Autism – School Support – Top Tips
Curriculum, Staff, Parent and Pupil Voice

Developing excellent quality education for all children and young people with autism must focus on the need for **mutual adaptation** on behalf of the individual with autism *and* those who live or work with them. This means reflecting on the dynamic relationship between the individual and those around them and understanding the way the individual processes and experiences the world. The performance and actions of an individual with autism depend very much on their context. One can create a learning environment where the child or young person feels uncomfortable, anxious, and excluded or one where they feel relaxed, included, and confident.

Curriculum

1. Practitioners should have grand expectations and ensure that pupils have opportunities to excel in the areas in which they have strengths, whilst providing individualised support to facilitate progress and achievement in the areas they find difficult.
2. Hold in mind the words of an adult with autism (Mike Stanton) *"Imagine being told that you had to drop your best subject and have double lessons in your worst subject. That is not so far from the experience of lots of autistic children whose interests and talents are side-lined while we concentrate on their difficulties."*
3. Work with the pupil's strengths. Individuals with autism are often:
   - Visual thinkers
   - Analytical thinkers
   - Intrinsically motivated by their interest(s)
   - Have a good eye for detail
   - Have a good memory
   - Have a sound understanding of the structure
   - Motivated by technology
4. As well as the academic curriculum, pupils with autism require support to gain personal, social and independence skills and these will need to be included in their curriculum.
5. Using visual strategies to support learning and understanding is crucial. This will:
   - Enable the pupil to 'see; the task, and not 'disappear' as spoken instructions do
   - Give additional time for processing
   - Visuals can be looked at, sequenced, rehearsed, and learned
   - Promote independence by providing tools learners can refer to identify and carry out the stages of a task.
6. Differentiate the curriculum. Differentiation can refer to:
   - Input
   - Tasks
   - Resources Support
   - Outcome.

Personnel and skills

1. Autism-friendly schools recognise that teaching staff, as individuals are key to the success of students in overcoming their difficulties. It is therefore important that <u>all</u> staff working in schools complete a basic level of autism awareness training, and that staff working directly with children and young people with autism are trained to understand and meet the needs of learners on the autism spectrum.

2. A tool freely available to practitioners in schools and educational settings for assessing and developing their good autism practice is the AET Autism Competency Framework. The framework is designed to be used as an ongoing self-reflection tool to help focus staff on which aspects of their autism practice require further development. Its format enables practitioners to rate their knowledge, skills, and personal qualities against a set of fifty-eight descriptors outlining best practice that is recognised and valued by individuals on the autism spectrum, their families, and professionals. The fifty-eight competencies are each linked to web resources and articles to support the self-reflection process and further development in that area.

Family support and voice

1. Parents are an integral and permanent part of the child's life. They know their child better than anyone else, see the child in a range of environments, can play a key role in sharing / developing/implementing strategies, and will be empowered and reassured by being involved in supporting their child.

2. The SEND Code of Practice says that 'schools should talk to parents regularly (at least three times a year) to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss the activities and support that will help achieve them, and identify the responsibilities of the parent, the pupil, and the school.'

3. Part of the autism diagnosis is 'differences in social communication and interaction' so adults need to find ways to enable the child or young person to meaningfully communicate their choices, views, and feelings e.g., drawing; using visual aids; Talking Mats; showing; taking photographs etc.

<u>Useful References and Links</u>

Questions to ask parents can be found at this link: \\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\OCYPS Support4Learning\Shared\Autism\resources\Autism School Support\AET Question_to_ask_parents.pdf

The AET Autism Competency Framework can be found at: \\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\OCYPS Support4Learning\Shared\Autism\resources\Autism School Support\2-AET-schools-competency-framework-2018.pdf

The AET Autism Standards can be found at: \\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\OCYPS Support4Learning\Shared\Autism\resources\Autism School Support\2-AET-schools-standards-2018.pdf

For further ideas of gaining the views of children with little or no speech see:\\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\OCYPS Support4Learning\Shared\Autism\resources\Autism School Support\Pupil Voice - I Want To Choose Too.pdf

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