

Sparrows

Rationale

Children in the Sparrows class are working at a level significantly below that which would be expected of their chronological age. They are all quite high on the autistic spectrum and this has a very big impact on their ability to interact with others and to access the curriculum. They all have very limited expressive language and find it difficult to communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings. This can lead to frustration resulting in difficult behaviour. It also makes accurate assessment very difficult.

The statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, as set out for children of their chronological age, are beyond what they would be able to access. In order for these children to be taught a curriculum that is broad, balanced and accessible, tasks have to be delivered in small steps with a very high adult-child ratio. The children need individual timetables, planned to accommodate the learning styles and developmental needs of each child. Due to their autistic traits, the children tend to have very 'spiky' profiles, with their ability to learn facts (HFWs, number bonds etc) far exceeding their ability to use and apply their learning, or to transfer learning from one situation to another. Whilst the need to socialise and interact are acknowledged, and planning incorporates opportunities for those skills to be developed, it is also recognised that these children prefer to work and play on their own, and that to enforce co-operation and collaboration could lead to extreme anxiety with related behaviours.

Learning in the Sparrows class is done through a topic-based approach which is cross-curricular and relevant to the children's developmental levels. Teaching and learning content is highly differentiated with individual visual timetables being provided, with a 'first....next....' approach being used by all adults.

Recording Progress

Progress for the children in the Sparrows is recorded in terms of their Annual Review and IEP targets. The children work very much from their 'own agenda' and can display some challenging behaviours when this is disrupted by adult-directed tasks. They need small steps, with regular breaks for sensory or motivational activities, and high adult support.

Academic progress is monitored via the whole school B-Squared data, but a much broader system of assessment is in place, encompassing the sensory, social, physical, medical and environmental needs of the children. Communication from parents through the home/school diary and comments made at parent consultations give an indication of the developments being seen out of school and examples of these are kept as evidence of progress. Notes are kept on how each child interacts with peers and adults, and the extent to which they are able to focus on adult-directed tasks. These are important markers of progress and are recorded on the planning sheets, alongside examples of written work or photographs, in order to inform next steps for progress. Weekly records are kept of the activities/tasks planned to ensure each child is working towards his/her individual Annual Review and IEP targets and how progress is being made towards these. These are linked to P-Scale and NC descriptors.

Assessments and targets from other professionals, for example Speech Therapists or Paediatricians, are also used to inform planning.

English

The main focus for children in the Sparrows class will be on developing communication and social skills. All of the children are on the autistic spectrum and struggle with communication. Some of them are competent at sight reading words, but are unable to demonstrate evidence of comprehension. Staff will be seeking to find the most appropriate means of communication for each individual within the class, to enable demonstration of comprehension, whilst at the same time being encouraged to increase their sight-reading, spelling and decoding skills.

They will be learning to

- construct sentences using up to 4 key words using verbal/signs/symbols as appropriate
- communicate their needs and opinions using verbal/signs/symbols
- understand and respond to instructions using up to 4 key words given verbally alongside signs/symbols
- develop a sight vocabulary, reading words from the first 100, then the next 200 High Frequency Word lists
- spell words from the two HFW lists
- develop accurate hand-eye co-ordination, through various hand-gym type activities, leading to improved pencil control
- form letters correctly leading to a legible style of handwriting
- Share books and stories with an adult and with their peers, and show comprehension through gestures and/or comments
- Spend quiet time looking at books on their own, demonstrating an enjoyment of books

Maths

Maths in the Sparrows class will be delivered predominantly through a topic-based curriculum, to encourage using and applying in practical, real-life situations, with a focus on developing communication and social skills to aid accurate assessment of mathematical understanding. All of the children are on the autistic spectrum and struggle with abstract concepts and transferring knowledge and skills from one situation to another. Some of them can complete a page of sums by following a procedure, but are not able to use that procedure in practical problems. They will be encouraged to use mathematics in everyday situations. Topics will be planned to provide opportunities to observe children using mathematics in order to assess and show progression in all areas, including using and applying.

Children will learn

- How to count in situations and activities throughout the day, including the register, lining up, setting out cups for snack time etc
- Number rhymes and songs that involve adding and subtracting
- Measures through cooking, growing seeds, sorting etc
- Matching and sorting during regular classroom activities
- Ordinal number through taking turns, lining up
- Activity tables set out for learning through play ie/ a weighing table, sand/water play etc

- Patterns and sequences through bead threading, pegboards etc
- Number formation alongside handwriting
- Number and other maths skills to be taught at an appropriate and individual level

Science

Science in the Sparrows class will be delivered predominantly through a topic-based curriculum, to encourage the children to explore, observe and question in situations that are relevant to them and within their own experiences. There will be a focus on developing communication and social skills, and the ability to generalise their learning. All of the children are on the autistic spectrum and struggle with the transferring of knowledge and skills from one situation to another. While some of them will have the ability to learn names and facts, the ability to work scientifically, solving problems and thinking abstractly, will be difficult for much of the group.

Children will learn about

- features of the classroom and wider school environment
- features of and changes in weather and seasons
- how simple electronic devices work ie/ toys, light sources
- how to take care of plants and animals
- how plants and animals, including humans, grow and change
- their own bodies, how to stay safe and healthy, how to exercise and eat well to be healthy and strong
- different types of sound, how sound is made, different volume, pitch
- different types of movement; how to make things move, speed up, slow down and stop using pushes, pulls and different surfaces
- habitats of living things within their environment
- changes that occur when things are heated or cooled
- simple methods of explaining and recording what they have discovered