

Practical Information for Teaching Pupils with ASD

In order to work effectively with pupils with ASD the most important thing for any teacher or support assistant is to have a good understanding of the nature of ASD and how it impacts upon the individuals that you are concerned about. Without this many of the suggestions in this information sheet will not seem to make sense and then you are less likely to try them out.

With a good understanding, you will see how these ideas fit with the impact that ASD has on individuals.

The Environment:

There may well be a range of sensory issues to take into account but even before that it is good to make the environment clear. Which chair and table/desk should they sit at? If it is to be shared it can help to make their desk space clear with the use of masking tape, if necessary. In primary school classrooms masking tape or lines on the floor to differentiate clearly the various areas of the classroom and what they are for will really help.

Visual supports to the curriculum will help a pupil to know what is happening and can prevent constant questions and seeking reassurance of what is going to happen in the future (i.e. next lesson, the afternoon). A pictorial timetable may help.

Limit the distractions from wall displays, things dangling from the ceiling or sunlight through blinds. Some schools have work stations that a pupil with ASD can use in order to aid their concentration but a similar environment can be created with the use of book cases or filing cabinets. It may feel uncomfortable and unnatural to do as a teacher, but if it works for the pupil with ASD, then that will be proof enough of the value.

Communication:

Do remember that a pupil with ASD will need longer to process instructions and other things that are said. Give them this additional time and without repeating things as this will cause confusion. The secret is to speak and wait....understanding will happen it just takes a little time. You need to also make sure that the pupil with ASD is aware you are talking to them. It may be obvious to you when you speak to the whole class or a group that they are with, but it is likely to not be obvious to them. Say their name and make it clear that the information you are about to give or the question you are asking is for them as well as the rest of the class.

Be clear and concise with your language and not flowery. Try to make sure you say what you really mean and remember that people with ASD take things very literally. They are not trying to be funny or cheeky. It is the different way their brains function. So if you say you will be with them in a minute and then get cross because they ask you again sixty seconds later, try to think about the fact that they interpret what people say very literally. You did say you would be with them in a minute.

