

## Autism Accreditation Assessment

### Hedgewood School

Reference No.	28052
Assessment dates	Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> – Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> April + Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Lead Assessor	Nikki Kennedy
External Moderator	N/A
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	Yes

### Section 1: Context

#### About the Provision

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

Hedgewood is a maintained primary special day school for pupils with autism, complex communication needs and additional learning difficulties.

**Number of autistic people supported by the provision:** 170

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

4 to 11 years

Diagnosis of autism/ complex communication needs.

Range from non-verbal (will use alternative means of communication) to verbal autistic with social communication difficulties.

All pupils have an additional learning disability relating to cognition, also there is a high ratio of sensory needs, dyspraxia, ADHD present.

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

Ofsted, 2017, Good

## **About the Assessment**

- The assessment took place over 3 days.
- The provisions adviser acted as assessor
- A tour was carried out of the provision
- 10 sessions were observed by the assessment team. These included a range of classroom-based activities, regulation activities and external providers.
- Discussions were held with both teaching staff and therapeutic staff and some parents of autistic pupils.
- Personal files were sampled across each key stage, for each of the case study pupils.
- Some key policy documents provided by the provision were read.
- The results of surveys carried out with families of autistic pupils were considered and can be found in appendix below.

## **Professional Development and Support for Staff**

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

- "Largely SPELL approach with adapted TEACCH in majority of classrooms.
- Specific approach within particular Essentials for Living pathway which follow some principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis.
- Total communication environment.
- Integrated therapy approach- classroom/context based with minimal withdrawal.
- Support for transitions, coping with changes.
- Social stories/jigs and communication supports from low to high tech.
- Emotional regulation programmes to include:
  - Zones of regulation
  - Emotional ladders
  - Alert Programme
  - Low Arousal approach [Studio 3]

Development of social interaction and choosing leisure activities through curriculum focus, playground provision, lunchtime and extended school clubs.

Low arousal and positive approach to managing challenging behaviours, identifying triggers and planning for modification of behaviour and development of self-regulation.

ABC and Prevent/Reinforce/Teach strategy to reduce challenging behaviours.

Autistic people in the wider community-AET for Hillingdon to empower fellow professionals to increase their ability to offer high quality provision for autistic pupils in their settings. Outreach service for some individuals." (*Assessment Introduction Form*).

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

All staff will complete the school's induction programme which will include AET good autism practice, the low arousal approach at Hedgewood, TEACCH the Hedgewood way as well as communication and use of the total communication approach and what a good communication classroom looks like.

There is a regular high-quality rolling programme of training available at Hedgewood which encompasses all aspects of support and approaches that are used within the school. These sessions act as a regular refresher for all staff. Training is delivered by a range of professionals within the school as well as make use of external professionals and conferences provided by a range of external agencies.

There is an ethos within Hedgewood of self-development with many examples of staff within the school progressing from TA through the school to gaining Qualified Teacher Status and are teaching currently in the school, developing specialisms as assistants in SALT and OT therapy team and leading the positive behaviour support team. This is an achievement that the school is proud of and they regularly support the staff through graduate and post graduate level qualifications so they can progress in their career.

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

Staff all reported that they were well supported by the multi-disciplinary teams and senior leadership working within the school. All were able to share who they could go to with specific problems. There is an ethos within the school of regular reflection. Staff teams reflect and debrief at the end of the day as part of regular practice as well as participating in wider school debrief.

Therapy teams work in direct class support and are therefore able to provide advice, guidance and modelling to class teams on a regular basis. In addition, the teams provide full time coverage in the school and are therefore always available to provide additional advice outside of direct support times.

Although regular ongoing support is available for all staff there is also an ethos of empowerment of the staff teams and encouraging them to problem solve situations to find a solution so that they are able to work their way through problems when a situation occurs again.

## Section 2: Findings from Assessment

### Person-Centred Planning

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

Support is well planned based on observation, assessment, paperwork, information from previous school and parents. Placement of pupils is based on this information and will form the judgement of curriculum pathways for pupils. This decision isn't static and a pupil can move between curriculum pathways based on progression.

Evaluation of progress is thorough and tracks academic as well as personal and social progress. This may look slightly different in each of the curriculum pathways as the pupil's progress in the Core pathways more academic progress will be tracked, whereas the emphasis within the Essentials for Living and Foundations for Life pathways will show progress in more personal and social skills.

### Differences in Social Communication

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

Hedgewood Communication policy states that they aim to "enable all pupils to communicate to the best of their ability and to be involved as far as possible in decisions that affect them."

Hedgewood is a Total Communication environment that is "committed to developing effective communication skills, in line with the child's identified individual need." The policy states that "the ideal communication team 'includes the staff, parents and pupils, working collaboratively to ensure the best progress for each child."

Hedgewood have 2 full time speech and language therapists and 2 full time therapy assistants. They provide direct class support with each therapist pairing with a therapy assistant and working on a cycle of support spending one week at a time in each class in a half termly cycle.

Whilst in class they will carry out observations and build rapport with pupils, they will have conversations with staff working collaboratively to provide the speech and communication needs of the pupils.

SALT will model good working practices of a range of communication approaches as well as carrying out group and solo interventions. They will also provide the staff and parents with a range of resources to support communication. Targets for pupils are decided collaboratively between the staff and SALT to ensure that they are achievable within the classroom.

Staff were able to talk eloquently regarding the communication abilities of the pupils and accurately shared how they needed to be supported both in achieving functional communication and ensuring that they understood instructions being presented to them.

Pupil profiles have a comprehensive communication section which includes a pupils expressive and receptive communication in addition to social interaction and their abilities to initiate interaction with others. Updates are noted before plans are edited so that changes/progress can be seen.

All pupils will have a range of communication targets on their personal curriculum plans which will all elements of communication and interaction. These targets will be broken down into smaller chunks over the term.

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

During all observations staff were seen to consistently adapt their language when talking to pupils taking into consideration their communicative abilities and amount of information that pupils are able to process. During one observation a staff member was seen to reduce the level of language she was using as one pupil became anxious. The staff member reduced her language and tone to soothe the child and put strategies in place before continuing learning.

Pupils were seen to use a range of communication tools across the school with varying levels of complexity in amount and presentation of symbols. This showed the differing

levels of communication within the pupil population. Communication devices were seen to travel with pupils to other areas of the school to ensure that they had their communication device wherever it was needed.

With COVID regulations it has been difficult to fully socially integrate the pupils with bubbles. However, staff are making full use of the class groups to teach skills of social interaction. During one observation pupils were seen to role play going to the beach, playing games and going to the fish and chip shop, how to order at a shop. Within another observation, pupils were seen to practice skills of turn-taking, listening to others responses before putting their responses forward.

## Problem Solving and Self-reliance

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

Each of the curriculum pathways has been developed to ensure that pupils have the skills necessary to achieve independence. The Essentials for Living (EfL) pathway provides a clear framework for supporting pupils to develop a range of skills in functional communication enabling them to communicate with those around them whilst also focusing on skills specific teaching and emotional wellbeing. This pathway provides the most complex pupils within the school the skills they will need to transition into their next environment.

Whilst core functional skills of English and Maths are important for the Foundations for Life pathway, there is an emphasis on skills for independence and daily living alongside functional, social communication and emotional regulation. Pupils can, if their skills develop, move between pathways so that their skills can be developed further.

The Core Curriculum pathways offers pupils access to a range of adapted National Curriculum subjects with a continued focus on emotional regulation, social communication and interaction. Pupils independence is fostered through appropriate expectations and opportunities to problem solve.

When interviewed staff shared how within EfL the focus is on developing functional skills for pupils using the Essential 8. They shared how prompts were reduced, enabling pupils to develop and secure skills for themselves. This is also supported in

the home so that pupils are able to replicate these skills with families in the home environment. Outcomes are measured daily identifying the skills that pupils show and to what level the prompt has been given. Case studies and assessment data were able to show the positive impact that the EfL approach has on the pupils, their development of skills in both home and school.

Some information regarding independence is seen through pupils' profiles across many of the sections. Assessment and tracking is carried out on skills of independence throughout all of the curriculum pathways, enabling the school to show progress made on independence and life skills of pupils. All pupils will have an independence target as part of their personal curriculum plan.

When interviewed staff talked about the importance of visuals to support pupil's ability to be independent in their activities, but also to understand the expectations of activities.

Transition into and out of Hedgewood is highly considered, with really clear pathways provided. Hedgewood have been really creative this year in offering opportunities for transition into the school which allows pupils and their parents into the school to meet staff and experience the environment whilst not breaking any of the current COVID regulations.

Case studies show staff understanding for the need to remove prompt dependence rapidly, enabling pupils to carry out activities independently.

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

All classes were seen to have whole class timetables. These were further adapted into individual timetables and now and next boards for pupils. These were seen to be taken with pupils around the school to support transition in all areas of the school.

During observations staff were seen to provide in task schedules to enable pupils to understand the process when completing activities. This was seen to be initially modelled by staff and then prompts fading as pupils understand.

In observations of the EfL pathway it was seen that pupils were initially heavily prompt dependent in some activities where they were learning new skills. Within the same observation prompts were seen to have been faded where pupils were more confident in the skills. Staff were confident in understanding pupil's individualised communication skills and were able to share this with the assessment team in addition



to how they worked effectively with the pupils in withdrawing prompts when teaching pupils skills.

Skills of independence are integral to the curriculum at Hedgewood. Pupils were seen to participate in a wide range of activities and skills to develop their independence, from collecting and putting away their own resources to dressing and putting clothes in a washing machine. Opportunities for developing these skills are taken throughout the school day.

## Sensory Experiences

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

All pupils will have a pupil profile which outlines the sensory needs of that pupil. This identifies the strategies and challenges that a pupil may face within and around the classroom in addition to strategies which can be used for calming.

Pupils will have a sensory passport which outlines both activities that the pupil enjoys as well as the challenges that they face within the school environment.

Hedgewood use a blended therapy approach where therapists will be allocated to a class for one week allowing for observation, modelling of practice and discussion with staff. Programmes are created and developed but these are delivered in collaboration with staff teams and modelled so that the skills can be effectively embedded into classroom practice.

There is currently one full time and one part-time OT on the staff team providing support to staff and pupils. This has been increased to 2 full-time from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

Staff interviewed were able to share the impact of a pupil's sensory needs on their learning and engagement in a classroom. They were all able to share strategies that they have used with specific pupils and the impact that having a programme of sensory support has had on their pupils.

Classroom layouts and content match the abilities of pupils across the school, pathway classrooms are distinct showing the tolerance levels of pupils in each of the curriculum pathways.



The outdoor environment has been developed to provide pupils with a wider range of sensory movements. Each area of the outdoor environment is zoned and pupils are able to use these either as part of a sensory break or during their leisure time.

Case studies show the sensory supports which have been put in place for pupils and that a range of strategies are used to support pupils' sensory needs.

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

Pupils were all seen to participate in sensory experiences they enjoyed. During one observation two pupils were seen to be enjoying playing with water beads in boxes and being free to enjoy the experience without adult intervention.

Pupils were seen to tolerate sensory experiences in a safe and secure context. One pupil was encouraged to have paint on his hand with wet wipes available when he needed them. All pupils within the school had the opportunity to handle a wide range of animals with an animal workshop as part of the activities in the school on the day of the assessment. It was seen that pupils had the opportunity to communicate whether they wanted to participate and touch animals or not as part of the activity.

There were a range of sensory supports made available for pupils. It was observed during the assessment that pupils were able to make a choice about whether they needed/wanted to use them.

During one observation a pupil was seen to be encouraged to try lots of different sensory activities, zones of regulation was used to support him in being able to communicate how it made his body feel.

## Emotional Well-being

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

Hedgewood has the emotional well-being needs of pupils at the core of everything they do. There is a clear understanding of the abilities of pupils and when it is appropriate to enable positive risk taking with pupils consistently appropriately praised and rewarded for achievements.

The school have a Prevent (PBS) team who are responsible for developing Hedgewood ABC, their approach to managing behaviour and supporting pupils when a behaviour incident occurs. It also gives staff a procedure to reflect on changes of behaviour and monitoring tools to note changes and trends. Although this isn't a radical idea it has had an incredible impact within the school. Staff are taking ownership of behaviour within their class, becoming small teams of experts in behaviour, utilising all the tools available to them to unpick challenging behaviour. This process is exceptional in its level of reflection and time taken to understand the behaviour in front of them and the root causes.

Hedgewood have seen an increase in staff feeling empowered to manage more complex behaviour reflecting to find the root cause and putting plans in place to support the pupils effectively in the classroom. These are reviewed regular and outcome measured to show impact that any implemented strategies have had.

There is a clear recognition within the school that support for home and the child at home has significant benefits. Hedgewood are innovative in the additional activities which are provided for parents, holiday clubs, Saturday clubs and breakfast club are just a few of the activities which are provided for parents. The outdoor school facilities are also offered to families so that they are able to spend quality time as a family an environment which is safe, secure and familiar to the children. This was developed to provide families an opportunity to be successful in their activities together.

A focus has been placed on mindfulness, resources and training have been provided by staff on mindful minutes to encourage class teams to consider mindfulness throughout the day giving pupils the opportunity to de-escalate and calm throughout the school day.

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

All pupils presented as feeling safe and calm throughout the school. Where pupils were seen to have increasing anxiety, staff were quick to support this and took time to de-escalate pupils before continuing with activities.

Zones of regulation is used throughout the school and pupils were seen to be supported in understanding their emotions. Where required this was seen to be taught in explicit sessions away from the group and learning then taken into the classroom to be embedded.

Pupils were seen across the school to be provided with regular praise as part of their activities or when they achieved something in their personal development. This was seen to be adapted for individual pupils. One pupil excitedly shared that he had earned himself some treasure as a result of good work he had completed.

Pupils were seen to participate in meaningful activities, for the development of their life and skills of independence, but also through their play. The school has themes in each term and during this term it was beach. Role play areas were seen to be well utilised with pupils learning about shops and activities they could do on the beach.

There was a clear relationship of trust, respect and understanding between staff and pupils. The smiles on pupils within the EFL as they interact with staff and peers was obvious. Within the other pathways it was clear through the communication between staff and pupils and the ways in which they interact with each other that the respect and trust was there.

### **Consultation with Autistic People**

Providing pupils with a functional and meaningful communication system is key at Hedgewood. Staff work really hard to ensure that all pupils have a voice which is used not only at school but also in the home environment. Time is taken by all the staff to develop a pupil's communication system, ensuring it is the system which suits them.

As a result, pupils were seen to have their voice throughout the school day in a wide range of situations, not just asking for their wants and needs but also commenting as part of a discussion. This was seen for pupils who were verbal but also those who were using AAC.

### **Consultation with families of Autistic People**

All staff spoke of the regular communication they have with families through SeeSaw, an app which parents have access to and enables them to see what the children are doing in the class but also communicate directly with the staff.

Regular coffee mornings are held, these are facilitated by the family services team and will cover a wide range of topics. These have moved onto virtual means to ensure

that parents are still able to access services and get support at the time when they needed it the most.

Hedgewood work closely with families from the classroom to Family Services Team who offer wider support including holiday and respite clubs.

Hedgewood have a Family Services Team who work on building relationships from a really early stage. Family services will be available during all stay and play sessions developing relationships with parents. Support is sympathetic to each family and are adapted to meet their needs to ensure that parents feel supported by the Hedgewood school community.

Throughout the pandemic, the Family Services Team have been integral in supporting parents ensuring that they were not isolated or felt overwhelmed with the expectations of home schooling. Family services went above and beyond to provide resources to families to ensure that they were able to access home learning successfully

Family services provide training to all parents on approaches used within school in addition to the NAS parents training courses available.

Staff work closely together to empower families to provide successful support for their person within the home. Resources are regularly provided to homes with photos and videos of how to use them effectively that parents are able to go back to.

Staff within family services work within classes so they know all the children, they are available to parents by being on duty at start and end of school day so parents can ask any questions when needed.

Family services will support and empower families to access support services within Hillingdon.

Home visits are carried out where necessary to help parents to understand techniques and support with any difficulties at home.

Questionnaires, surveys and parent's consultations are part of regular practice for parents to understand the progress and support being provided for their young people.

## **Involvement with the wider community**

Hedgewood play a significant role in developing the understanding of autism within the wider community. Extended schools are not only available to pupils from Hedgewood, but also the wider community so that they can access the facilities available in secure surroundings.

Training is available to a range of communities within the locality, outreach is working with local ethnic community groups to provide training to the adult population to help aid understanding of autism and learning disabilities within these communities.

SEND transport staff [drivers and Passenger Assistants] participate in AET training so that they are upskilled and understand the autistic young people who are in their care during the day.

Hedgewood have excellent links with a range of other autism specific services and charities within the Hillingdon area. They have been integral in driving understanding and the provision available for Hedgewood pupils by the Local Authority and other support services.

CAM hold triage in collaboration with staff at Hedgewood School to ensure that the pupils who would most benefit from their support are able to access it. Hedgewood have been integral in setting up a risk register within the LA that enables key professionals to come together to discuss and establish support for autistic pupils within the borough, ensuring that they and their families access the support they need within a timely manner.

## **Section 3: Summary of assessment**

### **What the provision does particularly well**

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

Family services work carried out and impact they have had on families over the period of COVID.

The extended schools and services provide families with a range of support outside of the normal school day, during weekends and the long holiday periods. This is managed by staff within the school and gives families a safe place to interact.

The knowledge and understanding of staff at all levels throughout the school is exceptional they were able to speak eloquently about the pupils they support with a clear knowledge of their needs, impact on everyday as well as ways to support effectively.

The collaborative working of the discrete teams in the school is exceptional. All teams working in conjunction, pulling on the expertise of each team member for the benefit of the pupils and their families.

There is a considered approach to the support which is provided for pupils which allows their teaching to their needs, strong development of skills through scaffolding before generalising their skills and learning.

The transition programme at Hedgewood is highly robust and considered, and is highly flexible this allows it to adapt to meet the needs of pupils who will struggle with the standard format for transition.

School were able to provide evidence of significant positive outcomes and progress both within the school and with pupils and their families. Progress was shown within the EFL in the Essential 8 skills with pupils not only able to carry out the skills in school but also in the home. They have shown exceptional skill and patience at supporting pupils back into education through COVID period, using all the resources available to them both in terms of staff and the school environment. In some instances, this progress is made over short period of time. Case studies show that pupils have achieved positive outcomes in other curriculum pathways in emotional regulation, relationships with others and communication.

### **What the provision could develop further**

The introduction of Hedgewood Prevent team and Hedgewood ABC has had a significant impact on practice within the school, staff were seen to be empowered to manage situations consistently across the school. As this is a new intervention the school should continue to monitor and support staff to ensure that the intervention remains an effective tool for supporting behaviour.




The introduction of the EFL programme is regarded as a success within Hedgewood in providing a clear framework for the teaching of functional development skills. The school should continue to evaluate the long-term impact of the programme on pupil social-emotional development, communication skills and behaviour.

The Lead of EFL would like to develop further so that there are bespoke environments within the provision to teach skills. Changing rooms already exist there is a plan to develop this further to have more specific environments so that pupils can learn skills in context.

## APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS




### Families of Autistic Persons




1. Feedback questionnaire on Hedgewood Primary Special School to be completed before 23/04/2021

1. The support my relative is given is...			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		5.88%	2
3	mostly good		17.65%	6
4	always good		76.47%	26
			answered	34



1. The support my relative is given is...			Response Percent	Response Total
			skipped	0

2. The understanding that staff have for my relative <b>with</b> autistic needs is...			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		5.88%	2
3	mostly good		17.65%	6
4	always good		76.47%	26
			answered	34
			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		0.00%	0
2	ok, but could be better		8.82%	3
3	mostly good		23.53%	8
4	always good		67.65%	23

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

	Response Percent	Response Total
answered		34
skipped		0

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

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor	2.94%	1
2	ok, but could be better	2.94%	1
3	mostly good	26.47%	9
4	always good	67.65%	23
		answered	34
		skipped	0

Please note that comments once shared with the provision are routinely removed from the final report to reduce the risk of personal data being included if the final report is shared or published;