

# **Autism:** **A Guide for Mainstream Secondary Schools**



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**A Guide for Mainstream  
Secondary Schools**

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# Foreword

I am pleased to provide a foreword address to *Autism: A Guide for Mainstream Secondary Schools*. Following the success of the Learning with Autism Primary School Programme, I hope that this guide and its accompanying resources will yield similar success in providing practical knowledge and advice for staff within secondary schools.

Creating autism friendly learning environments can only be achieved with everyone working together, and the 'Learning with Autism' programmes aim to achieve this by providing consistent advice and supportive resources that can be utilised across education provision.

These programmes have been developed with support and advice from a range of professionals, parents and carers. We are very grateful for the continued commitment shown, and hope that our resources continue to improve the lives of young people with ASD and their families.

**Councillor Ali Thomas OBE**



# Chapter 1

## Introduction





# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Learning With Autism – Programme Overview

The learning with autism programmes are a series of programmes aimed at raising awareness of autism across mainstream educational settings. Funded by the Welsh Government and developed by the Welsh Local Government Association, The Learning with Autism – Secondary School Programme can be accessed at:

[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/secondary-school](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/secondary-school)

In some settings, it may be useful to use the programme in conjunction with our primary school programme which can be accessed at:

[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/primary-school](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/primary-school)

Learning with Autism – Secondary School Programme is an invitation to become an ‘Autism Aware School’, and in addition to this guide there is a package of resources available to support the process:



### Introduction

- A short introductory film, introducing the ‘Learning With Autism’ programme and highlighting the benefits of making adjustments for pupils with ASD, including decreasing challenging behaviours and increasing attainment.
- A self-evaluation tool based on the Estyn inspection framework for schools, which will help schools to identify their current provision and practice, and plan and monitor improvement.

### For Teaching and learning support staff

- A training film, showing some of the challenges faced by young people with an ASD during a normal school day, designed to develop awareness, and stimulate discussion about the steps we can take to improve their experience and attainment levels.
- An online questionnaire leading to a Certificate in ASD Awareness.

### Governors and other school staff

are encouraged to take part in a nation-wide ASD awareness programme. It includes;

- A PowerPoint presentation about the issues involved in autism.
- An online questionnaire leading to a Certificate in ASD Awareness.

## For pupils

- There is 'Sgilti', a lesson for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils based around an awareness raising film, that promotes understanding and acceptance of autism.

With everyone on board, the whole school gets a certificate showing it has completed the Learning with Autism programme.

There are also additional resources to help support young people with ASD in school, including:

- An **online Personal Profile builder**, available to teaching staff, parents, carers and other professionals. With everyone working together, it can build into an effective resource, making sure there is consistency and continuity of care for a young person with an ASD.
- An **ASD Planner App**, designed to help organise and sequence activities. Teachers, parents and carers can input relevant information, giving a school day the clear structure that young people with an ASD need, in an accessible format.

Everyone needs to be on board to create an Autism-Aware School, and the Learning with Autism programme includes all sections of the school. As individuals come to understand more about ASD, their actions influence those around them, and being an Autism-Aware School becomes a reality.

Raising awareness about autism has the power to change lives: the lives of young people with an ASD, and the lives of those around them. It encourages understanding, tolerance and respect, so that together we can all reach our full potential.



## Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

Estimates tell us that around 1 in 100 young people have an Autism Spectrum Disorder - or ASD - which means there are young people with an ASD in most schools, whether diagnosed or not.

Young people with ASD present with a variety of strengths, difficulties and sometimes behaviour issues. For these young people the cause of behavioural difficulties usually relates to the core symptoms of ASD not being appreciated, and suitable support and adaptations not being put into place.



By adapting your practice, a young person with ASD will feel safer, less anxious and have an increased understanding of what is expected of them. This in turn will mean that the young person is more likely to have increased attainment, improved behaviour and therefore is at a reduced risk of exclusion.

It is widely recognised that the methods used to support young people with ASD can also benefit other young people in the classroom.

All young people with ASD have impairments in social communication, social interaction, social imagination and a preference for routines. Many have sensory issues and a restricted pattern of behaviours. It is important to remember that the way in which this affects a young person varies, and strengths or weaknesses in one area are not necessarily accompanied by strengths or weaknesses in other areas.

For example, many young people with higher functioning ASD have good or above average use of language. Having a complex vocabulary does not mean that the young person will understand the same level of vocabulary, nor that the young person understands the vocabulary that he or she is using.

We should not forget the many positive attributes of young people with an ASD. They often bring skills and knowledge that come from following a special interest, maybe showing close attention to detail, often picking up on things that others have missed. These abilities can be used to encourage engagement in school work, and enable them to make their own, unique contribution to school life.

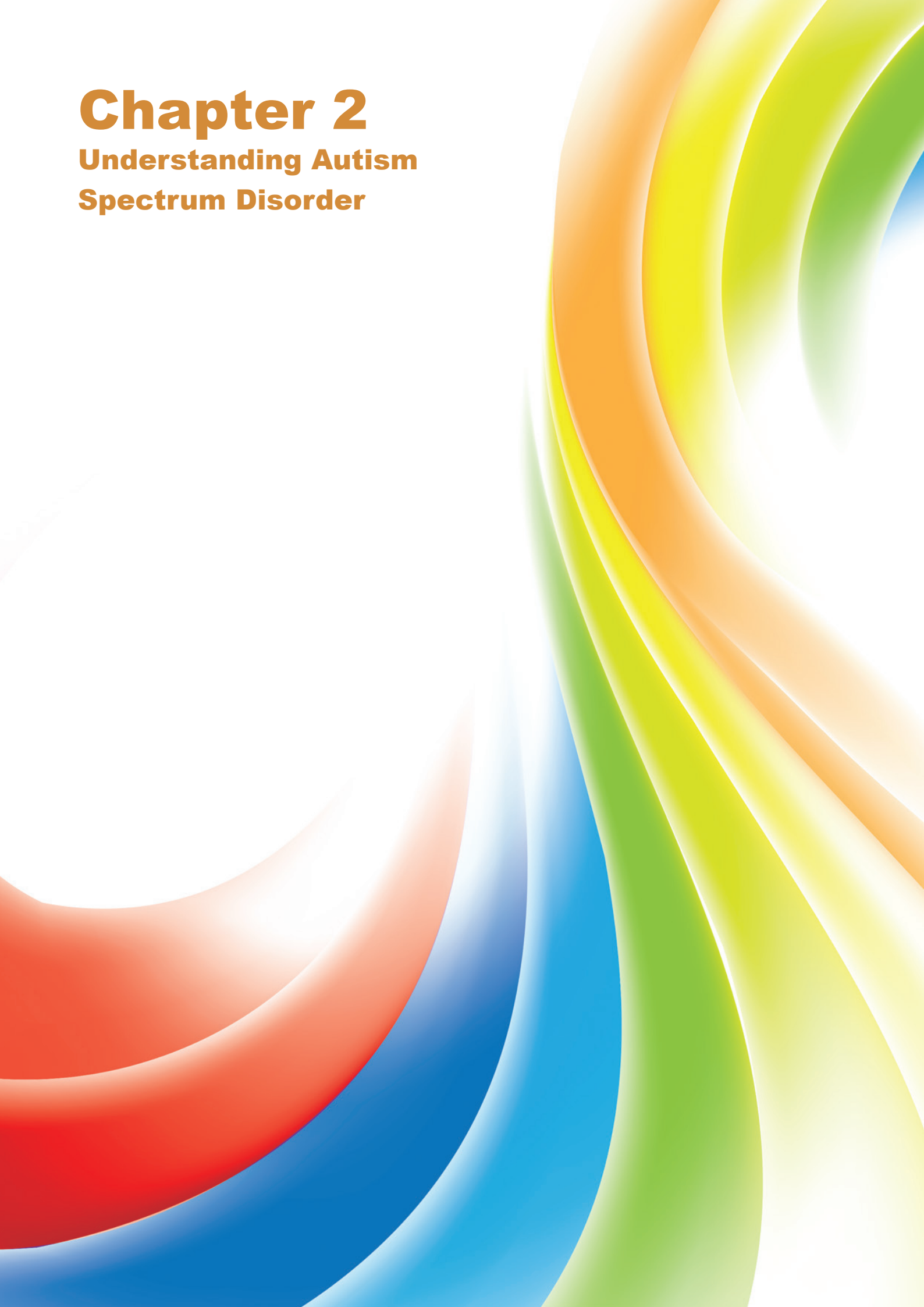
Many young people with an ASD (especially when diagnosed in later childhood or adolescence) have had negative experiences in relation to school. These experiences will have decreased confidence, and self-esteem. Rebuilding self-esteem is an important step in addressing behaviours. Often young people with ASD have a fear of failure, and so negative responses from staff within the school setting can increase the anxiety and subsequent negative behaviour.

Due to the issues young people with ASD experience, many have difficulties in accessing the curriculum and will need differentiation in teaching styles and approaches.

The learning with autism programme has been developed to equip schools with enhanced understanding of ASD and how to meet the needs of young people with the condition.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder**



# Chapter 2

## Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Recognising the Signs of ASD in Those without a Diagnosis

Autism Spectrum Disorder can be diagnosed from around the age of 2. However, for many, the symptoms are missed during the early years and many are not diagnosed until much later on. For some individuals, the symptoms are missed in childhood and they are subsequently not diagnosed until adolescence or adulthood – usually after a long period of struggling to manage day to day.

Early recognition and intervention ensures that young people can receive the most appropriate support and in turn benefit from the best outcomes.

NICE Guidelines **CG128, Autism in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis** [<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg128/chapter/1-Guidance#recognising-children-and-young-people-with-possible-autism>] advise that professionals should use their judgement as to whether a young person should be referred for assessment or not. The guidelines recognise, that scores obtained from ‘symptom recognition tools’ (sometimes inaccurately referred to as ‘screening tools’) should not be relied upon. It is recommended that the decision to refer should be considered on the basis of;

- Signs or symptoms
- Range
- Number
- Severity
- Duration
- Pervasiveness
- Impact

These guidelines also recommend that special attention should be paid to the level of parental concern about the young person.

Common signs of ASD are highlighted in the following graphics and more information about referring a young person can be found at: [www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/recognise-ASD-child](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/recognise-ASD-child)

# Autism – do you know the signs?

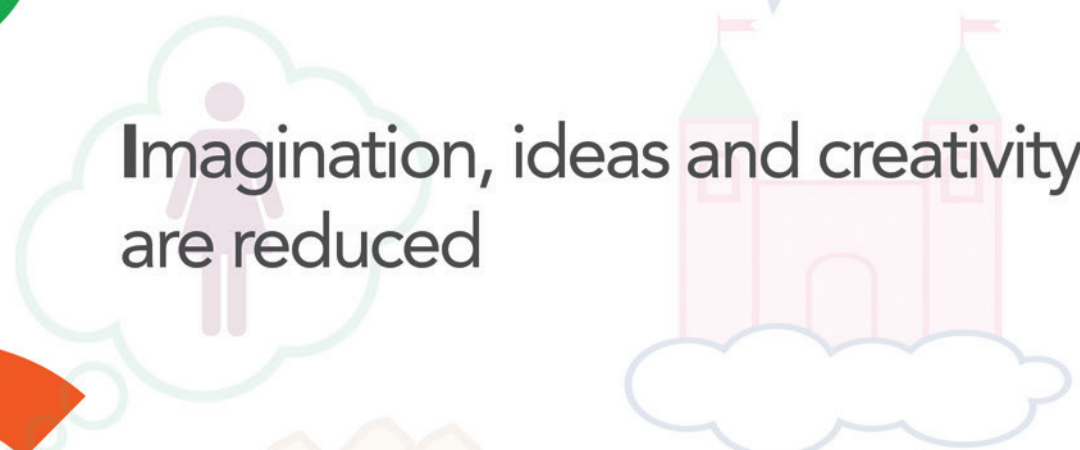
# S

**S**ocial Interaction and verbal communication are impaired

“echolalia  
cholalia  
alia  
cholalia  
echolalia  
echolalia”

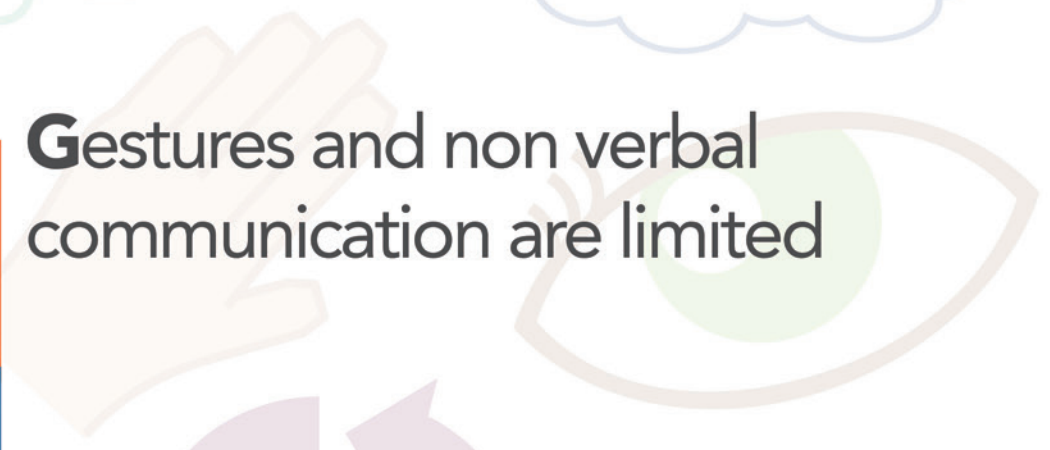
# I

**I**magination, ideas and creativity are reduced



# G

**G**estures and non verbal communication are limited



# N

**N**arrow range of interests, routines and repetitive behaviours



# S

**S**ensory responses are unusual



# Autism – do you know the signs?

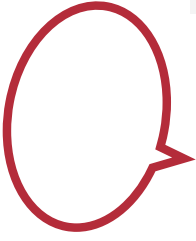
## Older Adolescents and Adults

### Social Interaction and Verbal Communication

Repeating certain words or phrases over and over again ("echolalia")

**"echolalia**  
**echolalia**  
 echolalia  
 echolalia  
 echolalia  
**echolalia"**

Limited use of language



Talks excessively about topics of own interest

Takes things literally, struggles with sarcasm and metaphor



Talks 'at' others rather than sharing a two-way conversation



Finds making and keeping close friendships difficult

Can be over-formal or over-familiar

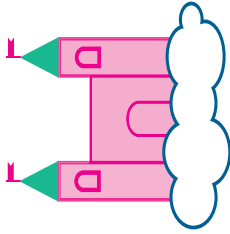
Does not respond to greetings and farewells

Emotional responses to others are inappropriate, rude and unsympathetic

Does not offer comfort to others

### Imagination, ideas and creativity

Imaginary activities not shared with others or else passively follows another's imaginative theme or insists that others follows his/her own themes and rules.



Reduced or no imagination

Reduced creativity, limited or repetitive fantasy world or role play

Interested only in non-fiction, and not in fictional stories/films

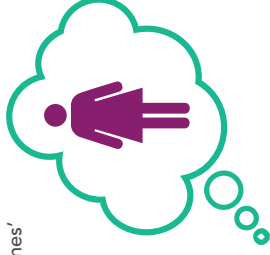
Difficulty with future thinking



Experiences difficulties with problem solving

Finds it difficult to predict intentions of others/ cannot imagine characters intentions in story/film

Struggles to 'read between the lines'



Unable to adjust behaviour to expectations or predicted reactions of others

### Gestures and non verbal communication



Reduced or unusual eye contact



Lack of spontaneous gesture that expresses emotion (e.g. putting arm around someone)



Lack of pointing to show objects and share interest



Poorly integrated gestures, facial expression, proximity, body language or eye contact when having conversations

Lack of social smile

Odd or flat/monotonous tone of voice

### Narrow range of interests, routines and repetitive behaviours

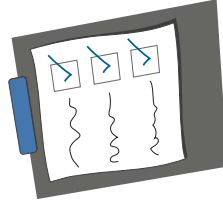
Displays repetitive behaviours or rituals that negatively affect daily activities



Arranges objects in patterns or lines and dislikes these to be disturbed

Self-chosen activities are limited and unchanging

Repetitive 'stereotypical' movements such as hand flapping, body rocking while standing, spinning, finger flicking



Over-focused, unusual or highly specific interests and hobbies

Prefers familiar routines, likes things to be 'just right'

Has strong adherence to rules or fairness that leads to arguments

### Sensory responses

Unusual sensory responses to sound sight, touch, taste, smell, movement and/or pain



## What is an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

**An Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder which affects the way a person communicates with and relates to other people and the world around them. The way in which people are affected varies from one individual to another and by age and intellectual functioning.**

Young people with an ASD are affected in a variety of ways and to very different degrees. This is why it is called 'the autism spectrum'. ASD can affect young people with any level of intellectual ability, from those who are profoundly learning disabled, to those with average or high intelligence. So, having an ASD does not necessarily mean that you have learning difficulties.

The more seriously affected young people at one end of the spectrum have learning difficulties as well and require high levels of support. At the other end of the spectrum, some people with 'high-functioning ASD' are very intelligent academically. They may go on to be successful in their chosen field. However, they still experience significant social and communication difficulties.

## What are the core characteristics of autism spectrum disorders?

Young people with ASD have significant difficulties relating to other people in a meaningful way. It is very common for young people with ASD to have profound sensory issues. This, combined with the triad of impairments, means that young people with ASD experience the world very differently. The 'triad of impairments', or 'the three impairments' are issues with:

- social interaction
- social communication
- rigidity of thinking and difficulties with social imagination

Young people with an ASD frequently also experience:

- repetitive behaviours / stimming
- special Interests
- sensory issues

It is important to remember that the autism spectrum is broad and therefore different individuals with ASD may display all or only some of the characteristics described. In this guide we will aim to help you understand the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders, the impact of school on the young person with ASD and support strategies in more detail.

### Social Interaction

From birth, most young people display signs of wanting to engage with others. They enjoy interacting, and look to others to learn from. As these young people grow, they appear motivated by and develop more skills in engaging with others, seeking praise and sharing pleasure and interests. Young people with an ASD find social interaction difficult, and often appear less motivated to socialise. They may seem less interested in people, find it hard to understand what others expect of them - they often seem trapped in a world of their own. **Try to find common ground (engaging in special interests is often useful) to begin to build trust and rapport with the young person.**



In school, the young person with ASD may not like to be approached, or only be receptive to approaches from people they know well. They may show preference for individual activities, or prefer to engage with adults over peers. **Do not force the young person to engage with you, be understanding and take your time. The more familiar the young person is with you, the more likely he will engage with you.**

Some young people with an ASD may like being sociable, but struggle to do this appropriately or may want social contact on their terms only. They may appear 'awkward', not liking anyone in their personal space or entering others personal space inappropriately. They may make errors in their interaction with others, be over-formal or over-familiar, make personal remarks without realising they are offending. They may struggle to start, end or take turns in conversation and may appear to talk 'at' rather than 'to' someone. They may talk excessively about their own interests, and not recognise when someone is bored or disinterested.



This lack of social awareness can also mean that the young person has difficulty in understanding and following social rules such as taking turns, not interrupting or waiting in line.

**Recognise that these difficulties are part of the autism spectrum rather than purposeful or deliberate.**

Young people can be easily confused by the untruths associated with social niceties. It is often hard for them to differentiate between when it is socially appropriate to lie (e.g. by saying someone's hair looks nice when they do not really think it does) and when it is wrong to lie (e.g. by saying a peer stole something when they didn't). **Getting this right will require a lot of support, reinforcement and practice.**

There are many negative impacts associated with impairments in social interaction. The young person can often experience low self – esteem from 'getting it wrong' frequently. Friendships with peers can suffer, many young people with ASD want friends but find it difficult to make and sustain friendships.

Not understanding the purpose of social interaction (along with other issues) can make the young person choose to avoid social occasions such as parties or sleepovers.

At times, adults who do not understand ASD may assume that the behaviours are caused by 'rudeness' or a bad attitude which results in the young person being punished or 'labelled' for something they have very little control of.

## Social Communication

Social communication and interaction are issues that all young people with an ASD struggle with and not understanding or misunderstanding can often be a cause of anxiety and subsequent anxiety, withdrawal or aggression in the classroom.

## Verbal Communication

Many young people with high functioning ASD have a higher level of expressive language (what they say) than receptive language (what they understand). When language is at an average or an above average level, it is often assumed that level of understanding is equal but this is usually not the case.

Even with higher level verbal skills, young people with an ASD still find non-verbal communication difficult and struggle to use, and understand, non-verbal communication methods. These communication difficulties can cause problems in giving information to and gaining information from pupils with an ASD. Being aware of these difficulties and **adapting your own communication style is essential** when working with pupils with an ASD.

**Long questions and explanations can cause confusion for someone with ASD, so try to avoid using them. Break down long instructions into smaller stages, and / or support the instruction with pictures or lists.**

People with ASD will often have a very literal understanding of language. Idioms, metaphors and similes may be very confusing or create misunderstandings.

### Idioms:

Make up your mind  
You're barking up the wrong tree  
Pull your socks up  
Put your thinking cap on  
That's the pot calling the kettle black

### Metaphors:

She's an old flame  
Dad is a rock  
You are an angel  
Bill is a snake  
My head was spinning

### Similes:

He is as rich as a king  
She is as cool as a cucumber  
You are as cold as ice  
As bright as a button



When interpreted literally, these phrases are very confusing. **You should avoid using figurative language when interacting with a young person with an ASD.** Do not be misled by the young person using some metaphors, it does not necessarily mean they will understand yours, especially if they are not familiar with them.

Often we will use phrases which literally interpreted mean one thing, when actually we are implying something else. For example, we may say “well done for listening” when actually we mean “well done for stopping when I asked you to”, or “wait a second” when we mean “I’ll help you after I have finished this task”. **Make sure you say what you mean when talking to a young person with ASD**, otherwise it can lead to much confusion and anxiety.

We often use analogies to try and explain things to young people in simpler terms. For example, if we are trying to explain career planning, you might explain it in terms of a map and say that there are a number of routes you can take to get to your destination. It is difficult for a young person with ASD to link this sort of an explanation with the original problem you are trying to explain. Try and **use facts to explain things instead of analogies**.

Because young people with ASD have difficulty understanding figurative language and struggle to ‘read between the lines’ you should always – **SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND MEAN WHAT YOU SAY.**



Due to issues with social interaction, many young people with an ASD will not offer any more information than they are asked for. For example, if asked “can you come to school early in the morning?” they may answer “yes”, but may not offer additional information such as “but only if my mother isn’t working”.

For the same reasons, using generalised questions may produce misleading answers, e.g. “How are you feeling?” may get a learned response of “very well, thank you”, but asking “have you got a headache?” may get a “yes”, because it is a specific question.

**Be clear and specific when questioning a pupil with ASD. Try and avoid open ended questions, and choose specific over non-specific terms such as ‘often’, ‘usually’ or ‘normally’.**

Young people with ASD may need more time to process and understand what you are saying. **Pausing frequently and allowing them to think, and allowing a longer time for a response can help.**

When giving information or teaching someone with ASD, **it is often helpful to use pictures or photographs or to use ‘to do’ style lists** to reinforce and remind the young person of what you have asked them to do.

Always **check that the young person has understood** what you have told them by asking them to explain it to you.

## Non Verbal Communication

Regardless of level of verbal communication, young people with an ASD struggle to use and understand non verbal methods of communication.

Non verbal communication methods include:

- eye contact
- body language
- tone of voice
- gesture
- facial expression

**Do not rely on non-verbal methods to communicate**, emphasise or contradict your point as the young person with ASD may not be able to understand these subtle ways of communicating.

Many, but not all, young people with ASD have an 'unusual' eye contact. This may be noticed as the young person avoiding eye contact, giving too much eye contact or a more subtle differences such as not using eye contact when showing or requesting something.

We often assume that a lack of eye contact implies that someone is not listening or not paying attention us. For young people with ASD the opposite is often true, they may find it easier to focus on listening to you when they are not concentrating on looking at you.

For those with ASD, eye contact is often uncomfortable and has even been described as painful. **You should not force a pupil with ASD to give you eye contact**, nor punish them for avoiding eye contact with you.

Because young people with ASD may have problems interpreting non-verbal communication such as eye contact and body language, they may not realise that you are addressing them, especially when in a group of other young people. **Start by saying their name and making sure you are in their view before speaking so they are aware you are talking to them.**

Young people with ASD have difficulty in interpreting the communicative intention of changes in pitch and tone of voice and indeed often present with an unusual pitch, accent or tone themselves. Indeed, for some young people they find variations in tone and pitch confusing or distressing. When interacting with a young person with ASD, **use a relaxed consistent tone of voice. Do not shout**, it will not help to the young person with ASD to learn and will more than likely cause additional confusion.

Complex humour and sarcasm are often conveyed through contradicting verbal and non-verbal communication. A spoken phrase is compared with tone of voice, facial expression and used to work out whether someone is being serious or not. Young people with ASD will often be unable to do this, and will assume the words used are accurate. **Avoid using sarcasm and complex humour**, it can be very confusing for the young person with an ASD, if you are using humour or sarcasm with other pupils, make sure you let the young person with ASD know.

A young person with ASD may not support their verbal communication with body language, facial expression or changes in tone of voice. If they do, they may not accurately reflect how the young person is feeling or what the young person means so **be careful not to make assumptions based on non – verbal cues.**

If a young person has sensory problems, environmental issues such as loud noises or bright lights may affect their ability to communicate. **Minimise sensory distractions** - refer to the section on sensory issues.

## Social Imagination, Rigidity of Thought and Routines

Imagination helps us understand the world, predict and see the perspective of other people. Young people with an ASD are unable to do this to any great extent. Young people with an ASD may have difficulty in engaging in imaginary activities such as role playing.

Problems with imagination make the world a very uncertain place, it makes it difficult to plan, cope with changes, predict other's responses, empathise and problem solve. Young people with ASD often find reassurance in setting up routines and patterns that they can control and prefer predictability to uncertainty.

This means that young people with an ASD:

- cannot easily make sense of sequences and events
- engage in repetitive activities
- may become distressed if a familiar routine changes
- may impose routines on others
- prefer sameness, and will often resist new experiences
- find it hard to work out what other people are going to do, and cannot make sense of why other people do what they do
- struggle to understand how their behaviour may affect others, may not understand social hierarchy
- have no, or reduced empathy
- struggle with imaginative activities, pretending and creativity
- find it hard to make 'free choices'
- will often pay particular attention to details and struggle to see the bigger picture

**Within the school environment, it is essential that staff recognise that young people with an ASD:**

- **need regular routines that are communicated to them in visual format**
- **must have changes kept to a minimum and to be prepared for unavoidable changes in advance**
- **require additional structure across many social and learning activities**
- **have difficulties with imaginative and creative activities**
- **struggle to empathise with, and predict the behaviour of, other people and characters**

## Routines and Coping with Changes

Many young people with an ASD find it difficult to cope with changes, they prefer the predictability of a routine and cope better with structured activities.

By ensuring consistent routines within lessons and in the way in which you interact, you will help to alleviate worry and anxiety.

Because of the difficulties that young people with ASD often have around predicting events, **it is essential that the young person is clear about the day's activities at the start.**

**Many young people will need visual aids to help them.** These 'planners' can help to decrease anxiety and ensure the young person understands the order of activities – preventing confusion and distress.

Often young people in mainstream schools work well with written planners. For those young people who enjoy using technology there are apps available on the iPad, tablets and mobile phones that can be used. There is a free ASD planner app available for this purpose, please visit [www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/ASDplanner](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/ASDplanner) for details.

Changes to the school routine can cause a young person with an ASD to become very anxious. Often this is purely because the young person feels more comfortable with predictability, at times the anxiety can be caused by the young person not recognising that key events will still happen. For example, if a special assembly is called during last period instead of the timetabled lesson, the young person may not be able to predict that home time will now follow assembly instead of the timetabled lesson. This may lead to the young person worrying that they will not be going home, or that there is an extra period in school.

Some common changes in schools that can cause young people with ASD distress are:

- Special assemblies/concerts
- Substitute teachers
- Term time – school holiday changes
- Transitions to new schools / classes
- School trips
- Indoor break times caused by weather conditions
- Special events such as school fayres

Again, it will help if you prepare the young person by providing a visual plan ahead of the anticipated changes, which the young person can access regularly. Being able to see clearly what's going to happen can make a young person with an ASD less anxious and confused.

You can also prepare a young person with ASD for changes by using a calendar count down over a week to prepare for change in routine such as school holidays.

It is not only changes to the daily / weekly routine that can cause anxiety for young people with ASD. Changes to the environment can also cause difficulties. These may include:

- Changes to classroom displays
- Rearranging of furniture
- Peers being away from school
- New pupil joining the class
- Visitors to the classroom
- Changes in other's appearances such as haircuts, glasses or growing a beard
- Non uniform days

Again, the most useful way of avoiding distress around these times of environmental change is to prepare the young person in advance, and explain what to expect.

For many, the structure of the school day is useful, and parent / carers may report more troublesome behaviours being displayed at home than are seen in school.



## Providing Additional Structure

Because of the difficulties that young people with an ASD have around planning and predicting, as well as their preference for routines they will need additional structure in many activities.

Some young people with an ASD struggle to breakdown an overarching task into its components, especially when 'grouped task' terms are used. For example, a young person might not be able to break down 'tidy up' into the sub tasks of 'put rubbish in the bin, return equipment to cupboards, and return chairs to original positions' etc. If this is the case, **break down the task into its components and communicate to them using lists or planners** to help the young person to work out what is expected of them. This also applies to learning tasks.

Young people with an ASD will also **need to be provided with additional structure for less formal learning activities in the class room**. This particularly applies to research activities, group work, free time, team games and creative writing activities.

When asking a young person to choose an activity or option they may find it difficult to make a free choice. **Provide additional structure by offering 2 or 3 alternatives for the young person to select from.**

## Imaginative and Creative Activities, Empathy and Predicting Others

Because of the impairments young people with ASD have, activities that rely on social imagination or require the young person to 'pretend' can be very difficult, and sometimes impossible for a young person with ASD.

Activities involving role play and sometimes symbolic representation (using models or scale drawings) can be affected. This does not mean that young people with autism spectrum disorders do not have any imagination, it just means they tend to have less ability in this area. **Choose activities that have rules or structure and do not rely on 'pretending'** to help the young person to engage and learn.

Young people with an ASD may have difficulty in creating imaginary scenarios or in making sense of hypothetical discussions. In relation to their school work they may not be able to predict how a character in a book is feeling, or what the character may do next. This is why young people with an ASD often have reading scores that are higher than their comprehension scores. **The young person with an ASD will need high levels of support in these areas, but remember to be realistic in what you expect.**

Writing in character, or from another's perspective can be particularly difficult and puts young people with an ASD at a disadvantage in tests and exams.

Difficulties with creative thinking can also have an impact on the young person's ability to develop friendships and engage with peers.

Young people with an ASD have difficulties with predicting how others feel, or how they will react. **This is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and allowances should always be made.**

The young person with ASD may not recognise when their behaviour has upset someone and have no concept that somebody else feels differently to them. Many will have difficulties in naming or explaining their own feelings and emotions. In fact, discussions around this can be very distressing for the young person who genuinely does not understand the concept of others emotions. With this in mind, **you should avoid problem solving activities that involve questioning the young person with ASD about how they think they have made others feel**, as this can lead to much anxiety and distress.

This lack of empathy, inability to 'read between the lines' or to recognise social differences may result in the young person not being able to respect social hierarchy, and may argue with a teacher as if he is a peer. The young person may also appear 'blunt' or 'rude' by saying what he is thinking, without recognising that this may offend. **It is important to recognise that these social errors are not made to deliberately offend.** This can also cause problems with friendships and peer relationships. Young people with an ASD can learn to modify this behaviour, but will need to be taught to do so. **Use rules rather than complex discussions about others feelings to help with this.**

## Sensory Issues in Autism

**The seven senses are sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, balance (vestibular) and body awareness (proprioception). In individuals with ASD, the brain sometimes processes sensory information differently to those without ASD. Everybody is different and therefore individuals will experience things differently and respond in different ways.**

Sometimes these different sensory perceptions can cause pain, distress, anxiety, fear or confusion and result in 'challenging' behaviour as the individual tries to block out what is causing the problem.

In some cases, the senses may work too well and the brain receives too much information (hypersensitive) or not well enough where the brain does not get enough information (hyposensitive). When the senses are hyper you may find that individuals with ASD rock, flap, spin, hit their ears, etc. as a way of trying to block out the overload that they cannot tolerate and to help them to calm down or relieve the pain. In cases where the senses are hypo individuals may make or seek out noises, bang objects, etc. as a way of causing more sensations and getting the senses to work better.



## Things to look out for:

### Hypersensitive

- Dislikes dark and bright lights
- Looks at minute particles, picks up smallest pieces of dust
- Covers ears
- Dislikes having their hair cut
- Resists touch
- Avoids people
- Runs from smells
- Moves away from people
- Craves certain foods
- Uses tip of tongue for tasting
- Places body in strange positions
- Turns whole body to look at something
- Difficulty walking on uneven surfaces
- Becomes anxious or distressed when feet leave the ground

### Hyposensitive

- Moves fingers or objects in front of the eyes
- Fascinated with reflections, brightly coloured objects
- Makes loud rhythmic noises
- Likes vibration
- Likes pressure, tight clothes
- Enjoys rough and tumble play
- Smells self, people and objects
- Seeks strong odours
- Mouths and licks objects
- Eats anything
- Rocks back and forth
- Lack of awareness of body position in space
- Spins, runs round and round
- Bumps into objects and people

*Taken from 'Sensory Issues in Autism' by the Autism and Practice Group, East Sussex County Council*

## Examples of sensory issues that a young person may experience include:

Some young people with ASD will demonstrate extreme reactions in relation to sensory stimuli. They may become distressed around bright lights, loud noises or strong smells. They may be 'fussy' eaters, only eating certain foods, or foods of a certain colour or texture.

In some cases, it is easy to notice the sensory stimuli that is distressing a young person. In most cases it is not, and the young person may be becoming agitated by things you do not even notice such as a flickering light, noise from a radiator or the temperature of the room.

If the young person appears distressed, you should always assess sensory stimuli in the environment and address issues that maybe the cause.

A young person with sensory difficulties may experience sensory overload as the brain tries to process everything at once without filtering out unimportant things like background noise, wallpaper, people moving about, the feel of clothes on their skin, etc. This can make it difficult for young people to focus on what someone is saying when in a busy area. When there is too much information to be processed at the same time it may be difficult for young people with ASD to break a whole picture down into meaningful units. For example, when talking to someone we will see their whole face but some people with ASD may see eyes, nose, mouth, etc. as individual things which all need to be processed separately. This makes it more complicated to process information and can lead to the young person focussing on only one aspect or not having enough memory to process everything.

**It is good practice to reduce the sensory stimuli in the school environment in order to reduce distress and increase the young person's ability to focus and concentrate.**

This includes reviewing and adapting classroom displays, storage, lighting, wall colours, seating arrangements as well as in communal areas of the school such as the corridors or school hall.

Consider offering ear defenders if noise is an issue, allow the young person to face the wall or in a less busy area of the class. If possible dim lights, and ensure that lights are not flickering. If the noise and movement of class changes are an issue, allow to move at a quieter time.

Allow the young person to leave if it gets too much, this will prevent the young person developing 'challenging behaviours' in order to gain permission to leave the class.

It is important to remember that when people are tired, unwell or stressed their tolerance levels are affected and this is also true of a young person with an ASD, and their ability to tolerate sensory stimuli.

## Repetitive Behaviours

Some young people with ASD will demonstrate extreme reactions in relation to sensory stimuli. The term repetitive behaviour is used to describe specific types of unusual or seemingly odd behaviours that are often seen in young people with ASD.

Repetitive behaviour is sometimes referred to as self-stimulating behaviour or stimming. This behaviour may involve any or all of the senses in various degrees in different individuals.

Several examples are listed below:

**Visual** - staring at lights, blinking, gazing at fingers, lining up objects

**Auditory** - tapping fingers, snapping fingers, grunting, humming

**Smell** - smelling objects, sniffing people

**Taste** - licking objects, placing objects in mouth

**Tactile** - scratching, clapping, feeling objects, nail biting, hair twisting, toe-walking

**Vestibular** - rocking, spinning, jumping, pacing

**Proprioception** - teeth grinding, pacing, jumping



Some repetitive behaviours are very obvious while others are more subtle and hard to detect such as blinking or eye rolling, tapping fingers and mild hair twisting.

We all engage in some of these behaviours occasionally, especially when we are stressed. However, a young person may engage in these activities excessively to the point that they interfere with learning or daily living activities.

It is not completely clear why repetitive behaviour almost always goes with ASD, but it is the case that young people with ASD experience a lot of chaos in their world and repetitive behaviour is a way of bringing predictability to an otherwise unpredictable and frightening world. Some of the reasons young people adopt repetitive behaviour are outlined below:

- Self regulation, which helps the young person become calm and overcome situations of stress or upset
- Demonstrates excitement
- Provides the young person with an escape route when they are overworked or wound up
- Makes the young person happy. Some young people find the behaviour pleasurable even if causing injury to themselves
- Provokes a reaction from others, which reinforces the behaviour
- A way of avoiding a task or activity

Some young people learn to monitor their behaviours so they can engage in them in 'safe' environments (at home rather than at school or out in the community).

No matter what repetitive behaviour the young person engages in, you need to understand this is something that they need to do in order to reduce anxiety. **Do not reprimand the young person for repetitive behaviours, instead note what may be causing the young person's anxiety or distress at the time they occur and seek to rectify this.** It may also be useful to let the young person know how others perceive this behaviour.

If repetitive behaviours are causing problems, or are likely to cause harm, **seek advice from an occupational therapist.**

## Special Interests

All young people have favourite things, games, films, possessions but most young people can be distracted or engaged in another activity without too much fuss. Also, most young people like interaction with other people in order to get the most enjoyment from their activities.

However, some young people with ASD seem to develop interests in an unusual, over focussed way. These interests are usually referred to as 'special interests' and to a young person with ASD they might be the most important thing in their life. Young people with ASD normally develop interests that do not involve anyone else, where they can retreat into their own world for hours and hours, whereas other young people might want to talk non-stop about their interest, which in turn makes it difficult for them to develop friendships.

These interests are different to repetitive behaviours but some of the reasons for the special interest can overlap, such as:

- Reducing anxiety
- Maintaining a sense of calm
- Gives them pleasure

- A way of avoiding another task or activity

To others, some of the interests of young people with ASD may appear pointless or boring but the young person will be experiencing something completely unique to them. For some young people their ability to focus on detail will mean that they are experiencing something completely beyond your imagination.

Special interests can be anything from weird to wonderful. Some of the more common examples of special interests in young people might include:

- Drawing
- Counting
- Collecting
- Fact based interests such as historical events
- Gaming
- Types of cars or trains
- Celebrities



As with repetitive behaviours young people can become engaged in their special interest if they are feeling anxious or scared, but the reality is that they have an uncontrollable desire to involve themselves in these things because their interest is real and their enjoyment and satisfaction is real.

Young people with an ASD will normally have one special interest at a time, but they often change as time passes.

To you the special interest may seem pointless or silly, but to the young person it might be the most precious thing in the world. Do not tease the young person about (or criticise) their interest. Learning more about the interest and talking to the young person about it might help you to engage more with the young person.

Special interests can interfere with learning or daily living activities but they can also be used to motivate and engage with a young person with an ASD. If the interest is interfering with learning or other activities, try offering specific times for them to spend on their special interests. You could look for ways to expand the young person's special interest or use the interest as a motivational tool by including it in class work or using as a reward.

Be patient and tolerant, some of the most famous autistic people have developed successful careers from their special interest.

Aside from the interest itself, many young people develop a wider set of skills as a result of pursuing that interest, these can often be utilised to encourage learning and to build the young person's self-esteem.

Some skills that may have been developed from special interests are:

- Cataloguing
- Research skills
- Use of internet
- Attention to detail
- Artistic skills
- Recognition of similarities
- Increased concentration

## Autism and Other Disorders

Some young people have other difficulties which are not directly related to their ASD, such as dyspraxia, dyslexia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It is important to seek an assessment of any other conditions, as this affects the sort of support that will best meet the young person's needs.

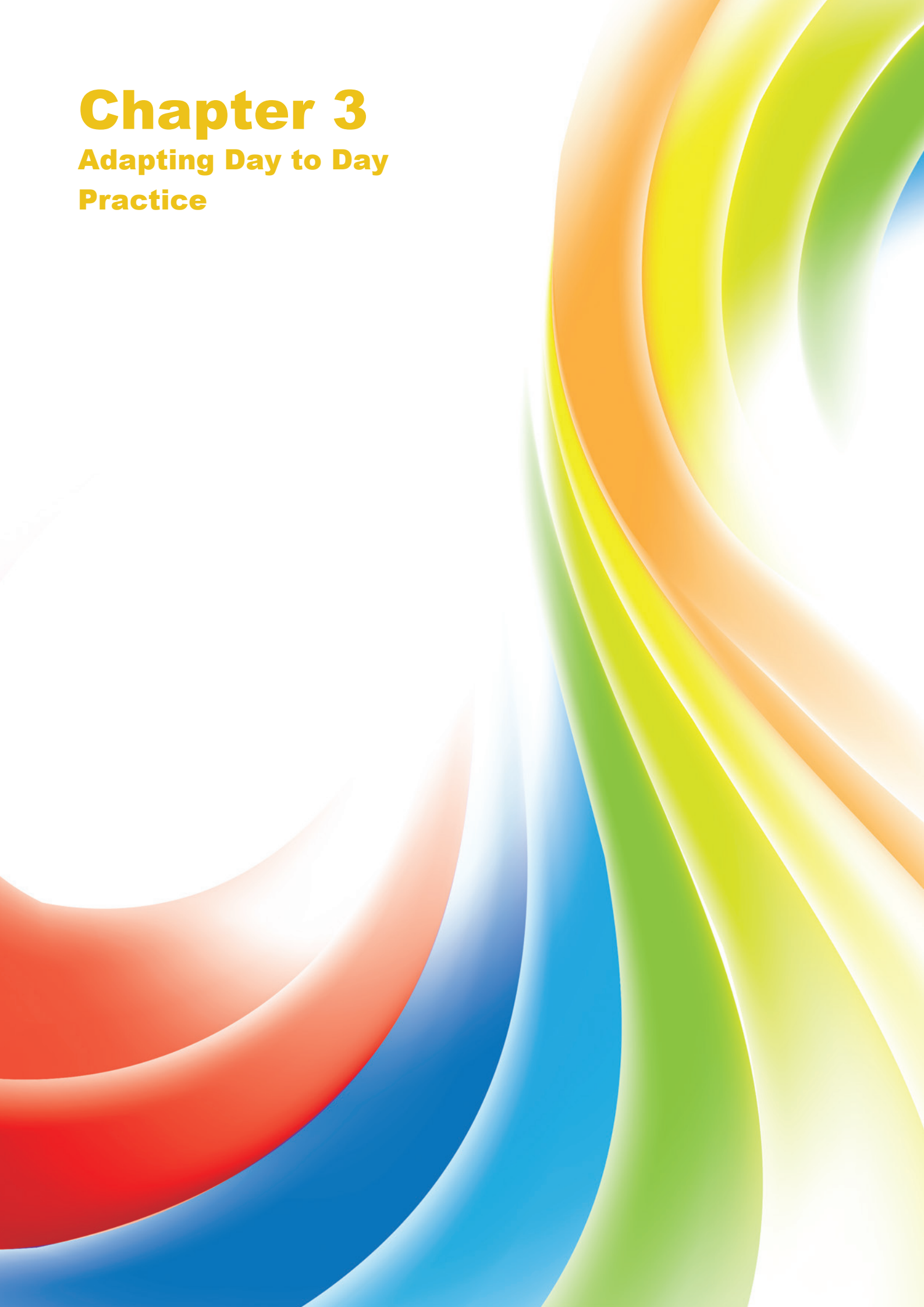
Sometimes individuals with an ASD have another disorder as well. Some conditions appear to affect individuals with ASD more frequently, although it is sometimes difficult for professionals to ascertain whether symptoms are part of the ASD or another condition. Some of these disorders are:

- Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Epilepsy
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Tourette's Syndrome

It is important to recognise that individuals with ASD are not excluded from other mental health and physiological conditions.

# Chapter 3

## Adapting Day to Day Practice



# Chapter 3

## Adapting Day to Day Practice

### A Young Person Focused Approach

A young person with an ASD deserves the same rights to grow, learn, engage and reach their potential as any other young person. Each young person will have their own unique set of strengths and difficulties, and has potential to play an active part in the school community. The way in which a young person with ASD presents and the difficulties they experience varies from one young person to another. However, **every young person with an ASD will need adjustments to be made** in order to maximize their learning potential and reduce distress. Because of the range of difficulties that pupils with an ASD experience, more structure, adapted communication and increased understanding will need to be applied across all school activities.

It is essential that each young person is considered as an individual, and that teaching practice and the school environment are tailored to meet their individual needs.

Many of the suggestions outlined in this guide are no or low cost, and **schools have a duty to make these reasonable adjustments** in line with The Equality Act and curriculum requirements.

**Key to delivering the best outcomes for young people with ASD is working with partners**, who can provide information, expertise and advice to help school to support the young person. These partners include professionals from health, social care and the voluntary sector along with parents, carers and other family members.



### Transition to Secondary School

Transition from school to school can be both exciting and daunting for any pupil. A change in environment, the geography of the school and volume of people each bring their own challenges. This can sometimes lead to a period of “melt down” as the pupil endeavours to cope, which can affect attendance levels. To support young people with an autism spectrum disorder, effective and early transition planning is essential to help them realise their potential and achieve individual goals.

For any pupil going to a new school the transition can be a daunting experience. This is especially the case when the pupil is in the small, nurturing environment of the primary school, contemplating a move to secondary school. Undoubtedly, the consequences of a poor transition will not only impact upon the pupil’s school career but also the perceptions of others

towards that pupil. Indeed, later behavioural difficulties caused by a poor transition can include detachment from the new environment. There are many reasons why this transition may prove a challenge to the pupil with an autism spectrum disorder. Here are just a few:

- Geography of the school – Finding your way around, coping with the environment, dealing with large, noisy crowds.
- Anonymity – In primary school settings most young people grow up together and understand and make allowances for certain behaviours, this may not necessarily be the case in secondary school.
- Travelling to school by bus – Allowing time to get to the bus, where to wait, times of the bus, what happens if the bus is late.
- Following a timetable – This is one of the most complicated parts of school life to get used to. In primary school the young person is taught by one teacher in the same classroom. They may be dependent on 1:1 support to help them with classroom activities.
- Added responsibility – Organise their own equipment, books, writing down homework, finding the way to lessons on time.
- Procedures for break times and lunch time and how to cope – Where to go, what to do, where to meet friends, which way to the next class.
- Social problems – Much larger number of pupils, being the youngest at the new school, opportunities to develop social interaction.

**With these things in mind, transition needs to be considered a PROCESS rather than an EVENT**, which certainly needs to begin when a pupil is in Year 5 if not sooner. If we are beginning to talk about a pupil's transition between primary and secondary towards the end of Year 6, then it is already too late. **An effective transition is about working in a person-centred way, and in partnership with the pupil, the family, key professionals and both schools involved.**

## Orientation into Secondary School

Many young people with ASD find new people and places difficult. When starting secondary school, it is important that they are supported to understand the school and become familiar with the people and patterns within it.

- Invite the young person to visit the school and be introduced to staff members on numerous occasions before they start.
- Provide written information that is written in ASD friendly language including what to wear, start and finish times of activities within the school day and conduct expectations.
- Discuss any adaptations to practice that would be useful for the young person, will also be useful to also gain this information from primary school teacher and parents.
- Ensure the young person knows who to speak to about any concerns. Be specific about the type of concern and contact person. As well as appropriate times and methods of contact.
- Provide information about breaks, lunch options and 'unwritten rules' about eating / drinking at school.
- Allocate a young person to 'buddy' the individual during their induction period.
- Make the young person aware of areas in the school that may have excessive stimuli such as noise and offer advice on minimizing these (such as avoiding the dinner hall during busy periods).



## The School Environment

**The potential impact of the environment needs be considered across the school.** Entrance areas, cloakrooms and corridors that are chaotic can make a young person with ASD agitated as soon as they enter school. **Schools should seek to decrease sensory stimuli in these areas, by using minimal, neutral wall displays and keeping areas clean and tidy.** The movement of other pupils at busy times can also be distressing. This can be minimized **by allowing the young person with ASD to utilise different entrances and allowing them to move through the school before or after the other pupils at the start and end of the school day and also in relation to lesson changes. School staff should be instructed to use a calm, consistent tone of voice** when addressing pupils in communal areas, and to avoid shouting.

**By adapting the corridor areas, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious and be more able to focus.**

**Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly.** Minimise displays in all areas and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. **Reduce lighting, and rely on natural light where possible.** Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

For those pupils who are more able to communicate their needs, a **'time out pass'** allowing them to exit from whole school activities can be very useful.



## The School Day

Young people with an ASD need support to predict and understand the structure of the school day, and this is even more essential when there are changes to the usual day including extended tutor time, school excursions, or additional assemblies. The most useful way of providing this additional structure is by using timetables. Whilst the young person will have a generic timetable for their lessons, it is important that this is checked and if necessary amended on a daily basis to take into account any changes to usual routine.

An ASD friendly phone app is available to support with planning, organising and sequencing activities. The app provides the structure to do this and can be tailored specifically to the needs of the young person. For more information and to download a free user guide visit:

[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/ASDplanner](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/ASDplanner)

Many young people with ASD will also find changes involving people difficult. Where there is a substitute teacher, the pupil should be prepared in advance and note made in their timetable. Visitors and unfamiliar people can also be anxiety provoking and where possible this should be avoided or in the very least the young person should be prepared.

## Whole School Activities

Many young people with an ASD find certain points of the school day difficult. Walking into a busy hall, lunch breaks and break times can be extremely anxiety provoking. **Allowances and adaptations will need to be made in order to decrease stress.**

Assembly time can be difficult for young people with an ASD. Different young people and adults, movement of large groups, not understanding expectations and social cues as well as sensory stimuli from the hall can quickly lead to distress. For young people who find assemblies difficult a graded approach should be taken. **The young person should not be expected to engage in the same way as peers, nor be punished for finding it difficult to manage.** If noise is an issue, **ear defenders should be provided.** If particular sections are difficult (such as singing) **the young person should be encouraged to attend for the sections that they find less distressing.** **The young person should be allowed to enter the hall before or after the other pupils,** so they are not caught up in the bustle of young people arriving. **The young person should be allowed to sit by the exit** so that they can leave if it gets too much.

For similar reasons, lunch time can also be distressing. **The young person should be allowed to attend for lunch before the other pupils arrive, or after they started to leave – when it is quieter.** **Alternative arrangements could be made, such as allowing the young person to have lunch in a quiet area.** If the young person has sensory issues around food, special dietary arrangements will need to be made with school catering.

Young people with ASD can be supported to attend school trips, by planning ahead. **Using a planner to countdown, providing pictures and explaining what will happen can help.** It is useful to take the young person's needs into consideration before planning a trip, and choosing an activity that is more suitable where possible.

Additional whole school activities, especially around Christmas can mean a distressing period for the young person with an ASD. Changes to the usual routine can cause anxiety and confusion.

**The young person with ASD should be encouraged, but not forced, to take part in celebrations such as school concerts or presentations.** Should they express a desire to be involved in such celebrations, but are concerned that they will not cope, they could be allocated a smaller role that they only have to attend part of the practice time. For young people who want to be involved but do not want to perform in the concert, alternative duties could be allocated such as stage hand, or making tickets so that the young person still feels a part of the activity.

## Social Skills and Relationships

Most of us learn how to interact with others and initiate and maintain relationships as we grow up. Some elements are learned through being taught by others, for example, eating with a knife and fork; whereas some just appear to come naturally as we develop, for example, maintaining space between us and the people we are talking to. Many of our social behaviours develop from our thoughts about how we expect others to interact with us, for example, we say nice things to people because we like it when people say nice things to us.

# Autism: A Guide for Mainstream Secondary Schools

Young people with an ASD do not develop these skills in the same way, and frequently struggle to understand social rules and the nuances of social interaction. This has additional complications in the teenage years, as young people generally learn to behave in different ways when with their peers to when in the company of adults.

Impairments in social imagination often mean that someone with an ASD struggles to predict how others think or feel, for example, they may point out that someone is overweight without realising that this can cause offence.

Issues with interpreting social communication may mean that they miss cues, for example, when somebody is annoyed or bored. Most people would assume that someone is bored if they are yawning and checking their watch. Someone with an ASD may not notice this, and will keep talking about the same subject, which can lead to people avoiding them in the future.

As with other impairments, the level of social skills varies from one person to another, — but impairments have a significant impact on the ability to make and maintain friendships.

This is a significant issue for young people in secondary school, who frequently find it difficult to develop and maintain friendships, recognise what is expected of them and to join in the conversations of their peers.

Difficulties in forming and maintaining friendships can lead to increasing social isolation, make trips and groups activities unpleasant and in turn can increase anxiety and reluctance to attend school.

Many young people with ASD find it easier to engage in conversations around facts and areas of interest rather than conversations with a pure social purpose. Therefore, clubs and after school activities can be a useful way of engaging with others. Social skills training maybe useful, there are a range of programmes available that may help the young person to understand social conventions and recognise others have different opinions to their own. Pairing the young person with a 'buddy' may also be useful, especially if that young person has been taught about ASD.

In general increasing awareness of ASD amongst peers can help them to understand and to communicate more effectively, as well as helping them to understand the many positive characteristics of those with the condition.

Some young people with ASD find the pressure of consciously adapting their interaction to meet social expectations exhausting. In this case, it is beneficial to allow the young person some quiet space during break times, such as in the library or an empty classroom.



## Bullying

Due to impairments with social interaction and communication young people with ASD are vulnerable to bullying.

Impairments in verbal communication mean that young people with ASD struggle to identify when someone is being friendly, sarcastic, making fun of them or trying to upset them, this can potentially lead to their peer's intentions being misread and the young person not realising that they are being bullied.

Intentions can also be misread due to impairments in using and understanding non verbal communication, it is difficult for a young person to interpret body language or facial expression which can lead to signs of aggression being missed.

Young people with ASD will often have a strong adherence to rules which can result in them being seen as 'teacher's pet', this is particularly difficult for the young person as they will not understand why their peers may not have the same adherence to rules, or are bullying them for it.

As other peers may not understand the behaviour of a young person with ASD, particularly as young people with ASD may have interests that are unusual to others, the young person becomes a target for bullying. As young people with ASD often struggle in group situations and so may prefer to be alone, this again can make them a target for bullying.

Young people with an ASD may spend lots of time online where they may find less pressure to follow social rules and expectations and may be able to socialise more easily. Signs of online bullying may be more difficult to recognise for a young person with an ASD which means they may be more susceptible to cyber bullying.

Although young people with ASD may be vulnerable, there are measures that can be put in place to help reduce the likelihood of bullying:

- Taking a whole school approach to improve awareness and understanding of ASD can help as a preventative measure of bullying. By increasing understanding of ASD and where possible adapting practice, anxiety and difficulties with communicating and interacting for young people with ASD can be reduced.
- Providing clear instructions on where to go and who to talk to if they feel uncomfortable can help to alleviate anxiety and bullying to those young people with ASD.
- Providing an area away from other pupils during break and lunch time may also help some young people with ASD to avoid challenging situations.
- In order for a young person to report that they are being bullied, they need to identify behaviours which could be bullying. Provide a list of behaviours which could be attributed to bullying to the young person. Identifying bullying at an early stage will make them less vulnerable to their peers and will enable them to report any issues experienced and seek help before things escalate.
- Difficulties in communication can make it difficult for a young person to discuss issues of bullying. Having an open door policy for parents or carers to speak to staff members about their concerns on behalf of or alongside the young person can take pressure away from the young person to appropriately communicate, interact and meet social expectations. Liaising with parents or carers may allow concerns to be better communicated and understood.
- Keep an open mind, do not dismiss reports of bullying due to poor recollection or lack of evidence.
- If a young person is being bullied, seek further support as per school policy.

## Sex and Relationships Education

The needs of learners with an ASD should be taken into account within the schools SRE policy. Within this schools should consider:

- Use of language - ensuring that ambiguous language such as 'making love' are not used when teaching
- Clear rules are set – specifying when and where it is and isn't appropriate to touch others or be touched.
- Focus on feelings is minimised – as individuals often find this confusing and therefore anxiety provoking.
- Age appropriateness – and update as the young person grows (e.g. hugging a 12-year-old is appropriate when you are 12 but not when you are 18).
- The difficulties that young people with ASD have in relating information to different situations – and consider whether case studies, DVDs and youth theatre are suitable learning methods.
- That young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination – and will struggle with role play and discussion around hypothetical situations.
- Teaching more general social skills as young people with ASD are often socially vulnerable.

## Home to School Transition

Many young people with ASD, manage differently at home and school. For some the structure of the school day helps them to cope better than the unstructured time at home. For others being able to access special interests and quieter areas more easily means that they manage better at home than at school.

Young people with an ASD often find the transition between school and home difficult. This is often escalated on return from school holidays or following weekends or inset days. **A timetable used at home and school can help to alleviate anxiety.**

Homework can sometimes confuse the young person, as school and home are blurred. It may help to **allow time in school to complete this**. Be flexible and allow for the young person's difficulties and recognise that parents also find this difficult too.

## Working with Parents and Carers

**Working in partnership with parents and carers is an essential component of a young person centred approach.** Young people with ASD work better with consistency and utilising the same approaches in school and at home is very beneficial.

Issues from school can spill over into home life and vice versa so **it is vital to ensure there is open communication** between the two. **A home - school diary can be used to share relevant information on a daily basis.**

Parents and carers of young people with ASD experience higher levels of stress. Caring for a young person with ASD can limit activities, impact on sleep and decrease parental self-esteem. Many parents and carers are not provided with training around ASD. A guide for parents and carers can be accessed at

<http://asinfowales.co.uk/resource/Autism-English-download.pdf>

Many parents and carers find liaising with school difficult. They sometimes feel as if staff are judging them, especially when the young person seems to cope better at school than at home. Sometimes parents and carers feel that schools are not being honest, especially when only positive aspects of the young person's work and behaviours are conveyed to them in school reports, at parents evening and in school diaries.

**Developing a transparent relationship with parents and carers can be useful in earning their trust and building rapport. Providing accurate feedback is good starting point for this.**

## Moving On

Transition to further and higher education can again be both exciting and daunting for any pupil. A new environment, new people and uncertainty about what to expect can each bring their own challenges. This can sometimes lead to a breakdown in placement if transition is not managed effectively. To support young people with an autism spectrum disorder, effective and early transition planning is essential to help them realise their potential and achieve individual goals. This should be undertaken in partnership with wider agencies who can offer support in adulthood.

Preparing for employment can also be fraught with difficulties for the young person with ASD who will struggle to understand the language and processes used for searching and applying for work alongside the skillset needed to sustain employment.

## Working with Autism Scheme and Resources

Our Working with Autism scheme is aimed at those supporting young people to seek and obtain employment. The scheme includes an information film and certification scheme for professionals, as well as a range of tools to support young people with their job search. The tools include:

- **A skills dictionary and personal skills list builder**  
A useful tool that can be used to search the meaning of common figurative language phrases used within job adverts and descriptions.
- **Searching for work tool**  
To help individuals with ASD understand and engage in the work application process. This tool provides a structured approach to searching and applying for work. After entering the young person's information and preferences there is the option of downloading lists of essential job criteria and preferences, skills and knowledge and experience which can then be used to help with job searches and applications. This tool interacts with the CV builder tool, meaning that any information entered will also be used to populate the young person's CV. Within this tool, you will also find helpful information in relation to all aspects of a job search.
- **An ASD friendly CV builder**  
A tool which interacts with the personal skills builder and searching for work tool, and can either be populated from information entered within these tools or by direct information entry. After entering the information requested, the tool will generate the CV in a Microsoft Word format which can then be printed or saved.
- **Working with Autism phone app**  
An app that cross references a young person's saved personal job preferences, against those listed within a job description to identify suitability. Also assists by setting reminders in preparation for an interview.

You can access the scheme and resources at:  
[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/working-with-autism](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/working-with-autism)

# Chapter 4

## Subject Specific Advice



# Chapter 4

## Subject Specific Advice

### Welsh

#### The Classroom Environment

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By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

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Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.



## Setting Tasks

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Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

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In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be specific in stating what is expected of them, setting clear, measurable end points. Instead of using time (e.g. “use the last 15 minutes to practice some more problems”) or product (e.g. “write about your weekend”) as an indication of completion; use specific expectations such as “complete the answers to 3 more problems”, or “write 12 more sentences”.

Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for

this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as ‘building a case for’ and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as ‘use varied and appropriate language’.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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### Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In English this will impact on the young person’s ability to:

- Match their talk to different contexts in oracy
- Engage the interest of the listener and have awareness of their needs in oracy
- Respond appropriately to what others say in oracy
- Formulate appropriate responses to different text in reading
- Communicate comparisons between texts in reading
- Communicate meaning to different audiences when writing
- Adapt and vary tone of voice in oracy
- Integrate gestures, facial expressions, body language and eye contact with verbal communication in oracy tasks

Because of the issues with understanding and use of language, many will struggle with personification, simile and metaphor. Providing a list of a few core phrases, along with explanations can help the young person introduce these into their work.

Additional structure and clear rules with regard to adapting work for different audiences will need to be provided, be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these. As appropriate adaptations to body language, facial expression and tone of voice may not develop naturally, additional structure in terms of specifying how to adapt these may help the young person with oracy tasks. Suggesting the young person looks at other areas of the audience's faces may help them to mask problems with eye contact.

Repeated practice with additional structured rules will help the young person to respond appropriately to the needs of different audiences, how to compare texts and how to engage better with the listener or reader.

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It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.

## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In English this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Identify different layers of text in reading
- Predict intention of characters in reading
- Choose imaginative vocabulary in writing
- Undertake creative writing tasks
- Develop characters and settings when writing
- Understand or empathise with fictional characters and texts

The young person will need to be provided with additional structure to complete activities such as comprehension, empathic or creative writing.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

For comprehension activities, try supporting the young person to elicit a list of key points from the text and then base answers on these.

Young people with ASD will struggle to 'read between the lines', and therefore may not have the same level of understanding around text as another pupil.

Try providing additional information such as descriptions of characters feelings as a starting point. The amount of information provided can be decreased as the young person develops skills.

Figurative language will need to be explained, in order for the young person to fully understand the text.

Difficulties with social interaction and imagination mean that young people with autism will struggle to write in the first person as a character. And they may also struggle with creative

writing especially when imagination is needed.

If being asked to pretend to be somebody else writing the text (such as soldier in WW1) the young person could be provided with a list of key facts and encouraged to write these in the first person. They could then be supported to change from the first person in another session, continuing to build on their work.

Creative writing can be supported by increasing structure also. A familiar story could be used as a basis, and the young person supported to rewrite in stages, changing characters, situations and outcomes as they progress.

If imagining characters and their actions is the issue, a story could be 'acted out' and then the young person could be supported to write up the story.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance.

As when supporting other changes, prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.

## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation summarising chapter 3', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behaviour.

## Tests and Exams

Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD for many reasons.

For many young people with an ASD easy read or large print versions of test papers can be helpful. These often have larger text and amended content which can make them easier to access.

As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

Many young people fear failure in tests because they are unclear of what is expected of them or the impact of not doing well. By explaining the purpose of tests and implications of the test results, the young person will experience less worry about them.

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Being asked to write from another's perspective, interpret how characters are feeling or undertaking comprehension activities will be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## English

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As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In maths this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Talk about and explain their work
- Justify their generalisations, arguments or solutions to others

Because of the issues with understand and use of language many will struggle to verbally explain their work to others.

Repeated practice with additional structured rules will help the young person learn appropriate ways of discussing their work with others.

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## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In maths this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Develop their own strategies for solving problems
- Search for a solution by trying out ideas of their own
- Check whether their results are sensible in the context of the problem
- Relate to written numeracy problems
- Use trial-and-improvement methods involving approximating and ordering
- Reflecting on their own lines of enquiry
- Prioritise and organise steps needed to complete a task

The young person will need to be provided with additional structure to complete activities that require them to generate creative ideas and hypothesise.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful, including working with the pupil to develop lists of options, providing lists or flowcharts to help direct them.

Many young people with ASD find it difficult to plan ahead and sequence activities. Providing additional support in the form of structured lists or templates can help them to manage this. Some individuals with ASD will have difficulty in translating numeracy problems into mathematical terms. This is particularly significant when the problem is long and contains lots of irrelevant information. Providing advice about identifying key terms and their meaning along with additional practice can help develop this skill.

Often young people find it difficult to 'predict' and this can have an impact on being able to check whether results are viable in relation to the context of the problem.

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## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for working with these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.

## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a data table', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behavior.

## Tests and Exams

Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD, for many reasons.

For many young people with an ASD easy read or large print versions of test papers can be helpful. These often have larger text and amended content which can make them easier to access.

As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

Many young people fear failure in tests because they are unclear of what is expected of them or the impact of not doing well. By explaining the purpose of tests and implications of the test results, the young person will experience less worry about them.

Many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the activity so running out of time during a test can be an issue. Supporting the young person to work out how much time to spend on each section of the test in advance may help.

Solving complex written problems or work with diagrams will prove difficult for young people with ASD. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Welsh Second Language The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is often a source of distraction or distress for pupils with an ASD. Bright lights, buzzing noises from classroom equipment, visually stimulating displays or the movements of a large number of young people through an area can be very difficult for a young person with an ASD.

By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.



## Setting Tasks

Many young people with an ASD will struggle to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. This may include taking notes whilst listening or listening to instructions whilst engaged in another activity. The way in which class tasks are set will need to be adapted, taking this into account.

Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

Many young people with ASD lack motivation to learn when they are unclear about the point or purpose of the activity. Ensure the purpose of the activity is conveyed to the young person, especially when it forms part of a larger programme of work. Repeating the same task over again is often not useful for a young person with ASD.

In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'fairly sound grasp' or 'has a Welsh flavour' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'work is effectively presented'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again

additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In Welsh this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Adapt intonation and vary vocabulary and patterns when speaking
- To talk about experiences
- To initiate and engage in conversation
- Asking appropriate questions and make relevant comments in response to others
- Take account of others views
- Amend styles for different audiences and purposes
- Integrate gestures, facial expressions, body language and eye contact with verbal communication in oracy tasks

Because of the issues with understanding and use of language, many will struggle with personification, simile and metaphor. Providing a list of a few core phrases, along with explanations can help the young person introduce these into their work.

Many individuals with ASD will struggle to engage in lengthy conversations in their first language, especially in relation to providing extended responses and appropriate questions. It may therefore be useful to practice these in first language before practicing in Welsh.

Additional structure and clear rules with regard to adapting work for different audiences will need to be provided, be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these. As appropriate adaptations to body language, facial expression and tone of voice may not develop naturally, additional structure in terms of specifying how to adapt these may help the young person with oracy tasks. Suggesting the young person looks at other areas of the audience's faces may help them to mask problems with eye contact.

Repeated practice with additional structured rules will help the young person to respond appropriately to the needs of different audiences, how to compare texts and how to engage better with the listener or reader.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.

For examples of how to provide additional structure, visit:

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## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In Welsh this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Identify different layers of text in reading
- Predict intention of characters in reading
- Choose imaginative vocabulary in writing
- Undertake creative writing tasks
- Develop characters and settings when writing
- Understand or empathise with fictional characters and texts

The young person will need to be provided with additional structure to complete activities such as comprehension, empathic or creative writing.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

For comprehension activities, try supporting the young person to elicit a list of key points from the text and then base answers on these.

Young people with ASD will struggle to 'read between the lines', and therefore may not have the same level of understanding around text as another pupil.

Try providing additional information such as descriptions of characters' feelings as a starting point. The amount of information provided can be decreased as the young person develops skills.

Figurative language will need to be explained, in order for the young person to fully understand the text.

Difficulties with social interaction and imagination mean that young people with autism will struggle to write in the first person as a character. And they may also struggle with creative writing especially when imagination is needed.

If being asked to pretend to be somebody else writing the text (such as someone writing a postcard from holidays) the young person could be provided with a list of key facts and encouraged to write these in the first person. They could then be supported to change from the first person in another session, continuing to build on their work.

Creative writing can be supported by increasing structure also. A familiar story could be used as a basis, and the young person supported to rewrite in stages, changing characters, situations and outcomes as they progress.

If imagining characters and their actions is the issue, a story could be 'acted out' and then the young person could be supported to write up the story.

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It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.



## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult to understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behavior.

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## Tests and Exams

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As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

Many young people fear failure in tests because they are unclear of what is expected of them or the impact of not doing well. By explaining the purpose of tests and implications of the test results, the young person will experience less worry about them.

Many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the activity so running out of time during a test can be an issue. Supporting the young person to work out how much time to spend on each section of the test in advance may help.

Being asked to write from another's perspective, interpret how characters are feeling or undertaking comprehension activities will be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Science

### The Classroom Environment

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Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

## Setting Tasks

Many young people with an ASD will struggle to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. This may include taking notes whilst listening or listening to instructions whilst engaged in another activity. The way in which class tasks are set will need to be adapted, taking this into account.

Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

Many young people with ASD lack motivation to learn when they are unclear about the point or purpose of the activity. Ensure the purpose of the activity is conveyed to the young person, especially when it forms part of a larger programme of work.

In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be specific in stating what is expected of them, setting clear, measurable end points. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'weighing up pros and cons' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'a variety of evidence'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD

to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In science this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Listen and respond to scientific ideas and react appropriately.
- Organise and communicate their findings in a variety of ways fit for purpose and audience.
- Talk about the steps needed to carry out their enquiries and what is needed to be successful

Because of the issues with understanding and use of language, many will struggle with personification, simile and metaphor. Providing a list of a few core phrases, along with explanations can help the young person understand and use key phrases.

Repeated practice with additional structured rules will help the young person learn appropriate ways of discussing their work with others.

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## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In science this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Suggest where to find evidence, information and ideas
- Plan the method to be used for their enquiries
- Think about how the methods could be improved
- Link learning to unfamiliar situations
- Systematically plan their enquiries
- Make predictions
- Apply abstract ideas

The young person will need to be provided with additional structure to complete activities that require them to generate creative ideas and hypothesise.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful, including working with the pupil to develop lists of options, providing lists or flowcharts to help direct them.

Many young people with ASD find it difficult to plan ahead and sequence activities. Providing additional support in the form of structured lists or templates can help them to manage this.

Some individuals with autism will have difficulty in translating abstract ideas into real terms. Providing advice about identifying key terms and their meaning along with additional practice can help develop this skill.

Often young people find it difficult to 'predict' and this can have an impact on being able to check whether results are viable in relation to the context of the problem.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

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In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a data table', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can

undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Working with unfamiliar or abstract problems or work with diagrams will prove difficult for young people with ASD. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## PE

### Setting Tasks

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Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support- especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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### Learning Objectives

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Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

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Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

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## Impact of ASD

Young people with ASD may find the social rules and planning skills needed to be able to prepare for PE lessons difficult. They may struggle to understand how to conduct themselves in the changing room. They may have difficulty with changing clothes either due to coordination difficulties or difficulties planning and managing the process of this. These young people will need clear rules about appropriate behaviour in order to prevent difficulties with the peer group and may need additional time and support with changing into and out of their PE kit.

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In PE this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Work with a partner
- Improve what they do through watching others
- Ask relevant questions in order to extend and improve performance.
- Communicate different ideas and emotions in response to different stimuli, and repeat simple movement patterns in creative activities.
- Understand the purpose of team games
- Demonstrate the predictive skills to be able to adapt their actions within a team.
- Make judgements about their own and others' performance
- Cooperate with others and observe the conventions of fair play, equality and appropriate conduct.

- Communicate ideas and information clearly and respond aptly to others' contributions
- Apply skills in new situations
- Vary their presentations for different audiences and purposes

Young people with ASD have difficulties with social interaction. They often struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them alongside their views. They may have difficulty in understanding and accepting that others have different views and opinions to their own and to take these into account.

Young people with ASD have difficulties in interacting with and understanding others. They may therefore struggle to 'guess' the feelings of and empathise with others. This includes recognising and meeting the needs of an audience. Options and suggestions will be useful. Be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these.

Young people with ASD struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them. They therefore may find it difficult to discuss what they like or dislike, or at least why. For the same reason, they may find it difficult to evaluate others work and learn from that. Additional support and suggestions will be needed for this.

Due to difficulties with social interaction, taking turns, working in groups and working with a partner may be difficult.

In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to choreograph and perform a dance', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

Many young people will not understand the purpose of team games, and frequently lack the predictive skills to be able to adapt their actions within a team. Provide alternative individual activities or team games in which the young person is reliant mainly on self-e.g. rounders.

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It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.



## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change.

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance. They may not naturally cope well with unfamiliar topics.

## Tests, Practical's and Exams

Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD, for many reasons.

For many young people with an ASD easy read or large print versions of test papers can be helpful. These often have larger text and amended content which can make them easier to access.

As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

Many young people fear failure in tests because they are unclear of what is expected of them or the impact of not doing well. By explaining the purpose of tests and implications of the test results, the young person will experience less worry about them.

Many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the activity so running of time during a test can be an issue. Supporting the young person to work out how much time to spend on each section of the test in advance may help.

Being asked to write about hypothetical scenarios, work with others or indeed make sense of hypothetical situations may be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Modern Foreign Languages

### The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is often a source of distraction or distress for pupils with an ASD. Bright lights, buzzing noises from classroom equipment, visually stimulating displays or the movements of a large number of young people through an area can be very difficult for a young person with an ASD.

By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

## Setting Tasks

Many young people with an ASD will struggle to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. This may include taking notes whilst listening or listening to instructions whilst engaged in another activity. The way in which class tasks are set will need to be adapted, taking this into account.

Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific.

Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

For examples of how to provide additional structure, visit:

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## Learning Objectives

Many young people with ASD lack motivation to learn when they are unclear about the point or purpose of the activity. Ensure the purpose of the activity is conveyed to the young person, especially when it forms part of a larger programme of work.

In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'draw on a variety of...' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'show some consistency'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD



to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In modern foreign languages this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Respond appropriately to questions.
- Take part in conversations, in particular providing extended responses
- Adapt presentation style to meet needs of audience
- Use language to deal with unprepared situations.
- Adapt intonation.
- Adapt presentation style to meet needs of audience
- Discuss ideas
- Use complex language

Because of the issues with understanding and use of language, many will struggle with personification, simile and metaphor. Providing a list of a few core phrases, along with (first language) explanations can help the young person introduce these into their work.

Many individuals with ASD will struggle to engage in lengthy conversations in their first language, especially in relation to providing extended responses and appropriate questions. It may therefore be useful to practice these in first language before practicing in additional languages.

Additional structure and clear rules with regard to adapting work for different audiences will need to be provided, be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these. As appropriate adaptations to body language, facial expression and tone of voice may not develop naturally, additional structure in terms of specifying how to adapt these may help the young person with oracy tasks. Suggesting the young person looks at other areas of the audience's faces may help them to mask problems with eye contact.

Repeated practice with additional structured rules will help the young person to respond appropriately to the needs of different audiences, how to compare texts and how to engage better with the listener or reader.

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It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.

## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In modern foreign languages this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Use context to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words
- Use skimming or scanning to locate information
- Use what they read to enhance their own productive language.
- Produce texts covering imaginative contexts.

The young person will need to be provided with additional structure to complete activities such as comprehension, empathic or creative writing.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

For comprehension activities, try supporting the young person to elicit a list of key points from the text and then base answers on these.

Many individuals with ASD find it difficult to use context to 'guess' the meaning of unfamiliar words. They will likely need prompting and practice with this.

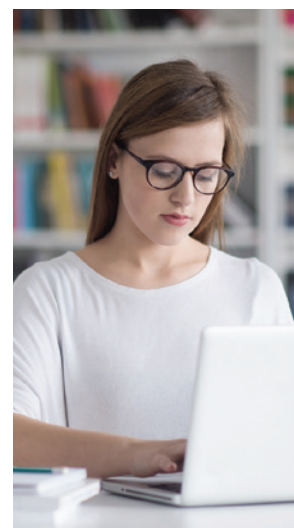
Creative writing can be supported by increasing structure also. A familiar story could be used as a basis, and the young person supported to rewrite in stages, changing characters, situations and outcomes as they progress.

There may be issues with the young person skimming or scanning text for information if rules are not clearly set in the first place. Take time to explain what skimming and scanning is, practice with word searches so that the young person understands they are not required to read all the text.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance. They may not naturally cope well with unfamiliar topics.



## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behavior.

## Tests and Exams

**Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD, for many reasons.**

For many young people with an ASD easy read or large print versions of test papers can be helpful. These often have larger text and amended content which can make them easier to access.

As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

Many young people fear failure in tests because they are unclear of what is expected of them or the impact of not doing well. By explaining the purpose of tests and implications of the test results, the young person will experience less worry about them.

Many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the activity so running of time during a test can be an issue. Supporting the young person to work out how much time to spend on each section of the test in advance may help.

Being asked to write from another's perspective, interpret how characters are feeling or undertaking comprehension activities will be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Music

### The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is often a source of distraction or distress for pupils with an ASD. Bright lights, buzzing noises from classroom equipment, visually stimulating displays or the movements of a large number of young people through an area can be very difficult for a young person with an ASD.

By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Of course others practicing is a significant sensory issue. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

## Setting Tasks

Many young people with an ASD will struggle to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. This may include taking notes whilst listening or listening to instructions whilst engaged in another activity. The way in which class tasks are set will need to be adapted, taking this into account.

Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

Many young people with ASD lack motivation to learn when they are unclear about the point or purpose of the activity. Ensure the purpose of the activity is conveyed to the young person, especially when it forms part of a larger programme of work.

In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'pupils sing and play' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'use simple terms'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD

to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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### Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In Music this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Demonstrate responsiveness to others
- Work with others to create compositions
- Act as member of a group
- Empathise with other performers

Young people with ASD have difficulties in interacting with and understanding others. They may therefore struggle to 'guess' the feelings of and empathise with others. Options and suggestions will be useful. Be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these.

Young people with ASD struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them. They therefore may find it difficult to discuss what they like or dislike, or at least why. Additional support and suggestions will be needed for this.

Due to difficulties with social interaction, taking turns, working in groups and working with a partner may be difficult.

In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to

understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create and perform a short piece of music', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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## Sensory Issues

Young people with ASD often have unusual sensory responses this will impact on the young person's interpretation and use of the basic sensory language of music. Loud noises may also cause distress.



## Restricted Interests, repetitive behaviours and dislike of change

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## Art and Design

### The Classroom Environment

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Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In art and design this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Describe what they feel and think about them about their own, and others, work
- Speculate and communicate how ideas and feelings may be interpreted differently

Young people with ASD have difficulties in interacting with and understanding others. They may therefore struggle to 'guess' the feelings of others. Options and suggestions will be useful. Be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these.

Young people with ASD struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them and use them to formulate their own views also. They therefore may find it difficult to discuss what they like or dislike, or at least why. Additional support and suggestions will be needed for this.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.

## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In art and design this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Record their ideas and feelings through drawing imagination.
- Experiment imaginatively begin to indicate an awareness of, and imaginative response to the work of artists, craft workers and designers.

Free choice and generating creative ideas may be difficult for young people with ASD, and you can support this by offering a limited number of choices or examples.

Due to issues with social imagination, young people with ASD find it difficult to work with hypothetical situations such as predicting how others may have been feeling or the message they were sharing. Providing extra support, visual cues in the format of lists and flow charts and providing examples can help.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.



## Sensory Issues

Young people with ASD often have unusual sensory responses this will impact on the young person's interpretation and use of the basic visual, tactile and sensory language of art, craft and design.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change.

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.

## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behavior.

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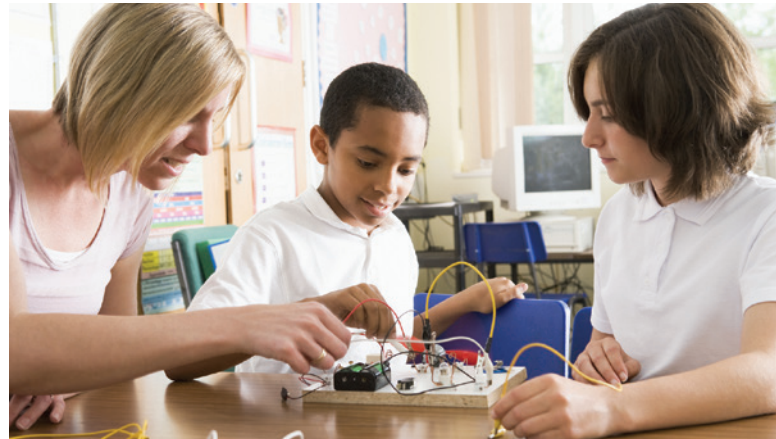
Being asked to create a plan, generate an idea or respond to a hypothetical need may be difficult. By practicing similar examples in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Design and Technology

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By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

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Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

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In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'draw on knowledge' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'begin to consider'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD



to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In Design and Technology this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Talk about what they like or dislike
- Recognise that users have views and preferences considering the user, health and safety and sustainability.
- Understand figurative language
- Follow verbal instructions
- Consider user needs, when making decisions about their products

Young people with ASD have difficulties in interacting with and understanding others. They may therefore struggle to 'guess' the needs of the user and make choices to fit the needs of the user. Additional structure and clear rules with regard to adapting work for different users will need to be provided, be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these.

Repeated practice will help the young person to respond appropriately to the needs of different users and how to engage better with the audience.

Young people with ASD struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them and use them to formulate their own views also. They therefore may find it difficult to discuss what they like or dislike, or at least why. Additional support and suggestions will be needed for this.

Following complex verbal instructions maybe difficult, ensure these are presented in visual format. Also ensure figurative language within instructions and recipes is clearly explained.

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It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.

## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In Design and Technology this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Suggest ideas for making things
- Generate a number of imaginative ideas for products
- Plan their design and approach
- Demonstrate some elements of creativity

Free choice and generating creative ideas may be difficult for young people with ASD, and you can support this by offering a limited number of choices or examples.

Due to issues with social imagination, young people with ASD find it difficult to work with hypothetical situations such as predicting need and potential solutions. Try providing additional supports such as visual cues in the format of lists and flow charts. You could also provide examples for the young person to follow.

Many also find planning difficult, and struggle to sequence activities. Others may become over focused on planning to the smallest detail and lose focus on the 'big picture'. Try using templates and providing examples to help the young person develop skills in planning.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.

## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional

support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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Group or whole class reward systems (or consequences) are not suitable for a young person with an ASD. They can cause confusion, and they often lack the social motivation needed for such approaches to work. Use individual approaches to promote and manage behavior.

## Tests and Exams

Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD, for many reasons.

For many young people with an ASD easy read or large print versions of test papers can be helpful. These often have larger text and amended content which can make them easier to access.

As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

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## Geography

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### Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In Design and Technology this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Express their views
- Recognise that people have different views
- Take account of other people's views and opinions
- Suggest relevant questions

Young people with ASD have difficulties with social interaction. They often struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them alongside their views. They may have difficulty in understanding and accepting that others have different views and opinions to their own and to take these into account.

Helping the young person to understand that others have different likes, dislikes and experiences can be a good starting point to developing an understanding that others also have different views and opinions. This area is a subject of some social skills training programmes which may be of benefit to the young person.

The young person may find it difficult to work out the 'appropriateness' of questions and will need additional support and structure with this. Using template styles maybe helpful.

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## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In geography this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Organise information
- Follow directions
- Draw maps
- Suggest how people's actions can improve or damage the environment.
- Develop sequences
- Select their own methods for investigations

Young people with ASD find it difficult to follow lengthy verbal instructions and directions. It will help them if they are written down in a clear manner. They may also find it difficult to 'sequence' steps and activities and again you will need to provide additional structure and tools for this. Problems with creative imagination may lead to difficulties with map drawing, and additional support and templates will need to be provided.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

Many individuals with ASD find it difficult to use context to 'guess' the meaning of unfamiliar words. They will likely need prompting and practice with this. Figurative language will need to be explained, in order for the young person to fully understand the text.

Many young people with ASD will have difficulties in 'guessing' outcomes and working with hypothetical scenarios. This will impact on the young person's ability to generate creative ideas about peoples impact on the environment. Ensure the individual has a sound knowledge of the subject area and range of examples to choose from. It may be useful to support the individual to guess impact of their own actions and then develop this further to take into account others actions.

Free choice may also be difficult for young people with ASD, and you can support this by offering a limited number of choices.

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## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

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Being asked to write about hypothetical scenarios, the impact of others or indeed make sense of drawings and maps may prove difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.



## History

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- Be aware of the distinction between present and past
- Reach and reflect on their own substantiated conclusions
- Produce well-structured narratives, descriptions and explanations

Young people with ASD have difficulties with social interaction. They often struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them alongside their views. They may have difficulty in understanding and accepting that others have different views and opinions to their own and to take these into account.

Some young people may find it difficult to understand and process hypothetical situations and events that are not within their own experience. They may find it difficult to differentiate between events that are current but happening outside of their own experiences and those which are historical. Utilising visual cues such as chronology lines can help greatly with this. They may also find it difficult to apply chronological and general sequencing to their work, structure templates and flow charts can help with this.

Many young people with ASD find fiction difficult, but are very interested in facts and so for those history is very enjoyable.

## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In history this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Recognise that there are reasons why people in the past acted as they did
- Recognising there are different ways of representing the past
- Select and combine information from historical sources to support an historical enquiry

Problems with creative imagination may lead to difficulties with map drawing, and additional support and templates will need to be provided.

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

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## Tests and Exams

Tests can cause much anxiety for a young person with ASD, for many reasons.

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Being asked to write about hypothetical scenarios, the impact of others or indeed make sense of hypothetical situations may be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## ICT

### The Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is often a source of distraction or distress for pupils with an ASD. Bright lights, buzzing noises from classroom equipment, visually stimulating displays or the movements of a large number of young people through an area can be very difficult for a young person with an ASD.

By adapting the classroom, or making allowances for the young person with an ASD, the young person will feel less anxious, be less likely to become overstimulated and will be more likely to behave appropriately and concentrate more in class.



Developing a sensory neutral environment will help greatly. Minimize class displays and where unavoidable choose neutral or pastel shades rather than bold colours. Place items on the wall in an orderly manner, lining them up vertically or horizontally rather than placing them in an ad hoc manner. Avoid placing displays near to the whiteboard, as these can often be distracting for a young person with an ASD.

Fluorescent lighting can be a problem for many young people with an ASD, especially if noisy or flickering. Reduce classroom lighting, and rely on natural light where possible. Ensure flickering or buzzing lights are fixed as soon as possible.

Any background noise is very distracting for a pupil with an ASD. This may be chatter from other pupils or noise from equipment or other areas that you hardly notice yourself. Ear defenders can be very useful when this is the case, as they will decrease the background noise whilst enabling the pupil to focus on your interactions.

Of course, movement, noise or just the presence of other young people, can often be enough to effect concentration or to increase anxiety for a pupil with ASD. At times where the pupil is expected to undertake work independently, it can be really useful to place a desk against a wall. By doing this, the pupil will be less likely to be impacted by the other young people in the class, and more able to focus on concentrating on the task in hand.

Some young people may need to take regular breaks from the class in order to cope with sensory stimuli. By allowing the pupil to take a break in a quieter area when necessary you will enable them to reduce their anxiety and stress to be better able to cope with periods in the classroom. Young people who are not provided this opportunity, will sometimes display challenging behaviours (such as shouting) in order to access this opportunity (by being asked to leave class for behaving inappropriately). By offering the opportunity, the young person will learn more appropriate ways of seeking the quiet space that they require to calm and relax. A 'time out pass' can be very useful. The pupil should be encouraged to use the pass regularly, and will learn to use this appropriate behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviours to be able to take a break from the class room.

## Setting Tasks

Many young people with an ASD will struggle to undertake multiple tasks at the same time. This may include taking notes whilst listening or listening to instructions whilst engaged in another activity. The way in which class tasks are set will need to be adapted, taking this into account.

Even with single tasks, many pupils with an ASD will need additional structured support—especially if the tasks are lengthy or complex. This can be provided in the form of additional support from an adult, or by providing visual cues or lists of instructions that the pupil can refer back to.

Complex tasks will almost certainly need to be supported by additional structure. Break the task down into smaller components. Start small and build up, set smaller tasks that can be added to over time. Support task setting with visual cues.

When setting tasks or activity, remember to adapt your communication. Be clear and specific. Young people with an ASD can have difficulty in choosing activities independently; offering a choice between 2 or 3 activities can help.

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## Learning Objectives

Many young people with ASD lack motivation to learn when they are unclear about the point or purpose of the activity. Ensure the purpose of the activity is conveyed to the young person, especially when it forms part of a larger programme of work.

In addition, pupils with an ASD often find it difficult to predict end points and to understand what is expected of them unless these are clearly explained. When end points or expectations are not clearly set, the young person may become confused or anxious and this may lead to refusal to undertake work or other anxiety based behaviours. Be realistic and use estimations based on what the young person can achieve, many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the work set. Setting too much can cause difficulties as can setting too little.

Similarly, unless you are specific, a young person with an ASD may not understand what the criteria for success around behaviour or school work. Non specifics lead to the young person getting it wrong and then feeling as if they have failed. This decreases self-esteem and therefore increases anxiety. Be clear and set measurable objective success criteria.

## Evaluation and Feedback

Self-evaluation can be very difficult for young people with an ASD, this is often due to the difficulties they have with social imagination and creativity. For a young person with ASD, it may seem futile to evaluate a piece of work themselves (if they knew what they could have done better, they would have done it in the first place). To help the young person with self-evaluation, it is useful to provide additional structure in the form of a checklist. This could be developed with the young person or class as a whole. If using curriculum level descriptors for this purpose they will need to be adapted, removing figurative language such as 'explore relationships' and adding quantifiable targets rather than relying on phrases such as 'begin to form opinions'.

Rigidity of thought and difficulties with imagination can also make peer evaluation difficult. Again additional structure in the form of checklists can be useful in helping the young person with ASD

to identify areas that would benefit from improvement. Following this, the young person can be given additional teacher support to suggest alternatives.

Teacher feedback to young people with an ASD needs to be specific to the learning objective. Suggestions for improvement should be structured to ensure that the young person understands the difference between strengths, difficulties and goals and the specific areas of work the comments relate to. Remember general statements are not useful for young people with an ASD.

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## Difficulties with Social Communication (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Social Interaction

As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In ICT this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Form opinions about issues raised by the use of ICT
- Discuss issues raised by ICT
- Identify the needs of their intended audience
- Making choices to meet the needs of a specific purpose or audience.

Young people with ASD have difficulties in interacting with and understanding others. They may therefore struggle to 'guess' the needs of an audience and make choices to fit the needs of the audience. Additional structure and clear rules with regard to adapting work for different audiences will need to be provided, be clear and do not rely on the young person's ability to guess these.

Repeated practice will help the young person to respond appropriately to the needs of different audiences, how to compare texts and how to engage better with the audience.

Young people with ASD struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them and use them to formulate their own views also.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided difficulties with communication and social interaction will remain.



## Difficulties with Creativity and Imagination

As also discussed previously, young people with ASD have impairments in social imagination their ability to generate creative ideas. In English this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Create, refining and develop their own ideas
- Plan for different purposes and audiences
- Predict consequences

There are a number of approaches that can be helpful.

Free choice and generating creative ideas may be difficult for young people with ASD, and you can support this by offering a limited number of choices or examples.

Due to issues with social imagination, young people with ASD find it difficult to work with hypothetical situations such as predicting consequences and potential solutions. Try providing additional supports such as visual cues in the format of lists and flow charts. You could also provide examples for the young person to follow.

Many also find planning difficult, and struggle to sequence activities. Others may become over focused on planning to the smallest detail and lose focus on the 'big picture'. Use templates, provide examples and practice to help develop these skills. Try using templates and providing examples to help the young person develop skills in planning.

It is important to be realistic, this is a core impairment of the autism spectrum, and whilst support can be provided – social imagination is not a skill that can be learned.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

Many young people with ASD have 'special interests', the young person may have a preference for writing about these over other subjects or default to these interests when struggling to generate creative ideas. This is often a cue for the teacher needing to provide additional support and ideas. Changes to topic or learning approaches may also be met with resistance, as when supporting other changes prepare the pupil in advance and offer reassurance.

## Group Work

Group work and group activities can be particularly difficult for young people with an ASD. In addition to finding it difficult understand the task as a whole, they may struggle to grasp the purpose or understand what is expected of them within the group and may struggle to understand social rules such as turn-taking, reciprocal conversation and waiting. Additional support and training around 'social rules' can be provided to help the young person to learn these skills.

In order to support the pupil with an ASD with the task within a group activity, additional structure will need to be provided e.g. instead of issuing guidance such as 'work in your groups to create a presentation', provide an additional structure which may involve a list of tasks that each pupil can undertake within the group and allocate one to the young person with ASD.

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## Tests and Exams

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As an irregular event, the fact that there is a change in routine can cause problems in itself. The young person can be supported through planners to help cope with this.

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Many young people with an ASD will feel the need to complete the activity so running out of time during a test can be an issue. Supporting the young person to work out how much time to spend on each section of the test in advance may help.

Being asked to create a plan, generate an idea or respond to a hypothetical need may be difficult. By practicing similar questions in advance, the young person may be able to develop skills in attempting such activities. However, it is important to be realistic - this is a core feature of the autism spectrum, and unfortunately puts young people with ASD at a disadvantage in many tests.

## Religious Education

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As discussed earlier in this guide, young people with ASD have impairments in their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally and in their ability to understand and interact with others. In religious education this will impact on the young person's ability to:

- Talk about their own feelings, experiences, the world around them and aspects of religion.
- Ask questions about their own feelings, experiences, the world around them and aspects of religion.
- Recognise that their feelings, actions and opinions may be similar to or different from those of other people.
- Explain how aspects of religion affect the lives of individuals, communities and society.

Young people with ASD have difficulties with social interaction. They often struggle to understand and interpret their own feelings and to express them alongside their views. They may have difficulty in understanding and accepting that others have different views and opinions to their own and to take these into account. Ensuring this is taught in structured way, with a range of examples is useful. Asking the young person to predict or guess the feelings of others is not a useful learning approach.

Some young people may find it difficult to understand and process hypothetical situations and events that are not within their own experience. They may find it difficult to differentiate between

events that are current but happening outside of their own experiences and those which are historical. Utilising visual cues such as chronology lines can help greatly with this.

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Many young people with ASD find fiction difficult, but are very interested in facts. They therefore may find the concept of religious beliefs difficult to relate to.

## Restricted Interests, Repetitive Behaviours and Dislike of Change

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## Group Work

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# **Chapter 5**

## **Working with Challenging Behaviours**





# Chapter 5

## Working with Challenging Behaviours

### Understanding the Cause of Challenging Behaviours

Everyone displays 'challenging behaviours' at some time because it is a way of communicating what they are thinking or feeling. Those with ASD may seem to display challenging behaviour more frequently than other young people but this is because they see the world differently.

Individuals with ASD experience high levels of anxiety. Impairments associated with the autism spectrum can make the world a very uncertain, and frightening place. Alongside this many young people with ASD do not have the 'protective factors' that help others such as friendships, social outlets and goals for the future.

Anxiety can be extremely debilitating for young people with ASD. The physical sensations and worrying thoughts can prevent them from engaging in activities and with others, and soon a cycle of anxiety can begin.

For many young people with ASD, school is a major source of anxiety. The busy environment, lack of consistency, social expectations and frequent changes can escalate anxiety and when it gets too much this can be displayed as challenging behaviour.

Challenging behaviours that are associated with anxiety include avoidance and aggression.

Young people with an ASD are typically unable to communicate their feelings of anxiety, and may present with behaviours that you do not typically associate with feeling worried or anxious.

These might include:

- Verbally and physically aggressive behaviour
- Becoming withdrawn and resisting any interaction with others
- Complaining of pain or illness
- Engaging in repetitive behaviours
- Hurting self



We all experience anxiety, it is part of our everyday life and we all react to stressful situations in a way which is personal to us, but the symptoms of anxiety are often similar. Think of a time when you have felt anxious, you may have experienced feelings such as being scared, panic, increased heart rate, sweating, sickness, not knowing where to turn or what to do next, loss of confidence etc. These are unpleasant feelings and can impact our mood, energy levels and behaviour, so imagine what it must be like to feel anxious every day of your life but not understand why.

Common situations that trigger anxiety are:

- Meeting strangers
- Being given too many choices
- Not being able to communicate their needs
- Changes in routine
- New activities or places
- Experiencing unpleasant sensations, e.g. dog barking, flashing lights, crowded and noisy environments, overpowering smells
- Transition from one activity to another — even small transitions
- Trauma - remembering unpleasant events e.g. having a haircut, seeing the dentist or doctor, which when being asked to repeat makes them anxious

Sometimes, young people with an ASD can be anxious about more than one thing at a time.

Before attempting to address challenging behaviours, it is essential that you identify the causes and / or reinforcing factors. Without doing this, your interventions may lead to increased distress and a likely worsening of behaviours.

Following this you may need consider if there is also often a function or purpose to the behaviour, and anything that may be reinforcing this.

## Step 1 - Track and Analyse Behaviours over a Period of 1 – 2 Weeks

To do this, you will need to record the ABC of the challenging behaviour using a chart, as follows.

### Antecedent (what happens before)

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This is often the trigger for the behaviour. This can sometimes be clear-cut such as somebody saying 'no' to a request but in individuals with ASD it can be more difficult to identify because the cause may be related to sensory issues such as loud noises or specific sounds or related to the need for predictable routines. It is therefore important that you record all relevant information including time, environment, what was said etc.

### Behaviour

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In this section you will need to record details of the behaviour, without judgement or assumptions.

Describe the behaviour rather than jumping to conclusions as many individuals with ASD have difficulties in expressing their feelings in an appropriate way. For example, anxiety may present as worry but could also present in repetitive behaviours or aggression.

## Consequence (what happens after)

Often the consequence or outcome of the behaviour can provide clues as to what the child is feeling, by showing what the child is trying to achieve. Consequences can often be reinforcing the behaviour. Even if the consequence is negative attention, it is still attention...

An example of an ABC recording chart is shown below.

Date and time	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence

## Step 2 – analyse the antecedent, what could be triggering the behaviour?

It is useful to use the CRISIS acronym to consider the main issues that may be triggering challenging behaviours in a young person with ASD.

**Communication** – did the child understand? Has the child misunderstood?

**Routines** – has there been a change in routine? Has the child been supported to know the routine?

**Interaction** – has there been a social misunderstanding? Does the child understand what is expected?

**Sensory Issues** – is there an increase / change in sensory stimuli?

**Imagination** – have impairments in social imagination caused the issue?

**Subjective attribution of behaviour** – are you treating the child as 'naughty' and not supporting?

### An example

#### The Specific Behaviour:

Refusal to take part in oracy task-presenting to class

#### The possible reasons / underlying difficulties:

##### Communication

I do not understand what is expected of me, the task has not been clearly explained.

##### Routines

We do not usually do the talking, the teacher does – I do not like things **changing**.

##### Interaction

I do not understand how to talk to a group. You have asked me to make sure I take the needs of the audience into account. I do not understand these and I am worrying I'm going to make a fool of myself.

## Sensory

I feel uncomfortable with everyone looking at me and watching them fidgeting in front of me. You have asked me to use Power Point and the noise from the equipment is very distracting.

## Imagination

You have asked me to pretend I am a character from a book, I do not understand how to do this. I am lost as to what you expect me to say.

## Subjective judgement of cause of behaviour

The teacher is trying to persuade me to take part as if I am just shy, this is annoying me and does not help with the worries I have.

By recording ABCs of behaviour in this way, you will be able to identify patterns which will help you to explore triggers and reinforcers.

In the above example, there are clear triggers for the behaviour relating to the young person's lack of understanding of the task.

If the young person's behaviour is appropriate even if it is undesirable (for example in this case refusing to undertake the task) you should not try to change the behaviour, but rather provide preventative strategies. In this case, additional support around understanding and completing the task could have prevented the behaviour occurring. If sensory issues are the cause of the unwanted behaviour, altering the environment will also be the way to move forward. Where there are clear triggers, that are related to the young person's ASD, you should always put in additional support and alter the environment to prevent the behaviour reoccurring.

## Step 3 – Working on Behaviour Directly

If the behaviour is not appropriate or desirable you may need to start some work around changing the behaviour.

When implementing a behavioural approach, remember the principle.

- **If you reward a behaviour you will see more of it**

This works for both positive and negative behaviours, for example if you reward a positive behavior with a treat, the young person will be more likely to repeat the behavior. However, if you have a young person that dislikes school, and then you reward aggression by sending the young person home from school, the young person will be more likely to repeat the behavior to obtain the reward.

Sometimes, the 'reward' for a behaviour is the attention you give to it. This includes negative attention such as shouting, statements of disappointment or lengthy attempts at problem solving.

In an individual with ASD the picture can be even more confusing, for example if the individual prefers to spend time alone, using 'time out' as a punishment could be rewarding. It is therefore important that you take the individual into consideration when deciding on how to give or remove rewards for a behaviour. When managing behaviour of an individual with ASD, it is important that you adapt your communication as discussed earlier.

When trying to decrease an unwanted behaviour, it is important that you teach a new way of behaving appropriately at the same time. This will prevent other negative behaviours

developing. To do this you will need to remove all rewards from the unwanted behaviour and look for ways to reward a behaviour that is wanted.

For example, ignore the individual when they interrupt you talking by asking for something, but respond immediately if they say 'excuse me'. In this situation the individual will learn that they will only get the response they are seeking by saying 'excuse me' first.

Use your ABC chart to help to identify the unwanted behaviour, and ensure you have clarity about this before you start. Many behaviours are grouped together and you need to be sure you are addressing one at a time. For example, if a young person is frequently becoming aggressive to leave class, do you want to work on the aggression? Or is leaving the class the main problem?

Be sure to recognise your own thoughts and feelings around the issue, and ensure they are not impacting on your management of the behaviour.

In order to help the learning of new behaviours it is important that your response is clear and consistent, you must respond in the same way each time, and ensure that others are following the same plan too.

When young people have complex behaviour issues, it can be difficult to plan your approach alone. It may be worthwhile seeking support from your local advisory team, or other professionals involved.

## For further information

[www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk](http://www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk) is the National website hosted by the National ASD Development Team within the WLGA in partnership with Public Health Wales and funded by Welsh Government. The website provides information and resources for individuals with ASD and those supporting them, including parents and carers and professionals.