

'We are different from the boys.' (Limpsfield Grange girls with ASC)

Key advice for mainstream class teachers/ teaching assistants (TAs)	Key advice for senior leaders
<p>LEARNING <i>Possible characteristics of girls with ASC – how you can support them</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties with abstract concepts and auditory processing – make learning concrete, contextual and visual • Likes routine, dislikes change – structure all transitions (for example, in and between lessons, after school holidays) • Quiet, shy, awkward, compliant, passive – praise and reward (if they can accept this) • Not asking for help, or being avoidant, to mask difficulty – check understanding often • Explosive outbursts or meltdowns – understand and address fears, triggers and sensory overload • Perfectionist – build flexibility in making mistakes and re-drafting work • Very determined and likes to be in control – offer guided choice • Fine motor or sensory difficulties – make reasonable adjustments; for example, allowing touch typing instead of writing by hand 	<p>USING SCHOOL SYSTEMS, BUILD WHOLE-SCHOOL ASC KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCY IN...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an 'enabling' school environment • Understanding the presentation of girls with ASC, their strengths and special interests • Analysing and supporting behaviours • Understanding the impact of impairments (for example, social imitation causing exhaustion during the day) • Identifying rising anxiety or mental health issues • Working with families to generalise girls' social understanding across different environments <p>SPECIFICITY: GIRL-ORIENTED PROGRAMMES <i>Girls with ASC may need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build their own age-appropriate understanding of ASC, sensory sensitivities and anxieties and how to manage them

- Enjoys reading, has a good imagination, etc – incorporate their special interests into learning

SOCIAL

Girls with ASC may...

- Mirror behaviour
- Affect different personalities and may not have a strong sense of identity
- Be socially immature and vulnerable
- Try to impose scripted, controlling play on peers

How you can support them...

- Select a partner(s) to model behaviours
- Use video, role play, social scripts to show how to respond appropriately
- Provide structured activities for social time
- Encourage and model reciprocity

EMOTIONAL

Girls with ASC may...

- Need to feel that someone 'gets' them
- Camouflage emotions or mask symptoms at school
- Be exhausted from the pressure of constant social imitation/mirroring
- Experience anxiety more intensely than others
- Shut down or cry over small things due to sensory/emotional overload
- Hate injustice

How you can support them...

- Use social stories and factual evidence to explain fears
- Where appropriate, confirm that their reaction or feeling is 'normal'
- Tell them it will be ok

- Extra-curricular provision and resources to match ASC special interests
- A social language programme to navigate social rules, with peer mentoring schemes for friendship and bullying issues
- Personal, social health and economic education specificity to facilitate:
 - o sex and relationship education: adolescence is unpredictable; bodily changes heighten anxiety due to perceived lack of control
 - o independence – to reduce vulnerability
 - o privacy awareness, personal space and touching rules
 - o permission to say 'No': self-advocacy
 - o awareness of e-safety and grooming: girls with ASC are more vulnerable to complying with a demand and more likely to respond to communication
 - o self-image, self-esteem, assertiveness and confidence
 - o gender identity
 - o emotional well-being and mental health
 - o developing vocational interests and leisure activities
- Careers information, advice and guidance specificity: girls who are systematisers may prefer male-dominated occupations, where the need to follow rules is high. Girls may need to:
 - o see the big picture of career pathway options
 - o celebrate the right to choose their own path, despite 'female' cultural influences