

Learning with Autism – Feedback following award

Introduction

The Learning with Autism programme continues to be a key program for the National Autism Team and uptake continues to grow. This report analyses the responses from settings and schools that have undertaken the programme and been awarded the whole school award. Below are some figures on how many settings and schools have undertaken training and completed the award.

Learning with Autism- Early Years

Since its launch at the end of September 2017, 1,741 staff have undertaken the training programme and 71 Early Year Settings have received their LwA award, with 26 of these were during 2019/20.

Learning with Autism- Primary Schools

This programme was launched in March 2016, and during 2019/20 a further 58 schools achieved their LwA award, taking us to 185 schools across Wales, and the following have been undertaken this year:

- 1,721 Teaching staff (6,913 in total)
- 1,773 Learning support Staff (6,992 in total)
- 12,977 Autism Superheroes (41,627 in total)

Learning with Autism- Secondary Schools

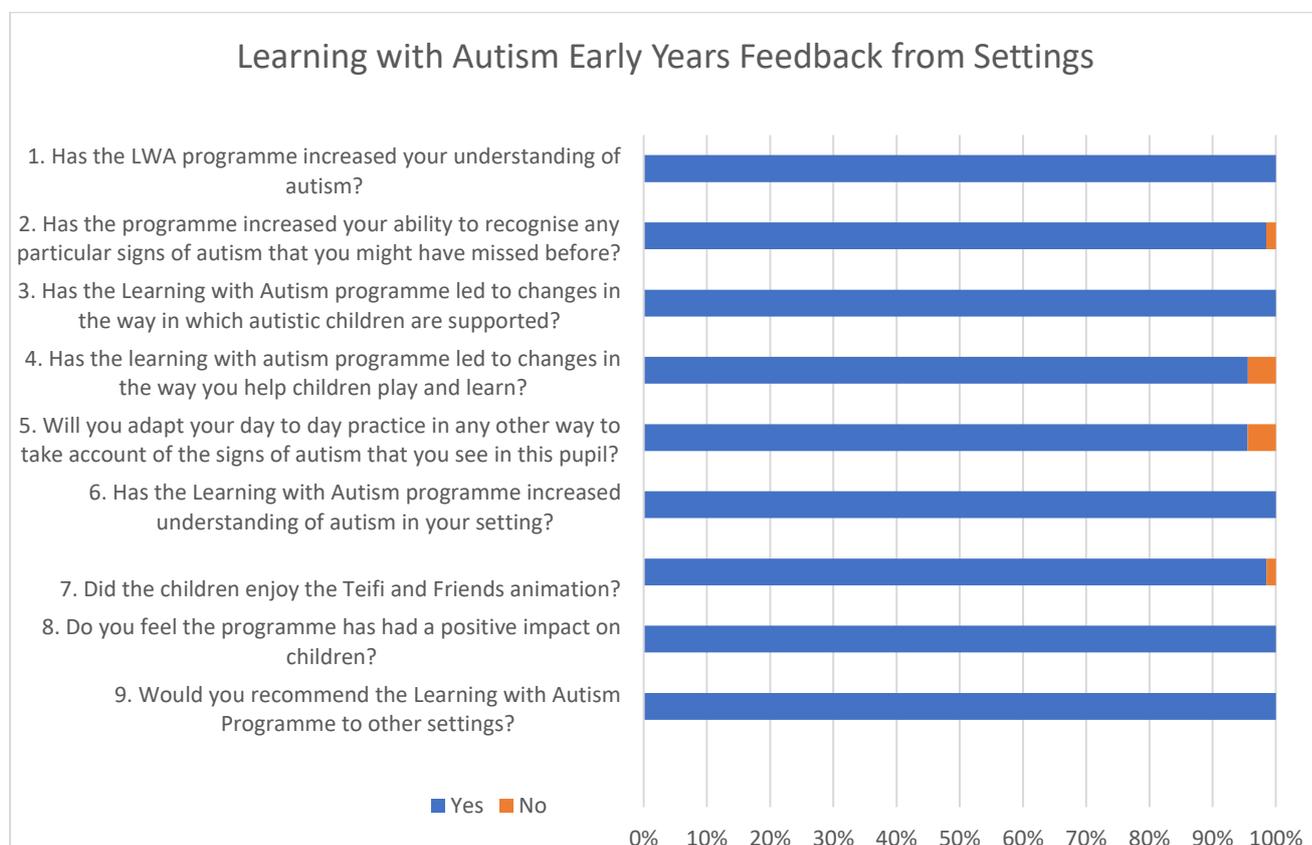
Since its launch at the beginning of September 2018, 3,997 staff have undertaken the training programme and 22,000 pupils have received the Sgilti lesson and taken their pledge. A further 7 schools across Wales have received their LwA award this past year, which takes it to 16 in total.

Feedback

Feedback is received from schools and settings following completion of the programmes through a form they fill in to apply for the award. Below is an evaluation of the information received by schools and setting per award.

Early Years Program

Below is a graph of the feedback received from the Early Years settings who completed the program Learning with Autism Early Years programme from its launch to the end of 2019/20.



The feedback from the evaluation forms from these settings have shown that 100% answered yes to the question ‘Has the LWA programme increased your understanding of autism?’ and ‘Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes in the way in which autistic children are supported?’ and 99% answered yes to the question ‘Has the programme increased your ability to recognise any particular signs of autism that you might

have missed before?'. With regards to the question 'Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes in the way in which autistic children are supported?' the following comments were received;

"We have introduced new daily routines within the setting for all children to work with on a daily basis." Evergreen Day Nursery

"We now have some of the visual strategies in place for the whole class as many of the strategies suggested for pupils with Autism we feel would be beneficial to others that may have some other difficulties." Pwll Primary (Nursery)

"We have put in place visual timetables and cue cards in each room and bathrooms. Outside each room we have photos of the staff and what days they work to help with the transition from home to nursery and so that the parents can tell the child what days staff are in. We have put together new strategies in place for circle time and how to get the best out of a child with ideas we've learnt. We also have a poster of triggers and signs in the staff room so staff can have a reminder and refresh."
Norfolk House

"The nursery as a whole is much more aware of signs of Autism and from this the staff are more confident to speak to parents about any concern we might have."
Cwtsh y Clos

In response to the question 'Will you adapt your day to day practice in any other way to take account of the signs of autism that you see in this pupil? In what way?' 96% answered yes and the following comments were received;

"A 'cool club' has been established to support children to access an 'alternative Autism friendly assembly' if they find the usual school assembly too overwhelming. A 'cosy lunch club' has been established as an alternative to sitting in the dinner hall at lunch time – this is a quieter and calmer lunch time which is supported by a Teaching Assistant." Ysgol Glan Gele (Infant School completed Primary scheme)

“We will adapt quiet areas to give the child time to settle at their own pace. We will observe the child and take their lead, enhancing their play with things they particularly like to do e.g. balls, trains etc. We will use Makaton, picture cards and use few words commands e.g. ‘coat off’ we will gently encourage a child to follow a routine. We will also use a visual timetable.” The Venture Flying Start

“Our day to day practice has changed considerably, we have removed all things from the walls, we have had the room painted a subtle light blue/grey. We have had the busy blinds removed and replaced with plain ones. The sensory room is an extremely vital area for children and we have now painted this black and have black out roller blinds. We have changed the some children’s start and finish times to correspond to their needs. This has enable some children to miss busy overwhelming times of the session. We have removed lots of toys from the childcare room as these seemed to over stimulate some of the children.” Sea View Flying Start

Below are some of the responses received for the question ‘Has the Learning with Autism programme increased understanding of autism in your setting?’ in which 100% answered yes;

“Yes, all staff fully understand the need for structure, routine and consistency. It has also made staff become more aware of children's preferences and choices are important. It also promotes the quality of a setting that has completed the programme” Llwynhendy Children's Centre

“Yes, all staff have completed the online and offsite training. We are using the resources to great effect. Staff are learning new things everyday about different children by using/reading the manual.” Sea View Flying Start

“Yes, it has enabled us to recognise signs early on and given us ideas on how to adapt our classroom to suit these children. The biggest improvement we have seen is how the children now interact with a child with autism.” Trysor Bach



99% answered yes to the question 'Did the children enjoy the Teifi and Friends animation?' with the following added comments received;

"The children enjoyed watching Teifi and Friends, following the film we had a discussion of how we could help Teifi feel happy when playing with us" Dechrau'n Deg Parc-y-Felin

"The children watched the animation clip in an assembly and they were all hooked!! We will be encouraging the children to watch the clip again in their classes during Time to Talk sessions. This clip will then be used annually as a refresher for children." Ysgol Glan Gele (Infant School completed Primary scheme)

"Yes the children sat lovely and watched the video. We paused the video at certain times to talk about what Teifi was doing and how he might be feeling. As our children are aged between 2-3 years of age they didn't understand that Teifi was struggling with certain aspects but was able to talk about how we are nice to others." Kiddies World

"The children really enjoyed Teifi and friends, we still talk about Teifi and it allowed our children and staff to see things from a child with Autism's point of view." Little Tigers Day Care

With regards to the question "Do you feel the programme has had a positive impact on children? / Can you give an example of how the programme has had a positive impact on children?" 100% answered yes and the following comments were received;

"We have a child at our setting who has been diagnosed with Autism. Her one2one support worker has started using picture cards and objects to support her throughout the daily routine. We also recognised the child's interests and use objects of interest to help the child sit at snack time, story etc. but the child is never forced to sit for these activities only encouraged, which has worked really well. From attending the training, we were given ideas of how to create sensory toys. We developed our own sensory basket of toys which we have found very useful and the

children have enjoyed playing with them. We have also made a sensory room and made some adjustments to the setting routine to avoid the child with Autism having a meltdown which in turn makes the session run more smoothly.” First Friends Nursery

“We spoke about feelings- the children became aware that everyone feels differently and we have more of an inclusion ethos. Children are starting to help their friends who do need extra support (putting coats on etc).” Cylch Meithrin Bro Alun

“The children are more aware that other children need may to have quiet time away from the group (e.g. a child was overheard asking another child if they would like to sit with them when feeling upset. We have a quiet corner and children are gravitating towards it when they feel they want time away.” Cylch Meithrin y Drenewydd

“The children are more understanding towards pupils’ specific needs and try to help each other. E.g. ensuring certain children have specific sensory toys, or helping them follow instructions.” Cwmaber Infants School

One-hundred percent answered yes to the question to the question ‘Would you recommend the Learning with Autism Programme to other settings?’ with the following additional comments received by settings and schools;

“Yes most definitely, it has helped to widen our knowledge and I think all settings should complete the programme” Llwynhendy Children's Centre

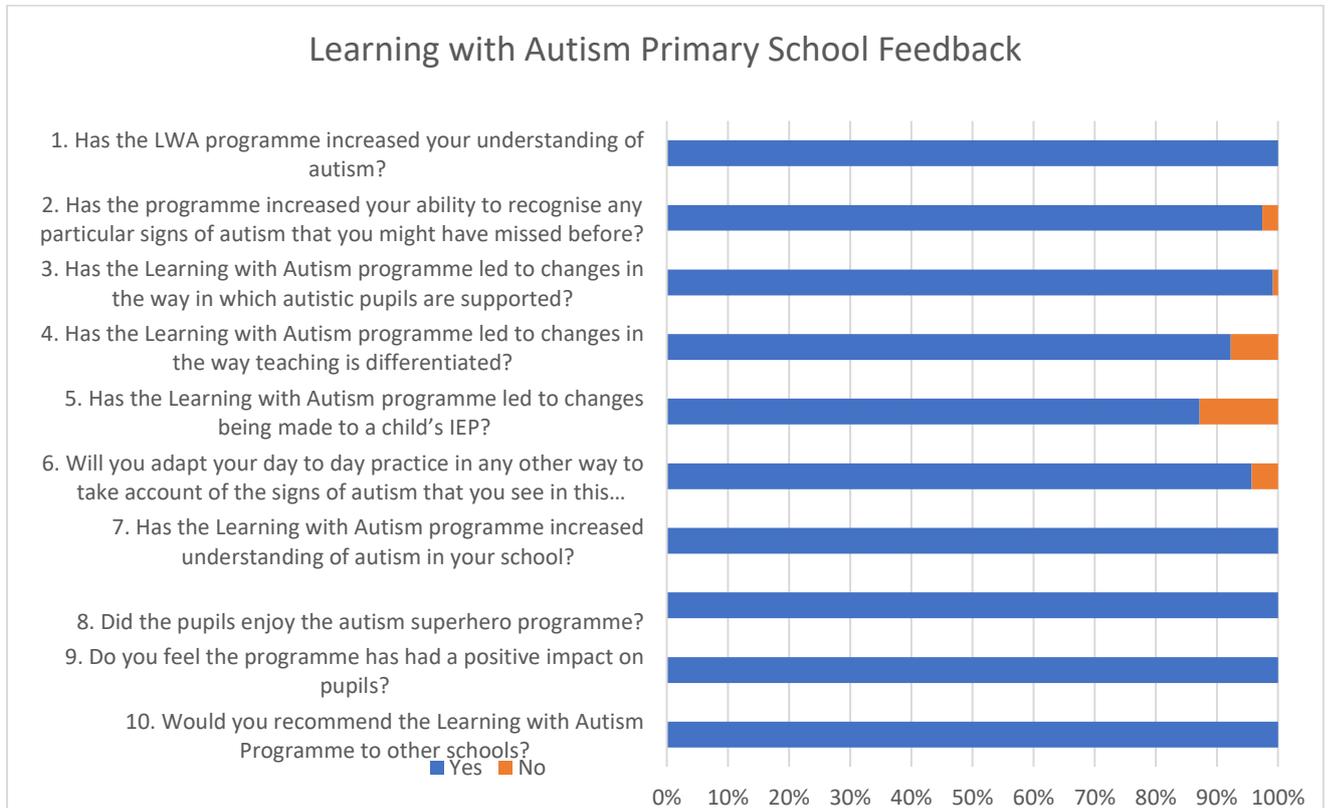
“Yes as we do support children with autism within our setting, it was very insightful on how to support children by looking at the environment as well as the child’s ability as this can play a huge role in the child’s ability through distraction, sensory overload etc.” Kiddies World

“Yes – it is an invaluable resource and gives staff an understanding of what to look for and how to deal with/help children with Autism or signs of Autism” Cylch Meithrin y Drenewydd

“Yes, I think all practitioners working with children should complete this course. The more we educate ourselves, the better we can support our children’s individual needs. I also think the Teifi and Friends animation is an excellent way to help older children to be more understanding friends” Wrexham Early Years Centre Flying Start

Primary Schools Program

Below is a graph of the feedback received from the primary schools who have completed the program Learning with Autism Primary Schools programme from its launch to the end of 2019/20.



For the Primary Schools Program, the feedback from the evaluation forms from these school have shown 97% answered yes to the question ‘Has the programme increased your ability to recognise any particular signs of autism that you might have missed before?’ and 100% answered yes to the question ‘Would you recommend the Learning with Autism Programme to other schools?’.

In response to the statement ‘Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes in the way teaching is differentiated?’ 92% answered yes. In addition, in response to ‘Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes being made to a child’s IEP?’ 87% answered yes, with the following additional comment received;

‘No - Already taken into account’ Ysgol Bro Teifi

‘No -Our IDP procedures and practices were effective and well established however we are moving to ‘Provision Map’ which will make them even better with greater accessibility for those who need to read them.’ Goytre Fawr Primary

Ninety-six percent answered yes to the question ‘Will you adapt your day to day practice in any other way to take account of the signs of autism that you see in this pupil? In what way?’ with the following comments received;

‘Visual timetables are being used much more efficiently in classes. Also, the way work is differentiated for ASD pupils has been adapted so that it is more personal to them and tailored to their needs.’ Penllwyn Primary School

‘All staff are more aware at recognising the signs and are able to create more specific strategies to implement with pupils with ASD’s IEPs. All non-teaching staff e.g. dinner ladies, canteen staff are more aware of the challenges that pupils with ASD have and are able to support them far better during non-teaching time.’ Townhill Community School

‘We will be considering how to manage pupil movement around school i.e. hallways can become crowded and noisy. We are also trying to evaluate how to make the time when pupils eat in the hall a less busy experience.’ Minera Voluntary Aided Primary School

‘All staff are aware of the checklists and supporting information available on the website. This supporting information that will be gathered through their use will help identify and support referrals in the future. We have several pupils who are currently awaiting ASD assessment. We recognise that a diagnosis isn’t the biggest factor here – and that we don’t need to wait for an assessment to take place and to be told that a pupil is ASD. We know that strategies can be implemented straight away and if pupils respond and benefit from that support it’s irrelevant if they are confirmed ASD or not – the fact is the strategy works for them.

What I also like about many of what’s been made available on the website is that it’s very inclusive – some of the changes we have made and intend on making in the

future are not being done just for specific pupils but actually will help other pupils too. We've found the profile section useful in developing the One Page Profiles for several ALN pupils.' Ysgol Swn Y Don

'Individual visual timetables are used and shared with parents and the child the day before, to ensure they are prepared for any changes to routines and these have been shared with all staff as a strategy to help reduce anxiety and to visually prepare children.

Break and lunchtime nurture room available for children who have difficulties accessing the hall at lunch time or have difficulties being outside on a busy playground.' Ysgol Maes Owen

'Yes (a lot!) We now understand the needs of our autistic pupils, what makes them unsure/unhappy and what makes them happy and calming so that they feel at their best to learn. These can include prior warnings regarding changes to routines, the way in which we timetable the hall. We also look at what works on an individual level and cater the classroom to suit the needs (one pupil doesn't adapt well to red colours, so we remove red from the school)' Ysgol Bro Lleu

100% answered yes to the question 'Has the Learning with Autism programme increased understanding of autism in your school?' with the following additional comments received by settings and schools;

'It has refreshed some experienced members of staff's understanding and been beneficial to others, particularly support staff, such as midday supervisors, who do not usually have access to training of this kind.' Penllwyn Primary School

'Definitely. Staff are now more aware of the signs and are more adept at spotting if a pupil is anxious or unhappy. Staff are more comfortable with coming to me if they suspect that a child displays ASD tendencies.' Ysgol Bro Pedr

'Yes. All teaching, non-teaching staff have more understanding in dealing with ASD and how they can support the children in their roles.' Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd

‘Yes it is given all staff more confidence, tools and strategies to help our pupils with ASD not just in the classroom but at other times.’ Townhill Community School

‘Yes particularly amongst non teaching staff who now feel much more confident in supporting all pupils.’ Hendre Junior School

‘Most definitely. All the teaching staff, learning support staff, admin staff and most lunch time supervisors have undertaken the course and it has opened up a great discussion on the facts that were unknown or misbelieved. As there are a number of pupils here with autism, it has made everyone more aware of how to talk with them and include them in everything by differentiating if need be. The use of visual aids and timetable is natural to many staff now as is the concept of now and next work. Also staff are more understanding of the needs of the children and what to look out for in others. We have also sent staff to the local specialised autism school nearby to observe lessons and more will be going in the New Year, to ensure that eventually all staff will have been. This has come about after staff discussions from this programme where a need was identified to have more information and strategies available to work with.’ Ysgol Pen Barras

100% answered yes to the question ‘Did the pupils enjoy the autism superhero programme?’ with the following additional comments received by settings and schools;

‘All KS2 pupils were enthusiastic about the programme and some wanted to do extra work. One pupil in a mainstream class actually felt confident enough after the programme to tell his peers about how autism affects his daily life.’ Townhill Community School

‘The pupils gained a great deal from engaging with this. They explained that they now have a better idea of the difficulties faced by those on the autistic spectrum.’ Minera Voluntary Aided Primary School

‘The pupils enjoyed the Superhero programme. After a class discussion and reading the comic, the pupils wrote and created their own ASD Aware superhero comics.’

Ysgol Min y Ddol

‘The Autism Superhero programme went down very well with our pupils. We have some High Functioning pupils in our upper Key Stage 2 and it was very interesting to see their reaction to the sessions. We discussed what we would be doing prior to the session and they chose to attend and ended up contributing really well to the session – one female pupil in particular who likes to inform everyone that she is ASD made herself available to answer any questions other pupils had – it was lovely to see and I was left feeling very proud of her!’ Ysgol Swn Y Don

‘Yes, all pupils accessed the programme including a Year 3 & 4 and a Year 5 & 6 assembly, tasks in the classroom based on the story and on how they could be an Autism superhero in our school, all pupils then signed up to the programme. Positive feedback received from parents.’ Ysgol Maes Owen

‘Yes they did, and we had excellent feedback from the children. It was a pleasure to see how they could share personal experiences openly, and this made them realise that conversation is very important. Sharing experiences had a very positive impact.’ Ysgol Bro Dyfrdwy

100% answered yes to the question ‘Do you feel the programme has had a positive impact on pupils?’ with the following additional comments received by settings and schools;

‘The programme has allowed children to be a lot more understanding and considerate towards some of their peers who have difficulties. They have more patience and concern for those around them.’ Penllwyn Primary School

‘Yes on two levels, the support given to children with ASD- i.e. prior warning, visual timetables, explicit language etc. helps all children and supports independence. As well as this, it has added to their understanding that we are all different and that we

can celebrate that. It has given many children understanding in how to support children with ASD.’ Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd

‘I believe it has. I think in the example of the High Functioning ASD pupils in Upper Key Stage 2, it’s empowered them and helped their peers understand a little more about them. It provided a platform in which pupils could discuss things in a safe environment.

It’s provided an opportunity to raise awareness – the strengths and some things they might find difficult.

With the changes we are now putting in place within the school – we aren’t making them just for the pupils with / potentially with ASD but as general whole-school good practice – so it doesn’t single any individuals out and will support other pupils too in a variety of ways.’ Ysgol Swn Y Don

‘Yes, children are now more aware of how everyone is different and showing thoughtful and understanding attitudes towards others that are different to themselves. There have been less meltdowns and behavioural issues.’ Ysgol Maes Owen

‘It did have a positive impact on the pupils. It led to discussions about acceptance and understanding, about celebrating diversity and differences. It has given us a platform to encourage ASD learners to begin to accept their differences and for non-ASD learners to show kindness and acceptance towards their peers who sometimes experience difficulties.’ Ysgol Pen y Bryn

100% answered yes to the question ‘Would you recommend the Learning with Autism Programme to other schools?’ with the following additional comments received by settings and schools;

‘Yes, absolutely, we, as a school community, have gained a great deal from taking part in this programme.’ Ysgol Sant Elfod

‘Yes we definitely would, staff feel far more confident at ensuring that the classroom environment is autism friendly but also understanding the challenges that pupils face daily. I also think a strength of the programme is that it has to be all staff, often dinner ladies etc. are left out of training.’ Townhill Community School

‘Yes. This has been of great benefit to our school for the time investment involved. It has spurred many adults in our school to re-visit the ASDinfo website again to access more materials and support.’ Minera Voluntary Aided Primary School

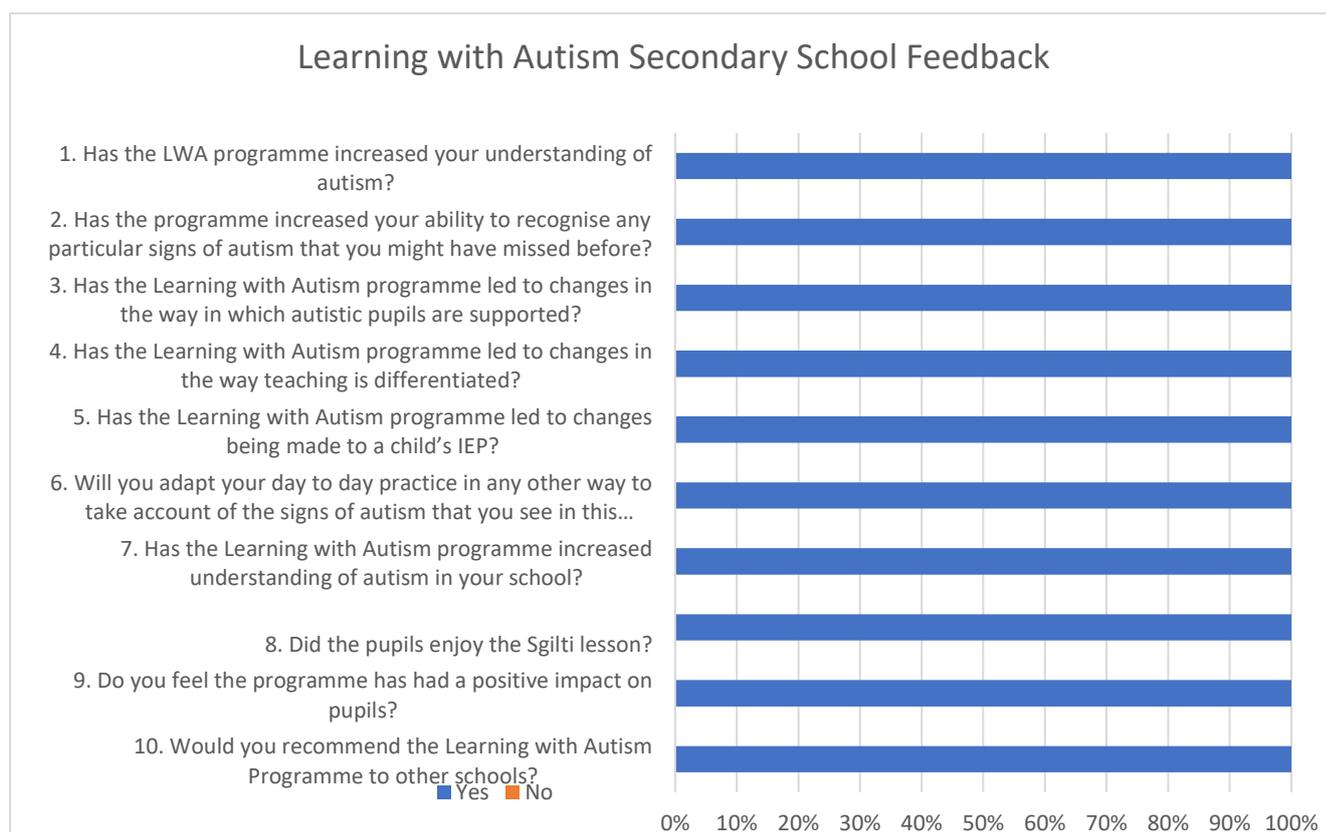
‘Definitely, especially with the new ALN Bill on the horizon! Schools should be more inclusive and ensure that all staff within their ‘Learning Organisation’ understand, that they are teachers of all learners and how to make their school and learning environment a better experience and one which is accessible for all.’ Brynterion Infants School

Secondary Schools Program



Below is a graph of the feedback received from the secondary schools who have completed the program Learning with Autism

Secondary Schools programme from its launch to the end of 2019/20.



For the Secondary Schools Program, the feedback from the evaluation forms from these settings have shown 100% answered yes to the question that 'Has the LWA programme increased your understanding of autism?' and 'Has the programme increased your ability to recognise any particular signs of autism that you might have missed before?' and all schools have stated they would recommend the programme to other schools.

In response to the statement 'Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes in the way in which autistic pupils are supported?' the following responses were received;

‘We have made a number of changes to the school environment to help support our pupils with ASD and social communication difficulties. Teaching assistants have also received training and we now have three autism champions in the school who have developed expertise in a number of areas and who are on hand to offer advice and support to pupils, parents and staff.’ Ysgol Bro Pedr

‘Yes, absolutely we have a far more knowledgeable staff team whose understanding and ideas of how to best support children on the Autistic spectrum has increased and has been seen in action. We have addressed the need to have quieter areas for them to choose to sit in at break and lunch. We also have a staff member who is our ASD champion, she has furthered her training in ASD by completing an additional module (NAS) Autism in Girls, and is hoping with funding to complete a number of others.’ Ysgol Eirias

‘The programme has provided an excellent knowledge base from which staff can draw when supporting students with ASD. Changes have been made at every layer within the school community in relation to how student with Autism are spoken to and how their needs are met both within lessons and around the school’

Pentrehafod School

‘Yes, there are now a number of areas around the school reserved for children to access when they require a quiet space (both internal and external). Two lunchtime clubs (one quiet and one social) have been created to allow pupils with ASD (and other socially vulnerable pupils) to access during unstructured times. Of particular benefit in a large and busy comprehensive school.’ Bassaleg School

In response to the statement ‘Will you adapt your day to day practice in any other way to take account of the signs of autism that you see in this pupil? In what way?’ the following responses were received;

‘We will continue to think proactively, in a person-centred way. We realise that pupils with ASD exhibit a number of different signs and that they are all different.

What is key is to develop systems that support each one's individual needs.' Ysgol Bro Pedr

'Yes, the most effective change has come in the school Restaurant. Having delivered the training to the canteen staff, we have made significant changes to the ways in which the children are identified. We now use a code on our computer system which discreetly informs the canteen staff if the pupil has a diagnosis or traits and they are then able to use more ASD friendly methods to help them in the noisy area. We are also arranging the use of name badges for canteen staff and for some we can now offer food to be eaten in another less crowded and noisy area' Ysgol Eirias

'We have introduced a pack of visual resources for each classroom to support students in lessons and also developed a referral process for class teachers to flag to ALNco if they have concerns.' Pentrehafod School

'Yes, one example would be children who have struggled to attend registration groups on a daily basis due to the anxiety often experienced at the beginning of the day. Now, these children attend the Progress Centre before lessons start. In the Progress Centre, the children are able to plan the day ahead, access information regarding staff absence and room changes before discussing any concerns with support staff (who are present every morning).' Bassaleg School

'Yes there has been a need to change pupils perceptions of ASD and staffs understand of ASD. We have tried to reduce sound in classes, introduced restorative practise/meeting and introduced clear communications across the school.' St John Lloyd Catholic School

In response to the statement 'Has the Learning with Autism programme increased understanding of autism in your school?' the following responses were received;

'Definitely. Staff are now more aware of the signs and are more adept at spotting if a pupil is anxious or unhappy. Staff are more comfortable with coming to me if they suspect that a child displays ASD tendencies.' Ysgol Bro Pedr

‘Yes, we hear conversations in the staffroom around the use of strategies for ASD children and sharing good practise. Caretakers and admin staff inc medical staff are far more aware of the need to adapt their ways in which we use speech, resources and facilities for ASD children’ Ysgol Eirias

‘Yes, it is almost tangible to see the awareness within the lessons of those staff who were not as confident as others in supporting ASD in the classroom. It has been an excellent stepping stone to continue raising our whole school awareness and support of invisible disabilities.’ Bassaleg School

‘Yes, I believe it has. Many staff are more engaged with our ASD pupils during the school day and understand their needs more.’ Penyrheol Comp School

In response to the statement ‘Did the pupils enjoy the Sgilti lesson?’ the following responses were received;

‘Yes all year groups were enthusiastic and mature with this topic of ASD and it has also raised awareness of other invisible difficulties and disabilities’ Ysgol Eirias

‘Yes- feedback was extremely positive’ Pentrehafod School

‘Yes. They were engaged in the lesson and it prompted detailed discussions’
Gowerton School

In response to the statement ‘Do you feel the programme has had a positive impact on pupils?’ the following responses were received;

‘Absolutely, I have witnessed fist hand children offering support in social situations and going out of their way to involve children with ASD in their social activities.’
Bassaleg School

‘There is definitely a shift in culture within the school. Students are far more tolerant and understanding of others’ needs and differences’ Pentrehafod School

‘As with staff, increased understanding is vital and as we have a high number of ASD pupils in the school every pupil knows someone on the spectrum and understands the importance of making them feel safe and valued.’ Ysgol Bro Pedr

‘Yes they were very keen to learn and embraced the work we have done in school and at the care homes’ Woodlands School

In response to the statement ‘Would you recommend the Learning with Autism Programme to other schools?’ the following responses were received;

‘Yes, as well as the planning and preparation for the award, we have all now seen the variety of resources available and can use these in both academic and pastoral lessons etc. We are personalising the learning by adapting our teaching and learning practise, and in some cases made significant changes to how we deliver lessons by differentiating the work to make it accessible, rearranging the classrooms and seating plans to accommodate the needs of all our learners with particular emphasis on making the ASD and ALN students feel safe and secure.’ Ysgol Eirias

‘This was an excellent way of getting everyone involved – from pupils to teachers to lunchtime supervisors.’ Ysgol Bro Pedr

‘Yes, there are only positives the outcomes’ St John Lloyd Catholic School

Conclusion

Information from settings and schools following the completion of the Learning with Autism programme have been overwhelmingly positive for all three programme. One hundred percent of participants in all programmes noted that they would recommend the programme to other settings or schools.