

Autism Early Support Curriculum Policy

For internal use only

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Teachers

Policy Owner:

Teachers

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is: The National Autism Plan (2003) states that targeted interventions should begin as early as possible. AES is committed to providing the earliest possible specialist intervention for children with social and communication differences / difficulties.

2. Scope

This Policy applies directly to all AES Employees and volunteers.

3. Terms and definitions

In this Policy, the following capitalised words and expressions shall have the meaning ascribed below:

“**AES**” means Autism Early Support Trust Limited.

“**AES Employees**” means individuals who have employment with AES, board members of AES, and, to the extent applicable, consultants and employees hired via staffing companies working for AES.

4. Curriculum

Autistic children and those with other communication difficulties need to have aspects of the curriculum presented to them in a way that takes account of their unique learning styles. This means that, especially in the early years, methods and approaches which may be appropriate for neurotypical children will not necessarily help Autistic children to access learning opportunities in the same way.

Curriculum plans at the Autism Early Support Trust Limited (AES) nursery reflect a balance between the unique needs of each individual child and the broad and balanced requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. Our nursery is staffed by professionals with specific expertise in this field.

There are half termly, fortnightly and daily curriculum plans as well as an overview of a year’s scheme of work. These are all made available for parents to view. Staff are all involved in the curriculum and individual planning and record keeping. (See Assessment and Record Keeping policy).

Children attend the nursery for a minimum of two, and a maximum of six, sessions per week (see Admissions Policy). There are two formats of session: ‘Core’ sessions incorporate all of the approaches and strategies laid out in this document. ‘Enrichment’ sessions include further small group learning opportunities in activities such as music and sensory circuits. Each family is invited to attend a termly meeting regarding their child’s targets.

5. Specialist Provision

Our nursery provides a specialist environment with educational/therapeutic approaches which are tailored to meet the needs of children with social communication, interaction and sensory differences. Three main teaching rooms are used – the main classroom, the messy play room and the specially designed soft play/sensory room. The garden has a sensory area, a soft tarmac area, as well as a large trampoline and Summer House. Toys and resources made available outdoors reflect the curriculum offered inside.

AES incorporates the SCERTS model (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports). This is a research-based educational approach and multidisciplinary framework that directly addresses the core challenges faced by Autistic children and their families.

SCERTS focuses on the following areas:

- The development of spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression and secure and trusting relationships with children and adults.
- The development of the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress, and to be most available for learning and interacting.
- The development and implementation of supports to help partners respond to the person's needs and interests, modify the environment, and provide tools to enhance learning.

Alongside this, identifying meaningful and relevant strategies is instrumental in developing targets and individualised support plans for each child, such as:

- Structured learning supports (e.g., use of visuals and emotional regulation supports)
- Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC)
- Child led play and interaction (e.g. intensive interaction)

Underpinning all approaches used at AES is the belief that a thorough knowledge of early child development and an embracing of neurodiversity provides the framework from which to understand best the strengths and learning needs of each child.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage

At the same time, AES enables children to access, engage and participate in all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is the unique interplay between enabling children to access experiences and learning, whilst catering for individual children's differences, particular needs and learning styles that distinguishes the curriculum and teaching approaches used at our nursery from most other Early Years settings.

The four guiding themes of the EYFS are incorporated into our planning to ensure we address all of the child's needs. These are:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- An enabling environment
- Learning and Development

The full range of learning and development areas are offered. Practitioners reflect on the different ways children learn, incorporating into their planning and guidance the characteristics of effective learning – all of which may present differently in Autistic children.

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically.

The seven areas of learning and development are:

Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (C&L)
- Physical Development (PD)

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The environment at our nursery is organised to promote learning for young children who have differences in their emotional regulation, communication, interaction, physical and sensory processing. The specialised environment is created by:

- enabling a low arousal space
- adopting a communication based curriculum
- utilising visual supports
- pacing activities
- monitoring demands
- making adaptations to meet the child's physical and sensory differences
- using the children's interests

AES has developed a large number of specialist resources and materials which enhance our ability to teach and deliver the EYFS curriculum, adapted and differentiated to meet the particular needs of children with significant communication and interaction difficulties.

Our nursery offers parent support through hosting parent coffee mornings and offering access to parent support groups. We have a library of relevant books, articles and resources, which parents and staff can borrow. We ask that you sign for these in our library book when you borrow them. We also hold regular training workshops for parents and other professionals.

Much is being researched and learnt about ways to optimise learning for children with communication difficulties. AES is committed to keeping abreast with the latest developments and training in this field.