Autism Spectrum Condition Policy 2020

Responsibility: ASC Team   Date: February 2020

Signed & Adopted by the Governing Body:

Chair of Governors

Date: 02.03.2020

Date to be reviewed: February 2022

INTRODUCTION

Villa real School holds Autism Accreditation and is committed to providing the best of care for all with ASC.

DEFINITION

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) is a lifelong complex development disorder that affects the way a person communicates and interacts with people around them. ASC is a spectrum condition, meaning that there is a wide range of disability and areas of need. No two individuals are affected in the exact same way but all individuals will share common characteristics. These are difficulties with social communication and restricted and repetitive behaviours including sensory differences. All children with an ASC will be recognised as having a communication difficulty.

Children with an ASC often have additional needs such as ADHD, language impairments and mental health difficulties such as anxiety. There is also an increasing body of evidence that individuals with an ASC have particular difficulties with functional skills such as activities of daily living.

There have been recent changes to the diagnostic criteria for ASC and as such ASC is now often diagnosed based on impairments in two key areas. These are
1. Social communication
2. Restricted and repetitive behaviours, including sensory difficulties

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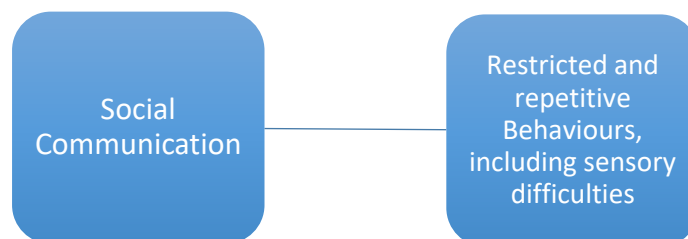
These two areas of impairment are described below:

1) Social Communication

An impairment in communication which affects their ability to understand and use verbal and non- verbal communication.
This can include facial expression, gesture, body language and social timing in addition to speech and signing or symbol communication. Facial

expressions, other body language, verbal intonation and responses reflecting emotion are all often misunderstood or not understood at all.

Difficulties developing and maintaining joint attention skills i.e. the capacity of the child to attend to and respond to the social communication of others, hinder the development of communication skills. Pupils and students rely on watching adults to model words and actions to provide a reference in order to develop their understanding of the world around them.

A young pupil with ASC and difficulties with joint attention leads to issues such as missed cues within communication, difficulties with learning vocabulary and a reduced ability to share meaning effectively with those around them.

The difficulties described above mean pupils and students with ASC have to work harder to understand how to interact with others. The difficulties and abilities are unique to each individual, but in addition to the issues discussed above common concerns can include:

- A delay or absence in acquiring and using functional language
- Difficulty in understanding speech
- Having unusual speech patterns e.g. Echolia- the automatic repetition of sounds and words made by another person.
- Having the ability to use speech, for instance they may be able to repeat whole chunks of a favourite song or video, but may lack the ability to communicate effectively with others or to tell others how they are feeling.

Speech is only one method of communication; it may be necessary to find other ways of helping a person to communicate their needs, wants and feelings appropriately.

An impairment of social relationships and effectively lacking the inherent ability to develop social ability and understanding. Impairment causes problems with developing and maintaining relationships. Inappropriate responses to situations may occur, for example, laughing or giggling when someone is hurt or upset. These traits affect social relationships and may cause anxiety and behavioural issues. It can also cause a lack an understanding of human behaviour and therefore an inability to anticipate others actions. The inability to recognise (in both themselves and others) and control emotions presents a great challenge to a person with an ASC.

Impairment also causes a lack of understanding of the rules of social etiquette and social priorities. It can decrease the ability and independence of an individual to function within a community.

2) Restricted and repetitive behaviours (RRBs)
Individuals with ASC show a variety of behaviours that can be catagorised as restricted or repetitive. These will vary in nature and intensity for each individual. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders (DSM 5) states that individuals with ASC will have at least 2 of the following RRBs

• Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects; (such as simple motor stereotypes, echolalia, repetitive use of objects, or idiosyncratic phrases).

• Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behaviour, or excessive resistance to change; (such as motoric rituals, insistence on same route or food, repetitive questioning or extreme distress at small changes).

• Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus; (such as strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests).

• Hyper-or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment; (such as apparent indifference to pain/heat/cold, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, fascination with lights or spinning objects.

RRBs have been shown to cause significant challenges for both the individual with ASC and his or her family. Likewise, they can impede learning and socialization by decreasing the likelihood of positive interactions with peers and adults. Parents of individuals with ASC also report that RRBs are one of the most challenging features of ASC due to their significant interference with daily life.

In addition to the above areas of difficulty individuals with ASC often have difficulties in the following areas;

• **Executive function**: the ability to plan tasks; motor planning; problem solving; responding to a request on demand and on time. Causing difficulty in prioritising and planning and organising of information and activities.

• **Central coherence:** the ability to see all the details as one big picture rather than focussing on each separate detail.

• **Theory of mind:** the ability to understand that another person has a view, thought or belief of their own which is different to our own; understanding other people's emotions; understanding that their actions will affect others; imagination – difficulty in understanding fiction/ characters / dreaming; inability to understand deceiving / deception

• **Functional skills deficit:** There is an increasing body of evidence that suggests that for many individuals with ASC their functional skills (their ability to perform activities of daily living, such as washing, dressing, shopping) are significantly below their cognitive abilities and chronological age.

As with all children and young people it is important to consider each individuals strengths and needs and the impact that their ASC has on them individually.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Management Team

- To ensure staff adhere to the ASC policy
- To ensure that all staff have basic ASC training that includes a range of ASC strategies as part of their induction
- To support staff to develop their knowledge and skills of ASC strategies
- To ensure that all staff working within the ASC provision will have specialist training in ASC strategies such as sensory integration, PECS and TEACCH
- To have an oversight and understanding of the range of ASC strategies used in school
- To identify funds for purchasing resources, equipment and for accessing relevant training

Class Teacher

- To adhere to the School ASC policy
- To create an ASC friendly classroom environment which is low distraction with differentiated areas
- To integrate ASC strategies throughout the School day
- To work collaboratively with the School ASC team, occupational therapy and other professionals to devise and monitor individual programmes of support
- To attend relevant training
- To ensure necessary resources are available throughout the School day
- To ensure that all relevant information and resources are passed over at transition
- To inform all relevant parties e.g. the School Communication Team of what professionals are currently working with that pupil/student

School ASC Team

- To provide regular in house ASC training
- To work collaboratively with the class team to devise and monitor individual programmes of support
- To monitor the use of ASC strategies such as TEACCH timetables, systems and PECS
- To support the class team to implement structures and routines that support learners with an ASC
- To work collaboratively with parents and carers to support the pupil/student's development across the School settings

Support Staff

- To adhere to the School ASC policy
- To attend relevant training
- To maintain an ASC friendly classroom environment which is low distraction with differentiated areas

- To work collaboratively with the School ASC team, Occupational Therapy and other professionals to devise and monitor individual programmes of support
- To ensure necessary resources are available throughout the School day
- To support the class teacher

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Villa Real recognises and promotes the importance that all partners in the pupils' and students' learning are involved in the development and evaluation of the Curriculum, to make sure it meets the needs of the pupils and students in a holistic and challenging way. This is especially important for parents/carers, members of the multi disciplinary team and the pupils and students themselves. Parents/carers have a crucial role to play in the development of their child's skills and well being. They are in the ideal position to support their child in the acquisition and refinement of independence and social skills. A close working relationship between staff and parents/carers will optimise each pupil or student's potential for learning. Staff work closely with the multi disciplinary team, working together to set targets and implement strategies/programmes to ensure pupils and students are challenged and supported in their learning. Staff will seek additional advice and support when needed. Pupils and students are kept involved and informed as much as possible in their learning and assessment. We will initiate contact, provide information and support about appropriate strategies to be used in all contexts e.g. school, home, respite and out in the community. School plays its part in communication with other agencies in relation to transition, child protection and information sharing.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Villa Real strives to develop close working relationships between staff and parents/carers in order to optimise each pupil and student's potential for learning. As a school we support parents/carers and respite services to help provide the pupils and students with the chance to have a range of varied experiences and opportunities at home and out in the community. We will initiate contact, provide information and support about appropriate strategies to be used in the home providing consistency and always welcome parents/carers into their child's class. Staff communicate with parents/carers through home school diaries on a daily basis.

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ASC

The approaches used to support pupils and students with ASC are individualised to each pupil/student's strengths and needs. Below are some of the strategies that are used within school. Training and support on using these strategies will be offered to staff on a needs led basis.

TEACCH: TEACCH aims to increase independence in pupils and students with ASC through the use of visual cues. This includes having a structured visual environment with clear areas for different tasks, predictable events, through the use of visual timetables and clear expectations through the use of TEACCH boxes.

PECS: The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with ASC and related developmental disabilities. It focusses on developing spontaneous, functional communication. It is a structured 6 phase approach to developing expressive language and communication. In order to become effective PECS users, it is essential that learners are given the opportunities to use PECS through their day across a variety of settings. PECS is an individual voice and should be available to them at **all** times.

Intensive Interaction: Intensive interaction is a way of interacting with pupils and students based on early parent-child interaction. It aims to develop the fundamentals of communication which includes joint attention, turn taking and eye contact. It is about interacting with a student whatever way is most meaningful to them.

Sensory Integration: Some of these approaches such as TEACCH and SCERTS are used with all students with an ASC. Sensory integration may be used with specific students following assessment by members of the multi-disciplinary team such as the OT. This list is not exhaustive and all strategies and approaches need to be individualised.

<u>SENSORY ISSUES</u>
The central nervous system (brain) processes all the sensory information sent from various sensory systems in the body and helps to organize, prioritize and understand the information. Using this information the body responds appropriately throughout our bodies we have various sensory receptors, which pick up on sensory stimuli. Our hands and feet contain the most receptors. Mostly the processing of sensory information is automatic.
Pupils and students with ASC often have trouble in the organisation and processing of this sensory information. This can lead to confusion, stress and presentation of challenging behaviours-behaviours that challenge themselves and/or others.
Martin (1991) states "Sensory systems are not only our only means for perceiving the external world, but are also essential to maintaining arousal, forming our body image and regulating movement."

This confusion can occur in one or more of the five senses - sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Listed below are the 8 different systems linked to the five senses;
1) Vestibular (balance) system

2) Proprioception (body awareness) system
3) Olfactory (smell) system
4) Visual (sight) system
5) Auditory (hearing) system
6) Tactile (touch) system
7) Gustatory (taste) system
8) Introceptive (awareness of internal processes) system.

Sensory difficulties can be divided into three main areas: Hyper sensitivity, Hypo sensitivity or Sensory seeking.
I) Hyper sensitivity – where an individual's response to stimuli is high or over responsive.
II) Hypo sensitivity- where an individual's response to stimuli is too low/ under responsive.
III) Sensory seeking- where an individual's response to sensory stimuli starts out as too low, the individual then does something to increase their sensory input – but doesn't always know when to stop and the response can then become too high.

Individuals may fluctuate from over responsive to under responsive to sensory seeking behaviours depending on the circumstances in each moment/ day/context. An individual's sensory difficulties may occur continuously and sometimes only occasionally.
There is an additional sensory condition called Synaesthesia separate from ASC, which some individuals on the spectrum say they experience. Current research suggests that a high percentage of people diagnosed with Synaesthesia have a diagnosis of ASC. This is a rare condition and occurs when confusion in the sensory channels occurs. A sensory experience goes in through one system and out through a different system. For example an individual hears a sound (auditory system) but sees colours (visual system).
At Villa Real all pupils/students have access to a sensory diet and support from Future Steps.

DIET
Some individuals with ASC can have problems relating to eating and difficulties surrounding their diet. These dietary problems can relate to both over- and under-eating. These issues are often due to sensory sensitivities or rigidity of thought.

PUPILS WHO LACK SELF CONTROL
Some but not all pupils and students with ASC can present challenging behaviour. This behaviour may be challenging to the pupil/student themselves or others. As previously stated each individual is affected by their ASC in a different way and their needs and behaviours need to be addressed in an individual way, as with all pupils and students at Villa Real school.

Every behaviour has a function. We as professionals/ parents/ carers need to interpret what each behaviour is saying. Staff will work in conjunction with information from parents and other professionals to interpret individual behaviours. The individual then needs to be taught a different / more appropriate way of expressing / communicating their feelings/ needs. Sometimes, a person with an ASC may behave in a way that you wouldn't immediately link to sensory sensitivities - but these sensitivities may be the underlying cause.

Each pupil/ student who has exhibited severely challenging behaviour will be offered a PHP (see Behaviour Policy).

Areas of strengths
After the discussion of the dyad of impairment it should be recognised that some pupils may have some of the following attributes:
1) Good visual skills
2) Good visual memory
3) Good focus in repetition
4) Accuracy and consistent accuracy
5) May be knowledgeable in areas of particular interest.
The Dyad of impairment can also be viewed as a" Dyad of Strengths"
"Individuals diagnosed on the autistic spectrum often exhibit a dyad of strengths, good attention to detail, deep narrow interest, and islets of ability"(Kaliouby et al 2006 P228).

The Dyad of Impairment is used as a basis for the strategies used within ASC specific services such as our ASC specific provision in school. However our experience in working with people with ASC has shown us that people with ASC have many strengths and our focus must be on the person, focusing upon what they can do and want to achieve rather than focusing just on their difficulties / weaknesses.
It should also be noted that some pupils might be attending the school as a result of their severe ASC rather than a severe cognitive disability.
In such cases appropriate teaching strategies will be employed to meet their educational needs. Likewise the presentation of other pupils may emphasise their cognitive disability and in such cases a curriculum delivery relevant to PMLD pupils and students would be employed, incorporating
elements of ASC specific strategies.

MORE ABLE
Pupils who have been identified as More Able will have specific strategies and interventions appropriately planned by the class manager and overseen by Senior Management to ensure that their specific needs are met.

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

These practices will be presented as applicable to the dyad of impairment and others areas of difficulties and discussed above. There will inevitably be overlap of strategies.

The Development of Social Relationships and Social Ability/Understanding

It is our aim to enable access to an inclusive setting for all pupils within the School. It is primarily the environment presented to pupils with ASC that initiates difficulties. In order to enable social inclusion we aim to provide ASC specific environments and a wider ASC friendly environment, throughout the school. We make regular use of the local community and initiate and support links to the home in order to develop further social competence. Specifically we will:

- Develop communication from the early stages of interaction, such as joint attention, through to social discourse between child and adult and student and peer
- Emphasise the development of shared and group activity
- Use sensory diet programmes for pupils and students to help them cope with the social implications of social interaction
- Provide integration with peer groups both within school and within main-stream schools when appropriate for individuals.
- Promote social interaction and understanding when ever possible both through planned and spontaneous activities
- Teach appropriate ways of social interaction within a verity of contexts. e.g. how to greet others appropriately
- Use visual structure, symbol/word timetables, PECS, communications devices- where appropriate, reward systems and child centred planning
- Use social stories, which may be supported by photographs, pictures and symbols
- Use Team Teach behaviour management strategies to develop pupils and students' knowledge of emotions both in themselves and in others
- Focus/emphasise the recognition, control and expression of emotions. As well as work upon empathy
- Use functional behavioural analysis procedures to address inappropriate behaviours, giving due consideration to environmental and bio-behavioural factors
- Pupils and students with ASC tend to have one style of learning and often show mono- tropism i.e. they can not cope with more than one form of information at one time and will focus on one form, blocking off other sources. This must be taken into consideration when working with individuals with ASC
- Bereavement – Young people with ASC find social interaction difficult and often have difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships. However this does not insulate them from the process of bereavement in response to the death of a familiar person. In fact pupils and students with ASC may also feel bereavement in response to a loss of an object/

activity, as well as in response to change e.g. staff changes in school/ divorce/ changes in school/classes peer group etc.

- Therefore to prepare a pupil or student for a bereavement, preparation planning and the pupil or student's involved is the key. School works closely with parents/carers to help the pupil or student prepare/ cope with bereavement as well as include the family's beliefs/ religion whether the bereavement is death/ divorces change etc. As pupils and students with ASC have difficulty with communication and therefore their expression of emotions, their response to grief can be very different and could even be delayed or inappropriate. Due to their flexibility of thought pupils and students with ASC need help to recognise emotions both within themselves and in others. Pupils and Students will also need to be taught a meaningful and appropriate way of expressing these emotions
- Sex education is taught throughout the school differentiated to the individual according to age, ability and need
- Sex Education is taught in four ways-
    1) Learning what to do where, when and how
    2) Personal hygiene
    3) Body parts and functions
    4) Sex education- friendships to sexual relationships
- The social implications of transition both to and within school e.g. form classroom to classroom are carefully considered and planned for. Pupils and students are prepared and supported according to their individual needs e.g. staffing, social stories etc.
- Use Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP) as appropriate

Development of Flexibility of Thought
It is our aim to encourage pupils and students to be independent learners and to be able to monitor and control their own learning and behaviour in a positive way. In order to do this we will use the following strategies;

- The use of a structured environment and routine within a setting to provide stability and reassurance
- The development of play/ drama skills (differentiated play responses, functional, symbolic and social play)
- The use of desensitisation techniques for perceptual/sensory integration problems – use of sensory diets throughout daily routines
- The development of the attention process (awareness of attention difficulties, switching attention, joint attention, joint closure, structuring of tasks and management of the environment as necessary to pupils'/students' needs)
- The development of memory through the use of visual cues during experience and recall, symbols and photographs
- The development of choice making skills through a variety of means e.g. speech, PECS, gesture etc.
- The development of problem solving techniques (initial presentation of tasks where problem solving element is at a minimum, development of

making choices with PECS, transference of skills, using computers, encouraging prediction, use of emotional marking within a task, i.e. stating if child finds it easy or difficult, makes them happy or sad.)

- The development of social cognition (stress relief, child centred environment, visual structure, 1:1 teaching, group work and turn taking, specific teaching of emotional states)
- The development of thinking skills (understanding finished, learning they are capable of doing something, visual structure in relation to physical presentation of a subject i.e. arrangement of furniture, space within a room)
- The development of the concept of time- in regards to Daily timetables, weekly timetables, life cycles etc
- In many instances a low arousal environment may be required. This will be gauged and monitored by staff with the aim of increasing stimulation as and when possible
- The development of routines to teach new skills, (including transition), and develop independence / as well as cope with change/ new routines
- The development of Individual Behaviour Management Plans which aim to understand what function the behaviour serves and to facilitate the pupils and students learn more socially acceptable means of expressing their need for support. The plans also aim to help the pupils and students to recognise and identify their own emotions and therefore to develop self-control

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed yearly by the ASC team and Senior Management Team to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the School. This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the:

- Communication Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy