

## Autism Accreditation Assessment

### Longford Park School

Reference No.	28807
Assessment dates	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2021
Lead Assessor	Rachel Gittens
External Moderator	N/A
Status prior to the assessment	Working Towards
Advanced status applied for	No

## Section 1: Context

### About the Provision

**Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:**

Longford Park School is a mixed day school for children aged 5-11 with different kinds of specific, complex, learning, communication and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. This includes pupils with autism.

**Number of autistic people supported by the provision:** 16

**Range of autistic people supported by the provision:**

All pupils at Longford Park School have an education and health care plan (EHCP). Children follow an adapted national curriculum and all are verbal.

**Outcome of last statutory assessment (Body; date, outcome):**

The school converted to an academy in 2019, and has not been inspected since it converted. Prior to this Ofsted described the school as outstanding in all aspects. The full report can be accessed here <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/25/106392> .

### About the Assessment

The assessment took place over 2 days.

The service's adviser assumed the role of lead assessor.

A presentation was delivered by one of the schools assistant head teachers on how provision is made for autistic pupils. A virtual tour of the sensory room and the quadrant outdoor play area were undertaken via Teams and the adviser watched a video, available on the school's website, produced to explain some of the new approaches in response to Covid-safe procedures that are now in place.

9 sessions were observed over a total of 2 hours 15 minutes. Sessions observed included maths, music and P.E.

During the assessment discussions were held with a number of staff members and three parents of autistic pupils.

Staff interviews had a focus on behaviour and pastoral care, meeting sensory needs and the CPD of staff.

Policy and procedure documents relevant to the provision for autistic pupils were reviewed, in particular; Autism Policy, Relational Policy (draft), SEN Policy and the Inclusion Policy.

Having used the AET schools programme framework to audit staff CPD the school shared compelling evidence that autism specific staff training has led to an increase in staff knowledge and understanding of autism. The survey results displayed an increase in each of the four categories.

Personal documentation was sampled from across service, these included one-page profiles, therapeutic one page profile, lesson plans, IEP examples and a case study.

The results of surveys carried out with the families of autistic people were also considered and are found in the appendix to this report.

## Professional Development and Support for Staff

### **Main approaches or methods employed by the provision in supporting autistic people:**

- SCERTS
- Intensive Interaction
- Team Teach
- Emotion Coaching
- Various play therapies
- Outdoor learning
- Social stories

### **Training and professional development staff receive in these approaches and in their understanding of autism**

The Head teacher is responsible for the overall management and organisation of induction, including Newly Qualified Teacher Induction across the whole school. This includes a whole school planning and quality assurance role.

Each Newly Qualified Teacher is provided with an induction tutor who will be a named senior, experienced and competent member of staff and all new experienced staff will be allocated a mentor.

All staff have '*on-the-job training on ASC-awareness*'. Staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and well-being of autistic pupils.

All staff have regular training related to Moving and Handling and Positive Handling through Team Teach Training.

### **On-going support available to staff in working with autistic individuals**

Learning from training is monitored through attainment tracking, staff, parent and pupil feedback and anecdotal evidence, and sharing of good practice in staff meetings. Further to this the process of performance management allows tailored CPD to address training needs.

Inset/Twilight Training sessions have included:

- NAS - Understanding Autism
- Sensory Processing Needs
- Attachment Aware Practice
- Emotion Coaching

- Relationship Building

Non-teaching staff are invited to join teachers and teaching assistant training once a week for a twilight session, some of which have include autism specific training as outlined above..

Further training opportunities are planned to address staff needs, with scheduled weekly times allocated for this.

Longford Park School provide advice and training to other external professionals in how to support autistic students through an outreach service. The school are also members of the Trafford Teaching School Alliance (TTSA) which provides Continued Professional Development opportunities. Longford Park School is the leading school in the TTSA.

## Section 2: Findings from Assessment

### Personal Centred Planning

#### **Brief description of how individual support is planned, implemented and evaluated:**

Autistic pupils are often taught within a general class at Longford Park School however the decision as to where a pupil is placed, and their inclusion opportunities is based upon individual need assessment. Curriculum design and planning takes account of individual pupil need providing all pupils with a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum.

Pertinent information, individual to pupils, is documented in each child's one page profile, IEP and Boxall profile. The AET assessment tool is currently being considered for implementation in order to supplement the assessment strategy.

Education Health and Care Plans are used alongside termly teacher assessments, as a basis, when setting personalised targets for each child's individual education plan (IEP) and individual behaviour plan (IBP).

### Differences in Social Communication

#### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

Speech and language therapy is provided to individual students in-line with advice set out in EHCPs.

Further to this speech and language needs are assessed by school staff and referrals to speech and language therapy made where necessary.

In interviews, staff gave examples of how autistic pupils have been supported in their communication and social engagement and the positive outcomes they had achieved. One example of this was a redesign of Individual Education Plans, these have been adapted so as to ensure that EHCP objectives are fully embedded and considered in all areas of the Curriculum.

Plans identify how each autistic person prefers to communicate and what motivates them to socially interact with others. One Page Profiles include the following key information:

- preferred/most effective way of communicating
- best way of presenting information
- social interaction preferences

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

In most observations, it was found that autistic pupils were well supported in their communication. For example staff made themselves understood by simplifying or structuring verbal language and by providing visual cues. Staff spoke clearly and allowed adequate processing time, they used facial expression, tone and intonation to support spoken language and they employed individual and whole class visual support systems to good effect.

Staff were observed to have a clear focus on key vocabulary, to 'talk up' activities to build anticipation and to use activities that provided an element of challenge which the children found engaging.

In all observations activities had been planned to provide autistic pupils with the opportunity and purpose to communicate as part of a group or 1:1 with staff, and in some with each other.

Where best practice was observed, which was in the majority of classrooms, wall displays and visual clutter was well managed; displays were kept within defined borders, surfaces were kept clear and pupils only had available to them the resources that related directly to the task. This approach ensured that key information was available to autistic pupils and provided adequate structure that supported them to access it.

Further examples of observed best practice included:

- Staff used structured conversation approaches to facilitate peer to peer interactions
- Staff used both planned and incidental opportunities to teach language to help children understand and express feelings
- Staff encouraged independent thinking through their questions
- Fun activities provided opportunity for children to develop their fine motor skills e.g. squeezing/pressing, mark making, writing

In one classroom observation a teacher was observed to use too much language, frequently repeating questions rather than allowing adequate processing time. During this observed practice there was also a strong focus on Q&A, making the lesson more interactive and fun may have made the content more accessible to some of the pupils.

## Problem Solving and Self-reliance

**Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

The School's Special Educational Needs Policy states that '*All staff will address the individual learning needs of pupils by using a variety of teaching styles and techniques. We will use a wide range of resources in our teaching to ensure that individual learning styles are addressed.*' During the assessment period the adviser saw many examples of how staff are achieving this, and staff interviews reinforced their commitment to this ethos.

One Page Profiles are created and updated termly in collaboration with pupils and their parents, and where appropriate with other professionals. These are displayed in classrooms so as to provide a quick reference tool for all staff which ensures a shared knowledge base and which helps class teams to provide consistent support. A sample of One Page Profiles were viewed during the assessment process and were found to be specific to different pupils, information included:

- How to break down, structure and present tasks
- How best to assist pupils to express choices, preferences and opinions
- Individual strengths, challenges, approaches to problem-solving

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

In most observations, it was found that autistic pupils were well supported in their problem solving and self-reliance. Observed examples of how autistic pupils are provided with opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills included:

- Visual teaching methods and approaches; the use of video, images, text to support spoken language
- Learning through play/fun; hands on experiential learning

In some observed lessons pupils were given opportunity to be responsible for collecting their own work/resources and in all observed lessons pupils were seen to be on task and engaged in learning. The pupil's response suggests that they understood the respective tasks, that there was appropriate differentiation and that learning was interesting to them.

The following best practice was observed in all classrooms, and the wider school environment was found to be largely clutter free. Both visual and physical structures were being used to good effect to assist pupils to work out what they must do now, and what they are expected to do next, for example the following systems and approaches were seen to be embedded in to practice:

- Defined seating plans and pupils only had access to the relevant resources
- Class visual timetables and labelled resources
- One page profiles in place and displayed
- Floor areas taped off/social distancing reminders

Further observed best practice used to support individual and/or whole class need, and which was consistently seen to be used to good effect to support autistic pupils to become more independent and to do things by themselves included:

- Traffic light system in place for those who need it ( work independently/with support/ask for help)
- Visual timers
- Work checklist – self- check work is completed (not task list)
- Visual break down of the lesson provided and children encouraged to reference it to see what is 'next'

In some observations practice to help autistic pupils could have been improved had staff made more reference to visual aids, for example to encourage autistic pupils to know what was 'next' before verbally prompting them to move on. This approach would further support personal independence skill development.

In one lesson practice to help autistic pupils develop skills and confidence in actively expressing opinion, making and taking decisions could have been improved had pupils had access to a visual break down of the activity. The provision of a visual break down could have supported them to better understand the progression of the lesson and to know what was expected 'now' and 'next'.

In addition whilst the teacher did engage pupils in a really good discussion, in which all children were actively engaged, however as the key words were not recorded there was a missed opportunity to provide them with an accessible visual reference.

## Sensory Experiences

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

The school has in place a transparent process that ensures the sensory needs of all pupils are considered and acted upon. If a teacher or parent raises concerns about a child in relation to sensory processing difficulties a discussion between the SENCO, class teacher and parents takes place followed by a detailed assessment of the child. Agreed strategies are then implemented and monitored by the SENCO, typically for a term, and where concerns continue a referral to the OT team can be made by school.

The school shared a case study which summarised how they had undertaken an assessment of a pupils sensory needs, formed a plan and who they collaborated with. Staff provided a personalised sensory toolkit which enabled the pupil to access regular sensory breaks throughout the school day, this included access to the mindfulness room/therapeutic suite. The pupil is now better able to communicate their thoughts and feelings, and whilst staff have recognised some triggers to dysregulation better understanding these continues to be a focus of their work.

Teaching assistants attended sensory training in the last academic year and next term whole school training in this area is planned. In addition two staff members have accessed external training, sensory processing and sensory circuit training, these staff have additional responsibility as designates 'sensory champions'.

As required, class teams can approach the designated staff champions in order to be supported in addressing children's sensory needs, and for pupils that require specific approaches their needs are recorded within the IEP document.

The school plan to introduce a Profile to capture sensory needs although this new initiative has been delayed due to the pandemic.

The school shared plans to further develop a sensory room, this project has been delayed due to work being re-prioritised because of the pandemic. At the time of writing this report it was suggested the work may begin in the coming weeks.

### **Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

In all observations it was found that autistic pupils were well supported with respect to their sensory needs.

Pupils are developing appropriate self-regulation strategies, for example on two occasions autistic pupils were observed to move away from the group teaching area and seek out sensory stimuli, and in another a child had their head covered and on the desk. In each of these observed examples staff respected the children's responses whilst sensitively providing support to re-engage them in learning, in their own time and at a level they felt comfortable with.

In the majority of classes focal teaching areas were not visually cluttered and the following best practice was observed in all lessons, ensuring that autistic pupils were being very well supported to regulate sensory experiences which interfere with what they are trying to do or which may cause them discomfort:

- Use of ear defenders

- Acceptance of pupils wearing their own items of clothing (coats, slippers etc.)
- Ready access to resources such as fiddle toys, preferred items
- Planned natural movement breaks

Autistic pupils presented as feeling safe and calm and were observed to be on task in all observed lessons and activities.

In one observations, practice could have been improved by reducing the visual clutter.

## Emotional Well-being

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

Longford Park School provides training and support to staff to enable them to support the emotional wellbeing of autistic pupils, training has included emotion coaching and attachment, trauma and healing. Some specific interventions are also provided, for example counselling and myHappyMind (a complete mental and emotional wellbeing package children, parents and teachers).

The school use the Boxall Profile when undertaking assessments of children's social, emotional and behavioural development.

A Behaviour Policy is in place and is written in very positive terms, it outlines the graduated approach to supporting pupils. The policy makes clear references and links the role of pupils, parents/carers and staff in adopting the school motto of '*Believe, Belong, Become*'.

The School have adopted a relational approach and have a draft Relational Policy. Cited policy objectives include:

- To provide a guide for all staff supporting pupils at Longford Park School with challenges and dysregulation that are supportive and follow research outcomes of how best to support pupils with SEMH and adverse childhood experiences
- To help children develop a sense of worth, identity and build self-esteem and understanding of themselves

The School's Special Educational Needs Policy states that the school '*strives for all classrooms and teaching experiences to be Autism friendly*'.

The policy also states '*carefully planned and designed environments*' and '*multi-sensory approaches to teaching and learning*' when describing how this is achieved. The adviser would endorse these sentiments, having undertaken a number of observations and seeing how these commitments are embedded in to teaching and learning opportunities.

Individual pupil profiles include key information about every child and these highlight individual's strengths and difficulties. They also include a personalised 5 step calm plan to share best practice of how to best support each pupil respectively.

Where required, pupils have individual behaviour plans.

As a direct result of Covid-19 the therapeutic offer at Longford Park has been temporarily reduced whilst staff are redeployed to manage class bubbles. The school are currently providing counselling, mentoring/family support, mindfulness/My Happy Mind.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

In the all observations it was found that autistic pupils were well supported in their emotional wellbeing. For example in order to manage the environment and to ameliorate environmental anxiety and distress the following were observed to be in place:

- Classrooms were calm and had a low level of visual and auditory stimulus
- Pupils had access to relevant sensory resources available, both planned and as required
- Where verbal praise was given it was attributed to actions
- Pupils had the means of requesting withdrawal to a chill-out area
- Staff gave opportunities to promote personal independence

In the majority of observations it was found that staff had considered and made best use of both visual and physical structure.

In all observations relationships between staff and pupils and between class teams were very positive. Feedback from the three parents that spoke to the adviser, and those shared in comments on the survey, further demonstrate the warmth and dedication of the staff team at Longford park School.

Best practice was observed in the way that staff joined children at their level to participate with them during play and learning. Autistic pupils were engaged in meaningful activities; through their approaches they were able to engage all pupils and they used creative approaches to ensure that learning was both accessible and fun.

Teacher planning and incidental learning experiences were used well to provide autistic pupils with opportunity to enjoy the challenge of trying out, or learning, new activities or skills. For example one child was observed to be supported to problem solve, rather than quickly stepping in the staff member held back their direct support and instead used supportive techniques to assist the pupil to work through the problem and find their own solution.

In some observations staff could have provided a clearer transition between activities, such as making reference to visual checklists and by using additional visual cues. For example to help autistic pupils better achieve a sense of completion and achievement during lessons that are currently being led remotely it would benefit school based staff if they had sight of a supporting lesson plan. This would enable them to produce accompanying visual resources that would bridge the gap and further support communication between the person leading the session (remotely) and the person facilitating the lesson in class.

## **Consultation with Autistic People**

There are embedded systems in place to capture and record children's views and autistic pupils make regular choices and decisions throughout the school day.

Staff engage autistic pupils in the development of One Page Profiles and 5 Step Plans, and they are included as part of annual review meetings with the pupil voice being recorded as part of this process.

## Consultation with families of Autistic People

13 family members provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. The full results are shown as an appendix to this report.

8 parents said the understanding staff have of their relative's autistic needs is always good, whilst 3 said it was mostly good. Only 2 family members disagreed and responded saying it was ok. All comments received were extremely positive about the work of the school. For example, one parent writes: *'The staff know my child very well and have a good understanding of his needs. He is well supported and he has some fantastic relationships with staff'*.

The school value the knowledge and experience parents hold and provide opportunities for them to contribute to the shared view of a child's needs and the best ways of supporting them.

Parents are encouraged to attend parents evenings, meet the teacher events and curriculum or topical workshops, where possible.

Class teachers and the SENCO also make themselves available to discuss thoughts and concerns as they arise, either over the phone or at a pre-arranged meeting time.

The adviser spoke with 3 parents, all of which were very satisfied with their child's placement at Longford Park School, the understanding staff have of their children's individual learning and development needs and in the communication they receive from the school. All 3 parents said the school staff are approachable and that they work in partnership with them. One parent said *"it's the best school going!"* and another said her son was *"like a different child since attending Longford Park School"*.

## Section 3: Summary of assessment

### What the provision does particularly well

#### **What stood out as particular strengths:**

The school have in place robust and effective systems to identify and assess sensory needs, and they have invested in training staff and allocating resources. In all observations it was noted that pupils had ready access to a range of resources that were being fully utilised.

The school are mindful of providing environments which are conducive to learning for autistic pupils. They follow the SPELL ethos and engage pupils in the process of environmental audits and review. The calm, well-structured environment of the school creates an enabling and predictable environment for autistic pupils.

The emotional wellbeing needs of autistic pupils are being met effectively through whole class and individualised systems and approaches. Staff know their classes well and provide timely support to assist with self-regulation and discreet behaviour management. Throughout the time observed pupils presented as calm and were engaged in learning.

#### **What else the provision does well:**

Partnership working provides a forum for open discussion with parents and staff reflection positively contributes to person-centred planning and reviews.

## What the provision could develop further

### Priorities for the provision:

The use of visual aids, that provide a breakdown of lessons/activities, are being well utilised in some classrooms. The school could look at the benefits of this approach and further generalise its use to ensure, where appropriate, more pupils can benefit from this.

The school could look at ways they can bridge the gap, to better support communication, during remote teaching sessions.

The adviser endorses the schools view that the development of sensory diets and sensory profiles will help staff to develop a clear and consistent approach to addressing identified sensory needs. CPD should continue in order to ensure that staff further their knowledge and skills in this area of practice.

The review of autism specific assessment tools should continue and relevant applications be implemented in order to supplement the current assessment strategy for autistic pupils.

### Other areas to consider:

The school re-designed the format of IEPs last year, ongoing evaluation and review should continue in order to ensure the new documentation works effectively.

## APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS

### Families of Autistic Persons

Feedback questionnaire on Longford Park School to be completed before 28/01/2021

Please note that written comments are shared with the provision but removed from the final report.

1. The support my relative is given is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		23.08%	3
3	mostly good		7.69%	1
4	always good		69.23%	9
			answered	13

### 1. The support my relative is given is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
skipped		0

### 2. The understanding that staff have for my relative@SQ@s autistic needs is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 poor	0.00%	0
2 ok, but could be better	15.38%	2
3 mostly good	23.08%	3
4 always good	61.54%	8
answered		13
skipped		0

### 3. The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 poor	15.38%	2
2 ok, but could be better	0.00%	0
3 mostly good	23.08%	3
4 always good	61.54%	8
answered		13
skipped		0

### 4. The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 poor	15.38%	2
2 ok, but could be better	0.00%	0
3 mostly good	38.46%	5
4 always good	46.15%	6
answered		13
skipped		0

4. The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...

	Response Percent	Response Total