The presentation materials at level 1 are designed to give you a better understanding and awareness of autism and the way it affects pupils in school.

The materials will be used to promote the following principles:

Principles

1. **Focus on difference and not deficit.**
2. **Promote positive attitudes to autism.**
3. **All staff can have an impact.**

Learning objectives

All participants will be able to:

- **Identify the four key areas of difference that need to be taken into account when working with pupils with autism.**
- **Know the importance of understanding the individual pupil with autism and their profile of strengths and weaknesses.**
- **Identify the key areas to help pupils with autism build positive relationships with staff and their peers.**
- **Know that many pupils with autism can be unusually sensitive to everyday sights, sounds, touch, tastes and smells which affects their learning and emotional state.**

Contents

- There are 4 themes:
  The individual pupil
  Building relationships
  Curriculum and learning
  Enabling environments
- There are 12 key messages.
- The key messages are consistent for all pupils with autism and relevant to all types of provision. Many will also be relevant to other students with special educational needs.
- We have used 5 films and 3 audio clips of young people with autism and a parent to reinforce those key messages.
- Activities, case studies and key resources may also be used during this session. We have provided further information which include top tips for supporting pupils with autism you may have in your own settings.

Terminology

- The term autism is used in all the level 1 materials. Some professionals may refer to autism by a different name. This may include autism spectrum condition (ASC), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), classic or Kanner autism, and high-functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome. The term 'parent' is used in the level 1 materials to represent a parent or carer.

Resources

Further information and resources can be found on the AET website at:
www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

autism education trust
traininghubs

Theme 1
The individual pupil

> **By understanding the hopes, dreams, strengths and weaknesses of autistic people, society can gain a deeper and rounder view of human nature.**
>
> Lawson, W (1998) Life Behind Glass.
> London: Jessica Kingsley.

Key information

Autism is a lifelong condition which affects the way that a person communicates and relates to people and the world around them.

It is a **spectrum condition**, which means that, while all people with autism share certain features, their condition will affect them in different ways.

The four key areas of **difference** that we need to be aware of to understand the educational needs of pupils with autism are in **sensory processing**, **social communication**, **social understanding**, **interests** and **information processing**.

There are approximately **134,000 children (or 1 in 100)** with autism in the UK. Some pupils with autism are very able intellectually. Others have considerable learning disabilities in addition to their autism. Providing the right support at the right time can enable pupils with autism to build on their strengths and manage their weaknesses effectively.

Top tips

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Develop a **pupil profile** to include triggers to likes and dislikes, motivators and anxieties. Share this information with all school staff to try to avoid situations which may lead to distress.

2. Build **self-esteem** by valuing the pupil.

3. Identify and use a pupil's **strengths** when planning activities.

Notes:

Key resource
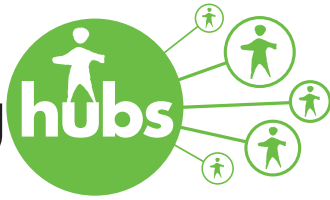
Theme 2
Building relationships

" **In an ideal world the education authorities, health professionals and social services will all work together with parents in an attempt to provide support for our unique children and their families.** "

Jackson, J (2003) Multi-coloured Mayhem.
London: Jessica Kingsley. p.16.

Key information

See the **pupil as a partner** in the education process and build on their strengths. We cannot take for granted what a pupil can or cannot do.

Understanding social behaviours and emotions usually develops from birth but pupils with autism do not easily learn or understand the skills involved in building and maintaining relationships.

Encourage **parents** to be **actively engaged** with school to support their child's progress and ensure information is shared effectively.

Raising the **awareness and acceptance** of staff and peers about **difference** can support their ability to build relationships with pupils who have autism. Using their **interests** can be a good way to engage with them and provide pupils with the motivation to engage with others.

Top tips

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Ensure all **staff** are informed of support strategies and current issues.

2. Share information with other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and so on.

3. Educate staff and peers positively about autism and difference through information and training. This can help to **reduce the levels of bullying** experienced by pupils with autism.

Notes:

Key resource

Theme 3
Curriculum and learning

> **For us parents and for our children, every day is precious. Each day at school without the right support creates an added trauma, not only to the child but to the whole family.**
>
> Jackson, J. (parent of children with autism) (2003)
> Multi-coloured Mayhem. London: Jessica Kingsley. P.16.

Key information

It is important for us to **understand** the individual child and how their **autism** affects them. This can help us understand their **behaviour** and enable us to work with them effectively.

If your school works well for pupils with autism it is likely to **work well** for **other pupils** too.

We need to help pupils with autism to help themselves and become **independent learners**.

Ensure there are effective systems of **communication** with pupils, staff, parents and outside agencies. **Staff** should be **flexible** and willing to make **adjustments** to address the needs of pupils with autism.

Top tips

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. See **behaviour** as a means of communication – what is s/he trying to tell me?

2. **Teaching strategies** and **staff response**s need to be **differentiated** to support the learning of pupils with autism.

3. Ensure **expectations are realistic** and individual to the child. Work should be **differentiated** to ensure continued motivation and success.

Notes:

Key resource

autism education trust

training hubs
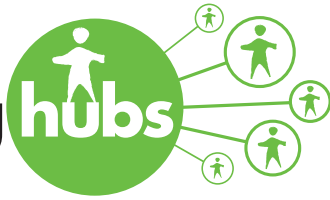
Theme 4
Enabling environments

"
Everything is so busy at school and everyone else, all the kids and all the teachers, seems to have a purpose and I have never quite fathomed out what that purpose is... It is like beginning a game without knowing any of the rules or passwords.
"

Luke Jackson (young adult with autism)
(2002) Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence. London: Jessica Kingsley. p.114.

Key information

Sensory differences can cause pupils with autism to experience stress and anxiety at school.

Pupils with autism find change difficult. **Providing structure** can help reduce their levels of anxiety.

The **learning environment** needs to be **adapted** to better meet the needs of the pupil with autism. We need to **know** and **listen to pupils** with autism to understand the best way to achieve this.

Create **safe spaces** and use a **low arousal (calm and quiet) approach** to help pupils with autism to **manage** their **anxiety** at school.

Top tips

Following these will help you to reduce the anxiety a pupil may be experiencing and will enable them to work more effectively in a welcoming and safe environment.

1. Check the **environment** for potential **sensory distractions** for individual pupils with autism (flickering lights, strong smells, noises, busy spaces).

2. Use **visual cues** such as **objects**, symbols, pictures or written words to support a pupil's **understanding** of an activity. Use **language** that is clear, precise and concrete. Ensure a pupil has **understood** the information given to them.

3. Use **timetables** to help pupils predict what is happening next and to inform them of any changes to the usual routine.

Notes:

Key resource