



Mount Pleasant Primary Social Communication Resourced Provision



Welcome to our school!

A message from Mrs. J Blackham

It is my pleasure to introduce you to our school, and more specifically to our Resourced Provision for children with Social Communication Difficulties. The Resourced Provision for up to 22 children was established within Mount Pleasant Primary School part of the LEAs Local Offer.



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The motto of our school of ‘Live to learn’ and it is key at Mount Pleasant Primary. The enhanced provision compliments our inclusive ethos.

We expect excellent behaviour, kindness, respect and good manners from our children – and in return we promise to give each and every one of our children an

excellent education, within a small, caring school community.

We understand that it can be difficult to decide whether to move your child from their local area to access more enhanced provision. Therefore, we have produced this guide to answer some of the questions which you may have as a parent looking to join our school.

We hope you find this guide useful; should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us – our details are included at the end of the guide.

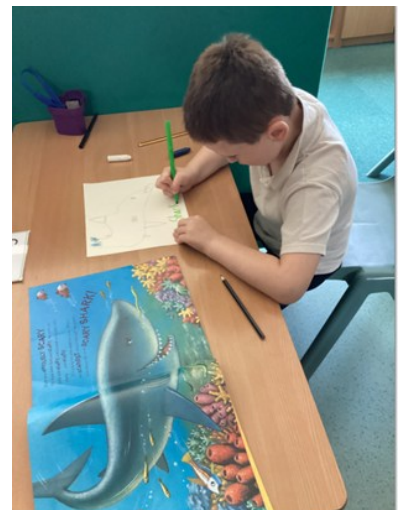
Mrs. Jo Blackham

Why would my child access Mount Pleasant Resource d Provision?

The majority of children accessing our resourced provision have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Decisions on placement are made by a multi professional team at a termly panel meeting. When a place in the provision is decided upon, a transition programme to introduce the child gradually is agreed by the provision staff, present school and parents. Where appropriate, assessed placements are arranged involving a set period of time where the needs of the child are assessed before a long term placement is offered.

How would my child get to Mount Pleasant Primary?

Generally, our children arrive to school by taxi if they do not live within walking distance of our school. The taxis are provided by the Local Authority and are free to parents. In most instances, children from our Provision travel in groups together, in minibus style taxis. If your child were to be offered a place, the transport team will contact you to arrange travel. For reference, their contact number is detailed in 'useful contacts' should you have any questions. All taxis have an escort to ensure your child is safe and happy throughout their journey and passed to member of Mount Pleasant staff upon arrival.





WHAT IS AN AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER?

Autistic Spectrum Disorder describes a developmental disability which affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. It is de-

scribed as a 'spectrum' because there are a wide range of behaviours and difficulties which appear to have autistic tendencies. It can affect people across the range of intellectual ability. There is no cure for ASD, it is a life long condition and can be genetically linked. People who are diagnosed as being autistic have impairment in the 3 areas known as the Triad of Impairment. These are:-

1. Impairment of Language and Communication

Difficulties with language and all forms of communication, including facial expression, gesture and other body language. Some of the things that will be visible in people with ASD include:

Facial expression being 'out of line' with speech

A lack of pointing to share attention

An inappropriate use of, or poor quality, eye-contact

A restricted repertoire of gestures

A lack of speech, or impaired use of speech eg. pedantic speech, odd intonation, use it out of social context

A literal interpretation of what is said

Difficulty understanding jokes/idioms/sarcasm

2. Impairment of Social Interaction

Difficulties with understanding and skills needed for social interaction. This is shown in a number of ways which include:

A lack of attention to other people

Failing to comment on or show things to others

Not responding when addressed as a member of a group

Behaving inappropriately to the social context

A lack of, or poor awareness of the feelings of others

A lack of, or poor awareness or incomprehension of other people's thoughts/ beliefs

3. Impairment of Flexibility of Thought

There will be evidence of rigidity and inflexibility of thought processes, and a difficulty in producing mental images of what is not present or has not taken place. This can lead to compulsive/obsessive behaviour and a resistance to change in routine. Some of the things visible will include:

A dependence on routine

Being inflexible

Resisting change

Having obsessive rituals

Being preoccupied with a limited range of interests

Poor imitation skills

A lack of, or minimal symbolic play

Difficulty with generalisation

All 3 impairments need to be evident for a diagnosis to be made, but a variation in the overall severity of the difficulties and the way in which they show themselves will be apparent in each individual.

What we will provide

Inclusion is at the heart of our entire school. We are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for all of our children, and work hard to ensure that the needs of our pupils are met across the day.



In order to meet this challenge, our provision has:

- *A dedicated provision manager and SENCo to oversee the provision for all children with additional needs across the school.
- *Dedicated and qualified staff in the field of ASD to directly support children across the school. All staff have completed relevant training, with provision staff holding more advanced qualifications.
- *Clear systems for developing social interaction skills taught across the curriculum, ensuring your child is always well supported and appropriately challenged.
- *A level of staffing, higher than that normally available in mainstream, but not 1:1.
- *A family ethos, where each child and their needs is understood by all of the school community.
- * An open door policy for parents – as we recognise that children attending settings which are possibly not in a family's local area can be a daunting experience*
- *A headteacher fully committed to inclusion and high quality experiences for all children.

Evidence based interventions used throughout our school for Autistic children

Objects of Reference

An object of reference is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity, place, or person. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Therefore using objects is considered the most concrete way of representing a word.

Song Signifiers

Simple songs used to signify to a child that a transition or activity is about to happen (e.g. a snack song, a going home song). Adults often use these when children are at an early stage of symbolic development.

Intensive Interaction

An approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development. This is usually carried out 1:1 with an individual. The support adults are responsive to delayed or subtle communication of an individual, that may be intentional or non-intentional and observe and respond to desirable and motivating shared moments. Intensive interaction can take place in a range of environments and is delivered by appropriately trained staff.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

With the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) children learn to communicate within a social context, by giving a picture of a desired item to their communicative partner in exchange for the item using a specified process. This helps young people to develop the ability to initiate communication, and to develop an understanding of the power of communication. There are then six phases of PECS to follow as communication competence grows.

Training in the approach is recommended.

This approach can be used with social partners but careful consideration should be given to the child's symbolic understanding (whether they know that an object or picture represents an object, action, place or activity. For those at a pre-symbolic level, progress may be limited.

Now Next Timetable

This is a form of visual timetable for Language Partners, with two symbols or photos – one indicates what is happening now and one indicates what will happen next. The symbol can be used to support transition. Social Partners might understand an object timetable indicating what is happening now, with an object to take to the next activity to support transition.

Sensory Diet

A sensory diet has nothing to do with food. It is a carefully designed series of physical activities and adaptations, which are designed to give each individual child the sensory input they need. Sensory diets can be used alongside other supports. Completing a sensory diet routine each day can help children to get into a “just right” state, which can help them pay attention in school, learn new skills and socialise with others.

Sensory Circuits

A Sensory Circuit is a structured set of activities, designed by Occupational Therapists, which are active, physical and fun. Sensory Circuits can be run for individuals or small groups and are often held on arrival at school or after lunch, to support children to be well regulated on return to classroom activities. It can stay set up in a room for children to access as necessary throughout the day. The circuit takes no more than 20-30 minutes to complete. A circuit runs in 3 sections, based on the theories of sensory processing and sensory integration and the practical consideration of providing a structured sensory motor input.

1. Alerting activities
2. Organising activities
3. Calming activities– this is very important to provide input to ensure that as children leave the circuit and enter the classroom they are as calm and centred and ready for the day as possible.

Safe Space

A Safe Space is an area of the learning environment where a child can choose to go when they feel overwhelmed or need time and space to regulate behaviour. This might be a range of things depending on the individual and the context. (e.g. a pop up tent, a blanket they can crawl under, a high backed chair in a quiet area). It does not contain activities or objects to play with. Children and staff should be taught to understand what it is and how to use it. It is important that the child makes a choice to use this and they are not directed to go.

Safe Spaces should be:

- ☑ Readily accessible to the child so that they can go safely and independently when they need to
- ☑ Available whenever they are needed by the child, for as long as they are needed
- ☑ Specific to one child, with their name on it and not a shared space. In some classes you may need several individual Safe Spaces
- ☑ When they are in there, it's as if they left the building

Movement breaks

Planned and scheduled or spontaneous breaks where the individual or group is given the opportunity to move to support self or mutual regulation. The movement choice can be personalised and a movement break can be done anywhere, anytime. You don't need a huge classroom or a large room to do this, you don't need to put everyone into their PE kits, you don't need to be outside, the weather doesn't need to be a certain temperature, and you don't have to have set times.

Fidget toys

A fidget toy is a great self-regulation tool that helps individuals to focus, calm, and help with paying attention and retaining information. The act of squeezing, pushing, pulling or moving a small fidget object can help get a student to sit and listen. It is a great physical outlet allowing the brain to focus. Different people have different preferences and you might want to have a (carefully chosen and individually risk assessed) selection for the child to choose from. A range of fidget toys are available and for some children, common objects can also be useful (e.g. blu tac to squeeze, a paperclip, a piece of textured, shiny, fleecy or furry fabric).

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is a fun and very sensory based 4 stage programme and engaging joint attention intervention that aims to develop the play and interaction of children on the autism spectrum. Attention Autism has been the subject of several research studies and has been linked to developments in:

- Play skills
- Joint attention
- Interaction
- Expressive language

TEACCH and Structured Teaching

The TEACCH approach includes a focus on the person with autism and the development of a program around this person's skills, interests and needs. The major priorities include centring on the individual, understanding autism, adopting appropriate adaptations, and a broadly based intervention strategy building on existing skills and interests. By focusing on the individual we mean that the person is the priority, rather than any philosophical notion like inclusion, discrete trial training, facilitated communication etc. TEACCH emphasises individualised assessment to understand the individual better and also "the culture of autism," suggesting that people with autism are part of a distinctive group with common characteristics that are different, but not necessarily inferior. Emphasising assessment and the culture of autism requires us to understand people with autism as they are and to build our programs around where each person is functioning. This does not suggest lower or higher expectations; it simply requires starting where people are and helping them to develop as far as they can go. This is different from espousing a model of "normal" behaviour for everyone and requiring people with autism to fit into that mould, whether that is comfortable for them or not. Structured teaching is an important priority because of the TEACCH research and experience that structure fits the "culture of autism" more effectively than any other techniques we have observed.

Organising the physical environment, developing schedules and work systems, making expectations clear and explicit, and using visual materials have been effective ways of developing skills and allowing people with autism to use these skills independently of direct adult prompting and cueing.

Targeted Visual Supports

There are a range of 'non-manualised' visual supports which can be used to:

- ☐ Reduce anxiety
- ☐ Increase predictability
- ☐ Support communication
- ☐ Increase independence and participation

These might be at an object, photo, symbol, picture or word level and include:

- ☐ Visual schedules for daily or social routines; task or activity schedules explaining the resources required and steps in an activity
- ☐ Timers or visuals to indicate the passage of time

Visual Timetable (symbols)

An individual visual timetable is recommended for all children with ASD. It can support predictability and desirability each day. It supports transitions and managing familiar and unfamiliar as well as unexpected and expected events. The length and type of timetable depends on the child's stage. In addition you may use a whole class visual timetable.

- ☐ It is a sequence of symbols usually organised from left to right.
- ☐ On the left is the current activity square and the rest of the symbols indicate the sequence of events for all or part of a day.
- ☐ When an activity is finished the child put the symbol in a finished pocket and puts the next activity on the current activity square.
- ☐ The child is taught to use it and the adults support it by ensuring that it is true (i.e. the symbol on the current activity square is what is happening now) and that it is accessible and visible.

Social Stories™

A Social Story accurately describes a context, skill, achievement, or concept according to 10 defining criteria.

- ☐ It can support the person with the predictability or desirability of a social situation, to support positive engagement and reduce anxiety.
- ☐ The specific criteria guide Social Story research, development, and implementation to ensure an overall patient and supportive quality, and a format, "voice", content, and learning experience that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the child, adolescent, or adult with autism.

Comic Strip Conversations

An approach designed by Carol Gray, which combines stick-figures with "conversation symbols"" to illustrate what people say and think during conversations.

Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism and related disorders.

Social Skills

The provision offers opportunity to develop skills that require teaching beyond those not generally available in mainstream classrooms. These include:

- *Making choices and decisions
- *Social skills e.g.. turn taking, respecting the needs of others
- *Appropriate behaviour
- *Language and communication skills.



Targeted one to one intervention is delivered where necessary to children of all ages. Older children access sequences of lessons focusing on the following areas. These are then assessed against a small step assessment system named PIVATS (PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR VALUED ASSESSMENT & TARGETTED LEARNING)



Curriculum



A flexible approach to a broad and balanced curriculum which enables us to accommodate individual needs and allows the children to reach their potential. Criteria for accessing our provision is based on the expectation that the

child can access at least 50% meaningful mainstream learning. It is expected that children will make progress towards age expected targets to the best of their ability, and sit all assessments in the same way as their peers. All staff in school are aware of ASD and the needs of these children. Children are supported by an adult when learning in mainstream classes, but when they are comfortable and confident in the environment the supporting adult will gradually withdraw where possible.

Learning Environment

*A low arousal environment with structured programmes and daily routines.

*Work stations and low stimulus environment

*Tasks broken down into small steps.

*Visual support for learning.

*Space and time for children to cope with and calm down as necessary.

*Organisation and Independence

*Interacting and working with others.



What involvement can we have as parents at Mount Pleasant Primary?

We very much value the contribution that parents can make to their child's education. In order for parents to be fully involved in the life of the school, when they generally do not drop off or pick up their child from school, both school and home must work hard at this important aspect of school life. You are always welcome to call in to see how your child is getting on, so long as you let us know that you are coming. We stay in contact by:

- *Home-School diaries for school and family to communicate with each other.
- *Regular phone contact with child's 'Key Worker' if there are any issues.
- *Termly parent meetings to discuss academic and social progress.
- *Half termly 'tea and talk' sessions for parents to come and chat informally with each other and staff around issues pertinent to them.
- *Review Meetings



Transition

The nature of Social Communication difficulties and ASD, it is very likely that once a child has a secure placement with us, they will not return to their previous school. This is because they need continued support to develop an understanding of their needs and strategies to deal with their difficulties. At the end of their time at Mount Pleasant, the children may transition into specialist provision, a secondary school with enhanced provision, or into their local mainstream comprehensive.



Who are my main points of contact if I have any questions or worries?

Sharon Minikin—SENDCo and Provision Leader 01325 244950

Jo. Blackham - Headteacher 01325 244950

Transport Arrangements for Darlington Local Authority 01325 405333

Placements Team at Darlington Local Authority 03000 265872

Educational Psychology Department 03000 263333





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