences. Pupils should:

- Acquire knowledge and skills through their work, increasing understanding or deepening/widening experience and extending their range of activity;
- Show engagement, application and concentration;
- Develop the skills and capacity to work as independently as possible and to work with and alongside other people;
- Show interest in how well they are doing and how they can improve, by responding to feedback from adults and, ultimately, by using insight to motivate themselves.

## ENTITLEMENTS

All pupils are entitled to high quality teaching and learning delivered by staff with expertise in delivering the curriculum and knowledge of autism-specific strategies.

A broad and balanced curriculum is offered and taught at the correct developmental stage of the learner. This incorporates a learning-to-learn curriculum and specific 'developmental learning outcomes'.

In almost every class, English and Maths lessons are taught as discrete lessons regularly throughout the week. However, in classes where pupils have Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) in addition to their autism, one or two lessons over the week may be substituted for more cross-curricular study or specific educational programmes to support the additional needs and functional development of these pupils.

In Post 16, Literacy and Numeracy skills are taught as discrete lessons and then practised and applied through practical work across the school and out in the community, throughout the rest of the week.

## IMPLEMENTATION of TEACHING

Our teaching methods are informed by the individual needs of each pupil within a class. Classroom management strategies need to take into consideration the varying levels of social and communicative impairments of our pupils. Within one class group there may be pupils who cannot tolerate peer contact and a major emphasis will be to encourage them towards being integrated into group situations for small periods of time.

There may be times when a pupil is unable to participate in their lessons due to factors which may cause destructive or noisy behaviour, incidents of aggressive behaviour or alternatively withdrawal and refusal to co-operate.

In addressing this, teaching strategies need to be well planned but flexible and need to include the individual in small group work. Staff need to respond sensitively and creatively within each lesson. A situation may change dramatically if a pupil is suddenly unable to cope within a particular environment. It may not always be possible to predict changes in mood as triggers for behaviour patterns can be internal as well as resulting from factors in a pupil's surroundings.

Staff consider a full range of teaching strategies and utilise those methods which are most productive in the light of the aims and ethos of the school. These will follow the principals of SPELL (NAS) and may include TEACCH, behaviour strategies (following the code of practice outlined by STUDIO 3) and therapeutic approaches such as Positive Behaviour Support (PBS).

In the light of the difficulties which our pupils encounter with abstract concepts, the generalisation of skills, perception and in the area of imagination, it is essential to prioritise teaching according to functional, contemporary and relevant criteria. All classroom planning considers the 'Dyad of Impairments' and the specific needs of the pupils to create individualised programmes.

The timetable for each class covers all subject areas and has an emphasis on developing communication, behaviour and independence (self-help and life skills) in both school and the local community. Our curriculum has been written for all key stages and year groups and these are differentiated in teachers' planning according to need. Pupils may also access additional programmes such as toileting, eating, managing anxiety, understanding their own autism and occupational therapy that are built into their individual timetables.

(See 'RLS Curriculum' for additional detail).

### IMPLEMENTATION of LEARNING

Prerequisites to learning are attention, co-operation, engagement and motivation, all of which are areas of considerable difficulties for our autistic pupils. The school has its own unique 'Learning to Learn Curriculum' that focuses on supporting pupils to acquire these skills.

Learning for a pupil with autism may be dependent upon many factors including a secure environment, interaction with particular staff, external changes, mood or degree of withdrawal from situations. A pupil's ability to learn can be strongly affected by factors beyond the control of the pupil, including but not exclusively, the environment, changes in usual transport, changes in routines or staffing, and changes in the weather.

Breaking through the fear, anxiety and confusion of daily life is dependent on the creation of a secure and trusting foundation and only then will a pupil be receptive to learning. Building positive relationships is one of the first and most crucial responsibilities of all adults who work with our pupils.

### AGE APPROPRIATE TEACHING

The teaching of all curriculum areas within RLS is carried out with the use of materials aimed at the appropriate stage of development of the pupils. Materials and resources used may be adapted or selected to reflect a multisensory or physical approach and to ensure access to the curriculum for all pupils. These resources, teaching approaches and materials will always take chronological age into account.

All pupils are entitled to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Our curriculum forms part of that entitlement and offers many opportunities within a supportive learning environment.

Materials may be selected from earlier or later year groups where this is appropriate to enable individual pupils to progress and demonstrate achievement. This is always presented in context and using resources suitable to the pupil's age.

Planning and delivering high quality teaching and learning for pupils with complex needs is a demanding task; staff are adept in the production of autism-specific, differentiated resources.

An important aspect of the organisation at Radlett Lodge School is the compatibility of individual pupils within class groups, especially when we consider the specific behavioural and high sensory needs of our pupils. For example, it would be inappropriate to group Pupil X with particular noise sensitivities to high-pitched vocalisations with Pupil Y who frequently communicates using such sounds. This is further compounded by the small number of pupils and class groups which limits alternative provisions. This issue presents challenges and usually results in pupils being taught with peers outside of their key-stage. This is typically referred to as a vertical education system. Regardless of the class group pupils are in, each pupil receives an individualised curriculum which seeks to address each pupil's main barriers to learning.

For a very small number of pupils, individualised sensory-specific curricula focusing on maximising inclusion and opportunities to tolerate being in proximity to others is prioritised over all other learning.

### PROGRESSION

While it is evident to staff that progression has occurred, quantifying and producing evidence to support this needs to be incorporated into the planning of lessons. Pupils may show evidence of learning on one occasion and subsequently not display such evidence in another situation.

Additionally, many of our pupils have difficulty generalising their learning from one situation to another, thus making it difficult to know with certainty that a skill has been learnt and understood.

The functional emphasis of our curriculum encourages pupils to use situational and contextual clues to support their learning. For these reasons it can be difficult to measure progression.

Many pupils may not produce tangible evidence of learning and hence it is through thorough teacher observation, recording and assessment that progress can be determined. (See also 'RLS Assessment, Recording and Reporting')

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Pupils with special educational needs are entitled to the best possible education and the same opportunities as their peers; education which is suited and adapted

where necessary to their particular needs. All pupils have the right to an inclusive education that offers excellence and choice.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Where deemed appropriate, risk assessments are carried out for specific activities or the use of specific equipment. This is in addition to pupil-specific risk assessments which help to maintain the health and safety of all members of the community at Radlett Lodge School.

Individual pupil risk assessments (RA's) are created, in conjunction with the class teacher, by our behaviour support team at RLS and are updated at least annually but more regularly if new behaviours are observed. Parents and Local authorities are aware and agree to all RA's.

The Radlett Lodge School Local Procedure for 'Teaching and Learning' should be read in conjunction with:

#### NAS POLICIES:

Education Visits Policy

Advocacy Policy

#### RADLETT LODGE SCHOOL LOCAL PROCEDURES:

Curriculum

Assessment, Recording and Reporting