



# Autism Policy

<b>Policy Written by/date:</b> <b>Date Ratified by Governors:</b>	<b>Signed/Date:</b> <b>Chair or Vice Chair</b>	<b>Policy due for review:</b>
Helen Blight: ASD Coordinator November 2015		November 2017

This Policy is linked to the following School Policies and/or Procedures

Curriculum Policies	School Policies	School Business/Finance Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• SEN</li> <li>• English (incl Library)</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• DT</li> <li>• Forest Schools</li> <li>• Humanities</li> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• P.E</li> <li>• PSHE</li> <li>• ICT/Computing</li> <li>• R.E</li> <li>• Collective Worship</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)</li> <li>• Careers</li> <li>• Post 16 (inc Consortium)</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• ASD</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• School Council</li> <li>• Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural/British Values</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Conductive Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection and Safeguarding</li> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• SEN Report</li> <li>• Appraisal</li> <li>• Positive Intervention</li> <li>• Prospectus</li> <li>• Pupil Attendance</li> <li>• Anti—Bullying</li> <li>• Designated Teacher (LAC)</li> <li>• Exclusions Policy</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Animal Visits</li> <li>• Educational Visits</li> <li>• Exams/Accreditation</li> <li>• Staff Dress Code</li> <li>• First Aid Health and Medications</li> <li>• Intimate Care</li> <li>• Manual Handling/Mobility</li> <li>• Initial Teacher Training</li> <li>• Planning, Preparation and Assessment</li> <li>• Continuing Professional Development</li> <li>• Teaching Assistants</li> <li>• Well-Being of Staff and Student</li> <li>• SEF</li> <li>• SDP</li> <li>• Bereavement</li> <li>• Management of Incident Involving Drugs</li> <li>• Use of Video and Photography</li> <li>• Acceptable Use</li> <li>• E-Safety</li> <li>• Non-Smoking Policy</li> <li>• Complaints</li> <li>• Assessment, Recording and Reporting</li> <li>• Parental Involvement</li> <li>• Student Participation</li> <li>• Home School Agreement</li> <li>• Healthy Eating</li> <li>• Transition</li> <li>• Pupil Premium</li> <li>• Lone Working</li> <li>• Staff Induction</li> <li>• Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Protection</li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> <li>• Pay Policy</li> <li>• Register of Business interests of HT and Governors</li> <li>• Accessibility Plan</li> <li>• Charging</li> <li>• Freedom of Information</li> <li>• Publication Scheme</li> <li>• Staff Grievance</li> <li>• School Companies</li> <li>• School Income</li> <li>• Lettings</li> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Governor Allowances</li> <li>• Allegations of abuse against staff</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> <li>• Retention of data</li> <li>• Recruitment and Selection Policy (Safer Recruitment)</li> <li>• Governing Board Succession Planning</li> <li>• Whistleblowers</li> <li>• Instrument of Government</li> <li>• Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance procedures</li> <li>• Equal Opportunity Policy</li> <li>• Equality Duty</li> <li>• Staffing Structure</li> <li>• Staff Attendance Planned</li> <li>• Staff Attendance Unplanned</li> <li>• Anti-Harrasment</li> <li>• School Emergency Plan</li> <li>• Critical Incidents</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Pool Safety and Procedures</li> </ul>

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*All policies at GSSC are written to reflect Statutory Requirements or National Guidance and updated in accordance with this. There are times when the Government or Local Authority provide updates to policies that are outside of the policy review schedules. In such instances, an appendix will be added to policies to reflect these updates until the Governing Board can ratify these amended policies. These appendices will supersede previously issued Statutory Requirements or National Guidance.*

*GSSC January 2016*

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**GSSC**  
**Autism Policy**  
**Including**  
**Social Ability and Understanding Policy,**  
**Flexibility of Thought to Cope with Change Policy**  
**And Autism Curriculum Policy**

**Introduction**

This (*revised*) policy was written in November 2015 by the ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) Coordinator in Conjunction with the Curriculum Committee. It was approved and adopted by the Governors ..... It will be monitored and reviewed bi-annually as part of the school's monitoring cycle or sooner if required

**Rationale and Equal Opportunities**

All our students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum regardless of race, age, creed, gender or sexual orientation. The curriculum enables all students equal opportunities to access subjects and activities that have been planned to take into account the varying needs and degree of support required by individual students.

The classes within the autism provision are grouped by functional ability, sensitivities, personality and behaviours and provide discrete autism provision for students with a diagnosis of ASD. Other students with a diagnosis of autism may be placed within other classes across the school. They may not require the support of a TEACCH Class, but are supported by staff from within the discrete provision as appropriate. ASD students in a class outside of the ASD provision that do require TEACCH support are supported appropriately and have access to work bay style supported learning, schedules and structured teaching and are monitored by the Head of ASD alongside the discrete classes. A student statemented as ASD may have a specific need that requires a deviance from this policy; it is required that this be discussed with the Head of ASD to ensure consistency.

The classes use clearly defined structures that promote communication and independence for all students through TEACCH. Opportunities are provided for all students to integrate with students in main corridor classes for appropriate lessons and to access Post 16 provision within a local college, if this is suitable for the individual student. KS4 students are supported to make options for the modular curriculum (new in school from September 2014). Students are offered access to all curriculum areas excluding modern foreign languages.

The aims of the provision are to enable all students to access a meaningful curriculum, building on skills that have already been learnt. Vocational skills are taught to enable students to develop their social, communication and self-help skills in an environment that promotes confidence, motivation, self-esteem and independence. These skills are also taught within the wider community, developing leisure and life skills for all students.

Continuity for students with an autistic spectrum condition is paramount in enabling individual students to reach their full potential, therefore classes work closely together to ensure a consistent and constant approach is used.

**Curriculum Development**

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As part of Whole School Curriculum Development at GSSC, we are continuing to work collaboratively with other Special Schools in Northamptonshire to develop a 'skills based curriculum' for all of our pupils that will focus on the learning of and consolidating of key skills across all curriculum areas.

## **TEACCH**

Northamptonshire Education Authority adopted TEACCH (The Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) for the education of students with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. These principles have been adopted and embraced by GSSC. The TEACCH approach was developed in North Carolina as a lifelong approach, preparing each student with Autism for productive living and employment within the community.

The principles of TEACCH are:

- Organising and simplifying the physical environment to be more consistent with the ways that people with autism process sensory information
- Developing meaningful schedules to make each day more predictable
- Developing individual work systems for independent learning so that students always understand how long they will be working on tasks and when they will be finished
- Using visually clear and meticulously organized materials and resources
- Identifying and using visual cues so that they can facilitate generalization
- Establishing positive and productive routines

Students with autism respond to the environment through the use of structured teaching. Structured teaching has four main components:

- The physical structure of the classroom
- Daily schedules
- Work systems
- Visual structure and information

### **Physical Structure:**

At GSSC the classrooms within the autism provision are structured to create individual learning environments for each student depending on their needs. Each area within the classroom has a specific purpose that is clearly marked by the placing of screens or furniture to minimize distractions, promoting consistent and effective working. Consideration is given to the positioning and size of individual work areas for each student. Work resources are located in student's academic work areas and can be accessed by the student according to their own abilities to access work.

### **Daily Schedules:**

Each student has an individual schedule. Schedules take into account the needs of each individual student and therefore may consist of photographs, TOBI, symbols, objects or text. Schedules may be presented for a whole week, whole day, half a day or may operate at a 'now' and 'next' level. Schedules enable students to predict, order and organize their day at a level that is meaningful to them. They also provide a clear finish. This enables the student to move around the classroom independent from an adult. Students match the picture, TOBI, symbol, object from their schedule to the area or activity in which they are working. For some students with a whole week schedule this is provided within a filofax, students check their

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schedules to find out what the next activity/lesson is and then marked this off on their schedule once the activity/lesson has been completed. For some students it is appropriate for them to write up their own schedule using a prompt whole class schedule board. Schedules provide the student with a clear vision of where they should be and what they should be doing and when it will stop.

### **Work Systems:**

Work systems are used with the classroom to communicate to the students:

- The work that they are expected to do
- How much work there will be
- When the work will be finished
- What to do when the work is finished

Work systems are presented visually to the students at the appropriate level of understanding. For some students this will be visually seeing the activities that they have to complete. For others the system is arranged as a top to bottom or left to right list of coloured shapes/numbers/letters/pictures. The student matches the shapes/numbers/letters/pictures to the appropriate work task, working until all shapes/numbers/letters/pictures have been matched to the appropriate task and completed. At the bottom of the list is a symbol of what the student should do next. This may be a motivator that is specific to that particular student or a visual instruction of where to go next. Students are taught the concept of 'finished', an area that students with autism find difficult to grasp.

Tasks that are to be completed independently by students in their work stations are first taught on a 1:1 level with the teacher.

### **Visual Structure and Information**

The visual organization of materials for students with autism can impact on their ability to function within the classroom. Therefore, staff organise and present materials in an attractive, orderly and minimally stimulating manner. This ensures that students remain on task and are not overwhelmed or distracted from their tasks.

To ensure that students understand what is expected of them, visual instruction is used with all tasks and activities. Jigs or pictorial instructions are used to demonstrate how materials are to be placed and the stages that are needed to complete a task.

### **Social and Life Skills:**

Wherever possible, links are made in all curriculum areas to activities that provide meaningful experiences for all students. Social and life skills are taught within school and also out and about in the wider community to enable students to develop and extend leisure and self-help skills.

### **Communication:**

Students at GSSC all have varying levels of communication difficulties. The provision for autism aims to aid all students to communicate at their own level. PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is used by all students within the provision to develop meaningful functional communication. Individual programmes and practices that promote the development of interactive, spontaneous and social communication are delivered across the curriculum. These include a wide range of experiences which are generalized to other environments and situations. The

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provision is supported by the AAC team within the school and is also supported by Speech and Language Therapists that work with groups or individuals students.

### **Implementation:**

The curriculum within the autism provision will be delivered through the use of TEACCH and PECS

- " Individual targets and success criteria will be set by teachers and shared with students
- " Staff will be offered support and training as needed to implement the curriculum
- " Students will have the opportunity to generalise social and life skills within the community
- " Students will have access to integration when and if appropriate

### **Staff Training:**

All staff within the autism provision receive training in TEACCH/Structured Teaching and PECS. This enables students to be supported by staff who have extensive knowledge of the needs of students with autism, the difficulties that they encounter and the individualized curriculum that they require to enable them to become as independent in their learning as is possible. Training for particular members of staff also includes:

- " Sensory integration, sensory circuits and sensory diets
- " Advanced TEACCH
- " Structured Teaching in the Home
- " AAC and Autism
- " PECS
- " PECS throughout the school day
- " PECS troubleshooting
- " Social Stories©
- " Minibus Driver
- " Interactive Play
- " Intensive Interaction
- " Hydro—Life Saver
- " Team Teach
- " Developing Autism Friendly Schools
- " Understanding and Developing Communication in ASD
- " Mainstreaming ASD
- " Developing Stories to Support Social Understanding in children with ASD
- " Rebound Therapy
- " The SCERTS Model
- " 1,2,3 Magic

### **AUTISM CURRICULUM**

The current provision provides all students with access to a full and balanced differentiated curriculum. It has been identified however, that some students are arriving at GSSC without the necessary skills to access the curriculum using structured teaching and in particular the TEACCH approach. Due to the nature of students difficulties in accessing the curriculum approach using specific themes that will encompass all subjects, will enable students to receive a curriculum that is individual and personalized at the level at which each student is operating. Teaching

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and learning will focus on concrete, functional ideas and skills rather than abstract concepts, as our students do not possess the necessary skills to develop abstract ideas into concrete thoughts. This will enable and give students the opportunities to generalize their skills in subject areas that have relevance and meaning in an everyday situation, consolidating their learning across the curriculum.

### **Curriculum:**

The curriculum will be delivered using a topic approach enabling students to generalise learning with a focus that is relevant to their everyday lives. The curriculum is adapted to enable students to experience and have access to opportunities that will link all subjects and engage students in meaningful and relevant activities building on prior knowledge and experience.

### **Timetable:**

For some students within the provision it is appropriate to develop a personalised timetable, giving each student individualised 1:1 teaching in all subject areas, independent working in their workstations, consolidating skills taught previously during 1:1 sessions and social relatedness/awareness interaction, developing skills to enable access to the curriculum, as well as engaging students in co-operative or directed turn-taking activities with their peers. This system usually operates in the mornings, at different levels, dependent on the group. In the afternoons, students work in small groups developing confidence within a group setting and practice strategies that have been learnt in social relatedness/awareness interaction sessions within a familiar and safe environment. Students will also have the opportunities to practice and generalise these skills within school and the local community.

### **Summary:**

This structure provides students with an enhanced curriculum; this approach ensures a sound foundation for future learning. For some students it may then be appropriate to move on, at a later date to whole group teaching for curriculum subjects, however, this will not be appropriate for all students and some will need to continue with an extremely structured provision to provide them with security and confidence to function independently within the TEACCH classroom, GSSC and the local community. Emphasis will be on each individual student's needs and will focus on specific areas of the curriculum to provide each student with a personalised learning plan, that will be used to develop and assess skills at a level that is appropriate to each student.

## **HOW WE MANAGE FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT TO COPE WITH CHANGE**

At GSSC we recognize that all of our students will have difficulties in coping with change due to their autism. We therefore use the following strategies at all times within the provision:

- TEACCH structure
- Use of PECS
- Class timetables
- Social stories
- Individual Schedules relevant to each student's level of ability
- Regular routines
- Consistent classroom management
- Awareness of triggers and strategies for calming known for each student
- Behaviour plans for all students and consistency of approach to behaviour from all staff

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- Autism focused IEPs for all students
- Speech and language targets incorporated into classroom practice
- Agreed responses to students who constantly ask the same question or use behaviours as attention seeking devices (burping, swearing etc...)
- Making students aware of what they are going to do before each activity and recapping at the end
- Teaching of “first ..., then ...” and then “first ..., then..., next...,”
- Teaching of “?” as something different or a surprise if appropriate
- Portable schedules to ease transition around school and during out and about activities
- Use of photos/visual prompts/objects of reference/TOBIS to prepare students for transition
- Pen portrait of each student, letting all who come into the class know what each students likes, dislikes, anxieties ways of calming etc., are
- Preparation for changes of adult in the room
- Strategies for preparation of changes e.g. respite care, parents visiting
- Home school communication books are filled in daily for each individual student with relevant information to improve understanding of a student’s daily experiences.
- Encouraging good communication between home and school and between school and the transport escort so that there are systems to let school know if the student has had a difficult night or if there are any changes that have upset them.

### **Guidance for all staff working with Students with a Diagnosis of Autism:**

GSSC aims to make staff fully aware of the complex needs of our students and understand that because our students suffer from high levels of arousal, anxiety and stress they may demonstrate challenging behaviours.

GSSC supports all staff within the autism provision in their own professional development in regards to their knowledge of autism and any other relevant knowledge related to providing an appropriate education for students with a diagnosis of autism.

### **Values and Practice**

- We have high expectations of all of our students and are committed to raising their educational achievement
  - We treat students consistently, with respect and consideration and are concerned for their levels of communication and their development as learners
  - We aim to teach students to manage their own autism and behaviours wherever possible
  - We demonstrate and promote the positive values, attitudes and behaviours we expect from our students
  - We communicate sensitively and effectively with parents and carers, recognizing their roles in students learning, and their rights, responsibilities and interests in this
- We all understand and respect the contribution that each member of staff makes to the teaching and learning of our students

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- We are able to improve our own practice by evaluating it, learning from the effective practice of others and from evidence.
- We are motivated and able to take increasing responsibility for our own professional development
- We are aware of and work within the framework relating to staff responsibilities

At GSSC we aim to equip our students with strategies for managing their own behaviour. We plan to avoid students becoming stressed and therefore avoid the need for physical interventions wherever possible by the use of a preventive curriculum and behaviour strategies.

**Preventative Strategies to encourage calm behaviours:**

- Staff are well trained in the teaching of students with autism who can present with challenging behaviours
- The environment is modified to provide a calm, low arousal environment
- Avoidance of situations that are known to provoke extreme behaviours e.g. sensory issues
- Students have individual behaviour plans and where necessary individual risk assessments that show how their behaviour is best managed
- An individualized curriculum for each student that works with their strengths and weaknesses engaging students in choice
- Celebrating their successes
- Working as a team to try to understand the communicative intent of their behaviour ('what is it that they are trying to tell us?')
- Talking to students and families about ways students prefer to be managed when they pose a significant risk to themselves or others
- Staff understand the frustrations our students experience and try to overcome them
- Staff recognize the value of each member of the team
- Staff are committed to respectful and professional working and will find ways to tell others if they are not working in such a way
- Working collaboratively with parents and carers to use consistent behaviour management strategies at home and at school

**Good Practice in order to minimise Students' anxiety and help students to learn to interact positively with others around them:**

- A flexible and life-skills curriculum so that student can learn through their interest and particular skills to become as independent as possible
- The curriculum is highly differentiated to meet the learning needs of each students routines so that students feel secure and calm
- Visual timetables so that students can see the structure of the day and respond to it
- Minimal language, so that students are calm and can understand what is expected of them
- Symbols and objects of reference are used to augment language, so that students can understand
- A positive environment, with lots of praise and encouragement and positive body language
- A low arousal environment, classes are clear of clutter and visually simple

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- Staff know the students likes, dislikes and triggers and how their autism affects each individual student
- Staff know what calms each student and will offer that strategy as necessary, e.g. a walk around the playground, time in the sensory room, a hand/foot massage etc.,
- Staff allow students time to respond to a question or instruction or time to finish their work
- Staff understand the sensory issues and how these affect each student
- Staff talk to students about what they are doing, even if the student is not using speech
- Staff use clear prompts to redirect a student: “ we are working” “hands down”
- Music is used to calm and motivate
- Students have individual quality time, e.g. being sung to, or something that they particularly enjoy
- Staff bend down to student’s physical level to speak to them
- Staff enjoy playing with students, often joining in with their play
- by imitating them
- There are toys/activities available to allow students to play, or to flap and spin if this calms them
- The ethos of the provision is a calm, happy place where staff are approachable

### **Managing Challenging Behaviours:**

- High professional standards from all staff provide a calm and autistic friendly environment
- 1,2,3 Magic techniques and visuals used consistently and according to training.
- An emphasis is placed on the use of preventative strategies that work to calm and engage each student
- The School has adopted TEAMTEACH as a positive intervention strategy
- Staff do not discuss a student’s challenging behaviours in front of them
- Class teachers in consultation with the Team and Senior Management will decide on how each students behaviours are managed
- Outside agencies, professional and parental advice is sought to address areas of difficulty for the students
- Staff do not intervene if a member of staff is dealing with a student that is displaying negative or challenging behaviours unless their help is requested
- Staff do not allow their own frustrations/tiredness to impact on their ability to remain positive when dealing with students
- Staff to the students with respect no matter what the situation
- Staff learn to recognize in ourselves the point at which they cease to be effective in a challenging situation and learn to walk away and ask for assistance. This is not a sign of weakness but strength!
- Staff respect students privacy and dignity at all times

Opportunities are provided for students throughout the school day to make choices about the activities that they may wish to pursue in their leisure time. This is carefully structured using, PECS, Jigs and visual cues, so that students can be given the opportunity to develop and extend their recreational and free time activities.

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Students with an ASD are supported in decision-making using visual aids and structured activities in order to promote choice. Start and Stop behaviours are related to good and bad choices and students 'choices' are given appropriate consistent and expected responses. GSSC provides students with opportunities to develop problem solving skills through the use of carefully structured Jigs, visual cues and activities.

All of these skills are taught through 1:1 teaching and within small group settings across the school and within the wider community to enable students to generalize these skills across different setting.

### **SOCIAL ABILITY AND UNDERSTANDING**

At GSSC, staff working with students diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are aware of and make considerable adaptations to the design and delivery of the Curriculum in order to provide students with an ASD with the ability to access an environment and curriculum that provides meaning and understanding through structured interaction within both small group settings and through working 1:1 with an adult. Initiation of interaction is also addressed across the curriculum.

Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen, 2000) suggests that children with ASD lack the ability to impute mental states (e.g. beliefs, needs, desires) to others, resulting in a difficulty understanding and predicting social relationships and behaviour. Young people may have particular problems in understanding other people's perspectives and emotions, leading to behaviours which appears insensitive or naïve. People with ASD may also avoid the complexities of social relationships such as friendships, finding them too difficult to comprehend.

Students with autism experience weak central coherence. They are unable to draw together information, organize the self, make connection and generalize skills and rules and apply them in different situations.

A further area of difficulty for students is their inability to plan and monitor their own behaviour and act in a flexible manner. Students with an ASD often display repetitive, inflexible and impulsive behaviours, often displaying difficulties in planning and making choices, and modifying behaviour according to the demands of the situation.

### **Opportunities at GSSC to develop Social Ability and Understanding:**

- Staff provide opportunities through a carefully structured curriculum that is personalized to the needs of the individual
- Students where possible, are taught to identify and modify their own behaviours
- Opportunities are provided for students to learn targeted skills through 1:1 teaching supported by visual, physical and verbal prompts, which are gradually reduced as students acquire these new skills
- Students interests are used to guide activities
- Skills are practiced in a variety of settings
- Staff within GSSC provide opportunities throughout the school day for students to make choices in regards to the leisure activities that they may wish to make
- Choice is also encouraged through the use of PECS encouraging functional communication in a range of settings

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- Students are taught a range of skills and strategies to initiate and request using their own communication systems
- Opportunities are planned across the curriculum, providing students with the structure, time and space needed to practice problem solving skills
- Students are encouraged to monitor their own behaviour through personalized reward systems
- Students are taught where possible to recognize their own areas of strength and difficulties
- Interaction sessions are used to enable students to develop skills starting from interacting with an object through to turn taking and initiating play with a peer or adult
- Community visits enable students to practice skills in a variety of settings in the wider community
- Students in Post-16 provision are offered the opportunity of accessing the local college with one of the schools main corridor students with support from staff experienced in Autism if appropriate

At GSSC we encourage and enable students to develop strategies in all areas of social ability and understanding that is relevant to their level of functioning.

### **ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING**

The school has a common policy towards record keeping, which ensures continuity and progression. The autism provision follows this policy. In our planning and teaching we provide opportunities for the continual assessment of students using the policies and practices adopted by the school.

Due to the nature of autism, skills are scattered and are not automatically transferred and generalized across the curriculum. Skills have to be taught in a variety of contexts and settings to ensure meaning and relevance for the students.

Therefore, students will often be operating within several P Levels and/or age related levels (NC levels are gone from September 2014) within a subject area. Levels may fluctuate when studying different topics or subject strands, as certain concepts are difficult to generalize for these students.

Teachers and staff within the provision ensure that students have a concrete understanding before moving on within a given subject strand. Due to the above, assessment data may show that students may at times be achieving at different levels in a particular subject. This data reflects the difficulties that students with autism have in the generalization of skills and the need at times, to assess, review or work within a strand at a lower P Level and/or National Curriculum Level that a student has previously achieved at.

Reporting to parents and carers takes place through the Annual Review process, Parent's Evenings and end of year academic Assessment reports.