

Autistic Spectrum Condition/Disorder (ASC/ASD)

What is a Autistic Spectrum Condition/Disorder (ASC/ASD)

Autism is a lifelong, developmental condition. As the name suggests, is a spectrum condition meaning everybody with Autism is different however they often share certain difficulties with some or all of the following areas:

- ◆ Communication and interaction
- ◆ Understanding of others thoughts and feelings.
- ◆ Sensory sensitivity e.g. noise or lights
- ◆ Increased anxiety and/or overwhelming emotions
- ◆ Repetitive behaviours or fixations

For a more comprehensive list of the main signs of Autism in children as well as the difference between boys and girls please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/signs/children/>

Autism does not stop children living a fulfilling life and they will have strengths and weaknesses like any other child. Understanding your child's differences is vital to helping them develop, learn new skills and thrive.

How can we help your child at Millhouse?

Autism is not an 'illness' or 'disease' it just means that the brain works differently. It cannot be 'cured' but there are some strategies, adjustments and interventions that we can put in place to help support your child's development:

- ◆ Social Thinking Groups
- ◆ Lego Social Skills
- ◆ Emotional Wellbeing Support
- ◆ Zones of Regulation
- ◆ Gym trail, Sensory breaks and Sensory overload reducing strategies e.g. Ear defenders, fidget objects.
- ◆ Additional LSA support in the classroom (if necessary)
- ◆ Use of Visual supports e.g. visual time table.
- ◆ Musical communication
- ◆ Social Stories™
- ◆ Celebrating National Autism Week and learning more about the diagnosis

For more information about any of these strategies/interventions, as well as others that we may be able to provide, please speak to your child's class teacher or one of the Inclusion Managers.

How can you support your child at home?

Learning and support network

One of the most empowering things you can do as a parent is to learn as much as you can about Autism and to be accepting of your child's differences. It makes them who they are! There are plenty of books, websites and support groups which can be invaluable sources of information. Never be afraid to reach out and ask for support, advice or help.

Routine, structure and consistency

For children with Autism, routine, structure and consistency in their daily life is extremely important. Even at home, visual timetables with pictures may help your child understand their routines and what is happening next. Children with Autism often find change difficult so always try to prepare them where possible for unexpected changes to their routines.

Supporting sensory and emotional needs

Give children a safe place within the house; this may be their bedroom or a tent etc that they can go to if the environment or their emotions become too overwhelming. Sensory toys, weighted blankets, listening to music are others ways they may like to use to regulate themselves. Always try to take a calm approach when your child is showing you they are overwhelmed through their behaviour and try to reduce triggers.

Supporting and teaching communication

Try to use simple, clear language and instructions. You may need to limit choices e.g. rather than saying 'What would you like for dinner?' say 'Would you like chicken or fish.' As a non Autistic person, we can often take everyday social skills and conventions for granted. It may be necessary to explicitly teach these skills to your child. Social Stories™ can be useful for this (for more information on Social Stories™ speak to the Inclusion Manager or search 'Carol Gray Social Stories™ online). Play is also a great way to help children learn social skills and build their imagination, so play and have fun with your child as much as possible!

* Look out for 'Autism friendly' activities in Basildon such as SEN 360 play sessions and ASC friendly cinema screening.*

Get in Touch...

If you have any concerns about your child's Social Communication Skills, or they have or you are concerned they may have Autism, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's class teacher, or one of the Inclusion Managers - Sophie Jones or Sam Durdle.

If your child does not have a formal diagnosis, you may find it useful to first look at the NHS page for Autism and the National Autistic Society Website.

www.autism.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism

**Please be aware when searching online; not all countries or support agencies share the same views around Autism and the most appropriate strategies, intervention and approaches for young people.*

You may also like to seek medical advice by contacting your GP or Health Visitor (for under 5s). We often advise that you keep a diary of what you have noticed so you can relay your concerns easily and clearly. As a school, we have supported many parents and children through the pathways for official diagnoses so please feel free to contact us for advice and support.

Further Support...

Please find a further list of resources, websites and support groups:

- ◆ SNAP Charity
- ◆ SHINE (advice/consultations)
- ◆ The Megacentre in Rayleigh
- ◆ <http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/>
- ◆ <https://www.familiesinfocussessex.org.uk/>
- ◆ The new Social Story™ Book by Carol Grey
- ◆ <https://www.autism-anglia.org.uk/>
- ◆ Apps - Such as First/then visual support and zones of regulations. See www.callscotland.org.uk for a comprehensive 'wheel' of apps.
- ◆ <https://safeessex.org.uk/>
- ◆ <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/>
- ◆ National Autistic helpline - 0808 800 4104
- ◆ <https://www.sibs.org.uk/> Support for brothers and sisters - we also offer 'Young Carers' support groups at school (please speak to Ms Slade).

Millhouse
Primary
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"Inspiring Tomorrow's Generation, Today"

A guide for Autistic Spectrum Condition and Social Communication



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