



WELCOME

Step by Step School for Autistic Children has been established to provide an effective and appropriate education for children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. It is founded on the principles of ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis), a method with a proven track record and considerable evidence of success over a substantial period of time. ABA has been applied to the whole curriculum in several schools in the United Kingdom and it has demonstrated that this approach is a highly effective way of enabling autistic children to reach their potential.

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT & AIMS

Step by Step school exists to offer exceptional provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, through the delivery of individually tailored teaching programs. We strive to assist all of our pupils to achieve their full potentials and live happy lives.

We aim:

To develop in each pupil the skills they need to achieve as high a standard of independence as possible.

To enable the pupils to be able to express choice, exercise control over themselves and their environment and achieve their full potential.

To provide a highly modified curriculum; differentiated to meet the individual needs of each pupil through an appropriate broad and balanced programme of education.

To ensure the acquisition of appropriate communication skills, to allow pupils the fullest possible active participation in their day-to-day experiences, and to enhance their social and emotional growth.

To monitor and record progress regularly and consistently ensuring that pupils are appropriately challenged in order to maximise personal development, enhance quality of life and allow their individuality to develop.

To nurture and encourage the development of positive, caring relationships between pupils, their peers and the staff.

To create a secure environment within which the pupils will develop a sense of confidence and self esteem and enhance their learning.

To build working partnerships with parents/carers, in order to promote confidence and develop mutual support and consistency between home and school.

To co-operate positively with other professionals and specialist services in order for all of the children's needs to be addressed.

To encourage two way interaction between school and the local community, to promote inclusive opportunities.

To provide training and support to our staff, to ensure that they are competent and confident in their roles, and to promote their professional development.

To maintain our position at the forefront of knowledge in the education of children with Autism.

SCHOOL ETHOS

Step by Step believes that:

Children with autism can learn a great deal if they are given appropriate, structured programmes which focus on their deficits and build on their strengths.

That they have the right to aspire to the highest standards attainable and that their achievements should be recognised and praised.

That parents have the greatest knowledge of their children and can make a major contribution to the success of their school experience.

That children with autism should be helped to take responsibility for their own lives and enabled to live as independently as possible. That they should be encouraged to make decisions and speak for themselves through all means of communication.

That all pupils, irrespective of their disabilities, have the right to participate in the community in which they live. That opportunities to integrate in mainstream schools, clubs, societies and activities are of paramount importance.

That school is a place of fun and learning where building good relationships and getting on with people is fostered and rewarding. That it is a place where everyone is valued and of equal worth and where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

To be eligible for admission to STEP by STEP pupils must have

A primary diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder
A Statement of Special Educational Needs
An agreement from their LEA or another source to fund the placement
Be of the appropriate age with the appropriate skills and behaviour profile to fill the available place

Prospective parents will be given a child application and information sheet to complete. Pupils will receive a comprehensive assessment from the Teacher in Charge who will refer to the consultant if necessary. If children meet all the criteria and a place is available they can be admitted at any point during the academic year. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be drawn up during the first six weeks of attendance.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Step by Step does not have any religious affiliations and welcomes children of all denominations and those with none. We welcome pupils from all ethnic groups. Our entry criteria refer only to a prospective pupil's special education needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Disorder, as that is the focus of our expertise. We will endeavour to lead pupils to an understanding of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. We do this using the strategies and techniques of ABA to ensure that

children develop understanding of their responsibilities to others and to society. This requires careful preparation and constant reinforcement to convey concepts, which can be difficult for some children with autism to comprehend. We make use of a variety of media and means of communication to develop awareness of social and cultural practices. Off-site visits are arranged with careful preparation and consultation to ensure that behaviour is consistent with accepted norms. We hope to engender a sense of pleasure in accessing community activities safely and happily. We also aim to bring other groups and organisations into the school and arrange joint activities wherever possible.

Discipline and exclusion policy

Step by Step is a small school based on the principles of ABA. The school curriculum is designed to address challenging behaviour as a key element of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Many children who have undergone ABA teaching are very compliant and do not require sanctions to behave appropriately. The emphasis is on developing good behaviour and the ability to focus on learning. Encouraging and assisting pupils to communicate with tutors and their peers is a key element in the school. The close engagement of staff and pupils in this environment mitigates against behavioural or learning problems. In addition, information on the role of dietary and sensory factors in behaviour and mood changes will be widely disseminated amongst staff and parents.

In the unlikely event of a pupil exhibiting behaviour which disrupts the school or places staff and pupils at risk of harm or distress, the parents will be contacted immediately. The behaviour consultant and Teacher in Charge will discuss problems with the parents to establish any cause for challenging behaviour. Strategies for addressing the difficulties will be explored but if these do not work parents will be asked to remove the pupil immediately. Advice and possible outreach work will be offered to parents and referral to other professionals may be recommended.

It is usually necessary for the pupil to have an Individual Behaviour Plan, which identifies 'pro-active' and 're-active' strategies for managing challenging behaviours. This will be written and implemented immediately when a child enters school, as in most cases, it is the challenging behaviours demonstrated by a pupil which cause the greatest barriers to learning. This plan is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and is implemented in partnership with parents.

Educational and Welfare Provision

Step by Step school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

All pupils at Step by Step will have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Staff members are trained in a wide range of issues which arise from this condition and ongoing staff development will be given. The school intends to be at the forefront of knowledge in all topics which have a bearing on improving the education and well-being of pupils with autism. This will involve attendance at conferences, holding seminars and hosting conferences, using the internet to access world wide information and sharing our knowledge and expertise with other organisations.

Supervision and assessment in the school, together with the high pupil/staff ratio, will ensure that the development and progress of pupils will be under constant scrutiny.

The consultant's visits will provide a professional overview of each child's progress and ensure that they are working to their full potential. Any concerns or problems will be picked up immediately and the daily record keeping allows the Teacher in Charge and parents to monitor pupils.

Parents have access to the appropriate school staff members and to information about their child at all times. They will contribute to regular discussions on their child, particularly when the consultant is involved. ABA methods require a high degree of consistency between school and home to ensure that skills are generalised. It is essential that parents are closely involved in their child's programme and contribute information from home to assist the school in setting targets.

The school has a comprehensive Health and Safety Policy which sets out procedures for ensuring the environment is safe and the staff is aware of and alerted to any potential risks to the pupils, and how to deal with these.

Parents will be alerted immediately if staff has any concerns about a pupil's health. All staff will have first aid training and a room is available for medical purposes or if someone is unwell. Parents must inform the school if they have any concerns about their child's health or well-being. They must provide contact details for emergencies.

Child protection is rooted in ensuring that the school organisation, its activities, staffing and procedures are aimed at providing an environment in which children feel safe, secure, happy, cared for and above all, valued as individuals in their own right.

Child protection will have the highest priority in our school and as a minimum we will protect children and young people from physical, sexual or emotional abuse and ensure they are not neglected.

Aims and Objectives

These are to:-

- Meet all statutory regulations regarding child protection issues
- Protect our pupils from any sort of abuse and provide them with skills, strength and support to manage their problems.
- Create and maintain a safe and happy learning and living environment, engendering respect and trust.

Language and Communication

Most children with autism have significant language and communication difficulties. All staff will be required to undertake signing training and signing may form a part of all pupil programmes as an aid to language. Improving language and communication will be a major element in the school and children with English as a second language will benefit from the focus on this skill. Each child in the school will have a very different level of ability in this area from those who are non-verbal to those with complex language disorders.

Education Policy

Whilst individual curricula have a strong emphasis on the development of functional and developmental skills, the pupils receive differentiated elements of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and/or, Key Stages 1/2 of the National Curriculum in order to ensure breadth, balance and appropriateness of input. Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy programs form an integral part of pupils' education.

Full use is made of any appropriate technique which will help individual children to acquire knowledge, develop skills and access the curriculum. The stages of learning they can encompass may not necessarily correlate with the pupil's age and individual children may have differing levels of ability within their profile across different areas of development.

Staff expertise is focused on the effective delivery of the curriculum through methods devised for children with language, communication and, in some cases, learning difficulties. The staffing ratio and size of the school allows for the construction of highly specific programmes of work to be tailored to the needs of each child. Staff will be trained in the most appropriate techniques to help children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and will be subject to an on-going programme of supervision and staff development.

The aim of the school is to build on the strengths of each individual child and address their deficits in the most effective manner. Each child will have an IEP, defined by the Teacher in Charge and Class Leader, in consultation with the parents. Teachers, Class leaders and consultants will have a programme of assessment and monitoring for each child and parents will receive regular feed-back on the child's progress with advice on maintaining consistency between school and home.

The core teaching method is based upon the principles of ABA and is on a one-to-one ratio to ensure that pupils are working effectively and retaining the knowledge they acquire. There are increasing opportunities for working in pairs and small groups with some whole school activities specifically aimed at developing social interaction and the ability to co-operate with peers. There will be an emphasis in such activities on developing the pupil's ability to acquire information in a group situation and respond accordingly. These opportunities are used to deliver aspects of the curriculum such as spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a way that is meaningful to children with social and communication disorders.

Every effort will be made to extend the pupil's knowledge and understanding of the world in a way that is comprehensible to them. This is achieved by modifying the subject matter embodied in the National Curriculum and using a variety of teaching strategies which motivate and stimulate children with special needs. This will be supported by a full range of visual aids and prompts specifically designed to enable pupils to structure their learning and perceive their progress in the most graphic way. Full use is made of ICT to assist teaching and learning and the majority of teaching materials are made 'in house'.

The school has been planned to provide good space and facilities for physical activities both indoors and outside. The location in the midst of exceptional countryside, with very convenient access to the Ashdown Forest, offers scope for outdoor work and contact with animals. A full range of creative subjects will be available with strong emphasis on the visual arts and crafts. A music and dance specialist provides sessions for all children as a group activity.

The overall aim of the school is to offer a broad and balanced curriculum using methods which are specifically tailored to children with ASD. We will use every opportunity to deliver knowledge, extend skills and develop each child to his or her full potential.

Curriculum

The curriculum for Step by Step has been constructed specifically to meet the needs of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. It addresses all areas of development, at an appropriate level for each individual child, using methods which are relevant to their

particular needs. Knowledge and skills are broken down into small steps and each child progresses at the rate appropriate to them, ensuring that each step accomplished provides a secure base for the next step. Each child has an individual programme with targets and goals to work towards.

In addition to individual programmes an overall theme or topic runs through each term. A topic may be approached at different levels according to the individual's ability.

Staff

Each member of staff at the school receives an intensive, initial training program, which covers training in the following areas:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Discrete trial teaching
- Use of positive reinforcement
- Data collection/analysis
- Behaviour management
- Verbal Behaviour (VB)
- Sign language (using the 'Signalong' approach)
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Visual support
- Child Protection (including Intimate Care)
- Health and Safety

In addition, as part of their on-going development, staff members receive training in areas such as:

- Sensory Integration/Occupational Therapy approaches
- Speech and Language approaches
- Team Teach (handling)
- National Curriculum
- Assessment
- Social skills development

The daily timetable is scheduled to include regular and frequent opportunities for:

- Small group activities
- 1:1 teaching (of individualised targets and literacy and numeracy skills)
- Social skills development
- Physical activity
- Sensory breaks ('calming'/'alerting' activities)
- Self-help/daily living skills development
- Independence skills development
- Speech and language skills development
- Listening and attention skills development
- Play activities
- Generalisation of skills

Each pupil receives 1:1 support/input throughout the day. However, the level of this varies according to activity and individual ability/need. Specific approaches are utilised

according to individual need and pupils receive input from at least 3 members of staff to ensure generalisation.

The classroom environment has been carefully planned to ensure that distractions are kept to a minimum. The use of visual systems increases the pupils' level of understanding of the daily routine, which is highly structured. Each pupil has a teaching bay but also accesses 'communal' areas of the environment regularly. The school has invested in some highly specialised equipment, such as ICT devices, physical equipment and has a sensory room.

Where it is appropriate, opportunities for social interaction with mainstream peers are available. Arrangements for such 'inclusion' opportunities are made on an individual basis, according to need and can vary from visits to a local mainstream school to mainstream pupils visiting our site.

Pupils go 'off-site' regularly for activities such as horse-riding and swimming, as well as for curriculum related visits and activities relating directly to individual targets, such as shopping or going to the library.

Communication, language and literacy

The major areas of deficit in children with autism are language and communication; therefore particular emphasis is placed on developing these skills. Children will present a range of challenges in language and communication from the non-verbal child, children with very limited vocabulary and children with speech problems. All the children are likely to require Speech Therapy and this is provided by a visiting specialist. All staff will be given training in signing, PECS and a range of techniques to assist communication. Communication and language will be developed across the whole curriculum and every opportunity will be taken to encourage speaking and listening in one-to-one situations, pairs and small groups. The emphasis will be on giving each child the basic tools for communication and learning. It is of paramount importance to establish a secure foundation of communication skills for children to access the whole curriculum. Their individual rate of progress will vary and will not necessarily be age appropriate. The emphasis is on motivating them to communicate, building their confidence and skill and enabling them to select appropriate forms of communication across the curriculum. There will be a high rate of language input in all topics and interaction is encouraged, the natural environment will act as a focus for work to ensure that the knowledge and skill developed can be transferred easily to daily life. The aims of the Communication, Language and Literacy programme are

To build a repertoire of functional language through vocalization, picture exchange communication or sign language.

To develop appropriate use of language receptively and expressively, requesting, responding, commenting and describing in a one-to-one situation, in pairs and small groups.

To develop clear and appropriate articulation

To develop confidence and pleasure in vocalization through story telling and songs.

To develop the ability to give attention, to listen and to respond to others.

To develop and sustain the ability to listen, to derive information and to follow instructions.

To develop the motivation and skill to express emotion and communicate needs by speaking, signing or writing.

To develop the core skills of reading and writing for a variety of purposes with

understanding and confidence.

Mathematical Development

Mathematical development is a key element in the curriculum. It is an essential element of communication and a vital life skill. It can contribute to every other part of the curriculum and can be reinforced regularly by reference to all other activities. The fundamental concepts of mathematics can be addressed in many ways and some children with autism find them easier to access than language based concepts. We deliver a broad and balanced mathematics curriculum based on the individual child's age and ability. For our pupils the functional use of mathematics is essential and this is incorporated in the knowledge and skills required for social independence, for example, matching, sorting, counting, money, telling the time, etc. Practical experience will be offered through community based visits as well as many different opportunities within the school including stories, songs, games, observing numbers and patterns in the environment and in daily routines.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Children with autism usually have great difficulty understanding the world and often find it bewildering and intimidating. Their sensory responses can trigger fear and behavioural outbursts. This subject area offers a great opportunity to help children learn how to explore, discover and investigate the world around them with confidence. Using a variety of materials such as sand, water, paint and foods they can be introduced to new smells and sounds and can become less sensitive. They can learn to enjoy investigation and discovery and acquire methods of analysing and recording their observations. They will have the opportunity to learn how to use a range of tools and equipment safely from computers to scissors and gardening tools. There are opportunities to work in pairs and groups particularly in cooking and craft activities. The school has a large outdoor area and is situated on the Ashdown Forest where children can extend their exploration of the natural environment by encountering animals, plants, people and the weather.

Within this subject area we incorporate Science, History, Geography and Technology in a way which will be meaningful to each child. We provide a range of practical and guided experiences which link these subjects and deliver them in the most accessible and direct manner. Real experiences enhance learning for autistic children and the teaching of appropriate behaviours in a variety of community based settings is an important feature of the curriculum. Emphasis is also placed on personal, social and life skills in a practical setting. Visits to shops and eating places, making purchases and transactions, using public services are all targets for autistic children and need a high level of preparation and support.

Creative Development

Art, Music, Dance and Play present a wide range of learning opportunities and can be a key element across the curriculum. Art and craft activities can be used as a means of expression and as a way of encapsulating knowledge and observation. They can be used to help in de-sensitising children to different materials and as a means of encouraging exploration and enjoyment of many senses. Fine motor skills can be greatly improved through art and craft activities, as can the co-ordination of hand and

eye to create visual meaning. Many autistic children are visual learners and derive great benefit and pleasure from the use of the visual arts.

Research has shown that Music can have a direct impact on the thought processes and brain function. Music can help children to be peaceful and happy. We encourage pupils to use music as a means of expression through dance, movement, singing and with instruments. Music and dance sessions can be used to improve listening and communication skills, they can incorporate counting, following instructions, waiting for a turn and working as a group. Singing can assist in improving and motivating vocalization. Dance has many benefits in addition, improving mobility and co-ordination, developing imitation skills, encouraging co-operation and communication in group work and having fun responding to stimuli.

Teaching play skills and social skills to children with autism requires great flexibility; there is great emphasis on using social and play opportunities with peers and adults to help them acquire information through everyday casual experiences. Play skills include interactive board games, computer games with a particular emphasis on developing important skills in observation and matching. Games include those that can be played alone or with one or more people. Some children's abilities will not correlate with their age. It is our aim to ensure that the child is able to learn some level of age-appropriate skills with careful consideration given to the selection of which skills will be taught.

There are opportunities across this area to bring in outside specialists with particular expertise

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Through this area we promote the knowledge, skills and understanding which children require to lead confident, healthy independent lives. Children with autism are aware of how they feel and what they want, but find it hard to communicate those needs to others. They also find it difficult to interpret the needs and feelings of others. This can lead to disruptive or challenging behaviour. Emphasis is placed on providing structured approaches to teaching situations which help to build recognition and appropriate responses to other people's needs and feelings. In addition practice in appropriate ways of conveying their own wishes, needs and feelings will be a key component of this topic.

The aims of this area are,

To encourage confidence, develop and maintain enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

Develop the ability to pay attention, concentrate and behave appropriately in differing environments.

To establish basic health and hygiene awareness and practice.

To encourage the development of good relations with staff and peers.

Continue to develop self-help skills.

Provide opportunities to exercise personal choice.

To develop good social communication skills.

Recognise, comprehend and follow a daily routine with understanding of key tasks.

Develop and recognise their personal strengths and abilities.

Physical Education

Children with autism can have varying levels of motor deficits. A certain level of independent motor functioning is required for the child to function in the classroom/school setting. Disruptive motor deficits within autism are the characteristic self-stimulatory movements and behaviours; these are often internal rather than external and are a means of coping with and controlling a challenging situation. Sensory integration and exercise are very effective in decreasing these behaviours. Physical education will equip children with the skills, knowledge and awareness to participate in games, dance, swimming, horse riding and other physical activities. There is frequent opportunity for outdoor and indoor activities. They are able to explore and use the space and equipment available indoors and outdoors. They develop awareness of their own body space in relation to a variety of environments and are aware of their own personal space and that of others. Activities to enhance motor development and sensory integration are advised by our Occupational Therapist.

The aims of this area are:

To develop gross motor skills, in particular co-ordination, control, movement, balance and timing.

To build comprehension of simple games and game skills such as turn-taking, sharing, waiting, winning and losing and competing.

To enhance general levels of health and fitness and contribute to their physical well-being.

To encourage personal endeavour and team awareness and to promote enjoyment in activity.

To develop spatial awareness and understand the potential of their ability in movement.

To gain confidence in and understand safe and appropriate use of large and small apparatus.

To develop fine motor control and co-ordination

To explore and learn to use everyday tools, materials and objects with safety and control.

ASSESSMENT

Step by step uses a number of assessment tools to track and monitor the progress of pupils. Baseline assessments are important in order to establish a child's current level of functioning and skills. Once an initial assessment has been completed it is used to inform planning and target setting for the child. A number of different assessment tools and methods can be employed through the child's time at Step by Step. The following is a list of the different assessment methods.

Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS)

The ABLLS curriculum assess the children's skills in key areas, which are

Co-operation and reinforcer Effectiveness	Reading
Visual Performance	Maths
Receptive Language	Writing
Imitation	Spelling
Vocal imitation	Dressing
Requests	Eating
Labelling	Grooming
Intraverbals	Toileting
Spontaneous vocalisations	Gross motor
Syntax and grammar	Fine motor
Play and leisure	Group instruction
Classroom routines	Social interaction

Generalised responding

Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)

The VB-MAPP assesses children's skills in key areas:

Mand	Intraverbals
Tact	Group/classroom skills
Listener	Linguistic Structure
Visual Performance	Reading
Play	Writing
Social	Math
Imitation	Echoic
Vocal	
Listener Responding by Function, Feature and Class	

In addition, the VB-MAPP assesses any specific barriers to learning e.g. behaviour problems, difficulty scanning items, failure to make eye contact and sensory defensiveness.

The children are assessed to establish a baseline when they enter the school and then assessed 6-monthly. These assessments can either be through observations or by setting up teaching opportunities in which the skill can be demonstrated. The assessment tools help to inform the planning of programmes for the children. They also enable the school to take data on self-help skills, basic learner skills and motor skills as well as academic skills. It is important that these skills are measured when target setting for children with Autism.

QCA P-scales- supporting the Target Setting Process

These are used to help track the attainment of the pupils starting below National Curriculum level 1 and working up through the National curriculum levels. They are used to provide a framework to measure pupil's progress. This assessment helps to inform planning, targets and objectives for the pupil. P-Levels are recorded using the B-Squared software. P-scales are used in the following subjects:

English
Mathematics
Science
Foundation
PHSE & Citizenship
Geography
History
Art & Design
Design Technology
ICT

Formative Assessments

Attainment in other areas is noted through formative, ongoing assessments. Annotations about the child's progress are written onto their programme sheets and data sheets. These are then used to inform planning.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Upon entry into the school, each pupil is assessed and an individualised curriculum and IEP is drawn up from which he or she is taught. The following areas of development are

targeted:

Speech, Language and Communication
Literacy
Numeracy
Social skills
Play skills
Self-help/daily living skills
Motor skills
Listening and Attention
Behaviour
Generalisation

Data relating to progress is taken daily. Pupils' progress against their individual targets is monitored on a fortnightly basis, with IEPs being reviewed once a term.

Access to information

Copies of all the school's policy documents and supporting information are available to parents on request. A list of policies is given below. Parents are invited to view all information held on their child at any time. Arrangements should be made with the School Director to access this information.

Policy Documents

Accessibility Plan

Administration of Medicines Policy

Admissions Policy

Annual Review Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Attendance Policy

Behaviour Management Policy

Child Protection Policy

Communication Policy

Complaints Policy

Curriculum Planning and Assessment Policy

Disability Discrimination Policy

Disability Discrimination Act and Equal Opportunities Policy

First Aid Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Hygiene and Cleanliness Policy

Intimate Care Policy

Physical Intervention Policy

Safe Transportation/Minibus Policy

School Outings Policy

Staff Employment and Development Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

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