

Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust



Flexibility of Thought Policy

May 2020

TORFIELD/SAXON MOUNT FEDERATION

Flexibility of Thought Policy

Introduction

At Saxon Mount and Torfield School we develop pupils' flexibility of thought to support them through transitions and /or changes to routines. We also work with pupils to improve their thinking skills to underpin the development of communication and interaction and social skills.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistency of approach across the schools and to support pupils' learning and understanding.

Objectives

- to develop the flexibility of each pupil's thinking skills
- to improve pupils' self-esteem and independence
- to reduce dependency on prompts from adults and increase independence
- to provide opportunities throughout the day for pupils to make choices and decisions
- to develop each pupil's awareness of his/her ability to think
- to develop each pupil's awareness of his/her ability to solve problems
- to allow pupils to take the lead in some activities
- to develop pupils' concept of self/other awareness

Statement of Equal Opportunities

At both schools thinking skills are taught as an integral part of the curriculum in which we aim to ensure equal opportunities and access for all children and to recognise the needs of children with communication difficulties including autism, pupils with visual or hearing impairment and to provide appropriate resources for both genders

Delivery

A range of strategies are used to support the teaching of flexible thinking skills. These are outlined in Appendix 1 – Staff guidance.

The teaching of flexible thinking skills also forms part of the teaching for all areas of the curriculum especially Citizenship and PSHE.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Flexibility of Thought forms an integral part of some pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPS). IEP targets are reviewed and set three times per year. Individual behaviour plans will refer to strategies to reduce rigid thinking as appropriate and are

reviewed at least termly. Reviews of Education and HealthCare Plans (EHCPs) will report on Flexibility of Thought where it is an identified need.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be monitored and evaluated by the whole staff and reviewed by the Federation Governing Body.

Reviewed and Federated May 2020
Next review May 2023

Appendix 1

Staff Guidance

The following strategies support the development of pupils' flexibility of thought.

Making Decisions and use of Choice Boards

Targeted pupils are given opportunities to make choices throughout the day and across the curriculum e.g. choosing activities as rewards, snacks and food at lunchtime, playground activities. For some children making a choice is essential. Some choice boards indicate what is inside a box or cupboard. Some are personalised for specific pupils. Pupils are taught how to use a choice board to help them with decision making. From here pupils are offered opportunities to make spontaneous requests using known motivators.

Pupils with an ASD diagnosis may have a very limited range of preferences. Where necessary, staff use symbols and objects of reference to help pupils make decisions, recognise and achieve goals and earn rewards and be monitored to participate in learning.

Visual Timetables

All classes have a visual timetable. Individual pupils may have personalised timetables.

This helps pupils to understand the passing of time and what they have to do throughout the day. Pupils can depend on these timetables and to support them. It can be upsetting if what is on the timetable does not happen for any reason, e.g. a teacher is sick, a visitor does arrive, swimming is cancelled etc. In order to prepare pupils for the unexpected, we teach strategies to cope with change and respond positively to something unexpected happening.

Social Use of Language Programme

At Torfield and Saxon Mount SULP is used to support pupils' understanding of change and social expectations. In addition, citizenship time gives pupils opportunities to evaluate and plan for changes.

Pupils at Torfield and Saxon Mount School have the unknown session called "?" time. This is an opportunity to practise managing something unexpected. In AS4 this is referred to as 'independent learning time' (ILT) where the emphasis is on the pupils responding to the situation and organising themselves and the resources they need.

Taking a break

At Torfield School, staff would direct a pupil to a calming activity in order to reduce anxiety.

Pupils are encouraged to develop self-help strategies for coping with anxieties. Teaching pupils to request 'Time Out' when they are feeling stressed can prevent the manifestation of aggressive behaviours. In this way the pupil is in control of when s/he takes "Time Out" and this supports their ability to manage their own behaviour.

Self/Other Awareness

Pupils are taught to develop these skills in regular social use of language programme activities and in PSHE and Citizenship lessons. These teach pupils to understand that they may have similar likes and dislikes to other pupils in their groups. They are taught to understand how to recognise emotions in themselves and others.

Generalisation and transfer of skills

To address the difficulties that pupils with ASD have in generalisation, they are taught to transfer skills within a variety of contexts and situations. Trips out of school are encouraged so that the pupils experience a range of contexts in which to learn within the wider learning environment.

This policy is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the Head of School, who reports to Governors about the effectiveness of the policy on request.