

Ambitious Approach – Our Approach to Education Practice

Ambitious about Autism's mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism. We believe all children and young people with autism have a right to the best education that meet their needs and enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. In addition to our direct work in schools and colleges, we work to transform policy and practice in autism education nationally.

We have high aspirations for our pupils and learners. Our goal for all our pupils and learners is that when they leave our settings they will have the opportunity to access employment, further education or training and to live as part of the communities of their choice.

Our Ambitious Approach across all our educational settings is person-centred, values based, trans-disciplinary and underpinned by a whole-organisational Positive Behaviour Support framework.

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that is relevant to each of our pupils and learners and highly personalised. We advocate for and deliver learning that is enjoyable, age appropriate, individualised and designed to respond to the particular needs, talents and interests of all our pupils and learners. We place importance on the development of communication, interaction, attention and 'learn to learn' skills, as well as fostering as much independence as possible.

We recognise and respect everyone's individuality and support pupils and learners based on their individual needs. We use a Positive Behaviour Support framework to underpin learning across our settings with the overall aim of improving and enhancing our pupils' and learners' quality of life so that they are better able to learn.

We are constantly developing, searching for and open to new approaches where there is robust evidence that they help young people and are ethical. We share our experience and evidence with others to enhance knowledge and expertise in the field of autism education.

Participation

Pupils and learners are involved in decisions about their learning, support and future. Their voices and opinions are valued. For many pupils, communication can be difficult, so we invest skills and resources in enabling their participation in a variety of ways.

We also recognise the enormous importance of working together with parents and carers as co-producers to ensure that the partnership between school or college and home works for the child or young person and to plan for the future.

Our expert trans-disciplinary team

We employ skilled, experienced and dedicated staff. Qualified teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, disciplinary team, behaviour analysts and employment specialists who work closely together to provide pupils and learners with specialist, integrated and appropriate support. Our specialists are on-site and embedded in services.

All staff receive regular training and support to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to work effectively with all pupils and learners. Staff are regularly supervised and supported. We also invest in continuous professional development, including an in-house autism-specific training programme (based on a competency framework), teacher training via Schools Direct, training and talks from external experts and the opportunity of post-graduate study.

Personal development, behaviour and safety

The safety and wellbeing of pupils and learners is paramount. We have child and adult safeguarding policies and processes in place, which are implemented holistically and rigorously and reviewed at least annually to ensure they reflect latest requirements and best practice. We focus on creating a whole organisational approach to safeguarding, which includes checks, training, information and briefings for all trustees, governors, staff and volunteers. Pupils and learners are also supported to understand these issues via the curriculum.

Progress and attainment

Children and young people in our education settings mostly have Education, Health and Care Plans, which outline their aspirations, outcomes, needs and support. Our trans-disciplinary teams work collaboratively with the young people and their parents/carers to input into and develop these plans and ensure they are implemented. Progress is regularly and comprehensively monitored, evaluated and reported. We tailor how we teach to match the individual child or young person, and we also measure whether the approach is working. This helps to ensure that pupils and learners make the best progress they can. Pupils and learners have access to a range of qualifications, as well as non-accredited learning, depending on their interests, desired outcomes and abilities.

Accountability

Each service has a Governing Body comprising a range of people with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to support and challenge our services, including parents/carers. The Governing Bodies meet regularly and visit the services to review and monitor their performance. Information on progress and outcomes is made available at annual reviews, to parents/carers and Local Authorities, and reported termly to the Governing Bodies. We also have a board-level Education Committee that oversees performance across all of our services. We welcome visitors to our services and regularly hold open days for parents/carers and professionals.

Our services are subject to Ofsted inspections, which are published online, both on our website and by Ofsted.

Notes

For more information on Positive Behaviour Support, refer to <http://pbsacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PBS-key-messages-April-2017-1.pdf>