



MAKING SENSE OF AUTISM RAISING AWARENESS

A MODULAR TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR PROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION

This face-to-face training is designed for use across all types of setting and ability, covering mainstream, special and specialist settings and for pupils from the ages of 5 to 16 years. All these materials have been developed in consultation with school staff, training providers, individuals on the autism spectrum, parents and carers.

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk



SUPPORTED BY:



DEVELOPED BY:

genium



UNIVERSITY OF
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schools programme

These presentation materials are designed to give you a better understanding and awareness of autism and the way it affects pupils in school.

Learning objectives

ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Identify the four key areas of difference that need to be taken into account.
- Know the importance of understanding the individual pupil and their profile of strengths and areas for development.
- Identify the key areas to help pupils on the autism spectrum build positive relationships with staff, peers, families and people in their community.
- Develop an awareness of the sensory and communication differences that pupils may experience.

Contents

THERE ARE 4 THEMES:



- The key messages are consistent for all pupils on the autism spectrum and relevant to all types of provision. Many will also be relevant to other students with special educational needs.
- Film clips of pupils and young people on the autism spectrum and a parent are used to reinforce key messages.
- Activities, case studies and key resources may also be used during this session. We have provided further information which includes top tips for supporting pupils on the autism spectrum in your own settings.

Principles

The materials will be used to promote the following principles:

1. Focus on difference and not deficit.
2. Promote positive attitudes to autism.
3. All staff can have an impact.

TERMINOLOGY

The term autism spectrum is used in all the materials. Some professionals may refer to autism by a different name. This may include autism spectrum condition (ASC), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), classic or Kanner autism, and high-functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome. The term 'parent' is used in the materials to represent a parent or carer.

Four key areas of difference

Every pupil on the autism spectrum will have a range of abilities within each of these areas. Many pupils on the spectrum have high levels of anxiety. Pupils on the autism spectrum have differences in:

Interacting

...the way they interact, play and develop relationships.



Processing Information

...their attention, interests and how they learn.



Sensory Processing

...taking in and perceiving sensory information. This may include hyper (high) or hypo (low) sensitivity to the 5 senses, as well as balance and body awareness.



Communication

...the way they communicate, understand and use language.





Theme 1 THE INDIVIDUAL PUPIL

“Any understanding of autism should not be approached from a position of ‘deficit’, but rather from a position of ‘difference’. Autistic people are not neuro-typical people with something missing or something extra added on. They are different. If we are serious about equality and inclusion within any area, then we must first of all understand that difference.”

Christine Breakey (2006)
The Autism Spectrum: A Guide to Good Practice



KEY INFORMATION

Autism is a lifelong condition which affects the way that a person communicates and relates to people and the world around them.

It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain features, their condition will affect them in different ways.

The four key areas of difference that we need to be aware of to understand the educational needs of pupils on the autism spectrum are sensory processing, communication, interacting and processing information. See page 3.

There are approximately 134,000 children (or 1 in 100) with autism in the UK. Some pupils on the autism spectrum are very able intellectually. Others have considerable learning disabilities in addition to their autism. Providing the right support at the right time can enable pupils on the autism spectrum to build on their strengths and address their areas for development.

 [Pupil profile – AET tools for teachers](#)

TOP TIPS

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Find out about the pupil's likes and dislikes, what is motivating and what creates anxiety. There should be a profile of this information available to everyone who works with the pupil.
2. Build self-esteem by valuing the pupil.
3. Identify and use a pupil's strengths when planning activities.



Theme 2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

“Difficulty with language, body language and facial expressions is a big one. These are the things that we have massive difficulties with. For the adolescent and teenage person with Asperger Syndrome, deciphering other kids’ meanings is harder than deciphering ancient hieroglyphics.”

Luke Jackson (2002)
Freaks, Greeks and Asperger syndrome.



KEY INFORMATION

Understanding social behaviours and emotions usually develops from birth but pupils on the autism spectrum do not easily learn or understand the skills involved in building and maintaining relationships.

It is important for us to understand the pupil and how their autism affects them. This can help us understand their behaviour and support the development of positive relationships.

Interaction is a two way process, so the way practitioners and peers interact with the pupil on the autism spectrum can make a big difference.

Parents know their child best and should be at the heart of decision making.

Encourage parents to be actively engaged with school to support their child’s progress and ensure information is shared effectively.

Raising the awareness and acceptance of staff and peers about difference can support their ability to build relationships with pupils who have autism. Using the pupil’s interests can be a good way to engage with them and provide pupils with the motivation to engage with others.

TOP TIPS

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Ensure all staff are informed of support strategies and current issues.
2. Share information with other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and so on.
3. Educate staff and peers positively about autism and difference through information and training. This can help to reduce the levels of bullying experienced by pupils on the autism spectrum.

 [Well done books – AET tools for teachers](#)



Theme 3 CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

“You can be the cleverest kid in the world but you won’t get anywhere in life if you can’t have a conversation. For people like me, a social and emotional education is so much more valuable than an academic one.”

Luke Dicker in Greenman, Jan (2010)
‘Life at the Edge and Beyond: Living with ADHD and Asperger Syndrome’ London: Jessica Kingsley



KEY INFORMATION

Early intervention can make a huge difference. The right help can be incredibly important, so the sooner pupils get the help they need, the better.

If your school works well for pupils on the autism spectrum it is likely to work well for other pupils too.

See the pupil as a partner in their learning and build on their strengths. Challenge stereotypes and avoid making assumptions about what an individual can or cannot do.

Many pupils on the autism spectrum have special interests. We should identify these and use them as a starting point for learning.

We need to help pupils on the autism spectrum to help themselves and become more independent.

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

TOP TIPS

1. See behaviour as a means of communication – what is s/he trying to tell me?
2. Teaching strategies and staff responses need to be differentiated to support the learning of pupils on the autism spectrum.
3. Ensure expectations are realistic and individual to the pupil. Work should be differentiated to ensure continued motivation and success.

 [Behaviour support plan – AET tools for teachers](#)



Theme 4 ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

“Everything is so busy at school and everyone else, all the kids and all the teachers, seem to have a purpose and I have never quite fathomed out what that purpose is... It is like beginning a game without knowing any of the rules or passwords.”

Luke Jackson (young adult with autism)
(2002) *Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence*. London: Jessica Kingsley. p.114.



TOP TIPS

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Check the environment for potential sensory distractions for individual pupils on the autism spectrum (flickering lights, strong smells, noises, busy spaces).
2. Use visual cues such as objects, symbols, pictures or written words to support a pupil's understanding of an activity. Use language that is clear, precise and concrete. Ensure a pupil has understood the information given to them.
3. Use timetables to help pupils predict what is happening next and to inform them of any changes to the usual routine.

KEY INFORMATION

Sensory differences can cause pupils on the autism spectrum to experience stress and anxiety at school.

Pupils on the autism spectrum find change difficult, particularly at transition points. Providing structure can help reduce their levels of anxiety.

The learning environment needs to be adapted to better meet the needs of the pupil with autism. We need to know and observe pupils on the autism spectrum to understand the best way to achieve this.

Create safe spaces and use a low arousal/calm and quiet approach to help pupils on the autism spectrum to manage their anxiety at school.

If your setting works well for pupils on the autism spectrum it is likely to work well for everyone.



[Pupil sensory profile – AET tools for teachers](#)

We help children and young people with autism to receive an education, enabling them to reach their potential.

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

There are six modules of training:

MAKING SENSE OF AUTISM

Basic autism awareness training for all staff within any education setting (including office staff; governors; caretakers; drivers and escorts).

COMPLEX NEEDS AND PARTICIPATION

Focussed training for staff in a specialist provision to support a pupil with complex needs and aid participation (including development of their personal or EHC plan).

GOOD AUTISM PRACTICE

Practical knowledge, hands-on tools and techniques for all staff working directly with pupils on the autism spectrum (including teaching assistants; lunchtime staff; teachers).

With optional certification.

PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK

Introduction to the framework (download free), with key features and guidance on how to use it. Hands on training for all staff involved in setting learning goals and recording progress for pupils.

EXTENDING AND ENHANCING GOOD AUTISM PRACTICE

Deepens delegates' understanding, including theories of autism. Advancing skills in developing and applying strategies to facilitate progress and achievement, for teachers, teaching assistants and SENDCos.

LEADING GOOD AUTISM PRACTICE

For staff who may train or lead other staff in their setting, focussing on developing good autism provision.

With optional certification.

AET SCHOOL AUTISM STANDARDS

A set of standards from the AET to enable educational settings to evaluate their practice in addressing the needs of pupils on the autism spectrum.



AET SCHOOL AUTISM COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

A competency framework for people working with pupils and young people from 5-16 on the autism spectrum.



Further information and resources can be found on the AET website at www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

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