

Supporting Children with ASD in Secondary School

ASD impacts on how a person communicates and interacts with others and makes sense of the world

Please note that these are generic rather than specific recommendation and each person needs to be considered on an individual basis - how their ASD impacts on them. These approaches are 'catch-all' and likely to benefit other students as well.

- **All school staff** should have **autism awareness training** with regular refreshers sessions for old staff and ASD induction for new staff.
- Ensure that all staff working with children know which students have ASD in their class and share information with each other about positive strategies.
- Think about how the student communicates his/her needs wants ideas and aspirations - they may need additional support to do this.
- Establish clear protocols for communicating about changes in routine and staff, teachers and support staff.
- Think about the sensory environment of your school and how this impacts on sensory behaviour in individual students (use checklist and profiles and think sensory breaks).
- People with ASD often have a very uneven profile of skills so don't assume that they will be as able in one area as they are in another.
- Ensure that explicit visual information is available in all lessons to support understanding and set tasks with clear specific goals.
- Where possible make lesson PowerPoints/notes/resources/homework and deadline information available on school fronter/VLE.
- Try to limit/simplify language when giving instructions and check for understanding. Show them what to do and guide step by step.
- Try to avoid non-literal language or explain idioms, metaphors and sarcasm.
- Have you considered an ASD champion in your support staff team to lead on ASD support and interventions?
- Support the production of work with writing frames, task sheets, closed procedure templates, tick lists, metacognition templates etc.
- If student is working in a group where social pressure is high make sure cognitive pressures are lower and assign group roles/adult support.

- **Homework** can often be a big challenge. Make sure that the student understands the work set and that support is available to record the work if necessary. It is often helpful to give an expected timeframe so focus is on effort rather than outcome. Where available try to encourage the student to attend homework club and keep in email contact with parents.
- **Identify 'get outs'** for the student so they know what to do and where they can go when they are feeling stressed, upset or overloaded. E.G. they may need a pass to leave the classroom early for lunchtime.
- Accentuate the **positive - think strengths as well as needs**
- Use their **special interest** and strengths to boost their self-esteem and perhaps social currency.
- Teach **social thinking** as well as **social doing** in social contexts to build social resilience.
- Provide adult support/structured activities at unstructured times.
- Provide a safe place for the person to go to when stressed, distressed or overloaded.
- Provide peer support - circle of friends.
- Challenging behaviours need to be understood through the lens of autism and analysed to collect data on possible triggers, sensory needs, negative and positive re-inforcers to give information for behaviour support plans.

The **SPELL** Framework from the NAS is a good whole Class approach. SPELL stands for Structure, Positivity, Empathy, Low Arousal and links.

- **S**tructure - clear structure, predictability, routines and prepared transitions.
- **P**ositivity - positive language, targets and behaviour reinforcement.
- **E**mpathy - trying to see situations and experiences from the perspective of people with ASD.
- **L**ow Arousal - approaches, environment and personal manner need to be calm and ordered in order to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
- **L**inks - consistency and continuity across whole staff team and home provides the security and predictability that the person needs.