

Welcome to Issue 5 of the SEND Newsletter

SPOTLIGHT ON AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION

What is Autism Spectrum Condition?

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a life long neurodevelopmental condition affecting social communication, interaction and behaviour, with symptoms typically appearing in early childhood. As it is characterised by a 'spectrum', every individual with ASC has a unique combination of strengths and challenges, which can include intense interests, sensory sensitivities and preferences for a routine.

[What is autism? - NHS](#)

Autism in School

School staff work with Autistic pupils every day. Staff often recognise traits in pupils and will put in place the most common support systems in order to reduce stress / anxiety in order to help pupils cope with school. At Miers Court, our classrooms are "Autism Friendly" - all have visual timetables; clear routines and expectations; reduced clutter on displays and surfaces; we have quiet spaces and a small sensory room; adaptive seating (including wobble stools and low-level desks); ear defenders to reduce noise levels; fidgets for those who need them. In addition, if a child needs another resource, we find a way to support them.

Other things that staff use regularly to support children with ASC, are useful to all children. These include social stories (short, structured narratives designed to help individuals understand social situations, expectations and appropriate behaviours) for transitions, trips/visits.

There are a lot of different versions of social stories, many are free online. Parents often find them useful at home too. Here is a link to help you get started.

[Making social stories and scripts to support your child](#)

For children who have sensory issues, we do our best to accommodate them. This could be making allowances with school uniform, use of quieter spaces at lunchtime or providing children with additional sensory input including movement breaks throughout the day.

What to do if you believe your child may be autistic?

First of all, please speak to the class teacher. They may have spotted traits and be able to tell you what they have observed already. Or, they may not have noticed as some children (especially girls) mask in school. Open conversations, can lead to staff being able to support you and your children more effectively.

If you wish to pursue an ASC diagnosis for your child, the quickest route at the moment is via your GP and the "Right to Choose" pathway. As part of this process, school staff will be asked to complete paperwork to support a diagnosis. Please bear in mind that completing the paperwork does take approximately 1.5 hours for each child, which teachers do on top of their other admin in the week. Therefore, please bear with us - we want to give as detailed information as we can to support your child. If you do not wish to get a diagnosis, at Miers Court we will do our best to support your child anyway.

The Coke Bottle Effect!

Think of your child as a coke bottle. As they go through the day the bottle gets more and more shaken. With pressure building up; anything from getting dressed, having to go a different way to school; to sitting in the classroom, to breaktime can increase a child's stress and anxiety.

They hold it together in school and it takes a lot of effort. You then pick them up... and BANG! All of the coke is released in one go and it leads to a massive meltdown.

These are not easy to manage, especially if they happen in public.

Here are some strategies which might help - ask your child when they are calm which things might help them best:

- Don't ask them questions! A smile and a hug might be best
- Give them a snack as soon as possible - crunchy/chewy whichever suits their sensory needs
- Giving them a drink in a sports bottle - this can aid sensory regulation
- Do something unexpected on the way home - hop to the car rather than walk
- Have their favourite sensory toy for them to play with on the way home or their 'safety blanket/toy' to hold
- Listen to music in the car rather than have a conversation
- Give them opportunities to be alone when they get home - they might want to read a book; paint/draw; listen to music; run around the garden; play on the swing; watch their favourite TV show; play on the computer

Once they are regulated, then you can have a conversation with them. Here are some possible conversation starters...

- What made you laugh / smile today?
- What was the best part of your day?
- Who did you sit with at lunchtime?
- What did you eat at lunchtime?
- What was the most interesting thing you learnt today?
- What did you play at breaktime?

Remember the "**10 second rule**", to give them time to think and organise an answer.

What can you do at home to help your child?

Visual schedules and preparing for change

Using picture schedules for daily routines - like mornings or bedtime - can make the day less stressful. These schedules help children know what comes next. When something is going to change, letting children know ahead of time with photos or videos can help them get ready. These steps make routines smoother and help children feel more secure. Asking them to help organise their uniform or book bag the night before can help them feel more in control.

Social activities

Activities like SEND-friendly clubs, special play sessions, and sports groups can help autistic children make friends. Starting with short visits and clear rules can help ease anxiety. Over time, children can join in more. Supportive, well-structured activities help children feel like they belong.

Talking about feelings

The "Zones of Regulation" system helps children talk about and manage their emotions. Using language like "blue zone" for sad or tired, or "red zone" for angry or overwhelmed, makes emotions easier to understand. Sensory tools/fidgets or mindfulness apps can also help. Headphones can lower loud sounds and keep children focused or calm.

At Miers Court, we use Zones of Regulation in our classrooms. Children are used to talking about feelings in this way and develop toolkits to help them manage these feelings as well. You could develop a 'home toolkit' to manage their feelings.

Home-school communication

Communication between home and school is key. Using diaries, daily check-ins, or apps like Class Dojo helps parents and teachers share what works and talk about new challenges. This back-and-forth helps keep support clear and focused on each child's needs.

If you need any more support, please ask your child's class teacher and if they are not able to help, they will pass your request onto either Ms Munns (SENCo) or Miss Bradley (HSSO).

Websites with more information

National Autistic Society - [Advice and guidance www.autism.org.uk](https://www.autism.org.uk)

Autistic Parents UK - [Autistic Parents UK | Autistic parent support www.autisticparentsuk.org](https://www.autisticparentsuk.org)

Child Autism UK - [Home - Child Autism www.childautism.org.uk](https://www.childautism.org.uk)

Medway Magic - [Overview - Medway Magic - NHS www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/medway-magic/N10499756](https://www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/medway-magic/N10499756)

MedwayGo (Rivermead School) - [ROCC | Rivermead School www.rivermead.org.uk/rocc/298.html](https://www.rivermead.org.uk/rocc/298.html)

ClubAusome [Home - Club AUsome www.clubausome.co.uk](https://www.clubausome.co.uk)