

Autism Accreditation Assessment

St Luke's School

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| Reference No. | 27699 |
| Assessment dates | 28 th September – 30 th September 2021 |
| Lead Assessor | Nikki Kennedy |
| External Moderator | N/A |
| Status prior to the assessment | Accredited |
| Advanced status applied for | N/A |

Section 1: Context

About the Provision

Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:

"St Luke's is a Special Educational Needs School for children with Learning Disabilities (LD) and Complex Needs including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech and Language Communication Needs (SLCN) and Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD) (*Assessment Introduction Form*).

Number of autistic people supported by the provision: 71

Range of autistic people supported by the provision:

"Children aged 7 -16. The school is a learning disability school, some children have moderate learning disabilities though there are a few who have severe learning difficulties. Most of the children are verbal but some children use PECS, symbols or AAC device." (*Assessment Introduction Form*).

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

Ofsted, May 2019, the school was rated as overall requiring improvement. However, the school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare was described as good. The arrangements for safeguarding were described as effective.

About the Assessment

- The assessment took place over 3 days.
- The provision's adviser acted as assessor.
- A presentation was given on how provision is made for autistic pupils.

- 8 sessions were observed by the assessment team. These included a range of classroom-based activities; whole school assembly; playtime and mealtime.
- Discussions were held with both teaching staff and therapeutic staff.
- Personal files were sampled across each key stage.
- Some key policy documents provided by the provision were read.
- The results of surveys carried out with autistic people and their families were also considered.

Professional Development and Support for Staff

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

St Lukes offers a variety of evidence-based approaches and methods based on the need of the individual child. These include, TEACCH approach, PECS, Attention Autism, Elkan, Social Stories, Comic Script Conversations, Visual/Shape/Integrated Semantics.

According to information provided by the school:

We offer small classes with high staff ratio where quality first teaching is personalised to meet individual needs. We have some intervention groups for those individuals who need further support and also bespoke packages depending on requirement. We offer interventions such as rebound therapy, social skills, communications skill, wellbeing, sensory regulation for example." (*Assessment Introduction Form*)

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

A comprehensive induction programme is completed that includes the use of an all staff handbook. This involves conversations with key staff members to ensure that new starters are familiar with key people and have necessary information. This includes meetings with the SENCo and Head of Interventions as well as the STEPS behaviour lead.

All staff will complete the AET Tier 1 training in addition to training provided by Herts Country Council on a range of autism specific subjects. Training is offered in school in Bite-sized 15-minute sessions in addition to regular formal training sessions. Content for these sessions is identified on a school and individual level.

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

On-going support is provided by a range of staff across the school. This includes an extensive intervention team who are able to in class advice and support to staff in addition to the Head of Interventions and STEPS Behaviour Lead.

St Luke's employs a trained sensory integration occupational therapist who will provide additional support, advice and guidance to staff in supporting pupils across the school.

Section 2: Findings from Assessment

Personal Centred Planning

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

We develop pupil profiles from information from EHCPs, Professional reports, previous schools (via transition), information with parents. Recently we have employed highly qualified specialist TAs who are inputting in to this process. Future plans include embedding SCERTS into our provision.

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Pupil profiles are comprehensive and highlight the needs that pupils have regarding their communication and strategies available for support. These do not however consistently include the skills that pupils have. Additionally, the strategies are not necessarily linked to specific needs and highlight generic classroom strategies rather than personalised approaches.

The Autism Handbook clearly outlines the practice which is expected to be seen by staff in the classroom. This includes the methods of communication that are likely to be used by the pupils in addition to how the staff are expected to communicate in the

classroom and how this can be supported. Social understanding and relationships share the expectations how this can be supported within St Luke's.

St Luke's have access to SALT 2 days a week and a SALT assistant 1 and ½ days from an external NHS provider. St Luke's have however employed a SALT TA who provides the majority of support of SALT for pupils across the school. These include bespoke interventions for individuals and groups as well as spending time in the classroom supporting staff directly. Time has also been spent in the playground supporting pupils and staff with social interactions.

Staff spoke confidently about the use of visuals to support pupils processing and a range of social stories were shared to support pupils with a range of situation across the school.

Each pupil will be assessed using StAPPS (St Luke's Assessing Pupil Progress System) against 'I can' statements taking evidence from a range of sources. Where appropriate the SALT will carry out their own assessments.

EHCP Outcomes and next step targets form part of each child's profile. This will include at least one target on communication or interaction. These targets are reviewed regularly and data collected once a term on the progress that pupils have made in all areas.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

The impact of the SALT TA was seen in the playground with staff having the confidence to support pupils effectively in their social interactions, so that when misunderstandings occurred they could be worked through quickly and pupils supported in their social understanding.

Staff were consistently seen to consider the language they used with pupils, simplifying what they were saying and using pupils' names to get their attention before providing further information.

A range of communication methods were seen. Where best practice was seen one pupil was encouraged to use his AAC in a maths playground game communicating with both staff members and a peer. This communication was effectively encouraged and the pupil showed great confidence and skill in being able to get his thoughts across.

There is a true collaborative style to learning with each lesson engaging the whole class staff and pupils engaging with each other at various points throughout a lesson. Where pupils don't have confidence or skills in social interaction this was seen to be encouraged by staff within the classroom.

Problem Solving and Self-reliance

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Pupil profiles record needs in relation to self-help and independence as well as strategies to support.

St Luke's are aware of the population of autistic adults who are out of employment. Through interviews they discussed the ways in which they are giving pupils skills that they can transfer outside of education. St Luke's has a successful mobile café which is regularly used within the car park and goes out into the community. Pupils achieve qualifications in Barista which can be transferred to successful employment away from school. Other vocational qualifications are available to pupils and St Luke's use pupils' areas of interest to develop skills that can be transferred into employment.

The independent functioning skills of pupils are recorded in StAPPS with specific skills being taught through the PSD curriculum and embedded in lessons throughout the school day.

There is a comprehensive transition programme both into the school and out to college. Where required bespoke transition programmes are developed to ensure successful transitions both into and out of school. The transition co-ordinator develops the initial relationships with pupils, parents and schools and passes this onto class teams once pupils are in school. The transition to college includes a link programme which enables pupils to experience college courses whilst being supported by St Luke's staff.

Interventions team spoke about how they work to give pupils the skills they need to use strategies outside of their sessions in the classroom giving them the confidence to practice their skills when required. Although they were able to report examples of when pupils successfully used strategies outside of interventions this could not be assured confidently with all pupils.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Classrooms are organised so that pupils are able to move independently round them and access the resources they require when needed.

Now and next or visual timetables were seen consistently across the school, these were however always seen to be presented in InPrint rather than considering the specific needs of pupils within the room.

Staff were consistently seen to provide pupils with visuals regarding expectations of lessons and timing for specific activities during a lesson using a timer both visually and electronically so pupils could see/hear when timer had finished.

Pupils were consistently seen to be on task and fully engaged in learning tasks suggesting that tasks were of an appropriate level of interest and challenge.

Where best practice was seen in most observations' pupils were seen to be encouraged to participate in activities independently being supported by staff when required.

Where best practice was seen pupils were encouraged to support each other in their activities rather than always relying on adult support.

Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills in a range of contexts within and outside of the classroom environment.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Sensory needs are included with strategies as part of the pupil profiles. Although these do not include activities which pupils will enjoy consistently.

The staff handbook outlines a range of activities which can help to support a pupils sensory processing from activities and resources to people within the school who can provide advice and guidance.

The interventions team provide a wide range of sensory support, strategies and resources for pupils. Many of these are provided on a timetabled basis but can be provided when a pupil requires them across the school day. Consideration is given to the wide range of sensory needs that pupils present.

There is a specialist OT and physio TA within the interventions team who deliver sensory diets for pupils and a range of specific intervention. A sensory play session is offered to pupils with specific targets and a focus that targets auditory, visual, touch and proprioceptive senses.

A sensory integration OT attends the school once a week and supports key pupils in specific programmes working closely with the interventions team and class teams within the school.

The NHS hours for OT have been dramatically cut within the school, however with the support that is available from the interventions team and SIOT the impact of this was not apparent during observations.

Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ is a dedicated sensory integration suite with sensory circuits available for pupils, a climbing wall, swing, and calm space. Pupils are able to use this space supported when required.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

All classrooms were low arousal environments the use of space had been carefully considered and quiet spaces have been developed in each room.

Pupils across the school access zones of regulation, these skills are expressly taught to pupils. During one lesson staff were seen to work with pupils to establish strategies to help pupils when they were in the yellow zone. It was emphasised that these would be available for pupils to use and support them when they were in the yellow zone and couldn't think very well.

Where best practice was seen multi-sensory activities were used throughout the lesson to enable pupils to explore and use all of their senses in their learning. These were both activities which pupils would enjoy but also those which might challenge them, completed in a safe way with support.

Staff consistently showed an understanding of the pupil's sensory needs and activities which may challenge, but were also able to identify effectively when movement breaks were needed and this was successfully facilitated by staff. During one observation

staff members facilitated a movement break providing pupils with an activity that they then continued and developed as their confidence increased. Where best practice was seen a lesson had sensory elements embedded within it. Movement breaks were used to maintain attention and pupils were able to select their own resources to complete the activity. One pupil chose to select only sensory toys which were available as part of a sensory table within the classroom.

During the assessment an unplanned fire drill was carried out, staff were considerate of the pupil's sensory needs and the impact that a fire drill could have on them and their abilities to engage/re-engage in lessons.

Movement breaks and relaxation time was seen to be used across the school to great effect to help to manage the arousal and excitement levels of pupils.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The staff handbook outlines expectations regarding the support of pupils and their emotional understanding and self-awareness. It clearly shows the skills that they hope to develop and the approaches which will be used to do this. Further through the document strategies to develop social understanding are identified.

Various interventions are available to support pupil's emotional well-being provided either by the interventions team or through external therapists coming into school. Interventions are provided on a bespoke programme of support and are provided as needs are identified.

Pupil profiles include information regarding a pupils social and emotional wellbeing, this information is presented in terms of a pupils needs and doesn't include strengths that they have this area. In addition, strategies are not specifically matched to areas of need and can be generic.

All staff were able to talk confidently about activities which made pupils happy, in one instance a staff member was able to share strategies about a specific pupil to ensure that his emotional well-being was maintained during an observation.

St Luke's uses the Hertfordshire Steps approach to behaviour management with a clear guideline within the policy.

The PSD curriculum has a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing as well as relationships which include direct teaching of feelings, empathy and recognising feelings and their impact on others.

St Luke's has a robust and comprehensive recording system of behaviour, staff record incidents through Arbor, this data is collated by the Behaviour lead who not only monitors the quality of incidents but also is able to track trends at various levels – pupil, class, year group, gender, and specific needs.

Regular pupil progress meetings attended by all key staff within the school allows staff to identify where additional support is required. Referrals to additional support services can be made in a timely way to ensure that pupils get support when they need it.

Key pupils within the school will have behaviour support plans, this can be developed further and some pupils within the school will have anxiety management plans. These are reviewed half termly and are developed on traffic light system of what the anxiety looks like, how the staff should respond and any visual tools to support.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

St Luke's is a calm school where pupils show confidence and security. There is a level of mutual trust between staff and pupils which allows them to make a mistake and know that it is okay.

Pupils were consistently seen to be at ease and engaged in motivating activities. During one observation I joined a class who were reading the story of going on a bear hunt. I went with the group on a pretend bear hunt in the school grounds where they experienced each element of the story. The teacher had set up sensory activities for each section of the story to replicate what the family did within the story. The children were able to physically explore the story and enjoyed carrying out the actions and sensory exploration that the story gave them.

Pupils were seen to be supported to regulate their emotions, zones of regulation were available in all classrooms and pupils in one observation were seen to participate in a lesson to learn strategies to use when in the yellow zone.

There are examples of interventions and activities throughout the observations which make the most of a pupil's specific skills and interests and can be developed into useful skills in adulthood.

Pupils were seen to be consistently praised and rewarded through the use of dojo points across the school. Pupils will regularly talk about the dojo points that they have been or could be awarded. There is clear understanding shown by the pupils of what they are able to achieve and get awarded points for.

Consultation with Autistic People

Pupils were seen to have the confidence to provide their views and opinions on a range of topics. Teachers were seen to make the most of opportunities to provide pupils the opportunity to interact with each other in both the classroom and outdoor activities.

Pupil voice is obtained formally through school council and formalised questionnaire feedback.

Consultation with families of Autistic People

Regular contact is made with families through class dojo, phone calls and emails.

Regular opportunities are provided to parents for formal discussions regarding their young person and the support provided in school. In addition to the annual review St Luke's will carry out termly EHCP reviews with parents.

The results for the family questionnaires are provided in an appendix below. Some elements of the questionnaire were regarded as poor and St Luke's are investigating the reasons behind the negative feedback which has been received.

Section 3: Summary of assessment

What the provision does particularly well

The interventions team provide a vast array of interventions and support for pupils with a diverse range of need. This enables staff to personalise interventions to best meet need. Much of the work that they carry out is proactive in supporting pupils and giving them skills that they can use and embed in classroom practice.

Staff were seen to be excellent at managing and supporting the social interaction of pupils both within the classroom environment but also during unstructured times in the playground. No opportunities were missed to support pupils in developing their skills of social interaction.

Communication is a key strength within St Luke's the staff have a clear understanding of the expressive and receptive communication needs of the pupils and how best they can support them in all areas of the school.

Pupils are encouraged to carry out activities with as much independence as possible, this is supported by the use of visuals.

Community working is a strength with St Luke's they have a real community presence started with the introduction of the Blue Tangerine Café and the Repair Shed. There are plans to develop this even further to continue to give the pupils the skills they will need as they prepare for adulthood.

There are a range of vocational options provided for pupils when they reach upper school. Thought has been given to which options pupils will be able to take at college and the early skills in these areas are taught as part of the upper school programme to support pupils with their transition into college should they wish to take a vocational route. This also helps pupils to participate in lessons with which they want to engage, alongside their core programme of subjects.

Significant progress has been made since the last assessment and Ofsted inspection, practice across the school is consistent and staff show understanding of the needs of the pupils and ways in which to support them effectively.

The development of additional spaces and staggered lunch has been pivotal in providing pupils with a low arousal space where they can enjoy their lunch.

The pupils at St Luke's are proud of their school and there is a mutual trust and respect between them and the staff team. Pupils were keen to open doors and talk to the assessment team often sharing their achievements within a lesson.

What the provision could develop further

St Luke's were surprised by the response received in the assessment feedback below. The school had recently completed their own surveys in which the feedback received was positive. St Luke's could investigate the reason for discrepancies in the feedback between their own surveys and those received by accreditation.

Practice within the school is good and consistent with staff showing a good understanding of autism practice. The school benefits from the specialist knowledge of the intervention team and the dissemination of this to the staff. The school should however, consider a more formalised approach for ensuring that staff including teaching assistants have access to accredited and formalised training.

Continue with the development of pupil profiles, consider including strengths and abilities as well as pupil's needs. Include personalised approaches for support for specific areas of need.

Collaborative working between interventions teams and classroom practitioners is good with modelling of interventions in classrooms. However, having a more formalised method for tracking progress and carrying out further observations in class will help the team to track outcomes and success of interventions being used.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS

St Luke's School FAP Deadline 24/09/2021

1. Feedback questionnaire on St Luke's School to be completed before 24/09/2021

1. The support my relative is given is...

| Answer Choices | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | poor | 5.26% | 1 |
| 2 | ok, but could be better | 31.58% | 6 |
| 3 | mostly good | 36.84% | 7 |
| 4 | always good | 26.32% | 5 |
| | | answered | 19 |
| | | skipped | 0 |

2. The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...

| Answer Choices | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | poor | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 | ok, but could be better | 31.58% | 6 |
| 3 | mostly good | 31.58% | 6 |
| 4 | always good | 36.84% | 7 |
| | | answered | 19 |
| | | skipped | 0 |

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

| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|-------------------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | poor |  | 15.79% | 3 |
| 2 | ok, but could be better |  | 15.79% | 3 |
| 3 | mostly good |  | 31.58% | 6 |
| 4 | always good |  | 36.84% | 7 |
| | | | answered | 19 |
| | | | skipped | 0 |

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

| Answer Choices | | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|----------------|-------------------------|---|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | poor |  | 15.79% | 3 |
| 2 | ok, but could be better |  | 26.32% | 5 |
| 3 | mostly good |  | 31.58% | 6 |
| 4 | always good |  | 26.32% | 5 |
| | | | answered | 19 |
| | | | skipped | 0 |

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

Please note that any written comments accompanying these scores have been shared with the provision but it is standard practice for these to be removed from the final report so the report can be published or shared with third parties without the risk of personal data been included.

APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION