



The  
Westminster  
School



# Autism Policy 2016/2017

*Safe Happy and Learning Together*  
*Building foundations and providing  
opportunities to create confident,  
aspirational and independent members  
of our community.*

Approved by Governing Body on: 16/02/17

Signed by Chair of Governors:

*Ken Ols*

Head Teacher:

C A Hill BEd NPQH

Lead Personnel:

C Stubbs

Date of Review:

16/02/20

## The Westminster School

The School provides for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties plus additional needs (MLD+) including autism and ADHD. In 2016/17, there are 180 pupils on roll at the School aged between 7 and 19 years old. Pupils are organised into year groups for 14-19 and by need in the Primary Department and KS3.

Through knowledge of our pupils and in partnership with parents/carers and outside agencies, we offer an environment and curriculum which allows our pupils to thrive, gaining many successes including GCSEs, BTEC Vocational and Entry Level qualifications, as well as Life Skills and other personal development goals. The vast majority of our pupils continue their studies when they leave the Westminster school in other mainstream and special colleges with the self-confidence to succeed in their chosen paths. We work with local providers to enable our pupils to take part in Work Experience and move onto employment where appropriate.

### Understanding Pupils with Autism

Research identifies that autism as a lifelong developmental disorder that affects the way in which a person communicates and relates to people around them. We recognise that whilst all autistic people show certain difficulties we recognise that that this will affect them in different ways.

At The Westminster school we understand autism as an impairment in:

- Social communication
- Social interaction
- Social imagination and flexible thinking

By **social communication**, we mean how people communicate with each other both verbally or non-verbally in social situations. Consequently a pupil with autism may develop speech relatively slowly and have limited ability to understand another's feelings.

By **social interaction** pupils with autism may prefer to be on their own or want to interact with people but lack the skills to do so.

By **social imagination and flexible thinking** pupils with autism often find it difficult to play imaginatively and to plan and think ahead. They struggle to make choices and lack the flexibility to deal with change. The transfer of information can present additional challenges.

Clearly pupils with autism are all unique individuals with their own personalities and characteristics and their autism will impact on each individual very differently. Some pupils will have learning difficulties; others have impairments outlined above but have cognitive ability within the normal range. This is usually referred to as High Functioning Autism (HFA). Another group is referred to as having Asperger's Syndrome (AS). These pupils have neither cognitive impairment nor clinically significant delay in language development, however they may have significant issues with the understanding, processing and the use of social language which has a noticeable impact on their social interaction. This may often be linked to restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour.

Autism may also be experienced in conjunction with other related conditions including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

## **Staff Training and Professional Development**

When appointed to The Westminster School, all staff will benefit from a detailed induction programme which includes an introduction to autism.

Throughout a member of staff's employment at the School, they will receive access to a comprehensive programme of professional development and training relevant to their roles and responsibilities.

We feel that it is vital that all staff have a shared and consistent knowledge and understanding of autism. Staff training days focus on Quality of Teaching and Learning, sharing good practice. Planning to meeting individual pupil needs, Active Learning, specific aspects of SEN including COSST, TEACCH, Intensive Interaction, Makaton, Social Skills, Talkabout, The effective use of communication devices, PECS Autism Education levels 1-3 and MAPA.

Our focus is to use existing expertise and to ensure pupils have access to both established and emerging strategies.

We will ensure that Learning Support staff attend the same training as teaching staff. We employ assistants with relevant experience who hold NVQs from level 2-4. We also encourage, and support, Admin Staff to attend specific training.

All staff that are appointed to a position at The Westminster School are fully inducted by undergoing a detailed induction programme which includes an introduction to understanding autism. This is further supported by access to a comprehensive programme of Professional Development throughout their period of employ at Westminster. We aim to ensure that....

## **External Agency Support**

We are fortunate to be able to access a wide variety of support agencies. Where appropriate, pupils will have access to Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Vision and Hearing Support Teams, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Counselling Services and the CCAT Team.

## **Partnership with Parents**

As a small school, communication between School and parents is part of the daily life of the School. Families are actively involved in the School and have a new and growing Friends of The Westminster Parents' Group, which works with the School and forms a supportive parents' network which meets regularly. Pupils in focus classes and Key stage 2 have Home/School diaries.

Families are actively encouraged to engage in supporting the pupils within the curriculum, after-school activities and on School trips. This helps promote a close relationship between home and School as well as bringing a range of experiences into the learning environment of the students.

We facilitate a range of parents' workshops and discussion groups. We work closely with Autism West Midlands and Sandwell Adult and Family Learning, recently hosting Pamper Sessions and Scrapbooking Courses.

In addition, we have a Family Support Worker who works closely with parents and carers to offer support and advice in order to ensure that their child makes outstanding progress in their Pastoral and Academic development.

The School has a formal reporting process based largely on the timetable of annual reporting required by the Statement of SEN. In addition to which, both education and therapy staff input reports as required by students for assessment and interventions.

### **Transition**

Transition into a new school can be stressful for any pupil but particularly for learners with autism. Pupils with autism often have great difficulty with change and therefore a new school will inevitably introduce changes in routines, procedures and personnel. Which we know will affect our pupils in different ways. Rigidity of thought processes, sensory processing and communication difficulties experienced by pupils with autism mean that successful transition requires careful, systematic and sensitive planning for each individual

### **Process**

- Visit by SENCO to pupil's primary school to meet pupil, their support staff and teacher.
- Attendance at pupil's EHC meeting at pupil's primary school to collect transition information.
- Coffee morning visit to Westminster by pupil with their parent(s)/guardian.
- Visit to Westminster by pupil with their support staff.
- Repeat visit to Westminster by pupil and their support staff.
- Visit by pupil to Westminster with new Westminster staff.
- Two more visits by pupil to Westminster with new staff.
- The collection of personal development information from class teaching staff.
- Follow-up visit to home by Westminster School - Home-School liaison support.

This process is tailored throughout to meet the individual pupil's needs.

This process operates for every pupil who is offered a place at Westminster at any time when the transition is to take place.