



Our playground rules



1. Care and share.



2. Stand quietly in the line.

The Autistic Spectrum



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Introduction

This chapter provides information on how best to tailor the classroom environment and educational programmes to meet the individual strengths and needs of children and young people in primary and post primary schools.

Many children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are educated successfully within mainstream schools. Some are taught in mainstream classrooms and other children are taught in specialist classes and participate in programmes with their mainstream peers, as appropriate. This chapter, which has been written by teachers and other practitioners, focuses on children and young people who require a high level of specialist intervention. The strategies can be adapted to meet the needs of any child or young person with ASD. The chapter contains advice on ways to ensure inclusion as well as provide the child with independence skills. It includes information on the resources and equipment that are useful in teaching children with autism including the guidance material provided by the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Skills. The chapter also provides direction for those who wish to advance their knowledge of ASD through specialist training provided by the Education Authority Support Teams and Middletown Centre for Autism. Details are also provided on university courses on ASD and on specialist training. For further information contact the ASD advisory Support Services in your Education Authority region and/or Middletown Centre for Autism.

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental difficulty that impacts on how a person communicates and interacts with others. It also affects how a person makes sense of the world around them. Autism is described as a spectrum condition, which means that each individual with autism shares common traits; however the level of severity across these difficulties will impact on individuals in different ways. It is known as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).

Some children and young people may have a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome. Although this diagnostic term has been removed from the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – DSM V, American Psychiatric Association, 2013, it remains in the ICD 10 and is still in use in the UK. The condition was named after Hans Asperger who wrote a paper on the subject in 1944. People with Asperger Syndrome may present with fewer difficulties with the acquisition of speech and may have a wide vocabulary but their use of, comprehension and processing of language will be impaired. They will have differences in how they interact with others and may have difficulties in expressing themselves effectively. People with Asperger Syndrome are classified as having average or above average intelligence. However, their lives may still be impacted significantly by inability to function in social settings, lack of adaptive skills and in at times mental health issues.

The main areas of difference which all people with autism share are:

- Social Communication and interaction. Social communication differences include challenges using and understanding verbal as well as non-verbal forms of communication, such as gestures, facial expression and tone of voice. Differences with interaction include problems with recognising and understanding the thoughts and intentions of others and with managing their own feelings. This can make it difficult for a child or young person with ASD to form friendships.

- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities. Difficulties in the use of imagination and thought are manifested by a lack of flexibility in thinking and behaving. This is why many children with ASD have difficulties in managing change or interruption to the normal routine.

For current diagnostic criteria please see links below:

<http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2015/en#/F84.0>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0042130/>

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.
- Is likely to appear focused on themselves; often only his/her needs seem to matter.
- May have an uneven learning profile. For example, cognitively able pupils may have great difficulties with adaptive living tasks involving sequencing and organisation e.g. bringing the correct books to school or setting a table.
- May seem to have little or no understanding about what other people think or feel.
- May have sensory processing difficulties and



unusual sensory responses, for example to visual stimulation, sounds, tastes, smells, touch. *(See chapter on sensory processing.)*

- May have dietary/medical issues – limited diet/problems with digestion/problems with toileting.
- Each child or young person is unique. In addition to knowing about ASD it is essential to become familiar with the individual characteristics and preferences of the child or young person in your class.

Assessment: Getting to know the child

Teachers will gain a good understanding of a child with ASD by assessing skills difficulties in a wide range of key areas such as social competence (e.g. interaction and communication); academic learning ability; learning preferences; personal independence; daily life skills; and sensory sensitivities.

Any assessment process should aim to identify a child's strengths as well as difficulties.

A comprehensive assessment will lead to the implementation of targeted interventions for each child. Targets may be recorded in a summary document such as a Pupil Profile and Action Plan *(Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)*.

Useful sources of information

1. Parent consultation provides an invaluable source of information about a child and this information should be included in the Pupil Profile.
2. The report of the child's Educational Psychologist.
3. Other Professional Reports e.g. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy.
4. Social Skills Checklist (*see the resource and equipment list*).
5. Standardised curriculum-based tests.
6. Natural and structured observations in a variety of school settings.
7. Individual Education Plan (IEP) monitoring. A child's IEP needs to target the autism associated difficulties. (*See Appendix 2*).
8. Standardised ASD-specific assessment tools such as the Psycho-Educational Profile (PEP-3) and Transition Assessment Profile (T-Tap). *Consult with ASD services for more information.*

Good Practice

1. Ensure that all relevant staff receive training in ASD. Training needs should be monitored by the school (*see training and advanced training sections*).
2. Ensure relevant staff are made aware of each child's individual pupil profile.
3. Take account of professional reports when developing education plans.
4. Provide opportunities for parents to have regular contact with the school.
5. Ensure that staff know how best to communicate with each child with ASD. Remember that a verbal pupil may have significant difficulties with some aspects of communication such as comprehension, idioms, or inference.
6. Develop an understanding of a pupil's learning style, for example, some pupils will learn best if information is presented to them visually. Some will have difficulties getting started on a task or will finish work very quickly. Others will not want to leave work unfinished. Knowing how each child learns best will help teachers decide on appropriate adjustments.
7. Create an autism-friendly and autism-competent environment (DENI, 2005, p.4). There is general agreement that an appropriate classroom environment will go a long way to supporting a child, making them feel at ease, and actively promoting learning and good behaviour (McAllister, 2012). This requires attention to classroom design and aims to take account of the particular social and communication needs of children with autism. Design also aims to support the inclusion of children with ASD in the life of the school.

Delivering successful inclusion programmes for children and young people with ASD.



A good classroom design will show consideration of the following:-

- i Sensory aspects of the environment (*see chapter on sensory processing*).
- ii The physical structure of the classroom (e.g. visual boundaries for different activities such as independent work area, group work, snack time, transition area).
- iii Temporal structure such as the use of a part-day or full-day schedule.
- iv Clear structuring of independent work so that the child knows what work to complete, when the work is completed, and what to do next (*Appendix 3*).
- v Visual supports to help with change and transition throughout the day (*Appendix 3*).
- vi Arrangements for unstructured times such as break-times e.g. alternative activities, adult supervision, use of social stories to prepare, buddies for primary school pupils or peer support programmes for post primary school pupils.
- vii Direct teaching of social skills which may not be learned naturally e.g. social communication, facial emotional recognition, understanding metaphors, taking turns, making choices.
- viii Direct targeting of positive behaviour. It is important to take account of a child's full profile when making judgements about behaviour. *Appendix 4* provides more suggestions for assessing behaviour taking a child's diagnosis of ASD as a useful starting point.
- ix Prepare for large transitions such as moving from pre-school to primary school or from primary to post-primary school. It is useful for the child and their parents to visit the new school close to transition time, choosing a quiet time for the visit. A 'transition pack' including photographs e.g. of staff, entrance hall, assembly hall, classroom, toilets, playground and dining area, is helpful.

Description of an Autism-Specific Setting in a Primary School

This example is taken from an autism-specific class in the Southern Region. It describes an autism-specific class (ASC) within a mainstream primary school (Key Stage 1).

The class is an integral part of the school and is not viewed as a separate unit.

The pupils are taught in a class (N=8) which has one teacher and two classroom assistants. Prior to taking up post, and as part of continuing professional development, staff received training in ASD including a range of educational, cognitive and behaviour based approaches. The specific approach or combination of approaches chosen at a given time is determined by the main focus or outcomes targeted, individually assessed needs and the child's individual education plan.

Integration and Inclusion

Inclusion of all children in the life of the school, and to the greatest extent possible, is a fundamental objective of the class. Each child takes part in integration with mainstream classes in a way that is appropriate for them. For example, some children join their peer group at school assembly, school trips, dinner-time or in the playground. For some this may be for a short period of time initially and may require a high level of support. Some children join with their mainstream peers for curricular subjects, starting with an area that reflects their interests and strengths.

Some children progress to spending a considerable portion of the day with their mainstream class, returning to their own class as necessary. Close liaison between the specialist teacher and mainstream teacher is essential.

The class is viewed as an integral part of the school and all school staff and pupils have had training in ASD.

Forms of Integration

Reverse integration – a small group of mainstream pupils join the ASC.

Whole group integration – all children from the ASC move to a mainstream classroom for an activity. They are taught by their own class teacher and supported by classroom assistants.

Small group integration – a small group of children from the ASC join a mainstream class, are taught by a mainstream teacher and are supported by a classroom assistant.

Individual integration – an individual child moves to another class with support from a classroom assistant.

Individual integration without support – an individual child moves to another class without support from a classroom assistant.

The success of any integration programme depends on preparation, close monitoring and staff collaboration.

The Classroom Environment

Clear physical layout of the classroom and a structured school day are essential for helping children with ASD feel safe, understand expectations, and access the full curriculum. A well structured ASC setting also has a significant impact on promoting positive behaviour.

In this ASC there are clearly defined areas such as:

- A one-to-one teaching instruction area
- A workstation/area for independent work
- A transition area where schedules are located
- Snack area
- An area for small group work
- An area for larger group activities
- An area for story/roll call/T.V. time
- A computer hub
- An area for play
- A cloakroom/area (e.g. for changing for PE)
- Waiting area
- Sensory or quiet area



Teaching at a table for new work



Story / TV / Roll Call



Group work / Snack Time



Cloakroom



Computer Hub



Waiting / Transition Area



Independent work with removable screens



Changing for PE

Sensory Area

The sensory area is used to meet the sensory needs of each child as assessed by an occupational therapist. The area also helps some children manage their feeling and behaviour; it is a place of calm and low demands. Time in the sensory area may be included as part of the child's daily routine as appropriate.

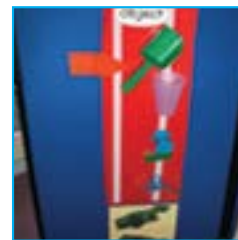


Sensory Area

Temporal Structure

A variety of types of daily schedules exist and these are tailored to the individual child's level of understanding. For example:-

- Object Schedule – using objects associated with the activity (e.g. a pencil for work, a cup for snack)
- Photograph schedule
- Picture of symbol schedule
- Large line drawing with small word schedule
- What's next?..... time forschedule
- Small line drawing with large word (for beginning readers)
- Word only schedule (for readers)
- Weekly timetable
- Written class timetable



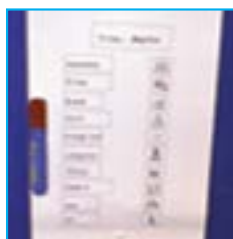
Object Schedule



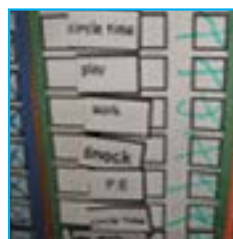
*What's next...
time for schedule*



*Small line drawing +
word schedule*



*Large word small line
drawing schedule*



Word only schedule



Weekly timetable

Other Visual Other Resources



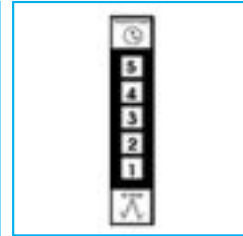
Choice board



Standing cue



Turn taking board



Countdown strip

Planning and Monitoring

A period of assessment which gathers information from a wide range of sources assists in the development of each child's education programme. Teachers meet with parents on a regular basis to discuss their child's IEP and progress. Parents are encouraged to contact the school at any time if they have any concerns.

Each child is entitled to the full NI Curriculum unless stated otherwise on their Statement of Educational Needs. However the pace and content of the curriculum is tailored and adapted to take account of individual needs.

A 'Home/School Book' facilitates regular communication with parents. For example, the teacher informs the parents about what activities their child has participated in that day, what they have had to eat, homework or other general class/school information. The parents are encouraged to write a comment or let school know of any relevant information. Parents also use the Home/School book to request a meeting or a phone call.

**Progress is regularly monitored through
Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and data collection.**

At the end of Key Stage 1 a transfer review is held with parents and relevant professionals. A decision is made by the Education Authority about the most appropriate educational placement and provision for the child.

Education Authority Autism Support Services:

Antrim Office

Call: 028 2566 1313

Dundonald Office

Call: 028 4461 2456

Southern Region

Call: 028 3831 4471

Western Region

Call: 028 8224 6203

Belfast Region

Call: 028 9077 8602

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.middletownautism.com

Email: training@middletownautism.com

Call: 0044 (0)28 3751 5750

There is no charge to professionals, parents or family for training events.

Specialist Setting in a Post Primary School

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.

Integration Methods

Each group is integrated with a class in its year group. Many of the pupils are high functioning and academically competent, the class that makes fewer academic and social demands is often the most appropriate placement (at least initially). All classes in the year group follow the same NI 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 'home room' with some support.

The group follows the timetable of the class with which they are integrated and this allows the CRC teachers 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 'home room' is equipped with single desks, hangers, a quiet corner with soft seats and a TV/DVD player, computer stations. The 'home room' serves as a base for the pupils' entire day and is open from about 8.30am. The young people go to this room as soon as they arrive in school and all of their belongings are kept there to avoid the hustle and bustle of a locker area. The Home room 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 'home rooms' have proved so popular that they sometimes require a rota for visiting.

As part of the focus on improving social skills, staff have arranged some extra curricular activities for example, a friendship group was piloted during the first year; various outings to agricultural shows, museums, science based exhibitions, historic places of interest and a visit to a local cross community project took place. The school leavers and classroom assistants who had worked with the pupils were treated to a meal at the end of the year and a senior school residential weekend was organised. These 'real life' situations worked well.

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 Storie™, calming music, choices charts (token for making good choices), desktop cues (take turns to talk), emergency pass cards (e.g. I need to go to the Home Room now!), classroom posters (e.g. keep everyone inside the circle) and whole school strategies such as merits for good behaviour. Staff occasionally make an arrangement with parents to agree positive behaviour contracts.

Planning

One of the useful strategies used in the Centre is a home/school book which facilitates communication with parents. The teacher makes a daily comment and the parents respond as appropriate. Letters or forms that have to be sent home are put into the home/school book. Parents can also use the 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. Parents are encouraged to contact the school at any time if they have any concerns. Teachers also attend case conferences or medical consultations where appropriate 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 considers which subjects to teach to the small group, to which subjects she will accompany the class, and in which curricular areas one-to-one support may be required. 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.

By Key Stage 4, the pupils are usually well settled in the school and are known and understood by most of the mainstream teachers. Many of them are capable of attending mainstream classes on their own. The level of individual pupil need dictates the type and level of support provided. 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.

For those young people who are taking fewer subjects, alternative arrangements are provided in the 'home room' where help can be given with coursework or revision for tests and examinations. When sitting GCSE examinations, access arrangements are made as required.

Environmental Adaptations

There is a designated area which serves a number of purposes. It is used for group activities, silent reading periods and an area of socialising during break and lunch times. Many pupils with ASD can lose their ability to communicate clearly when they are anxious or upset, a quiet area is therefore an invaluable resource 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. 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.

Continued Professional Development

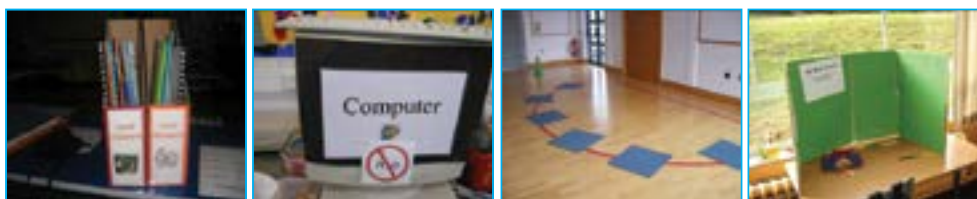
It is important that the class is an integral part of the school; both staff and pupils benefit from the whole school training on ASD Awareness from the Education Authority (EA) ASD Services and then, when teachers have some experience of teaching children with ASD, from the training delivered by Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA). The Education Authority ASD services, a specialist advisor can visit the school to support teachers and individual pupils. They may provide whole school training and facilitate cluster groups which offer the opportunity for teachers to discuss issues together. There are various training courses that schools have access to. These are either hosted by the EA or other through the Centre for Autism based in Middletown, Co Armagh.

Mainstream Classrooms

Some children and young people will require 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 South Eastern Region Advisory Team.



Book Organisation

Not Computer Time

*Where to stand for
a PE activity*

Moveable Carrel



Individualised Timetables

References

DENI (2005) *Evaluating Provision for Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Schools*.

McAllister, K. & Maguire, B. Design Considerations for the autism-spectrum disorder-friendly (Key Stage 1) classroom (2012). *Support for Learning, British Journal of Learning Support*, Vol 27 (3) 103-112.

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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.

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

Useful Documents

- 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/patients/publications/145/index.html>
- The Autism Toolbox: An autism resource for Scottish schools
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0>

Equipment

- 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
- Dividers
- OT equipment as recommended.
- Mini white boards
- Educational Games - www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise
- Board Games e.g. Monopoly, Cranium, Pictionary.
- Alphasmart computers (for pupils with writing difficulties)

Training Opportunities

ASD Training Programmes provided by Education Authority in each region.

See EA ASD core training menu including:

- 2 day INSET for Primary Schools - An Overview of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Middletown Centre for Autism Training programme

www.middletownautism.com

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.

Useful Websites for Schools



Good Practice Guidance

- Best Practice Resource
<http://best-practice.middletownautism.com/>
- Department of Education NI
www.deni.gov.uk
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
http://www.rcslt.org/speech_and_language_therapy/commissioning/resource_manual_for_commissioning_and_planning_services
- C2Kni <http://www.c2kni.net/>

Visual Resources

Twinkl
<http://www.twinkl.co.uk>

Topmarks
<http://www.topmarks.co.uk>

Do 2 Learn
<http://www.do2learn.com>

Social Communication

Carol Gray Social Stories

<http://carolgraysocialstories.com/>

Kansas ASD

<http://www.kansasasd.com/socialnarratives.php>

Write Social Stories

http://www.ehow.com/how_4479088_write-social-stories-children-ASD.html

Sandbox Learning

www.sandbox-learning.com

Social Skills List

<http://www.cccoe.net/social/skillslist.htm>

Communication for All

www.communication4all.co.uk

Speechmark

www.speechmark.net

SEN Teacher

www.senteacher.org

Autism Education Trust

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

Sensory Processing

- Sensory Processing Resource
<http://sensory-processing.middletonautism.com/>

Case Studies

Each child and young person is unique 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. 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.

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 25 other pupils, two classroom assistants and a teacher. Kate has a diagnosis of ASD and Attention Deficity Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). 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 outside of the school setting. However it is reported that she is becoming 'obsessed' with this child. The teacher has noted that Kate monopolises 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 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 and instead engages 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 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 remained high. This addressed her ASD and ADHD profile.
- Kate needed to be taught explicitly about friendship skills in a small group. This began with Kate working with a classroom assistant or teacher, before working with emotionally able classmates. Teachers used a range of vehicles including role-play and video modelling to engage her attention.
- A buddy system was created where Kate had a pre-assigned peer that she can turn to for help, it is important that this responsibility rotated throughout the class.
- PDMU was used to address teasing and bullying within the whole class with the aim of instilling a respectful ethos.
- Kate had a quiet work area, free from distractions and placed away from busy areas including windows and doors.
- Kate was taught 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 Oppositional Defiance Disorder (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 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 become disruptive, as it is a distraction to the class. His parents have asked the school to help with this situation.

Graham 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 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 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 tried to avoid getting into arguments with Graham and instead attempted to redirect his attention to one of his many interests.
- Graham's parents agreed to a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) following concerns that he was talking to himself.
- To extend his friendship circles the school implemented a peer mentoring with students who set good examples for Graham.
- With parental and Graham's consent Graham's diagnosis was explained to his peers. This helped them to be more understanding and accepting of his behaviour.
- A self-advocacy group was established to teach Graham about appropriate behaviour and how to react to others.
- With permissions in place Graham's behaviour was videoed and feedback provided. This helped Graham to understand the impact of his behaviour on others.
- Written rules were provided in a positive form, for example, 'please whisper' rather than 'do not shout'.
- Graham was provided with an outline warning of the plan for PE lessons. He was directed towards a specific activity or was encouraged to participate in the whole class activity paired with the teacher or an understanding peer.

- It was considered that Graham could be 'disapplied' from a range of subjects.
- Graham undertook a reduced timetable for a short period of time. This arrangement was regularly reviewed.
- The sensory environment was considered, particularly with regard to his light sensitivity. Graham's seat was moved so he was not directly under fluorescent lights.
- Graham was taught less extreme ways of opting out. For example, he used a 'get out of class card'.



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 autism.

Service Delivery

Centre staff deliver services to three main client groups:

- Professionals working with children and young people with autism, mainly those based in the education sector but including some health professionals who are school based,
- Parents (and guardians) of children and young people with autism, and
- Children and young people with autism

The Centre's Services

Provision has been made for the development and delivery of comprehensive educational assessment, individual learning support and intervention, accredited training and accessible research support. Details of these services and how to obtain further information are included below.

Learning Support and Assessment

Middletown Centre for Autism's Learning Support and Assessment service delivers intensive assessment and learning support for children and young people who despite specialist input continue to experience difficulties in their educational setting. It is a second level service aiming to provide further assessment, learning support and intervention for children and young people with autism. The service utilises a trans-disciplinary approach and is usually delivered over a period of three school terms. The team includes Teachers, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, access to Educational Psychology input, Autism Intervention Officers and Learning Support Officers. The service delivery is based on a capacity building model which provides:

- A detailed trans-disciplinary assessment and learning support plan.
- Specific training for those working with the child and young person referred to the service.
- Home support and advice for parents in relation to their child's education. Support for children and young people for up to four terms according to need.
- Alternatively schools, who are focusing on ASD as part of their school development plan, can be referred to the service. Their staff will receive advice on ASD policies, professional and parent training, and paired observations. The broad aim is to ensure the school is an 'autism competent environment' and all staff are skilled in working with children and young people with autism.

Children and young people or schools are referred to the Centre through the Education Authority. For further information please contact the Education Authority ASD team in your region or Middletown Centre for Autism.

Comprehensive Training Programme for Professionals

The Centre's staff deliver 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. Training events include:

- **A Blended Intervention Approach for Children and Young People with Autism**

This training has been designed for educational professionals in special and primary schools who have had previous training and experience of working with children and young people with ASD and would benefit from guidance as to how to integrate their knowledge and apply it to their educational practice, assessment and planning.

- **Using the Primary Curriculum to Create an Autism Friendly Classroom**

This training will recommend practical advice to enable staff in primary mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of students with ASD to make school a more positive experience for them whilst providing an inclusive learning environment.

- **Using the Post-Primary Curriculum to Create an Autism Friendly Classroom**

This training will recommend practical advice to enable staff in post primary mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of students with ASD to make school a more positive experience for them whilst providing an inclusive learning environment.

Comprehensive Training Programme for Parents

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.

Weekend Training Events for Professionals and Parents

The Centre staff host major training events on weekends throughout the year for parents and professionals.

Evidence Based Practice

Research bulletins on topics which complement the training delivered from the Centre, are produced regularly. Titles include:

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

*(These can be downloaded from the Centre's website
www.middletonautism.com)*

The Centre staff are engaged in innovative research projects. Topics include:

- **Working Memory Project** – a comparison study of the working memory skills of 24 children with ASD and 24 typically developing children in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

- **Sensory Processing Project** – a pilot study, which will profile and pattern the presentation of sensory difficulties in 30 children in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.
- **Case Studies** – collating the data on current referrals (as appropriate), to provide a measure of the impact of the current interventions, the capacity building model and develop an evaluation of the efficacy of the transdisciplinary model of service delivery.

Teachers are welcome to visit the Centre to use our research and information service, access research articles and make use of reference books.

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.middletownautism.com

Email: training@middletownautism.com

Call: 0044 (0) 28 3751 5750

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

Additional Professional Qualifications

- Post-Graduate Certificate in Autism studies commencing in September 2016, Middletown Centre for Autism, Mary Immaculate College Limerick, and the University of Limerick.

The course will be open to all graduates who wish to pursue graduate studies in the area of autism. This part-time course will be delivered both in Limerick and Northern Ireland with a significant online component and is open to applications from across Ireland and Northern Ireland. The course will be worth 30 ECTS/60 CATS points or 6 ECTS / 12 CATS points per module.

Modules offered are:

- Introduction to Autism
- Anxiety Management
- Sensory Issues
- Visual Learning Styles
- Creating an autism competent environment

For further information contact:

training@middletownautism.com

- Master of Education (MEd) in Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Birmingham University Distance Education.

The aims of the programme are to give students knowledge of the ASD spectrum, based on theory, research and practice. It aims to develop skills in identifying and meeting the needs of these children and improve the student's awareness of different approaches and models of service delivery (particularly in the area of education). Taking the perspective of the child on the ASD spectrum is paramount, and listening to families and what they need and value is also stressed. The course may be studied full or part time on campus or by distance learning.

<http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/programmes/cpd/courses/ASDchildren.shtml>

- Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP Europe) formerly known as Profexcel.

ICEP is a provider of online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and University validated Diploma programmes in special educational

needs for teachers, parents and allied professionals who work with children and young people.

<http://www.icepe.co.uk/>

- Post Graduate Certificate in Asperger's Syndrome.

A collaboration between The National Autistic Society and Sheffield Hallam University. This course has been running for over five years throughout the United Kingdom (UK) Participants should hold a degree or equivalent.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/training-consultancy/university/postgrad-certificate.aspx>

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: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Parent's/Guardian's signature: _____			

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

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 not seem 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 around 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 Rigidity of Behaviour (restricted range of activities, behaviour and interests)

Very anxious to finish work.	Practice 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.	Many 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. Practice under examination conditions e.g. time allocated, working with minimal levels of assistance. Examination concessions may be granted.
Lack of organisational 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.

<p>Do not like a change in routine.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Prepare for fire drills, Christmas play practice and other changes to routine.</p>
<p>Need to know what is happening next.</p>	<p>Use a visual concept for 'first and then'.</p> <p>Encourage them to use timetables.</p>
<p>Will try to bring their particular interest into every activity.</p>	<p>Allow them so many minutes to tell you about their interest – turn it into a 'rule'.</p> <p>Use their interests as motivation for work.</p>
<p>Like to do things their way.</p>	<p>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).</p>
<p>May be very negative.</p>	<p>Challenge negativity. Have them to write a list of 'least awful' activities. Incorporate motivators.</p> <p>Use an Achievement Book/charts to show progress.</p>
<p>May be very anxious/cry easily.</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p>Can become agitated/aggressive if frustrated or do not understand what to do or feel work is too difficult.</p>	<p>Try to prevent frustration/aggression by recognising 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.</p> <p>Teach children how to recognise their emotions and how to self-regulate. See the following example.</p>
<p>May run off.</p>	<p>Try to ensure pupil's safety.</p> <p>Use an 'Emergency Card'/traffic light system/choices charts/stars in home/school book/warning or encouragement cards/social stories.</p>
<p>May lash out verbally or physically/throw a tantrum.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>May destroy work.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Want everything to be correct/neat.</p>	<p>Allow time for drafts to be written. Perhaps practise on a mini white board before transferring to final copy.</p> <p>Introduce social stories around mistakes being acceptable.</p>

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