

PUPILS WITH AUTISM

UNIT 16

DIFFERENTIATION, ADAPTATION AND MODIFICATION TO ENSURE A RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL CURRICULUM

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Trainees will:

- Understand a number of key curriculum issues, in particular differentiation, adaptation and modification linked to learning style and conceptual level
- Identify ways to assess the level of support pupils require and to measure the success of such input
- Make appropriate adaptations to the learning environment and to the ways in which information is communicated, and
- Know the key elements of structured teaching and be able to adapt them according to a pupil's profile of need.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.

Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:

- Highlight salient points
- Provide at-a-glance content summaries
- Introduce further points of interest
- Offer visual context
- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.

Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.

You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb

The first resource for this unit can be found here:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/differentiation/intro

BRIEFING 1 - COMMUNICATION

Wendy Lawson, an adult with Asperger syndrome, describes some of the confusions that pupils on the autism spectrum might experience:

For instance, we dislike change (we prefer routine), we tend to be obsessive, we become anxious very easily and we take what is said to us literally (For example: teacher says "...pull your socks up John or you won't make it into the team." John bends down and pulls his socks up. The teacher tells him off and calls him a 'smarty pants'. John replies that he doesn't have any Smarties in his pants. Teacher sends John to the head mistress/master because he 'talked back' '. John doesn't know what all the fuss is about... he is missing his favourite period at school, the time on the computer and he becomes very upset. John comes home with a note from his teacher that requires him to do detention for insolent behaviour!

Before I received a diagnosis of ASD I thought that my difficulties in every day life were because I was not as intelligent as other people. The only way that I could cope with my daily confusion and frustration was by living according to my rules, rituals and routines.¹

There follows some mini case studies to highlight some typical issues in communicating with pupils on the autism spectrum and give pointers to some possible solutions. Some general points around communication with pupils with autism, drawn from these case studies or associated with them, are set out first:

- Cue attention;
- If the pupil has not understood what you have said, simplify the sentence and consider supporting your words with visual means
- Beware of using phrases like 'Would you like to...' as you may get the honest answer, 'No!'
- Instructions need to be clear and precise. It is important to make them explicit rather than implicit. For example 'There's a chair over there!' is implying 'Sit on that chair!' However that is not what was said, and so may not be understood

¹ <http://www.mugsy.org/wendy/asschool.htm>

- Give time to process – asking further questions or giving further information will only confuse or mean pupils have to start over again
- Check the pupil has understood. Do not assume that the pupil has understood just because you have told the class or group, or because they nod or say, ‘Yes’ when asked. Ask the pupil to state what they have been asked to do in their own words and if possible to show you what they are going to do
- Be aware that what you say could have been taken literally. If you get an unexpected response, think about what you asked and which could have been taken literally. If so explain it in a different way to get your meaning across
- Similarly with idioms, metaphors and similes. If pupils take the literal meaning it is an opportunity for teaching. For example, if they are confused by, ‘Pull your socks up!’ explain what was meant so that the next time they hear it they may be able to work out the intended meaning or teach pupils to recognise figures of speech and ask for their meanings
- Be aware of the potential confusion that jokes or sarcasm can cause. Give the pupil strategies or phrases to use if confused, e.g. asking, “Are you joking?”

VIDEO TASK

Watch the Video Clip “Broadfields”.

See this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/differentiation/broadfields

Note the strategies the teachers use to ensure the curriculum is tailored to the needs and strengths of the pupils with Autism. In particular note how they work alongside other professionals and how they ensure that their teaching is focused and engages pupils with autism.

CASE STUDY 1 – DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING SPEECH - ANNA

Anna is a pupil with autism. The teacher had told Anna's class that a supply teacher would be taking the class every Friday until the end of term. On the following Friday, when Anna entered the classroom and saw the new supply teacher, she became upset and would not settle for the rest of the day. Anna reacted in the same way the following week.

TASK 1

- a) What do you think may be causing this behaviour?
- b) If a colleague described this situation to you, what advice would you offer to help Anna?

a) Possible causes

In this school, staff made the link between Anna's behaviour and the change in teacher. Even though the class was given the information verbally and Anna was able to understand this information, some potential issues were identified:

- Anna may not have realised that the general instructions were intended for her as well as the class, so she may not have been 'tuned in' or listening
- The language used may have been too complicated or at too quick a pace for Anna to understand, or
- Anna may have heard and understood the instructions but had difficulty holding them in her head until Friday.

b) Advice

The specialist teacher for the autism spectrum offered the following advice:

- Cue the pupil's attention - help the pupil to concentrate on the relevant information. Pupils on the autism spectrum are also likely to have difficulties switching attention from one thing to another. It is important to ensure you have their attention before giving them any instructions or other verbal information
- Adapt your language - pupils on the autism spectrum have difficulty using and making sense of all aspects of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Even those who may appear articulate and speak using good grammatical sentences have real problems when it comes to using their language to interact with others in social situations. This will be made worse when they are given too much verbal information to process at once. Slowing down and simplifying the language used will give them time to process and focus on the correct key words

- Use visual supports and cues - pupils on the autism spectrum often experience difficulties with language, social communication, planning and organisational skills. They may also be distractible to a greater or lesser degree. Pupils on the autism spectrum are visual learners and this is usually an area of strength. The spoken word is transitory, i.e. once said it is gone. Even if the pupil is able to 'understand' the verbal instruction in the first place he or she may forget or be distracted and may need frequent verbal reminders. Visual cues are concrete and can remain as a permanent reminder. There are many different forms of visual support and these can be used in a variety of ways. For example, in this case, the teacher helped Anna by using a visual cue when telling the pupils about the Friday staff change. The cue was also shown to Anna before she went to this class on Fridays. The change was noted on her weekly timetable.

CASE STUDY 2 – DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING SPEECH - MOSES

Moses has autism. When he started secondary school he became very anxious when he was asked to walk down the corridor where the head teacher's office was situated.

TASK 2

- a) What do you think may be causing this anxiety?
- b) If a colleague described this situation to you, what advice would you offer to help Moses?

Possible causes

After weeks of anxiety and upset, Moses revealed that while on his initial school visit someone had remarked that if he was sent down that particular corridor he would be in *hot water!*

a) Advice

Following discussion with Moses' teachers the specialist teacher for the autism spectrum discovered that Moses would often follow instructions or understand pieces of information, very literally. This could lead him to do things that others would see as strange or unconventional. As well as taking things in a very literal way he also lacked the social awareness to realise that his actions might be interpreted as odd or unusual. This would often lead him into trouble with peers and staff or cause him great anxiety. The specialist teacher advised staff that

they needed to be aware of this and be ready to explain when there was confusion.

CASE STUDY 3 – DIFFERENTIATION – SHAI

Shai has autism. He is in year 6. He attends a specialist resource provision for pupils on the autism spectrum within a mainstream primary school. He is included in a number of lessons in one of the Y6 classes each week.

Shai has very little spoken language and when he does speak it tends to be echolalic. He finds group work difficult and responds well to very predictable sequences, supported by visual systems. His writing skills are at an early stage of development. He can hold a pencil and is able to write his first name and to make other marks on paper. In recent assessments Shai was operating at P8 for English and L1 for science and mathematics.

In preparation for a history lesson, the teacher makes some specific materials to help Shai access the lesson. These resources are to be used by the teaching assistant (a member of the resource provision staff).

The lesson is the culmination of a series looking at education in a Victorian school and comparing this with school today. The class, including Shai, have visited a history centre where they dressed in Victorian costume and experienced a lesson using Victorian-style equipment and approaches.

The teacher has prepared a series of photographs of Victorian school equipment, e.g. slate, chalk, individual wooden desk and abacus, and some modern school equipment, e.g. calculator, whiteboard and computer. She has also prepared a photograph of a Victorian schoolboy and one of Shai.

Shai's task is to place the pictures of equipment under the appropriate photograph of Shai or the Victorian schoolboy.

To start the lesson, the class is shown photographs of their visit to the history centre on the interactive whiteboard. The class discusses the experience and key information is provided, e.g. reminders of the apparatus they used and the style of teaching. During this class activity, Shai appears unfocused. He hums to himself and rocks his head from side to side. His teaching assistant tries repeatedly to draw his attention to the board but he does not appear to be looking.

As the children move to the linked activity, the teaching assistant attempts to engage Shai in the activity prepared for him by the teacher. He is able to identify the photograph of himself. However, he appears confused by the task; he does not seem to understand the significance of the photograph of the Victorian schoolboy. When given the photographs of equipment he initially flaps the pictures in front of his eyes. With prompting he understands that he is supposed to place them next to the photographs and then does this randomly. In the end, the teaching assistant places the pictures correctly and talks to Shai about them.

TASK 3 – DIFFERENTIATION – SHAI

Imagine that you had observed this lesson. How would you explain to Shai's teacher why the differentiation to the lesson for Shai did not help Shai to access the activity?

What would you advise the teacher to have done differently? Plan a differentiated activity that you think would have been meaningful and cognitively appropriate for Shai.

Advice:

- The specialist teacher for autism explored Shai's level of understanding of events that have happened in the past with the class teacher and staff from the resourced provision. It was reported that Shai has difficulty in recalling what he has done at the weekend when returning to school on Monday. In partnership with Shai's parents, the provision staff had set up a photography project where Shai takes photographs on a digital camera of key events over the weekend. He brings in the camera on Monday and the photographs are downloaded and printed. Shai is then encouraged to place the photographs on a timeline for the weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) so he can see the chronological order of events that are meaningful for him. A weekday timeline has also been introduced for use in the school using photographs of Shai at school. In discussion with the specialist teacher, the class teacher and TA decided that Shai might be better served by developing a concept of today and yesterday as a starting point for his work in History.
- The specialist teacher also asked the class teacher and staff from the resource provision to reflect on the link for Shai between photographs and objects. They observed him over a number of different lessons and discovered that he only responded to photo prompts of familiar activities or items. They decided it was likely that he had not recognised the photographs of the Victorian items as he had only seen them once on the visit to the history centre. An individual lesson was planned where Shai was able to use and handle objects such as a slate with chalk and an abacus and then find the

matching photo card. It was agreed that Shai was likely to need this level of rehearsal whenever new photo cards were introduced.

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/differentiation/rehearsal

TASK 4 – RESPONDING TO PUPILS’ LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS THROUGH DIFFERENTIATION

In the left-hand column of the table below, which has been adapted from one in the Scottish Toolbox for autism², you will see examples of the potential impact of communication autism on teaching and learning.

In the central column, list some things you might try to do to respond to the specific needs.

In the right-hand column, list specific examples or strategies from your own experience to help remove the barriers to participation and learning that undifferentiated lessons might create for pupils with autism.

Table1: The impact of communication in autism on teaching and learning

The impact of autism on teaching and learning		
Impact of autism	Responding to the needs	Specific strategies and examples

² [The Autism Toolbox: An Autism Resource for Scottish Schools accessed at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0)

<p>Pupils on the autism spectrum are likely to interpret language on a literal level.</p> <p>They may have 'semantic' and 'pragmatic' difficulties, i.e. difficulties with the 'meaning' of words and, while seemingly articulate, may have problems using language in a social context</p> <p>They may also take longer to process and understand verbal information.</p> <p>They may not be 'tuned' in to non-verbal cues.</p>		
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Briefing 2: Social understanding and relating

Schools are sociable places where pupils are often required to learn in group situations and may often be encouraged to participate in small groups or in pairs to embed a new skill or piece of knowledge. Some subjects, such as drama, demand a high level of social relating. Each school day also presents the opportunity for social interaction outside the classroom, e.g. at break times, eating together at lunchtime and during after school activities.

Many pupils may find the demands of fitting in with the social world challenging at different points during their school career, the pupil on the autism spectrum may find the challenge to be a persistent one. Some may struggle with understanding teacher expectations, the social rules governing participation in a lesson or activity and any of the implicit conventions, which are more easily understood by others. Some mini case studies, which illustrate some of these issues, are presented here. First you will find listed some possible responses to social confusion in the classroom:

- Make social expectations explicit and use visual systems to communicate these (e.g. poster, information sheet for planner, rule list card)
- Make any exceptions to rules clear – non-uniform day, seating arrangements, use if the same space (e.g. school hall) for different purposes and how this impacts on expectations of behaviour
- Communicate social routines clearly using visual prompts as needed (e.g. how to ask/answer questions; how to line up in playground; protocols for getting lunch in dining hall)
- Support understanding by incorporating Quality First elements into learning processes (e.g. highlight relevant and key points using visual systems such as whiteboards, sticky notes, colour coding and highlighting, mind maps)
- Embed social coaching into lessons (*if you are not sure what to do, put your hand up and wait for me to say your name*)
- Ensure the nature and demands of a task are clearly understood (e.g. with homework give approximate timings for each section and what needs to be covered in each, necessary equipment/tools for the activity).

CASE STUDY 4 – GEORGE: DIFFERENTIATION AND ADAPTATION

George has autism. He is full time in a mainstream, year 5, mixed ability class.

He comes across as articulate although he does have semantic pragmatic difficulties.

George finds it particularly difficult when a new topic is introduced and he rarely contributes at 'carpet time'. In fact he becomes very anxious and disruptive at these times. He is however a mine of information on his favourite topic, which is Dr Who.

George can be very engaged when the discussion is about something he knows about and he is very motivated to complete tasks when he knows what to do. He is not always very organised. He does however use a wide range of demand avoidance strategies, particularly when the demand is to write, which in George's view is 'too much!'

George's teacher is planning a science lesson that will involve:

- some introductory discussion of a new topic around solutions and evaporation
- setting up and carrying out an experiment, and
- recording the findings.

She has on previous occasions, sent George out for sessions like this to work 1:1 with a teaching assistant (TA). This strategy was successful in avoiding the potential disruption to the rest of the class if George became anxious, fidgety and began

making loud comments that were not relevant. This and more extreme challenging behaviours had happened in the past. However the teacher was also keen to help George achieve his IEP target of taking part in more whole class activities. She thought she had some ideas of how she could set up the lesson so that her class and George could achieve success. She consulted the teacher with advanced and specialist skills in autism for advice.

TASK 5 – DIFFERENTIATION – GEORGE

What preparation, adaptations, and differentiation would you advise the teacher to make to help George take part in this lesson fully?

In this school the teacher with advanced and specialist skills in autism suggested some strategies and George and the rest of the class had a very successful lesson. It was commented that he contributed appropriately to the class discussion and that he had written more than he ever had before. There were several other pupils in the class with writing difficulties who also benefited from this strategy.

Here is what they did:

- Prior to the lesson, during his regular 1:1 time, the teacher gave the TA a list of key words and concepts that were going to be used in the topic, so that George's understanding of them could be developed. This 'priming' helped George to tune in to and understand the class discussion. He felt confident enough to put his hand up and answer questions and to share some facts he had found out by himself about the sea and how some people got salt from it. George even used the word evaporation.
- To help George carry out the experiment successfully, his teacher gave him some visual support to aid his focus and to help him plan the steps of what he had to do in order. The visual cues comprised of pictures and headings of the key steps in the process. He was given a wallet with pictures of the main stages of the experiment. He had to put them with the headings in the right order and then carry out the experiment.
- The recording of the experiment was simplified as George merely had to stick his visual sequence into his book, label it and add some drawings of his own to show what had happened. He was only asked to write one sentence to describe what he had found but in fact he wrote several
- During the experiment, the TA, with George and some of the other pupils, took photos of themselves. These photos helped George and others to reflect on what they had done

- Although George turned out to be very engaged and cooperative in this lesson, his teacher knew that sometimes he would not be very motivated. She would often remind him before a session that if he finished his work he could have some time working on his Dr Who project. Other pupils could also spend time on things of their choosing when they had finished as part of a general class reward system.

CASE STUDY 5:

Sophie is in Y8. She is an able student but will often walk around the classroom during lessons - particularly when the class are focusing on practical activities. Sophie was observed in an English lesson (a subject she enjoys). The class had been studying a scene from Macbeth where Duncan is murdered. The class watched a video excerpt of the scene and were then asked to work in groups of 3 or 4 to discuss how Macbeth would be feeling after killing his friend. Sophie shouted out, 'I don't do groups' and left her seat to walk around the room. When asked to sit with her group, Sophie protested and said there was nothing to talk about anyway because 'Macbeth was happy because he did what he wanted'. The teacher was unable to persuade Sophie to sit down and she spent the rest of the lesson walking around the room.

TASK 6: DIFFERENTIATION AND ADAPTATION – SOPHIE

If Sophie's Y8 English teacher approached you with this account of her lesson, how would you suggest she might approach a situation like this in the future?

What links can you make between Sophie's responses and potential issues relating to social understanding?

Reflection:

As with all the case study examples, there may be many underlying issues which impact on the pupil's responses. As the focus here is on social understanding, this particular example will be considered from this perspective:

- As you read earlier in the unit on the Triad and Sensory Issues, Wendy Lawson has described the difficulty for some individuals on the autism spectrum to multi-task and focus on different demands simultaneously. It may have been too challenging for Sophie to manage the **social** requirements of operating in a group at the same time as exploring some **academic** elements as well. There may be occasions when the outcomes will need to be differentiated to allow pupils on the autism spectrum to focus on either the

social (e.g. working with others in a group, taking turns, staying on topic, using others' ideas) or the academic (e.g. embedding new knowledge, practising a new skill) aspects of a task. She may have been willing to tackle the task on her own

- On this occasion, the task, in addition to being presented as a group activity, also required some social expertise (an understanding of intention, motivation and potentially ambivalent feelings). This was likely to be challenging for Sophie who tended to be quite polarised in her understanding of her own feelings and had difficulty in ascribing thoughts, feelings and intentions to others. In this example, Sophie may have been helped by using a graphic organiser, such as a simple mind map, to help organise her thinking. For example, a prepared map showing Macbeth as the central element with key influences (such as Lady Macbeth, the three witches) as sub-elements with 'thinks' bubbles for Sophie to write in how each of these elements might make Macbeth think/feel about the death of Duncan may have helped her to deepen her thinking on the topic
- Walking round the classroom is likely to be a violation of one of the teacher's expectations (however, it may also be Sophie's means of managing her anxiety or stress levels). There needs to be a clear communication of required behaviours (e.g. staying in your seat) and, if this is an issue for Sophie that has been prioritised, a system for feeding back success to her for the occasions that she manages this

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/differentiation/sophie

TASK 7 – RESPONDING TO PUPILS' SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING NEEDS THROUGH DIFFERENTIATION

As before, in the left-hand column of the tables below, which has been adapted from one in the Scottish Toolbox for autism³, you will see examples of the potential impact of social understanding in autism on teaching and learning.

In the central column, list some things you might try to do to respond to the specific needs.

In the right-hand column, list specific examples or strategies from your own experience to help remove the barriers to participation and learning that undifferentiated lessons might create for pupils with autism.

³ [The Autism Toolbox: An Autism Resource for Scottish Schools at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0)

Table 2: The impact of social understanding in autism on teaching and learning

The impact of autism on teaching and learning		
Impact of autism	Responding to the needs	Specific strategies and examples
<p>We cannot assume that pupils on the autism spectrum 'know' social conventions or rules. They may well do unexpected things or make the 'wrong' decisions, as their choices are not based on 'common sense'</p> <p>They are not always aware of other's thoughts and feelings. This is sometimes called 'mindblindness'</p> <p>They may find it difficult to find a partner or to work in groups</p>		

BRIEFING 3: Flexibility of thought and social imagination

Predictability, consistency and the use of routines in teaching may help to allay the anxiety which may be disruptive to learning for some pupils on the autism spectrum. Coping with unexpected change on many different levels can be problematic for some. Difficulties in shifting attention from one activity, line of thought or process to another can present a challenge unless supported by appropriate (to the individual pupil) levels of preparation or rehearsal. For some, having to juxtapose opposing, contrasting or even complementary ideas may lead to internal conflict, it may be necessary to carefully structure the teaching to build resilience to the notion of understanding and managing different ideas alongside creating opportunities to practise such cognitive skills.

It should be remembered that skills learned in one setting (such as the classroom) might not transfer to another setting (such as a different classroom, the school hall, home). It may be necessary for some pupils on the autism spectrum to re-learn or practise new skills across a range of settings in order to generalise their learning.

The explicit teaching of problem-solving and thinking skills will be helpful for many pupils on the autism spectrum.

The ability to focus intensively on an area of personal interest can be a source of pleasure for many individuals on the autism spectrum who can become specialists in their particular area of interest (such as the solar system; London underground system; dinosaurs; geology; flags of the world; radio frequencies). Such passions can be a useful means of engaging the pupil who is reluctant to participate in classroom activities.

Before exploring some case studies linked to flexibility of thought and social imagination, a number of pointers for differentiation to address these needs are considered here:

Build in routines:

- Use of across-day timetables and within-task 'to do' lists
- Use of routine: introduce reliable emotional 'anchor points' which are embedded into the day (for example, establish a start/end of day routine)
- Create a predictable and consistent environment within the classroom
- Use of signals/preparation for changes and transitions
- Use routines as a means of supporting independence:
- Predictable routines for completing certain tasks or activities
- Teach the routine, then allow the child to undertake independently
- Initially focus on the routine rather than the content of the activity: choose activities that will ensure success

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/differentiation/routine

Structure teaching:

- Think about the skill to be taught and break it down into small, logical and sequential elements
- Teach one element at a time and link each new step to the previous steps
- Introduce a routine element that can be used to teach each part where possible
- Use visual means to support each teaching element
- Make each element concrete (do rather than say)
- Cut out any 'unnecessary' or confusing elements
- Find relevant ways of extending/generalising skills
- Move at the pupil's pace
- Observe the pupil's preferred means of learning/interests and exploit
- Where necessary, introduce elements of TEACCH practice for a highly specific use of structured teaching (see the unit on Evidence Base for Educational Interventions for a detailed description of TEACCH)

Teach thinking skills:

- Many schools will have their own programmes to support the development of thinking skills and problem solving. For the pupil on the autism spectrum particular attention may need to be given to bridging the skill taught from the session in which it was learned into the application of that skill in different settings. Skills taught may include any of the following (adapted from COGNET⁴):
- **Approaching learning through:**
- Systematic exploration: gathering information
- Systematic planning: making a plan
- Controlled expression: communicating thoughts and actions
- **Making meaning of learning through:**
- Working memory: using memory
- Making comparisons: automatically seeing what is the same and different
- Getting the main idea: automatically finding the most important ideas
- Thought integration: pulling thoughts together
- Connecting events: seeking relationships among events
- **Confirming the learning by providing named tools for thinking, problem, solving and learning**
- Precision and accuracy: understanding and using words and ideas correctly
- Selective attention: choosing relevant information
- Problem identification: automatically noticing inconsistencies within the learning
- **Provide a bridge: help to generalise the learning:**
- Making the skills used explicit: name them
- Explore how the skills help in different situations
- Make links to other situations where they could be used
- Embed skills learned into all curriculum activities
- Name skills and encourage pupils to practise them

⁴ Greenberg, K. (1996) The Cognitive Enrichment Network Education Model (COGNET). Paper presented at the Head Start National Research Conference (3rd, Washington, DC)

CASE STUDY 6: DIFFERENTIATION, ACCOMODATION AND MODIFICATION - ALI

Ali is a Y7 pupil attending a mainstream secondary school. He has a diagnosis of High Functioning Autism. He is very able but teachers have found it difficult to engage him in learning across all subject areas. He will often refuse to take part in tasks or activities connected with lessons and can, at times, disrupt others' learning by calling out or making comments while the teacher is talking. Ali is socially isolated, although he would like to have some friends he has not managed to establish any friendship groups since moving to the secondary school. He is starting to say that he doesn't want to come to school and there are concerns that he is not making progress in any curriculum areas.

TASK 7: DIFFERENTIATION, ACCOMODATION AND MODIFICATION – ALI

How would you address this issue?

What information would you want to gather and who might you talk to about Ali?

What suggestions might you make to the teachers involved?

Possible causes:

- Ali arrived from primary school with above average SATs scores; the secondary school's initial cognitive assessments indicate that Ali should be operating in advance of his chronological age. His lack of engagement is not likely to arise from a lack of ability so other factors need to be considered
- Ali may have found the transition to secondary school challenging, he may be feeling heightened levels of anxiety if he is not yet aware of the routines which are particular to his new school
- Ali's behaviours in class may be symptoms of anxiety or may be established patterns of behavior
- Ali shares only a few lessons with some of the pupils from his primary school

The specialist teacher for autism did the following:

- He contacted the primary school to ask if they recognized any of the behaviors teachers were reporting. The SENCO confirmed that Ali had found transitions to new year groups challenging and had benefitted from an increase in visual supports at these times.
- He met with Ali's parents who were also concerned about his reluctance to attend school. They commented that he had become more volatile at home and felt that he was feeling very anxious about school. One of the activities that he found very calming at home was to help with cooking meals. Cookery was an area of particular interest and skill for Ali. They confirmed that Ali had not been part of any particular friendship group at primary school but was now saying he wanted some friends.

- He met with teachers to explore aspects of Ali's behavior in their lessons. He discovered that despite the school having very clear protocols around expectations for behavior, many of the teachers had subtle differences in the ways they managed their classes.

He met Ali and used a rating scale and agreement line to find out from Ali what was going well for him and what he might need support with (see unit on identifying the needs of individual pupils on the autism spectrum)

- Based on his discussions, the specialist teacher worked with Ali's teacher to put the following accommodations and modifications into place:
- Teachers were supported to make posters clearly describing their expectations for participation in their lessons (in some cases this involved organizational aspects such as where pupils were expected to put their backpacks or whether they should stand behind their chairs or go straight to their seats on entering a room). Ali was given matching, credit card sized reminders of the rules for each teacher, which he carried in a credit-card pouch. The specialist teacher taught Ali how to use the cards by organising them in the pouch in the order of the lessons for that day. When waiting in the line by the door for the teacher to arrive, he could find the card for that lesson and remind himself of the teacher expectations before going into the class.
- He wrote a Social Story (see the unit on The Social-Emotional Curriculum: Social Assistance for the Pupil on the Autism Spectrum) for Ali to read about how to ask for help in the classroom. He helped Ali to explore the impact of calling out or making comments during a lesson using a Comic Strip Conversation (more details also available in the see the unit on The Social-Emotional Curriculum: Social Assistance for the Pupil on the Autism Spectrum)
- He set up a Y7 lunchtime cookery club to run once a week. The head of Food Technology agreed to the club running using their facilities and a member of the teaching team agreed to oversee the club with support from the specialist teacher. Ali was a founder member and a number of other Y7 pupils joined. In addition to developing recipes to create themed meals, the club took on responsibility for preparing items for some school functions. Ali began to spend some time with some of the other club members outside of the weekly meeting with their shared enthusiasm for cooking as a starting point.

CASE STUDY 7: DIFFERENTIATION, ADAPTION AND MODIFICATION - GRACE

Grace is in Y4. She has a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. Her Statement of Special Educational Need has provided additional resourcing and she has a full-time Teaching Assistant (TA). This role has been shared between two TAs and at break and lunchtime Grace has the support of one of the playtime supervisors. Some members of the school staff are concerned that Grace is very reliant on this support and that she may find it difficult to cope when she goes to secondary school where support is arranged differently. The class teacher is very concerned about changing any of the support for Grace as the previous year she had worked with another child on the autism spectrum who had reacted very badly to having their support reduced.

TASK 8 - DIFFERENTIATION, ADAPTION AND MODIFICATION - GRACE

As the specialist teacher, what do you see as the key issues for Grace?

What advice would you give to the class teacher? How could Grace be helped to be more independent of her TAs?

Reflection:

- Grace has been used to receiving support from two specific TAs and two playtime supervisors. It may be useful to consider slowly introducing other adults so that she becomes used to working with a few other adults
- It may be helpful to consider the nature of the support being offered. For example, if in class the TA is accustomed to providing ongoing prompting for Grace (such as reminding her what equipment she will need for a task), the emphasis could shift over time to providing a visual prompt list (relating, for example, to tools for the job). This could list all the possible equipment Grace could need and her being taught by the TA how to select from the list what is needed and then gathering those items together. Over time the TA would take a less active role until Grace is able to use the visual prompt for herself. Similar prompts could be introduced for other aspects of classroom activities (for example, a visual reminder of routine elements of a task; to do lists; 'how to....' prompts).
- Varying the way TA support is utilised may be helpful, particularly when other systems for support have been introduced as above. Grace could, on occasions, be part of a group that is supported by the TA or may work on her own with the TA offering general support to the class. Grace may need to be taught systems to recognise when she needs help and how to ask for it when her TA is not working directly with her.

TASK 9 – RESPONDING TO PUPILS’ FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT AND SOCIAL IMAGINATION NEEDS THROUGH DIFFERENTIATION

As before, in the left-hand column of the table below, which has been adapted from one in the Scottish Toolbox for autism⁵, you will see examples of the potential impact of flexibility of thought and social imagination autism on teaching and learning.

In the central column, list some things you might try to do to respond to the specific needs. In the right-hand column, list specific examples or strategies from your own experience to help remove the barriers to participation and learning that undifferentiated lessons might create for pupils with autism.

Table 3: The impact of flexibility of thought and social imagination in autism on teaching and learning

The impact of autism on teaching and learning		
Impact of autism	Responding to the needs	Specific strategies and examples
Organising self and organising tasks, planning and working sequentially and systematically may be difficult and idiosyncratic. Pupils with autism like structure and routine but may impose their own ‘inappropriate’ ones		

⁵ [The Autism Toolbox: An Autism Resource for Scottish Schools at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0)

<p>Coping with the unknown or unfamiliar may be stressful and have a negative impact on behaviour</p> <p>Even 'minor' change can produce a 'disproportionate' reaction</p> <p>Unstructured times may be stressful and provoke anxiety.</p>		
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TASK 10:

When you have completed this table take time to explore the Scottish Toolbox for ASD, where there are further examples of ways to help remove the barriers to participation and learning for pupils with autism. You might like to use your completed table as the basis of a discussion between yourself and colleagues. Draw up your own table and include additional examples of the impact of autism and complete the rest of the table in response to your examples.