



AUTISM ACCREDITATION

AWARDED BY THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Certificate

This is to certify that

Riverside School of Haringey Council

has successfully achieved **Autism Accreditation** status

working under the

Criteria for Education, Social Care and Health

Chris Mitchell

Chris Mitchell
Head of Autism Accreditation

Date: 12th December 2027

*Expiry date: December 2030

*Subject to current regulations with Autism Accreditation

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AUTISM ACCREDITATION PEER REVIEW

SERVICE REVIEWED: Riverside School

DATES OF REVIEW: 21st & 22nd November 2017

TEAM MEMBERS: Mary Fawcett & Vicki Turner

OVERVIEW OF PROVISION

Riverside School is a successful and oversubscribed co-educational day secondary special school in Haringey, North London. The school provides 126 places for students aged 11-16, (school years 7-11), mainly from across the borough. It is co-located on the same site as Woodside High School which enables good inclusion provision for Riverside students.

Riverside students experience a wide range of general, complex, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, and many of their community have emotional, language and communication needs. Nearly two-thirds of the school population have a diagnosis of autism. At the time of the review 78 students are identified as being on the Autistic Spectrum. The school is working hard to create an autism friendly organisation. Riverside see Autism as a condition involving a different way of perceiving the world with inherent strengths and challenges.

The school is organised into three teams, corresponding to student's level of need:

- Team 3 – Pre formal Curriculum
- Team 2 – Semi-Formal Curriculum
- Team 1 – Formal Curriculum

Each team has a team leader who monitors the quality of teaching and learning in their teams and ensures there are regular opportunities in the team for sharing good practice.

Riverside is always mindful of the need to deliver positive outcomes for all, according to their motto: '*Learning to Live Life to the Full*'. Riverside aim to develop and nurture happy and fulfilled students whilst ensuring that they have the highest possible levels of independence before they move on to post-16 education and later adult life.

Riverside holds awards from NAACE which recognises the school's outstanding use of technology in learning and teaching and administration; the National Standard for Healthy School; an Outstanding Sustainable School/Excellence in Cycling Award; the International Schools Award that demonstrates the

many links it has with other countries and in particular Slovenia and the Active Mark and Sports Mark have recently been re awarded recognising the exceptionally high standard of sports provision at the school.

Riverside's last Ofsted inspection took place in October 2016 where it was judged to be Good overall. Comments from Ofsted that the team wholly endorse include:

- 'Pupils from Riverside access the co-located academy as appropriate to their ability and needs. Some classes are twinned with a class in the mainstream academy for projects. In addition all Year 11 pupils are engaged in weekly work experience placements tailored to their individual interests, preferences and abilities.'
- 'The restructured middle leadership team are enthusiastic and experienced. They are excited about their new positions and have grasped the opportunity to take a more significant leadership role with relish.'
- 'Teachers and other staff members know pupils well and quickly recognise small changes in their behaviour or mood. They know what each pupils preferences are and met their needs quickly. Adults use a range of strategies and resources to communicate with pupils including objects, signing, electronic devices, symbols and text'

High quality learning environments at Riverside include:

- a number of multisensory rooms including a dark room and soft play
- a hydrotherapy pool
- well-designed outside play areas that included bike trail, climbing frame, herb garden, play tepee and play balconies
- mirrored dance hall and sports hall
- use of adjoining Woodfield's facilities such as five aside football and outside table tennis tables
- dedicated suites for music and art

Riverside with Haringey is developing its own Post 16 provision, it has four students at present however this provision is not under the remit of this accreditation review. Riverside is also offering ex-students the chance to take on apprenticeships or similar at the school – an ex student is at present undertaking an ICT apprenticeship.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Observations

The review team observed 25 sessions including lessons, circuit training, dance and PE sessions, speech therapy, lunch and morning break, assemblies and transition to and from school. The team also observed a training session for SMSAs led by the Occupational Therapist. A total of approximately 9 hours was spent observing practice.

Interviews and Discussions

Semi structured interviews and discussions were held with the headteacher, teachers inc PE Teacher ABA tutors supporting one recently admitted students, Community Links Lead, Deputy Heads, Speech and language Therapist, Music Therapist, Team Spirit Lead, 3 Ex-students and 4 current students, School Band Lead, SENCO Woodside School, Independent Travel Lead, CPD and Induction Lead, Positive Behaviour Lead, Group of Parents, Specialist Communication support, Haringey Shed Leader, Dance Unfolding leaders, Occupational Therapist

Documentation

The review team read a range of documents including published schemes, school policies, pupil related documentation and multi- media of pupil enrichment activities. These included the School Offer, Training presentations, draft Sensory Policy, Safeguarding and the student wellbeing MAG, Challenge Partner feedback, training information for parents including – Sleep training and Makaton, Lesson plans, Communication profiles, Behaviour profiles, Team Spirit summary report 2016/17, Riverside Residential school journey 2016/17, Attachment Aware schools documentation, Subject Folders, Communication Development Plan, various Research Project undertaken by staff for degree level and above work, video clips including Friday assemblies, piano and drum lessons and Intensive Interaction, Autism at Riverside Policy guidance, staffing structure, SCERTs development Plan, Analysis of progress, Ofsted Inspection Report, Flexibility of Thought Policy, ASD specific plan, CPD Training programme, Student personal information files and Riverside website.

KEY FINDINGS

As a result of this process, the following **two** developmental actions were identified for Riverside School to work on:

Actions for Development	Reasoning
<p><u>Development Action One</u></p> <p><u>Enabling the Autistic Student</u></p> <p>Strand 3: Sensory experiences</p> <p>E15 How is each autistic student supported if they are experiencing sensory overload or discomfort.</p> <p>E32 How do staff enable each autistic student to feel calm and in control, thereby feeling less anxious or frustrated</p> <p>To further develop sensory diets further to include/cater for activities/needs during unstructured times. The review team suggest that Sensory diets are separated from the Communication Profile and included in a further section in Student's Personal Files – this seems particularly necessary for students within Team 3 classes. To ensure all staff and parents are knowledgeable in this area by providing further focused training.</p> <p>To ensure that sensory resources for individual needs are readily available throughout the day and at home.</p>	<p>To ensure staff are familiar with the sensory profiles for each student and have well developed sensory diets that are used across the school day and in the home environment. To include the development of further personalised sensory input and activities particularly during unstructured times such as breaks and lunch time.</p> <p>The review team understand that an OT Consultant has recently been employed in order to audit and address the area of Sensory need through further and ongoing staff training and resources development..</p> <p>There is a comprehensive action plan in place within the Riverside's Autism Action Plan – some actions planned but not due for completion until July 2018.</p>
<p><u>Development Action Two</u></p> <p><u>Enabling the Autistic Student</u></p> <p>Strand 1: Differences in Social Communication</p> <p>E1 How is each autistic enabled to communicate what matters to them.</p>	<p>A Communication Development Plan is in place and its aim of consistency across the school environments continues to be worked towards. The team observed good practice across most formalised settings but noted that total communication across the whole school day including unstructured times such as break and lunchtimes is still being worked towards. Further actions</p>

<p>E3 How is each autistic student enabled to understand and participate in different social interactions and social situations, and with different people.</p> <p>To audit consistency of practice in social communication across all environments and put in place training and resources as needs dictate.</p> <p>To look at unstructured times such as break, lunchtimes and after school provision and other areas known to the school to ensure that resources are available to support social communication and that the students know how to access and use them.</p>	<p>to address this are planned by Riverside School. (See comprehensive Autism Action Plan)</p> <p>Riverside has developed a number of innovative communication strategies including PODDs and SmiLEtherapy - personalised to individual students. It is also exploring the use of SCERTs across the school.</p>
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The following **five** areas were identified as examples of what the school does well.

Specific areas of strength	Reasoning
<p><u>Strength One</u></p> <p><u>Commitment and Consultation</u></p> <p>Strand 1: Commitment</p> <p>C9 How does the school ensure that all staff, including administration and ancillary staff, understand and implement a strengths-based person-centred approach, which is based on current knowledge and understanding of Autism</p> <p>Staff are respectful, calm, enthusiastic and knowledgeable.</p>	<p>Students at Riverside are eager to learn due to a highly individualised approach, an unconditional positive regard for the student and an acceptance of their autism as an integral part of who they are.</p>
<p><u>Strength Two</u></p> <p>Enabling the Autistic Student</p> <p>Strand 4: Emotional Wellbeing</p>	<p>Very good and varied planned activities that enable students to develop independence skills including the excellent Travel Training and Work Experience programmes, the Annual Residential and Community skills programmes and Team Spirit out of school provision.</p>

<p>E16 How do staff enable each autistic student to experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction</p> <p>Riverside has developed many programmes that ensure that self-esteem, resilience and independence in students is nurtured and developed over the time they are at Riverside. These include the residential trip, travel training and work experience.</p>	<p>Also the ongoing development of innovative programmes such as the 'Dance Unfolding' project, the School Band and 'PODDs' programmes to further develop students sense of self and self-worth.</p>
<p><u>Strength Three</u></p> <p>Commitment and Consultation</p> <p>Strand 2: Partnership</p> <p>C23 How do staff actively work in partnership with other professionals, who support each autistic student, to deliver a consistent and unified approach</p> <p>The partnerships developed with outside organisations is an enormous benefit to the students.</p>	<p>The partnership Riverside have developed with Woodside High School and other external organisations such as Haringey Shed and Work Experience placements have enabled a personalised approach for students in the development of functional life skills.</p> <p>The Challenge Partnership Network is very supportive and helps the school audit its practice well.</p>
<p><u>Strength Four</u></p> <p>Enabling the Autistic Person</p> <p>Strand 2: Self-Reliance and Problem Solving</p> <p>E4 How is each autistic student enabled to make sense of their environment and encouraged to be self-reliant and independent within it</p> <p>Riverside has developed a physical environment that very well meets the needs of its student cohort on the Autism Spectrum.</p>	<p>Riverside has developed a physical environment that very well meets the needs of its student cohort on the Autism Spectrum. This includes both external play areas and internal spaces such as hydrotherapy pool, soft play, dark rooms, hall, terraced play areas, dedicated music/food tech/ICT and art rooms. Also the well laid out classrooms all with chill out rooms. The quiet seating areas in the wide corridors are well used by students and staff. The Head says he loves 'village' feeling this gives the school</p>
<p><u>Strength Five</u></p> <p>Commitment and Consultation</p> <p>Strand1: Commitment</p>	<p>Person-centred Student Behaviour Plans, Well Being documentation and Communication Profiles along with monitoring by the Student Wellbeing Multi Agency Group and termly through Governing Body through the Student Development Committee, ensures a rigorous process. The</p>

C15 How does the school ensure that staff employ positive and proactive behaviours in addressing behaviours that are a threat to the autistic student.

Riverside's very good Positive Behaviour Support practices are well embedded and ongoing Team Teach training ensures that all staff adopt the strategies as outlined in Riverside's Behaviour Management Policy.

team observed that students feel valued by staff and are secure and happy whilst at school.

FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

	Scores				
	Number of Questionnaires set out : 78 Number of Questionnaires Returned: 26				
	Unscored	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to contact the school about my child on a regular basis	0	2	0	11	13
I am given information about my child's/family member's progress on a regular basis	0	2	0	11	13
The school listens to my views about my child and their education and takes them into account.	0	1	1	11	13
I am aware of how to raise concerns about any aspect of my child's/family member's education and am confident that they will be considered and addressed.	0	1	0	12	13
The school has a good understanding of my child/family member and works well to meet their needs.	0	1	0	11	14
The school respects the complexities of caring for a family member on the Autistic Spectrum	1	1	1	7	16
The school provides opportunities for me to find out more about autism and my child's/family member's specific needs	0	1	0	11	14
The school has had a positive impact on my family member's life and learning	0	1	0	12	13
Totals	1	10	2	87	109
Percentages	0.5%	4.5%	1%	42%	52%

94% of scores are in the happy to very happy range with most of these (52%) being in the very happy category. Overall this indicates a high level of parental approval for the way their child is supported and that they themselves are involved and kept informed.

Parent Comments

- She is happy to go to school
- Riverside staff help my child to reach his full potential
- Staff respond promptly to any issues and are very supportive
- Excellent teacher and support staff
- My child feels safe and loves attending school
- Lack of communication
- No respect for the complexities of caring for a child on the Autism Spectrum

Parent Meeting Comments

- He was always upset at mainstream school but he is never upset at Riverside
- The school really meet my son's needs – there have been no issues since September.
- My child looks forward to coming in the morning. He didn't like his last school
- He had been excluded countless times from his last school - since he has come here I am more relaxed and don't worry when the school phones – it's never to exclude him.
- Teachers are supportive and caring
- Staff are experienced and can manage behaviour
- Would like there to be coffee mornings so we can get together with other parents
- Would like more information about Haringey Sixth Form College
- Travel training is excellent
- Would like better access to after school clubs and funding to be able to place my child there.
- The Sensory training session for parents was very good.

Students' comments gathered from a meeting and out and about in the school during unstructured times

- You don't feel like a stranger when you come here. Everyone is friendly.
- I am proud to represent the school (Headgirl)
- It's good being with friends here.
- I enjoy my work experience. I work in Woodside Canteen helping to get food ready.
- Were you a baby? (Yes) I was a baby but not as long ago as you were!
- If you were half a boy and half a girl you could choose to play in the girls' football team or the boys' football team.
- Whilst out in the playground Deputy Head boy introduced himself without prompting.
- Riverside is better, the work is easier and the staff help me with my work in the lessons.

OBSERVATION SCORES

Number of observations completed - 25				
Topic	Not Met	Partially Met	Majority Met	Fully Met
Differences in social communication	0	4	8	13
Self-reliance and problem solving	0	4	10	11
Sensory Experiences	0	3	11	11
Emotional well-being	0	2	9	14
TOTAL	0	13	38	49
PERCENTAGE	0%	13%	38%	49%

87% of lessons are majority or fully met with 13% partially met and none are not met.

In lessons where fully met students are provided with personalised tools and support to enable them to communicate and interact successfully. Teachers/support staff use of language is differentiated and appropriate to the needs of the student. Students are enabled to carry out many tasks independently and they know this is an expectation e.g. putting snack cup and plate in sink. The well-being and self-esteem of students is enhanced through the activities been engaging and fun. Students are provided with planned activities and opportunities to develop appropriate social and communication skills. The environment is maintained to support independent functioning e.g. visual cues, schedules, Now and Then boards, micro-transition visuals to show passing of time. Highly structured lesson supported

by visuals. The well being and self esteem of students is enhanced particularly through the staff knowing and understanding the students very well. Makaton signing is used with symbols to support verbal language.

Where less than fully met there are missed opportunities for students to develop problem solving and independence skills. Insufficient attention is paid to the individual sensory needs of the student. Visuals not sufficiently/proactively used and were not available for students to initiate a request. There was a lack of personalised strategies to engage students particularly during unstructured times such as break.

FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

Topic	Comments
<p>Differences in Social Communication</p>	<p>Riverside School adopt a Total Communication Approach that underpins every area of the curriculum enabling students to access learning and develop social relationships as well as communicate their wants and needs. Riverside has a comprehensive communications policy and a further section on communication in the Autism Practices Policy. Reference is made to providing students with visual structures, choices and giving processing time in order for the student to respond. Maximising opportunities for students to communicate using an appropriate mode of communication is seen as key. All staff in Teams 2 and 3 wear symbol fobs though very little use was made of these by the students or staff.</p> <p>Every student has a Communication Profile in his/her personal information file, written in the first person, that describes his/her needs and strengths. It includes their preferred means of communication and how staff can help them communicate. Ofsted 2016 comment, <i>'Pupils are taught to communicate effectively with adults and each other using a range of a systems and resources. These include the use of technology, signing, symbol exchange and verbal language'</i>. The team observed that communication is well adapted to the needs of the student e.g. on several occasions the team observed an object shown alongside a visual, when the visual did not elicit a response. The use of one lead voice and limited verbal instructions is noted by the review team as consistent across the school environments.</p> <p>The school employs three NHS speech and language therapists (SaLTs) who support all the students within the school. Only one of these is a full time SaLT. Each class has produced an audit in order that effective group support and interventions are used. Symbols from Communication in Print are used across the school including on display boards.</p> <p>Intensive Interaction observed in an individual SaLT session with a Team 3 student. The student enjoyed this way of working and is able to initiate some moves herself. Further communication through intensive action is viewed on the DVD and during the Unfolding Dance session, where individual students are seen enjoying leading others.</p> <p>In liaison with the SaLT, a small team, including the dedicated communication support assistant, are introducing a small number of students to PODD books. Previously these students have only used symbol exchange, however within just a few weeks they are observed by the review team to be independently building up sentences and requesting snack</p>

items. The team developing this are very excited about the increased communication and interest this group are showing and hope to extend training for the use of PODDs across the school and then roll out PODDs books for all who will benefit.

Little was seen of the use of technology e.g. iPads. It may be appropriate for some students to develop the use of technology for communication further, particularly to respond to individual requests such as 'yes' or 'no, especially when the student does not sign. The review team observed some staff and several students using MAKATON. Riverside has a member of staff trained to Regional Trainer Level who regularly leads Makaton training sessions at the school for staff members and parents. In the summer a 1 hour introductory course was offered to parents and this term the intensive accredited 2 day course was attended by a number of parents at the very reasonable cost of £10. Riverside is looking at introducing SCERTS; several trained staff members have put together a development plan to roll it out across the school with the aim to help build students' confidence in social communication. Riverside is also using smiLEtherapy. This aims to develop social and communication skills for life.

The school environment and classes and wall displays are generally uncluttered and visuals including timetables are well used. The review team noted that micro transitions visuals the team observed are very good and used in nearly every session to show the student what happens next and most importantly the passing of time. The team suggest it may also be appropriate to use timers, sand/mechanical/electrical to help some students understand that a session is coming to an end; countdowns are observed in several instances but without accompanying visuals.

In the best sessions observed there are good use of resources and multi-sensory stimuli. In a geography lesson the teacher had a range of multi-sensory resources including ice, sand, sea creatures and water. These were extremely motivating for the students, capturing their attention and focus and resulting in cooperation, engagement and enjoyment. The review team observed an assembly for Team 3/2 students that used the 12 days of Christmas as a focus. The teacher leading this used simple clear visuals, instruction and hands on resources, ensuring the students are fully engaged in learning. During a Dance Unfolding session, engagement was high; staff follow student lead to engage them meaningfully and move them on to another action e.g. mirroring and then waiting for the student to engage and then at times initiate. Students in a maths lesson are observed using Numicon as a visual means of understanding the computation they are working out. In the same lesson the teacher ensures that all students know the key MAKATON signs for words such as add, subtract, multiply and divide by practising them all together.

A bank of Social Stories are available to alleviate anxiety. These included generic 'stories' such as, 'Having an Injection' and 'Going to Harrington' but also very individualised ones such as, 'Nanny goes on holiday' and 'Sleeping at Grandma and Grandpa's house in the summer holiday'

Social interaction between students, observed by the team, are positive and respectful. The review team observed sessions where students listened to opinions and took part in discussions in a very positive way. In unstructured settings such as the playground and the dining hall students played appropriately together. Staff use of language is clear and explicit.

	<p>Lessons are observed to have a clear beginning, middle and end. The team observed many opportunities that enabled discussion and evaluation of student's own learning. Lesson objectives are clear and frequently referenced. Teaching is delivered within a group, paired and individual basis with evidenced differentiation. Reflection and evaluation are also encouraged and positively supported. Visual supports are evident in all lessons observed but the use of them was inconsistent. Some missed opportunities are evidenced that would have supported more independent work rather than the students being reliant on adult verbal prompting.</p> <p>The team observed that the social skills of turn taking and listening are successfully embedded throughout the school. High expectations are evident within nearly all observed sessions; students take turns within a group, and respect others thoughts and opinions. Many opportunities are given to allow students' voices to be heard. The students have recently elected, through voting, a Head Boy and Head Girl. The team members had conversations with both these students who are absolutely delighted to be representing their school.</p>
<p>Self-reliance and problem solving</p>	<p>Riverside's Flexibility of Thought Guidance document seeks to outline to staff a number of teaching strategies to help students manage change, adapt to new situations and cope in unfamiliar settings. The Autism Policy also includes a useful section on the development of Independence. The team observed visual timetables and sequences of tasks in a variety of lessons, that appeared purposeful and clear. Transitions between rooms are well managed through clear modelling of expected behaviour. Most observed lessons/sessions included clear learning objectives that are shared with the students as the detailed lesson plans provided by teachers illustrated. Students nearly always knew what they had to do to be successful. The students' personal files detailed personal learning targets in the first person, however the team did not see these referred to by staff or teachers during the review observations.</p> <p>The team observed questioning being used to good effect, across the age range of the school. Examples of the best questioning included the use of open questions, problem-solving questions such as, "What do you need to get?", and "How can you make it better?". In Team 1 and several of Team 2 classes questioning can be further improved by ensuring that questions are adequately challenging, and by providing more opportunities for students to discuss their ideas with one another rather than solely with staff. The best use of questioning ensured that students are given adequate time to answer, and that questions are not repeated in different ways by more than one member of staff, as was very occasionally observed, particularly during unstructured time.</p> <p>Areas used by students are well resourced, orderly and structured. As a result students use their spaces with a sense of pride, ownership and independence. This contributes to a lower-arousal environment, reducing behavioural issues.</p> <p>During lunch time and break the review team noted that students did not have easy access to symbols or iPads to initiate conversations either in the dining hall or outside in the playground. It may be useful for Riverside to consider ways these could be usefully used for some students to reduce verbal information and/or lessen behaviours at this time. It would also help students become more independent and able to ask for activities rather than the staff member engaging with them, often verbally, first. Therefore during breaks, although the staff on duty are very attentive, it would be useful to have visual Choice Boards and Now and Next Boards available. The bikes and bike track are a firm favourite and enjoyed by almost all the students, however the team suggest that the play areas would benefit from</p>

having some small games equipment available e.g. soft balls, hoops, bean bags, outside 'board type' games e.g. Connect 4, to offer to the students and give them an element of self-choice and autonomy.

The review team observed students independently managing their own sensory needs through wearing flexible uniform and whilst in school taking shoes off as needed. The main playground break times have opportunities for students to choose to be busy and moving or to be quiet e.g. cycling and or using the herb garden.

Gentle encouragement and guidance is given to those that need to observe experiences first and join in when ready. Staff expressed that some students need more time and may need to observe from outside the room so they can work out what is happening before entering an environment and this is then personally tailored to the individual's needs. This was seen in Dance Unfolding where a student sat on the windowsill initially, watching the adults and students below. After a time, he came down to initiate contact with an adult who could then go and work with him in his safe area on the windowsill. This is a student that they were told previously had a fear of soft play areas. It is noted that staff use proximity to encourage movement and engagement in the lesson and then moving away to allow the student more independence.

Every Year 11 (Teams 1, 2 & 3) have weekly offsite work experience added to their programme. Placements develop independence skills as well as raising self-esteem and creating curriculum variety for these students. Students with high levels of independence (mostly Team 1 students) can join the local 'Urban Futures' programme. The programme is linked to Haringey's Education/Business Partnership. These placements are in Wood green and include music production, restaurant service and office work. Students who need staff support to make a success of their placements can join the Harington Scheme in Highgate, a training scheme for people with disabilities where a range of horticultural skills are taught. At present the students receive in house certification for their work experience but the school is exploring routes towards external accreditation for the future.

Staff gave time for students to process the environment and request with no pressure to join in e.g. watching music videos back in the music lesson At times students were given a limited choice and time to process this e.g. with watching back videos of themselves for critique - 'today or tomorrow'. The review team noted there were missed opportunities in several sessions to give students limited choices - on some occasions there were no choices but more commonly the choices were open ended which caused some students anxiety.

There are self-directed opportunities to be themselves. The review team observed the School Band, two students taking part with the Band lead. Their band the "London Cosmos" included a student who is a very talented vocalist and another a highly skilled drummer. They write their own songs, using this as time to express themselves emotionally and develop social skills as well. The sessions are 30-45 minutes a week throughout the year and planned by the Team Lead. Students can be referred to the Band by the Music Therapists. This has been running for several years and the music they write is in keeping with the students interests e.g. the two students today enjoy the Ramones and 80s rock. They then rehearse and tour other schools to perform. The enjoyment seen in these students as they perform is amazing.

	<p>Travel Training allows students to learn about their local home and school environment in detail and rehearse journeys and problem solving strategies before travelling independently to and from school. This process varies greatly for individuals but has a highly positive impact on their self-esteem. There are a number of students, on the autism spectrum, who have been trained to travel independently to and from school. The Travel Lead commented, 'Every step of the travel training programme sees students build their resilience and self-esteem.' Their achievements are celebrated regularly in assemblies through the gaining of certificates. As well as travelling by public transport Riverside is also part of the Bikeability programme that gets students ready to bike to school – although few will achieve this it gives them confidence to cycle in the park or on quiet roads.</p> <p>At Riverside residential school journey places, on one of three annual trips, are offered to all students regardless of levels of complexity of need. These trips play an important role in developing social, independence and self reliance skills as students move through the school towards preparation for transition to post-16 education. The review team observed how enthusiastically teachers talked about these trips and especially the trips and numerous links with the Slovenian school.</p>
<p>Sensory Experiences</p>	<p>Riverside School organise and manage the environment to meet the student's sensory processing needs. The transport drop-off/pick up is split into two areas at the front and back of the school; this leads to a calm and swift transition into and out of school.</p> <p>Although the school is purpose built, leaders have re-organised areas of school to meet the increasingly complex needs of their students and this is particularly effective for students on the autistic spectrum, where the wide corridors with quiet seating areas, have become somewhere they can go when they are feeling confused or anxious. Staff will then support in line with that student's needs and behaviour profile.</p> <p>The environments are managed within rooms and activities. Classrooms are set up according to the needs of the students and generally include a seating/circle time area, tables for tasks and access to a chill out room. Riverside are creating "room narratives" to explain why a room is laid out in the way it is.</p> <p>Lunchtime includes minimal transitions for the students and therefore less sensory information to process, moving one class at a time to collect their food. One student who needed further support in this area sat to one side with an individual table.</p> <p>Riverside's 'Challenge Partner' reviewed the school's autism provision and reinforced the need to access quieter areas both in terms of traffic and noise as well as visually quiet and de-cluttered. The need for low arousal rather than no arousal is also reinforced and this could be seen in the soft play session where dim lighting and calm music is played enabling the students to be in a calm/alert state for interaction.</p> <p>There are planned activities and opportunities to develop skills for self-regulation, though these can vary from one class to another. The review team observed circuit training for a group of students who take part in this twice a week and more</p>

	<p>if needed. This took on the elements of a Sensory Circuit approach but in an age appropriate and accessible way for the students, finishing with calm breathing exercises.</p> <p>The team observed several students engaging in self-stimulatory behaviour that impacted on their engagement. The review team felt the school may want to consider more personalised sensory tools that allow the student to meet their sensory needs and also promote engagement, such as personalised sensory calmers/fidgets. The team suggest that these may be particularly useful in the longer assembly times.</p> <p>The students at Riverside school are supported to have new/varied sensory experiences in a safe environment. This was observed through the "Dance Unfolding" project that enabled sensory input for students, often seeking proprioception. Adults are able to respond to the sensations the students showed they enjoyed. Food technology sessions allowed students to experience food textures, smells and taste. Many students also benefit from Hydrotherapy and Music therapy. There are opportunities for sensory activities that are enjoyable/stimulating for the students. The use of the Hydrotherapy pool was observed with calming visual stimulation. The adults focused on different sensory experiences in the water as well as working on focused tasks for the student's physical needs.</p> <p>There are strategies to support sensory overload and discomfort. Lunchtime staff (SMSA's) were observed taking part in a training session with the school's Occupational Therapist and her colleague. They are building an awareness of the students' needs through these discussions and one SMSA picked up on sensory overload being an issue for one of his students and that they were unable to filter out noise. Another SMSA had explored and found out that mimicking the action of the student and recognising this engaged him. The lead OT was able to explain what this sensation is and what it achieves for the student increasing the SMASAs understanding of the students' needs. The SMSA's have begun to share advice between classes and SMSA staff that support a growth of consistency of practice. The team observed a member of staff encouraging a student to slow down with his food and also reassure when sensory information caused upset.</p> <p>Although reference to some personalised tools are seen in students' communication profile, these are not often seen in use. Ear defenders are mentioned on several plans but not in use on all occasions e.g. in music one youngster was covering her ears throughout and also in Dance unfolding. School may want to consider that some students may need an individualised path through activities such as the circuit training, as lying down for one student appeared to cause more alerting rather than calming. At lunchtime whilst waiting for everyone to finish, one student's noise impacted on another causing distress. A box of sensory calmers to allow movement/touch whilst waiting may have supported this student. Riverside may benefit from ensuring that there is consistency of approach for students to enhance emotional wellbeing. The review team suggest that Sensory diets are separated from the Communication Profile and included in a further section in their Personal Files – this seems particularly necessary for students within Team 3 classes. This would make it easier for staff to provide the necessary resources for individual students.</p>
<p>Emotional Well-being</p>	<p>All staff at Riverside School seek to understand the causes/functions of behaviour for their students. The school have on site Team Teach trainers, that ensures staff stay up to date and can regularly review as well as supporting other schools in this area.</p>

The Behaviour Management Policy recognises that raising students' self-esteem is fundamental to their success and comments that it is essential to preserve a student's dignity and self-esteem whilst supporting behaviour. There is also reference to anxiety and arousal for autistic students, that are documented for students through the Individual Behaviour Profiles in each student's personal file. These indicate that physical intervention is absolutely the last resort, if all other strategies have failed. These profiles can include advice from other professional agencies working with that student e.g. Speech and Language Therapists and Educational Psychologists. The ethos of the school could really be seen when older students are observed to support the behaviour of a younger student who was distressed. Once a member of staff arrived, they further supported the student redirecting him to a quiet area.

This key area is monitored by the Student Wellbeing Multi Agency Group and termly by the Governing Body's Student Development Committee which ensures a rigorous process.

The school have a robust system for monitoring students safeguarding and wellbeing fortnightly through student MAG meetings. This involves a group of multi-agency professionals discussing and sharing information and strategies with everyone together enabling a consistent and regular review approach.

The training for SMSA's is enabling those staff to further understand the well-being needs of the students. One SMSA reflected that she was struggling to understand one of her students but she was able to recognise that some behaviours were sensory driven. The SMSA group are sharing information which enables them to connect with the students and help "keep them calm".

There are personalised de-escalation and positive behaviour strategies in place. These are evidenced through the Individual Behaviour Profiles in the students' personal files. Observations showed consistent use of praise; this takes different forms for the students dependent on individual need e.g. some needing verbal praise and others needing a frequent thumbs up from across the room.

There are personalised tools to understand/manage own behaviour and emotions. The review team observed praise being used to encourage engagement and participation. There are warnings of transition from one activity to another and what would be happening next in some situations, which enabled students to prepare. One student missed the goal several times in PE and is briefly upset, but staff praised for trying and he is moved on quickly and is able to re-engage.

Although school transport have moved to a central pick up system, there are exceptions to those travel arrangements for student/family needs if these have been identified with the family, head teacher and transport manager. School, with transport, have then been able to ensure that a student spends no longer than 30 minutes travelling on school transport, which supports their emotional well-being and behaviour.

Well-being and self-esteem is enhanced through adult interaction. Students are able to share their ideas and feel listened to as they get a response or an explanation. Students are able to experience activities they find enjoyable, relaxing and build on strengths and interests Throughout the review there was a real sense that staff like and care for the students they work with.

High levels of engagement, smiles and enjoyment are seen in many sessions observed. In an observation, a student, new to school is reluctant to participate but is motivated with 'sparkly' things. There are opportunities for students to lead interactions or model for others, boosting their self-esteem e.g. actions in songs/Dance Unfolding work, Music - drum warm up. Peers are seen to celebrate with each other and say 'well done' to one another.

Riverside's Head Girl reported that the school is 'Amazing' and that her new role as Head Girl is about, 'helping others, helping staff, being professional'. She also said that the school helped her to, 'be myself, be more confident, be positive, be who you are, take your responsibilities and represent the school.'" Another student reported that her favourite lessons are art, ICT, food tech (they get to take it home and share with their families) and PE. She reported that there are more subjects in her previous school but Riverside is better.

Students are supported to make a meaningful contribution to the community, through work experience opportunities and using their strengths in areas such as art and food technology. There are a wide range of physical and recreational activities and the school is recognised as a Centre for Excellent Practice in PE and Recreational Sport- which include PE lessons, circuit training, Hydrotherapy and swimming, Trampolining, Cycling, Omi interactives, soft play tournaments and competitions and playground areas.

At lunchtime, waiting for everyone to finish their food and leave the hall led to increased noise and movement that led to distress for some students. Pro-active use of visuals and sensory calmers may have supported here rather than students just being asked to "stop" the behaviour they were engaging in.

CONCLUSION

Staff at Riverside School demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of students on the Autism Spectrum. The school has a warm and welcoming ethos and students and staff are confident and happy. The curriculum and staff practice is continually developing to ensure the needs of the cohort are addressed consistently. There is an ongoing commitment to staff training and school evaluation and planning documentation demonstrates a clear understanding of both strengths and development areas of the school.