



How your child on the Autism Spectrum is supported in school



Information for parents and carers

This leaflet provides examples of what you and your child can expect from schools through the graduated approach for supporting Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).



Autism is a life-long developmental disability that affects the way your child makes sense of the world around them, and how they interact and develop relationships with others.

People with Autism are often referred to as being on a 'spectrum'. This means that while each person on the spectrum has the same areas of difficulty, they each have their own unique presentation and will be affected differently. Sometimes Autism is known as an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

If your child is on the Autism Spectrum, or has social communication difficulties, they may have problems in the following areas:

Communication and interaction

- Understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, tone of voice, body language.
- Literal understanding of what is said to them, eg taking phrases such as 'she's got eyes in the back of her head' at face value rather than understanding the underlying meaning.
- Difficulty using speech to communicate.
- Listening and responding appropriately to others during a conversation.
- Talking about a range of topics and not just their own interests.



Social understanding

- Understanding how other people are feeling.
- Understanding other people's intentions.
- Recognising and talking about their own emotions.
- Seeking comfort from others or offering comfort to others.
- Spending time with others.
- Understanding what is appropriate behaviour in different situations.
- Making and maintaining friendships.
- Cooperating and collaborating with others.

Repetitive or restricted behaviours

- Coping with changes to their normal routine.
- Preferring to do the same things in the same way every time.
- Having very strong interests, which can take over their thoughts and actions.
- Being able to switch from one activity to another when asked.
- Thinking in a 'black and white' way.
- Restricted play, such as only wanting to play one type of game.

In addition:

Your child may be over or under sensitive to touch, taste, sound, smell, light and colour. They may also have difficulty with recognising changes within their bodies such as temperature or pain.

The type and level of support required will depend on your child's needs. All children and young people on the Autism Spectrum can be supported in school and make progress in some or all of their areas of difficulty.



Quality First Teaching

Quality First Teaching is high quality teaching which provides appropriate learning opportunities to all pupils, whatever their individual needs. It is the first step of the graduated approach in responding to pupils who have, or may have, SEND. Staff knowledge and understanding of SEND is a key factor to Quality First Teaching.

All staff are also required to have knowledge and understanding of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and The Equalities Act 2010.

You will be involved in decisions about your child at every stage of the graduated approach and all staff who come into contact with your child should be made aware of their needs and given strategies to cope with them.

Examples of what might be expected from this level of school support:

- All school staff have an awareness of Autism.
- Consistent routines and boundaries will be set.
- Your child will have opportunities to experience success and be given praise.
- Seating arrangements, and where personal belongings are kept, will be considered so that your child is comfortable and able to participate.
- Environmental considerations will be taken into account, such as lighting, noise, colour of background of power points etc.
- Adjustments to school uniform, if required.
- Activities and tasks will be provided to meet your child's needs and abilities.
- Support in class for times when the pace of learning may be too fast.
- Different styles of teaching used, such as multi-sensory, visual or practical learning.
- Additional time given to process language and complete tasks if required.
- Flexible grouping for different activities, for example smaller groups for areas of the curriculum where your child needs more adult support.

- Where there is a language problem use of one-step instructions and pictures or objects to help your child understand.
- Provide visual timetables and visual task boards or checklists.
- The classroom will be clearly labelled so that resources are easy to find and your child can learn to be independent.
- Staff will understand that your child's social and emotional well-being may be affected by their Autism.
- Additional support for unstructured times of the day, such as a key adult at lunch times.
- Arrangements to leave a lesson early in order to avoid busy corridors.
- Planned opportunities for your child to learn and practise social and emotional skills in a group and during activities over the school day.
- Planned support for times when there is going to be a change to the normal school routine.
- Regular contact between you and the school.
- Some children with a diagnosis may have had access to specialists such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, CAMHS, Durham County Council Autism and Social Communication Team. School staff may have had some advice from one or more of these professionals to help them understand the needs of your child so that they can make the right adjustments at a Quality First Teaching Level.



SEN support

Some children will require SEN support which should be ‘additional to’ or ‘different from’ what schools provide for all pupils.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and the teacher will work with you and your child to create a SEN support plan which should be reviewed three times a year. This will be based around your child’s strengths and needs and will identify outcomes for your child that will be agreed with you.

It will be important to identify the main characteristic of your child’s need (primary need). However, support plans will identify all the needs of your child within these four broad areas:

- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Communication and interaction
- Sensory and physical

Targeted SEN support might include:

- A specialist teacher from the Autism and Social Communication Team to provide further advice on how to meet the needs of your child in school beyond Quality First Teaching.
- More sustained support from Speech and Language Therapy or Occupational Therapy.
- Support from CAMHS (if your child has a mental health problem).
- Support to develop your child’s social and emotional skills, using strategies such as Social Stories, 5 point scales or programmes to address anxiety.
- A quiet area in school for your child to have breaks from the busy classroom.
- Sensory diet if required.
- Additional structure and support at lunch or break times for example being able to spend parts of break times indoors or doing different activities with adult support, aimed to help them manage those times of the day better and feel less anxious.
- Structured teaching – this is a personalised system of teaching which sets up tasks in a highly organised way; it may use visuals or numbers to organise the work as well as providing additional structure or

models within the tasks to help your child understand what to do.

- A personalised reward system.
- Use of your child's interests, if possible, when planning activities.
- Planned support to help your child become more independent and learn self-help skills.
- Alternative strategies may be needed to help your child record their work in class, including the use of technology.
- Using key adults in school to build strong, positive relationships with your child, and facilitate conversations with them about their school experiences.
- Multi-agency meetings such as Team Around the Family as appropriate.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plan)

Before a school can apply for a statutory assessment of your child's needs they must do all they can to support your child and must be able to show that they have taken 'sufficient relevant and purposeful action'. You and your child will be the focus of the assessment process. The assessment will provide valuable information to help decide the most appropriate support for you child, and may result in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

If your child has an EHC Plan:

- Staff will be trained to appropriate levels.
- The support for your child will be detailed in the EHC Plan and your child may have an individual learning programme.
- Teachers will have access to specialist advice.
- Teaching styles and resources will be modified as required and may include a highly structured approach.
- Teaching will focus on the curriculum **and** social and emotional understanding.
- A personalised timetable may be required with alternative opportunities at KS4.
- Individualised plans for break and lunch times may be put in place.
- We will undertake careful planning when your child is moving to the next stage of education (transition).
- We will undertake an annual statutory review in addition to termly reviews.

Additional Support

The Local Offer

Information for parents and carers on a broad range of SEN and disability issues and support can be found on the Local Offer website. SEN planning tools can also be found in the 'for providers' section of the website.

www.countydurhamfamilies.info/localoffer

Telephone 03000 26 99 95

Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Durham SENDIASS supports parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and young people with SEND. All services provided are confidential and impartial.

Email sendiass@durham.gov.uk

Telephone 03000 267 003

Making Changes Together

Making Changes Together (MCT) is a group for parents and carers of children with SEND. MCT work with professionals in County Durham to improve services for children and young people with SEND.

www.mctdurham.co.uk

Telephone 0191 587 3541

Durham County Council's Portage Service

The Portage Service is a home-based teaching service for pre-school children with additional support needs, and their families.

Telephone 03000 263 350

Telephone 0191 587 3541

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SENDandInclusion@durham.gov.uk
03000 267776