

AUTISM ACCREDITATION REVIEW REPORT



Portland Academy
Review Date: 16-18/06/2015

Review Team

Team Leader	Name	Occupation
	Stephen Pyott	Autism Accreditation Advisor
Team Member	Name	Occupation
	Berni Dobson	Head Teacher

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE NUMBER	INITIALS OF AUTHOR
COVER		SP
TABLE OF CONTENTS		SP
INTRODUCTION		SP
PEN PICTURE		SP
PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS		N/A
POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT		SP
POTENTIAL AREAS OF STRENGTH		BD
REVIEW STANDARDS		SP/BD
SUMMARY		SP
APPENDIX		SP
PANEL REPORT		EM
TERMINOLOGY		SP

INTRODUCTION

The review report is designed to provide a concise and focused insight into the organisation's performance against accreditation teaching/learning standards. The Review Report focuses to the criteria for Autism Accreditation.

1. The service has a specialised knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum disorders.
2. The knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum disorders consistently informs the organisation, resources and management of the service.
3. The knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum disorders consistently informs the individual assessment and planning for all people with autism.
4. The knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum disorders consistently results in positive outcomes for all people with autism.

The Review Report will be submitted to the Autism Accreditation Panel and forms part of the decision making process.



PEN PICTURE

SERVICE PROVIDER

Name of Organisation	Portland Academy
Address	Weymouth Road Chapelgarth Sunderland SR3 2NQ
Telephone Number	0191 5536050
Mission Statement	"To value, to respect and to promote optimum learning"
Organisations Governance (E.g. Online Links to Statutory Reviews, Annual Reports)	
Details of any other services	Portland Academy works alongside a range of services and agencies within Children's Services. There are close links with health teams, SALT, Educational Psychology, OT, physiotherapy and social services. In addition to those following the Year 9 Annual Review there are also close working links with Connexions.

PROVISION BEING REVIEWED

Name of Provision being reviewed	Portland Academy
Contact Person	Michelle Wardropper
<p>Details of provision(s) (Please list separately all provisions being Reviewed and add/delete bullets as required)</p> <p>A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Address(es);</i> <p>B. - <i>Number of Placements;</i></p> <p>C. - <i>Type of Service/School; and</i></p> <p>D. - <i>Specialist Standard used</i></p>	<p>Portland Academy Weymouth Road Chapelgarth Sunderland SR3 2NQ</p> <p>Placements: The school has 157 allocated places, in which all are currently filled. There are sixty one pupils with an ASC.</p> <p>Portland Academy is a special school (11-19) for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound multiple and complex medical needs. A growing number have ASC and additional diagnosis.</p> <p>Specialist Standard: Day Schools</p>
Telephone	0191 5536050
Fax	
Email address	<p>portland@ascenttrust.org</p> <p>mwardropper@ascenttrust.org</p>
Autism Specific Aims for Care / Education	<p>Portland Academy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and understand the pervasive nature of ASC and aims to develop and provide appropriate curriculums to meet individual needs. • Encourage and develop the ability of all pupils to achieve their full potential in terms of communication, independence, life and work skills (where applicable) • Provide opportunities to develop advocacy skills, social

	<p>awareness and be able to make choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of strategies to ensure that all pupils are able to successfully access the curriculum, for example TEACCH, SCERTS, visual strategies and multi-sensory approaches. • Provide communication support through the use of a Total Communication Approach, PECS, Makaton, personal high tech communication aids such as Dynavox/iPads with Proloquo2Go or Widgit Go, Objects of reference and TaSSeLs (on-body signing for PMLD) • Provide regular training to develop staff understanding of ASC and appropriate and/or personalised strategies • Support parents • Work with local businesses to provide realistic work placement opportunities for our pupils <p>The majority of teaching staff in school are trained in the OCN Level 2/3 qualification in ASD.</p>
<p>Management and Staff Structure</p>	<p>Executive Head Teacher Head Teacher Deputy Head Business Manager 3 Assistant Heads 4 TLR 2a's for English/Maths/Tertiary English/Maths/Practical Strategies 2TLR 3's for Behaviour/SMSC 22 additional Full time teachers 3 of whom are part time 2 part time teacher 4 Lead Teaching Assistants 39 Teaching assistants</p>
<p>Description of service/school</p>	<p>Portland Academy is a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound multiple and complex medical needs. A growing number have ASC and additional diagnosis. The school has 157 allocated places, in which all are currently filled. There are 61 pupils with an ASC. Portland offers co-educational day provision to pupils from a catchment area which covers the city of Sunderland, Washington and Houghton. The school is separated into three departments; tertiary, secondary and sensory. The pupils are placed into Pathway groups depending on their assessment data. Pathway 1 is for pupils who are p level P1-3, Pathway 2 for P4-8 and</p>

Pathway 3 for P8 and above.

Portland Academy delivers a broad and balanced curriculum designed to challenge all students, develop their academic abilities, and build upon their individual strengths. Due to the range of needs and abilities within the school we have three distinct pathways which ensure that curriculum and accreditation is well matched to individual student's needs and abilities. The pathways are as follows:

Pathway 1

- Learners with complex learning difficulties often combined with physical difficulties, sensory impairments or severe medical conditions.
- Learners working on this pathway will focus on communication and interaction particularly developing choices and expressing preferences. These learners will require maximum support throughout their lives.

Pathway 2

- Learners on pathway 2 will focus on developing and generalising their social and communication skills in order to achieve a greater level of independence.
- Learners within this pathway may progress to programmes which focus on functional skills, supported living and/or supported employment.

Pathway 3

- Learners on this pathway will focus on developing, generalising and applying their skills in a wide range of settings.
- Learners within this pathway may move into a working environment or independent living with minimum support.

As the students move through the key stages they are encouraged to become independent learners and members of the community in preparation for life beyond school.

We cater for approximately 150 students between the ages of

	<p>11 and 19 who experience severe learning difficulties and profound, multiple and complex medical needs. A growing number of our pupils also have an Autistic spectrum condition.</p> <p>The academy is able to offer a number of part time or assessment placements for identified pupils.</p> <p>Portland Academy is part of 'The Ascent Academies' Trust', a small, but growing partnership of Special schools, which aims to develop special needs provision across the City and the North East. We are currently undergoing a pilot with a group of post 19 pupils to develop 19-25 year old provision with Sunderland College.</p>
<p>Philosophy of service/school</p>	<p>Portland Academy aims to provide:</p> <p>To provide outstanding education and support for young people with special educational needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Curriculum <p>The provision of the highest quality teaching is of paramount importance. Pupils need to experience a wide range of motivating and challenging, well-pitched learning opportunities. Teacher expertise will identify barriers to learning and plan ways to overcome these. There is a belief that all pupils can succeed whatever their individual circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership <p>We will provide an environment in which everyone is encouraged and supported to develop leadership and management competencies. This will enable Ascent to maximise the talent within the trust and plan for succession. We will review the progress made by the Trust against the organisation's overall investment. We will challenge any under-performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and Partnership <p>The Trust is committed to the development of education</p>

practice by maximising collaboration across all academies within the trust. We will use wider partnerships, such as parents, multi-disciplinary teams, community links, teaching schools and businesses to enhance provision. The Trust will pursue of opportunities for income generation.

- **Inclusivity and Equality**

Ascent in an inclusive Trust, the skills and experience of staff are valued and utilised in striving for excellence. No groups are discriminated against. We value each person equally whilst being mindful of the needs of the whole Trust.

- **Investment and Opportunity**

We will invest in our staff to provide them with the necessary training and support in order that the aims of the Trust can be met. We embrace and celebrate continuous learning and create a culture where all learning is valued. All staff are given the opportunity to make the most of their potential through fair and open access to training. We are committed to the most efficient and effective use of resources to support training needs.

- **Continuous Improvement**

All staff and governors clearly understand the core values of the Trust and the way it operates. Leaders across the trust act in line with these values, encouraging people to work towards the aims of the organisation. Leaders ensure that the core values are at the heart of the organisation's strategy and govern the way it operates. Leaders of the academies provide challenge and support for each other in order that improvement is central to our work.

Achieve NAS accreditation that will;

- Provide the school with quality assurance of its management and teaching of children with autism.
- Ensure all staff are trained to a standard in autism and

	<p>there is a consistency of approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide the best possible outcomes for pupils to develop life skills, independence and access to the curriculum
<p>Are there any safeguarding issues which you feel would have an impact on the Accreditation Review?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The designated people for safeguarding are Steve Murphy (Deputy head) and Karen Mitchell (Assistant head)</p>
<p>Description of Physical Environment / Buildings</p>	<p>The school has been purpose built to accommodate pupils with SLD/PMLD and is about 15 years old.</p> <p>The school has three departments. Tertiary is located on the left upon arrival through the main doors and is spread out over two floors containing five classrooms, a social skills room, and two bathrooms.</p> <p>Sensory corridor has four larger classrooms with adjoining bathroom facilities. Currently only two of these classrooms are used by PMLD pupils, the other two are used for our Tertiary support group which has pupils with challenging behaviour.</p> <p>Secondary corridor has ten average sized classrooms and a quiet room. KS3 has seven classes and KS4 has three. There is a further classroom S11 which is located opposite the food technology room. This class has pupils who are more ambulant with PMLD.</p> <p>The school has a wide range of additional facilities, including a hydrotherapy pool, sensory room, OT room, large hall which is used for PE, whole school assemblies, school productions and lunch, ICT suite, food technology room, media room with green screen technology, adventure playground, bike track, large playground, two separate fenced in outdoor areas (quads), outdoor classroom and Woodland Walk. In addition the school has 2 conference rooms and a community café.</p>

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT As identified in the IDR
--

Potential Area 1

Core Standard: 15 Sensory Issues

Within the Interim Development Report written in December 2014 it was stated that:

“The school has appointed an OT and OT assistant in Nov 2013 (each for 1 ½ days). Since their appointment, the OT has devised some guidance on sensory integration and the aim and objectives of it. They have also had a number training sessions around Sensory Integration. These have been delivered through INSET evenings and so require staff to sign up to them, as a consequence not all teachers have taken this training.

Individual teachers have completed sensory profiles for each of their ASD pupils, this has then been fed into a system held by the OT, and we are yet to have plans put in place for these, but as stated above not all teachers will have been trained in sensory awareness.

The OT will spend time in class observing key pupils that have been identified as having additional needs in relation to their learning and possible sensory issues. A plan is then developed and given back to the teacher. This is felt to be a really valuable resource and tool for teachers and TAs; however this is limited due to the restrictions on the OTs time within school.

Due to time and capacity constraints of the OT role a clear programme and pathway of upskilling staff and then ongoing coordination and support given from the OT to work with specific pupils, would enable a more effective use of time and more consistency.

It is felt that it may benefit the school to have key sensory champions, trained and accessible to the wider school to help observe and identify strategies in relation to pupil’s sensory needs. This will overcome the time constraints of the present OTs and also enable a level of consistency amongst the teams.

To enhance learning opportunities and engagement, and support teachers, the allocated budget for sensory resources could be made

clearer so that they are aware of what they are able to request to aid their pupils.”

Since then a sensory integration questionnaire was given to all class staff to complete in order to gain a baseline of knowledge in this area. Information gained from the questionnaire was then used to develop a training session for staff which was completed on 2nd February 2015. Following training staff were asked to complete the questionnaire again in order to ascertain whether knowledge of sensory integration had improved. Some improvement was evident but there were still areas in need of further development and training has been scheduled to address this.

Since December 2014 the following training relating to sensory issues has been accessed:

- SCERTS Refresher (three staff – 26.01.2015)
- Sensory Equipment (All staff – 02.02.2015)
- ASCENT Conference (All staff – 02.04.2015)
 - Ian Jordan – Visual environment in the classroom
 - Sue Stephenson – Sensory or behaviour
 - Alan Heath – Auditory processing and the listening program
- Sensory Integration (All staff – 08.06.2015)

The Occupational Therapist has had direct input with three classes (S11, S9 and S2) as well as assessing individual pupils and implementing strategies for staff to trial. This has included a coloured lens assessment, regulatory strategies and a listening program.

A delay in the processing of sensory profiles has occurred since the OT assistant went on maternity leave in October.

Further training in SCERTS is scheduled for October and SCERTS assessments are to be implemented in the next academic year. This very positive step is supported by the review team as is the aim of having key sensory champions, trained and accessible to the wider school to help observe and identify strategies in relation to pupil’s sensory needs. This will overcome the time constraints of the present OTs and also enable a level of consistency amongst the teams. Together these steps should further address the sensory needs of pupils within the school. That said, the review team saw many examples of staff working very positively with pupils to address their sensory needs. Examples were many and varied and included the use of ear defenders in several environments, quiet space and time out being requested by pupils when classrooms became noisy or busy, sensory experiences being built into lessons

such as cookery where pupils experienced the touch, smell and taste of food items and the Occupational Therapist engaging in sensory based activities such as massage with pupils within the soft play area. Together with the extensive training that has already taken place it is clear that although next stage developments have already been identified this area is already a significant strength.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy

Work experience

Areas for Development

The aim of having key sensory champions, trained and accessible to the wider school to help observe and identify strategies in relation to pupil's sensory needs is supported by the review team. This will help to overcome the time constraints of the present OTs and also enable a level of consistency amongst the teams.

Areas of Strength

The review team saw many examples of staff working very positively with pupils to address their sensory needs. Examples were many and varied and included the use of ear defenders in several environments, small trampolines in classrooms, quiet space and time out being requested by pupils when classrooms became noisy or busy, sensory experiences being built into lessons such as cookery where pupils experienced the touch, smell and taste of food items and the Occupational Therapist engaging in sensory based activities such as massage with pupils within the soft play area. Together with the extensive training that has already taken place it is clear that although next stage developments have already been identified this area is already a strength.

Potential Area 2

Core Standard: 11 Social Understanding

The IDR of 2014 also stated that:

“It is felt that although social understanding is supported and aided throughout the school we are not able to evidence specific approaches or progress.

The school at present uses the SCERTS approach with a small number of pupils but have plans to roll it out school wide with a staged approach. Currently only three people feed into the SCERTS assessment (ASD lead/OT/SaLT) and it is not as effective as the school would like. Portland had also developed its own SAP documentation (Social Assessment Profile) which has been implemented fully throughout the school, but it is felt that it doesn't take into account all of the areas in relation to social understanding specifically from an ASC viewpoint as this is not the sole designation of the school.

The school wishes to meet with the whole staff team to discuss the 'hidden curriculum,' surrounding how we promote social understanding and develop social skills for our ASC population. The ASD lead will work with the SMSC lead to look at 'British values' and what that means in terms of the school population.

They also wish to further develop the Social Assessment Profile in the areas of social skills in the classroom/school/community.

Whole staff training will take place for SCERTS in October 2015. This will further enhance staff understanding and support the teachers undertaking the SCERTS assessment and implementing the support strategies. It should also support staff understanding in sensory regulation and how to best plan effective learning programmes that facilitate an individual pupils specific barriers to learning.”

The review team can confirm that there is a Portland Academy Autism Policy (with sections relating to sensory issues, physical environment, approaches and interventions, assessment, curriculum, behaviour, continuity of approach, transition and training), a Social Policy, a Lunchtime Interaction Policy and an Anti-Bullying Policy. All reference social understanding. For example, the Social Policy aims are:

- Through a holistic approach social interaction and social understanding will be developed for all pupils.

- To use systems which both support and develop social understanding in all contexts.
- To develop inclusion with the wider community to provide opportunities for learning how to socialise.

A Social Assessment Profile (SAP) is carried out on entry to school for all pupils with autism which highlights strengths and development areas in social interaction and understanding. These documents are updated in June every year.

PIVOTS Personal and Social Development (PSD) data is used to map social skills development and some pupils have a SCERTS assessment which helps to highlight social understanding levels.

The Lunchtime Interaction Policy has a focus on pupils with autism and aims to develop socialisation as well as communication, imagination, independence, collaboration and interaction. A meeting was held with lunchtime supervisors on 24th February to discuss the Social Interaction and Lunchtime Interaction policies in order to help to exemplify how they might influence social understanding and independence. Secondary break duty rotas have been changed to include higher staffing levels and one person per day has been identified to be responsible for either encouraging pupils to partake in playground games or by encouraging the sharing of play equipment.

The review team can also confirm that new equipment that has been bought as a result of fundraising is now used to good effect within the yard and that pupils respond well to the variety of equipment on offer. Numerous examples of sharing, turn taking and social communication were observed during the review.

Work has been undertaken to develop class jobs, yard activities, thoughts of the week, clubs and praise and reward systems.

Pupil Profiles are considered by the review team to be very useful documents with sections dedicated to Learning, Communication, Social and Behaviour. As such, they help to provide a consistent framework for staff interaction and support taking account of social understanding and ability.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans

Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

Areas for Development

Further training in SCERTS is scheduled for October and SCERTS assessments are to be implemented in the next academic year. This very positive step is supported by the review team. In light of this the school might then revisit and refine current assessment and planning procedures.

Potential Area 3

Core Standard: 14 Transition

The 2014 IDR stated:

“The school invests a lot of time and understanding in relation to macro transition. There is a clear schedule to enable pupils and staff to complete a smooth transition both in, at year seven and out, in year fourteen.

It is felt that there needs to be more focus on micro transition, within the classroom and between lessons. Staff have received training and further support from the SALT, however more visual support may aid pupils to understand the next stages in their activity or day, to promote independence and more engagement within tasks. It will be crucial that staff have a full understanding as to the function, purpose and use of visual aids in order to make this a success.

The school has invested time in some specific ‘drop in’ sessions with the ASD lead, OT and SALT to help staff problem solve specific difficulties they are having. The development and use of SCERTS is thought to also be able to support this approach, when it comes into effect.”

Whole school training on 9th February 2015 addressed this area.

As a result staff report an increased use of “within lesson” timetables/schedules, individual timetables and now/next boards. Some staff have also started to use “Working with” or “Working towards” boards to assist and motivate pupils. Some classes also make use of objects of reference within the environment to indicate a change of activity. An example provided to the review team was the use of different coloured table cloths for different activities. Each of these strategies were observed to be in use during the course of the review alongside the “Writing with Symbols” sentence strips that are used across the school and support much of the adult to pupil communication (see area for development in Specialist Standard 4 Teaching/Learning Methods).

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning

Pupil Profiles

Behaviour support plans

Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

POTENTIAL AREAS OF STRENGTH As identified in the IDR

Potential Area 1

Core Standard: 13 Family Links

The school employs a community lead who acts as a link between school and home for the pupils. Through this link, information events, training opportunities and social events that parents can access are organised. As part of this role the link also supports families to understand the process of work experience placements.

The community lead organises parents' events. There is a monthly parents' forum group that approximately 10 parents attend. This allows parents time to discuss concerns with professionals, find out more about the school and also have a social opportunity to meet together

The teachers have an open dialogue with parents daily and weekly via their home/school diary, and also by phone. Areas that are often discussed are those of concerns raised at home, where the parent has asked for further support, teachers will often provide additional information related to the area, social stories, and access to other professionals such as the SALT/OT/physio/specialist nursing team/etc. During a meeting with parents the review team were told that this support works very well and that most parents are happy with the dialogue between home and school. One parent did express a desire to receive more informative and detailed information within the home/school diary in order to facilitate discussion with her son at home.

The school has 'Challenge days' once per half term, where teachers are required to blog around a specific area, on the school website and then parents are asked to comment. The blog includes photographs of the work pupils are undertaking throughout the day. (<http://portlandchallengedays.blogspot.co.uk/>)

There is a specific teaching assistant who is trained to undertake travel training with pupils, and they will link with the families to discuss this next step and support them in understanding the level of support that will be provided by school.

The school subscribes to the 'Achievement for All,' initiative, this involves agreeing a convenient time for the parent/carer to meet

with the class teacher for an hour. They discuss areas of difficulty for the pupil and how these could be overcome with targeted work from both home/school. These meetings take place every term to review progress and set new targets. AfA meetings currently take place for year seven pupils and for those who access pupil premium.

The school offers training and support to families in autism. Both through formal training sessions, meetings with staff and informal discussions.

The positive relationships that have been developed with families are considered to be a strength. Of particular note is the school blog which provides an innovative method of encouraging parents to be involved in school life. It allows families to share in their child's school activities and achievements and to add comments on these.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

Areas of Strength

The positive relationships that have been developed with families are considered to be a strength. Of particular note is the school blog which provides an innovative method of encouraging parents to be involved in school life. It allows families to share in their child's school activities and achievements and to add comments on these.

Potential Area 2

Core Standard: 12 Behaviour Support

The school has a consistent approach towards supporting pupils who display challenging behaviours. All the staff team are TEAM TEACH trained and follow scripted de-escalation techniques.

There is an identified team responsible for collating incident forms and monitoring the restraint log in order to identify when, where and why the difficulties arise. There is a system for producing and monitoring behaviour plans for individual pupils and how best to support them to reduce the effects of their behaviours and to enable them to recover and return to a regulated state for learning.

The behaviour lead meets with the pupil's core staff team to discuss the behaviour and also strategies to try to reduce this. A behaviour plan will be created and this will then be monitored over a period of time and reviewed. The behaviour plan will also be shared with home and there is a section for them to provide feedback and information.

Behaviour support plans are consistently applied and are reviewed regularly if a pupil's needs change. Staff report that there is good communication relating to behaviour support ensuring that everyone is informed of changes and subsequent support needs. This is important as most students move around school a lot and come into contact with many different staff during the course of each day.

Visual supports such as the traffic light system and working towards rewards are in place and, for the most part, work well. Observation demonstrated that some pupils respond extremely well to these. For example, in one session a pupil was observed to be off task and boisterous. The teacher discreetly mentioned to him that she would have to move him from green to amber on the traffic light system. When he continued the teacher moved a visual symbol from green to amber making sure the pupil was aware of the move. Almost immediately, the pupil settled down and was then an active participant for the remainder of the lesson. However on rare occasions, by contrast, similar techniques were observed to be in use when they were not cognitively appropriate to the child and might have caused confusion.

Risk assessments are in place for all pupils and are implemented by class staff. These were scrutinised by the review team and considered to be useful documents.

One of the aims of the school is to further embed the use of the SCERTS model. Discussion with staff demonstrated that they were aware of how this model might work effectively for some students to reduce the number of incidents that have previously been considered as challenging. The review team support this initiative.

Overall it is clear that staff demonstrate an excellent knowledge of pupil needs and this knowledge is translated into supportive documentation and appropriate methodologies. The Pupil Profiles are considered to be very useful documents with relevant and accurate information about each child. These documents then help to ensure that this knowledge is consistently translated into effective practice. Another good example of this, which is highlighted as a strength elsewhere in this report, are the opportunities provided to students for sensory regulation activities which help to ensure that pupils remain settled, calm and on task.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:

Classroom practice

Lunch clubs

Dining room

PE

Swimming

Yard

Music Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Work experience

Areas of Strength

The Pupil Profiles are considered to be very useful documents with relevant and accurate information about each child highlighting the excellent knowledge that staff have about each individual. These documents then help to ensure that this knowledge is consistently translated into effective practice.

Potential Area 3

Core Standard: 10 Communication

The school has a full time SALT based within the school. She provides training not only to the whole school but externally with other schools, professionals and parents.

Her work includes working on a 1:1 basis, working in small groups and monitoring classes via learning walks. She also provides specific support for individual class teams when difficulties arise and provides support to families.

The SALT works closely with the OT to assess and support pupils with autism.

Individual or group family training is provided in Makaton/PECS/high or low tech communication systems/visual support systems such as reward charts, schedules or social stories. Parents are given training and shown how they can implement the techniques at home to provide consistency.

A comprehensive package of staff training is in place, and is constantly updated and reviewed to meet the changing needs of the pupils. This is effectively extended to supply staff to ensure consistency of practise.

Social Stories are used to support families with potential areas of stress and anxiety. An example was provided of a Social Story being written to support a child's first overseas holiday and aeroplane journey.

The school is responsive to the parents views and have adjusted communication plans to ensure parents are involved. The SALT has supported staff on introducing colour semantics. Initially this was led by the SALT but it has now been developed across the school.

All classes use visual timetables and working towards visual reward systems. Makaton signing is used effectively throughout and the SALT has assessed a number of students for communication aids such as "Eye Gaze" and "Pro-Lo Quo" on iPads. Each of these communication aids were observed to be being used effectively and were clearly enabling students to ask and answer questions or demonstrate their understanding of a subject. Careful consideration had also been given to how and when such methodologies for communication would be used.

Each pupil profile and care plan describe an individual's communication ability and the strategies used to support them. These are reviewed annually and are considered to be very effective documents that clearly reflect the needs of the child to whom they refer.

However, in some less successful lessons strategies such as colour semantics and, in particular, writing with symbols resources are used with pupils when they are not developmentally appropriate. Care needs to be taken to ensure that each student understands the communication methodology being used and in some cases simplification might be needed. Additionally, PECS is not always used as effectively as might be expected and isn't the "voice" of the child. Also, some pupils were seen to be quite prompt dependent waiting or relying on staff instruction to do the next task. Further refinement of visual support strategies such as "now and next" strips could assist in the development of more independent working.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT

Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:

Classroom practice

Lunch clubs

Dining room

PE

Swimming

Yard

Music Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Work experience

Areas of Strength

The school's SALT has an excellent knowledge of the pupils and works closely with the schools OT to ensure assessment, and programmes are in place and are effectively implemented.

REVIEW STANDARDS

SPECIALIST STANDARD 1
Environment

The physical environment is fit for purpose/suits its stated purpose and meets/is responsive to the needs of the people with autism.

INDICATORS

1. There are policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines that inform practice regarding the needs of people with autism in relation to their environment.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Portland Academy is a purpose built building for pupils with SLD/PMLD. There are an increasing number of pupils with autism within school (61 of 157). The school has extensive grounds with fenced play areas, an adventure playground, a nature area and a bike track. Internally there is a hydrotherapy pool, a sensory room, a newly refurbished soft play / Occupational Therapy room, rebound therapy equipment, Speech and Language Therapy room, ICT suite, food technology room and café. Classrooms are large with access to outside areas and quiet spaces, storage is good and most doors are fitted with a card security system.

School policies and procedure documents inform practice and include a Teaching and Learning policy, safeguarding information, a Communication policy, a Behaviour policy and an Autism policy. Staff training documentation and pupil support documentation such as Pupil Profiles also make appropriate reference to the environment.

2. The physical environment reflects policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines and meets the needs of the people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

The school environment is appropriate to the needs of the pupil cohort. In fact, there are many aspects relating to the environment

that are especially suited to pupils with autism. For example, where appropriate consideration has been given to low arousal techniques and “The Street” (long central corridor) is wide and uncluttered with carefully placed art work on the walls. All classrooms are large for the number of pupils and adults. They allow for both group teaching and individual work and are equipped to a high standard. Most have direct access to outside spaces and storage is good ensuring that potentially distracting items can be stored out of sight. Many have been decorated with pupil work but only after careful consideration of the needs of the group. Pupils are able to access the specialist rooms described above as appropriate to their needs and teaching goals.

The school is well signposted with each door identifying the purpose of each room. Upon entering rooms, doors and cupboards are labelled and there are storage areas for coats and bags.

3. The physical environment is used effectively to promote well-being and progress for the people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
			√

The on-site school café is considered to be a strength. It is both familiar and comfortable but also reflects a realistic working environment where pupils can work to develop and generalise their skills through both teaching sessions and work experience activities.

All classrooms are set up so that there are opportunities for individual, group and whole class activities. Consideration has been given to appropriate floor coverings within the teaching spaces, there are window blinds to help to reduce external distractions, good storage and robust classroom furniture that meets the needs of pupils within each group. The physical layout of classrooms reflects the detailed knowledge of staff with regard to the importance of structure. As pupils move through the school, however, their classrooms reflect the progress they are making.

4. People with autism are able to function effectively within the physical environment and their well-being is enhanced.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

It is clear that all classrooms have been built arranged to similar specifications and with a familiarly consistent arrangement, although adapted to ensure they are appropriate to the pupils who use them. As mentioned elsewhere there are large group work

areas, designated space for individual work within a distraction-free setting and adjoining work rooms where pupils can work in an area away from their peers as needed. Some classroom furniture is moveable so that it can be re-arranged according to the nature of the activity. Each classroom has adequate storage space to avoid clutter and all staff have received guidelines and training input to ensure consistency within the room layout.

Displays in classrooms and around the school are neat, well presented and celebrate pupil achievement and participation without being overly-stimulating. Where displays are used they are within designated spaces within the classroom or school corridor. Most of the rest of the wall space is either kept clear or used to provide visual information and visual resources for the pupils, such as individual and class schedules, topic specific symbols, reward charts and PECS's resources.

Good levels of staffing allow an appropriate degree of independence within the environment whilst providing support as needed.

Pupils were observed, for the most part, to be at ease and confident in the school environment. In every observation pupils demonstrated that they fully understood the purpose of the environment and were able to access learning in an appropriate manner. They also showed a clear understanding of the routines and structures of the school enabling them, in the best examples, to demonstrate a high degree of independence.

Staffing ratios are very good. The level of support was considered to be entirely appropriate to the needs of the cohort and resulted in positive on task learning and clear checking of pupil understanding.

It is clear that staff and pupils take pride in their work place and their care and attention to detail has provided a high quality autism friendly environment. This is a very clear and positive reflection on the value with which the school regards its pupils.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

Areas of Strength

The on-site school café is considered to be a strength. It is both familiar and comfortable but also reflects a realistic working environment where pupils can work to develop and generalise their skills through both teaching sessions and work experience activities. Other work experience opportunities offered by the school are considered to be a significant strength with effective partnerships having been developed with local employers and an employment agency.

SPECIALIST STANDARD 2

Teaching/Learning - Programme/Curriculum and Activity Content

The programme/curriculum and the content of activities are informed by an understanding of autism/takes into account the needs of the people with autism.

INDICATORS

1. Within policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines there is a clear written description of the needs of people with autism in relation to the programme/curriculum and the content of activities.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

There are a large number of whole school policies that relate to the programme/curriculum and help to establish the teaching of appropriate content to the pupil cohort. These include, but are not limited to subject specific guidance relating to English, Reading and Writing, Science, D&T, ICT, Maths, etc. There are also policy documents relating to The Challenge Curriculum and PSD as well as more general policies relating to Teaching and Learning, Behaviour, Communication and Marking.

These documents are then further supported by autism specific documentation such as the Autism Policy and SCERTS materials.

2. The programme/curriculum and the content of sessions reflect policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines and are informed by the needs of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

A recent Ofsted Inspection (January 2015) found that the school requires improvement across all five areas of judgement (Leadership and Management, Behaviour and Safety of Pupils, Quality of Teaching, Achievement of Pupils and Sixth Form Provision). It did, however, state that "The curriculum includes an appropriately broad range of subjects. Support for students' care and welfare needs are well balanced with programmes of learning. Extensive extra-curricular activities and projects requiring students to work together to tackle challenges are much enjoyed. The impact

on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good."

The review team found a broad and balanced curriculum that was relevant to the needs of the pupil cohort. Clear efforts have been made since the Ofsted inspection to ensure that lesson content is appropriately challenging, reflective of policy documentation and adapted to the needs of each class member. During the 17 observed sessions during this review the content of sessions was scored as "Met" on 9 occasions, as "Partially Met" on 4 occasions and "Met and Exceeded" on 4 occasions. Where sessions were graded as Partially Met it was because content wasn't always matched to the cognitive ability of each child, the pace of the session was sometimes a little slow and the resources being used couldn't always be understood by all students. However, an equal number of sessions scored as Met and Exceeded and this reflected very tailored content that matched very well to the differing needs of the class group with excellent differentiation. A very good work experience session was observed with content well matched to the ability of the student. The soft play area was used very well by the OT in one session, in some sessions more able pupils were encouraged to help their less able peers and in other very effective sessions, content was well matched to the group and very motivating activities were used to engage pupils and assess levels of understanding. In some sessions learning was undertaken in a variety of environments and care had been taken to break up a potentially long lesson into manageable pieces that required pupils to move around and focus upon different types of activity during the one lesson.

Each school day was observed to start with a target/progress session where pupils work either individually or in small groups on their learning targets. This helps to ensure that they know what their individual targets are.

There is particular emphasis on communication, social development and life skills and in the best lessons there is a focus upon the development of social communication, interaction and understanding.

Observed lessons were supported by clear planning. Lessons had clearly stated outcomes and individuals had identified goals and targets.

Staff teams were observed to work well together with little need for verbal direction from the teacher. Teaching assistants were skilled at giving discrete verbal prompts, using planned ignoring and

modelling expected behaviour. Praise and positive reinforcement was tailored to each child and was in evidence in all classes. Visual aids, whether tangible ones or those on the whiteboard, were used well to allow children choice or understanding of what would happen next. In many classes timers or countdowns were used to prompt children that there would be a change and in all classes the individual schedules were used to help manage transitions.

As recognised by Ofsted the curriculum and content of sessions ensures that “Opportunities to work, perform and serve the community make a good contribution to preparing students for their next steps. Students know the difference between right and wrong and have tolerance and respect for differences.”

The school places a high emphasis on pupils learning to work and sustain attention. Pupils are encouraged to remain on task and participate to their best of their abilities in all lessons. For the most part this was observed to be the case by the review team. However, sessions lasting for an hour were sometimes considered to be a little bit long for some students. In the best sessions this didn’t present a difficulty as staff showed skill in moving between activities during a session and breaking the hour into smaller and more manageable chunks. This worked particularly well when staff encouraged movement breaks or required pupils to move within the environment from one activity to another.

Additionally some good sensory regulation opportunities are on offer in classes, tailored to the needs of each student. For example, one student had access to regular time on a small trampoline during her one hour class session, another student had regular 5 minute breaks outside and one student used a specialist cushion. All helped to ensure pupils were able to access learning again when they were ready to participate effectively.

Opportunities to practise skills for life are embedded into the curriculum. Pupils have weekly life skill sessions, community visits and daily opportunities to undertake roles and duties within their tutor groups.

3. The programme/curriculum and the content of activities promote the independence, well-being and progress of the individuals with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
	√		

The school curriculum is based on National curriculum and also has a heavy emphasis on independence and preparation for life beyond school. As a result a comprehensive package of work experience is in place with students working in a range of high quality external placements. Students who have more complex needs have opportunities for internal work placements, for example within the on-site café. Some students have gained employment as a result of this work.

Sixth form students study a range of accredited pathways. Observation of a media session demonstrated a high standard of work and students were eager to talk about what they had achieved with pride.

Challenge days and the school blog offer highly motivating activities for pupils that enrich their learning. Other events such as the annual school performance offer new and novel experiences, which pupils with autism are supported and encouraged to fully participate in.

Some teachers are highly skilled in ensuring creative learning opportunities are on offer in lessons. This ensures that pupil engagement and learning is maximised. A good example of this was a session where a teacher was checking the understanding of pupils having read a text. His lesson required that they go on a treasure hunt for items of clothing worn by the character in the book. Throughout the lesson careful questioning and subtle testing ensured that each child's level of understanding could be assessed whilst maintaining a highly motivating activity.

When session content is less successful it is as result of a lack of pace or a misinterpretation of the ability of those present. Staff need to ensure that pupils understand the requirements of each task and that each task is sufficiently challenging to build upon their previous learning. The school should consider the further development of personalisation of student learning. This could lead to greater student choice, engagement and independence. Where appropriate it should take account of the personal interests of individuals and address specific needs that are difficult to cater for in whole class groupings.

Staff know pupils well and personalise some learning resources to meet the interests of students. For example, one pupil is interested in a TV programme called "something special" and the teacher uses characters from this to gain the pupils interest.



In all observed sessions the use of praise and rewards systems were in evidence. Frequency of reward was dependent upon the student but all worked towards choosing a desired activity or gaining something that they wanted.

4. The people with autism respond positively to the programme/curriculum and the content of activities and maintain skills or make progress.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Pupils arrive at school eager to start work. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils start the day well. In classes that were observed it was noted that behavioural standards were high and verbal praise and rewards used well to encourage participation. Staff interacted with the children in a calm and positive manner. Small achievements were celebrated in a variety of ways from a quiet well done to whole recognition, depending on the student. In some lessons there was eager participation by the students, their enjoyment of the lesson and of their own accomplishments was clearly evident.

In particular it was seen that students enjoy the sensory activities within the curriculum.

In the majority of lessons the students were encouraged to evaluate their own learning or reflect on what they had enjoyed.

Transitions were well planned and managed and it was observed that the majority of students moved around the school calmly and with confidence.

Staff teams were observed to reflect on what activities pupils enjoyed and adjusted lessons accordingly.

A comprehensive package of work experience is in place with students working in a range of high quality external placements.

As stated by Ofsted: "The behaviour of students is good. Students typically are engaged in lessons, and many show they are enjoying learning. Students cooperate positively with staff and visitors: they are polite, welcoming and courteous."

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

Areas for Development

The school should consider the further development of personalisation of student learning. This could lead to greater student choice, engagement and independence. Where appropriate it should take account of the personal interests of individuals and address specific needs that are difficult to cater for in whole class groupings.

SPECIALIST STANDARD 3

Teaching/Learning – Activity Organisation & Resources

There is a planned approach to the organisation of activities and resources that takes into account the needs of people with autism.

INDICATORS

1. There are policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines that inform practice regarding the organisation of activities and resources in relation to the needs of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

The Autism Policy and Teaching and Learning Policy outline the practice expected within school. The medium and short term planning is differentiated for all students, with good instruction on the resources needed. There is an emphasis on building communication and independence skills.

The Autism policy succinctly addresses the difficulties found in autism. It outlines how the school attempts to reduce these barriers to learning. In the best practice this written guidance was clearly observed. For example, in some of the observed lessons there was specific teaching of social skills by modelling and instruction. In others, impromptu opportunities were made the most of and staff changed focus to allow for pupil interaction.

2. The organisation of activities and resources reflects policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines and takes into account the needs of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

The school organises pupils into different learning pathways to ensure they meet the needs of all groups of students. The pathways are as follows:

Pathway 1

- Learners with complex learning difficulties often combined with physical difficulties, sensory impairments or severe medical conditions.
- Learners working on this pathway will focus on communication and interaction particularly developing choices and expressing preferences. These learners will require maximum support throughout their lives.

Pathway 2

- Learners on pathway 2 will focus on developing and generalising their social and communication skills in order to achieve a greater level of independence.
- Learners within this pathway may progress to programmes which focus on functional skills, supported living and/or supported employment.

Pathway 3

- Learners on this pathway will focus on developing, generalising and applying their skills in a wide range of settings.
- Learners within this pathway may move into a working environment or independent living with minimum support.

As the students move through the key stages they are encouraged to become independent learners and members of the community in preparation for life beyond school.

In lessons there is a mix of individual and group work. This is adjusted effectively to meet learning needs of student's. Examples include individual work stations, individual table work, paired table work, group work, etc. In the best lessons teachers showed skill in supporting pupils to work more inclusively and there were some examples of effective group work and paired working. In another example one pupil started the term working outside the classroom, he then progressed to a work station and is now working on a table on his own with brief paired learning.

Staff teams are strong and staff demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of pupils with autism. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in lessons to ensure that pupils with complex or additional needs are well supported.

Teaching resources are prepared ahead of every lesson, and are easily accessible for students. In some lessons these resources were

highly engaging and motivating because they had been differentiated and personalised, for example, relating to favourite TV programmes.

However, in some sessions resources are not always effectively differentiated to meet needs of students. For example, Writing With Symbols resources are quite frequently presented to pupils at pre-symbolic stage of communication.

3. The organisation of activities and resources promotes the well-being and progress of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Detailed learning targets are set for each pupil. These are linked to EHC documents and end of year reports. Teachers then plan activities and resources to ensure that pupils regularly practise key skills and areas of learning linked to these targets. Observation demonstrated that students and staff are routinely aware of individual targets.

In the majority of lessons pupils with autism were directed by class staff. Clear verbal direction, and in most sessions clear visual support, was observed. However, there were only limited opportunities for self-directed activities or choice. These opportunities could be further developed.

In some lessons teachers were very skilled at enabling pupils to work at their own pace and to make decisions and problem solve. For example, in one cookery lesson two pupils worked totally independently (one very quickly) on making their cakes. They organised all their own equipment and sought help only when needed.

In some lessons the pace of learning activities was a little slow, however in some lessons pupils worked through a range of learning activities with gusto and pleasure.

Teaching Assistants were observed to lead several teaching sessions. This was not immediately apparent with staff consistently following good practice in autism. Pupils seemed to respond well to range of staff even if they were not their regular staff member.

4. The people with autism respond positively to the activity and the resources used and make progress.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Pupils overall were happy and settled in lessons. They were keen to work and sustained high levels of attention. Most reported that they were very happy to be coming into school and the vast majority participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities that the curriculum offers. In some classes observed there was obvious excitement and enjoyment in participating in the activities offered.

Pupils participated well in lessons. This was largely due to the skilled support of class staff and the positive relationships between staff and pupils.

In some lessons pupil's fed back on the activities and the teacher and staff took on board their comments.

Students are encouraged to use the school blog following challenge days and this seems to be a highly motivational resource for students.

Progress for pupils with autism is in line with progress for all students. The 2015 Ofsted inspection found that pupil progress overall required improvement.

At play times and lunch times pupils were well supported by staff to engage in a range of activities.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
 Pupil Profiles
 Behaviour support plans
 Risk assessment
 Lesson plans
 Autism policy
 Social Policy
 Anti-Bullying Policy
 Lunchtime Interaction Policy
 Teaching & Learning Policy
 Pupil Profiles
 PIVOTS materials
 SCERTS materials

Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents
Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:
Classroom practice
Lunch clubs
Dining room
PE
Swimming
Yard
Music Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Work experience

SPECIALIST STANDARD 4

Teaching/Learning – Methods

There is a range of methods and approaches used with people with autism that respond to their needs and are informed by a knowledge and understanding of autism.

INDICATORS

1. There are policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines that inform practice regarding the approaches and methods used with the people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

As previously described there are a number of documents that describe the provision. These include a large number of whole school policies that relate to the programme/curriculum and help to establish the teaching of appropriate content to the pupil cohort. There is guidance documentation relating to English, Reading and Writing, Science, D&T, ICT, Maths, etc. There are also policy documents relating to The Challenge Curriculum and PSD as well as more general policies relating to Teaching and Learning, Behaviour, Communication and Marking.

These documents are then further supported by autism specific documentation such as the Autism Policy and SCERTS materials.

2. The approaches and methods used reflect policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines and take into account the needs of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Portland Academy does not subscribe to one specific approach to meeting the needs of pupils and adopts a holistic view in supporting each child as an individual. There are a wide variety of teaching methodologies used. Some are more specifically used for pupils with autism whilst others are used across the whole school cohort. Some are used better than others and care need to be taken to ensure that the chosen methodology is one which is appropriately matched to individual need.

Methodologies observed include Makaton, TEACCH, PECS, Writing With Symbols, objects of reference, Now and Next boards, Social Stories, Colourful Semantics, etc.

The calmness observed in all settings, and the predominance of on-task behaviour clearly reflects the skills of the staff team and the success of the specific and individually identified strategies employed. When behaviour becomes challenging or disruptive there is a focus upon functional analysis to try to determine the communicative intent of the behaviour and/or to identify potential triggers.

There is an emphasis on supporting children to learn new and useful skills, to consider others, to be self-aware, and, importantly, to raise self-esteem. Within sessions teaching and support staff were always highly positive in their support and encouragement of each child. Additionally good use was seen to be made of reward strategies with pupils routinely observed to be working towards a motivating reward. The review team found evidence of a high level of care and empathy for pupils. Staff are committed to addressing the well-being of pupils and ensuring that the school is a safe and supportive environment.

3. The approaches and strategies promote the well-being and progress of people with autism.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
		√	

Staff are skilled at modifying their language according to the cognitive ability of the child they are working with. On most occasions requests or directions were to the point and clear. They were communicated with the minimum of fuss and in a calm, quiet and reassuring manner. Care needs to be taken to ensure that this quality is matched with visual support (see development area below).

Observed sessions demonstrated that pupils were routinely able to settle to work tasks demonstrating a clear understanding of the routines employed.

Staff make excellent use of reward systems. Some are clearly used across all classes and others have been developed to meet the needs of the individual. For example, discussions with staff highlighted that some pupils needed the immediacy of a reward in order to be able to understand what it relates to whereas others can work towards a reward at the end of the day or school week.

In lessons pupils were able to make use of appropriate support methodologies in order to take part in all aspects of learning. In addition there were some good examples of methodologies such as PECS being used to express choices and make staff aware of wants, needs, likes and dislikes. As previously mentioned this methodology should now be further developed to ensure it becomes the “voice” for those pupils for whom it has been identified as being useful.

Observations and pupil records demonstrate there was recognition of the need for pupils to have regular opportunities to access favoured items or self-directed activities. For example, one pupil was observed on several occasions to be obtaining reassurance by discussing particular topics with a staff member who was clearly aware of how this could be used to get the young man focussed again on the task at hand. In other sessions pupils were seen to be working towards specific rewards of spending time on a favoured activity.

4. The people with autism respond positively to the approaches and methods used and make progress.

Not Met	Partially Met	Met	Met & Exceeded
	√		

During observations pupils were routinely seen to accept adult direction in order to carry out a range of purposeful activities which they clearly found motivating and relevant. There were only a very small number of occasions when pupils were seen to be off-task and staff showed skill in reengaging or refocusing pupils on alternative appropriate activities.

Pupils, for the most part, were happy and confident. They worked in close proximity with their peers and in most observations completed tasks appropriate to their ability. Pace and degree of difficulty should be considered for some in order to ensure that the most able are being appropriately challenged.

All staff have accessed TEAM TEACH positive behaviour training which is accredited by BILD. Robust systems are in place to ensure that new appointees are quickly trained and that refresher training takes place on a regular basis through the investment in having staff members trained as trainers.

Achievement is celebrated well both within individual classes and the wider school community. Good use is made of specific praise,

there are many reward strategies in place and the school celebrates achievement well.

On-task behaviour and working towards the achievement of goals was seen to be the norm during all observations of practice.

In general, the calmness observed in all settings, and the predominance of on-task behaviour appeared to reflect the skills of staff and the success of the strategies employed.

Staff were observed to show a consistent understanding of autism in relation to the individual needs of pupils. The review team observed the use of specific autism methodology throughout.

It would be useful to undertake further assessment of less able children in order to ensure their understanding of the visual cues being provided to them and to ensure that instructions are given in a way that is meaningful to the child.

Sources of Evidence:

Written Documentation of:

Medium and short term planning
Pupil Profiles
Behaviour support plans
Risk assessment
Lesson plans
Autism policy
Social Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy
Lunchtime Interaction Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Pupil Profiles
PIVOTS materials
SCERTS materials
Social Assessment Profile
Communication policy
Communication profiles and assessment
Training records – staff & parents

Interviews & Discussions with:

Head Teacher
Deputy Head Teacher
Autism Lead
SALT
OT
Parents

Pupils

Observations:

17 observations including:

Classroom practice

Lunch clubs

Dining room

PE

Swimming

Yard

Music Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Work experience

Areas for Development

It would be useful to undertake further assessment of less able children in order to ensure their understanding of the visual cues being provided to them and to ensure that instructions are given in a way that is meaningful to the child.

SUMMARY

OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION SCORES				
Number of observations completed:				17
	NOT MET	PARTIALLY MET	MET	MET & EXCEEDED
Environment	0	0	15	2
Activity Content	0	4	9	4
Activity Organisation and Resources	0	1	14	2
Methods	0	1	13	3
TOTALS	0	6	51	11
PERCENTAGES	0%	8.8%	75%	16.2%

Comments:

- During this review almost 9% of recorded scores were given a score of Partially Met. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the tasks set are sufficiently motivating and that they are pitched at the appropriate level for the ability of the pupil. For some pupils extension activities would be useful. A greater focus upon experiential learning and sensory activities would be beneficial. The pace of some lessons was considered to be a little slow.

- Over 16% of scores were awarded Met and Exceeded. Included amongst these was a work experience visit. The soft play area is well designed and was used extremely well in one session. In some sessions more able pupils were encouraged to help their less able peers. In other very effective sessions content was well matched to the group and very motivating activities were used to engage pupils and assess levels of understanding. In some sessions learning was undertaken in a variety of environments and care had been taken to break up a potentially long lesson into manageable pieces that required pupils to move around and focus upon different types of activity during the one lesson.

QUESTIONNAIRES

SCORES					
Number of Questionnaires sent out (information provided by the service):					61
Number of Questionnaires returned:					14
Number of sections not scored (figures only reflect sections scored):					0
	VERY UNHAPPY	UNHAPPY	SATISFIED	HAPPY	VERY HAPPY
Contact	0	1	2	1	10
Support	1	0	1	2	10
Advice	0	1	1	4	8
Involvement	0	1	1	3	9
TOTALS	1	3	5	10	37
PERCENTAGES	1.78%	5.35%	8.92%	17.85%	66.07%

Comments:

14 Family Questionnaires were returned.

Only one contained any negative comment.

13 out of 14 returns stated that parents were either satisfied, happy or very happy.

Statements included:

"I am extremely happy with how my class teacher and teaching assistants communicate with me."

"Staff involved with (Name) at school are fantastic support. They have a brilliant connection with families too."

"(Name) loves to go to school."

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Core Standard 15 – Sensory Issues

The review team saw many examples of staff working very positively with pupils to address their sensory needs. Examples were many and varied and included the use of ear defenders in several environments, small trampolines in classrooms, quiet space and time out being requested by pupils when classrooms became noisy or busy, sensory experiences being built into lessons such as cookery where pupils experienced the touch, smell and taste of food items and the Occupational Therapist engaging in sensory based activities such as massage with pupils within the soft play area. Together with the extensive training that has already taken place it is clear that although next stage developments have already been identified this area is already a strength.

Core Standard 13 – Family and Support Links

The positive relationships that have been developed with families are considered to be a strength. Of particular note is the school blog which provides an innovative method of encouraging parents to be involved in school life. It allows families to share in their child's school activities and achievements and to add comments on these.

Specialist Standard 1 – Environment & Specialist Standard 2 – Teaching/Learning – Curriculum & Content

The on-site school café is considered to be a strength. It is both familiar and comfortable but also reflects a realistic working environment where pupils can work to develop and generalise their skills through both teaching sessions and work experience activities. Other work experience opportunities offered by the school are considered to be a significant strength with effective partnerships having been developed with local employers and an employment agency.

Core Standard 12 – Behaviour Support

The Pupil Profiles are considered to be very useful documents with relevant and accurate information about each child highlighting the excellent knowledge that staff have about each individual. These documents then help to ensure that this knowledge is consistently translated into effective practice.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Core Standard 15 – Sensory Issues

The aim of having key sensory champions, trained and accessible to the wider school to help observe and identify strategies in relation to pupil's sensory needs is supported by the review team. This will help to overcome the time constraints of the present OTs and also enable a level of consistency amongst the teams.

Core Standard 11 – Social Understanding and Core Standard 6 Assessment, Reporting, Recording and Evaluation

Further training in SCERTS is scheduled for October and SCERTS assessments are to be implemented in the next academic year. This very positive step is supported by the review team. In light of this the school might then revisit and refine current assessment and planning procedures.

Core Standard 10 - Communication

It would be useful to undertake further assessment of less able children in order to ensure their understanding of the visual cues being provided to them and to ensure that instructions are given in a way that is meaningful to the child.

Specialist Standard 2 – Teaching/Learning – Curriculum and Content

The school should consider the further development of personalisation of student learning. This could lead to greater student choice, engagement and independence. Where appropriate it should take account of the personal interests of individuals and address specific needs that are difficult to cater for in whole class groupings.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL COMMENTS

Please note that comments must only pertain to the report and not to the performance of the review team. Any feedback on the performance of the review team must be sent separately to the Accreditation office on the Review Team Evaluation form at the end of your review.



PANEL REPORT

TERMINOLOGY

The Audit Programme may be applied to services for people with autism spectrum disorders. In this folder the word 'autism' is used to apply to the whole spectrum, including Asperger syndrome, so that unwieldy phrasing is avoided. Similarly, to avoid repetition of alternative titles, generic terms have been used throughout the text.

To be consistent with the Care Standards ACT 2000 UK, this document refers the term Autism Spectrum Disorders, whilst recognising that some may refer to this as Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

Accredited: When a service/school has successfully completed their self audit, IDR and review and is awarded accredited status by the Accreditation Panel.

Advanced Documentation: Self-evaluation documents that include the pen picture describing the establishment, the Core Standards and the Specialist Standards. It is to be completed and updated regularly by service/school and submitted in preparation for an Autism Accreditation review. It includes recommendations from the previous panel report (recorded under **Development Need**), the Core Standards, and the Specialist Standards (recorded under **Self Audit**).

Areas for Development: Term used by the Advisor (within the IDR-summarised under further action to be taken) and Review Team (within review report) describing areas for improvement. To be highlighted for the Panel to consider as Recommendations.

Areas of Strength: Term used by the Advisor (within the IDR) and Review Team (within review report) describing aspects of strong practice within the service/school locally to be highlighted for the Panel to consider as Good Practice or Commendation.

Autism: Term used to apply to the whole spectrum, including Asperger syndrome.

Carer(s): Term used to refer to parents, guardians and other family members that are responsible and care for a person with autism.

Commendation: Determined by the Panel from areas of strength that reflects outstanding practice within the service/school.

Deferred: Status of service/school determined by the Panel. Neither not Accredited nor Accredited for a maximum of 6 months until recommendations from the panel have been addressed. A re-visit will be arranged in which a second report will be produced on these recommendations, no IDR required. This report will then be presented to the Panel to determine whether Accredited status can be granted or not.

Good Practice: Determined by the Panel from areas of strength within the service/school that reflects good practice within the membership of Autism Accreditation.

Interim Development Report (IDR): Report completed by the Accreditation Advisor and service/school at the 18 month visit and includes further actions, key documents and areas of potential strength.

Key Documents: Is a binder/file that remains at the service/school as a reference tool. It includes proof of evidence that supports the self-audit and advanced documentation and includes items such as policies, procedures, local protocols, guidelines, brochures, handbooks, and manuals. The key documents file is maintained on a regularly basis at the service/school to be available if required by the Accreditation Advisor or the review team.

Not Accredited: Accredited status not granted or removed by the Panel after the service/school review. No IDR required, but there will be a minimum of 12 months before the next review.



Panel: Makes the judgement on whether there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate whether the service/school meets the criteria for accredited status. The Panel consists of a representative from the Accreditation department and a minimum of two individuals from a pool of professionals selected based on their expertise and qualification in the field of autism. Panel members are selected based on their area of expertise as it relates to the type of service/school being reviewed and any potential conflicts of interest with the specific service/school presented at the Panel meeting.

Pen Picture: A factual description/overview of the service/school(s) being reviewed that forms section B of the Advanced Documentation (see page 18). Accreditation Advisor agrees and completes at initial visit with the service/school and updated as necessary. This document is required as part of the final self audit submission.

Person with Autism: Any individual who is using a service/school, including pupil, student, client, customer, resident, or service user.

Policies, Procedures, Local Protocols and Guidelines: Documents which establish the groundwork for good practice and which refer to or evidence methodologies developed to successfully support the needs of people with autism e.g. Individual Plans, or Transition Policy.

Procedures Manual: Autism Accreditation programme's review process manual, describing mission statement, overview of the Department, Accreditation Advisor role and specifics of the review process.

Recommendations: Determined by the Panel from areas for development within the service/school that reflect areas of concern within the membership of Autism Accreditation.

Registered: When a service/school registers with Autism Accreditation and begins the process of completing the self audit in preparation for the IDR and review with the prospect of being awarded accredited status.

Self-Audit: Is the self-evaluation documents of Core Standards and Specialist Standards. They are to be completed and updated regularly by service/school and submitted for every IDR and review. As described in the Advanced Documentation above.

Service/School: Includes all types of organisations and schools that provide education, care or support for people with autism.

Service/School Manager: Any person who has the direct management responsibility for a service/school, including Principal, Head Teacher, Manager, General Manager and Home Manager.

Service/School Provider: Any organisation or individual that owns a service/school, including local/education authorities, health authorities, trusts, national charities, local charities and private organisations.

Specialist Standards: Separate Standards for areas of service/school provided, including:

- Playscheme
- Children's Home
- Day Schools
- Residential Schools
- Colleges and Continuing Education Services
- Adult Day Services
- Adult Residential Services
- Secure Residential
- NHS and Independent Hospitals
- Educational Outreach Support Services
- Community Outreach
- Fostering Agencies
- Employment
- Short Break and Shared Care
- Supported Living

Standards: A set of Core and Specialist requirements set by the Accreditation Standards Body. The Standards are the basis that:

- The service/school uses for their self-evaluation for the self-audit document;
- The IDR is compiled through the self audit and other key documents
- The review team makes their observations to compile their review report.

Standards Body: Establish and review the Standards annually. The Standards Body consists of individuals recognised for their high achievement, expertise and qualification in the field of autism research and practice. Their names are listed on our website www.autism.org.uk.

Statutory Requirements: These include all statutory and legislative bodies' requirements that must be met in order for care provision to be allowed in the United Kingdom. They include CQC, OFSTED, HMie, Health & Safety Executive Council etc.

The use of these terms avoids duplication of documents and also ensures consistency of terminology throughout the text.