Supporting Children with ASD in Primary 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 refresher sessions for staff and ASD induction for new 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).
- Think about how the student communications his/her needs wants ideas and aspirations – they may need additional support to do this.
- **Visual timetables** should be visible in every class so that the structure of the school day is clear and events are marked off to show passing of time.
- Some children will need **individual timetables** perhaps with more concrete and limited information using words, pictures, photos, objects of reference and perhaps half a day or now and next.
- Oral information should be supported and broken down with visual information. Use a visual way of showing the student what he/she will be doing, what they will need, for how long and what it will look like when it's finished. They may also need to know what their reward will be when they are finished. Small whiteboards are very useful.
- **Rewards** give positive feedback and should be tangible and targeted.
- Gain the student's attention before asking a question or giving an instruction. Some students will need you to use their name first or have instructions given on a 1:1 level.
- Students will often need explicit information and adult support to work in a group. They may need to be taught how to **take turns** and **wait**.
- **Be consistent** with rules and consequences and use visuals to illustrate expectations e.g. social stories, incredible 5 point scale.
- Try to avoid non-literal language or explain idioms, metaphors and sarcasm.
- When asking questions ask direct closed questions at their level of understanding.

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- Classrooms should have distraction/clutter free areas, especially around the interactive whiteboard. Some students will need a workstation to work at that is completely distraction free.
- Support the production of work with writing frames, task sheets, closed procedure templates, tick lists, metacognition templates etc.
- Accentuate the **positive – think strengths as well as needs**
- Use their special interest and strengths to boost their self –esteem and perhaps social currency.
- Always tell the student **what to do** rather than what not to do.
- Each child with ASD should have a safe person in school that they can go to for pastoral support.
- Have you considered an ASD champion in your support staff team to lead on ASD support and interventions?
- Prepare ASD children for change - changes in staff, routine, classroom, building and year groups – timetables, social stories, photo sequences
- Prepare transition information on the child for relevant staff – pen portraits/personal passports
- Regular, positive communication with parents about activities in school and triumphs, as well as any difficulties.
- Provide support outside of lessons to support play and social interaction.
- 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 form 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.

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