

# Autism



## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) present with difficulties in 4 areas:

### Social understanding



Differences in understanding social behaviour and the feelings of others, which informs the development of friendships and relationships.



### Sensory processing

Differences in perceiving sensory information. Hypo (low sensitivity), hyper (high sensitivity), touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste, vestibular inner ear (balance), proprioceptive (body awareness)

### Interests and information processing



Differences in perception, planning, understanding concepts, generalising, predicting, managing transitions, passions for interests and ability to absorb auditory or spoken information.



### Communication

Differences in understanding and expressing communication and language, with skills ranging from individuals who are highly articulate, to others who may be non-verbal. Good language skills may mask a deep level of misunderstanding.

It presents as a spectrum of difficulties, ranging from mild to severe. There are often co-existing learning needs in addition to ASD. Levels of anxiety are often high for children with ASD.

## CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

- Pupil voice: ask the child what helps them learn, what they find difficult
- Consider special interests and think about how you can use these in the classroom to motivate and engage
- Parental voice: They know the child best- talk to parents to find out what works at home.

COMMUNICATION	SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING	PROCESSING INFORMATION	SENSORY
<p><b>Make expectations clear:</b> Rules of good listening are taught, displayed and reinforced</p> <p><b>Ensure attention:</b> Use pupil's name and then communicate directly. Agree pre-arranged cues for active listening. Support staff 'tune' pupils in to class teacher.</p> <p><b>Support processing:</b> Use direct, clear language. Allow additional time to process instructions and information. Break instructions down. Tell pupils what you want them to do, not what you don't want them to do.</p> <p><b>Support understanding:</b> Use consistent vocabulary and explicitly teach new vocabulary.</p> <p><b>Visuals:</b> Give visual prompts to support communication, particularly instructions - e.g. task ladders / writing frames.</p> <p><b>Check Understanding:</b> Use talk partners, ask pupils to repeat information back etc, even when verbal ability appears to be good</p>	<p><b>Whole class strategies</b></p> <p>Provide clear rules and expectations</p> <p>Model appropriate interactions</p> <p>Provide clear roles and responsibilities in group work</p> <p>Give structure to unstructured times and environments</p> <p><b>Small Group Interventions</b></p> <p>Socially Speaking</p> <p>Social Detective</p> <p>Lego Therapy</p> <p><b>1:1 Teaching</b></p> <p>Social Stories</p> <p>Social Behaviour Maps</p> <p>Comic strip conversations</p> <p>Emotion works</p> <p>5 Point scale</p> <p>Proud book/ self-esteem folder</p>	<p><b>Change / transitions</b></p> <p>Clear routines through the day and during lessons/ activities, supported with visual timetable.</p> <p>Meet and greet - keyworker supports to prepare for the day ahead.</p> <p>Support change with pre-warning/ pre-teaching work.</p> <p><b>Issues with lack of flexible thinking</b></p> <p>Avoid tasks which depend solely on talking or writing about imagined experiences.</p> <p><b>Special Interests</b></p> <p>Special interests utilised - opportunity to access these in the day and used these as a vehicle to motivate and support learning.</p> <p><b>Executive functioning skills</b></p> <p>Allow 6-10 seconds processing time</p> <p>Extra time or modified activities as needed.</p>	<p><b>Environment</b></p> <p>Calm, low arousal environments</p> <p>Consider seating positions- involve the child in the decision wherever possible.</p> <p><b>Understanding Need</b></p> <p>Ensure pupils' sensory needs are clearly identified (using Sensory Audit completed by parents and school).</p> <p><b>Sensory Interventions</b></p> <p>Provide opportunities for sensory breaks throughout the day. Jobs, whole class movement breaks or individual sensory program.</p> <p>Sensory supports e.g. fiddle toys - with clear rules and expectations.</p> <p>Agree 'reasonable adjustments' to the uniform.</p> <p>Offer a 'timeout'/ 'not now card' to support pupils when they are feeling overloaded.</p>