

SEND Bulletin No. 2



Asperger syndrome

Children with Asperger syndrome display similar characteristics to those of autistic children. They have problems with communication, social relationships and making imaginative responses. However, they are often more articulate than autistic children and may be keen to speak at great length on their own personal topics of interest. Children with Asperger syndrome may find any large group of people, including a room full of children, daunting and even threatening. They don't like to be the focus of others' attention and respond negatively, sometimes aggressively, to any situation they don't understand. When challenged they may seek to hide in a small, enclosed space such as a cupboard or a toilet cubicle. Asperger syndrome requires a multi-professional diagnosis.

Key characteristics

Children with Asperger syndrome may:

- have difficulty understanding jokes, idioms or figures of speech - everything is taken literally, making it difficult for them to make friends, understand some oral instructions and follow parts of literacy lessons
- respond aggressively
- find it hard to interpret body language and facial expressions
- tend to avoid eye contact
- seem to respond inappropriately to other people's feelings, due to a lack of awareness of others' emotions or reactions
- imagine slights or challenges where none are intended
- become obsessively interested in a hobby and/or be especially talented at something like music or art
- tend to talk obsessively about topics of their own interest in an expressionless tone of voice
- need to follow routines exactly, to the point where they become rituals, and be very upset at any changes in normal home or school routines
- follow any instruction or statement literally
- have difficulty thinking in abstract terms

- find it hard to make and keep friends because they have difficulty relating to the needs of others
- feel aggravated and confused by the brightness or buzzing sound of some types of lighting.

Support strategies

You may need to:

- provide an area in the classroom where they can have their own personal space and avoid distractions, perhaps facing the wall and possibly screened off
- ensure that the classroom has an element of continuity - not too many changes at one time
- prepare them well in advance for any changes in school routine, if possible, as this can be very distressing for them
- use a daily visual timetable for younger children
- keep instructions clear and simple, checking that they understand by repeating the instructions to them individually as they may not understand that general instructions are for them unless their name is used
- use ICT to support their learning in a variety of ways
- use visual and concrete materials to support understanding of conceptual vocabulary
- explain jokes, idioms and figures of speech as far as can be understood, or at least explain when something is a joke, etc
- teach pupils how to interpret social signals, such as facial expressions and gestures
- use games and activities to teach social conventions and interaction (eg turn-taking)
- give them the opportunity to explain their anxieties
- give a logical explanation when asking them to do something new
- ensure that they understand that school and classroom rules apply to them
- speak to them in a calm and emotionless manner, with little variation in tone/modulation of voice.

Support agencies

- Asperger's Syndrome Foundation: www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk
- Autism Education Trust: www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk
- Autism Independent UK: www.autismuk.com
- National Autistic Society: www.nas.org.uk
- Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support: www.oaasis.co.uk
- Scottish Society for Autism: www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin please e-mail them to me:

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Many thanks Anne