Policy Document for Autism
Gosberton House Academy and Working Together Team Outreach March
2018

Unicef Children's Rights
Article 23: children who have any kind of disability should have special care
and support so they can lead full and independent lives.

Service Aim
The teaching philosophy of the Gosberton House Academy and WTT
embodies the rationale of the SPELL approach developed by The National
Autistic Society.
The framework addresses the desire of many young people with an autistic
spectrum to have continuity and order in their life; to be able to predict
events; to have access to an environment sufficiently modified to reduce
anxiety and at the same time to be stimulating and promote learning.

The approach has been developed to overcome or reduce the potentially
disabling effects of autism by providing a broad and balanced curriculum,
giving extra help in each of the areas of impairment.

SPELL

The SPELL framework recognises the individual and unique needs of each
young person and emphasises that all planning and intervention need to be
organised on this basis. Our philosophy is that of building on the existing
strengths of the individual and reducing the potential difficulties.

SPELL FRAMEWORK

Structure

The importance of structure has long been recognised. It makes the world a
more predictable, accessible and safer place. Structure can aid personal
autonomy and independence by reducing dependence on prompting from
others. The environment and processes are modified to ensure individuals
know what is going to happen and what is expected of them. This can also aid
the development of flexibility by reducing dependence on rigid routines.

Structure plays to the strengths of a sense of order and preference for visual organisation commonly associated with an autistic spectrum disorder.

Positive (approaches and expectations)

A programme of sensitive but persistent intervention in place to engage the individual child and develop his/her full potential. Having high but realistic expectations based on careful assessment which includes identification of the strengths and individual needs of the person, his/her level of functioning and an assessment of the support he/she will need. Aiming to support educational setting to seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.

Empathy

To see the world from the standpoint of the young person with an autistic spectrum is the key to the development of the art of working with young people with an autistic spectrum disorder. Starting from the position or perspective of the individual and gathering insights about how he/she sees and experiences the world, knowing what it is that motivates or interests him/her and also frightens, preoccupies or otherwise distresses him/her. Getting inside and respecting the experience underpins any successful approach, develops communication and reduces anxiety. In this, the quality of the relationship between the child, the child's family and staff is of vital importance.

Low arousal

Aiming for approaches and the environment to be calm and ordered in such a way as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration. There should be as few distractions as possible. As appropriate, particular attention is paid to potentially aversive or distracting stimuli, for example noise levels, colour schemes, odours, lighting and clutter. Low arousal should not be confused with 'no arousal'. It is desirable that individuals are exposed to a wide range of experiences.

Links

Strong links between the various components of the child/young person's life promotes and sustain essential consistency. Open links and communication

between people (e.g. parents, teachers and outside agencies) provides an holistic approach and reduce the possibility of unhelpful misunderstanding or confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.

All pupils at Gosberton House Academy have an Education, Health, Care Plan or statement of need. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition (ASC), the primary characteristics of which are : difficulties in non-verbal and verbal communication, difficulties in social understanding and social behaviour, and rigidity of thought. Pupils with ASC may also experience unusual sensitivity to sound, touch, movement and visual stimuli. Our aim is to ensure that all pupils are able to access an inclusive, broad, balanced and relevant curriculum

Article 29: education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents and their own and other cultures.

Rational

In order to meet the needs of all pupils we use an eclectic mix of established and researched approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. Our child centred approach, with emphasis on personalised learning, addresses the specific needs of each individual child.

One size does not fit all! "Personalised learning is all about shaping teaching around the different ways children learn" (DfES 2005). For example, although visual strategies are considered the learning style of choice for pupils with ASC this is not always the case. Staff seek to identify pupils' preferred mode of learning as well as ways to ensure meaningful engagement in tasks. A 'learning by doing' approach is encouraged.

Many pupils are easily distracted by what they hear, see, feel or smell. We need to recognise that pupils display varying degrees of tolerance of visual and auditory stimuli and adapt these according to the individual pupils. We provide calm classroom environments, which also have additional 'chill out' areas where pupils may take themselves when their levels of anxiety become raised Pupils may need a work area or work station which faces away from many visual or auditory distractions (individualised learning) for **some** activities.

We therefore adjust our approach when sensory stimuli are obstacles to learning and gradually work on desensitising the children and teaching them the necessary skills to overcome them. We aim to reduce these barriers to learning and work towards the children spending increasing amounts of time in a more inclusive learning environment.

Curriculum

The school and WTT are committed to accessing the National Curriculum for all pupils, particularly in terms of breadth and richness. The school and WTT do, however, recognise that pupils on the autistic spectrum have additional difficulties which necessitate the adaption of the courses of study prescribed in the National Curriculum. This may mean a greater emphasis on certain areas of need for these children e.g. communication, social development

Therefore, pupils access a full differentiated curriculum delivered in a way that recognises primary, core needs. Underpinning all teaching and learning is an emphasis on the development of independence, social interaction, social understanding and social communication. Lessons are planned to facilitate development in these areas but specific teaching, for example in social skills, life skills and sensory desensitization are also included. We provide many 'real life' opportunities, for example, educational visits are used to help reduce rigidity and develop appropriate social skills.

We develop skills through our creative thematic curriculum, which follows a different theme each half term. The curriculum is learner led and delivered through a very sensory, hands on approach. Within our fully inclusive approach pupils are encouraged to be involved in a range of exciting experiences to support the topics. These include whole school experiences e.g. theatre groups, live music, re-enactments.

Article 31: every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Approaches and Interventions

At Gosberton House Academy and WTT we use a child-centred approach which addresses the specific needs of the individual child. Different children may need a different 'mix' of the best known approaches to meet

their needs. R Jordan (2001): 'in terms of an ethical approach to a child, an eclectic mix may offer the best opportunity'.

We have a range of compensatory strategies which take account of the pupils difficulties and seek to minimise them, enabling the pupil to feel calmers and thus more able to learn.

Our eclectic approach includes:

1. The development of Language and communication
2. A range of Therapy interventions
3. TEACCH
4. Behavioural Approaches
5. Social Scripts and Stories
6. Physical activity
7. Sensory approach

1.The development of language and communication

The development of interactive communication skills [verbal, gesture,body language, facial expression, picture exchange; pointing; eye gaze etc.]is a priority at Gosberton House Academy . The school ethos is one of creating a communication enriched environment . We are supported by Speech and Language Services. Individual programmes are delivered by staff as an integral part of daily school life.

We use a range of communication systems with the children. This includes:
PECS (Picture exchange system)
Communicate in Print and intensive interaction [see Communications Policy].
The development of functional and meaningful communication is our long-term aim for all pupils. All pupils are assessed on an individual basis to ascertain the best method or methods to facilitate communication.

Intensive interaction

Intensive interaction is used with pupils who have a limited repertoire of positive communicative behaviours. Here, the aims are to develop skills of early social behaviour e.g. turn-taking, contingent action and eventually to the initiation and leading of interactive 'games'.

Parent support

We offer workshops and 'drop in' consultations with a range of staff and visiting professionals. We are also able to offer programmes such as Healthy Minds, EarlyBirds and Family Seminars.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children)

The key principles of TEACCH e.g structure and visual information, are practised throughout the school to enable pupils to know what they are doing next, when it will be finished and what will happen when it is finished. Individual and class timetables are used to support pupils. Aspects of this approach involve the use of minimum distraction work areas which have minimal visual or auditory distractions, where pupils can systematically work on skills.

Implementation of TEACCH varies across the school according to the needs of classes or individuals. Some classrooms are clearly organised along TEACCH principles with individual timetables, workstations. In other classes individuals may use timetables for some elements of their learning e.g. making choices during unstructured times, specific transitions

Behavioural Approaches

The school and WTT operate within a Rights Respecting, Emotional Literate approach. Behaviour is a means of communication and we endeavour to understand what the child is aiming 'to say' through their behaviour. Specific strategies are used to reduce anxiety and promote feelings of well being. An applied behaviour analysis approach helps to modify unwanted behaviours and promote more appropriate ones. This stimulus – response – reward programme, which involves the use of strong motivators ensure the child learns basic work behaviour e.g. sitting on a chair. The same principles are used when dealing with behavioural issues. We consistently aim to reinforce positive behaviour and to reinforce positive responses.

Some pupils have individual behavioural plans that are regularly reviewed and updated. All teachers and teaching assistants are trained in positive handling (Team Teach)

Physical Activity

Physical activity is encouraged within structured PE lessons as well as Sensory Circuits, Activate, Resistance exercise sessions and movement

breaks. The school has extensive outdoor play areas including a Bike Track, Sensory garden, trim Trail, Climbing Frame, Basket ball and trampoline. The school operates within Forest School principles and is working towards the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Mark.These physical activities reflect elements of Higashi Daily Life Therapy.

Social Scripts and Stories

These aim to prepare pupils and therefore reduce anxiety in unfamiliar situations or when preparing for a certain event. They also inform the child about social expectations and the benefits of conforming to these.

Sensory Approach

A sensory approach is used to engage pupils in their learning, through adapting the environment, seating, as well as the activities to support individual learner needs.

Assessment

All pupils are comprehensively assessed using CARS, Sensory Profiles, B squared on entry to school [Beery; Diagnostic curriculum assessments; Kays;]Challenging, but realistic, targets are set with pupils' learning styles and pace of learning in mind. Pupil progress is tracked and recorded each term and Assessment outcomes are reported at Annual Review. The school uses CASPA to track individual and group progress and to compare progress against national norms. IEP targets are set each term and may be AS specific. These aim to reduce barriers to learning. The school operates within a Metacognitive philosophy.

Continuity of Approach

We recognise the importance of generalising the skills that pupils learn both across school and within a range of settings. Multi-disciplinary teams liaison with parents and carers is carefully supported to ensure continuity of approaches in and out of school.
The school operates within a highly successful Family Learning ethos.

Training

Staff in autism specific classes are trained in autism specific practices and interventions such as; PECS, TEACCH, Social Stories, Team Teach. All staff have

attended internal training on autism-awareness and good practice and many have externally accredited additional qualifications. School staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well being of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition through regular updates, training opportunities and access to elearning. The school has been awarded the Continuous professional Development Accreditation mark for the high level of CPD accessed by staff and is an Investors in People Gold Award winner.

We have high but realistic expectations for all our pupils. We endeavour to provide the very best learning experiences through a personalised approach. To achieve this our provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum is continuously monitored, evaluated and adapted as part of the self-evaluation process.

June 2017

What does this look like a GHA? – an autism friendly environment

Areas of potential Difficulty	Impact	Strategies
• Communication and language skills.	• Difficulty in understanding, processing and following verbal information. • Difficulty in 'reading' and interpreting facial expressions, gesture, body language • Difficulty understanding non-literal language.	• Get the attention of the child before giving instructions. • Use simple language with visual prompts. • Provide time to process the information. • Use of colourful semantics • Use activities, demonstrations, modelling, role play, rehearsing, over-learning and pictures. • Technology support

		• Avoid or plan and explain the use of idioms and metaphorical language. • Practice of telling and listening to jokes. • Saying of the week to build up a library of expressions
• Communication and language skills.	• Difficulty in expressing needs or answering a question. • Difficulty in retelling / recalling /retrieving information. • Inference	• Using the child's name [pause] to gain his/her attention. • Some pupils are prompted through gentle touch to gain attention. • Providing visual supports to help in communication and recollection of personal experiences. • Use closed questions rather than open ended questions. • Scaffolding request • Options to write/draw 'problems' • Use of 3D mind-maps; objects of reference; mind mapping
• Social skills.	• Difficulties with the concept of personal belongings/ personal space	• Spend time in developing understanding of the concepts of private and public –social

		stories; SULP characters. • Use of visual boundaries • Use visual prompts to support this. • Labelled pencil cases etc • Consistent seating
• Social skills and flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in following social 'rules', and socially appropriate behaviour. • Difficulty understanding and recognising emotions in themselves and others. • Difficulty in maintaining friendships.	• Have consistent, explicit routines for individuals. • Use Social Stories™ to explain the social rules and expected behaviour. • Specific social communication teaching, supported by resources such as Social Use of Language Programme, Talkabout and Blob tree and cards. • Self-esteem charts • Role play of situations –explore opportunities to possible solutions • Use of favourite characters from TV, books, films to explore feelings

Areas of Potential	Impact	Strategies

Difficulty		
• Social skills and flexible thinking.	• Can find it difficult to deal with sudden changes, leading to anxiety.	• Give advance notice of any changes. • Regularly using 'surprise' cards on timetable • Using visual timetables. • Give clear guidance, self-management strategies [access to calmers; distractors; self-regulation strategies etc.] and consequences . • Access to quiet rooms/areas. • Individually clear and relevant consequences to non-compliance • First/then boards • Use of planned 'surprises • Use of red/green anger, actions, words
• Flexible thinking.	• Difficulty in understanding the feelings of other people and the effect of their own behaviours on other people.	• Work on understanding emotions. • Role play • Emotional literacy work-individual and group • Use of song [supported visually/ 3D] • Use strategies such

		- as comic strip conversations, and mind reading etc. - Rights Respecting School - Identification and support to use strategies for 'next time' - Use of high quality relevant , meaningful resources - Learn in real-life situs - Whole child approach- learning for life and lifelong learning ethos - Role play - Use of film/visual prompts to cue and reinforce learning
Flexible thinking.	Difficulty in relating to a story or topic that requires imagination.	- Teach a new concept from concrete to abstract. - Use 3D concept maps - Use 'What I want to Know' boards - Relate to the child's experiences / interests.
Flexible thinking.	Difficulty in using a learnt skill out of the learnt situation.	- Teach each skill in all the possible contexts and in different ways. - Include generalisation as part of teaching every

		topic/concept. • Learn in a wide variety of environments • Visitors in classroom/ in school e.g. theatre groups; musicians; re-enactors
• Sensory perception and flexible thinking.	• Resistance to certain activities or situations.	• Preparation-movement breaks; activate, sensory circuits; wide variety of outdoor activities e.g. trampoline; trim trail, bikes, climbing frame • Introduce to sensation gradually. • Provision of alternative options • Access to quiet outdoor areas. • Proximity working • Access to e.g. ear defenders, weighted animals, lap mats, hokki stools, quiet dividers, writing slopes etc. • Access to specialist assessment e.g. Kays • Weekly cookery-planting, growing, harvesting • Sensory enriched environment-kinaesthetic learning • Individual sensory

| | | programmes
• Lycra resistance activities
• Learning/ skills practice in 'real life' environments |
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Areas of Potential Difficulty	Impact	Strategies
• Sensory perception and social skills.	• Finds it difficult to concentrate/focus on task.	• Give a distraction free learning environment. • Realistic pictures, avoid complicated or very visually busy pictures. • Reduce the social demands while learning. • Permit time out if child is becoming over-stimulated.
• Sensory perception -Visual	• Flickering lights- distraction, discomfort	• Classroom illumination is suitable for pupils with autism. • Fluorescent lights are regularly checked and changed. The effects of light coming into the room through blinds and creating distracting patterns are

		minimised •
		• Light reflecting on objects such as metal or shiny surfaces in the classroom is minimised.
	• Ability to self-organise / self-structure	• The classroom is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment.
		• The impact of wall displays is considered.
		• Designated areas for specific activities to give clarity to the classroom organisation.
		• Pupils have the opportunity to work at a workstation to focus their attention, if necessary
• Sensory – noise/sound	• Distraction; discomfort; inability to focus on designated activity	• Sounds from classroom equipment are kept to a minimum.
		• Screens, audio systems, lights and computers are switched off when not in use [to avoid a mains hum.]

		- There are strategies in place to reduce noise when rooms are in use - Classrooms are carpeted to lessen noise created by the movement of people, chairs and desks; use of noise softening dividers - The acoustics of the gym, dining hall and hall are checked and modified to lessen echo - Hallways are carpeted to lessen the noise created by movement through the corridors. - Awareness of need to reduce sounds from outside the classroom - Windows are suitably soundproofed / film applied to reduce glare - There are agreed strategies in place when noise becomes too

		much for individual pupils e.g. use ear defenders.; movement away from the noise source • There are quiet rooms available which provides a calm place for pupils to relax. • Pupils are warned if a loud noise or bell is going to sound. • Strategies are put in place to support pupils who find loud noises or fire bells very difficult to tolerate.
• Sensory -smell	• Difficulty tolerating aromas; distraction /hyper sensitivity	• Smells within the classroom are kept to a minimum. • The smell of paints, glue, clay and cleaning fluids is minimal. • Staff are aware that the smell of perfumes and deodorants may be distressing. • Staff are aware that pupils may react to the smell of others. Smells from outside the

		classroom are monitored and reduced, where possible • The smell of cooking is reduced. [de-sensitisation programme in operation for individuals]
• Sensory –touch and feel	• Distraction/discomfort	• Uncomfortable clothing (seams, inflexible or itchy fabrics) is avoided, where possible, unless there are safety issues • Variations of the school uniform offer enough flexibility to enable pupils to be able to wear clothing they find comfortable. • Alternative arrangements are made for pupils who find writing to be physically painful or difficult – word processing; voice recording; writing wedges;OT exercises. • Seating is comfortable – hokki stools, captains chairs;

		wedges
• Social skills, flexible thinking and communication.	• Difficulty in developing play skills, and following game rules.	• Identify and focus on teaching necessary play skills such as turn-taking, negotiating etc. • Simplify the game rules. • Introduce a circle of friends or buddy system to help the child in building relationships. • Collaboration with local schools e.g. sporting activities • Scouting Schools for all pupils • Forest School • Lunch Clubs
• General	• Heightened anxiety; challenging behaviours; non-engagement	We believe that every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development. Ready to learn approaches are used- including e.g. finger exercises before fine motor activities; squashing; access to ergonomic and weighted equipment • Pupils are supported to let staff know if they are finding an

		aspect of the environment distressing.
		• Pupils are relaxed when moving through corridors – movement is controlled, ordered, corridors are light, de-cluttered
		• Pupils are allowed to leave the classroom slightly earlier or later than peers to avoid noisy corridors/ crowds.
		• Classroom organisation takes into account the individual needs of pupils.
		• Classroom organisation and individual seating plan takes into consideration individual concerns
		• Pupils who become anxious by the close proximity of others are allowed ample space around

		their seat
		• Dinner halls system is carefully regulate to reduce stress – some pupils eat in different rooms] [some pupils sit on the periphery of a group or on their own table]
		• Pupils are allowed to enter the dinner hall before or after peers to avoid crowds.
		• A system of support is available for pupils experiencing sensory overload.
		• Learning and movement breaks are planned
		• There is a designated place and a clear system/routine for pupils to follow if they feel they need to withdraw [use of Quiet/Relax rms]