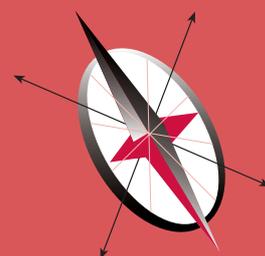


autism

children with autism

strategies for accessing the curriculum
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acknowledgement

This book is the result of work that began in Lancashire LEA in 1991.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) seconded a member of staff, Mick Connelly, to advise Lancashire with regard to the needs of children with autism.

A part of this work was the development of curriculum access documents. The foundations for this were laid out in the report 'Autism in Lancashire' by the NAS. The curriculum work was then taken forward by the Autism Research Team (1992-1995), The Complex Learning Difficulties service (1995-98), the Blackpool Physical, Sensory and Complex Difficulties Service (1998-1999) and finally the North West SEN Regional Partnership (1999 and ongoing), facilitated by Diane Whalley.

The following people have been major contributors to this book:

Sue Allison (Boys and Girls Welfare Society)
Tony Bland (CLD)
Diane Chiappi (CLD)
Jennifer Clarken (Warrington LEA)
Mick Connelly (NAS/CLD/PSC/Blackpool LEA)
Val Cumine (ART)
Gail Garraty (CLD)
Jacqui Ghigi (PSC/Blackpool LEA)
Julia Leech (ART)
Jean Leeming (CLD)
Jean Mallaband (CLD)
Sylvia Oakes (Bolton LEA)
Pauline Richardson (CLD)
Linda Roberts (CLD)
Karin Sherrington (CLD/Bury LEA)
Clive Smith (CLD)
Gill Stevenson (ART/Blackburn with Darwen LEA)
Sandra Tetley (CLD)
Jean Vesty (Rochdale LEA)
Jacqui Wheple (Bolton LEA)
Philip Wilde (CLD)
Alan Woodward (Bolton LEA)

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The partnership would like to thank Ian Southern and Amanda Marshall of Lancashire County Council for their forbearance and their unwavering support.

The strategies discussed are the result of real work in real schools. They reflect the ingenuity of dedicated teachers, learning support assistants and parents/carers. Most importantly they reflect upon the amazing nature of pupils with autism. To them, all of us are grateful.





Introduction

Autism, Asperger syndrome, infantile autism, pervasive developmental disorders, these terms and many more are all used to describe individuals with a particular developmental disability. Some features of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are also seen in pupils described as having other conditions e.g. Pathological Demand Avoidance syndrome (PDA), Semantic Pragmatic syndrome and Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). Collectively they are referred to as Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Despite the range of terminology used there are common features, which include differences in social development, language and communication development, insistence on sameness and social imagination. This is often accompanied by difficulties processing sensory information. The social impairment is characterised by a level of social detachment and a lack of responsiveness to other people. The communication problems can range from a total lack of language or communication skills to individuals who may speak fluently but with a voice that lacks intonation or expression. They generally find the complexities of language difficult to understand. Individuals are often intolerant of changes in their environment and routine. Despite these collective descriptors the children are as uniquely individual as any other child.

Pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder face great challenges when accessing learning alongside their peers. Their range of ability is as great as the learning difficulties they face. The purpose of this document is two fold. Firstly, it provides colleagues with a framework to help them to a better understanding of the needs of such pupils. Secondly, it provides examples of general strategies around which they may develop short-term targets to meet the objectives outlined in section 3 in the pupil's Statement of Special Educational Needs or at School Action Plus (SA+). This is a working document that will continue to be reviewed, developed and added to in the light of the successful work being undertaken in the many schools in the North West working with pupils with asd. It has been written by practitioners and is intended to be used by practitioners, particularly hard-pressed teachers who have a myriad of other duties and responsibilities.

The current government's policy of promoting educational (and social) inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools means that colleagues on the shop floor will need to be aware of the needs of children with pervasive developmental disorders that are within the autistic landscape. Bearing that in mind, the document includes an outline of Autism and Asperger syndrome as the most common examples of autistic spectrum disorder to be found in mainstream schools.

On the assessment side, there is already a requirement for schools to assess all pupils who have SEN and to prepare individual education plans that address the identified need. This document directly focuses upon assisting this process at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder will be educated in the whole range of provision provided within and outside the local education authority (LEA). However, this document is directed in the main towards those pupils who are within the mainstream sector.

NB Throughout 'he' is used to reflect the male/female ratio. The term asd has been used although it is recognised that this is an over- simplification.





Introduction

“School days provide the earliest opportunity for social contact for the vast majority of people, and yet, I remember those days with trepidation...If only I had had the right sort of professional support at school while on school premises, life would have been so much easier. Someone to make me less oblivious of the impression which I was giving other pupils, and to give strategies”. (Thomas Mader)

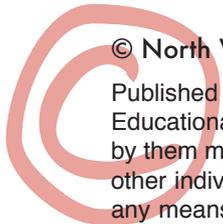
We hope that this document will be a practical and helpful tool in your day-to-day work.

Mick Connelly

Blackpool Education, Leisure and Cultural Services.

On behalf of the above contributors and the North West SEN Regional Partnership

The document may be accessed as a whole or as subject areas.



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Autism & asperger syndrome

Autism is considered to be a disorder of development. The causes of autism still remain unknown although genetic factors, complications in pregnancy or during the child's birth and other medical aspects such as infection, viral disease or even vaccination have all at various times been considered to play some part in the onset of autism. The terms autism and Asperger Syndrome were used and the syndrome described in the early 1940's by Leo Kanner (a psychiatrist working in America) and Hans Asperger (a paediatrician working in Vienna) respectively.

Although we have a greater understanding of prevalence rates there is no consensus. Figures from the MRC's Review of Autism Research: Epidemiology and Causes (Dec 2001) suggest that:

'There appears fairly good agreement that the asd affect approximately 60 per 10,000 under 8 years, of whom 10 - 30 per 10,000 pupils have narrowly defined asd. These estimates confirm that asd is far more common than previously generally recognised.'

It is therefore likely that in each secondary school of 1,000 you could well expect to find at least 6 pupils with asd.

The most consistently held view of asd at present is the result of research by Lorna Wing & Judy Gould working in the late 1970s. They identified the three common features or core aspects of asd, more commonly known as the "Triad of Impairments".

These are:

- impairment of two-way social interaction.
- impairment of verbal and non-verbal communication.
- impairment of flexible thinking and social imagination

Asd is now generally seen as a continuum or a spectrum disorder. Individuals with asd can display a wide range of intellectual ability, from those who are severely intellectually challenged through to some who may be of average or even above average ability. Whatever the ability level of the individual all three core aspects must be present for asd to be identified.

Whilst some parents may be unaware of their child's problems in the very early weeks of life, research indicates that a small number are certain of some abnormality in their child's development before the age of twelve months. Many parents are unaware of any problem until the birth of their second child; (statistically the majority of children with asd are first born). In many cases, it is not until a child enters a pre-school setting and direct comparisons with other children are made, either by the child's parents or professionals that any question of developmental delay is raised. The average age of diagnosis of asd is 5.5 years and for Asperger Syndrome is 11.3 years. Diagnosis often lags behind recognition causing frustration and difficulties amongst parents, teachers and not least pupils.

The majority of pupils at pre-school level will at times display examples of behaviour or a 'lack' of behaviour that can be associated with the 'triad of impairment'. Isolated incidents of impairments of social interaction, communication or rigid thought patterns should not immediately lead to a consideration of asd for any pupils. Repeated evidence of a combination of impairment from all three areas would suggest the need for further assessment.



Impairment in social interaction

Pupils in play schools, nurseries and other pre-school settings are by nature egocentric.

Questions should be asked only:

- if a child consistently shows a marked lack of awareness of others, both adults and peers, particularly
- if the child displays a similar lack of awareness about others' feelings
- if a child is completely unmoved and even unaware of another child's distress
- if distressed does not seek comfort.

Pupils with asd often display a propensity for imitative ability however, they have great difficulty in showing appropriate, social imitation. There are obvious consequences for the child's learning when action-rhyming games etc have little or no social meaning.

There is therefore a delay in the development of social play. Pupils with asd do not actively participate in simple games and may reject, sometimes with extreme force, their parents or other adult's early attempts to join in with them.

Autism is considered to be a disorder of development.



Impairment of communication

From the earliest stages communicative activities will be marked by an 'inappropriateness', and by a lack of communicative intent. Eye-to-eye gaze, use of facial expression to convey information, body posture or gesture, all may be absent or used inappropriately to initiate or modulate social interaction.

In social situations inappropriate body language may be used, such as a child turning their back upon people or getting too close, invading personal space when curious to know more about the person.

Role playing and acting out imaginative activities may not feature in the repertoire of a pupil with asd. This absence limits many opportunities for language and communication development. Older pupils often lack interest in fictional stories preferring factual events or information.

The child's speech is often abnormal with an inability to use volume, pitch, stress, rhythm and intonation appropriately. Speech may be pedantic or have a monotonous tone. Echolalic speech is a common feature, where the child may repeat anything from single words, short phrases through to whole conversations, with little notion of context.

Where language and speech does develop it is often characterised by errors in structure. The child may be unable to use language in an appropriate social context, or may use their own idiosyncratic structure. "Go on green riding" may mean, "I want to go on the swing".

"Go on green riding" may mean, "I want to go on the swing"



Impairment of flexible thinking

As social impairment can be seen to affect language development so impairment in language development has an effect upon the thinking of an individual with asd. A child's inability to make sense of their own environment may result in the child being constantly in conflict with their world. Many researchers believe that individuals resolve such confusion through their insistence on following known routines or their dependence on real objects and their lack of response to people who can be unpredictable. Such views are supported by the writings of the more able individuals with asd who describe their feelings of security developed through such actions.

Wendy Lawson, an adult with asd describes looking at life as a video in which she can't take part.

So pupils may use concrete objects to develop a personal feeling of control. Many pupils with asd develop obsessions for particular objects, often with inappropriate responses, sniffing or smelling them, feeling their textures. Pupils may simply sit spinning the wheels of a toy car or watching the washing machine with fascination or fear.

With a difficulty in making sense of the environment any changes, even trivial aspects such as moving a picture, can alter the child's perception of the whole environment. Changes in routine or environment are unsettling and for individuals to accommodate such changes requires a major effort, Pupils then, will go to extreme lengths to maintain the 'sameness' and any inability to maintain the 'status quo' can cause major problems. This need for security is often manifested in a restricted range of interests. Pupils may line up pieces of Lego, (not building creatively), amass facts about meteorology or pretend to be the same character over and over again.

Christa went away on a school trip and whilst away her mother decorated her bedroom as a nice surprise. Christa destroyed everything in the bedroom on the first night back.

One of the consequences of these impairments is a heightened perceptual difficulty, which reinforces the individual's lack of understanding. Being unable to predict outcomes and events can result in the child developing a high degree of insecurity and anxiety. As a response the child then adopts his or her own unique stress reducing behaviours or coping strategies, commonly at odds with the demands of the school routine.

The aspects of the triad are all inter-linked. Each strand will interact with and affect the others eg a child who is totally detached from others will lack an understanding of the need to communicate. The factors change and shift over time and context rather like a child's kaleidoscope.

note: within the strategies presented it is important to address the 'triad of impairments' rather than the manifest behavioural symptoms, which are themselves a result of the child attempting to come to terms with a confusing and inexplicable environment and social structure.



psychological insights

A great deal of research has been done on the medical understanding of the pathology of asd. Lorna Wing described it as rather like trying to grasp mercury - you think you have it but end up having to chase lots of smaller pieces.

This research is crucially important, however insights from psychological research and studies have far greater implications for the practitioners.

Briefly there are three interrelated areas of study:

- Theory of Mind
- Executive Function
- Central Coherence.

Theory of Mind:

A lack of understanding that other people have thoughts, feelings, wishes and desires that are different from their own.

A lack of basic perceptual/affective abilities for the person to engage in "personal relatedness" with others.

"The face bone is connected to the mind bone" (Meltgoff and Gobnick 1993)

Michael came into school and told the teachers that his Grandma had died and his Mum was crying but he didn't know why his Mum was crying.

Implications of Theory of Mind

- predicting behaviour
- reading intentions/motives
- explaining own behaviour
- understanding effects of own behaviour
- communication/language use
- sharing attention/eye contact
- imagination - fiction - role play
- deceiving/understand deception

Executive Function:

Difficulties with problem solving, planning, sequencing, organisation, attention and disinhibition, (often also seen in pupils with ADHD and/or epilepsy).

"Impairment of the ability to maintain an appropriate problem - solving set for the attainment of a future goal" (Lauria 1996)

Gill didn't know when to finish a task and carried on writing until the book was full.

Karen couldn't start an exam paper because she had noticed that the questions were numbered wrongly. Staff had to take the paper away and correctly number it.



psychological insights

Implications of Executive Function Deficit

- difficulty in perceiving emotion
- difficulty in imitation
- difficulty in pretend play
- difficulty in planning
- difficulty in starting and stopping

Central Coherence

The difficulty with taking parts of information and making it into a whole eg seeing the woods for the trees.

"The ability to experience wholes without attention to the constituent parts" (Leo Kanner 1944)

Sheila Griffin took pupils to the woods near her school. They spotted a squirrel sat on top of an overflowing rubbish bin. Simon commented with great excitement 'Look someone's thrown away a perfectly good squirrel'.

Implications of Central Coherence Deficit

- idiosyncratic focus of attention
- imposition of own perspective
- preference for the known
- inattentiveness to new tasks
- difficulty in choosing/prioritising
- difficulty organising self/materials
- difficulty seeing connections/generalising

These psychological insights may be seen to be describing deficits but as they are the learning style of the pupil with asd they could be seen as strengths. The strategies described in this document have tried to incorporate them in a positive way. We believe differences is a better description than difficulty, deficiency, deficit or disability to reflect the way a person with asd views the world.

(with thanks to Julia Dunlop for assisting with the preparation of this material)



Pupils with asd in mainstream schools

Listed below are the three areas of impairment and some of the common characteristics that pupils with asd may display. In addition, poor motor co-ordination and sensory perceptual differences are listed. Although not diagnostic features, they are commonly found in pupils with asd in mainstream education.

1. Impairment of language and communication.

- the pupil has a superficially perfect spoken language, which may seem formal and pedantic.
- their voice may lack expression.
- when listening to others the pupil understands the words rather than the meaning, this is often the case when reading (Known as 'hyperlexia').
- the pupil may understand others in a literal way, without understanding the implications of what has been said.
- the pupil is limited in their use of non-verbal communication and often cannot make sense of the gestures, facial expressions and body language of others.

2. Impaired social interaction.

- the pupil may be socially isolated amongst his peer group (but may not be worried about it) or may wish to join in with his peers but cannot and becomes upset and concerned about it, lacking the strategies to develop and sustain friendship.
- the pupil may feel tense if others approach him and make social demands.
- the pupil fails to pick up social cues and unwritten rules. This makes him appear odd and prone to teasing and ridicule.
- the pupil may behave or use language in a socially inappropriate way.

3. Rigidity of thought and behaviour.

- the pupil may have an all - absorbing interest which peers find unusual.
- the pupil may insist on the adherence to certain routines.
- the development of the ability to think and to play creatively will be limited.
- the pupil will have difficulties in generalising skills from one setting to another.

4. Poor motor co-ordination.

- the pupil may appear gauche in their movements - attracting ridicule from their peers.
- the pupil's presentation of work may be poor and tasks are often unfinished.
- the pupil may have difficulty with self organisation, eg packing school bag, finding way round school.
- the pupil may have difficulties with handwriting and in some cases they may be dyspraxic.
- the pupil's difficulties may be severe enough to warrant the label of 'dyspraxia'.

5 Sensory perceptual differences

- over or under sensitive to smell, taste, touch, sight , sound
 - under/over sensitivity to heat and pain.
 - inability to filter out extraneous noise/stimuli and focus on the salient information/speaker.
 - unusual visual perception, may have difficulties picking out the foreground/background of a picture.
 - perseveration on one detail in a picture despite its relevance to the subject.
- 

Strategies

The following suggestions are offered as a series of 'tips' that have been gathered from parents, teachers and support staff. Consideration of these simple 'tips' will aid the drawing up of individual education plans.

Social Interaction.

- understand that the young person may feel threatened by the close proximity of others - especially those his own age.
- allow the young person time for solitary reflection.
- proceed at the young person's pace when trying to develop interaction, it may be necessary to 'move down' developmentally.
- identify what the young person likes and dislikes socially - use this knowledge when planning activities.
- the young person is more likely to interact with familiar people, so give him or her time to get to know you. Introduce new people sensitively.
- do not presume that the young person will want to please you.
- watch for anyone who subtly annoys the young person.
- identify anyone who feeds off and feeds back inappropriate behaviour.
- be aware of the young person's vulnerability that may lead to bullying and teasing.
- peers may need to be shown how the young person with an asd finds things difficult so that they are aware and can help the young person cope with different situations.
- consider the opportunity to work 1:1 with the young person for short periods in a quiet area in order to teach new concepts or to build upon existing ones.
- establish a 'buddy' system in class/school.
- ensure that both staff and peers allow the young person to develop as much independence as possible. Do not do for the young person what he can do himself.
- create co-operative learning opportunities with peers. Build up specific skills through natural activities with one peer, a few peers etc.
- be aware that the young person may be defensive of his own personal space.
- focus on shared interests, use interests and strengths.

The following social skills may need to be taught specifically:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ● turn taking | ● complimenting |
| ● negotiating | ● responding |
| ● inviting | ● waiting |
| ● greeting | ● repairing breakdowns |
| ● joining others | ● accepting answers of others |
| ● accepting success of others. | ● taking the lead |
| ● following others' ideas | ● joking and 'teasing'. |



Strategies

Communication.

- specifically engage attention visually, verbally or physically.
 - slow down the pace.
 - give the young person time to respond.
 - simplify your language.
 - be concrete and specific.
 - keep facial expressions and gestures simple and clear.
 - give one instruction at a time, not a sequence.
 - avoid using vague terms such as; later, maybe 'why did he do that'.
 - use gestures, modelling, and demonstration with verbalisation.
 - if necessary for understanding, break down tasks into smaller steps.
 - give a clear indication of the amount of work required, teach what 'finished' means and what to do next.
 - use additional visual (or written) clues to aid the young person's understanding
 - sensitive to the young person's attempts to communicate.
 - teach the young person how to ask for or refuse help and how to indicate that he needs a break.
 - set up situations, which will encourage the young person to communicate.
 - don't assume that as the young person has repeated an instruction that he has necessarily understood.
 - explain:
 - metaphors (eg 'frog in your throat')
 - idioms (eg 'save your breath')
 - double meanings (most jokes have double meanings)
 - sarcasm (saying 'that was very clever' as a child kicks the ball out of the ground)
 - nicknames
 - cute names (eg 'Sweet', 'Pal', 'Wise guy').
 - remember that facial expressions and gestures used in regulating classes - the raised eyebrow or the arms folded while ominously waiting for quiet and other social cues or indicators may not work.
 - provide accurate, prior information about change.
 - provide accurate prior information about expectations.
 - don't rely on emotional appeals.
 - don't give options if there are no options - be absolutely consistent.
 - teach safety phrases such as 'are you pretending' to give the young person a vocabulary of questions to help them to gain information (they will not know how to do it naturally) so that they can determine the nature of the situation and respond appropriately.
- 

Strategies

- remember an increase in unusual responses probably indicates an increase in stress.
- if the young person becomes agitated understand that the usual strategies for calming a young person (e.g. physical comfort, verbal reasoning) may have the opposite effect and make the situation worse!
- for a young person who has an obsession - don't try to stop it. Make it manageable, limit it and try to use it positively.
- allow modifications as needed to deal with over or under sensitivity to environmental stimuli.
- build in choice making, problem solving and self-reflection.
- avoid pressure to be 'good' or other abstract expectations.
- avoid punitive measures that lower self-esteem, increase anxiety and are not understood.
- disciplinary action should never be contingent upon behaviours that are part of the child's disability:-
 - avoidance of eye contact.
 - talking to self
 - slow response time
 - lack of respect for others.
 - repeating words or phrases.
 - upset in crowd or with noise.
 - anxiety
 - persevering on topics of interest
 - upset caused by change.
- encourage awareness of location of materials and specific activity areas.
- introduce activities to develop gross and fine motor control.
- offer alternative methods for recording activities.
- use labels/diagrams/maps to increase the young person's awareness and understanding of his physical environment.
- if necessary use a sequence of pictures/instructions to develop organisation of materials and activities.
- provide frameworks/scaffolds for activities that require spatial and sequencing skills.
- colour in the areas/ pictures you need the young person to focus on so that it can be recognised against the background.

These strategies should be seen as constructive approaches that address the learning differences of pupils with asd. In this way it enables us to be proactive rather than reactive to the behaviours/responses.



asd at key stages 3 and 4

Adolescence brings physical, intellectual and social changes for all pupils. The challenges faced by pupils with asd stem not from their own, changing behaviour but from the altering expectations of society, educational establishments, and family. It is the difficulties inherent in understanding and responding to these changes that makes adolescence for pupils with asd particularly stressful.

At this age the consequences of the triad of impairment for a pupils with asd are not lessened by the response of those around them. The impact of social naiveties demonstrated by the younger pupils becomes more manifest in the social structure of teenage life and within a secondary school environment.

Social Impairment.

Pupils with ASD will have difficulty in understanding the subtle and unwritten rules of social interaction. They will have difficulty, due to their lack of social empathy in understanding the demands of peers and teachers. As a result their behaviour often will appear odd, unusual, or abnormal in the majority of social contexts, regardless of their age or level of intellectual ability. They do not choose to be different or rebellious or challenge authority, in the way some teenagers do, through dress or habits. Their problem is a lack of intuitive understanding as to how to fit into the social conventions of their school, family and local community. Social impairment, therefore, must be clearly distinguished from anti-social behaviour. Pupils with asd rarely have a good understanding of social rules and thus have no concept of the consequences of breaking them.

Brenda would feel it necessary to explain to the teachers when she felt they had got it wrong. If she felt that the teacher hadn't listened to her she would follow them into the staff room and back them into a corner to explain their mistake.

Again the lack of understanding of the subtle and unwritten rules of social interaction means that very often the pupil's manner is inappropriate to the social situation.

Even in an informal group Richard would stand upright as if he were 'at attention'. He would formally shake hands with other pupils even though he had been with them for the whole of his school life.

John another pupil with asd had learnt that it was polite to say "after you" and allow the person through if there was a queue. This became problematic when queuing up for his lunch in the school canteen he proceeded to allow everybody to go in front of him, saying "after you" as the other pupils arrived.

Peers (who are increasingly fragile in their own self-image) often regard pupils with asd as eccentric.

From being in one class with one teacher, pupils find themselves with several teachers who will probably have little practical experience of the social impairment of pupils with asd. They are mixing with a greater number of peers who, coming from different primary schools, may also have little awareness of autism.

Sam a Y8 youngster was prevented from going to the pupils' toilets by Y7 pupils so logically he went to staff toilets where he was found and given a detention for using them.



asd at key stages 3 and 4

Very often pupils with asd wish to be sociable but fail in their attempts to make relationships with some of their peers. They are often to be found on the edge of the social group as they watch the interaction but do not have the skills to join in or when they do so, may ask embarrassing personal questions and make inappropriate approaches. In some fellow pupils this can evoke sympathy, in others it leaves the pupils with asd vulnerable to teasing and bullying. They become the butt of group jokes thereby reinforcing their failure to make appropriate social overtures.

These pupils have little ability to understand the concept of friendship and the reciprocal sharing of ideas and feelings that this involves. It may be shown as a complete lack of interest in others resulting in a solitary school and home lifestyle. Another pupil with ASD may want friends but try to have a friendship around an imposed set of rules that are followed as if by rote. The comments of an able man with asd throw some light on the complexities of friendship for an individual with asd.

"People seem to expect me to notice them and relate to them no matter who they are, just because they happen to be there. But I don't know who people are. I don't know how (or why) to talk to them. I don't have much sense of people in general as things to be involved with. And I don't know how to have prefabricated relationships. If I happen to be involved with some person in particular, I practically have to learn to talk all over again to develop a common language with that person". (Jim Sinclair).

The pupils may not know how to express sympathy when others are upset or show their own pleasure and happiness.

Richard would not seek comfort when in distress or use physical gestures of empathy, such as shuddering with horror, smiling or grimacing appropriately during a conversation.

"No-one ever bothered to explain to me what words meant. No one ever told me that they expected to see feelings on my face, or that it confused them when I used words without showing corresponding expressions. No one explained what the signals were or how to use them. They simply assumed that if they could not see my feelings, I could not feel them". (Jim Sinclair)

Any work within the secondary school setting that requires working in-groups or within teams will pose problems. The problems already discussed in communication means that co-operative activities present particular problems for the pupils with asd. There is not only the difficulty in learning to communicate with several people but also the pupils often lack an understanding of the rules and conventions of team games, indeed the very concept of a team activity is difficult for them to comprehend. In addition they may struggle to understand how to co-operate and interact with other people in order to achieve a group target.

Rigidity of thought.

The problems inherent in making sense of a constantly changing world to some extent drive the pupil's need for consistency, sameness, a desire for routine. People with their changing voices, clothes and moods are unpredictable. Some pupils with asd prefer attachment to objects. Objects remain the same and are predictable. These may be carried around even when inappropriate. Some researchers feel that there is a link to fundamental language impairment, believing that pupils with asd have an inherent difficulty in applying language or labels to all facets of life, labels for concrete objects being easier to apply than those for emotional or transient states.

asd at key stages 3 and 4

The insistence on sameness, routine and an obsession for real objects are an all too obvious response to the stress and anxiety caused by having to live in a world of which you are unable to make sense.

The insistence on sameness is a major cause of behavioural problems. Where a routine is broken pupils may become anxious or stressed and may respond with tantrums or outbursts: it may be as simple as a change in the morning routine at home, a different route to school or a change of timetable at school for an event or because of exams. (e.g. supply teacher, exam stress)

This rigidity of thought manifests itself in a pupil's literal interpretation of life. The world is seen in very black and white terms, which presents difficulties for the pupils, as they get older. Language may often be taken literally, often causing either amusement or offence.

A teacher should not be surprised if they tell a pupil to "pull their socks up" and that is exactly what they do. Situations where the same word has one or more meanings are fraught with problems. There is also for many pupils with asd an inability to lie. Sometimes their responses are considered to be downright insolent. If a pupils is told to get on with his or her work and they want to do something else they will often simply refuse to do it.

Impairment of communication.

Impairment of communication presents a range of difficulties. Where pupils have spoken language their diction is often rather formal, sometimes 'fussy'; pedantic or 'robot-like'. Very rarely do they adopt a local accent. Often they will fail to adjust their speech to fit in with the social context. Use of language in a social context presents problems. Many pupils with asd are unable to take account of the interests of different listeners but take every opportunity themselves to talk, sometimes at length about their own particular obsession.

Some pupils will display marked impairments of non-verbal means of expression.

Imran does not make eye contact during conversation, shows no facial expression, uses no gesture, does not nod or shake his head in agreement or disagreement and has a monotonous voice.

Joyce makes use of large flailing gestures with no correspondence to what she is saying.

Jake has a vocal intonation that changes markedly from high to low without the usual prosodic fluidity to be found in conversational speech.

The concept of pupils with asd having islets of ability is a common one. Indeed some pupils do display a propensity for certain activities and some have highly developed skills in isolated subjects. These pupils are the exception rather than the rule and in the majority of cases their ability is not functional. The individual may be able to perform calculations in their head involving six figure sums but they could remain unable to solve simple practical problems or shop for themselves.

On a visit to a classroom Thomas asked the educational psychologist to give him a hard sum. 10 x 6 he dismissed as too easy, 104 x 14 was also dismissed until finally 1,234x168 pleased him and he calculated the correct answer.



asd at key stages 3 and 4

The teacher commented that last week Thomas had, a tantrum over the question how many apples are there if there are 3 trees and 4 apples on each tree. He complained that she hadn't taught him how to do that.

Pupils with asd lack skills that most people learn by intuition and 'osmosis'.

They have to ask themselves these questions on a regular basis:

- What would most people think in this situation?
- What would most people expect me to do now?
- What do most people assume I understand?
- What can I assume most people understand without being told?
- How would most people interpret my behaviour in this situation?
- How do I make a choice?

"I understand a lot about not understanding. I usually understand when I don't understand something, and I'm beginning to be able to recognise gaps between what I actually understand and what other people assume I understand. Some of the missing connections that I can finally have are funny and some are sad and some are infuriating. In some ways I am terribly ill-equipped to survive in this life - an extra-terrestrial stranded without an orientation manual". (Jim Sinclair)

"When non-autistic people adopt eccentric behaviour, they have made a conscious choice to be different for any number of reasons. Quite a few people seek attention by deliberately doing bizarre things, especially in highly competitive fields such as rock music. In spite of such diverse motives for eccentric behaviour, non-autistic people have in common one thing that is generally lacking in asd. They are aware that most people will view their unusual behaviour as odd". (Margaret Dewey mother of a pupil with asd)

At the age of around seven years old or maybe younger, boys and girls seem to kick and push each other a lot. Mum has told me that this is often because they actually like the person they are kicking - and AS kids are considered weird!! AS kids reading this, I am not by any means explaining this so that you think you have to do this kind of stuff. Just be yourself. I am merely highlighting the fact that to get to where we are now - a bag of nerves or a gibbering wreck (these both mean very nervous) in the face of a fanciable person - we have not had the same social experiences as non AS kids. (Luke Jackson pupil with asd)

Staff who are working with pupils with asd should address the triad rather than reacting to the behaviour

Look through the behaviour and find the child

information and communication
technology

quis.



nformation and communication technology

“ICT has enormous potential not just for a National Curriculum. It will change the way we learn as well as the way we work.”
(Chris Yapp)

In key stages 3 and 4 pupils become increasingly independent users of ICT tools and information sources. They have a better understanding of how ICT can help their work in other subjects and develop their ability to judge when and how to use ICT and where it has limitations. They think about the quality and reliability of information, and access and combine increasing amounts of information. They become more focused, efficient and rigorous in their use of ICT, and carry out a range of increasingly complex tasks.

In addition to being an important curricular area, the use of information technology is fast becoming a standard tool for supporting the learning of all pupils. If a pupil normally uses ICT such as a lap top to carry out their work then they should be allowed to use it in examinations. For the vast majority of pupils with asd this aspect will present no problems. They often display an aptitude for technology including microcomputers. The key elements of information technology match to a greater extent than the classroom teacher the needs of a pupils with asd. They are consistent and non-judgmental. The computer's response to the pupil's interaction will never vary. For younger pupils, there is a wide range of software both for mainstream and software designed for special educational needs. Much of the latter software remains appropriate for pupils at all Key Stages.

Emma constantly rubbed out the first letter of her work because it had to be perfect. Once she started word processing she was able to produce half page of writing more than she had ever produced before.

Programme of study

Finding things out

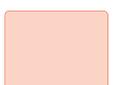
Pupils with asd will have fundamental difficulties when given problems to solve. This will mean that the tasks in many adventure type programmes or simulation programmes will need careful structuring and support.

Developing ideas and making things happen

Any discussion of the role of ICT in modern life will prove difficult for a pupil with asd. The triad of impairment can have the most effect on these aspects of the programme of study. The pupils may simply not have the communication skills to discuss their experiences. Many pupils will find large group situations threatening and will achieve more and possibly at a higher level when working either individually or in a small group. Success is more assured when trying to encourage the pupil's contribution in a small group discussion or debate. Pupils may then be given confidence, through the support of the smaller group; to contribute to a larger class discussion, or may simply have their contribution in the group acknowledged.

Bryony was able to express her ideas and thought coherently when using a cassette recorder.

The pupils will require much more support and aid to discuss experiences and in the case of ICT the computer itself can provide the assistance. They may be able to demonstrate the activity with little need for verbal discussion. They may be able to write out their thoughts using a word processing package appropriate to their ability.



nformation and communication technology

Exchanging and sharing information

Many pupils with asd quickly adapt to the technology involved in using computers and become capable users. Computers are often a powerful motivator. Appropriate software will allow the pupils to develop and present attractive work with good layouts. The provision of appropriate pictures in the form of 'clip art' can help encourage the pupils's thinking and writing. The majority of software for writing will provide a facility for storing word-banks where single words or useful phrases can be stored. Overlay keyboards can also be used to provide easy access to information. Spell-checkers and thesaurus can provide assistance with accuracy and alternatives. Software with speech synthesis can allow pupils to hear what they have written and assess themselves whether it sounds right. The motivational power of ICT may allow pictures to be created using a suitable art package and so to communicate visual ideas.

Reviewing, modifying and evaluating work as it progresses

There is a wide range of high quality, attractive and therefore motivating adventures and simulations. These have been found to be useful for pupils with asd to create a scenario in which they can explore a range of aspects. Again, the motivational aspect of the computer maintains the pupil's interest. The use of such programmes can allow the staff to begin to introduce problem solving activities an area of learning where pupils with asd have significant difficulty.

At this point a word of caution must be given. Pupils with asd do usually display an aptitude for computers. They typically quickly learn the rules of the programme, game or activity. Care must be taken to ensure that the pupil does not become even further isolated. The computer should not become a replacement for the social contact and guidance from the teacher.

Used effectively, pupils with asd can derive many benefits. Carefully planned and supported use of the computer can provide:-

- a safe, non-threatening, non-judgmental learning environment in which there is emotional neutrality, infinite patience and immediate feedback without value judgement. Personal works "on screen" can lend a distancing effect, which supports self-criticism, a particular area of difficulty as many adolescents are hypersensitive to criticism.
- a final presentation that can look as good as anyone else's with mistakes in spelling and grammar corrected via a spell-checker and re-drafting.
- assisted problem-solving without conveying the impression that their communication difficulties are holding the class back or preventing them sharing their own 'innovatory' ideas.
- greater visual clarity compared with hand-written text. Results of surveys/questionnaires can be shown graphically thus reproducing the "visual cueing" to which many pupils respond best.
- interactive packages enhance independent learning and provide almost infinite resource base. In this way a deeper and more reflective outcome can be produced. Information gathering skills like skimming and scanning are learnt along the way and grouping, organising, and classifying become an integral part of the learning process. Carrying out this kind of original research allows for comparison between sources and conclusions are drawn about fact or opinion; intention of writer and how information is presented. This kind of multi-media can present problems from real-life situations. Here there are a wider variety of clues to assist understanding and memory. Previous knowledge is drawn on and connections between events are made easier.



nformation and communication technology

- computer modelling to allow pupils to visualise abstract ideas. It can also facilitate the testing of ideas, which may be too expensive, impracticable or dangerous to try out! ("What if.....?" from a relatively safe position!)
- a way of making changes or alteration to text that is easy, thus allowing focus on the creative process, making writing more closely related to thinking. Use of visual and sound packages further assist and use of picture sequences with speech bubbles can serve to create more extended story or play script. This kind of work can lead naturally to turn-taking, sharing and collaborative styles of working.
- opportunities to use games on the computer. This can have benefit if carefully used. Teachers have noticed that all pupils learn to change the ways in which they play in order to win or improve their score! Some of these games clearly have not only literacy and numeracy benefit but have potential for collaborative learning.

Additionally, when the pupil's ability and experience are carefully matched, paired and shared group work can reduce anxiety about learning and promote greater achievement. Share responsibility for a 'wrong' answer can lead to analysing 'why' and 'how' for next time.

Clearly the teacher must give explicit directions as to what the task is, but most importantly, indicate explicitly that:

- this is a situation in which pupils will be working in groups but will need to produce individual results; or
- pupils are working on a collaborative/co-operative task to produce a group result.

A significant limitation of extensive use of the computer is that it can reduce the need for social interaction. It is worth remembering that certain individuals with asd can develop a particular "affinity" and/or expertise, preferring the computer dominated activity to the complexities of human interaction. Knowing when and how to intervene is therefore of paramount importance to the teacher. The relationship between pupils and teacher changes over time.

Initial stage:

Teacher as manager of pupils' learning - i.e. teacher tells pupils what and how to do it.

Interim stage:

Teacher as adviser to help pupils' set own task and goal - i.e. teacher prompts a logical sequence and outcome, redirecting, suggesting strategies, providing new pieces of information.

Proficient stage:

Teacher is established as a facilitator, but with particular note to the following areas of challenge: -

If introducing pupils to their 'asd' the ability to access asd friendly information is important as well as 'safe' chat line sites (under supervision).

Lunchtime computer clubs can also be a sanctuary for pupils. This is a place where their knowledge and skills are valued and yet the pupils can relax during the 'recreation' time.



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outs.



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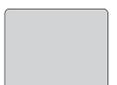
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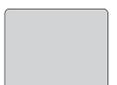
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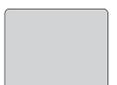
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Useful websites

asd Working Party (UK) Guidance, published 2002
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/documents/ACFEFA.htm#PRINCIPLES>

web page about marriage where one partner has AS
<http://www.asperger-marriage.info/>

site for jobseekers working in asd field (UK)
<http://www.asdjobs.org/jobseek.asp>

an outstanding site built by parents of a child with ASD (AE subscriber)
<http://www.autisticangel.net>

<http://www.hunnybee.com.au/asd/asdsupport1.html>
"To you, asd might be a tragedy. For many of us on the spectrum, it is just the way we are."
Melissa Bee's gorgeous web site packed full of helpful links!

a hilarious spoof of the medical model of asd, authored by a person with asd - find out if you are one of the 9625 in every 10 000 who are neurologically typical!
<http://isnt.autistics.org/>

online Asperger Syndrome information and support
<http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/>

a highly influential group who challenge the dehumanising sobriety and detachment pervading many professional relationships
<http://www.patchadams.org/>

a diverse collection of high quality articles on ASD online
<http://trainland.tripod.com/asd99.htm>

a ground breaking article on emerging Autistic culture by Martijn Dekker
<http://trainland.tripod.com/martijn.htm>

information about carol gray's method for teaching social skills
http://www.thegraycenter.org/Social_Stories.htm

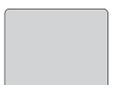
tony attwood's site, with lots of useful links
<http://www.tonyattwood.com/>

iep discussion group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IEP_guide

get adobe acrobat for reading pdf files about asd
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>

asd society of america information page
<http://www.asd-society.org/packages/packages.html>

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Useful websites

world asd organisation
<http://worldasd.org/>

sensory integration books and resources
<http://www.sensoryint.com/recommended.html>

picture exchange communication system (PECS)
http://www.asdconnect.org/asd99/html/Preview.cfm?conference_id=6&title_id=135&type=paper

intensive social interaction with a trade mark
<http://www.son-rise.org/>

division TEACCH
<http://www.teacch.com/>

USA info site with many links
<http://www.asd.org/contents.html>

a UK ABA information page
<http://www.peach.org.uk/links2.htm>

the other uk asd organisation, which provides TEACCH training
<http://www.asduk.com/main-index.htm>

national autistic society for the uk
<http://www.nas.org.uk/>

the ultimate ASD information centre, with links database
<http://www.asdconnect.org/>

list of aspie homepages
http://www.kandi.org/aspergers/Personal_HomePages/index2.html

list of links, including homepages of people with ASD
<http://www.isn.net/~jypsy/experts.htm>

Dr. Gutstein's Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) program
<http://www.connectionscenter.com/>

an article linking air pollution to various disorders, including ASD
<http://www.vaccinationnews.com/DailyNews/June2002/IndustrialPollution15.htm>

a UK-based site for working parents
<http://www.parentsatwork.org.uk/>

asd-friendly ASD resource
<http://3service.freeservers.com/asd.html>



future changes

In providing these opportunities adults should be aware of the common strengths and difficulties that pupils with asd can display and of the strategies we have found useful.

The strategies are not exhaustive, nor is it envisaged that they will answer all your questions. This is a working document and as such we would welcome your comments to inform future changes.





The document may be accessed as a whole or as subject areas.

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Response form

pupils with asd key stages 3 & 4
accessing the curriculum

Subject Area and Key Skill

Issue

Strategies

Name

Address

E-mail

Please return to Mick Connelly
Assistant Manager
Central Service for Support & Advice/PSC Co-ordinator
Blackpool LEA, Progress House, Clifton Road, Blackpool FY8 4US
Email: mick.connelly@blackpool.gov.uk

