



# Autism Specialist Classes

## Parent Information

### Welcome

I look forward to welcoming you and your child into one of our Autism Spectrum specialist classes at Exeter House School. These classes span all the Key Stages of a child's educational journey at Exeter House School (Early Years to Post 16). If you would like any further information about our educational provision in these classes please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sally Dymott – Autism Spectrum Lead

### Classes

There are currently four Autism Spectrum specialist classes:

**Penguins: Pupils within the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1**

Teacher: Wiola Sibley

**Swifts: Pupils within Key Stage 1 and 2**

Teacher: Rosie Bath

**Larks: Pupils within Key Stage 2**

Teacher: Hannah McGuire

**Falcons: Pupils within the Key Stage 3 and 4**

Teacher: Abbi Murphy

Each class is led by a teacher and supported by a team of teaching assistants.

## **Curriculum Framework**

Within the Autism Spectrum specialist classes we understand that the students all have their own specific barriers to learning and require a personalised curriculum tailored to meet individual needs.

Each class adheres to the **Autism Education Trust (AET) Progression Framework** in conjunction with the lower, middle or upper school planning framework. Please see the department information booklets for further information.

The lower school classes (Penguins and Swifts) follow the **Early Years Curriculum Framework and topic cycle**

The middle school classes (Larks and Falcons) follow the **Semi Formal Curriculum (Equals) and topic cycle**

<p><b>Communication and Interaction</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Engaging in interaction</li> <li>*Making requests</li> <li>*Communicating information</li> <li>*Listening and understanding</li> <li>*Greetings</li> <li>*Conversations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social Understanding and Relationships</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Being with others</li> <li>*Interactive play</li> <li>*Positive relationships (supporting adults)</li> <li>*Positive relationships and Friendships (peers)</li> <li>*Group activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sensory Processing</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Understanding and expressing own sensory needs</li> <li>*Responding to sensory interventions</li> <li>*Increasing tolerance of sensory input</li> <li>*Managing own sensory needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interests, Routines and Processing</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Coping with change</li> <li>*Transitions</li> <li>*Special interests</li> <li>*Problem solving and thinking skills</li> </ul>	<p><b>AS Curriculum Framework (based on the AET Progression Framework)</b></p>	<p><b>Healthy Living</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Keeping healthy</li> <li>*Personal care</li> <li>*Relationships and sex education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning and Engagement</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Learning through play</li> <li>*Motivation and engagement</li> <li>*Organisation and independent learning</li> <li>*Understanding and following rules, routines and expectations</li> <li>*Evaluating own learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotional Understanding and Self-Awareness</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Understanding and expressing own emotions</li> <li>*Managing emotions and behaviour</li> <li>*Understanding others' emotions / intentions</li> <li>*Self-Awareness</li> <li>*Developing confidence and self-esteem</li> </ul>	<p><b>Independence and Community Participation</b></p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Independent living</li> <li>*Personal safety</li> <li>*Road safety and travel</li> <li>*Leisure</li> </ul>

## **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning takes place through:

**Child initiated activities** – Activities selected by the student. Staff observe, model, extend and introduce learning opportunities.

**Teacher directed activities** – Planned activities with learning objectives based on individual needs. Students work either individually, in small groups or occasionally as a class.

**Individual Targets** – Personalised targets agreed with parents during structured conversations that take place three times a year. This ensures that you can be fully involved in your child's education. These targets are related to the specific needs of each individual.

In addition to classroom based activities we make full use of our excellent onsite shared facilities. These include soft play, hydrotherapy, the gym, forest school, library, sensory integration room, and sensory room.

Each class has access to offsite activities. These include swimming at Five Rivers Leisure Centre, opportunities for therapeutic riding at RDA in Wilton and trips into the community to learn independence and life skills.

Students have access to a range of therapeutic opportunities including rebound therapy, music therapy, therapeutic riding and sensory integration therapy.

## **Assessment**

Teachers formally assess each child's progress three times each year.

Teachers collate evidence of learning through **Evidence for Learning**. This evidence is used to create **Learning Journeys** that celebrate individual experiences at school. Over time they will 'tell a story' of learning, progress and engagement.

**Annual Reviews** are held to discuss progress in all areas and are attended by the whole team around the child.

## **Autism Strategies**

Each teacher adopts a number of different techniques to enable the pupils in their class to be positively involved and engaged in their learning. They plan these in both personalised and group learning opportunities alongside the curriculum for their age group.

## **TEACCH**

Each class follows the TEACCH programme of structured teaching.

This addresses:

- Organisation of the **physical environment** (minimising distractions, segmenting the environment to add meaning)
- Use of **individual schedules** (helping students to know what is happening during the day)
- **Visual structure** (including visual instructions, visual organization and visual clarity)
- **Work systems** (a system to inform students what work and how much work needs to be completed)

For more information about TEACCH:

<https://www.autismtruths.org/index.php?p=teacch>

[www.autism.org.uk/teacch](http://www.autism.org.uk/teacch)

## **Communication**

Development of **communication is central to all teaching and learning**. At Exeter House School we aim to provide a total communication environment. Communication methods include Makaton, objects of reference, speech, gestures, body signing, speech, communication software and Intensive Interaction. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is widely used for pupils in the department.

For more information about PECS:

<https://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/pecs/>

## **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction is an approach to **teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication** to children who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development. This technique involves having fun, playing and sharing attention with another person as well as aiming to develop non-verbal communication such as gesture and body language. This technique is used extensively by all staff during planned discrete sessions and incidental learning opportunities throughout the day as appropriate for each pupil.

For more information about Intensive Interaction:

[www.intensiveinteraction.org](http://www.intensiveinteraction.org)

## **Sensory Integration**

Sensory integration is the **ability to process, interpret and use information received through the senses**. Sensory integration (a balanced nervous system) develops through typical childhood activities and experiences. It is the foundation for more complex learning and behaviour.

There is a link between a person's ability to deal with sensory input effectively and their behaviour and emotional development. For many students at Exeter House School, sensory integration development is atypical. These students may experience difficulties in learning, motor skills and behaviour.

A person's response to sensory input will affect their arousal state. In order to be able to function, a person needs to be able to maintain an optimal level of arousal, that is, to be in a state of readiness to learn and respond appropriately.

Students have access to individual sessions in the sensory integration room and staff integrate sensory strategies into daily classroom activities. These interventions help students to modulate their level of sensory arousal in order to achieve the '**calm alert**' state required to engage and participate.

For more information about Sensory Integration:

[www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/What-is-SI#Overview\\_of\\_sensory\\_integration%20](http://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/What-is-SI#Overview_of_sensory_integration%20)

## **Attention Autism**

Attention Autism is a highly motivating and creative approach to **building attention and early communication skills**. Attention Autism was developed by specialist speech and language therapist, Gina Davies. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The Attention Autism programme progresses through a series of stages, building on each skill level. Each new stage is introduced when the group is ready to expand attention skills.

**Stage 1: Focusing attention**

**Stage 2: Building attention**

**Stage 3: Turn taking and re-engaging attention**

**Stage 4: Shifting and re-engaging attention**

For more information about Attention Autism:

<https://autismspectrumteacher.com/attention-autism-stage-1-attention-bucket/>

[www.ginadavies.co.uk](http://www.ginadavies.co.uk)

## **Positive Behaviour Support**

As a school we use Positive Behaviour Support principles and practice to support pupils in the management of their behaviour. We promote the learning of self-control through the reinforcement (rewarding and encouraging) of positive behaviours rather than the response to negative behaviours. Every available opportunity is made to **teach, model and promote positive behaviour**, raise confidence and self-esteem and develop personal and social skills in all our pupils. Many pupils in our Autism specialist classes have an Individual Behaviour Support Plan (IBSP). This is put in place to support identified behaviour(s) of concern with agreed strategies and interventions as appropriate. This is shared with all staff working with the pupil, you as parents and (if appropriate) the pupil themselves.

## **Home School Diary**

We know that you want to be **involved** with your son or daughter's learning. Every day staff will send a note in the Home/School Diary to inform you of the day's events and how your child reacted to activities. We will also use the diary to ask for any equipment that we need in school.

## **Celebration**

We know how **proud** you are of your son or daughter. We are proud of them too and like to reward achievement. Pupils can work towards individual or class awards at a level that is appropriate to them. We also have a whole school house point system and celebrate achievement in our twice weekly assemblies. Pupils can achieve house points, stars and certificates for good work, good attitude, being a great friend or for trying something new.