



Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn Autistic Spectrum Condition Policy

This Policy has been written to cover all sites belonging to Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn. This includes:

Ty'n Fron – Primary Site

Park Street – Secondary Site

Ty'r Ysgol – Secondary Site- SLD

Gerddi Glasfryn – Residential Site

Please note that whenever the terms Brondyffryn or School appear they are therefore referring to all of the above sites.

1. Description of School and its Community

Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn is a Local Authority Residential Special School maintained by Denbighshire Education Authority. The school specialises in meeting the needs of children/young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) aged 3-19 years. As a Regional school, Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn welcomes children/young people from across North Wales and the closer counties of England. Our policies are relevant to all our children/young people regardless of county of residence.

The majority of the children/young people are from English speaking families. For most children/young people, Welsh is taught as a second language. However, children/young people from Welsh speaking families are educated in Welsh. The majority of the children/young people are boys due to the higher prevalence of autism in males.

At Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn we are conscious of the need to maintain a low arousal environment which has been shown to be beneficial for individuals with ASC, reducing their anxiety and aiding concentration. To this end, we strive to keep all areas tidy and free from clutter; to make sure classroom displays are orderly and muted in colour; to communicate information in a clear and concise manner and to aim for a quiet and calm atmosphere. The approach varies on each site as dictated by the needs and abilities of the pupils and our aim is always to organise the environment as far as possible to promote independence in our young people.

2. Description of Policy Formation and Consultation Process

This Policy has been formulated by a working party consisting of the Senior Leadership Team. Staff, governors and parents were consulted before the Policy was finalised and formally adopted by the Governing Body.

3. Aims

To ensure the following key principles underpin our practice to enable us to provide the best possible education for pupils with an autistic spectrum condition:

- Knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum condition throughout the school.

- Knowledge, understanding and implementation of established interventions and approaches.
- Knowledge and understanding of general and specific behaviours and behaviour management approaches.
- Up to date current research relating to the education and wellbeing of pupils with an autistic spectrum condition.

4. Approaches and Interventions

Curriculum

Underpinning all teaching and learning is an emphasis on the development of independence, social interaction, social understanding and social communication. Lessons are planned to facilitate development in these areas but specific teaching, for example in social skills, life skills and sensory desensitization are also necessary. We believe in providing many 'real life' opportunities, for example, educational visits are used to help reduce rigidity, develop appropriate social skills such as waiting in shops or having snack in a café and learning about road safety.

Language and communication

The development of communication skills is a priority at Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn and we are keen to develop staff skills in this area. We use a range of communication systems with the pupils and the development of functional and meaningful verbal communication is the long-term aim for all pupils at Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn.

- **Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)**

The school benefits from the expertise of specialist Speech and Language Therapists who are on site every week. We have also employed two qualified Speech and Language Therapy Assistants who work closely with the SALT team to resource, model and monitor the targets set in the pupils' Individual Communication Programmes. SALT assistants work in classes with staff, individuals and groups and make a significant contribution to the progress achieved by our young people in this area.

- **PECS**

The Picture Exchange Communication System is used with pupils who enter the school with no functional spoken language. This system encourages the development of functional communication by focusing initially on the pupils' most powerful wants and needs and using these to shape communicative behaviour. This approach is used throughout the SLD and Foundation Phase sections of the school and often leads to the development of spoken language. Parents are invited into school to observe their children using PECS and to learn how to implement PECS at home.

- **Makaton**

Makaton is used to enhance communication with pupils as it supplements spoken language with a visual sign. It is used alongside PECS and often during singing activities.

- **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction is used with pupils who have a limited repertoire of positive communicative behaviours. Here, the aims are to develop skills of early social behaviour e.g. turn-taking, contingent action and eventually to the initiation and leading of interactive 'games'. All staff have attended training on intensive interaction.

- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**

A number of pupils have electronic communication aids – pupils are assessed by Specialist Speech and Language Therapist as to whether or not they would benefit from this approach and an aid would be trialled. Therapist, SALT assistant, parents and class staff would then monitor its use to see if the correct aid has been identified.

Autism Specific

- **TEACCH**

The key principles of TEACCH are incorporated into teaching throughout the school according to the needs of the pupils, so that visual supports and a structured environment are in evidence in all classes. Individual and class schedules are in use so that pupils gain a clear understanding of what is expected of them and what is coming next. This helps to make life more predictable for our young people and to reduce anxiety. In some classes, 'work' and 'finished' baskets are in use and pupils are able to use work stations with minimal distractions to undertake independent work.

- **Social Stories**

Social Stories are used with pupils as necessary to help them understand social situations and to help them cope with unfamiliar events.

- **Visual Supports**

Visual supports are used throughout the school to support behaviour and learning. This includes the use of schedules and first/then boards, signs and labels and all staff carry a key ring with communication symbols.

- **Low arousal environment**

We endeavour to maintain a calm and ordered environment so as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration. There should be as few distractions as possible in the form of noise levels, colour schemes, odours, lighting and clutter. Displays within the classrooms are deliberately neutral in colour and orderly and staff endeavour to use calm and low voices whenever possible.

Behaviour

- The approach to behaviour is detailed in our Positive Behaviour and Physical Intervention Policy.

- **Behaviour Support Plans**

These are in place for all pupils and detail the primary and secondary approaches to be used in relation to the pupils' behaviour.

- **Individual Reactive Strategies**

These are used with those pupils whose behaviour can escalate and require physical intervention. They detail the kinds of behaviour that the pupil may

display, the likely triggers and cues for the behaviour and redirection techniques that should be used. They also include information about the physical intervention that can be used if all else fails. They are agreed with parents on a termly basis. All staff are trained in Timian techniques and we have our own Timian trainer on staff.

Sensory

We are in the process of developing our sensory provision and this has involved 3 day training for key members of staff and a day for the rest of the staff. We use behaviour monitoring systems to assess pupils along with a sensory checklist with the aim of being able to provide a sensory diet for the young person. A Sensory Profile is then drawn up and appropriate activities incorporated into the day, either for the individual or for the class. Physical activity is also used to reduce anxiety and provide sensory input.

Therapeutic and Enrichment Activities

- Th.Inc.
This is an approach that combines therapeutic, nurturing and educational resources using creative play and emotional skills teaching. Pupils access the sessions in groups and/or individually and the sessions are targeted towards the more able stream.
- Music sessions
A specialist music teacher provides sessions for all classes every week. These combine group and individual teaching.

5. Promoting independence

All our pupils have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition, many with associated communication difficulties; a proportion also have severe and complex needs. Because of this our pupils and young adults can be highly dependent on external support to fulfil their needs. As a result, privacy can be hard to obtain in most aspects of their daily lives. Teaching them to become more independent will give them more control over their lives, create more opportunities for privacy, lead to better quality of life and enhance their ability to make their own choices.

We believe it is important to empower our young people through the teaching of self-help and life skills. It is essential that they be given planned opportunities to acquire independence in order to develop self-esteem and confidence throughout life. This is done through assessment and target setting as well as general awareness of "doing with", rather than "doing for" provided by 1:1 staff support in both Gerddi Glasfryn and school. Young people are given frequent opportunities to achieve at their own level of ability with or without minimal adult support and opportunities are given for this learning to be generalised and consolidated.

Pupils' independence encompasses:

- Occupying themselves with independent activities
- Carrying out daily tasks with minimal support
- Recognising the need to ask for help and how to ask for it
- Self-help tasks e.g. eating, drinking, personal care, dressing, going to the toilet
- Moderating their own behaviours
- Ability to generalise skills e.g. in a different setting, with different people
- Making choices

- Communicating needs, such as thirst or hunger
- Ability to be alone
- Initiating communication/activity
- Influencing/controlling their own environment and responding appropriately to it e.g. appropriate dress/regulating their own temperature

All pupils have Individual Education Plan (IEP) targets and methods for working towards these in school and in the residential setting to ensure consistency and continuity and these are agreed on by the key care staff and teacher. Parents receive copies of IEPs, so that when possible new skills can be transferred and maintained at home. There is emphasis on developing independence in ways that are appropriate to young people's age.

The use of carefully designed and individualised visual cues is central to enabling pupils to understand the task presented to them. In addition to clarifying tasks, visual cues act as an unobtrusive prompt to pupils. Visual picture or photo sequences (work systems) support the young person to carry out a task with minimal or no staff help, thus increasing their independence.

In some classrooms pupils have independent work-stations where they can learn to complete tasks independently with minimal disruption. The emphasis would then be on completing a familiar task without any support, rather than on immediately learning a new skill.

A wide variety of strategies are used to structure the working environment and promote pupils' taking responsibility for organisation of work and materials. These strategies include:

- Use of structured teaching principles: visual schedules, work systems
- Workstations
- Familiar daily routines/tasks in Gerddi Glasfryn or class room e.g. laying the table
- Opportunities for making choices throughout the day e.g. food, activities

When working with our young people staff should always be aware of:

- Having the mind-set of 'working with' rather than 'doing for'
- Asking themselves: 'Could the pupil be doing some of this themselves?'
- Thinking carefully about the use of prompts and phasing them out as quickly as possible

6. Staff and Training

Each class is led by a classroom teacher, with support from teaching assistants. The number of teaching assistants allocated to each class is dependent upon the needs of the pupils within each class and is decided upon by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on a class by class basis. Staff absences are covered by regular supply staff as far as possible who already know the students to further promote consistency and some teaching assistants are available to fill absences in the residential provision.

All new staff attend internal induction training in autism-specific practices and interventions such as TEACCH, Intensive Interaction, PECS and sensory processing. All staff attend internal training on autism-awareness and good practice on a regular basis. We use our trained and experienced staff to lead staff INSET training. All staff are

provided with opportunities for professional development and training in line with the School Development Plan and the organisational training needs analysis and strategy. Training needs will be linked to the school's performance management process. Teachers, HLTAs and Team Leaders attend external training TEACCH (3 days) & PECS (2 days).

In March 2015 the school achieved Autism Accreditation from the National Autistic Society and continues to receive support helping to ensure that our provision is the best it can be for pupils with autism.

7. Assessment and Planning

Pupil progress is assessed using B Squared and against the Foundation Phase outcomes. All pupils have an Assessment File containing evidence of attainment in the form of annotated pieces of work or photographs. End of Key Stage targets are set and progress towards them assessed on a termly basis.

Pupils have autism specific Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with targets in the areas of Social Imagination, Social Interaction, Social Communication, Sensory Needs and Independence. These are monitored and updated twice a year and agreed with parents.

Teachers plan for their classes in accordance with the needs of the pupils. Pupils in the able stream follow the National Curriculum and planning is adapted as necessary. Classes in Key Stage 2 and the Severe Learning Difficulties department plan around themes and the needs of individual pupils. Pupils work towards accredited awards including GCSEs, ASDAN and Prince's Trust.

8. Collaboration

Autism can be a complex and challenging condition therefore we recognise the need to collaborate with a range of other people to ensure the best provision for our young people. Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn collaborates on a regular basis with:

- Parents and carers
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Educational and Clinical Psychologists
- Occupational Therapist
- Community Paediatrician
- Social Workers
- Children with Disability Teams
- Counselling Service
- Young People's Advocacy Services
- Other professionals involved in the care of the individual young person.

We recognise the importance of generalising the skills that pupils learn across school, home and residential settings. Class teachers regularly liaise with multi-disciplinary teams, respite workers, parents and carers to ensure continuity of approaches in and out of school. The sharing of strategies enables students to consolidate on skills they have learnt.

9. Outreach

Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn operates an Outreach Service to mainstream schools in Denbighshire at two levels of intensity. Teachers, Senior Leadership Team and SALT assistants are all involved in outreach as necessary. Mainstream Foundation Phase pupils

are placed on a high level of outreach involving (at first) weekly visits to establish ASC strategies and train school staff, with visits falling away to half termly by the end of the second year of outreach. Alternatively individual schools can request a one-off visit and advice for any pupil with a diagnosis of ASC. Regular coffee mornings are held for Denbighshire parents and weekly drop-in clinics are held for mainstream staff.

Reviewed: Spring 2016
Reviewed: Spring 2018
To be reviewed: Spring 2021

Wellbeing Impact Assessment completed

A Wellbeing Impact Assessment offers an opportunity for staff to think carefully about the impact of their work on local people and other members of staff.

Date completed:

January 2015