

SCHOOL POLICIES

Autism Policy



This policy was adopted by the Governors on: March 2024

The last review of this policy was: June 2026

This policy is due for review on: June 2028

Signed Headteacher: N. Craddock

Signed Chair of Governing Body: D. Garside

1. Rationale

At Hudson Primary School, we believe that every autistic child should experience high-quality teaching, meaningful inclusion and a learning environment that responds to their individual strengths, needs and aspirations.

We recognise that autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference and that autistic children have a wide range of strengths, needs, interests and ways of experiencing the world. There is no single approach that works for every autistic child. Our provision is therefore personalised, evidence-informed and responsive to each child's communication, sensory, social, emotional and learning needs.

Autistic pupils are an integral part of our school community. They are included in classroom learning, wider school life, enrichment opportunities and community experiences, with appropriate adaptations and support where required.

Hudson Primary School is committed to developing the knowledge, confidence and expertise of all staff so that autistic pupils are understood, supported and enabled to flourish.

Our approach is underpinned by our school expectations:

Ready. Respectful. Safe.

We aim to ensure that autistic pupils:

- develop confidence and independence;
- communicate in ways that are meaningful to them;
- build positive relationships;
- experience belonging and participation;
- develop their academic, social and emotional skills;
- have access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum;
- develop their strengths and interests;
- are supported to regulate and understand their emotions;
- develop the skills they need for life beyond primary school.

2. What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference that affects how a person experiences and interacts with the world.

Autistic people have individual strengths, preferences and needs. Autism can affect people in very different ways and at different levels of support.

Autistic children may experience differences in areas including:

- social communication and interaction;
- understanding and using language;
- interpreting non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice;
- flexibility of thinking and adapting to change;
- sensory processing;
- emotional regulation;

- attention and focus;
- highly developed or focused interests;
- anxiety and uncertainty;
- repetitive movements, behaviours or routines.

Some autistic children may experience periods of significant distress, which can include what are sometimes described as **meltdowns or shutdowns**. At Hudson, we seek to understand the communication and needs underlying a child's presentation rather than viewing behaviour simply as something to be stopped or punished.

We recognise that autistic children should not be expected to change who they are in order to fit an environment that could reasonably be adapted to meet their needs.

3. Autism at Hudson Primary School

Hudson Primary School has a significant level of expertise in supporting autistic pupils across both our mainstream and Autism Resourced Provision.

Autistic pupils are educated across the school, with provision determined by individual need and the child's educational placement.

Our Autism Resourced Provision currently provides four mixed-age classrooms for pupils with autism who meet the relevant Local Authority admission criteria. Pupils accessing the provision have individual Education, Health and Care Plans and receive support tailored to their identified needs.

Whether a child is educated within mainstream provision or the Autism Resourced Provision, we seek to provide:

- high expectations;
- appropriate challenge;
- high-quality teaching;
- individualised support;
- meaningful communication opportunities;
- opportunities for independence;
- appropriate sensory support;
- support for emotional regulation;
- positive relationships;
- access to enrichment and wider school life.

Our aim is not simply to provide support for autistic pupils, but to create an environment in which autistic pupils can **learn, communicate, belong and experience excellence**.

4. Our Approach

Our approach is based on understanding the individual child.

We consider:

- What does this child enjoy?
- What are their strengths?

- How do they communicate?
- How do they understand and experience the world?
- What helps them to feel safe?
- What causes uncertainty or anxiety?
- How do they show that they are becoming dysregulated?
- What sensory experiences support or challenge them?
- What motivates them?
- What helps them to learn?
- What adaptations will increase their independence?

Strategies are selected according to individual need rather than applied automatically to every autistic pupil.

5. Communication

Communication is central to learning, relationships and independence.

Some autistic pupils may experience difficulty interpreting verbal and non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, figurative language or implied meaning. Some children may have a very literal understanding of language.

Staff therefore adapt their communication according to the needs of the individual child.

Approaches may include:

- clear, concise language;
- visual supports;
- visual timetables;
- objects of reference;
- photographs and symbols;
- communication boards;
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC);
- communication books or devices;
- modelling language;
- allowing additional processing time;
- checking understanding;
- Social Stories;
- Intensive Interaction;
- structured social communication activities;
- Lego-based therapy approaches where appropriate;
- advice and programmes from Speech and Language Therapy;
- use of pupils' individual communication systems across settings.

Where a child uses an alternative or additional communication system, we seek to ensure that this is respected and available throughout their school day.

6. Emotional Regulation and Wellbeing

At Hudson, we recognise that behaviour is communication.

A change in behaviour may indicate that a child is experiencing anxiety, sensory overload, frustration, uncertainty, communication difficulty or another unmet need.

Our approach is relational, preventative and restorative. We seek to understand **why** a child is struggling and identify what can be changed or adapted to support them.

Strategies may include:

- co-regulation;
- de-escalation strategies;
- calm and predictable adult responses;
- safe and quiet spaces;
- sensory regulation opportunities;
- sensory circuits;
- movement breaks;
- relaxation activities;
- Social Stories;
- visual supports;
- personalised regulation plans;
- positive reinforcement;
- positive noticing;
- individualised reward or motivation systems where appropriate;
- preparation for potentially challenging situations;
- support from appropriately trained staff;
- advice from relevant professionals.

Where a pupil becomes highly dysregulated, staff prioritise safety, reduce demands where appropriate, use agreed de-escalation strategies and support the child to return to regulation.

Any restrictive physical intervention is used only where lawful, necessary and proportionate to maintain safety and in accordance with the school's relevant policy and staff training.

7. Flexibility, Predictability and Change

Some autistic pupils may find change, uncertainty or unexpected events particularly difficult.

We therefore aim to make expectations and routines as predictable as possible while gradually developing pupils' ability to manage appropriate changes and uncertainty.

Strategies may include:

- visual timetables;
- now-and-next boards;
- advance preparation for changes;
- visual countdowns;
- timers;
- transition objects;
- Social Stories;
- structured choices;
- consistent routines;

- consistent language;
- familiar adults where appropriate;
- transition visits;
- preparation for new environments;
- additional processing time;
- use of individual interests and motivators;
- carefully planned opportunities to develop flexibility and independence.

Predictability should not mean that children are prevented from developing flexibility. We aim to provide the right balance between **security and appropriate challenge**.

8. Sensory Processing

Autistic pupils may experience sensory information differently.

Sound, light, touch, movement, smell, taste and visual information may be experienced as overwhelming, distracting or uncomfortable. Other pupils may actively seek particular sensory experiences.

Sensory differences can affect concentration, communication, emotional regulation, behaviour and access to learning.

We therefore consider sensory needs as part of understanding and supporting each individual pupil.

The environment may include:

- calm and clearly structured spaces;
- reduced visual clutter where appropriate;
- clearly defined learning areas;
- access to quieter spaces;
- sensory activities;
- sensory circuits;
- movement breaks;
- planned opportunities for physical activity;
- sensory trays and activities;
- access to appropriate sensory equipment.

Individual equipment may include, where appropriate:

- ear defenders or headphones;
- sensory toys;
- alternative seating;
- wobble boards;
- movement equipment;
- tactile resources;
- other specialist equipment identified through assessment.

Sensory equipment is selected according to individual need and is not used as a replacement for appropriate teaching, communication or environmental adaptations.

9. Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed to provide a broad, balanced and ambitious education for all pupils.

For autistic pupils, curriculum planning takes account of individual communication, sensory, social, emotional and learning needs while maintaining high expectations.

Our curriculum aims to develop:

- knowledge and understanding;
- communication;
- independence;
- problem solving;
- creativity;
- resilience;
- physical development;
- emotional wellbeing;
- social understanding;
- confidence;
- preparation for life beyond primary school.

Within the Autism Resourced Provision, pupils may work across different curriculum approaches according to their developmental stage, learning profile and individual needs.

Pre-formal learning

For pupils with complex learning needs, learning may focus on:

- communication;
- engagement;
- interaction;
- sensory development;
- early cognitive skills;
- independence;
- functional skills;
- individual motivators and interests.

Semi-formal learning

A semi-formal approach may provide highly structured learning through meaningful themes and experiences, with a strong focus on developing functional skills, communication, independence and engagement.

Formal learning

Where pupils are ready, teaching becomes increasingly structured around the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding linked to the National Curriculum.

Pupils in the Autism Resourced Provision access Hudson's curriculum where appropriate, with adaptations and personalised learning pathways enabling them to make meaningful progress.

The Cornerstones curriculum is used across Hudson and provides a creative and thematic approach mapped to the National Curriculum.

10. Inclusion and Participation

Autistic pupils are members of the whole school community.

We seek to ensure that autistic pupils have meaningful opportunities to participate in:

- whole-school events;
- assemblies;
- celebrations;
- enrichment activities;
- educational visits;
- sporting opportunities;
- lunchtime and play opportunities;
- clubs and wider school activities;
- transition activities;
- community experiences.

Participation is supported through reasonable adjustments, preparation, appropriate staffing and individualised strategies where required.

We recognise that inclusion does not mean that every pupil must experience an activity in exactly the same way. Meaningful inclusion means enabling pupils to participate in ways that are appropriate, accessible and successful for them.

11. Independence and Life Skills

Developing independence is an important part of our provision.

We identify opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as:

- communication;
- self-care;
- organisation;
- managing personal belongings;
- making choices;
- moving independently around school;
- following routines;
- accessing the community;
- managing transitions;
- developing friendships and relationships;
- understanding personal safety.

Support is gradually adjusted to encourage pupils to become as independent as possible.

12. Family and Carer Partnership

Working in partnership with parents and carers is fundamental to effective support for autistic pupils.

Parents and carers know their children exceptionally well. Their knowledge, experience and observations are therefore an important part of understanding a pupil's strengths, needs and progress.

We aim to maintain open and respectful communication with families through appropriate channels, which may include:

- ClassDojo;
- parent meetings;
- parents' evenings;
- termly reviews;
- Annual Reviews of EHCPs;
- transition meetings;
- informal discussions with staff;
- coffee mornings and family engagement opportunities where available.

Parents and carers are encouraged to share information about changes, successful strategies, concerns and significant events that may affect their child's presentation or wellbeing.

Similarly, school will share relevant information with families and work collaboratively to identify appropriate support.

13. Working with Other Professionals

Hudson Primary School works with relevant professionals where this will support a pupil's education, development, communication, health or wellbeing.

Depending on individual need, this may include:

- Speech and Language Therapy;
- Occupational Therapy;
- Educational Psychology;
- Autism and specialist advisory services;
- physiotherapy;
- health professionals;
- social care;
- Early Help;
- other specialist services.

Advice from professionals is considered alongside the school's knowledge of the child and the views of the pupil and their family.

14. Staff Knowledge and Training

Staff expertise is fundamental to effective autism provision.

All staff are expected to develop an understanding of autism and the individual needs of pupils they support.

Professional development may include:

- introductory autism training for new staff;
- whole-school autism awareness;
- communication approaches;
- sensory processing;
- emotional regulation;
- understanding behaviour as communication;
- de-escalation;
- specific communication systems;
- support from Speech and Language Therapy and other professionals;
- training linked to individual pupils;
- opportunities to share effective practice across the school.

Staff are encouraged to remain informed about current evidence and effective practice in autism education.

Our Autism Resourced Provision also provides opportunities for staff to develop specialist expertise which can be shared across the wider school community.

15. Positive Behaviour and Safeguarding

Hudson's approach to behaviour is rooted in relationships, regulation, communication and safety.

We recognise that autistic pupils may communicate distress through behaviour and that behaviour can provide important information about unmet needs.

Staff consider:

- the context in which behaviour occurs;
- communication needs;
- sensory factors;
- changes to routine;
- anxiety;
- environmental demands;
- relationships;
- physical wellbeing;
- previous experiences;
- the function and meaning of behaviour.

Safeguarding remains central to our work. Autistic pupils may require additional consideration in relation to communication, vulnerability, personal safety, relationships and reporting concerns.

Any safeguarding concern is managed in accordance with Hudson Primary School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

16. Transition

Transitions can be particularly significant for autistic pupils.

We therefore plan transitions carefully and, where appropriate, provide:

- advance information;
- visual information;
- transition visits;
- photographs;
- social stories;
- meetings between staff;
- opportunities to meet new adults;
- information sharing with families;
- individual transition plans.

Transition planning is tailored to the needs of the individual child and may include additional preparation when moving between classes, phases, schools or into secondary education.

17. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of our autism provision is monitored through:

- pupil progress information;
- observations and learning walks;
- individual pupil reviews;
- EHCP Annual Reviews where applicable;
- parent and pupil feedback;
- staff feedback;
- monitoring of communication and independence;
- analysis of behaviour and regulation patterns where relevant;
- review of individual support strategies;
- external professional advice;
- Local Authority quality assurance and review processes.

The SENDCO and senior leaders monitor the implementation of this policy and identify priorities for staff development and improvement.

The policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier where there are significant changes to legislation, guidance, provision or school practice.

18. Our Commitment

At Hudson Primary School, we want autistic pupils to be known, understood and supported as individuals.

We will continue to develop our practice so that autistic pupils experience:

High expectations.

Meaningful inclusion.

Effective communication.

Positive relationships.

Emotional safety.

Growing independence.

A broad and ambitious curriculum.

Opportunities to thrive.

Above all, we want every autistic pupil to experience belonging and to know that they are an important part of the Hudson community.

Everyone experiences excellence.