

The Autistic

Pupil In Your

Classroom

Jane Jackson. Learning Support Assistant

Before I go any further I must tell you about myself and why I am putting together this information.

When I started supporting a pupil with Autism I found it very difficult to get straight forward concise information, so thought it might be helpful to do it for you.

I am not a teacher, I am a Learning Support Assistant who has learnt everything I know about Autism from the pupil I have worked with over several years, I hope that this booklet will help enable you to integrate a pupil with this Special Need into your classroom.

We are all individuals and we all require special help at sometime in our lives, an Autistic pupil will grow and develop into an adult who suffers from Autism he/she needs to learn what appropriate behaviour is and what is not, to enable them to move forward

Imagine what it is like to be in a foreign country alone, not being able to speak the language, or not to be able to understand a directional sign, that is what it is like to an Autistic pupil. It can be a very frightening world.

Things to remember, the pupil may exhibit,

- : Lack of communicating skills.
- : Finds making friends hard.
- : Lack of imaginative and creative play.

The pupil may be extremely

- : Clever at something music, art, maths.
- : Knowledgeable about something, birds, dinosaurs.
- : Polite
- : Good sense of humour
- : Caring.

Ask Yourself,

- : How am I speaking to this pupil?
- : Never use sarcasm or a metaphor, an Autistic pupil is very literal!
- : Does the pupil understand the instructions?
- : Am I being clear and precise, without being patronising?

Socialising

It is not automatic for an Autistic pupil to know how to talk to others; they need to be told, sometimes repeatedly. They may, when being introduced to someone, kiss them in greeting or touch the person. They need to know what is appropriate.

The other pupils in your class may find some of the Autistic pupils' behaviour disturbing; they need to be made aware that the

classmate is not being deliberately rude or unkind, but that their friend has difficulty understanding the right way to behave, so you need to tell the pupil that inappropriate behaviour is upsetting the rest of the class. Their own peer group will help them in this, if they understand the situation.

It is a good idea to make a chart with some good opening lines;

- : What do you like best at school?
- : Do you have a hobby?
- : Did you have a good weekend?
- : Appoint a 'buddy' to help.

Structure.

An Autistic pupil likes structure. They like to know what is going to happen and when, change can upset them greatly. A fire practice can disturb them for the rest of the day!

When pupils have finished their tasks and are allowed to choose, an Autistic pupil will flip. They find it really hard to make choices.

Making it easier.

- : Written tasks taped to pupil's desk
- : Give pupil a written timetable
- : If you know that there is going to be a change, tell them.
- : At choosing time ask a "buddy" to help.

Playtime.

An Autistic pupil finds the playground a daunting place; he/she won't understand that there are rules. They find it difficult to interact with other children, they may like their own company or to charge around making loud noises.

If strategies aren't put into place difficulties may arise with the other pupils.

Free mind at playtime.

- : Talk to the pupil about how to behave towards others.
- : Allow them to take something to play with outside
- : Allow them to go to the library or quiet place to read, if they feel more comfortable doing that.
- : Make sure that all other staff know any strategies that you are using.

Obsessions.

Some pupils may display obsessional behaviour for instance they may collect buttons, tops and it becomes part of their everyday life.

The pupil may walk up and down the classroom or demand to watch puddles when it is raining, which is obviously disruptive to the other children in your class.

Using the obsession.

- : If moving about the classroom give pupil a task to do, perhaps take a note to another teacher. Tell your colleagues that this may

happen otherwise they will wonder why blank pieces of paper keep arriving from you!

: If collecting is taking place try and link it to topic work, I warn you though you will get snowed under!

Discuss with your pupil.

Talk to the pupil about inappropriate behaviour, physical or verbal, mistakes that they may be making. Don't forget to praise whenever appropriate behaviour happens.

Have a reward system in place.

: It is no good saying "Don't do that" or "Stop it"

: If you have asked them not to do something then explain what you want them to do.

: Naughty and silly are unsuitable words

: If something goes wrong, give calm, clear alternatives.

: Be open about any social-slip ups.

L.S.A

Working one to one with a pupil is great, but be careful that the pupil doesn't become too dependent on one adult, it is vital that he/she works and plays together with their own peer group to enable them to fully integrate, not only during their school life but to allow them to move on into adult hood with the necessary skills for everyday life.

Words of the Autistic pupil I worked with.

- : I want people to like me.
- : I want friends.
- : I want to fit in.
- : I am good at lots of things.
- : I like to look after other people.
- : I am Special.

The last thing that I would like to say is that, it has been a great privilege working with an Autistic pupil and I would like to thank him for all he taught me. I shall value his friendship always.

Jane Jackson.