



The West Berkshire



Toolkit for Schools

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Supporting Autistic pupils in schools

Introduction:

Autism is a spectrum. It presents and affects individuals differently and in a variety of ways, both in the strengths of and challenges for the individual. When educators take the time to understand the uniqueness of each autistic individual, the teaching and learning is more effective and the individual learner makes strides in the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge. This supports the long term aspiration in West Berkshire Council's SEND Strategy for all children and young people with SEND to become resilient, happy adults.

The West Berkshire Autism School Toolkit has been put together to help schools plan provision and support for autistic pupils. It has been developed in consultation with parents and carers, colleagues in West Berkshire Council and school staff.

We appreciate there are different terms for describing autism and everyone has their own opinion and preferred way of communicating. In this Toolkit, we use the term 'autistic person/pupil' rather than 'person/pupil with autism', following the advice of the National Autistic Society. However, when talking to autistic young people, do use the terminology they are most comfortable with and this should take precedence over any recommendations.

The West Berkshire Autism Team

1. Support for schools and families in 2021

Who is in the team?

Autism Advisors for Schools

- **Lesley Botchway**

Lesley is our Autism Team Coordinator. She will coordinate the work of the team and supports mainstream secondary schools.

- **Sue Granger**

Sue is our Autism Advisor for schools working with mainstream primary schools.

Autism Specialist Teaching Assistants

We have also appointed two specialist teaching assistants working with us for a year initially, from January 2021. Our Autism Specialist TAs are:

- **Kelly Evans**

- **Gilly Rogers**

Together we will be piloting schemes within our schools; in primary looking at improving behaviour by reducing anxiety and in secondary, exploring ways of reducing emotionally based school avoidance.

Autism Advisor for Families

- **Melissa Hutchings**

Melissa provides support and training for parents post diagnosis. She regularly sends emails with updates, information and signposting to events. You can sign up to receive these emails by contacting the administrative team for Learning Support Services (learningsupportteam@westberks.gov.uk)

The Autism Team is a FREE service to schools and families, although centrally run training for schools is charged for.

Which pupils and families can the team have contact with?

The Autism Team can become involved with children and young people with a diagnosis of Autism and their families. A copy of the pupil's diagnostic report must be received by the team before making contact or making a visit. Reports from private clinicians are accepted, as are diagnoses from abroad. Please note that you must have parental consent to share a pupil's diagnostic report with us and also to become involved in a case.

We are able to become involved with pupils who reside in West Berkshire and attend a mainstream school in West Berkshire or a school in another Local Authority, and also pupils who attend a school in West Berkshire but are resident in another Local Authority. If a pupil



is known to advisory staff from another Local Authority then the West Berkshire team would not become involved.

When will the team visit/make contact?

The Autism Advisors for schools will visit (or contact the school to discuss a pupil) at specific points in their time in school, these are:

- After diagnosis (usually within 8 weeks)
- For pupils with an EHCP: during Year 5
- For pupils on SENS level: during Year 6
- During Year 7: some pupils where school highlights concerns
- Other pupils: on a needs-led basis, where school, family, others highlight concerns
- It is also helpful to have regular meetings with the SENCO/Inclusion Manager to discuss the pupils with a diagnosis and the needs of the school in terms of training/support that might be appropriate. This can be facilitated by phone, Zoom/similar or in person.

The Autism Advisor for Families will make contact with the family soon after diagnosis, once a copy of the diagnostic report has been received by the team.

Training

We offer a wide range of training both for parents and schools.

Central training for schools is listed in the SEND Training Brochure that has been sent to you and also on the Autism Calendar that you will have received. We offer free network meetings, as well as core training and our 5 week Keeping Afloat course (for which there is a charge).

We can also deliver bespoke training for your setting. Bespoke training is free; do contact us if this is something you feel would be beneficial.

We also run regular training and a range of workshops for parents.

Contact training@westberks.gov.uk or the Learning Support Team for more details.

Reports following a visit by the School Advisors

We aim to send reports to schools by email within 3 weeks of a visit. They are sent from the Learning Support Team's administrative staff and are sent to the school office for the attention of the SENCo. Please note that it is the school's responsibility to send the reports on to parents. If you have any questions regarding reports please contact the team.

2. Getting the most from the service

If would be most helpful if you would follow this guidance:

- If you receive a diagnostic report send a copy to us (with parental permission), and inform us if the pupil is in difficulty
- Inform parents/carers (and pupils) of our visits. During this time of pandemic, we also ask that you inform parents/carers that the meeting will involve an outside visitor. Inform them of the procedures around the visit and ensure that permission is

granted. We will send a risk assessment that you can share with them, and we will also be asking you for your risk assessment and procedures before any visit at this time.

- Invite parents/carers to meetings if we ask you to; this ensures they have the opportunity to meet us and it provides us with important information which can guide the advice we give to schools. It is helpful to have the opportunity to meet parents/carers when we first meet the pupil post diagnosis and this will be for the school to arrange. Ensure relevant staff are available to engage in discussion with us when we visit, particularly if it is an emergency appointment.
- On receipt of a report from us, check if we have suggested further meetings, or recommendations, developmental checklists, further referrals and so on. If we have done this please act promptly. Also note we do not comment on whether or not a pupil should have an EHC Plan, nor do we comment on school placement – those decisions are made by the SEN Panel.
- Send a copy of our report to parents promptly.
- If we contact school to alter an appointment, please ensure your administrative staff are aware of the need to pass on the information to everyone, including parents.
- If you need to make changes to our appointments (including any training we are providing) please contact us in advance if at all possible.

Contact us if a pupil is causing concern, for example:

- If there are mental health concerns
- If behavioural responses degenerate
- If there are ongoing self-help concerns – e.g. toileting, eating, drinking

3. Important points and considerations

Confidentiality

- You need parental consent (and the pupil's permission for older pupils) to share information about a pupil's diagnosis, we would advise you to ensure you gain written permission and also suggest you discuss this with us.
- We strongly advise you NOT to send photographs/video of pupils by email (eg after having had a behavioural incident). You should seek parental consent to show these at meetings.
- We strongly advise you to avoid making comments about a pupil or family by email, we would remind you that Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests include communication by email.

New diagnoses

- We encourage you to place all pupils with a diagnosis on your SEN Register and record provision on a Support and Achievement Plan
- We also encourage you to meet with parents of newly diagnosed pupils – helpful topics could include:
 - Well being
 - Behaviour at home and school
 - Use of electronic devices and the virtual world, and the need for parents to supervise this. Useful websites are: NSPCC shareaware, Childnet international STAR toolkit, NAS sex education and puberty, raisingchildren.net.au
 - The importance of addressing toileting, food and sleeping issues

- The need to provide a higher level of supervision than that required for typical children/young people
- Routines and structure- dealing with change

Home/school relationship

- Pupils with autism may experience difficulties and be unable to communicate or respond effectively, this can have an impact on the relationship between home and school, for example pupils may:
 - Be injured but not inform staff,
 - Perceive they are being bullied
 - Experience unhelpful responses from peers but not express this at schoolIf you are facing difficulties with these situations contact us for advice

Other considerations

- We advise school managers to discuss potential exclusions with managers in the SEN Team
- It is crucial that you contact the SEN Manager (Nicola Ponton) if you are approached by parents or practitioners about 'Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)'

Chapter 1: What is Autism?

What is it?

Autism is a developmental condition affecting the way the brain processes information. It occurs in varying levels of severity and is a lifelong condition. Autism may affect the way autistic pupils communicate with others and relate to the world around them. Autistic pupils have a different perspective and may have trouble learning, understanding and interpreting the unwritten rules of social interaction and relationships. It is important to value and develop their particular interests and activities and not to focus on trying to change them; instead try to see situations from their point of view. Try to help them understand the world we live in by explaining and showing as much as you can.



What will I see?

When thinking about what we see in autistic pupils, we always need to consider two perspectives: what we are seeing and *why* we are seeing it.

The 'why' relates to how autism is experienced from the 'inside.' Autism is a difference in the way the brain processes information and the reality is that autistic pupils are often processing the school day in a very different way to other pupils. This includes their sensory experience of the school environment -which can often be very uncomfortable and the way in which they process communication and other types of information (including social information).

Since they are experiencing school differently, they often respond to it differently and we see this in their behaviour. Autistic pupils do their best to cope with experiences they find difficult or uncomfortable, but it is hard, and as children their coping skills may be limited. As professionals it is up to us to help them develop those skills.

Autistic pupils can often develop passionate interests and become very proficient in their areas of expertise. Some also have the ability to 'hyper-focus' (maintain high levels of focus for extended periods of time on topics of interest), to focus on detail and identify patterns.

Some of the more specific differences in processing experienced by many autistic pupils are described in the box below.

Autism and Cognitive Processes

- **Monotropism:** being single channelled, for example, only able to focus on one thing at any one time, or only comfortable with using one channel at any one time, such as the visual channel. Looking at someone and listening to them at the same time can be difficult. Autistic pupils may be perceived as being 'rude', not interested or not interesting. This can be a negative when it comes to social relationships, but very much a positive in the world of 'concentration'.
- **Literality:** taking things literally, for example, sentences, concepts, metaphor, simile, words, situations and people.
- **Thinking in Closed Pictures.** For example, not connecting ideas or concepts. Not being privy to the 'whole picture' but only getting bits of it can be rather limiting. Within a social context this makes it 'hard' to 'read' others, anticipate their needs, be spontaneous, work and/or relate without schedules and refocus after being interrupted.
- **Non-social Priorities.** For example, preferred clothing versus fashion. This can cause a conflict of interest. Autistic individuals may not be concerned with appearance, hygiene, being on time, having a tidy home, or quite the opposite and will be regimented about these things to the point of distraction!
- **Non-Generalised Learning.** This implies not transferring skills or knowledge. Even if an autistic individual is abused, used or taken for granted they may not learn from this and be wiser next time. Not generalising makes it difficult to differentiate between appropriateness and being inappropriate.
- **Issues with Time and Motion.** This can mean problems with sequencing, timing and/or motor co-ordination. This can mean social concepts such as being prompt, being organised, being apt, being appropriate in conversation and being generally co-ordinated are difficult.
- **Issues with Predicting Outcomes.** For example, not learning from experience or being able to forward think and work out conclusions. This will mean missing social cues, not comprehending the importance of 'special' occasions, finding the idea of 'romance' interesting but not necessary and so on.
- **Issues with 'Theory of Mind':** understanding the concept of 'other', empathy lacks and empathy gaps. This can also be the lack of ability to imagine 'being in someone else's shoes.' So for example, writing a diary entry of an evacuee, or working out how another pupil feels after a playground argument can be very difficult to imagine.



Dinah Murray & Wendy Lawson (2001)

Common Signs of Autism

As a result of the above autistic pupils often behave differently. Some of these differences relate to their autism specifically, but others relate to how they are trying to *cope* in environments which have been created with non-autistic children in mind.

Social Interaction & Social Communication

This is a common area of difference and part of the diagnostic criteria. Autistic pupils may:

- Experience difficulties in knowing how to interact with other people, and in understanding unwritten social rules. This makes it harder to create relationships / friendships
- Experience difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication. The way in which they naturally communicate may be different to everyone else, and they may feel that staff and other pupils are speaking a different language even though many of the words are the same.
- Use different levels (or no) eye contact when communicating/interacting.
- Have trouble fully understanding the meaning of 'neuro-typical' gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice or in knowing what is expected
- Need extra time to process information
- Enjoy talking about their special interests for a while or sometimes go off track

Restricted and Repetitive Behaviours

Autistic pupils will often behave in 'restricted and repetitive ways'. Despite the negative sound of this label, these behaviours often arise from an autistic pupil attempting to cope with the challenges of living in an unpredictable neuro-typical world.

Autistic pupils may:

- Be extremely bright, and passionate and dedicated learners (especially in areas that interest them)
- Develop strong interest in one or two areas. They may be able to focus for long periods on these. Special interests can be great motivators.
- Be very good at absorbing and retaining facts – long-term memory can be excellent with superior recall. However, short term memory can be more difficult for some pupils.
- 'Stim': use repetitive behaviours or sounds such as flapping, twiddling, flicking or hums. These stims help autistic pupils to stay calm and regulate and are very important.
- Find it hard to imagine what may happen next. Sometimes this may be because their brain may overload them with too many possibilities of what might/could happen, and/or because of other executive functioning difficulties.
- Seek or show a strong preference for a consistent routine / structure, especially at times of high stress. This is often *because* they otherwise find it difficult to predict what will happen next.
- Struggle with change. Routine and consistency makes the world predictable; but change makes it unpredictable and frightening again.
- Experience difficulties in flexibility of thought and / or behaviour and have very 'logical' and rigid thinking patterns. This can be a positive and a negative!
- Be very good at keeping to the rules
- Have a great eye for detail
- Feel that finishing a piece of work is very important to them, as can finishing it to 'perfection'. This can be due to their 'black and white' thinking.

What can I do?

Top Tips for Supporting Autistic Pupils in the Mainstream Classroom

- Take sensory needs seriously and create school environments that allow pupils to engage in learning: for autistic pupils this often means less clutter, less wall art, less noise and more structure. In reality, many pupils will benefit from a calmer, quieter environment that does not distract them.
- Have a clear consistent timetables, and allow autistic pupils to create routines.
- Use visuals and provide a visual timetable to show what is happening next. If necessary provide a checklist of what is needed each lesson, what they need to get out at the start, and put away at the end. These can be on an app or a phone as well as paper.

Visuals also support working memory and help pupils see the bigger picture.

- Plan for any changes in advance as change can produce anxiety. Warn autistic pupils for example if you know they will have a cover teacher and give them time to recover and regulate after doing so (e.g. suggest a walk outside). Introduce them to the cover teacher if you can or show a photo of them and tell them their name. Plan for school trips carefully, using photos, social stories and so on.
- Break tasks down into small steps illustrating what comes next.

A task that appears too large means the pupil may struggle to respond.

Smaller steps increases motivation and reduces the chance of distraction.

- Have clear learning objectives in language that the pupils understand. Ensure these objectives are presented visually- many autistic pupils are visual learners.
- Have a task strip for the lesson- this can be on the whiteboard, on a mini whiteboard for the individual pupil, be put on a worksheet or written in the pupil's book.

This helps the pupil to know where they are in the lesson and gives them a sense of progress and completion.

For a pupil with a PDA profile, they could perhaps choose the order in which they attempt the tasks.

- Give one instruction at a time and give time to process each instruction.
- Gain the pupil's attention by using their name first.

This supports them to shift their attention more easily.

- When giving a pupil an instruction or asking a question, allow processing time. Perhaps ask the question, go to another pupil and come back to them.

If they don't respond, repeat, using the same words.

Otherwise they may think you are giving a different question or instruction.

However, change the words if you then feel the initial question was too complex.

- Say what you do want, not what you don't. For example, 'Walk please,' rather than 'Don't run.'

***Sometimes autistic pupils may not hear the whole sentence.
Negative instructions might prompt the opposite of what you want.***

***When they are told not to do something,
they may also struggle to know what they should be doing instead.***

- Use visual prompts to help pupils stay on task, rather than using your voice. Put visual systems in place to enable a pupil to show if they need support- e.g. traffic light cards.
- Support the autistic pupils with routines and homework. Show them how long each step might be and the rationale for the work. They will also need to know what to do for each step.
- Remember that pupils with working memory problems may not remember that they have problems remembering! They will need support to remember to use the planners/apps checklists they have to help them.
- Think about what might be motivating to encourage good executive skills. For example, consider judicious use of special interests to complete work or as a motivator itself.
- Use visual prompts to help pupils stay on task, rather than using your voice. Put visual systems in place to enable a pupil to show if they need support- e.g. traffic light cards.
- Support the autistic pupils with routines and homework. Show them how long each step might be and the rationale for the work. They will also need to know what to do for each step.

Chapter 2: Social Communication and Interaction

What is it?

Many autistic pupils have communication difficulties in school. It is important to be aware of these difficulties with communication and **adapt our communication** and the environment to give pupils the greatest opportunity to understand and be understood. This entails looking at communication in its broadest sense and giving the pupil as many resources and opportunities as possible to understand and convey their message.

Social communication and interaction are part of the diagnostic criteria, meaning all autistic pupils will have differences and potential difficulties here. Stay alert to the possibility that an autistic pupil who appears to have no difficulty communicating verbally may be masking their difficulty.

What will I see?

Listening, sharing and attention skills

An autistic pupil may:

- Find it hard to focus on what does not interest them (i.e. not realising it is considered polite to do so).
- Find turn-taking difficult
- Can have different levels of eye contact
- Fiddle and fidget to help themselves listen
- Appear easily distracted
- Appear to ignore others



Understanding Language

An autistic pupil may:

- Not respond, if they do not understand the words you have used or have not been given enough processing time
- Have poor auditory memory – they may forget what they have gone to get / find it difficult to process a number of instructions without forgetting some
- Have a different speed of processing – take a longer time to respond
- Struggle to 'filter out' the key information in long convoluted sentences
- Find it impossible to focus on, and understand, the person talking in front of them when other adults or pupils in the room are also talking
- Have a literal understanding of language – may struggle to understand idioms
- Experience difficulty understanding sarcasm and jokes
- Misinterpret your words through not picking up on your intonation. Some words have different meaning depending on the emphasis in a sentence e.g. 'What are you wearing?'

Expressive language

An autistic pupil may:


- Have difficulty expressing themselves, and/or in using words to communicate their ideas, feelings and needs to others. This may be worse (or sometimes emerge only) at times of stress
- Use immediate or delayed 'echolalia' – repeating back words or sounds they have heard. It is important to understand that echolalia serves a function and is not a bad 'habit'
- May ask repetitive questions. Again these serve a purpose and it is important to answer these each time
- Use inappropriate volume without realising it – too loud, too quiet
- Use unhelpful speed of communicating without realising it (too fast/too slow)
- Make grammatical errors
- Use a different intonation to others when speaking – this may come across as strange
- Have difficulty starting conversations / maintaining conversations/ holding appropriate conversations
- Not follow social rules / protocols e.g. may innocently answer 'does my bum look big in this?' honestly!
- Lack understanding of listener's previous knowledge – but instead assume their listener will have the same knowledge (and opinions!) that they do
- Struggle to understand that there are (confusingly!) different social rules for different people – e.g. understanding how/why we greet a parent / grandparent/ friend/ head teacher/ police officer etc. differently
- Not recognising needs of listener or when to stop!

Non – Verbal Communication

An autistic pupil may:

- Be unable to read non-verbal clues to extract meaning of a sentence e.g. tone of voice, emphasis, facial expression,
- Not understand / respond to facial expressions, or use their own
- Find it hard to judge what physical proximity is appropriate when talking and invade another's space

What can I do?

- Be aware of how you communicate through your body language and tone of voice
 - Think about the words that you say and how you say them, i.e. not using sarcasm & idioms
- 
- Use clear, non-ambiguous language:
 - Language should be as concrete as possible
 - Say what you mean – and mean what you say
 - Put in pauses to regulate the pace of verbal delivery
 - Make sure verbal explanations or instructions are clearly explained and backed up with visuals. Pupils on the autism spectrum may not pick up on irony or sarcasm.
 - Attention and Processing
 - Use the pupil's name and wait until they give you their attention (some pupils may not be able to look directly at you, or listen to you if they do)
 - Be aware that autistic pupils may not recognise instructions given to the whole class as being 'for them'. Give individual instructions
 - If you are pointing at the board or at a resource, make sure the pupil is looking at the right item – highlighting can help with this
 - Remember some autistic students have monotropism – so if they are *looking* at the whiteboard as directed they may not be able to *hear* your voice (and vice versa)
 - Allow your pupils time to process your verbal information – this can vary but may take up to 20 seconds for some autistic pupils.
 - Chunk information down
 - Allow yourself time to think, to consider what / how you are going to ask / say
 - Consider whether Social Stories or Comic Strip Conversations will aid in the young person understanding situations
 - Consider other ways to communicate – visuals, written words, gestures, objects or photographs
 - Monitor the pupil's emotional state – what zone are they in? Look for more ideas in Emotional Regulation Skills. If they are in the Red zone, say very little –they will not be able to process what you are saying in red zone.

Structuring Language Positively for ASD Pupils

Good communication with autistic pupils will compensate for and promote comprehension, and the ability to start/maintain a conversation. It will also promote cooperation and socially acceptable behaviour.

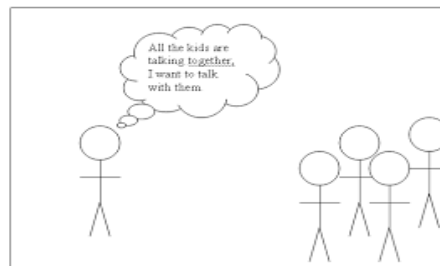
- Speak positively i.e. 'Do walk,' rather than 'Don't run.' Tell the pupil what you need. The pupil is likely to hear only part of a sentence, and you want them to hear, 'Walk,' rather than, 'Run.'
- Reduce your language, giving short, clear directions one at a time, allowing time to process. Back up instructions with visuals, for example, writing them on the board or on an individual task strip.

- Ensure that autistic pupils can access written tasks, texts and instructions too. Are they 'chunked' sufficiently? Are the written instructions short and clear and at an appropriate literacy level?
- Preface instructions to the group with the pupil's name, 'Charlie and everyone line up.'
- Employ the 'active voice'. This can be easier and more direct to understand. For example, 'Jenny fetched the books this morning,' rather than, 'The books were fetched by Jenny this morning.'
- To keep a conversation going or to elicit information make a statement rather than ask a question i.e. 'The weather today is....' Rather than 'What's the weather like today?'
- To keep a conversation going and to promote language use, if the pupil says something grammatically or phonologically incorrect, back up with a positive model rather than a correction. E.g. pupil: 'I goes into town,' adult: 'You are going out, how lovely.'
- Employ gesture, for example when asking a pupil to stop or pointing when you want children to go to a specific place. Using gesture can also be a visual support for instructions.



Resources

- Visuals (Chapter 9)
- Communication Tips (Chapter 2)
- Comic Strip Conversations
- Social Stories
- Scripted language



Chapter 3: Restricted and repetitive behaviours

What is it?



Autistic pupils will often behave in 'restricted and repetitive ways'. Despite the negative sound of this label, these behaviours can represent an autistic pupil attempting to cope with the challenges of living in a seemingly unpredictable neuro-typical world. Stimming for example, is a repetitive behaviour that represents an important regulating activity (and can also be an expression of joy). Routines can help autistic pupils predict what will happen next and reduce their anxiety. Restricting where they go and what they do can reduce their chance of being overwhelmed in an aversive sensory environment (see the section on sensory needs on page).

However while restrictive behaviours such as routines and restricting places can work as coping strategies, they can also restrict opportunities. For this reason, it is important to support autistic pupils carefully, ensuring they are well supported but still able to access opportunities. For example if a routine appears overly restrictive, we might try to adapt or create a new routine with them that is less so, rather than take it away altogether.

What will I see?

Autistic pupils will often use routine to help make sense of the world, and for this reason can find change very hard. Change makes everything unpredictable again and this can make autistic pupils very anxious.

Many autistic pupils can also develop rigid ways of thinking (also known as 'black and white thinking') and have less flexibility in thoughts and perceptions. This can mean that to some autistic students a piece of work is either 100% perfect or it is an absolute fail. Often any attempt to explain that their work is 'really good with just a couple of areas that need improving' is completely rejected as a fail (because 'really good' = 100% perfect!).

Some autistic pupils may struggle to consider any topics from a different point of view, and /or find it difficult to consider more than one solution to a problem. The latter can make it difficult for autistic children to adjust a plan when something changes. When autistic pupils struggle to see a topic from other points of view it can have an impact on their social skills and relationships with others. This is linked to a lack of Theory of Mind (difficulty in interpreting and understanding the thoughts, feelings and actions of others).

Some autistic pupils will develop very intense interests in a specific area, and be much more likely to be restricted themselves to a very deep knowledge of one or two interests compared to their non-autistic peers (who may have a wider, but less in-depth, range of interests and hobbies). Special interests can be used to motivate the pupil and are a positive way of motivating them to engage in school. Some autistic pupils will have the ability to 'hyper-focus' on their special interest for long periods of time and this can be a great skill, although it can prove challenging when they need to change task.

What can I do?

- Create class and whole-school environments that are not 'restrictive' for autistic pupils. Strive for low arousal sensory environments and clear structure (remember that if the sensory environment is too uncomfortable for them it will prove very difficult for them to remain and/or fully engage). Don't assume autistic pupils will 'get used to a busy classroom' over time; they will more likely just consistently underperform in that classroom over time. Autistic pupils will learn to cope with different sensory environments with support, adaptations and compromise.
- Have a clear consistent timetables, and allow autistic pupils to create and follow healthy routines.
- Allow pupils to stim. Provide them with a quiet place to stim only if they prefer this.

"When I did stims such as dribbling sand through my fingers, it calmed me down. When I stimmed, sounds that hurt my ears stopped. Most kids with autism do these repetitive behaviours because it feels good in some way. It may counteract an overwhelming sensory environment . . ." – Temple Grandin, Autism Asperger's Digest, 2011

- Use visuals and provide a visual timetable to show what is happening next. If necessary provide a checklist of what is needed each lesson, what they need to get out at the start, and put away at the end. These can be on an app or a phone as well as paper.

Visuals also support working memory and help pupils see the bigger picture.

- Plan for any changes in advance as change can produce anxiety. Warn autistic pupils for example if you know they will have a cover teacher and give them time to recover and regulate after doing so (e.g. suggest a walk outside). Introduce them to the cover teacher if you can or show a photo of them and tell them their name. Plan for school trips carefully, using photos, social stories and so on.
- Break tasks down into small steps illustrating what comes next.

A task that appears too large means the pupil may struggle to respond. Smaller steps increases motivation and reduces the chance of distraction.

- Have clear learning objectives in language that the pupils understand. Ensure these objectives are presented visually- many autistic pupils are visual learners.
- Clearly described 'grey' areas. In other words, rather than just outlining one single target for a piece of work (encouraging black and white thinkers to think they must either achieve this perfectly or fail), clearly outline a number of independently achievable targets.
- Have a task strip for the lesson- this can be on the whiteboard, on a mini whiteboard for the individual student, be put on a worksheet or written in the pupil's book.

This helps the pupil to know where they are in the lesson and gives them a sense of progress and completion. For a pupil with a PDA profile (See Appendix 3), they could perhaps choose the order in which they attempt the tasks.

- Give one instruction at a time and give time to process each instruction.
- Gain the pupil's attention by using their name first.

This supports them to shift their attention more easily.

- **Explain what is happening** – be explicit about situations, expectations, or other people's actions to help the young person understand. Be clear and detailed, so there's no room for confusion or doubt. Remember your communication skills (Chapter 2: Social communication and interaction)
- Use structure and consistency
- Use Social Stories / white boards / telling parents to inform of change. Give them chance to process this, and to recover from the stress it has caused them
- Consider whether Social Stories or Comic Strip Conversations will aid in the young person understanding social situations
- Encourage playing flexible thinking games – use an object and discuss what else could it be? Make up new rules for games
- Consider using 'What if?' cards. Use these in social skill lessons
- Mind map – help them learn to problem solve (chapter 6)
- Help them feel safe. Build on confidence and self-esteem



Resources

- Visuals (Chapter 9)
- Communication Tips (Chapter 2)
- Executive Functioning (Chapter 5)
- Comic Strip Conversations
- Social Stories



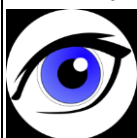
Chapter 4: Sensory processing

What is it?

Sensory processing is how we make sense of our bodies and our environments. Our lives are full of day to day sensory experiences and we constantly have to make responses to sensory input from within our bodies (internal) and from the environment (external).

Autistic pupils will very often process sensory information in a very different way to their non-autistic peers, sometimes finding environments too over-stimulating (and uncomfortable) and at other times was under-stimulating (and boring). This can impact not only their experience of the world (as 'uncomfortable' 'painful' or 'muted') but their ability to self-regulate, since our self-regulatory system is affected by sensory input. These sensory differences can therefore have an impact on how autistic pupils behave and interact in areas such as play, school, life skills, relationships, self-care and learning and can lead to restricted and repetitive behaviours as they try to cope.

Sensory input includes the following:



Visual or vision input: such as the words on a page or white board or the environment such as the lights above. For some pupils fluorescent lights for example can be excruciatingly painful.

Auditory or sound input: Autistic pupils may struggle to filter out background noise- this can affect the ability to learn and concentrate. They may be very sensitive to tone of voice and feel they are being shouted at by teachers when they may just be projecting their voice to speak to the class.



they



Tactile or touch input: It may help autistic pupils to feel the gadget they are holding to stay focused. How they feel in the seat they are on is important too. They may be very sensitive to the feel of clothes- not liking labels, or certain fabrics, they may struggle with some PE kit, may feel more comfortable in shorts rather than trousers, or struggle with the feel of a tie. Carpets may be very uncomfortable to sit on, and autistic pupils may wriggle during floor time.

Olfactory (smell) input: Autistic pupils may be very sensitive to the smell of food, the smell of other people or the perfume you're wearing.



Taste input: You may notice autistic pupils needing to chew in order to focus. You may see them chewing their jumper or pen.

Movement input: This has 2 parts: the sense of our position in space (proprioception), and the feeling of gravity (vestibular input). As you're reading, this input would be the feeling of leaning on your arms or tapping your foot.



Interoception: This is our ability to detect how we are feeling internally e.g. are we hungry, thirsty, hot, cold, calm, stressed.

Autistic people can be over sensitive (hyper-sensitive), under-sensitive (hypo-sensitive) in any or all of their senses and in any pattern. The pattern may change day to day or even hourly! A pupil who is hyper-sensitive may find many environments aversive or painful to their senses,

and regularly become over stimulated in them (sometimes leading to meltdown or shutdown). A pupil who is hypo-sensitive on the other hand, may feel that the world is dim and muted. They may either become lethargic and sleepy, or crave sensory input touching, licking, smelling and crashing into everything in sight. It is important to recognise this is a pupil trying to regulate themselves. Sensory differences are 'life-long': they do not go away, and autistic pupils need support to learn to manage these. In practice this means a mixture of learning how to change the environment (where possible), how to cope in an environment with sensory aids and when to identify an environment as intolerable and to leave. Autistic pupils will learn this far better with support and should not be left to 'manage' or 'get used to it'.

What will I see?

- Autistic pupils may struggle to sit still through a half-hour lesson and therefore may disrupt the class
- They often seem distracted and can't pay attention to what is being said
- They can bump into others in the lunch line, making them and others angry
- They may not be able to hold a pencil correctly, so they struggle with handwriting
- They can get upset when asked to switch from one activity to another
- They might become distressed during assemblies or have to leave the classroom at times
- The pupil may react with a flight, fright or freeze approach
- Some autistic pupils may seem unable to stop themselves touching, tasting, licking or moving because they are hypo-sensitive. This needs to be supported with sensory aids.
- Autistic pupils with sensory differences may need more opportunities to self-regulate than other pupils: heavy muscle work is especially helpful, as are the provisions of quite spaces.

What can I do?

Use the tools from Chapter 7 (Behaviour), analyse what you are seeing and why:

Consider and explore the environment (externally)

- Lights – florescent lights, by a window
- Noises – the white board, assembly, your tone of voice, others around them. Noise from outside the classroom etc.
- Smells – Perfume, coffee breath, food, smells from those around them
- Sitting arrangements and chair type (arm rests and backs can be important)
- Touch
- Clothes, seat and carpet materials

Consider and explore the environment (internally)

- How they are feeling – tired, ill or anxious
- Toileting issues
- Vision – looking up and down at a white board to an exercise book can be very difficult
- How does their body feel - Sitting on a hard floor or chair
- The need for movement – fiddling or rocking on a chair
- Focusing – feeling excited or shutting down

Carry out **sensory profiling** for the autistic pupil- look at:

Preferential seating

- Discuss with the pupil – ask the pupil what works for them

- Give the pupil additional space if needed
- Could be sat at the front or back – pupil may express a preference
- May need own desk/space
- Provide quiet, low arousal spaces for autistic pupils to retreat to as needed.
- Provide rules on how and when the space is used with the pupil
- Seating next to good role models

Movement Breaks

- Walking across the classroom to hand out books, sharpen pencil, open a window or taking messages
- For autistic pupils who struggle to self-regulate, plan regular movement breaks into the school day e.g. a walk around school after each lesson

Sensory Toys

- Give the pupil a doodle pad
- Allow fiddle objects, this could be blue tack, wristbands
- Some pupils will have 'Chewlery' (a specific chewy item)

Resources

CYPF Toolkit: <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/>

Autism Education Trust: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>

Chapter 5: Executive functioning

What is it?

Executive functioning is a set of cognitive processes which enables pupils to set goals, plan, and get things done, connecting past to present experiences. Executive functioning is not linked to intelligence. Executive functions are responsible for the initiation of tasks and the monitoring of action. These processes have been associated with the front section of the brain, known as the frontal lobe.

Executive function skills are used for:

- Planning and doing tasks
- Organising
- Regulating behaviour
- Working memory
- Impulse control
- Attention

Together, these skills allow us to make plans, finish work on time, cope with distractions, ask for help, figure out whether something is a good idea and take turns. They also help us not to over react to small problems and to focus on more than one thing at a time, to make decisions, check for mistakes and change plans if we need to – all the things we need to make life easier at school and work. Executive functioning also helps us process time: this is different from 'telling the time'. Processing time means being able to gauge how long '5 minutes will feel like', how much you can accomplish in that time and how much of that time has passed.

What will I see?

- Working memory difficulties
- Organisation and planning (of the day as a whole and class work in particular)
- Remembering to hand work in
- Starting a task and finishing a task
- Time management skills – when / where to start, knowing how long to take, being aware of time scales, how to convert what is in the mind to getting it out on paper
- Self-monitoring themselves and their work
- Revising and editing work
- Regulating anxiety / frustration / self esteem

What can I do?

Executive Functioning Maps

Planning	Strengths	I plan when the event is recurring, using visuals.
	Weaknesses	I have to write down my plan for how I am going to handle an event, or I have to ask someone for help since I don't like social interactions and can't join a social interaction without a plan for my involvement.

	Learning Goals	Learn how to write things down: lists, white boards, phone, and regularly check them.
	Accommodations	Have access to writing down everything I have to plan. Have access to school plans. Maintain a calendar on a wall as well as an electronic one.
	Approaches	Always have a notebook or electronic device that I can write things down so I don't forget.

Resources

- Emotional regulation (Chapter 8)
- Visuals (Chapter 9)
- Timers
- Mind Mapping
- Time Tables
- Colour Coding
- Memory Tasks / Games
- Frames around tasks to be completed
- Stop and summarise key points at planned intervals
- Repetition of information
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/organising-sequencing-prioritising.aspx#>
- <https://www.understood.org/~media/040bfb1894284d019bf78ac01a5f1513.pdf>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/understanding-executive-functioning-issues>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/ebook-executive-function-101>

Chapter 6: Anxiety

What is it?

Anxiety is a normal part of children's development, but autistic children and young people can experience anxiety more intensely and more often than others. Anxiety can be caused by a huge range of triggers and these will depend entirely on the individual, their likes and dislikes and their past experiences. It can help to encourage pupils to notice anxious feelings and use strategies for managing anxiety, along with modifying the environment. It is important for the pupil's long term wellbeing.

What will I see?

Parents may share:

- There may be changes in their child's sleeping, toileting or eating patterns
- They may report that once their child gets home they become distressed, upset, have meltdowns or become withdrawn and self-isolate
- They may struggle to get them up in the morning and get them to school on time
- They may consequently have their own parental anxiety

You may notice:

- Autistic pupils may be less tolerant of changes or of social situations
- They may be less tolerant of the environment externally and internally (sensory)
- They may be less engaged communicatively or emotionally
- They may become increasingly fixated on special interests or on following new or old routines
- There may be evidence of stress related physical symptoms such as irritable bowels or a flare up of eczema
- They may not cope well with situations which they usually tolerate or even enjoy
- They may show behaviour which avoids co-operation, leads to shut down or ultimately becomes physically challenging including for some, self-injurious behaviour
- You may see more anxious behaviour at different parts of the day
- Remember anxious behaviour may be internalised and not always easy to spot



Areas of anxiety to consider

Separation anxiety – autistic pupils may experience excessive anxiety regarding separation from home and/or from people to whom the individual has a strong emotional attachment

General anxiety - excessive worry about daily events, past & present

Social anxiety – They may become confused / fearful around others, show avoidance, and find reading social situations difficult.

Trauma - may be at high risk for experiencing stressful and traumatic life events, which can negatively impact their mental health

What can I do?

Work with Parents/Carers

Working with parents/carers will help you understand and connect with the pupil. It will help highlight any difficulties at home or what the pupil may share when they become distressed or anxious.

- **Analysing and unpicking anxious behaviour – (Chapters 6 and 7)**



Therapeutic Anxiety Guidance – Used alongside other therapeutic approach tools.

West Berks Therapeutic Thinking Team -

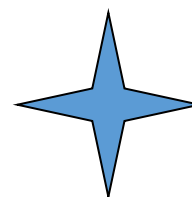
<https://www.westberkseducation.co.uk/Services/4716>

“Anxiety analysis is an analytical tool used over time to collect information. The aim is to plan to avoid escalation through differentiation or support. Input from a number of sources including the child’s views where possible will allow us to look for inconsistency in perception.”

Iceberg analysis (Division Teacch, 1995) – **See Chapter 7**

The **STAR Approach** (Ewa Zarkowska and John Clements 1994). **See Chapter 7**

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/setting-trigger-action-result-star-chart/>



Areas to explore and consider when analysing anxiety

- Where was the pupil? When did it happen? Who were they with? How were they feeling?
- Sensory Processing difficulties
- Executive Function Skills
- Emotional Regulation Skills
- Social and Communication Skills
- Home life

Other needs that may contribute to anxiety

- ADHD
- Cognition and Learning needs
- Attachment
- Trauma

- **Amend and adapt your approach:**

Show understanding - recognise there isn't necessarily one trigger

Anxiety may be the reaction to a number of low level stressors that have cumulatively built up over time. The last thing that happened may not be the only issue to consider. When

adults around a pupil are reporting that there was no trigger to a distressed behaviour, it is important to review the learner's whole experience. (See Prizant's 'Uniquely Human', Ch 6)

- Find out what makes the pupil anxious
- Help the pupil to recognise anxious feelings
- Use relaxation and calming strategies
- Facilitate enjoyable interaction, either with a key person, mentor, friend, animal
- Play games
- Use visual techniques
- Create a Happy Box / Calming Bag / List
- Teach resilience and problem solving
- Avoid or explain change
- Manage transitions
- Evaluate the classroom / outside environment
- Discuss homework with home if an issue

Relaxkids.com – Relax Kids uses mindfulness and relaxation techniques and has a free download of a 'Calm Pack' on their website. The calm pack has a meditation and set of cards with a variety of relaxation exercises that can be practised in groups or alone. There are also affirmation cards and some activities. A Relax Kids meditation for younger children can also be accessed on YouTube.

Consider using the following :

- Communication strategies - Body Language / Tone of voice
- Using Scripted Language
- Use a Therapeutic thinking approach
- Try and put yourself in their shoes, understand how they are feeling
- Be aware they may not be able to know how they are feeling or realise that they are anxious, so will not know how to express this
- Mindfulness
- Exposure therapy (gradually exposing someone to the thing that makes them anxious)
- Comic Strip Conversations
- Social Stories
- Zones of Regulation
- 5 point Scale
- Time out Cards
- Safe, quiet place for them to retreat
- Alert Programme
- Wellbeing Plans

Resources

- **Visuals (Chapter 8)**
- **Worry Boxes**
<https://copingskillsforkids.com/blog/coping-skill-spotlight-using-a-worry-box>
- **Therapeutic Thinking:**
<https://www.westberkseducation.co.uk/Services/4716>
- **ELSA:**
https://directory.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/directory/service.page?id=ZTkXbcXX_D4
- **Emotional Health Academy:**
<https://directory.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/directory/service.page?id=upYcDgajjYw>
- **CAMHS (Appendix 6)**
<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/children-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs/>
- **Anna Freud**
<https://www.annafreud.org/>
- **Mind.org**
www.mind.org.uk
- **Young Minds**
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Book:** *Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries* by Cathy Cresswell and Lucy Willetts

Chapter 7: Behaviour

What is it?

Behaviour is a form of communication, autistic pupils may be expressing that they do not feel safe, or may not understand what is happening or understand what others are thinking or feeling. They no longer feel in control at times and/ or feel that they have autonomy.

It is important to connect with our pupils and be curious and understand why the behaviour is happening. Through acknowledging and offering empathy and looking for solutions small changes can start to happen.

What will I see?

- Is the behaviour a means of expressing feelings or experience of a situation?
- Is the behaviour being used to escape from the situation or to avoid a demand?
- Is the behaviour a way of getting something the pupil needs or wants?
- Is the way we respond reinforcing the behaviour?
- Is the pupil having a meltdown or shutdown?
- Is the behaviour conscious or sub conscious?

What can I do?

You need to analyse the behaviour, then amend and adapt your approach.

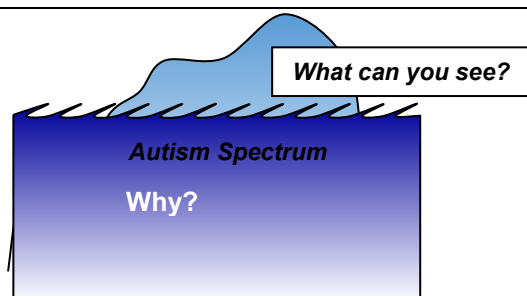
Analyse the behaviour

We can analyse the behaviour and unpick what happened and why, by doing this we can often prepare and prevent that behaviour happening again.

There are several tools you can use to analyse the behaviour that you are seeing:

Iceberg analysis

(Division Teacch, 1995) The iceberg image supports the idea of conducting a functional behaviour assessment to recognise the communicative function or intent of challenging behaviour. The top of the iceberg is the visible behaviours that you are seeing, the important part is to explore what is hidden underneath the waterline.



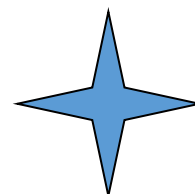
Why is the pupil distressed? Is it related to any of their needs or difficulties or are there circumstances around the pupil at the moment which could also be causing them to be upset? By exploring further what we do not see, often we can come up with more ideas and solutions.

The **STAR Approach** (Ewa Zarkowska and John Clements 1994).

The STAR chart works by providing a detailed record of the behaviour which is taking place, in relation to:

- Setting -where and in what context the behaviour takes place
- Trigger -what might lead to the behaviour, including what happens immediately before it
- Action -what does the pupil do
- Result – What happens as a result – for the young person, and what do other pupils and staff do?

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/setting-trigger-action-result-star-chart/>



Therapeutic Tree – Used alongside with the other Therapeutic approach tools. (West Berks Therapeutic Team)

<https://www.westberkseducation.co.uk/Services/4716>

“**Therapeutic Tree**– this analysis needs to be completed before writing a therapeutic plan. The therapeutic tree identifies root causes to behaviour and identifies solutions that schools or services can include within the therapeutic plan. What pro-social experiences are identified from completing roots and fruits that you would include within the therapeutic plan.”

Areas to explore and consider when analysing the behaviour

- Sensory Processing difficulties
- Anxiety
- Home life
- Other needs:
 - ADHD
 - Cognition and learning needs

- Attachment
- Trauma

Amended and adapt your approach

- Communication strategies - Body Language / Tone of voice
- Using Scripted Language
- Use a Therapeutic thinking approach

Resources

- **Therapeutic Thinking:**
<https://www.westberkseducation.co.uk/Services/4716>
- STAR, ICEBURG, TREE – see above

Chapter 8: Emotional regulation

What is it?



Emotional awareness refers to the ability to identify which emotion we are feeling and the reason for it. Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage and control our emotions as well as our ability to express them. Autistic pupils can have a number of difficulties here. First of all they are often dealing with *more* stress, and therefore have to regulate more which in itself is hard. Part of this may be due to the sensory environment creating more stress and making them feel more dysregulated. Secondly, autistic pupils may have difficulty regulating their emotions, in telling them apart or reading the emotions of others. This can make them feel lost, not

in control, or they can come across as rude and abrupt, not realising the impact they have on others.

What will I see?

An autistic pupil who is struggling to regulate may visibly seem to be on an emotional rollercoaster, and to be experiencing very strong emotions. At times this may seem for very little cause, but in reality this is usually due to a build-up of difficult experiences. Some autistic pupils may struggle to regain their sense of calm and may need help with this – it is important to recognise they are not choosing to be dysregulated.

Other autistic pupils may struggle to recognise what they are feeling at all. This may be due to alexithymia, a difficulty in recognising and describing emotional states. A pupil with alexithymia may not be aware they are feeling stressed or angry for example at all – until it has reached a very high level.

What can I do?

The ability to recognise, label and understand feelings in oneself and others is an important skill and one in which our pupils will require ongoing teaching in everyday settings. To effectively teach self-regulation, school and parents can adopt the following approach: be warm, accepting and responsive to the pupil's emotional needs, talk about emotions, acknowledge feelings, support and show empathy to validate negative feelings, try not to punish or react negatively to emotional outbursts.

- Think about where the pupil is in terms of understanding their own emotions. How well do they recognise how emotions feel and label them correctly? They can mislabel emotions “angry” when they may mean “worried?”
- Can they recognise pain or how their body feels?



- Do they know and understand that they are starting to feel anxious / angry and knowing what to do about it?
- What makes them relaxed, annoyed, stressed etc. – connect and observe them.
- Do they know how to express themselves or communicate that they are losing control?
- Is the pupil unwilling to express themselves?
- Are they able to recognise emotions in others and know how to respond?
- Do they say “yes” because they have learnt this makes the other person leave them alone!
- Are they experiencing emotional outbursts due to sensory difficulties?
- What helps them feel more relaxed – consider using fiddle toys, happy boxes, quiet safe spaces or breathing / relaxation exercises

Resources

- **Sensory Snacks (Chapter 4)**
- **Visuals (Chapter 9)**
- **Social skills**
- **Comic Strip Conversations**
- **Social Stories**
- **Magazines – cutting out pictures**
- **Emotion Cards**
- **5 point scale**
<https://www.5pointscale.com/>
- **Zones of Regulation – Me and My Zones**
<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html>
- **Alert Programme**
https://www.alertprogram.com/?doing_wp_cron=1611923883.7963919639587402343750
- **Emotional Literacy Support – ELSA**
<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/about-elsa-support/>
- **And contact EPS -**
https://directory.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/directory/service.page?id=ZTkXbcXX_D4
- **Twinkl**
<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>
- **Do2Learn**
<https://do2learn.com/>
- **Sparklebox**
<https://www.sparklebox.co.uk/>
- **Axiom Sensory**
<https://axiomsensory.com/>

Chapter 9: Visuals

What is it?

Visual supports can be used to help autistic pupils. Visual supports can be adaptable and portable and can be used in most situations. We see and use visual prompts every day, for example road signs, maps and shopping lists. They help us to function, to understand the world around us, and provide us with valuable information. Many autistic pupils are thought to be visual learners, so presenting information in a visual way can help to encourage and support their communication, language development and ability to process information. It can also promote independence, build confidence and raise self-esteem.

Whichever visual support you decide to use, make sure it's appropriate to the autistic pupil and in line with their needs and current stage of development. Visual supports are very personal and what works for one person may not work for another.

"I think in pictures. Words are like a second language to me...when somebody speaks to me, his words are instantly translated into pictures... One of the most profound mysteries of autism has been the remarkable ability of most autistic people to excel at visual spatial skills while performing so poorly at verbal skills." (Grandin, 1995. p19)




What will I see?

- The pupil may become confused, frustrated and unaware what should be happening.
- Staying focused could be difficult for them
- May fidget and move around
- Could be less organised and more forgetful
- Poor executive functional skills
- Can become more anxious and overwhelmed
- May become less flexible and more rigid
- They will feel less in control
- Could be unaware or explain how they are feeling

What can I do?

Areas where visual support can help autistic pupils:

- Timetables/schedules
- Helping with sequencing
- Transition and change
- Starting and finishing activities
- Introduction of new activities or situations – general knowledge, curriculum subjects, news
- Instructions/reminders
- Attract and hold their attention
- Choice
- Understanding emotions and expressions
- Sharing information
- Behaviour – praise, demonstrate what's appropriate, stop inappropriate behaviour
- Behaviour strategies
- Social skills

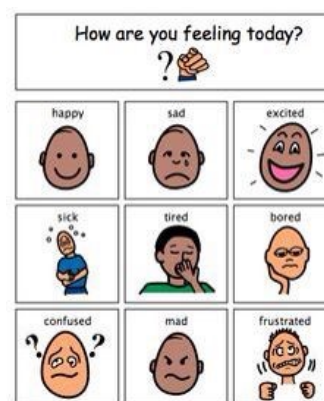
Literacy	
Maths	
ICT	
R.E.	

- Locating people and places
- Safety
- Structuring the environment
- Independent living skills
- Sex education
- Health

Consider using the following visuals:

Emotional regulation - supporting recognising and regulating feelings

Facial expressions - ELSA
 5 point Scale
 Zones of regulation
 Emotional Thermometer
 How am I feeling? - ELSA
 Happy boxes / lists / calming bags.



Classroom visuals

Timetables

- Pocket size and laminated
- Daily, weekly, fortnightly, depending on pupil

I need a Break Card

Choice Boards

Note Books

Labels – on boxes / draws

Lesson Outline – to show progress through the lesson

Highlighters and colour filters

Timers

Organisation

Bag packing, equipment check list.

Organising help with writing (graphic organiser), mind maps, templates, vocabulary boxes, sentence starters, focus questions.

Task Breakdown (post It notes/white board.)



Resources

- **Widget**
<https://widgitonline.com/>
- **Twinkl**
<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>
- **Do2Learn**
<https://do2learn.com/>
- **Symbolworld**
<https://symbolworld.org/>

Appendix 1: Revision, Tests and Exams

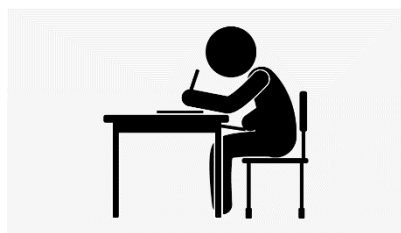
Revision

Autistic pupils may find revision very stressful because they may be easily distracted, may struggle for motivation and may not find it very interesting. They may also aim to do too much revision and risk burn out or they may not know where or how to start.

What can I do?

- Think about what might work and what might motivate
- Think about the best time of day to study and how long for- short bursts with breaks built in may work best
- Consider the revision environment
- Study alone or with a friend or parent/ teacher to guide?
- Consider the learning style- what strategies work? Visual aids, mind maps, flash cards, audio revision, film clips, quizzes, practice questions
- Make a revision timetable and display it. The timetable needs to be specific- 'English' or 'Maths' is too vague. Break each subject down into topics E.g. 'An Inspector Calls' or 'Shape.' Then subdivide this further e.g. 'Characters- the Inspector, Sheila, Gerald etc., Themes- capitalism vs socialism, moral conscience etc.' or '2D shapes and 3 D shapes.' Work backwards from the exam to ensure there is time to revise every aspect plus some buffer time in case some revision sessions are missed for any reason
- Include fun things on the revision timetable and other commitments that already exist such as a birthday party or music lessons or fitness classes

Tests and Exams



Autistic pupils may struggle with exams and tests. They may not recognise their importance or may not see the relevance. They may also become very anxious around tests and exams. This can be for a variety of reasons:

- It's a change to the normal routine
- They may struggle to focus and be put off by other pupils around them
- They may feel very anxious just because it is a test and they feel pressured both by wanting to achieve and by time constraints
- It may take them longer to process information and therefore they may run out of time
- They may not know how to start or how to approach a test and this can lead to increased anxiety

What can I do?

- If the pupil is sitting national exams, see if they qualify for any exam concessions such as extra time, scribe, reader, use of computer
- Does every exam need taking? Would it be better to concentrate on fewer subjects to lower anxiety and maximise success?
- Consider if taking the test in a different room away from most other pupils will reduce anxiety
- Offer rest breaks and movement breaks if permitted, and explain how to use these to reduce anxiety
- Can the test be broken up into smaller parts and completed at different times?
- Is the test at the right level? If it is too hard, this can be very de-motivating
- Consider the pupil's sensory profile and the environment. Do the lights need to be turned off? Can there be a quieter space to work?
- Teach relaxation skills and make sure there is time to practise them regularly
- Give opportunities for physical exercise and encourage a healthy diet and a good sleep pattern
- Explicitly teach exam skills: how to read the questions, how to highlight, how to plan answers, where to start, how to obtain marks. Show lots of practice answers and explain how these obtained the marks they did. Show lots of mark schemes too, explain how the mark scheme is reflected in answers. Give lots of targeted practice so that answering exam questions becomes routine and therefore less anxiety provoking
- Display the exam timetable- use colour if helpful
- Autistic pupils can be very literal. Make sure they are practised in understanding exam questions so that they are used to any more abstract style questions that appear
- Explain how to prepare for exams, and explain where they will be taken and what the procedures will be
- Show the pupil where the exams will take place and where they will sit. Can the pupil tell the time to know how to pace themselves? If the clock ticks, this might be distracting. Consider most appropriate seating position. Introduce the pupil to exam invigilators
- Offer a meet and greet before an exam if this would help and this could be used to practise relaxation techniques too

Appendix 2: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

What is it?

Autistic pupils can also have other needs that affect them, this is 'comorbidity'. Some of these may be identified early in a child's life, others may be identified later in adolescence or even adulthood. One of these could be **ADHD**.

The impact of having a diagnosis of ADHD in addition to autism can vary from one pupil to another. At one extreme it can be difficult to detect at school, at the other it can be very problematic, with significant issues related to the diagnosed pupil's behaviour and learning, and with an impact on other pupils and school staff.

Pupils with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) have a brain that develops and functions differently. These differences can bring both challenges and opportunities.

What will I see?



Characteristics of ADHD

A pupil with ADHD may have difficulties in several core areas:

Attention – Probably the most significant difference in ADHD is difficulty in *regulating or shifting attention*: you may find that either a pupil's attention is continually racing from one thing to another or it is concentrated and focused on one activity and cannot shift to another activity (hyper-focus). A pupil with ADHD may appear to:

- Make careless mistakes in school work, overlook details
- Be easily distracted or sidetracked
- Have difficulty following instructions
- Doesn't seem to be listening when spoken to directly
- Have trouble organising tasks and possessions
- Often fails to finish work in school or chores in the classroom
- Often avoids or resists tasks that require sustained mental effort, including doing homework

- Often loses homework assignments, books, jackets, backpacks, sports equipment

Hyperactivity & Impulsivity

- Often fidgets or squirms
- Has trouble staying in seat
- Runs and climbs where it's inappropriate
- Has trouble playing quietly
- Is extremely impatient, can't wait for turn
- Always seems to be "on the go" or "driven by a motor"
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before a question is completed
- Interrupts or intrudes on other conversations, activities, possessions

Executive functioning (how the brain enables us to organise and plan). This can include difficulty in:

- inhibiting behaviours i.e. impulsivity (e.g. a student who cannot stop themselves getting up to look out of the window while trying to solve a maths problem)
- staying on task, and transitioning between tasks
- managing time, and be on time
- organising themselves
- relying on their working memory generally (this may be limited, making organising themselves challenging, as well as making sequences and instructions hard to follow)
- regulating their emotions, which may be very intense.

In addition to this, some pupils with ADHD may be **hyperactive**. This is not a feature shared by all pupils with ADHD. While some pupils with ADHD do not experience hyperactivity as we normally think of it at all however, many talk of experiencing a constant 'internal restlessness'.

It is important to keep in mind that not every high-energy or impulsive pupil has ADHD. Pupils are diagnosed with ADHD only if they demonstrate these symptoms so often that they are causing real difficulty in at least two settings i.e. at school and at home. The pattern that is causing them serious impairment must persist for at least 6 months.

ADHD brings challenges but it also brings **positives**. Pupils with ADHD can have energy, creativity and be excellent at thinking outside the box. The ability to hyper-focus can be a gift, and experiencing strong emotions such as happiness, excitement and intense interest can be very positive.

Friendships

Pupils with ADHD often find it difficult to make and keep friendships.

Social skills can be difficult for pupils with ADHD who cannot always wait to take their turn, blurt out inappropriate comments and who may be overtly antagonistic and even aggressive.

Girls and ADHD

The stereotype of ADHD is boys disrupting the classroom by jumping up from their seats, getting in other pupils' business, or blurting out answers without raising their hands. However, girls can be diagnosed as having ADHD and they tend to be diagnosed much later because their symptoms are more subtle. More of them have only inattentive symptoms of ADHD, and this can be mistaken for being 'dreamy' or 'quiet'. If they have the hyperactive-impulsive symptoms

they are more likely to be seen as pushy, hyper-talkative, or overemotional. Impulsive girls may have trouble being socially appropriate and struggle to make and keep friends. This can then have an impact on their anxiety levels.

What can I do?

Often ADHD is managed by medication but it can also be well supported with good strategies too. Most pupils with ADHD respond well to medication but it should only be used as part of a wide range of psychological, educational and developmental therapies. Talk with parents to understand more about the pupil's medication and how it is working. Sometimes it can take a while for the medication to work or be right for that pupil.

- Try and stay patient and have a higher level of tolerance. This is not always easy as there can be a higher level of frustration around a pupil with ADHD.
- Try to help them organise their thoughts and to be aware of what is expected of them. (Executive Functioning)
- Offer Structure. With regular routines and rituals, they become more familiar with what they need to do. The more you can keep to routines and rituals, the better. Any change simply creates distraction, uncertainty and confusion.
- Help them to learn how to develop a sequence of events in the right order; this will bring about real improvements in academic performance.
- Support them with their memory weakness, by using colour coding, visuals etc. Look up executive functioning skills.
- Consider where you seat pupils with ADHD and who you sit them next to.
- Offer pre learning – involve the parents with this. It really helps with confidence and self-esteem
- Explore how you can keep them focused
- Movement breaks – get them involved with tasks
- Chunk information down, give one task at a time. You may have to break that task down into even smaller chunks
- Explore alternative ways of recording information
- Provide prompts – make it visual as well as verbal
- Beware of your language / body language (Chapter 2)
- Allow time to settle into the lesson
- Provide fiddle toys / sensory input to help them stay focused (Chapter 4)
- Try music to support task responses/concentration
- Consider behaviour (Chapter 7)



Resources

- Consider referral to CAMHS (see Appendix 6)
- **ADHD Foundation**
https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Teaching-and-Managing-Students_FINAL.pdf
- **Book: How to Teach and Manage Children with ADHD** by Fintan O'Regan published by LDA Learning, 2002

Appendix 3: Pathological Demand Avoidance

What is it?

Pathological Demand Avoidance or PDA as it is often known comes under the autism umbrella. It is a relatively new concept with limited evidence to date, and is still somewhat controversial. As a result there is no currently agreed upon definition of PDA.

However, there is general agreement that a PDA profile exists which describes children and adults whose main characteristic to avoid everyday demands and expectations to an extreme extent. This profile is considered to be part of the autism spectrum.

You may also see it highlighted as demand avoidance. These pupils often have their own distinct profile, with a higher level of anxiety which can lead to avoidance of demands and expectations of others. Like other pupils with an autism diagnosis they will experience difficulties with social communication and interaction, and display behaviours, activities and interests which are repetitive and restricted. However, pupils with PDA will also exhibit a pronounced need to be in control. It is this control which can lead to behaviours being displayed either externally (meltdowns) or internally (shutdowns) caused by fear, anxiety and confusion.

What will I see?

What are the characteristics of PDA?

Taken from the PDA society <https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/>

The main characteristic of PDA is high anxiety when demands are made on the pupil.



Resisting Demands Obsessively - It is often not the activity itself that is a pressure but the fact that another person is expecting them to do it. The pupil's threshold or tolerance can vary from day to day, or moment to moment. It is important to realise that the more anxious a person with PDA is, the less they will be able to tolerate demands. As a child, avoidance of those making demands on them knows no boundaries and usually includes a level of social manipulation. Strategies range from simple refusal, distraction, giving excuses, delaying, arguing, suggesting alternatives and withdrawing into fantasy. They may also resist by becoming physically incapacitated (often accompanied by an explanation such as, "My legs don't work" or "My hands are made of lava.") If pushed to comply, they may become verbally or physically aggressive, with severe behavioural outbursts, best described as a 'panic attack'.

Appearing sociable - Pupils with PDA are often very sociable and can display degrees of empathy previously not thought to be consistent with autism. Sometimes it seems that they are able to understand other people at an intellectual level but not at an emotional one. However, despite their use of social niceties, social interaction is very often flawed by their inability to see the bigger picture, their lack of boundaries and desire to be in control of the situation. They often understand rules but don't feel they apply to themselves. As children, this can lead to playground peer group difficulties.

Excessive mood swings, often switching suddenly - Pupils with PDA may switch from one state to another very quickly (e.g. from contented to aggressive) driven by the need to be in charge.

Comfortable (sometimes to an extreme extent) in role playing and pretending - When they are younger, children with PDA often engage in a level of pretend play that would be

unexpected from autistic children. People with PDA are very good at taking on the roles and styles of others. The classic example is children who behave as if they were the teachers to other children.

Language delay, seemingly as a result of passivity - Although people with PDA may have some language delays at an early age, there is often a striking and sudden degree of catch-up. Certain elements of communication are not as disordered as in autism, with more fluent use of eye contact (other than when avoiding demands) and better conversational timing. Some language difficulties remain, such as taking things literally and misunderstanding sarcasm and teasing. As an extreme form of avoidance, some pupils become selectively mute in many situations, yet their parents know they can speak when they want to.

Obsessive behaviour - The sort of avoidance that has been described is often linked to an obsession with a particular person (or less frequently, an object). Obsessions will vary from person to person but are often social in nature. Sometimes, obsessions with particular people can become problematic and overbearing for those who are on the receiving end.

Masking - Some autistic people are very adept at **masking**, and this is very common with PDA. Masking means that pupils may be able to hide or 'hold in' some of their differences/difficulties in certain environments or with certain people. Significantly, this means that challenges reported in one setting (often home) may not always be seen in others (such as school or other settings). This can and does lead to misunderstandings.

Attendance difficulties - School avoidance – when a pupil is unable to attend school due to anxiety, phobia or trauma – **contact the Autism Team as soon as you see any signs**

Sensory sensitivities - Just as in autism, pupils with PDA can often experience over- or undersensitivity in any of their senses: sight, smell, taste, touch or hearing.



What can I do?

- Try not to react to behaviour/what they say, build a tough hide – don't show anger/hurt.
- Remember they may be able to work out how others think/feel but don't relate this knowledge to how they deal with others
- Be prepared – identify triggers and plan strategies in advance
- Be flexible when you can – be prepared to negotiate
- When child in full fantasy flow – it's not the time to challenge it

- Indirect praise, e.g. to adult/parent in their hearing – rather than to them directly
- Avoid direct demands e.g. 'you need to', 'you've got to'.
- **Use indirect language**, 'Bet you can't...' 'Can you show me....' 'I wonder who can...' 'How do I' 'I can't see how to make this work-' 'Maybe we could investigate. **Not-** 'You need to/time to/got to/must,'
- Try to make them feel helpful, 'It would be helpful if you...'
- The 'race' can be effective
- Pretend you don't know/get it wrong
- Offer limited choices – give them some control, 'Do you want to do --- or ---' 'Do you want to do --- or --- first?' 'Would you like to put your shoes on here or there?'
- Monitor anxiety – when you sense that it is higher, make fewer demands when lower, make greater demands
- Get them to rate tasks/demands – give help/support as appropriate
- Quality of relationships is paramount, may work better for some staff than others
- Share the load, it is taxing (gradually increase number of staff)
- Depersonalise rules, 'It's not me, it's the health and safety rule/school rule,'
- Visuals can work – be prepared to change
- Change the routines – novelty factor
- Change your approaches
- Care for staff – it's exhausting
- Allow take up time
- Use the pupil's interests
- Use humour
- Use distraction

Five Golden Rules

- Think ahead
- Give the pupil advance notice
- **Monitor the pupil's stress levels and scale back demands when necessary**
- Create space- chill out zone
- Keep calm

Choose Priorities

How important?	Priority	Strategies/comments
Change into PE Kit	Low	Indoor- could be bare feet, outdoors try trainers
Sit on chair in class	Medium	Try office chair, bean bag, stool- more important to be part of group
Attend school every day	High	Flexibility regards uniform, amended timetable- aim to achieve sustained attendance and to build relationships
Record work in own handwriting	Low	Can dictate, scribe, photograph, different pens to use, whiteboard

Resources

- Therapeutic Thinking Tools (Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and appendix 8)
- Communication Tips – be sure they are PDA friendly (Chapter 2)
- Executive Functioning (Chapter 5)
- Take a **P.A.C.E** approach (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)
<https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/>
- **PDA Society**
<https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/>
- **Books**

Simple Strategies for Supporting Children with Pathological Demand Avoidance at School, 2015. Zoe Syson, Emma Gore Langton

Understanding pathological demand avoidance syndrome in children: A guide for parents, teachers and other professionals, Phil Christie, Margaret Duncan, Ruth Fidler and Zara Healy

Appendix 4: Dyslexia

What is it?

Dyslexia is a neurological difference and can have a significant impact during education, in the workplace and everyday life. It is estimated to affect about 10% of the population.

Dyslexia primarily affects reading and writing skills but can also impact on other areas such as;

- Processing information
- Remembering information
- Organisational skills

There is no connection between intelligence and dyslexia. It can range from mild to severe and can co-occur with other learning differences. It usually runs in families and is a lifelong condition that is a recognised disability under the Equality Act 2010.

It is important to remember that there are positives to thinking differently. Many dyslexic people show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in the visual and creative fields.

Ten percent of the population are believed to be dyslexic, but it is still often poorly understood. With the right support, the strengths and talents of dyslexic people can really shine

The British Dyslexia Association has adopted the Rose (2009) definition of dyslexia:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well-founded intervention.

What will I see?

The picture of indicators may be different from one person to another/at different ages.

A few examples include:

- Slow to acquire spelling/reading/writing and secure letter/sound correspondence
- Late speech and language development
- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes and unable to give rhymes
- Difficulty learning tables
- Difficulty learning to tell the time
- Difficulty with handwriting
- Poor attention or concentration for activities involving the reading, writing, listening
- Problems remembering more than one instruction at a time
- Difficulty learning sequences such as the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year
- Has difficulty with the organisation of work

What can I do?

There are many different strategies that can support dyslexic pupils in the classroom such as:

- Don't do too much at once – as it overloads the working memory
- Ensure information is clearly understood in the first place
- Make links to previous knowledge explicit
- Use repetition/overlearning where necessary
- Give instructions in the order they are to be performed
- Ask pupil to repeat the instruction/information back to you
- Give pupil 'thinking time' to process information and respond appropriately
- Display prompts and reminders about what to do, where to find things, useful words
- Use multi-sensory teaching approaches to ensure that information is absorbed and stored
- Encourage alternatives to writing - respond by drawing or dictating/recording answers
- Check pupil's learning by requesting non-written responses - draw, act out, sing, dictate answers
- Limit writing demands and give plenty of time to complete written work
- Provide planning formats/writing frames/cloze activities/story skeletons for extended writing
- Teach pupils how to use mind maps, spider webs, bullet points, flow charts, ICT software
- Mark work in a positive way – mark only words that have been taught
- Specify what will be marked - content, spelling, technical skills or presentation and mark only that
- Match reading resources to an individual's reading ability, ensuring it is age appropriate
- Encourage the use of books in audio/digital format to support individual access to texts
- Limit/avoid reading/copying from the board. Give copies of notes/examples
- Avoid asking pupils to read aloud in front of others

Cognition and Learning Team (CALT) are all specialist teachers for children with literacy difficulties and can offer advice and training in relation to dyslexia and literacy difficulties. Note information below about who can undertake dyslexia assessments and the qualifications that are needed.

Visual difficulties are separate from dyslexia. Some children with dyslexia may experience visual difficulties but not all pupils with visual difficulties have dyslexia. Pupils experiencing visual difficulties should seek assessment and advice from optometrist/behavioural ophthalmologist.

Guidance on assessors & assessments for Dyslexia/Dyscalculia in light of changes by SASC 2019

Background

SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) is a standard-setting group concerned with the diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties. The authority for this committee and its remit stem from the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines.

Recent changes in diagnostic assessment reports reflect an extensive consultation process carried out over the past three years by SASC and its sub-committee STEC, involving key professional bodies and training providers in the field, to clarify how best, in the SpLD diagnostic assessment, to use professional observation and experience alongside test results in the identification of an individual with a specific learning difficulty.

Changes to reporting have been made to encourage greater:

- Accessibility
- Consistency
- Reliability

- Clarity
- Efficiency and usefulness

SASC have provided the structure and core components for the diagnostic assessment report that should be followed by assessors.

Use of this format will be required to be used by assessors from 1st July 2020

Who can carry out a dyslexia assessment?

Testing should be carried out by a professional who is suitably qualified to ensure that the assessment and the report are of an appropriate standard.

In order to be able to diagnose dyslexia the individual carrying out an assessment should be either:

1. An Educational Psychologist holding HCPC registration

OR

2. A Specialist Teacher assessor holding:

- AMBDA (or equivalent level 7 qualification)
- An Assessment Practising Certificate (APC). This needs to be current as this certificate requires renewal every 3 years
- Specialist Teacher Assessors should ideally be a member of a professional body such as the BDA. Professional membership of such organisations as the BDA, PATOSS or The Dyslexia Guild mean that the assessor is obliged to undertake regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and keep up to date.

Who can carry out a dyscalculia assessment?

In order to be able to diagnose dyscalculia the assessor should have experience of teaching mathematics at the assessee's age or level of maths experience and be either:

1. An Educational Psychologist holding HCPC registration

OR

2. A Specialist Teacher assessor holding:

- AMBDA (or equivalent level 7 qualification)
- Approved Teacher Dyscalculia (ATD)
- (The combined AMBDA Dyscalculia is not yet available)
- An Assessment Practising Certificate (APC). This needs to be current as this certificate requires renewal every 3 years

The links below will provide further information/detail:

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/how-is-dyslexia-diagnosed/dyslexia-diagnostic-assessment>

<https://sasc.org.uk/Default.aspx>

Resources

- **British Dyslexia Association (BDA)**
<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- **Professional Association of Teachers of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS)**
<https://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/>
- **Helen Arkell Centre**
<https://www.helenarkell.org.uk/>
- **The Dyslexia – SpLD Trust**
<http://www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/>

Appendix 5:

Dyspraxia/Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)

What is it?

Dyspraxia is also known as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). One way of understanding dyspraxia is difficulties in processing where you are in space, and where you are in time.

'In space' refers to co-ordination difficulties: these may be in gross and/or fine motor activities, but every individual will have a unique profile. If you have a pupil with dyspraxia they may appear to be 'clumsy'. Difficulties in processing where you are 'in time' refers to the differences in the executive functioning system also found in many people with dyspraxia. This can include organising your time, your thoughts, and planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order. Sensory and social difficulties are also a feature of dyspraxia.

Common strengths in people with dyspraxia include creativity, determination, strategic thinking and problem-solving.

What will I see?

A pupil with DCD/dyspraxia may:

- Appear 'clumsy'
- Have difficulty with pencil grip, and with writing
- Grip items too tightly, or not tight enough (e.g. dropping)
- May walk into people/things
- Struggle to sit upright without arm/back support or become very tired, flopping on to the desk
- Find P.E. difficult (and avoid)
- Find cutlery difficult to use and be a messy eater
- Find balance difficult, dislike having their feet off the ground and experience vertigo from even short heights
- Struggle to organise themselves, remember what to bring to a lesson, when homework should be completed
- Have difficulties with short term memory
- Find it difficult to organise their thoughts, or communicate them effectively
- Find it difficult to navigate through space (including find their way around school)
- Experience high levels of tiredness/exhaustion through having to work harder with all of the above tasks
- Experience sensory differences

In addition parents/staff may observe low self-esteem, difficulties with social interaction and relationships with peers.

What can I do?

Make sure reasonable adjustments are made, and consider if a pupil needs a rest during the school day to recharge their batteries.

- Use and focus on their strengths
- Consider lunchtime carefully – carrying a tray of food might be incredibly difficult

- Help with executive functioning - offer lists, reminders and prompts. Visual supports can be very helpful
- Offer use of timers and reminders
- Offer structure. With regular routines and rituals, a child will become more familiar with what they need to do. The more you can keep to routines and rituals, the better – especially if you use a visual support. Any change simply creates distraction, uncertainty and confusion
- Help them to learn how to develop a sequence of events in the right order; this will bring about real improvements in academic performance
- Support them with their short term memory, by using colour coding, visuals etc. Look up executive functioning skills (Chapter 5)
- Consider where you seat pupils with dyspraxia, and who you sit them next to. Ask them for their preference
- Movement breaks – get them involved with tasks. This is especially important for students with sensory needs
- Explore alternative ways of recording information
- Provide prompts – make it visual as well as verbal
- Provide fiddle toys / sensory input to help them stay focused (Chapter 4)

Resources

- **Occupational Therapy and advice:**
- <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/therapy-services-cypit/https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/support-and-advice/>
- **Dyspraxia Foundation:**
<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>
- **Book:**
'Caged in Chaos: A Dyspraxic Guide to Breaking Free Updated Edition Paperback' Victoria Biggs. 21 May 2014

Appendix 6: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Autism Assessment Team:

Amy Balcon and Liz Pitts (joint leads)

<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/autism>

If your referral is urgent, please phone 0300 365 1234.

Our Autism Assessment Team provides an assessment service for children and young people up to the age of 18, where there is a concern that they have difficulties with communicating and relating to others. We assess children and young people to see if their difficulties are due to autism.

There is no medical test for autism. A decision about diagnosis is made on the basis of detailed information about your child's early development and how they are now. This information is gathered by talking to you, an individual assessment with your child, and gathering information from school.

Once an assessment is complete, families are given information about support available at home and at school. This includes information on autism-specific parenting workshops and groups in their area, and access to specialist advisory teachers where available. Parents and carers will also be invited to join an online support network.

Ideally referrals should come from professionals that know the child well, such as their teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) or health visitor.

Please read the [referral](#)

[criteria](https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/33429326/autism-referral-criteria-march-2020.pdf) <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/33429326/autism-referral-criteria-march-2020.pdf> carefully before you go ahead and [make a referral](#).

<https://forms.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/cypf/>

ADHD Team: Michelle Walton (lead)

<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/ADHD>

If your referral is urgent, please phone 0300 365 1234

- Referral must be made by a professional that knows the child or young person well (such as teacher, SENCO, educational psychologist)
- Child must be over six years old
- If the school refuse to make a referral please call the CYPF Hub to discuss further

Before referral please take the following steps:

1. Observe the child's behaviour for 10 weeks and make notes including any changes and patterns in their behaviour (this must include difficulties with their concentration, impulsiveness and activity levels)
2. Refer parents and carers to a training/education programme if available (advisable, but not compulsory)
3. If the child's behaviour is still having a negative impact on themselves and their family/school life, please make a referral

Please read the ADHD [referral criteria](#) document for more in depth information.

<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/media/33429685/adhd-referral-criteria-oct-20.pdf>



Appendix 7: Parent Support Information



West Berkshire Autism Team – We can offer support post diagnosis and as and when the parent feels they have questions and concerns.

We also can offer:

- Parent Autism Workshops
- Coffee Groups
- Transition Workshops Yr 6 and Post 16
- Regular emails, sending out updates with what is happening in and around the area and information news sheets on different topics

If you wish to sign up for the updates to pass onto your parents, please contact our Admin team learningsupportteam@westberks.gov.uk

Our School Advisors:

- Lesley Botchway- mainly secondary schools and Autism Team Co-ordinator
Lesley.Botchway@westberks.gov.uk
- Sue Granger- mainly primary schools
Sue.Granger1@westberks.gov.uk

Family Advisor:

- Melissa Hutchings
Melissa.Hutchings@westberks.gov.uk

Our Specialist Teaching Assistants:

- Kelly Evans
Kelly.Evans1@westberks.gov.uk
- Gilly Rogers
Gilly.Rogers1@westberks.gov.uk

Other Organisations:

National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk>

Parenting Special Children - <https://www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk/>
Offer a range of Pre and Post Workshops on a range of areas around SEND.

Autism Berkshire - <https://www.autismberkshire.org.uk/>
Offer parent support, Workshops and a telephone helpline





<https://www.autismberkshire.org.uk/2020/12/18/berkshire-west-service-autism-adhd-support/>

ASD Family Help - <https://asdfamilyhelp.org/>

Offer parent support, Workshops, activities both for young people and adults.

Swings and Smiles - <https://www.swingsandsmiles.co.uk/>

Offer Family activities for children with SEND and Sibling Support, along with Coffee Groups.

West Berks Mencap - <https://www.wbmencap.org/>

Offering Family activities and support. After School and Holiday Clubs. Along with Adult support.

West Berks Family Hubs - <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/familyhubs>

Family Hubs provide:

- early years education and childcare
- help to access social services
- health services
- training and employment services
- information and advice services

Home Start - <https://home-startwestberks.org.uk/>

Supports families 0-5 years within the family home

West Berks SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

https://westberkssendiass.info/en/Main_Page

West Berkshire Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service is available to parent carers of children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) and also to children and young people with SEND themselves. The support and advice provided is impartial, confidential and free. We will listen to your concerns and answer your questions about anything relating to your special educational needs and disabilities. Our service is statutory and is available to parents, carers, children and young people living in West Berkshire who pay their council tax in Newbury. 'Parents' includes all those adults with parental responsibility.

West Berks Parent Carer Forum - <https://www.wbpcf.org.uk/>

A Forum which can support and train parent/carers to enable them to have a voice and opinions, and to be involved with shaping services alongside professionals who provide health, education, adult and social services.



West Berkshire's Local Offer provides information on local services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. Click [HERE](#) to visit our site.

There are many other good organisations, these are just a few within our area. The Local Offer above can help parents seek more help and information.

Questions parents may find helpful to ask when visiting schools

- What experience do staff have of autism and what training have they had?
- How is transition supported? From one school to another, one year to another, one lesson to another and one activity to another—
- If a pupil is nervous of going to school or has sometimes attempted to school avoid, how does the school address these concerns?
- How does the school promote social skills development?
- What support is provided for breaks and lunchtimes –is there a quiet/safe space to go?
- Who do parents contact if they have concerns regarding their child? What is the best way to get in touch?
- What support structures does the school use to ensure curriculum access for autistic pupils?
- How will the school foster independence skills?
- Can parents look around and see classes in action?
What do I see? Are pupils who appear to have needs being managed positively? Do these pupils look as if they feel good about themselves?
- What autism friendly strategies are in evidence? I.e. timetables, visual cues, reduced language from staff, place to go if overwhelmed.
- How will the school plan for my child? Can I see an example of a Student Achievement Plan/Passport/ Individual Education Plan? When is this put together and how often is it reviewed and by whom?
Does the pupil have an input to the plan and is it shared with them?
- How does the school address sex education?
- How does the school address bullying?
- What support is there regarding homework?
- Do the staff I speak to regarding my child appear interested/informed?
- Could I speak/communicate effectively with these staff if there were problems?
- How does the school use hours of support that accompany some pupils?

- If my child has hours of support how many staff will work with him during the school week?
- If my child has learning difficulties/dyslexia/ADHD as well as autism what further support will the school provide?

Appendix 8: Additional Useful Links

West Berks Therapeutic Thinking Support Team

We work predominantly in maintained primary and secondary schools, supporting pupils directly or indirectly to meet their Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs, including behaviour. We do not currently work with pupils in the Early Years.

<https://www.westberkseducation.co.uk/Services/4716>



The Emotional Health Academy (EHA) is West Berkshire's support for mild to moderate mental health in children and young people. Our goal is to help children and young people as early as possible and to stop emotional health problems from getting worse.

<https://directory.westberks.gov.uk/kb5/westberkshire/directory/service.page?id=upYcDgaijYw>



The AET is a not for profit programme led by two national autism charities – the National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism. Established and supported by the Department for Education, the AET promotes and supports partnerships throughout the education system to improve educational access, experience and outcomes for children and young people with autism. Underpinned by current research into good education practice, the AET programme is structured around the three education phases – early years, school and post 16. Our core values are: person-centered, outcomes and process focussed, inclusive and accessible, evidence-based, high quality and working in partnership.

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>



<https://www.autism.org.uk/>



Gareth D Morewood

Gareth D Morewood is the Educational Advisor for Studio III (www.studio3.org). Previously he has worked for 25 years in U.K. schools; the last 17 of which were as SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) in a large, inclusive secondary school in the North West of England. Gareth has extensive 'front-line' experience supporting schools, families and working directly with young people in the U.K. and abroad; most recently Chile, Dubai, Portugal, Scandinavia and Ireland. Gareth has a significant body of published works, films and resources, which can be found on his website (www.gdmorewood.com).

Anna Kennedy Online is a small charity with a big heart, that raises Autism Awareness like no other mainstream charity, we are not conventional nor traditional. We are established and passionate about helping society and raising Autism Awareness across the globe by making a difference through our dedication to reaching out and supporting communities.

<https://www.annakennedyonline.com/>



Offer information and free resources around mental health for young people

<https://www.annafreud.org/>



The Curly Hair Project is a social enterprise that supports people on the autistic spectrum and the people around them, founded by autistic author Alis Rowe. We use cool things like animated films, comic strips and diagrams to make our work interesting and easy to understand!

<https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>