

Special Educational Needs and Disability



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects the way people:

- Communicate
- Interact
- Think and behave flexibly
- Experience their senses

There are lots of names used to describe autism; Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), high functioning autism, Asperger syndrome and the autism spectrum. Autism is referred to as a spectrum because each person is different. Understanding each person's strengths and weaknesses is key to supporting them appropriately.

'The exact cause of autism is still being investigated. Research suggests that a combination of factors...may account for changes in brain development. It is not caused by a person's upbringing or social circumstances and it's not anyone's fault.'

(Autism West Midlands)

Key facts about autism

- The brain of a person with autism may develop and function in a different way from the brain of a person without autism.
- People with autism tend to see, hear, taste, touch and smell the world differently. Their balance can also be affected.
- Autism can be genetic; it can affect more than one family member.

People with autism may find it difficult to:

- Make sense of the world.
- Make conversation.
- Understand some of the subtleties of social language.
- Be adaptable to new situations.
- Understand emotions.
- Process everyday sensory information like sounds, sights and smells.
- Be imaginative.
- Reason and make decisions.
- Maintain good mental health and wellbeing.



Special interests

Autism can also mean people develop a particular strength or focused interest. People with autism will often say their interest brings them pleasure and allows them to relax.

Ways to support a child with autism

- Say the child's name to get their attention.
- Keep language simple and allow time for a response.
- Use short simple instructions. Give one at a time and check for understanding. Repeat instructions in the same words rather than different ones. Ask students to repeat them back to you.
- Explain social rules and how to behave in different social situations as clearly as possible. Teach what to say/do, how to ask for help. Always tell the child what to do rather than what not to do.
- Provide structure and routine to reduce anxiety. Try to prepare for changes in advance.
- Use visual support like symbols, pictures and photographs to add meaning to the spoken or written word e.g. symbols to indicate noise levels.
- Use task management boards and set tasks with clear goals in step-by-step form. Set explicit and clear expectations e.g. how long to write with timer
- Use 'Social stories' to prepare for a change.



Classroom strategies to support pupils with ASD

- Display classroom rules and routines for children to refer to e.g. visual timetable.
- Teach classroom routines explicitly e.g. Lining up.
- Seat pupil in a quiet space away from distractions.
- Support writing with writing frames and prompts e.g. Use a green dot to show where to start writing.
- Allow pupil to work alone rather than in a group if this is a particular difficulty.
- Have a time-out or calm area if pupil gets anxious or angry.
- Introduce a sensory box or motivational box (containing items or tasks of particular interest to the pupil)
- Use a 'help' card so pupil can indicate if help is needed.
- Provide support in unstructured times e.g. Lunchtimes.
- Provide regular breaks from a long task.

What to do if you have concerns:

- Speak to the class teacher
- Speak to the SENCo
- Speak to the Head Teacher

Contact the school office if you need to make an appointment: 01562 67742

Please remember we are always here to listen and answer any questions you may have.



Links to help you;

Autism helpline: 0808 800 4104

Autism West Midlands

www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk