

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism

The child or young person who may or may not have a diagnosis of autism or may be on the assessment pathway, presents with greater difficulty than the majority of children of their age in the areas of:

Communication and Interaction:

- Inappropriate or limited social initiative and problems with establishing and maintaining reciprocal relationships.
- Poor or inappropriate eye contact and non-verbal language for social interaction.
- Impaired expressive or receptive language including unusual intonation, idiosyncratic phrases, literal interpretation.
- Limited conversational skills, rigidity of thinking and a tendency to follow agendas which are not easily amenable to adult direction with an absence of awareness of the needs or emotions of others.

Social Understanding:

- Understanding social situations, responding to social cues and intuitively sensing other people's feeling and intentions.
- High susceptibility to anxiety and stress.

Interests and Information Processing:

- Difficulty in open-ended or unstructured situations and with change or transitions.
- Limitations in expressive or creative ability.
- Obsessive interests or repetitive activities.

Sensory Processing:

- High susceptibility to hyper/hypo sensory stimuli.

Leicester City's approach to autism support

The Early Years Support Team (EYST) and the Learning, Communication, and Interaction Team (LCI) work with the City Psychology Service (CPS) as part of Leicester's Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Support Service to offer assessment, advice, training and support to families, settings, and schools to meet the special educational needs of children and young people on the autism spectrum.

Electronic referrals at [SEND services referral - Self \(leicester.gov.uk\)](#) are discussed at fortnightly intervals and, if accepted, allocated to the appropriate team. The allocated team will then contact the referrer and family/setting/school to discuss the nature of the support needed. This support can range from direct work with the children and young people, to advice and support to parents/carers and/or practitioners, to delivering training to individual parents or groups of parents or

practitioners. Teams may also liaise with other professionals involved with the children and young people to gain a fuller picture of the child's needs and the support required. [Training](#) can be arranged centrally i.e., at a venue arranged by the SEND Support Service or can be delivered to individual or groups of parents/carers, settings or schools; training is delivered either virtually or face-to-face. EYST and LCI base their training and advice on resources from the [Autism Education Trust \(AET\)](#) including a set of autism standards, competency framework and Progression framework to support the professional development of those working with children and young people with autism.

People and services for children and young people with autism

Role and expectations of the school:

Senior management team & SENCo should ensure:

- a value is placed on a knowledge of autism which underpins the performance and behaviour of children and young people.
- there is an Autism Champion (with AET Good Autism Practice and Leading Good Autism Practice Training) within the school who attends Local Authority briefings and updates.
- ensure there is a clear induction programme for new staff including AET Making Sense of Autism training and all staff should have refresher training every 3 years.
- complete a regular audit of staff confidence levels, understanding and knowledge of autism and link this to CPD.
- deliver whole school training (at least AET Making Sense of Autism).
- ensure the SENCo has training in Social Stories and sensory profiling and cascades it to all teachers and teaching assistants (TA).
- ensure that all staff should have training in the appropriate communication strategies for children and young people with autism including simplified language and visuals.
- implement whole class visual timetables and ensure their use is monitored by the senior management team and SENCo.
- include a written statement in the SEND policy around supporting children and young people with autism. This is reviewed annually.
- facilitate discussions with teachers to discuss the individual needs of children and young people with autism.
- make sure clear policies are in place to support close working with parents/carers around the needs of children with autism.
- share all SEND service advice and reports with parents/carers (including verbal).
- liaise with SEND services prior to the following meetings: statutory meetings such as Annual Reviews, Implementation meetings, reviews to discuss possible statutory assessments, general review meetings where appropriate.

Teachers and TAs should:

- establish and maintain positive relationships to support the learning and well-being for the children and young peoples.
- use language that is simple and clear and avoids non-literal language and inferred meaning.
- put in place appropriate support for transitions and for managing unpredicted changes to the routine which will include visuals, processing time, gradual introduction to unfamiliar environments or activities, groupings (including staff changes) etc.
- follow the advice and recommendations of local authority support services (verbal or written) and the school SENCo. These should be reviewed termly and added to children and young people passport/SMART targets.
- provide opportunities and support to develop relationships with peers that are meaningful to the children and young people.
- encourage and motivate the children and young people by using their strengths, special interests, and favourite activities to promote achievement and engagement.
- support the generalisation of skills including social understanding e.g., inferential understanding, perspective taking, empathetic thinking.
- explicitly name the emotions and thoughts of the child and others and prompt, model and encourage expected social interaction skills.
- recognise that children and young people with autism are much more likely to be teased or bullied (including cyber bullying) and take steps to prevent and manage bullying.
- recognise that children and young people with autism are vulnerable to elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression and that these can be prevented or reduced if needs are recognised early and met.
- manage, support, and differentiate collaborative learning e.g., opportunities to work within or alongside a group or pair.
- provide greater structure for open ended/creative activities e.g., choice from options instead of prediction, writing or drawing from actual experience instead of imagination.
- manage behaviour by consistently using strategies recommended by the SENCo and/or external agencies, e.g., personalised reward system, five-point scale, standardised testing and reporting (STAR), Iceberg, time out cards, and/or access to a planned haven (children and young people to signal or leave using a suitable plan to leave e.g., time out card, band to signal they need to leave or a particular number on the emotional scale point).
- show awareness and plan to manage sensory differences e.g., light, noise, texture, temperature, etc.
- use relevant High-Quality Teaching to support learning as per SLCN, MLD and ADHD sections of this document.
- ensure parents/carers are kept updated around children and young people's needs, progress, behaviour, wellbeing, and achievements.
- access AET resources to inform understanding and practise.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SEND services should:

- provide training in AET and the Progression Framework.
- support school in implementing the AET Autism Standards.
- support school in auditing staff confidence levels through the AET Competency framework.
- provide termly Autism Champion meetings.
- complete cognitive social communication and physiological assessments.

Provisions and practice for children and young people with autism

Role and expectations of the school

Schools should:

- have a SEND policy around supporting children and young people with autism which is understood and implemented by all staff.
- have clear policies in place to support close working with parents/carers around the needs of children with autism.
- ensure that all SEND service advice and reports are shared with parents/carers (including verbal).
- make effective plans for transitions for children and young people with autism coming into and leaving the school and moving between classes.
- have a curriculum that addresses both the learning needs and their social, emotional well-being, their communication needs and life skills.
- ensure there is structure to the learning including individual visual timetable, task lists etc.
- make reasonable adjustments to timetables e.g., leaving the classroom early to avoid busy corridors.
- be aware of challenges relating to homework and revision for tests and exams apply reasonable adjustments.
- children and young people may need to apply exam arrangements.
- provide a home school communication book or system to ensure families are aware of their children and young people's day, successes and/or important messages.
- complete individual children and young people passports and update annually.
- work towards SEND targets to support the progression of social skills, learning or needs, using the AET Progression Framework to set suitable targets, which are reviewed termly.
- ensure appropriate strategies are in use even if there is not a diagnosis of autism.
- offer opportunities of support to develop relationships and social skills with other children.
- use AET resources as appropriate to support children and young people with autism.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SEND Services should:

- model good practice and coach school staff to implement SEND services' advice.
- provide support and advice around sensory needs once profiling is completed.
- signpost useful resources and materials to support teachers in developing and using autism friendly strategies and approaches.
- signpost/provide advice about access arrangements. This includes providing up to date exam arrangement information on our website and/or directing people to the AET website where this information can be freely downloaded.

Environment for children and young people with autism

Role and expectations of the school

Schools should:

- complete sensory profiles for individuals and implement appropriate adaptations.
- consider the school environment using a sensory audit and make reasonable adjustments.
- provide a clearly organised learning environment, with a variety of cues (e.g., tactile, visual, auditory) to help children and young people to understand and navigate the environment.
- provide opportunities for sensory breaks within the classroom.
- provide appropriate seating for children and young people e.g., weighted cushions, wobble seats, seating plans.
- ensure classrooms have areas with minimal distractions.
- put in place individual workstations if appropriate.
- provide clearly defined spaces/areas for personal equipment and use a variety of cues (e.g., visual, tactile) to help children and young people with autism understand and navigate the environment.
- designate a safe place in the building with a suitable plan to leave e.g., visuals, card system.
- provide Social Stories to support children and young people's understanding of the environment including how and when this may change.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SEND Services should:

- provide advice and guidance to support the school in making the environment more autism friendly, including arrangements to accommodate sensory differences.
- provide advice and guidance to support the children and young people specifically around the environment.

Resources for learning for children and young people

Role and expectations of the school

Schools should:

- ensure visual systems are in place, used consistently and personalised according to the individual children and young people's needs. These may include:
 - Attention pictures, e.g., good listening/sitting.
 - Individual mats or cushions etc. to indicate where the children and young people need to sit.
 - Timers to indicate how long the children and young people needs to focus.
 - Whole class and personalised visual timetables.
 - First-then boards.
 - Choice boards.
 - Personalised reward system.
 - Objects of reference.
 - Task planners.
 - Mind maps.
 - Writing frames.
 - Emotion fans.
 - 5-point scale or Zones of Regulation.
 - Time out cards.
- manage sensory differences and provide access to sensory resources e.g., fidget resources, ear defenders, chewellery, weighted blanket.
- provide support to encourage and develop children and young people's independence in using and applying strategies and resources.
- provide support to help children and young people organise their learning e.g., provide a homework diary/schedule.
- provide aids to facilitate access to the curriculum such as an iPad or laptop as part of reasonable adjustments.
- ensure access to children and young people's personalised social stories, sensory resources, and visuals throughout the entire day.
- provide access to areas or rooms with reduced distraction for challenging activities, i.e., those that require greater attention and effort for the children and young people.
- arrange workstations for individual children and young people as needed.
- use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) for children and young people to enhance their learning experience and as a tool for communication and leisure.

Role and expectations of the local authority

SEND services should:

- signpost to appropriate resources.
- model use of interventions and resources.