



Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit

“Nurture, Inspire, Flourish”

Autism Specific Classroom Policy

Date reviewed	November 2023
Next review date	November 2025

Chair of Board of Governors	<i>Alison Bennington</i>	A Bennington
Principal	<i>Emma Quinn</i>	E Quinn

History of Learning Support Class
Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit

The Sunflower Room



The Sunflower Room in Rathcoole Primary School opened in November 2020. This classroom is to support children in Primary 1 to Primary 3.

Its purpose is to provide an appropriate learning environment for children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs, a formal diagnosis of ASD and who may be functioning in the Moderate Learning Difficulties ability range.

The second Willow Room Class opened in September 2022. This was to support children from Primary 4 to Primary 7.

ETHOS

**The Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit family
are devoted to ensuring that each and every child is nurtured and
inspired
to flourish and achieve in their own unique way.**

**We are proud of our inclusive learning environment,
where every child matters
and
every voice is heard.**



AIM

To develop learning, social and behaviour competencies in children with learning difficulties in the context of a supportive class and school environment.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop an individual programme based on the Northern Ireland Revised Curriculum.
- To develop each pupil's functional skills within the Revised Curriculum.
- To develop an appropriate physical environment to increase predictability and independence.
- To develop each pupil's ability to integrate meaningfully with others at social and functional levels.
- To provide opportunities for parents to work closely with the school on agreed targets.
- To adapt the classroom environment to meet individual needs of pupils, which is constantly monitored and reviewed regularly.

Underpinning Principles

- Children and young people with learning difficulties are children and young people first.
- Pupils and young people with learning difficulties have a right of access to services that best suit their needs, offered by the Education Authority.
- Pupils with learning difficulties have a right to a programme designed to meet their individual needs which also provides access to the Curriculum of their peers.
- Teachers, allied professionals and learning assistants should have an appropriate knowledge of Special educational needs and of the holistic needs of the pupils. School will liaise with the Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST) in relation to this.

Staff Development

Training is ongoing. Specific training is undertaken by staff to ensure that all pupils' needs within the Autism Specific Classrooms are fully met. The Principal and Senior Management Team will ensure this is implemented.

Training undertaken by staff, facilitated by outside agencies, should include the following aspects:

- An examination of the principles and concepts of structured teaching
- Assessment methods
- Implementation of specific strategies
- PLP

- Managing behaviour
- Training via the Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST)
- Additional and bespoke training will be requested via the SST.
This may include Middletown, Primary Behaviour Support,
Autism Advisory Support.

Classroom Assistants

The classroom assistants make a very valuable contribution to the Autism Specific Classroom team. They implement all teaching methods under the direction of the teacher.

They carry out the following activities:

- Group/1:1 work
- Facilitating integration in the playground
- Take charge of play activities
- Help to create the necessary resources and plans
- Implement behaviour management plans (RRAP – Risk Reduction Action Plans)
- Assist with the review of pupil's progress
- Carry out any other activities at the discretion of the teacher and as the needs arise.

Staff-pupil ratio

Each class provides for up to a maximum of 8 pupils. Each class has one teacher and two classroom assistants as a minimum standard of staffing. The additional assistant arises when the pupil numbers rise above four pupils.

If a RRAP indicates a high level of risk, regarding a pupil(s) school will submit an additional adult request and submit this to the EA SARS team, to ensure that all needs of pupils can be safely met.

Parental Communication and Involvement

It is essential that parents are provided with information in relation to the pupil's learning difficulties and the class teacher ensures that there is close liaison with parents, so that the home environment can support any intervention in the education setting. Parental confidence and support is regarded as essential and active parental participation in the learning and teaching programmes of their children is encouraged.

Parents are consulted at the outset to obtain information about the pupil and are contacted on a regular basis thereafter to assist teachers in reviewing the pupil's education plan.

Class dojo is used to share updates and/or photographs and share successes and any worries between home/school.

Assessment and Monitoring Arrangements

The pupils are formatively assessed throughout the year and results of assessment are used to inform planning and the construction of a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) for each pupil.

The Annual Review process is used to discuss progress and placement in the setting. Should change of provision be required, evidence will be submitted to the SARS team prior to the Annual Review. An Educational Psychologist will determine if the statement is still suitable. An Annual Review may be called in an Emergency, following a record of Multi-Disciplinary Meetings.

Personal Learning Plans- PLP

Pupils with learning difficulties have diverse individual profiles that require an individualised approach to meeting their needs. The Personal Learning Plan is the basis of developing an inventory of skills and individual learning style to assist the teaching process, a choice of methods and the monitoring and evaluation of provision to facilitate best practice. PLP's can provide a structure for the systematic planning and evaluation of learning programmes for pupils with special educational needs.

Curriculum

Access to the Curriculum is carefully planned in accordance with the individual strengths and needs of each pupil. The ability of each pupil is recognised, valued and encouraged through the Curriculum and its provision. There is a strong emphasis on developing personal, social and life skills within each pupil through the topic area of Personal Development for Mutual Understanding (PDMU).

Behaviour Management

The approach to the management of behaviour in the whole school, including the Autism Specific Classroom, is that of positive behaviour support. This approach gives emphasis to prevention by creating a supportive learning environment and Curriculum where problem behaviours are less likely to occur in the first place, using proactive strategies, tailored to the needs of the pupil. Building a pupil's personal and social competencies and addressing classroom layout and design are core aspects of this proactive antecedent based systematic approach. Teaching alternative skills, such as, communicative competence (e.g., PECS) is also central.

Reactive strategies included in the Positive Behaviour Policy, may include distraction, removal of 'trigger,' positive praise, role modelling. Direct methods (observations) may be used to measure the nature, frequency, and intensity of behaviour and to identify causes. Reinforcement preferences for each pupil are identified through observation and interview and are used to encourage positive behaviour.

Behaviour Escalation

Whilst acknowledging that many behaviours are aligned with Autism, there may be circumstances when some behaviours cannot be managed within the current remit of school.

Any behaviour which is deemed unsafe or puts staff and/or pupils at risk will be monitored. School will seek support from home, SSST, EA, SARS and may have a crisis plan in place. This will ensure that all potential triggers have been assessed and the advice given from support agencies has been implemented. A RRAP will be put into place and the impact measured.

If behaviours do not de-escalate through these measures, BoG and all other relevant agencies will be informed and a multi-disciplinary meeting for professionals will be called. Parents/Carers will be involved in the next stage of meetings.

Should the Senior Leadership team feel at any time that behaviour is not safe and puts a child or staff in danger, then the police may be called, and the parents, BoG and all relevant agencies informed.

Next steps may involve suspension or expulsion, if deemed necessary, whilst implementing any further strategies suggested by other agencies. This may be followed by an agreed planned reintegration to class.

- Close monitoring of the risk assessment
- Reduced demands.
- An application to the EA for additional adult support in the class.
- Agreed slow stepped reintegration plan.

- PSNI safety support
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Parents/Carers will be asked to collaborate with the school to support a positive way forward.

Ultimately, the Principal, along with the Board of Governors, will take the lead in ensuring decisions best support the health and safety of all pupils and staff.

Integration

The ASC classroom is an integral part of the school, allowing planned and focused opportunities to learn and play alongside children who do not have Special Educational Needs (SEND). Decisions on degree type and occasion for integration are made by Senior Leaders and teacher, in consultation with parents and any advisory teachers or staff who may be involved in any pupil's education. Integration is where staffing permits.

The programme notes the details of the form and level of integration planned, also the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process.

Approaches

Various approaches directed towards pupils with autism are implemented to meet the individual needs of the pupils e.g., the use of visual cues as derived from the TEACCH programme. These are bespoke to each pupil.

Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency co-operation

The school recognises that the success of a pupil's education and support plan, as well as long-term outcomes, depends on the working of a team, including parents, with collaboration on assessment and intervention.

Members of staff in the Autism Specific Classroom work closely with staff representing EA services, such as Advisory services, Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST) Educational Psychology, Education and Welfare and The Health Trusts (e.g. Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists).

Conclusion

The Autism Specific Class provides a Curriculum that is tailored to meet the specific needs of each pupil. It offers a holistic approach to the development of each pupil.

The ASC policy is reviewed every 2 years by the relevant members of staff in the school and agreed with the Board of Governors, or sooner if required.

Appendix I

Admissions

Parents approach the admission of the pupil to the Autism Specific Class in various ways.

- Each class will only have 8 pupils maximum. There will be 1 class teacher and 2 additional SEN assistants.
- The first point of contact is always through the Education Authority - Special Education.
- The first point of contact with the school is always through the school Principal.
- Parents may then contact the school personally to request to visit the ASC.
- A visit to the ASC may be arranged through Special Education, responsible for placement of the child.
- The appropriate body makes referrals to place a child in the ASC through the school Principal.

The parents of new pupils are invited to visit the classroom and speak to the Learning Support Teacher and Class teacher in the ASC.

The parents of each new pupil receive a beginner's pack, which details information about the ASC.

Appendix II

Integration Programme

When children are moving to another class within the school the following strategy is implemented:

- The receiving teacher visits the pupils in their existing setting
- The pupil is integrated into his/her new classroom, this is individual to each child, building up the frequency of integration as time progresses.
- This integration process is assessed and developed according to the ability of each individual pupil concerned to adapt to the new class environment.
- There is close liaison between the pupil's class teacher and the receiving teacher to ensure a successful and stress-free transition for the pupil.
- Some children may integrate at a slower pace into a full day at school. Some children will be transitioning to Rathcoole, following a period of exclusion or withdrawal from their mainstream class, or having been on a reduced day already.
- Some children may find it difficult to attend for a full day due to their needs.
- After a successful transition, all documentation concerning the pupil is passed to the receiving teacher.
- This will be monitored between home and school.

Appendix III

Role of Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSC)

- To work alongside the class teacher to assist in the assessment of pupils and writing of PLP'S and PLP reviews
- To co-ordinate and assist the class teacher in the planning and preparation for the annual review process
- To liaise with the class teacher and classroom assistants to obtain current information about the progress of each pupil
- To be kept informed of any changes in the day-to-day running of the Autism Specific Class

Role of the ASC teacher

- To ensure that any advice and strategies, from agencies, are fully implemented within the class.
- To liaise with SMT regarding pupil welfare and progress
- To maintain daily paperwork when requested
- To adhere to any risk assessments in place
- To contribute to all aspects of school life.

Role of the Parent / Carer

- To support the pupil and school in all aspects of school life.
- To ensure that any changes that may impact their child in school are communicated. E.g., sickness, bereavement, medical needs, changes in home circumstances, medical appointments etc.
- To raise concerns/worries with school immediately so that any issues can be dealt with in a timely manner.
- To liaise with transport page