



Autism Policy

Date last reviewed: September 2025
Next Review Date: September 2026

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including: the PSHRE Policy, Teaching & Learning Policy, Child Protection Policy, Curriculum Policy, SEN Policy and Behaviour Management Policy.

Policy Aims

At Cribden House we aim to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of autistic learners ensuring that their educational, social and emotional needs are met. Barriers to learning and experiences for day to day living and learning are identified and addressed through the learning environment, planning and delivery of lessons and social times, and an emphasis on communication and interaction. These together with sensory diets aim to reduce the behaviours associated with autistic learners who experience anxieties and heightened behaviours. All staff have received training on recognising and understanding autism and the school environment is organised to support the independence, as far as possible, of autistic learners. There are common approaches throughout the school which reflect key working practices, modified and adapted curriculum and teaching approaches for identified young people are in place.

Environment

The school has been adapted to reflect the needs of pupils with autism. As such the pupils are able to go to sensory places and go for support. There are areas for when pupils need reduced stimuli for learning. All classrooms use visual timetables and additional visual support systems are available for individuals. PECS is used for those pupils who have been identified and they are taught in bespoke sessions and then practice takes place at social times and lunch time as appropriate. Sensory diets are supported by the use of space, environment and use of timetabled rooms for specific activities.

The Provision

Pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) are included in every class throughout the School. The primary characteristics of ASC are as follows:

Difficulties in:

- non-verbal and verbal communication
- social understanding and social behaviour
- thinking and behaving flexibly (rigidity of thought)
- sensory perception and responses.

Pupils with ASC can be affected by sensitivity to sound, touch and/or visual stimuli. Reference to 'a spectrum' of difficulties is made because there is a wide variation of difficulties and needs within the Condition and as a child grows and develops these may change. The pupils with ASC are supported by staff members who have specific training in aspects of Autism. In addition, many members of staff have received basic training in supporting pupils with ASC so awareness is spread across the school. Structure, visual support and individualised strategies appropriate for each individual are provided to aid a pupil's access to the curriculum.

In School Support

Staff across the school are supported by those with additional experience and qualifications and also, we have four Team Teach tutors who support the positive handling of any pupils in need of a Positive Handling Plan. Additionally, there are staff trained and experienced in PECS, Makaton and other forms of AAC. We have a Family Support Team who manage the emotional and social needs of young people with autism and this enables those pupils who experience difficulties to remain in school, in class, and to develop strategies to recognise and manage their own behaviours and needs.

External Support

When school recognises that further support from professionals is needed, they can make referrals to a variety of agencies who will in turn work with families and young people as appropriate.

Staff Training and Development

Training is planned in line with the School Priorities and can be seen in the School Development Plan. Staff, where appropriate will receive through their Appraisal, CPD related to autism or a linked area.

Rationale

Autism Spectrum Condition affects communication, social understanding, and flexibility in thinking and behaviour. This is known commonly as the 'Triad of Impairments' In addition to this, there is often a strong tendency towards repetitive behaviour. All of which can result in unusual behaviour.

1. Impairment in social relationships/skills/interaction:

- lack of understanding others feelings & emotions
- very poor at interpreting other people's facial expressions and body language
- individuals may appear aloof, stilted, rude, aggressive, forthright, shy, thoughtless, immature &/or act inappropriately in social interaction situations and consequently fail to form 'real' lasting friendships

2. Impaired Imagination: is an inability to imagine things, which have not already been experienced, for example:

- New or different situations can be unimaginable and therefore perhaps frightening.
- Changes in routine are frightening / disorientating without the ability to imagine an alternative order of events.
- Do not realize/comprehend other peoples mental states are different from their own.
- An autistic person may not appreciate that other people have their own thoughts, perspectives, plans etc.
- Have difficulties with generalizations.

3. Communication and Language. Autistic people have trouble with expressing and projecting themselves and difficulty understanding all levels of communication, which may manifest as:

- A literal understanding of language. 'Pictorial language' can be nonsensical. For example, it's raining cats and dogs, we're going 'down' the road to the shops, get your skates on or we'll be late etc.
- "Don't do that". An autistic person may not know what the word 'that' is referring to.
- People with autism have the same emotions as everybody else - but may not express them in a way that is easily understood, partly because they may fail to realize that language is one way of doing this.
- They may talk to somebody without taking any notice of that person.

In order to ensure that pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to access the broad, balanced and relevant curriculum offered to pupils throughout our school their additional difficulties and characteristics are taken into account in all aspects of their school life, including the school environment, planning, teaching and learning objectives. The emphasis is on communication, social interaction, and the independence and emotional well-being of the individual pupil.

Communication

Communication is fundamental to learning and therefore seen as a key area of development for all pupils. The school approaches this by providing a 'total communication environment',

Using speech and symbols, as well as photographs and objects of reference if necessary, to provide clear and reinforced communication. If appropriate, pupils will access one to one intensive interaction, where staff will encourage pupils to respond to sounds in conversation like exchanges, which may lead to copying of words and phrases. Staff will also encourage turn taking exchanges within group situations. Individual communication/conversation books may be developed alongside the visual timetables to aid the pupil's communicative intent where necessary. The Speech and Language Therapists will develop this system along with the teachers and teaching assistants.

Approaches to Teaching pupil's with ASC

A visually intensive approach (based on the TEACCH Approach) is used to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them, and to enable them to anticipate what comes next. This involves the use of visual timetables, and a structured environment plus consistency of approach. There are direct 1-1 teaching times for the learning of new skills, as well as times when pupils are encouraged to work independently, or in a group with adult guidance. Regular physical exercise/brain breaks are incorporated into the daily timetable to help channel any excess energy that may cause anxiety. Life skills are an important part of the pupils' programmes, including 'Generalisation activities' which then lead on to life skills within a community-based education. Independence and emotional development of the pupils is highlighted in the PSHCE element of the curriculum. Social Stories are sometimes used to aid the understanding of the feelings of others and the consequences of actions.

Sensory Issues

Some pupils with an autistic spectrum condition have specific sensory difficulties which can result in unusual or uncomfortable perception of one or more of the following: sound, sense, touch, sight and smell. They may become upset, distracted or react in an aggressive manner due to the discomfort or pain they feel.

We therefore try to reduce environmental anxiety and distress by providing the following:

- An environment which is calm and comfortable with few distractions
- An environment with clear structures and routines
- The knowledge that they can ask for help and it will be provided
- Specific sensory support to match their needs, to help them learn

Training

School staff have undertaken various levels of in house training. The school has achieved and maintained official ASC Accreditation for the past four years, recognising that the school caters for all aspects of ASC. Ongoing in-house training has taken place in the form of CPD, staff twilights and staff meetings. All staff receive refresher training and module updates. Autism is an ongoing training priority for all staff.

Partnership with Parents/Carers

Parents are regarded as essential partners in helping their children to learn. A meeting to discuss their child's progress and individual needs is offered every term. A coffee morning is held termly for parents of all pupils, and a variety of subjects discussed. Parents are welcome to arrange to visit the school, or can telephone to discuss any problems.