

Autism Accreditation Assessment Foxfield School

Reference No.	28159
Assessment dates	15 th – 17 th June 2021
Lead Assessor	Jonny Knowles
External Moderator	Julie Naylor
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	No

Section 1: Context

About the Provision

Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:

Foxfield School is a local authority special day school for students aged 11 - 19 years old who have complex learning difficulties.

Students are in 4 different learning pathways: pre-formal, informal, semi-formal and formal. Each pathway has different learning intents and core learning outcomes. All of the school's informal classes follow SCERTS, as well as one semi-formal class (conversational partner stage students). "These classes are for students that require the highest support with social communication and emotional regulation."

Number of autistic people supported by the provision:

150 students are supported by the provision with 70 students having an Autism diagnosis.

Range of autistic people supported by the provision:

- The age range of the school is 11-19
- Every classroom has one or more autistic students
- Some autistic students are described as verbal and others as non-verbal.

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

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2017 and was found to be Good.





About the Assessment

The assessment took place over 3 days.

The service's adviser assumed the role of lead assessor with support from an external moderator on the first day of the assessment.

A presentation was shared with the assessment team by the service's Autism lead and Head Teacher on how provision is made for autistic students.

21 sessions were observed by the assessment team over a total of 8 hours. Sessions observed included Regulation, Sensory Circuits, Attention Autism, MOVE, Learn to Learn, Life Skills, My Art, Check-in, Zones of Regulation, Options, Horticulture and Transition.

Discussions were held with a number of staff members and the families of autistic people during the assessment. Staff interviewed included the ASC lead, Head Teacher, Communication Lead, Curriculum Lead, Sensory Lead, Behaviour Lead, CPD/Training lead, Transition Manager and three staff members who are new to the school.

3 family members spoke with the assessment team via phone during the assessment.

Policy and procedure documents relevant to the provision for autistic people were reviewed during the assessment.

Personal files were sampled from each of the school's classes during the assessment.

The results of surveys carried out with autistic people and the families of autistic people were also considered and are found in the appendix to this report.





Professional Development and Support for Staff

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

The school highlighted their main approaches as -

- Communication SCERTS, Social Stories, Intensive interaction, Attention Autism, objects of reference, Communication support (Makaton, PECS, BSL, PODD and AAC devices)
- **Self-Reliance** TEACCH, Consistent use of visual supports (standardised across the whole school), Life Skills curriculum
- **Sensory** Low stimulus/arousal environments, Sensory diets, Engine Rooms, Sensory Circuits, Outdoor learning opportunities
- **Wellbeing** Student centred curriculum, Zones of Regulation, Team Teach, Music and Art therapists, Clubs (Lego, self-esteem club, girls club, boys club)

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

During their initial induction into the service all new teaching staff, support staff and auxiliary staff complete the school's autism specific induction. The online programme, which was reviewed during the assessment, ensures that there is a consistent understanding across school of autism and that staff are introduced to the school's key methods and approaches.

New teaching staff to the school are assigned a mentor who is available to offer both formal and informal support and guidance during staff's initial year at the school. New staff may access additional training in specific areas based on the needs of the students within their class. During the assessment the assessment team met with a number of new staff to the school. Staff praised the school's induction process stating that it gave them "a good understanding of the school's key approaches". Staff also stated that they were given "time and opportunities to develop" with "amazing support" from staff.

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

There is a robust programme of CPD at Foxfield school which ensures that staff have a good understanding of autism and a range of autism specific best practice methods and approaches. The ongoing programme of CPD is led by the needs of students and staff, who identify developments through the school's appraisal process. SLT use staff and student voice to strategically plan the schools CPD programme, which has recently included sessions in Makaton, SCERTS, Attention Autism, PODD, Team Teach and rebound therapy.

To further support the development of practice the school have recently introduced tripod meetings for staff. Staff from across school are placed in groups of three, alongside other staff from different pathways, and throughout the year there are planned opportunities for them to meet, share practice and conduct peer-peer reviews.

Due to the restrictions enforced due to COVID the school have had to be creative in their approach to their professional development. Staff have been asked to record and upload examples of their practice, which have been collated and grouped online and analysed by SLT. Staff identified this as a "positive experience" in identifying their own areas of strength and development and reviewing examples of best practice from other staff members. SLT are further exploring how they can use technology to explore and share best practice across school, the pathways and the classes.





Section 2: Findings from Assessment

Personal Centred Planning

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

- The school has developed a robust transition process to support students as they transition from feeder schools.
- All new students undergo a number of baseline assessments.
- Each student has Personal Learning Goals (PLG) in either a SCERTS or a non SCERTS format which are constantly reviewed and updated.
- Targets are co-produced in collaboration with the students, parents, teachers, therapists, care staff and professionals surrounding the student.
- Each student has a one-page profile and student support plan which identifies their key support needs.
- Evidence for Learning, an online record keeping, tracking and assessment programme, is used to collect evidence towards students' identified targets throughout the year by both staff and families.
- All of the school's targets are SCRUFFY (Student Led, Creative, Relevant, Unspecified, Fun for Youngsters) ensuring that students have opportunities to broaden/establish skills through fun, relevant and meaningful activities.
- The four distinct pathways enable staff to deliver a curriculum which meets the individual needs of students at their point of learning.

Differences in Social Communication

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school have access to a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT), for two days each week, who works closely alongside the communication lead to provide both universal and targeted support for students and staff.

To ensure a consistent communication environment across school the school's ASC lead regularly conducts an environment walk. This includes reviewing all of the communal spaces across school, including the lunch hall, swimming pool and engine rooms, too ensure that there are consistent communication tools.

Classes are grouped on their appropriate language phase to enable staff to provide opportunities for students and their peers to practice and engage in functional language.

During the assessment the ASC and Communication Lead shared positive outcomes which had been achieved in students developing their communication, which was tracked using SCERTS and evidence for learning. Each students' communication target, which is shared on their PLG, relates directly to their long term EHCP targets. Staff aim to set SCRUFFY targets to ensure that progress is tracked laterally and skills are not just developed in isolation.

Each student's One-Page Profile and Student Support Profile shares their communication preferences and needs. The student support profile identifies the





specific communication level of students alongside their preferred method of communication and any specific tools.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within all observations highly skilled staff used a range of strategies to communicate with students, these included simplified verbal language, Makaton, PECS, Visuals and BSL. Within all observations staff effectively differentiated their approach between students and reinforced verbal communication with visual supports, signs or modelling.

Within all observations students were able to communicate with their staff. Students were observed as having access to a range of differentiated communication strategies which matched information found within their person-centred documentation. Students were observed using visuals, Makaton, physical prompts, verbal communication and AAC devices to communicate with staff and their peers.

Within all observations students were provided with opportunity and purpose to communicate with staff or/and their peers. Staff effectively used planned and naturally occurring opportunities to enable students to communicate and work collaboratively. During the assessment Post 16 staff discussed how they use planned opportunities to facilitate interactions between students with a focus on developing a peer-peer support model between the students.

Where best practice was observed, within the R4 morning check in session, staff facilitated opportunities for students to lead the session and communicate directly with their peers. Students in R4 class have also all learnt Makaton, even though it isn't everyone's primary form of communication, which enables all of the students to communicate with their peers.

Problem Solving and Self-reliance

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Life skills and independence skills are built into the curriculum for students on all pathways. The post 16 curriculum aims to build on the skills learnt through school and places an even greater emphasis on the development of independence skills with the aim of preparing students for adulthood. Through the life skills curriculum staff aim to create challenge and support students to develop problem solving skills through sabotage and real-world experiences within the community.

In Autumn 21 the school aim to further build on this curriculum by offering a broader range of specialist subjects onsite, including mechanics, construction, and hair and beauty. The school are also in the process of developing a life skills room which will enable students to practice and encounter skills for adulthood within a safe and secure environment.

The school's building facilitates the development of independence through the consistent and clear visual structure. Corridors have a specific colour which matches the teaching wall, chairs and windowsills, and rooms are clearly labelled with a consistent visual format. Independence is also supported through teaching approaches such as SCERTS and TEACCH as well as staff using a consistent visual timetable across school.





Student support profiles identify the independence levels of each student across school. A range of independence skills are identified and staff comment on whether the activity can be completed with No Help (NH), Spoken/Signed Help (SH) or Physical Help (PH).

Targets across school are based around long term goals and supporting students to achieve a level of independence in preparation for adulthood.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within almost all observation students were supported to understand what they must do now and next through a range of differentiated approaches. Each class has a consistently formatted whole class timetable and students were seen being supported through visual prompts, now and next boards, in class schedules, white boards and a range of other bespoke strategies based on the specific needs of students.

Where practice could be further developed, in a small number of observations, staff should review how they are signposting transitions to the students and ensure that they are explicitly referencing the visual structures which are in place.

The school's curriculum places an emphasis on providing opportunities for students to develop cultural capital through a range of carefully planned and relevant life skills sessions. During observations staff were seen to provide opportunities for students to develop independence skills through planned cookery, road safety and horticulture sessions. Within these sessions staff challenged students to make predictions and guesses and use their own autonomy to plan tasks and problem solve.

Within all observations staff were observed to provide both opportunity and purpose for students to make choices or express their opinion. Across school staff effectively used naturally occurring opportunities to promote independence and throughout observations staff ensured that students were allowed ample processing time before offering prompts or scaffolding. Where best practice was observed, within a Post 16 session, staff were highly skilled at planning opportunities for students to make choices and develop independence skills through planned sabotage and open questions.

Sensory Experiences

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school's sensory lead works across school to support staff in their understanding and implementation of sensory supports. The school are in the process of developing a sensory team, which will be in place by Autumn 2021. The aim of the team will be to work alongside staff to further upskill them in the sensory approaches through modelling, advice and guidance.

The school buy in additional OT support from Shine Therapy if staff need to develop a deeper understanding of a student's sensory needs. Shine therapy work with specific students and staff teams to assess the sensory needs of students and provide additional support to staff through a report, advice and recommendations.





To ensure that the environment across school supports students the ASC lead regularly conducts learning walks of the school to ensure that it is low arousal, consistent and that classrooms are clutter free.

Across school students have access to a range of sensory environments which they can access as a planned intervention or as part of regulation sessions, these include Engine rooms (multi-purpose sensory spaces), Sensory circuits, trampolines, soft play, light rooms and a hydrotherapy pool.

The school have also developed a number of outside areas across school with a particular focus for students including a forest school, beach school and beekeeping. As part of the school's continuous development the school hope to further develop and add structure to these spaces, alongside additional training for staff, to ensure that they meet the sensory needs of students.

Students' sensory preferences and aversions are shared with staff within their one-page profile. Student support plans also identify students' sensory needs and sensory sensitivities. Students with the most significant sensory needs also have a sensory diet which structures the school day to ensure that students receive enough sensory input so that they are able to engage in learning.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Careful consideration has been made to the school environment to ensure that it is an environment where students can thrive. Displays across school are purposeful and teaching walls and work stations ensure that students are supported by a clear visual structure. During the assessment the school was a calm environment, particularly within classrooms and the corridors, where staff appeared calm, relaxed and confident in the pace of their lessons, using naturally occurring opportunities to promote exploration of sensory experiences.

Within all observation's students had access to a range of sensory tools/activities to enable them to feel safe and regulated. All classrooms have access to a private outside space and some classes have develop in-class smaller rooms into sensory spaces, which were seen to be used by students during the assessment.

Sensory activities were planned into sessions throughout the school day. This was particularly evident within Attention Autism and Sensory Stories sessions where staff provided students with opportunities to explore or encounter new experiences. Staff effectively used the sessions to gather a better understanding of students likes and aversions, which could be reflected on at the end of the day and inform future planning/documentation.

Emotional Well-being

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school's student-centred curriculum places an emphasis on regulation and supporting the students to be ready to learn. This means that session times throughout the day are flexible around the needs of the students in the class and their needs on that specific day.





To encourage staff to be reflective practitioners staff have timetabled time at the end of each day to meet as a class team and reflect on progress, targets and behaviours. The school's curriculum places an emphasis on the wellbeing of students and the school host regular whole school wellbeing events for both staff and students.

To support students to develop an understanding of their emotions and identify self-regulation activities the school use Zones of Regulation, which is differentiated across school based on students' understanding and pathway. The school's ASC lead has supported the introduction of the approach which was evident in all of the classrooms and used as part of interactive and structured check in sessions.

The school's behaviour team meet weekly to analyse behaviour on Slueth, the school's behaviour recording system. After analysis, members of the communication, sensory and behaviour teams work collaboratively to provide advice, modelling and guidance for the staff teams so that they can better understand the function of a behaviour and meet the communication and sensory needs of the students.

Post COVID enforced lockdowns the school implemented a Recovery curriculum which provided students with opportunities to re-establish and rebuild relationships with staff on their transition back into school.

During interviews staff shared a number of success stories which evidenced the progress made by some students. One student, who is currently accessing the post 16 provision, is next year being employed by the school as a trainee lifeguard, having identified this as a career aspiration.

Students' likes, dislikes, what's important to me and what people like and admire about me are all shared as part of students' one-page profile. The one-page profile also contains key information in regards to behaviour including the 'behaviours I may display' and 'how best to keep me calm/regulated'. Students may also have a Positive Behaviour Support plan, alongside their other documents, to support staff to have a more detailed understand their behaviour and deliver graduated, consistent and structured approach in their support. Discussions with staff, SCERTS targets, EHCP reviews and Case Studies evidenced the progress of some students in their emotional regulation, developing a greater knowledge and understanding of their own needs. One student, who previously was repetitive in his behaviour within the classroom, has been supported by staff through additional regulation time to engage in alternative activities alongside staff and peers.

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

During all observations staff placed an emphasis on supporting students to feel happy, safe and ready to learn. The school's flexible timetable, which is differentiated to meet the different pathways, places an emphasis on supporting students to be regulated and ready to learn.

Staff have built positive and trusting relationships with the students, which was evident through observations and staff interviews. Staff appeared attune to the needs of the students and within all observations staff were observed working proactively to pre-empt the needs of the students and offer support, sensory input or distractors.

Within all observations students had access to a zones of regulation display which was used to support students to understand and identify their emotions. Some classes also used keyrings, which were placed alongside the display, to signpost students to regulation activities related to their identified emotion. Throughout observations staff





placed an emphasis on regulation and students were seen accessing sensory breaks independently and with support from staff.

Where best practice was observed, in all class-based observations, students were able to identify that they needed a break independently and used staff prompts or the zones of regulation display to identify self-regulation tools/activities which were relevant to their arousal level. Where practice could be further developed, within the morning regulation sessions, staff should consider how they structure the regulation sessions to ensure that they promote independence and enable students to access the correct activities/support.

All lessons observed were engaging, fun and interesting, as well as containing elements of challenge and opportunities for students to encounter new experiences. Particular good practice was in all Attention Autism sessions where staff delivered sessions with passion and excitement, which engaged the students in the activity. Staff also effectively differentiated the sessions, which were all based around the school's overarching topic of the call of the wild, to focus on the weather, the wild and camping.

During all observation staff provided meaningful specific positive feedback and praise to the students, which appeared to boost their self-esteem and confidence. During all observations staff appeared confident and comfortable in allowing students to access self-regulation activities when they needed them. Staff are clearly aware of the importance of these strategies and aimed to support students to re-engage when they appeared "ready to learn".

Consultation with Autistic People

The school had a student-centred approach when developing the new curriculum and feedback from students played a pivotal role in supporting staff to design the curriculum, develop the resources/options and adapt the school's timetable. The changes, developed due to student voice, included the future development of a nail bar and hairdressers, as well as rooms to enable students to develop skills in mechanics and construction.

Reflection and self-advocacy time are planned into each school day. This supports staff to dedicate time to review evidence, celebrate success and identify next steps alongside the class team and students.

Across school some students have specific roles to support their peers during lunch time, transitions, lessons and unstructured times. Within post 16 students on a more formal pathway work collaboratively with their peers on the other pathways which has led to more opportunities for mutual regulation, as well as prompting and modelling from peers. The school hope to further develop the buddy/mentor system post COVID.

Post COVID, and with the restructure of the school, the school hope that their will be more opportunities for students to weave between pathways to ensure that they are accessing learning in an environment, and with peers, who can further support them to practise and develop skills.





School Council has not been meeting as a whole school due to restrictions in place due to COVID. The school have adapted this process so that students have been meeting as a key stage so that they can still have a voice about key topics and inform practice.

During the assessment the assessment team spoke to a number of students in post 16 about their likes and interests. Students highlighted their likes at school as "opportunities to work together with friends", "gardening" and "swimming".

2 autistic people completed and returned questionnaires, which are found in the appendix to this report. 4 family members also completed questionnaires, answering to represented the views of their relative.

Consultation with families of Autistic People

The school employ a transition manager 2.5 days each week. The transition manager works closely alongside students and families to support them throughout school and to understand their next steps when transitioning out from the school. To support families to understand next steps the transition manager attends reviews for students from year 9 onwards so that they can ask any concerns or queries.

When developing the new curriculum, the school gathered parent voice to ensure that the school's aims matched with the parents. From feedback the school gathered from families, staff and students the school developed their vision which is "To create happy, healthy safe independent young adults who can communicate their wants and needs."

To support parents throughout the year the school host monthly coffee mornings. The topics or speakers who attend the coffee morning are based on the identified needs of the parents or students. Speakers may be internal staff speaking about specific interventions or approaches used across school, or external speakers discussing topics such as future provisions, benefits or supported living.

Parents have a number of mediums available to them to enable them to communicate with staff. These include Class Dojo, phone calls, emails or face to face meetings. The school have also encouraged parents to collect evidence toward students' PLGs and share them within the evidence for learning programme to evidence generalisation.

3 parents spoke with the assessment team via email during the assessment One parent stated that my child is "making progress within the school which is helped by the staff really understanding the needs of my child".

When discussing home-school communication parents stated that there is "Good communication with staff through Class Dojo and evidence for learning is used well by staff to share pictures and progress". Another parent stated that "the communication is great between home and school".

One parent highlighted the SCERTS model, "which really works well for my child and staff have really supported me in my understanding of the programme".

To further develop practice parents highlighted that the school;

- would benefit from clearer expectations on Dojo and evidence for learning.
- could consider reducing the number of fancy-dress days across school as some students have difficulty coping with the change in the days.





• create more opportunities, post COVID restrictions, for new parents to visit school to engage with and understand the school's curriculum and key approaches

30 family members provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. The full results are shown as an appendix to this report. 26 family members (87%) stated that the support their relative is given is always or mostly good. 27 family members (90%) stated that staffs understanding is mostly or always good and 25 family members (84%) stated that advice given by the school was good or always good. 22 family members (73%) stated that the way they are kept informed was good or always good. 6 family members chose to leave a comment on the questionnaire which are found in the appendix to this report.

Section 3: Summary of assessment What the provision does particularly well

What stood out as particular strengths:

The school effectively use Attention Autism across school, differentiated to the students' needs and their learning styles. During the assessment Attention Autism sessions were seen to be fun and engaging and showed the value of the programme with students on different pathways.

SLT are enthusiastic and ambitious about developing and delivering a curriculum which best meets the needs of the students. The changes made to the curriculum over the last year allow staff to be flexible and creative in their approach, meeting students at their point of learning through fun, engaging and interactive lessons.

Within all observations highly skilled staff used a range of strategies to communicate with students. Staff effectively differentiated their approach between students and reinforced verbal communication with visual supports, signs or modelling. Support staff also worked proactively during lessons, pre-empting the needs of students to deliver discreet sensory supports and prompts.

Throughout observations staff effectively used sabotage and open questions to promote independence and problem-solving skills.

What else the provision does well:

Both staff and students are given time each day for reflection. This enables staff and students to track progress and identify next steps to ensure that PLG targets and feedback informs practice.

The school's flexible timetable, which is differentiated to meet the different pathways, places an emphasis on supporting students to be regulated and ready to learn. The school is a calm environment and the pace of lessons further reinforces the low arousal and calm approach.

The school's robust programme of CPD ensures that staff have a good understanding of a range of autism specific best practice methods and approaches. New staff to the school also highlighted the strength of the school's induction programme, which supports staff through positive training and mentoring.

The school's transition manager supports both parents and students to make informed and supported choices about their futures.





The communication, sensory and behaviour leads work collaboratively using data analysis and observations to better understand the function of behaviour. The team work with staff providing practical advice, modelling and guidance to enable classes to best meet the communication and sensory needs of the students.

The post 16 curriculum has been carefully planned to support students to develop skills which are appropriate for their next steps. Staff are aspirational about students' futures and aim to provide real world opportunities for students to both practice and generalise skills.

The new format of the school, with classes based on corridors with their pathway, will further support a collaborative and consistent approach and enable more planned opportunities for students to weave into different pathways as part of progression.

The passionate ASC lead is actively supporting and mentoring other provisions and professionals to ensure that they have a good understanding of the key methods and approaches used to effectively support autistic students.

What the provision could develop further

Priorities for the provision:

Further refine the structures in place during the morning regulation session, particularly within the hall, to support students to independently manage and access their appropriate activities.

Other areas to consider:

Where practice could be further developed, in a small number of observations, staff should review how they are referencing transitions to the students and ensure that they are explicitly referencing the visual structures which are in place.

Continue to implement and embed the new curriculum across school. Support staff, who are following a non SCERTS pathway, in their setting of communication based PLGs which are evidence based and progressive.

Continue to develop the vocational rooms and life skills space, in line with the new post 16 curriculum, to enable the school to offer more specific pathways within the post 16 curriculum.

Continue to explore the new technology, which has recently been introduced into the school, to reflect on the CPD systems in place. The school should consider how they share best practice through videos with both staff and families to further develop understanding and practice.

Develop the new communication, sensory and behaviour teams and support the staff to understand the systems in place to support them.

Continue to reflect on how the school supports families to engage with the school. With the introduction of the family liaison roll in Autumn 2021 the school hope that this will further develop positive relationships and communication methods with parents.

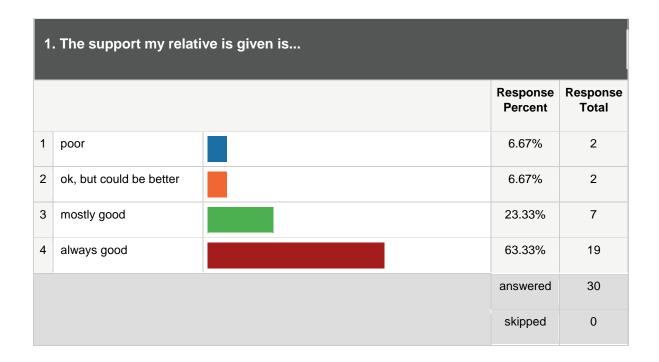




APPENDIX 1: SURVEYS

Please note all comments accompanying survey ratings are routinely removed from the final Accreditation report once they have been shared with the provision. This is to eliminate the risk of any individual being identified from these comments should the provision share or publish the report

Foxfield School FAP Deadline 11/06/2021



2	2. The understanding that staff have for my relatives autistic needs is			
		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	poor	3.33%	1	
2	ok, but could be better	6.67%	2	
3	mostly good	30.00%	9	
4	always good	60.00%	18	
		answered	30	





2. The understanding that staff have for my relatives autistic needs is...

Response Percent	Response Total
skipped	0

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

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		10.00%	3
2	ok, but could be better		16.67%	5
3	mostly good		13.33%	4
4	always good		60.00%	18
		8	answered	30
			skipped	0

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

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor	6.67%	2
2	ok, but could be better	10.00%	3
3	mostly good	26.67%	8
4	always good	56.67%	17
		answered	30
		skipped	0



Foxfield School AP Deadline 11/06/2021

1	1. The support I am given is good?			
		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes	100.00%	6	
2	No	0.00%	0	
3	Sometimes	0.00%	0	
		answered	6	
		skipped	0	

2	2. Staff understand me and my needs			
		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes	83.33%	5	
2	No	0.00%	0	
3	Sometimes	16.67%	1	
		answered	6	
		skipped	0	





3. The staff listen to me on how I want to be helped Response Response Total **Percent** Yes 5 83.33% 2 0 No 0.00% 16.67% 3 Sometimes 1

answered

skipped

6

0

4. Who just completed the questions above? Response Response Percent Total The autistic person by 0.00% 0 themselves The autistic person with 2 33.33% 2 support A staff member who 0.00% 0 represented their views A family member or friend who represented their 66.67% 4 views answered 6 skipped 0





APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION

