



Our playground rules



1. Care and share.



2. Stand quietly in the line.

# The Autistic Spectrum



Department of  
**Education**

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AN ROINN  
**Oideachais**

MÄNNYSTRIE O  
**Lear**



## Introduction

Many children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are educated successfully within mainstream schools. This chapter provides examples of how to best tailor the classroom environment and educational programmes to meet individual strengths and needs for children and young people in primary and post primary schools. Some are educated in mainstream classrooms and others in specialist bases where they participate in integrated programmes as appropriate. The chapter has been written by specialist practitioners and focuses on children and young people who require a high degree of specialist intervention techniques. The strategies recommended can be adapted to meet the needs of any child or young person with ASD. It contains advice on inclusion models and intervention strategies that have been implemented successfully in schools throughout Northern Ireland. It provides information on the resources and guidance material provided by the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Skills on teaching children and young people with ASD. Information is detailed on useful commercially based resources and equipment. Direction is provided for those who wish to advance their knowledge of ASD through specialist training provided by the Education and Library Boards' ASD Advisory Teams and advanced training and intervention programmes provided by Middletown Centre for Autism. Details are also provided regarding Masters courses on ASD delivered by universities and on specialist training from other organizations. Please contact the ASD Advisory Support Teams in your Education Board area and/or Middletown Centre for Autism for more information, advice or training.

## Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) describes a group of conditions characterized by three main areas of difficulty known as the Triad of Impairments (Wing and Gould 1979). These three areas are:

- Difficulty with social interaction. This includes problems with recognising and understanding the feelings of other people and with managing their own feelings. An inability to interact with other people can make it difficult for these pupils to form friendships.
- Difficulty with social communication. Difficulties will include using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice.
- Difficulty with social imagination. This includes the ability to understand and predict other people's intentions and behaviour and to imagine situations outside of their own experience. This can be accompanied by a narrow repetitive range of activities. Difficulties in the area of imagination and thought are manifest by a lack of flexibility in thinking and behaving. This area of difficulty makes it challenging for pupils to cope with new and unfamiliar situations.

ASD is diagnosed by the existence of the full Triad of Impairments though the particular manifestation of the Triad will vary among individual children and young people. The degree of impairment is considered to be along a continuum of mild, moderate or severe. There are no behaviours per se that by their presence or absence indicate autistic spectrum disorder; it is the overall pattern and underlying difficulties that define ASD (Jordan et al., 1998). The incident rate is generally accepted as 1 in 100 and the male to female ratio has remained unchanged for many years at 4:1. It is important to be aware that girls in mainstream settings may present with more subtle characteristics but may need adaptations and interventions to enable a successful educational experience.

Increasingly there is acknowledgement that in addition to the Triad of Impairments, there are sensory differences experienced by those with a diagnosis of ASD. A detailed account of the nature of these differences is available in the sensory processing section.

Whilst certain areas of daily life are likely to remain a challenge for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder it is important to build on the pupil's unique strengths and learning styles. These strengths may lie in areas such as good rote memory and attention to detail, and particularly in bringing a new perspective to everyday situations.

## References

National Autistic Society (2010) ASD and Asperger's Syndrome: an introduction. Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010 from <http://www.ASD.org.uk/about-ASD/ASD-and-asperger-syndrome-an-introduction.aspx>

Jordan, R., Jones, G. & Murray, D. (1998). Evaluating Interventions for children with ASD: a literary review of recent and current research. London: DfES

Wing, L. and Gould, J. (1979) Severe impairments of social interaction and associated abnormalities in children: epidemiology and classification. Journal of ASD and Developmental Disorders, Vol. 9(1), pp. 11-29

## Important Points about Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

- The child or young person with ASD has a different worldview. This can show others a different perspective on everyday situations and be very interesting and engaging.
- The child or young person with ASD is likely to appear to be focused on self. It may appear that only his/her needs matter to him/her.
- Children and young people with ASD will have an uneven learning profile. Intellectually able pupils may have great difficulties with adaptive living tasks involving sequencing and organization e.g. bringing the correct books to school or setting a table.
- The child or young person with ASD may seem to have little or no understanding about what other people think or feel.
- The child or young person with ASD may have sensory issues – visual, sounds, tastes, smells, textures.
- (See chapter on sensory processing).
- The child or young person with ASD may have dietary / medical issues - limited diet / problems with digestion/ problems with toileting.
- Each child or young person is unique - no 'one size fits all'. In addition to knowing about ASD it is essential to become familiar with the individual characteristics of the child or young person.



## Assessment

The assessment process will prove most useful if a pupil's strengths and needs are considered contextually. Teachers will develop a comprehensive understanding of their pupil by assessing different adaptive areas such as academic skills, learning styles (see good practice bullet point 4), how the child or young person communicates and why, and how the pupil responds to in social situations such as the dining room or playground. Just as importantly the comprehensive assessment process should lead, as required, to the implementation of targets and interventions adapted to the individual pupil. These can be recorded in a summary document such as the pupil profile and action plan detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.

1. Parental Information is an invaluable source of information and could be included in the Pupil Profile (see Appendix 1).
2. The Educational Psychology Report in the statement provides important information.
3. Multi-agency Professional Reports e.g. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy Reports.
4. PEP-3 (Psycho-Educational Profile): an ASD specific assessment tool which provides a developmental profile of the child – generally for use up to the age of 7.
5. Transition Assessment Profile (T-Tap) An assessment tool for young people from age 14 years addressing vocational skills.
6. Social Skills Checklists (see the resource and equipment list).
7. Standardised classroom based tests if appropriate for the individual and in keeping with school policy.

8. School based observations in a variety of settings – an initial period of observation is essential in building up a profile of the child and should be continually updated.
9. Education Plan (EP) monitoring. EP's need to target the Triad of impairments in addition to academic learning. (See Appendix 2).

## Good Practice Points

1. Familiarise relevant staff with the individual child's learning style, academic levels and social skills using the results of classroom interactions and observations, (see assessment section).
2. Read and respond to the information in multi-agency reports from previous classes (see assessment section).
3. Provide opportunities for parents to work closely with the school. Use information from parents as a vital resource, (see assessment section).
4. Ensure that you are familiar with your pupil's communicative level. A verbal, intellectually able pupil may have significant difficulties with inference, creative expression, auditory processing, and comprehension, literal interpretation of events and phrases and with reciprocal conversation.
5. Attain an understanding of the pupils learning style, for example, most pupils will learn best if information is presented to them visually. Some, for example, will have difficulties getting started on a task or will finish work very quickly. Others will work at a steady pace; appear not to hear anything going on around them (perhaps even loud noises such as a fire bell). Some will not be able to leave work unfinished. All pupils are individuals and knowing how they work and learn will help teachers decide on appropriate interventions and classroom adaptations for individual children and young people.

These points have proved useful in schools, throughout Northern Ireland, delivering successful inclusion programmes for children and young people with ASD.

6. When moving from preschool to primary school or from primary to post primary school, arrange for the child or young person and their parents to visit the school close to transition time. Chose a quiet time initially for the visit, perhaps when the school is closed, and provide a 'transition resource' including photos of the teachers and classrooms, gym, playground and dining hall. For older children and young people (or for those children who are particularly interested), provide a map.



7. Create 'an autism competent' environment which is designed to reflect the learning needs, and support the inclusion of, children with an ASD" (DENI, 2005, page 4). Particular attention should be given to the following:

- i. The sensory environment (see chapter on sensory processing)

**Visual teaching methods including:**

- ii. The physical structure of the classroom (placement of desks, providing obvious boundaries for circle time or group work spaces).
- iii. The use of work systems – instructions on what work to do, how much work to do, when will the work be finished, what happens next. (see Appendix 3)
- iv. Access to an individual timetable.
- v. Procedures for dealing with change and transition throughout the day (see Appendix 3)

8. Ensure that social understanding is taught specifically (c.f. A Guide to Classroom Practice: ASD Working Group pages 13-19)
9. Assist each child to integrate at an appropriate and meaningful level with his/her peers
10. Ensure that all staff has training in ASD and are familiar with the specific interventions used with each pupil. Training should be comprehensive and ongoing (see training and advanced training sections).
11. Make specific arrangements for the child or young person at break and lunch times if necessary e.g. adult supervision, social stories, buddies for primary school pupils, peer support programmes for post primary school pupils; time in the library to use computers or do homework.
12. Traditional interventions for the promotion of challenging behaviour are likely to be ineffective as the best starting point is usually to view the behaviour from the point of view of how ASD is impacting the child or young person. The table in Appendix 5 provides more suggestions for assessing the behaviour taking ASD as the starting point and provides intervention methods to help address common issues.

See Appendix 5 for more good practice strategies.

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These strategies will all contribute to reducing the child's anxiety; however the child or young person's emotional needs will need to be monitored throughout the day and appropriate responses made to help ensure their well being.

## SPECIALIST SETTING IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Background Information

This model is from an ASD specific class within a mainstream primary school for Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.

The pupils are taught for most of the school day in a small class with a maximum of 8 pupils to one teacher and two classroom assistants. The ages range from 4 to 8 years old and the staff are trained in a range of approaches which include TEACCH, PECs, ABA, (refer to Training Section for an explanation of terms), ASD Advisory Education and Library Board INSET training including, sensory diets, interactive play and social stories to name. An eclectic mix of teaching strategies proves most successful; there is no 'one size fits all' methodology.

**The class is an integral part of the school it is not viewed as a unit or school within a school.**

### Integration Methods

Each pupil is integrated with a class in his/her year group or the year below, where appropriate. They may integrate for assemblies, school trips, dinnertime and in the playground – often for a short period of time with a high level of support initially, then gradually increasing the time spent and reducing the level of support, at a pace dictated by the child's needs. They may also integrate for curricular subjects, usually in an area of relative strength for the child, again usually with the support of a classroom assistant for as long as is necessary.

Those children who are ready may well progress to spending a considerable portion of the day with the mainstream class, touching base with the ASD class as necessary. On occasion he/she may need help organising the day, therefore a timetable will need to be provided or calming strategies, for example, according

to need. Close liaison between the specialist ASD teacher and mainstream teacher will obviously be essential to success. Integration works on a number of different levels:

**Reverse integration** – where a small group of mainstream pupils join the ASD class, this usually works well as an initial form of integration as the pupils do not have to cope with a new setting as well as new people

**Whole group integration** – into another class, with support from the specialist teacher and a classroom assistant

**Small group integration** – into another class with support from a classroom assistant

**Individual integration** – into another class with support from a classroom assistant

**Individual integration** – into another class without support.

Having the same child for a period of up to four years builds up a close relationship between staff and pupil. The staff must be extremely sensitive to each child's needs and moods, likes and dislikes as even the most vocal of our children can have great difficulty communicating what they think or feel.

## **Outcomes**

**Progress is regularly monitored through Education Plan (EP) targets, checklists (see Appendix 3) and data collection when required.**

At the end of Key Stage 1 a transfer review is held and all those with a professional interest in the child attend or submit advice. A decision is then made as to the child's next placement; there are three main paths that pupils

follow. For some, the best placement is within the special school setting; others often move on to a learning support class where they can benefit from a small group setting while continuing to integrate with their mainstream peers; while a third group will progress to mainstream (with or without the support of a classroom assistant). Whichever route the child takes, the transition process will be carefully planned and the child gradually familiarised with his new setting. This will often take months to complete, but ensures support for the family and the least stressful move for the child.

### **The Classroom Environment**

The ASD classes provide the child with a structured environment that addresses their individual needs. The layout and tone of the classroom is one of the most important tools for helping children with ASD understand expectations, and access the curriculum. It also has proven to have a significant impact on promoting positive behaviour. Thought needs to be given to the layout of the classroom. The physical environment may need to be more structured (visual skills are an area of relative strength for many of our pupils) with clearly defined areas for different activities. Physical boundaries using cupboards and bookcases can be very helpful when placed strategically in a classroom to define areas.

The areas may include:

- 1:1 teaching area
- Workstation (enclosed cubicle for independent work) or work desk
- transition area (schedules and timetables are located in a specific area)
- snack area
- area for group work and group activities

- story/ roll call/T.V. area
- computer
- play area
- cloakroom/ area for changing for P.E.
- Library
- waiting area

As the pupils will often have an 'obsession' with computers, toys or T.V. it is very helpful if these distractions can be kept well away from work and teaching areas. However they should be timetabled into a part of the school day so the pupil can see that he/she will be given time to engage in areas of high interest to him/her.

## Classroom Layout

These photographs are from a school in the SELB



Teaching at a table  
for new work or work the  
pupil may need help with.

Story / T.V /roll call

Group work /  
Snack time



Independent work with  
removable screens

Table top activities

Cloakroom



Cloakroom

Changing for PE

Waiting /  
Transition Area

## **The Quiet/Calm Corner**

The quiet corner or sensory area (pictured below) is used as a 'chill out' area for those occasions when the impact of anxiety, frustration or anger becomes unmanageable. On occasion some pupils will need to access an area entirely free from distractions or sensory input, at other times they may need sensory input (e.g. movement or deep pressure) from items such as therapy balls or tactile toys or weighted blankets. Many pupils with ASD lose their ability to communicate clearly when they are anxious or upset, the quiet corner is therefore an invaluable resource – they soon understand that it is a safe place not a punishment and that no issues will be addressed until they are calm enough respond. They often ask to go to the quiet corner when just getting anxious or upset as it tends to have a calming effect and promotes positive behaviour.



## **Timetables**

Timetables help the pupil to understand the activities that will happen in the school day and can be used to help pupils cope with changes. The teacher can show the pupil what was planned to happen and what will happen instead. This reduces anxiety and promotes learning. We all use diaries, outlook calendars and mobile phones as organizational tools. The premise for children with ASD is the same and most pupils will benefit greatly from having access to a schedule individualized to their needs.

A variety of daily schedules/ timetables are tailored to the individual pupil's level of understanding, these may include:

- object/tobi (true object based icon, an actual object is scanned and true to size on the schedule) – usually an object associated with the activity; e.g. a pencil for work, a cup for snack;
- large line drawing with small word;
- what's next?...time for.....;
- small line drawing with large word (for beginning readers);
- word only (for better readers);
- weekly timetable;
- written class timetable.

## An Example of Individualized Timetables in a Classroom



Some pupils may need a transition object or card to bring them to the transition area to check their timetable. They may then need to bring the object or picture on their schedule and match it to an identical one in the area where the activity will take place. Some pupils will only cope with one or two activities on their schedule at a time; others can have part-day or whole day schedules. A system for highlighting changes to the schedule also needs to be introduced to the pupil.

### Planning

A prolonged period of assessment, (see assessment section) together with information contained in the child's Statement of Special Educational Needs, the pupil profile, parental advice, advice from other professionals and classroom observations assist in the construction of the Education Plan, which includes targets addressing the Triad of Impairments, (see the description of ASD) as

manifested in the individual child. Teachers usually arrange meetings with parents to discuss the child's Education Plan, for Annual Reviews and for Parent/Teacher evenings. Parents are encouraged to contact us at any time if they have any concerns. Teachers also attend case conferences or medical consultations where this is helpful and may also have input from other professionals involved with the child such as Speech and Language Therapists or Occupational therapists.

The child must have access to the full curriculum unless stated otherwise on his statement; however the pace and content need to be tailored to take account of any learning difficulties, and adaptations.

One of the most useful planning strategies often used is a 'home/school book' which facilitates constant communication with parents. The teacher lets the parents know what activities the pupil has participated in that day, if they have eaten well or not, any news, homework and general information about the child. The parents then sign it and write a comment, letting school know any news or information such as how the child has slept. Letters or forms that have to be sent home are put in to the Home/school book so that they do not lie forgotten in the bottom of a schoolbag. Parents can also use the Home/school book to request a meeting or a phone call and teachers can use it to forewarn of forthcoming changes or events.

### **Visual Resources**

Other strategies used include social stories, calming music, choices charts, desktop reminders (take turns to talk), emergency cards (I need help/ get out of class card), visual cues (quiet, hands down, no hitting), reward charts with strong motivators, turn-taking boards and whole school strategies such as merits for good behaviour, pupil of the week recognition, building up to a tangible reward such as a small toy or a packet of crayons. Individual pupils may require additional reminders e.g. volume control visual card if they are inclined to shout/ whisper. Schedules, books, and chairs may all need to be colour coded to enable non-readers to identify their space and belongings. Cues such as

footprints to show where to line up can make all the difference, and a coloured circle is easily transported to another setting when integrating.

### **Continued Professional Development**

Support for the staff comes from a number of places. The Education and Library Board (ELB) ASD services are a tremendous help – a specialist advisor can visit the school regularly to support teachers and individual pupils. They may also offer home support in some ELB's. They also facilitate cluster groups which offer the opportunity for teachers to discuss issues together. It is important that the class is an integral part of the school; both staff and pupils will benefit from the whole school training on ASD Awareness from the ELB's ASD Services and then, when teachers have experience of teaching children with ASD, from the Middletown Centre for Autism training programme.

Working with these pupils is undoubtedly a challenge, but also an immense privilege and incredibly rewarding.

## **SPECIALIST SETTING IN A POST PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Background Information**

The Communication Resource Centre (CRC) is a post primary provision for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder who require a significant level of support in order to attend a mainstream school.

It was decided to adopt a flexible model that would combine a 'homeroom' setting for small group teaching with integration into mainstream classes. Currently the provision has 26 pupils, 4 Homerooms, 3 full-time teachers, a part-time teacher and 6 classroom assistants.

### **Integration Methods**

Each group is integrated with a class in its year group, usually the low ability class. Although many of the pupils are high functioning and academically competent, the low ability class is the most appropriate, as the pace is a little slower and the class size a little smaller than other classes. They integrate with this class during Key Stage 3. All classes in the year group follow the same curriculum content and the Centre teachers liaise with the mainstream teachers to ensure that they are working at much the same pace. As far as possible, pupils attending the CRC sit the same tests at Christmas and June as the rest of the integrated class, though they may do so in the Homeroom with some support.

The group follows the timetable of the class with which they are integrated and this allows us to operate a very flexible arrangement. Pupils who make good progress in the small groups and who are comfortable enough socially, can easily move into the mainstream class but can also have the option of moving back into the small group if necessary.

Integration works on a number of different levels:

- Whole group integration into another class, with support from the specialist teacher and a classroom assistant.
- Whole group integration into another class with support from a classroom assistant.
- Individual integration into another class with support from a teacher or a classroom assistant.
- Individual integration into another class without support.



Each Homeroom is equipped with enough single desks for the group using it, hangers for coats and PE bags, a Quiet Corner with soft seats and a TV/DVD player, and some computer stations. The Homeroom serves as a base for the pupils' entire day and is open from about 8.30 am. They go to the Homeroom as soon as they arrive in school and all of their belongings are kept in the Homeroom, thus avoiding the hustle and bustle of a locker area. The Homeroom is also open and supervised during break and lunchtime and the pupils are free to bring hand held games consoles or computer games for these periods. There are also board games and books available. The pupils are encouraged to invite friends to join them at break and lunch time so that their social skills can be improved. The Homerooms have proved so popular that they sometimes require a rota for visiting.

As part of our focus on improving social skills, we have arranged some extracurricular activities – a Friendship Group was tried during the first year but we felt it was too artificial and didn't continue it; various outings took place – to agricultural shows, to museums and science based exhibitions, historic places of interest castle, to a local cross community project; the school leavers and classroom assistants who have worked with them were treated to a meal at the end of the year; a senior school residential weekend was organised. These 'real life' situations worked much better than the friendship group.

*Please see Appendix 4 for a diagram on the integration process.*

## Visual Resources

A colour coded timetable for the day is clearly pinned to the board and any additional arrangements are written beside it. At the beginning of the year, each pupil is given a colour coded, laminated weekly timetable which fits into a blazer pocket and a similar one is sent home to parents to help with organising the school bag for each day. As far as possible, subject textbooks and exercise books are colour coded to match the timetables.

Other strategies used in the Centre include social stories, calming music, choices charts (token for making good choices), desktop reminders (take turns to talk), emergency cards (I need to go to the Homeroom now!), classroom posters (keep everyone inside the circle) and whole school strategies such as merits for good behaviour, resulting in off-homework cards. One of the Year 8 pupils this year requires a visual timetable and an individual daily schedule book. His teacher has tried to encourage a more positive attitude to school by keeping a daily Achievement Book and a book of 'Things to remember and Think About'.

We also on occasion make an arrangement with parents to offer rewards for a certain number of merits or full charts of stars – these can range from bars of chocolate to new games for the hand held games consoles. Most pupils respond to 'making deals' (you work at coursework for an hour, then you can play a computer game).

## Planning

One of the useful strategies used in the Centre is a Home/school book which facilitates constant communication with parents. The teacher makes a comment each day and the parents either sign it or write a comment as well. Letters or forms that have to be sent home are put in to the Home/school book so that they don't lie forgotten in the bottom of a schoolbag. Parents can also use the Home/school book to request a meeting or a phone call and teachers can use it to forewarn of forthcoming changes or events.

Teachers usually arrange meetings with parents after the Christmas and June examinations, for Annual Reviews and for Year Group consultations. We encourage parents to contact us at any time if they have any concerns. Teachers also attend case conferences or medical consultations where this is helpful and may also suggest referrals to the school counselling service, bereavement services or behavioural outreach services as required.

At the beginning of each year, each Centre teacher decides which subjects she will teach to the small group (anything from 3 – 5 subjects), to which she will accompany the class and where she will provide one-to-one support (perhaps literacy or numeracy support). This is a fairly straightforward exercise in Key Stage 3, when working with one year group, but is rather more difficult if two year groups have been combined or at Key Stage 4.

By Key Stage 4, the pupils are usually well settled in the school and are known and understood by most of the mainstream teachers so many of them are capable of attending mainstream classes on their own. The level of need dictates the support given at this stage. Most pupils require support from the teacher or classroom assistant in some subjects but not all, but occasionally a pupil will require full time support and as far as possible, this is put in place.

Some of the pupils are taken out of an entire option block and support periods are put in place in the Homeroom so that help can be given with coursework or revision for tests and examinations. The teachers and classroom assistants liaise with mainstream subject teachers to ensure that the pupils keep abreast of the work being done in class. When sitting GCSE examinations, access arrangements

are made as required – most Centre candidates receive 25% extra time and are allowed to sit their examinations in one of the Homerooms. Others may require a reader, prompter or a scribe. This helps to reduce some of the anxiety at examination times.

## **Environmental Adaptations**

The quiet corner in each room acts as a socialising area during break or lunch times but is also used as a chill out area for those occasions when anxiety or frustration or anger become unmanageable, or as a sick bay when a pupil is not feeling well. It is also used for Circle time or silent reading periods or for watching video clips related to what they are being taught. Many pupils with ASD lose their ability to communicate clearly when they are anxious or upset, the quiet corner is therefore an invaluable resource – they soon understand that it is a safe place not a punishment and that no issues will be addressed until they are calm enough respond. They often ask to go to the quiet corner when just getting anxious or upset as it tends to have a calming effect and promotes positive behaviour.

## **Outcomes**

So far, all Centre pupils have been able to sit at least 5 GCSE subjects and some have done very well, achieving 4 or more subjects at a C grade or above. Recent Year 12 pupils achieved some A grades and at least two of them have moved on to A-level courses next year. Most other pupils attend courses at Regional Colleges in their area. The Centre has been very successful – it works. There are two main reasons for its success – the use of a flexible model and the acknowledgement on the part of all who work in it that each child who has ASD is unique – the secret of working with them is to get to know them.

## **Continued Professional Development**

It is important that the class is an integral part of the school; both staff and pupils will benefit from the whole school training on ASD Awareness from the

ELB's ASD Services and then, when teachers have some experience of teaching children with ASD, from the Blended Approaches to Intervention training delivered by Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA).

Support for the staff comes from a number of places. The Education and Library Board (ELB) ASD services are a tremendous help – a specialist adviser can visit the school regularly to support teachers and individual pupils. They may also offer home support in some ELB's. They can provide whole school training which facilitates integration. They also facilitate cluster groups which offer the opportunity for teachers to discuss issues together. There are various free training courses that schools have access to on an ongoing basis, sometimes ELB based, other times through the Centre for ASD based at Middletown, Co Armagh.

## MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

Some children and young people will need less intensive support than others. At times small adjustments to the organisation or layout of the classroom and additional support during times the pupil finds particularly difficult, may be enough to facilitate a successful school experience for the child or young person with ASD. The following are examples of adaptable strategies easily incorporated in a mainstream classroom. The same principles of intervention will apply as those described in the 'Specialist Setting' sections, but these can be adapted to fit individual need. Teachers can, through assessment, decide what interventions are needed and when they can be reduced. It is not usually recommended that additional strategies be removed completely unless the child or young person has internalised them and can apply what they have learned in varied settings. Teachers often find that some of these strategies help with other children or young people in their class/classes.

### Intervention Strategies in Mainstream Classrooms

These images are from the SEELB Advisory Team



Book Organisation



Not Computer Time



Where to stand for A PE Activity



A Moveable Carrel

**Individualised timetables**

Daily / Weekly

Thursday

Maths

R.E.

BREAK

English

Science

LUNCH

History

HOME

**Timetable**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ §GK

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mon	Geo. Rn 9	Hist Rn 9	Hist Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	P.E. Gym	P.E. Gym	Art Rn 9	Art Rn 9	Form Period Rn 9
Tue	H.E. HE 1	H.E. HE 1	Maths Rn 9	French Rn 9	Eng Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	Art Rn 9	Art Rn 9	Art Rn 9
Wed	Eng Rn 9	French Rn 9	French Rn 9	P.E. Gym	P.E. Gym	R.E. Rn 9	Tech TL 1	N	Tech TL 1	Maths Rn 9
Thu	Geo. Rn 9	Sci SC 2	Sci SC 2	L.T. IT Rn 9	L.T. IT Rn 9	R.E. Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	H	Art Rn 9	Eng Rn 9
Fri	Tech TL 1	L.B. LB	H.E. HE 1	Eng Rn 9	Geo. Rn 9	French Rn 9	Maths Rn 9	Sci SC 2	Sci SC 2	Hist Rn 9

## Books and Articles to Consider

Breakley, C. and Hesmondhalgh, M., *Access and Inclusion for Children with ASD Spectrum Disorders*. (2001). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Christie, P. and Fidler, R. (2001) A Continuum of Provision for a Continuum of Need: Opportunities for Mainstream Integration and Inclusion Provided by a Special School for Children with ASD. *Good ASD Practice Journal*. 2. 1. p. 36.

Jordan, R. and Peeters, T., (1999) What Makes a Good Practitioner in the Field of ASD? In: G. Jones (Ed) *Good ASD Practice*. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham. p. 23.

### Resources and Equipment

- Autistic Spectrum Disorders: A Guide to Classroom Practice (booklet and "Teachers Toolkit" DVD) by the ASD Working Group. Evaluating Provision for Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Schools (2005) pb. Dept. of Education.
- Report of the Task Group on ASD pb. Dept of Education (ch.3).
- Good Practice Guidelines (for Schools to meet the Special Educational Needs of Pupils at the School Based Stages of the Code of Practice (ch. 3) pb. Education and Library Boards.
- Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network NHS (2007) Assessment, diagnosis and clinical interventions for children and young people with ASD spectrum disorders. A national clinical guideline. [On-line]: UK Available <http://www.sign.ac.uk/pdf/sign98.pdf>. Last accessed 04/11/2010.
- Boardmaker Software: an adaptable piece of software to create, schedules, super symbols, social stories, cues and reminders.

- Writing with Symbols Software: also used to create visual supports. The programme allows for the creation of sentences with symbols.
- Clicker 5.
- Computer.
- Laminator.
- Velcro.
- Timers.
- Quiet area with few distractions.
- OT equipment as recommended e.g. 'move n' sit' cushion, peanut roll, scooter board (see sensory chapter).
- Home/school diary – two way daily information communication system.
- Mini white boards – allow for repeated practice of fine motor skills, easy correction of errors, individual work for copying into books, communicating with the child in a visual manner.
- Quest – a useful diagnostic tool for Key Stage 1 pupils in Literacy and Numeracy.
- Talkabout Series – Alex Kelly A Social Skills Teaching Resource.
- Educational Games - [www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise).
- Aarons and Gittens Social Skills Assessment.
- Board Games e.g. Monopoly, Cranium, Pictionary.

- Alphasmart computers (for pupils with writing difficulties).
- Beat Dyslexia (for children who have specific literacy difficulties).

### **Training Opportunities**

ASD Training Programmes provided by each Education and Library Board including:

- 2-day INSET for Primary Schools - An Overview of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- Applied Behavioural Analysis - Supporting the child with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder using the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis.
- Boardmaker - Computer Programme Training.
- Writing With Symbols - Computer Programme Training.
- Whole School Training on Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Visually Based Communication Training including:

- Hanen Programme for teachers.
- Picture Exchange Communication (PECS).
- Elklan Programme.

ASD Specific Intervention Training including:

- SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transitional Support).

- TEACCH (Training and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children and Adults).
- Promotion of Positive Behaviour in the Classroom setting including the principles of applied behavior analysis e.g. IABA Training (International Applied Behaviour Analysis).

Social Skills Training including training by:

- ELB ASD Advisory Teams.

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*These training courses are not specifically aimed at a particular age, ability level or school setting (unless the title provides specific information). The principles learned can be adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils.*

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## Useful Websites for Schools

### Good Practice Guidance

- [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk) Department of Education in Northern Ireland website from which many of the booklets and resources can be downloaded.
- <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/165037> - free DVD Inclusion Development Programme Primary & Secondary- Supporting Pupils on the ASD Spectrum.
- [http://www.rcslt.org/speech\\_and\\_language\\_therapy/commissioning/resource\\_manual\\_for\\_commissioning\\_and\\_planning\\_services](http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/commissioning/resource_manual_for_commissioning_and_planning_services) Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy Website provides useful information on ASD and helpful framework suggestions for commissioning and planning resources.
- [www.learningni.org](http://www.learningni.org) Learning NI website.

### Visual Resources

- <http://www.twinkl.co.uk> Twinkl Website - Early Years and KS1 teaching resources.
- Topmarks Website - Teaching resources, interactive resources, including Special Needs Link. <http://www.topmarks.co.uk>
- [http://directories.phillipmartin.info/home\\_school.htm](http://directories.phillipmartin.info/home_school.htm) Phillip Martin Copyright free clipart for use in the classroom.
- <http://www.ASDeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/tools%20for%20teachers.aspx> ASD Education Trust Teacher tools which contain comprehensive examples of visuals.

### Social Stories

- [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org) Carol Gray - social stories resources by Carol Gray.
- <http://www.kansasasd.com/node/9> social stories for specific age groups and interests.
- [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4479088\\_write-social-stories-children-ASD.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4479088_write-social-stories-children-ASD.html) How to write a social story.
- [www.sandbox-learning.com](http://www.sandbox-learning.com) Sandbox Learning is dedicated to developing fun and engaging stories that help those with ASD. Materials can be purchased online.

### Communication and Social Skills

- <http://www.cccoe.net/social/skillslist.htm> Lesson Plans for the teaching of social skills ASD specific resources.
- <http://www.do2learn.com> Do2Learn Games, songs, communication cards, print resources and information for special needs.
- [www.communication4all.co.uk](http://www.communication4all.co.uk) Communication Resources. Classroom resources to support children with SEN. The site has a large range of print and interactive materials supporting several curriculum areas.
- [www.speechmark.net](http://www.speechmark.net) Speech Mark Speech and language resources.
- [www.senteacher.org](http://www.senteacher.org) SEN Teacher Behaviour charts, certificates, emotion cards.

### Voluntary Organisations

- [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk) National Autistic Society - "We are the leading UK charity for people with ASD (including Asperger's Syndrome) and their families. We provide information, support and pioneering services, and campaign for a better world for people with ASD."
- [www.ASD.ie](http://www.ASD.ie) Irish Society for ASD.
- [www.ASDni.org](http://www.ASDni.org) ASD NI - seeks to ensure that people with ASD and their carers have access to appropriate services, enabling people with ASD to be valued members of the community.
- <http://www.ASDeducationtrust.org.uk> The ASD Education Trust (AET) is dedicated to co-coordinating and improving education support for all children on the autistic spectrum. The site features a number of resources for students and teachers, including: tools for teachers supporting pupils with ASD.

### **Advanced Topics in Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

Each child and young person is different and will have differing strengths and needs throughout their lives. External factors often play a significant part in their wellbeing. Some are highly influenced by others whom they perceive to be their friends but who are actually playing on their vulnerability. Internal factors also have an influence on their development and progress. Commonly, pupils experience an increase in their anxiety or/and an awareness of their differences as they reach puberty. In addition, an increasing number of pupils present with a complex range of strengths and challenges. Children and young people may have a diagnosis encompassing ASD and a number of co-existing conditions such as, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). Additional intervention techniques and medications may be required to address these issues. Kutscher (2007) advises that when we are presented with children with comorbidities and ASD we get to know the child in detail to tailor appropriate interventions based on their strengths and

addressing their needs. Many of the strategies useful for children and young people with ASD will be useful for those with ASD and co-existing conditions as the case studies and table below indicate.

## Reference

Kutscher M. Kids in the Syndrome Mix C. and Hesmondhalgh. (2005). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

The following describes a primary aged child and a post primary young person with complex challenges and provides good practice points.

## Primary Case Study

### Kate

Kate is eight years old and is in a mainstream school with four 25 other pupils, two classroom assistants and a teacher. Kate has a diagnosis of ASD and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Kate loves drawing and working with art materials to create models of bridges, she has expressed ambitions of becoming an architect.

Kate has one close friend in the class with whom she enjoys contact with out of school, however it is reported that she is becoming 'obsessed' with this child. The teacher has noted that Kate monopolizes her friends time and the child's mother has asked that Kate be seated elsewhere. Kate finds it difficult to establish and maintain other friendships as she likes to be in control and when other children recognise this they disengage from the interaction and can tease her. Kate's teacher and parents feel that this is having a negative impact on her self-esteem to the point where she appears to be trying less and less to participate in positive social interaction instead engaging in throwing chairs, hitting out at other children and generally being disruptive in school. This maintains the cycle of problem behaviour, reprimands and hinders her academic progress.

Kate has very articulate verbal communication and is able to partake in group discussions usually when they are based around her special interests. She commonly brings conversation around to her special interests (buildings, art, bridges) and does not cope well with interruptions during the flow of these conversations/monologues.

It is difficult for Kate to remain in her seat for periods over three minutes and she cannot stay on task during the teaching of subjects in which she has no particular interest.

The teacher has tried to teach Kate appropriate friendship rules and extend her conversation skills through circle time activities however, Kate finds it difficult

to wait her turn, interrupts others and runs off so these sessions have had to be abandoned.

During writing tasks, Kate finds it difficult to frame her ideas to a coherent piece of work. This results in frustration and books are often thrown at other children and the teacher.

While Kate is in the top group academically within her class, she is failing to achieve because she cannot control her impulses.

### **Good Practice Points**

- Kate could responded well to a visual timetable to help her remain on task with scheduled movement breaks sandwiched between preferred and non preferred activities to ensure her motivation levels remain high. This will address her ASD and ADHD profile.
- Kate needs to be taught explicitly about friendship skills in a small group. This should begin with Kate working with a classroom assistant or teacher, before working with emotionally able classmates. Teachers should consider using a range of vehicles including role-play and video modeling to engage her attention.
- Create a buddy system where Kate has a pre-assigned peer that she can turn to for help, it is important that this responsibility rotates throughout the class.
- Use PDMU to address teasing and bullying within the whole class with the am of instilling a respectful ethos.
- Have a quiet work area that Kate can go to which is free from distractions and placed away from busy areas including windows and doors.
- Teach Kate how to use a writing frame to organise her thoughts and allow her to present her material in different ways including PowerPoint, photographs and video.

## Post Primary Case Study

### Graham

Graham is 15 years old and has a diagnosis of ASD and ODD. He is academically able but teachers believe that his behaviour outbursts affect his overall academic performance. In particular Graham will argue with his French and Science teachers often about what he sees as specific inaccuracies in grammar or fact. However Graham has a few friends and teachers generally enjoy having him in class despite the challenges he presents as he has a very interesting interpretation of everyday situations is usually right and is endlessly interesting. He has a number of topics he is specifically interested in including football league tables and train timetables.

Graham is very loyal to his friends but recently some have taken advantage of his tendency to be argumentative and have encouraged him to come into conflict with teachers, as it is a distraction to the class. His parents have asked the school to help with this situation.

He is becoming more extroverted and displaying increased sensitivity to the school environment, for example he persistently shouts out inappropriately at the beginning of class saying random phrases such as 'turn it off' or lines from current films. He says that the lights are hurting him as they are flickering and too bright.

He has started to react badly to any direction in certain classes for example in PE Graham is refusing to get involved and last week he threatened the PE teacher and said that he was going to harm himself if he was forced to participate.

He says that school makes him sick and that he cannot cope with the other children in his class; and he pushed another boy in the back last week for bumping into him in the corridor. His temper is starting to get the better of him and it is a matter of time before he gets into serious trouble.

His Science Teacher saw him talking to himself and she is worried that he might be hearing voices.

His mother reported that he has become even more defiant at home and she found him under the mattress of his bed last week when it was time to get up for school.

### **Good Practice Points**

- Teachers and parents might try to avoid getting into arguments with Graham and should try to redirect his attention to one of his many interests.
- Check what Graham is saying when he appears to talk to himself, it may be a self regulation technique however, consider a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) if you are very concerned.
- To extend his friendship circles the school could consider peer mentoring with students who would set good examples for Graham.
- Talk to Graham's parents and Graham about the pros and cons of disclosing his diagnoses to his peers. This may help them be more understanding and accepting.
- Consider establishing self-advocacy groups to teach Graham about appropriate behaviour and how to react to others.
- Gain Graham's parents' permission to video his shouting out behaviour and play it back to him. Sometimes pupils are unaware of the effect their behaviour has on others and seeing it can provide this insight.
- Provide written rules in a positive form. Write a few points about what behaviour would be more appropriate for example, 'please whisper' rather than 'do not shout'.
- Give Graham warning of what will happen in PE. Ensure he has a specific activity to engage in or have him do the same activity as the whole class but with the teacher or an understanding pupil.
- Consider having Graham 'dis-apply' for PE if it is becoming a further problem. Reassess the issue regularly.

- If he is refusing to come to school consider a reduced timetable for a short period of time. This arrangement should be regularly reviewed.
- Turn the lights in the classroom off or move Graham's chair so he does not sit near the light fittings.
- Teach Graham less extreme ways of opting out. For example the use of a 'get out of class card!'

## Intervention Strategies for Children and Young People with Co-Existing Diagnoses

### ASD and ODD

Children with ASD and ODD, often have difficulty understanding how they appear to other people and as a result, do not perceive themselves as being argumentative or difficult and will blame their problems on others. Such children can also be perfectionists and have a skewed sense of justice regarding violations of what they consider correct behaviour.

Children with ODD and ASD often start arguments and will not give up. Winning the argument is of very high importance to the child and this will be more important than the actual content of the argument. Even knowing that they will receive a sanction for continuing the tantrum or argument will be of little significance as they will have difficulty ending the confrontation. Attempting to reason with such a child often rebounds because the child perceives rational discussion as a continuation of the argument. For this reason it is important not to engage in the argument process and avert the potential for such conflicts by pre-empting which situations are likely to give rise for an argument.

It is critical not to take what the child says personally oppositional behaviour is the symptom of the disorder not a personal attack.

Utilizing effective consequences for the oppositional child can be difficult since this presents one more opportunity for conflict in which you are likely to lose

Rules and consequences must be clear, and in writing to provide clarity for both child and teacher before the conflict occurs

Be aware that constant conflict is likely to have a negative impact on the child's self esteem. Therefore, staff should ensure there are many opportunities for this child to engage in appropriate activities.

Reward all instances of cooperative behaviour.

Refrain from arguing with children and make it clear that they will not be engaged in confrontational displays.

There are often ranges of challenging behaviours present in ODD so decide which behaviour you will target for intervention and which you are going to ignore. This way you will be more likely to experience some success and build on it.

### ASD and ADHD

There are similarities between ASD and ADHD in that both have difficulty in executive function, turn taking and excessive talking and interrupting (Ozonoff, 2008). Children and young people with ADHD will have hyperactivity, which may be absent in a child with an ASD diagnosis.

Alternate seated activities with those that involve movement so that the child has many opportunities to move throughout the day.

Where appropriate give the child or young person specific responsibilities around school, for example, giving out materials or running errands.

Provide a stress ball, small toy, or other object for the child to squeeze or play with discreetly at his or her seat.

Use mnemonics to aid memory.

Children may need frequent movements breaks during sedentary work.

Use a simple schedule so that the child can understand salient information without being overloaded.

Change rewards frequently. Kids with ADD/ADHD get bored if the reward is always the same.

Try to use Reward privileges, praise, or activities as rewards rather than with food.

Perhaps include some "buffer time" between break time and the next lesson which may involve following a relaxation programme so that the child can transition more easily between active and sedentary activities.

Use role play to teach child more effective ways of dealing with impulsivity

Written plans, goals, and contracts work well. A visual reminder can really make all of the difference in the world.

Give the child important jobs to do within the classroom or school as appropriate to help with self-esteem.

Try not to seat children in high traffic areas e.g. near windows and doors where they are likely to be distracted.

Have specific locations for all materials (pencil pouches, tabs in notebooks, etc.) to minimize time spent looking for items and address organizational issues.

<p>ASD and ADHD (continued)</p>	<p>Try using contingency contracts, where staff and children are encouraged to work in partnership to establish rules, self management strategies and rewards.</p> <p>Eliminate or reduce frequency of timed tests. Tests that are timed may not allow children with ADHD to demonstrate what they truly know due to their potential preoccupation with elapsed time.</p> <p>Use assistive technology programmes to help students organise their thoughts when doing extended pieces of work.</p>
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## ASD and its Impact on Behaviour

Difficulties with Social Communication	
Difficulty obeying more than one instruction at a time.	Give instructions one at a time, directly to a child or young person, or write them down in a list.
May seem not to be listening because they aren't looking at you	Don't insist on eye contact - it is very uncomfortable for many children and young people with ASD.  Check the instructions have been understood.
May seem to answer rudely - tell it like it is	Understand that their abrupt, blunt manner is not necessarily rudeness - often it is just their way of stating the truth. Use social stories to explain alternative ways of communicating.
Usually tell the truth - don't spare the feelings of others	Don't be offended by their honesty. Use social stories to explain alternative ways of communicating.
May ask inappropriate questions	Simply state that a particular question is inappropriate and will be dealt with at a later date. Teach about inappropriate questions in PSD classes.
May refuse to take part in an activity but find it difficult to explain why  Can shut down - refuse to talk / answer questions / look up	Shutting down or refusal to take part - just ignore and be very patient! Talk about it later and try to discover what the problem is - it may be something quite insignificant or possibly a sensory issue or pupil may not be feeling well.
Always want to answer the questions	Teach turn taking skills (visually). Make a rule about answering questions - 1 in 5 or in order round the class?
Difficulties with social interaction	
Like to be the leader in a group	Teach turn taking skills (visually). Make sure everyone who wants to, takes turns to be the group leader.
Have a strong sense of justice / fairness	Be as fair as possible.  Use social stories, comic strip cartoons (Carol Gray) to explain other points of view.
Don't pick up social cues	Use role play / friendship groups to teach social cues

Will not make friends easily, may not want friends, can't keep friends	DSI / PSP / Computer clubs to encourage friendships. Encourage parents to be pro-active. Use social stories and PSD materials to teach pupils how to be a friend and how to maintain friendships.
Difficulties with Social Imagination (restricted range of activities, behaviour and interests)	
Very anxious to finish work	Practise stopping work and doing another activity then coming back. Have a specific place for non-finished work.
Find it hard to retain information – e.g. tables may be a problem	Most pupils who have ASD are visual learners so a flow chart or diagram may help them to remember something better.
May not perform well in examinations	Revision for examinations should begin earlier – parents usually need to help out.  Practise under examination conditions e.g. time allocated, working with minimal levels of assistance.  Examination concessions may be granted.
Lack organizational skills	Timetables or schedules – colour coded or with pictures. Send home too! Daily bag packing schedules.  Home / school book – all letters home and comments and reminders.  Trays for work from left to right.  Zip folders for loose sheets.  Homework given at beginning of class / day / week.  Colour code for individual subjects.
Do not like a change in routine	Give warning about changes that you know are going to happen – write them up beside the timetable. Build in a strategy for unexpected change such as a visual card which indicates that he or she will be supported through the change.  Prepare for fire drills, Christmas play practice and other changes to routine.
Need to know what is happening next	Use a visual concept for 'first and then'.  Encourage them to use timetables.

Will try to bring their particular interest into every activity	Allow them so many minutes to tell you about their interest - turn it into a 'rule'. Use their interests as motivation for work.
Like to do things their way	Use social stories, comic strip cartoons to explain other points of view. Teach the child or young person to think more flexibly. (see point about teaching change).
May be very negative	Challenge negativity. Have them to write a list of 'least awful' activities. Incorporate motivators.  Use an Achievement Book / charts to show progress
May be very anxious / cry easily	Be sympathetic / jolly them along / breathing exercises may help / listen to their fears and talk about them / counselling may help. The suggested strategies in this resource should help pupils to be less anxious.
Can become agitated / aggressive if frustrated or do not understand what to do or feel work is too difficult	Try to prevent frustration / aggression by recognizing signs e.g. hand-flapping / hair pulling (Know your pupil!) Check if they know what they have to do and how to do it. Help them to get started.  Teach them how to recognize their emotions and how to self regulate. See the following example.
May run off	Try to ensure pupil's safety.  Use an 'Emergency Card' / traffic light system / choices charts / stars in Home/school book / warning or encouragement cards / Social stories
May lash out verbally or physically / throw a tantrum	Use a Quiet Corner / Chill-out Room - do not confront and do not attempt to deal with the issue until the pupil is calm - ask them if they're ready - they will know.
May destroy work	Be prepared to give a clean sheet of paper to begin again - erasing sometimes isn't enough. The offending page may have to be removed!  Use a mini white board as a new or draft copy.
Want everything to be correct / neat	Allow time for drafts to be written. Perhaps practise on a mini white board before transferring to final copy.  Introduce social stories around mistakes being acceptable.

## The Middletown Centre for Autism



Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA), located in County Armagh, was established in March 2007 and is jointly funded by the Department of Education (DE), Northern Ireland and the Department of Education and Skills (DES), Republic of Ireland. The purpose of the Centre is to support the promotion of excellence in the development and coordination of education services to children and young people with ASD Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

### **The Centre's Services**

Under the Centre's Research and Development service we are currently delivering an advice and guidance service, research service and training programmes for parents and professionals.

An advice and guidance service is available for children and young people who despite specialist input continue to experience difficulties in their educational setting.

The Centre is currently working intensively for up to three terms (depending on need) in a transdisciplinary, capacity building model in schools and homes in Northern Ireland.

The Centre delivers a wide-ranging training programme throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland annually from October to June for professionals. Training times are varied and include weekend events, twilight sessions and whole day term time courses. Please visit the Centre's website for full details of forthcoming trainings.

The Centre offers local training programmes for parents in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Teachers can direct parents to the website or the Centre directly for further information.

The Centre hosts major training events on weekends throughout the year for parents and professionals. They have proved to be very popular and effective. The following is an example of a major weekend training event. It was entitled 'Attention ASD' and was delivered by Gina Davies, a specialist Speech and Language Therapist with over 25 years experience. She offers innovative ideas on enhancing attention and communication skills for children and young people with ASD.

A research bulletin is produced bi-annually on topics which complement the training delivered from the Centre. Previous titles have included:

- Educational Assessment
- Transition
- Mental Health Issues and ASD
- ASD and Girls

(These can be downloaded from the Centre's website

[www.middlestownASD.com](http://www.middlestownASD.com)

Pupils on the autistic spectrum present with unusual patterns in their responses to sensory input. Gunilla Gerland, an adult on the autistic spectrum, describes her experience of being overwhelmed by sensory input:

*'..certain sounds frightened me- dogs barking, mopeds, tractors and cars, engines of various kinds. They would explode inside my head and make me lose all sense of the way my body related to my surroundings. It was like being flung out into space- whoosh- quite without warning. Sometimes I screamed and covered my ears...Some sounds around me I hardly reacted to at all.'*

Kenneth Hall, a young man with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, explains how his auditory sensitivity affected him in the classroom:

*'..one thing I don't like is crowds. For example, I just hated the classroom. The noise annoyed me. At the time, the sound of pupils' chatter was like dynamite going off in my ears.'*

There is a wealth of scientific research indicating the high incidence of sensory processing differences experienced by pupils and young people on the autistic spectrum. The majority of studies carried out indicate that over 70% of pupils with ASD have sensory processing difficulties (Adamson et al, 2006). These difficulties can be observed in their responses and behaviours in the classroom and beyond.

It should be noted that sensory processing difficulties are not exclusive to ASD and are often observed in other developmental disorders (e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Down Syndrome, Developmental Coordination Disorder).

## Recommended Resources

The list of possible resources to meet the sensory needs of children in school is extensive and the recommendations below are therefore just a 'Top Ten' list of useful resources.

More ideas for resources may be found at any of the suppliers below or by consulting the books in the Recommended Reading section.

### Suppliers

Some of the many suppliers of sensory resources include:

- [www.learningspaceni.co.uk](http://www.learningspaceni.co.uk)
- [www.thinkingtoys.ie](http://www.thinkingtoys.ie)
- [www.rompa.com](http://www.rompa.com)
- [www.spacekraft.co.uk](http://www.spacekraft.co.uk)
- [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### Sensory Resources: Top Ten Recommendations

The resources listed below are available from a range of suppliers and prices will vary. It is therefore advisable to search catalogues and the Internet for the most competitive price or to purchase from a company on your school's procurement list.

1. Movin' sit cushion (Junior or Standard): a specialised cushion which provides movement (and tactile) input. It provides sensory input for sensation seeking children, thus helping them to stay in their seats for longer periods; it may also increase the alertness levels of under-responsive children by giving the brain sensory stimulation.

2. Southpaw Bear Hug: a lycra garment with Velcro which can be wrapped around the child's body to give deep tactile and proprioceptive input. This is suitable for calming over-responsive children when they are feeling anxious or stressed.
3. Weighted blanket: a thin but heavy blanket which will provide deep tactile and proprioceptive input. This is suitable for calming over-responsive children when they are feeling anxious or stressed.
4. Weighted vest: a waistcoat with weights which can be added to special adapted pockets in the garment. This provides deep tactile and proprioceptive input, which may be calming for the over-responsive child.
5. Chewy tube: a non-food alternative for children who tend to chew and bite objects. This will provide deep tactile and proprioceptive input to assist in achieving the calm and alert state.
6. Therapy/exercise/gym/Swiss ball: inflatable balls in a range of sizes suitable for various ages and heights. The child can sit on the ball to get movement input in order to increase alertness. The child may also lie on his stomach on the ball and weightbear through his arms in order to achieve deep proprioceptive input, which will be both calming and alerting. Ensure the ball is of the correct size for the child (he should be able to place feet on floor when sitting on it).
7. Peanut ball: this will provide the same input as the therapy ball described above, but its shape provides greater stability. It is again available in a range of sizes to suit a range of heights and ages.
8. Therabands: rubber exercise bands which can be stretched to provide resistive activity. This resistance exercise gives deep proprioceptive input to the muscles and subsequently can facilitate the calm and alert state.

9. Fidget toys: this can include koosh balls, tangle toys, stress balls etc. They provide tactile input and so will help the sensation seeker or under-responsive child to remain alert and focused on task. Fidget toys can also calm children who are feeling anxious. They are available from the suppliers suggested above or may be easily and inexpensively purchased in local shops.
  
10. Ear defenders: worn in the same way as headphones to significantly reduce the volume of noise from the surrounding environment. This will assist children who are distressed or distracted in noisy environments or by specific noises.

Detailed advice on sensory issues and ASD are available from the Centre and will be available through the LNI C2k website during 2011.

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*Middletown Centre's training prospectus and research bulletins can be downloaded from the website. Please visit the website or contact the Centre for further information and/or to reserve a place on trainings*

[www.middletownASD.com](http://www.middletownASD.com)

Email: [training@middletownASD.com](mailto:training@middletownASD.com)

Call: 0044 (0) 28 3751 5750

*There is no charge to professionals, parents and family members for training events.*

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## Additional Professional Qualifications

- Master of Education (MEd) in Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Birmingham University. Distance Education.  
[http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/programmes/cpd/courses/ASD\\_children.shtml](http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/programmes/cpd/courses/ASD_children.shtml)
- Master of Science (MSc) in Autistic Spectrum Disorders: Queen's University Belfast  
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation/ProspectiveStudents/PostgraduateTaught/ProfessionalDevelopmentEducation/AutisticSpectrumDisordersMSc/>
- Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP Europe) formerly known as Profexcel  
<http://www.icepe.co.uk/>
- Post Graduate Certificate in Asperger's Syndrome.  
[www.ASD.org.uk/training](http://www.ASD.org.uk/training)
- ASD NI  
<http://www.ASDni.org/training/calendar.asp>

## Useful Contacts

### Education and Library Boards

Gillian Gamble  
 Sr Specialist Educational Psychologist for ASD  
 ASD Support Service  
 North-Eastern Education and Library Board  
 Call: 028 2565 3333

Kate Doherty  
 Head of Service  
 ASD Advisory and Support Services  
 South-Eastern Education and Library Board  
 Call: 028 4461 2456

Marie-Louise Hughes  
 Senior Educational Psychologist  
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Autism NI  
[www.autismni.org.uk](http://www.autismni.org.uk)

National Autistic Society  
[www.ASD.org.uk](http://www.ASD.org.uk)

ASD Northern Ireland  
[www.ASDni.org](http://www.ASDni.org)

Irish Society for ASD  
[www.ASD.ie](http://www.ASD.ie)

Appendix 1

# Pupil Profile

\_\_\_\_\_ Primary School

## Learning Support Centre / ASD Specific Class

Name of Pupil : _____	Year Group : _____
Current Class : _____	Teacher : _____
Background Information	
Main Difficulties / Challenges	
Parents' Views / Other Information	
Opportunities for Integration including support required	

## Action Plan (stage 5)

\_\_\_\_\_ School

Name of Pupil:		DoB:	Age:
Teacher:	Class:	Period Covered:	
Strengths and Successes			
Nature of Difficulties			
Medical or Pastoral Arrangements			
	Targets for Pupil to Achieve	Teaching and Learning Strategies	
Literacy			
Numeracy			
ASD Profile - Communication			
ASD Profile - Social Skills			
ASD Profile - Obsessive rituals / Behaviour			
School Support Arrangements		Specialist Support Arrangements	
Parental Support Arrangements		Pupil Comments (if appropriate)	
Arrangements for Monitoring			
SENCO's signature : _____		Parent(s) / Guardian(s) informed:	
Parent's signature: _____		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix 3

**Schedule Change Checklist for \_\_\_\_\_**

*(Initial and date)*

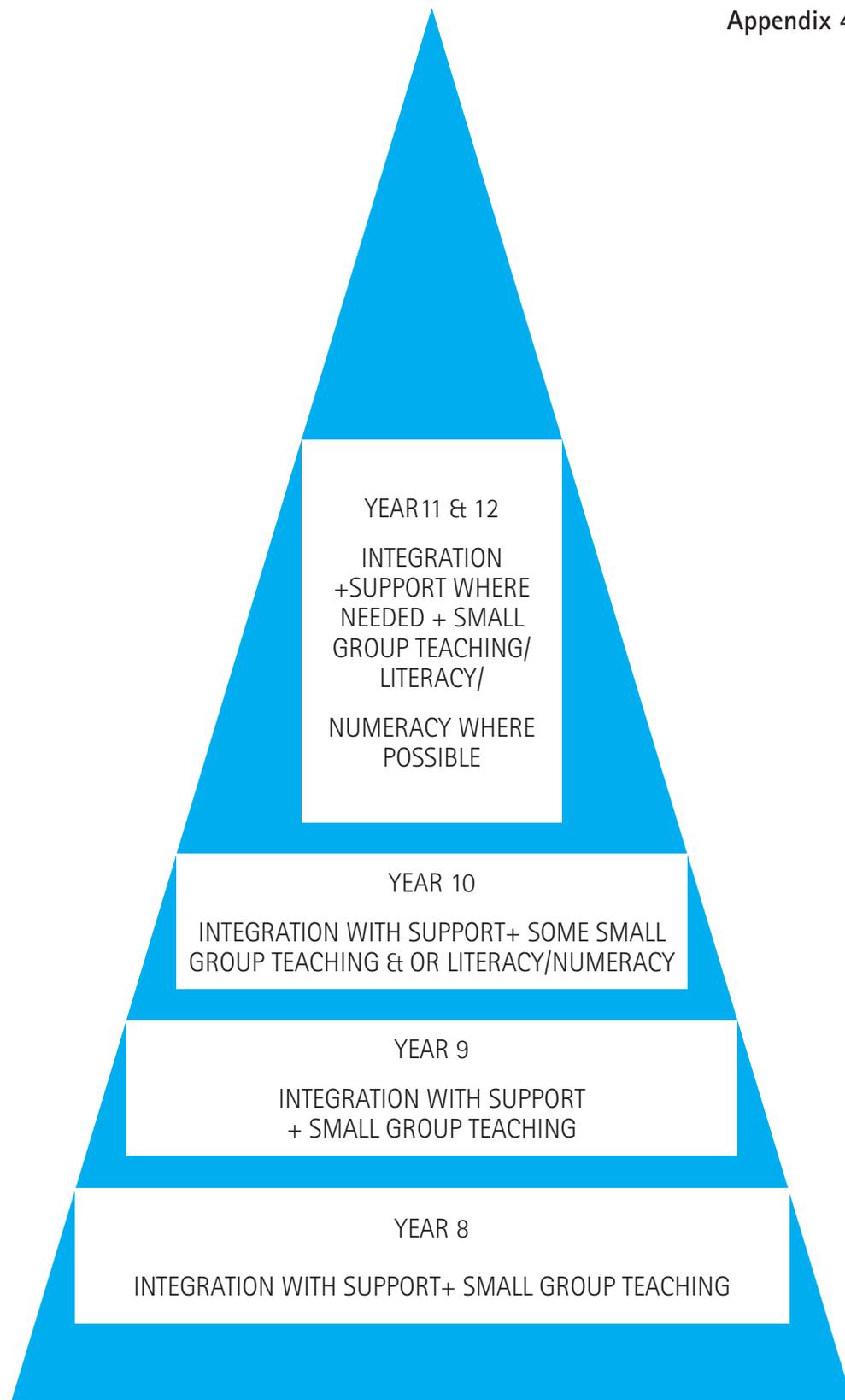
Objectives	Requires physical prompt	Requires verbal & point prompt	Requires verbal prompt	Tolerates independently (100%)
Tolerates change of schedule cue				

**Work Station Checklist for \_\_\_\_\_**

*(Initial and date)*

Objectives	Achieved with physical prompt	Achieved with verbal & point prompt	Achieved with verbal prompt	Achieved independently (100%)
Work at station with 3 physical screens				
Work at station with 1 physical screen				
Work at table with no physical screens (on periphery of class group)				
Work at table with one other child sitting nearby				
Work at table with one other child sitting opposite/or beside				
Work at table alongside more than one other child				

## Appendix 4



## Acknowledgements

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