



# St Edward's SEND/SET Newsletter May 2018



## World Autism Awareness Week April 2018

World Autism Awareness Week was 26th March-2nd April. St Edward's School marked this event by hosting a number of events including a raffle, cake sale, 'wear something blue day', a drop in clinic for staff/pupils and tutor group presentations about ASD. In total the school raised £448.54, half of the proceeds have been donated to the National Autism Society and half will help resource the Learning Centre's sensory space. This was followed up by the Big Brekkie 26th April, an opportunity for parents/carers of students on the ASD register to meet and share information, advice and strategies. It raised £60 for Autism Wessex.

*How aware are you of the condition and how it affects the school experience of students in your classroom?*

**"Autism is not a label: it is a signpost"**

Autism (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) is a **lifelong**, neurological developmental disability that is present from birth; it affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience

the world around them. (From Greek Autos—self).

Individuals with Autism have a common set of characteristics. They will all have difficulty in these four areas.

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Social interaction
- ◆ Flexibility of thought & behaviour (social imagination)
- ◆ Sensory Integration

However how these 4 areas impact/interact with each other will be totally unique to each individual.

A child on the Autistic spectrum may be hyper-sensitive (have high sensitivity to sensory input—fright/flight!) or hypo-sensitive (have low sensitivity to sensory input and need more sensory stimulus than other children, they touch, feel...).

Either way sensory integration dysfunction results in inconsistencies in performance, difficulties in attention, organisation of behaviours, motor planning, co-ordination, processing and regulation of emotions.

*How does your classroom and teaching accommodate students with these features?*

Autism may co-exist with other diagnoses such as learning difficulties, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Epilepsy.

In addition, a child with Autism is likely to have trouble sleeping, eating and will experience extreme anxiety. The complexity of ASD and co-diagnoses will of course present challenging behaviours in the classroom.

### Support for students with ASD at St Edward's School

#### **Autism Champion: Davina Gregson**

Can audit your classroom, observe a student and/or recommend strategies for the classroom.

#### **The A (Autism) Team**

Supports whole school ASD friendly approach, the AET 3 year development plan and supports key individuals and their parents.

**Social Skills Club:** provide a structured opportunity for pupils to interact socially and practice communication skills

**Social Thinking Club:** provides opportunities for young people to develop their social competencies, to better connect with others and live happier and more meaningful lives. **SAL (Speech and Language) Support:** 1:1 targeted intervention based on SALT direction. Currently supporting pupils 1:1

**ELSA Emotional Literacy Support Assistants:** provides emotional literacy and friendship support



### So what can we do about it?

#### In the classroom:

- ◆ Use visual prompts (eg. photos, symbols, the written word)
- ◆ If the child does not respond to group instructions, use the child's name before giving the instruction.
- ◆ Be clear, almost blunt and to the point
- ◆ Explicitly teach group working skills through working with an adult first before moving on to one other peer etc.
- ◆ Use strategies such as TEACCH principles to support engagement and the structuring of tasks.
- ◆ Use the child's areas of interest to increase motivation.
- ◆ Consider scaffolding tasks through the use of concrete materials.
- ◆ Consider introducing rules around the correction of work.
- ◆ Use a visual timetable to enable the child to anticipate what is next and reduce anxiety.

#### In PE/practical subjects:

- ◆ Consider modifying the requirements around PE clothes.
- ◆ Social stories and/ or visual cues can be useful to support the understanding of rules.
- ◆ Pupils may need to work with a partner before at-

tempting to work with larger groups.

- ◆ Use language carefully!
- ◆ Differentiate tasks taking into account the physical skill level, ability to be creative and ability to cope with the environment

#### Your language:

- ◆ Change "Please come over here and sit down" to "Sit here"
- ◆ Use a calm and positive voice using the child's name

#### Why do we need an Autism Champion?

From the pupil's point of view:

Pleased to now have a member of staff who understood their needs

Students felt happier to come to school and happier about school in general

They liked having someone to discuss concerns with and help solve problems

Students felt that with the support of the designated adult they were finding classes easier.

#### Moving forward collaboratively:

**Put yourself in the child's shoes** they cannot put themselves in yours. See the world from their point of view.

With this in mind **reflect on your classroom practice and environment**

Remember a child with Autism will find it difficult to fit into school life and may not be able to adapt, so find ways to **be flexible**.

**Consult and collaborate** with both parents and other professionals.

Consider **specific interventions** to develop the child's skills in social interaction, social communication and in flexible thinking.

**Provide good links with home** no one child with Autism is the same as another. They know their child best!

*"I think I'm speaking for all of us when I say that what we really want you to know, what we're screaming out loud, is that we, as mothers, are both terrified and brave."*

*Just like you. That while our children may act differently from what you're familiar with, they are our normals. That they're full of emotion, fierce love, tender hearts, and hope."*

For further support go to:

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

[www.autismlinks.co.uk](http://www.autismlinks.co.uk)

[www.poolefamilyinformationdirectory.com](http://www.poolefamilyinformationdirectory.com)

[www.autismwessex.org.uk](http://www.autismwessex.org.uk)

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

