

Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

a guide for school staff

If you work in a mainstream or special needs school, you will inevitably come across instances of bullying from time to time. Pupils with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at particular risk of being bullied.

This booklet helps you to understand why this is the case and provides strategies and ideas for promoting understanding of ASDs among staff and pupils, tackling and reducing bullying incidents and supporting pupils with an ASD who have been bullied.

The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people affected by autism.

Over 500,000 people in the UK have autism. Together with their families they make up over two million people whose lives are touched by autism every single day.

Despite this, autism is still relatively unknown and misunderstood. Which means that many of these two million people get nothing like the level of help, support and understanding they need.

Together, we are going to change this.

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By Alice Stobart

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I am grateful to the authors of the many great resources available in print and on the web, which have informed the writing of this guide. Key web resources are listed on page 28.

About the author

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Alice's current role involves working directly with both mainstream and special educational needs (SEN) schools to develop practical ways to improve their provision for children with autism. She delivers training for groups involved with education, and is a member of the Autism Accreditation team, a body established by the NAS to provide an autism-specific quality assurance programme for services across the UK.

Cover artwork by Jeanette Byrne, aged 13, who entered our make school make sense art competition

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Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Why pupils with an ASD are at risk of being bullied	3
3 Taking bullying seriously	5
4 Strategies for reducing bullying	8
5 Promoting understanding of ASDs within the peer group	12
6 Addressing the topic of bullying	14
7 Dealing with bullying	16
8 Helping pupils with an ASD develop an awareness of bullying	18
9 Supporting the bullied pupil	20
10 Perceived bullying behaviour in pupils with an ASD	21
11 Conclusion	24
12 Useful resources	25
13 Contact The National Autistic Society	29
14 Appendices	30

A note on terminology

We use the term autism spectrum disorder (ASD) throughout this booklet to refer to the full range of diagnoses on the autism spectrum, including Asperger syndrome.

Although in real-life contexts children should not be labeled as 'bullies', for ease of communication we have used the terms 'bully' and 'bullies' to refer to children who display bullying behaviours. For the same reason, we refer to the child on the receiving end of the bullying behaviour as the 'target'.

A note on case studies

All the case studies described in this booklet are based on real incidents, but with names and some details changed.

1 Introduction

If you work in a mainstream or special needs school, you will inevitably come across instances of bullying from time to time. While most schools have a clear policy for dealing with bullying, it may not always take account of the needs of pupils with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), who are among the pupils at greatest risk of being bullied.

This booklet will help senior management, class and subject teachers and school support staff to:

- > understand why pupils with ASDs are at risk of being bullied
- > promote understanding of ASDs among school staff and pupils
- > implement strategies to tackle and reduce bullying
- > support pupils with ASDs who have been bullied
- > manage perceived bullying behaviour in pupils with an ASD.

Most of the guidance in this booklet applies to both primary and secondary schools, but where approaches and strategies are more appropriate for one setting or the other, this is made clear.

Although this booklet focuses on pupils who have an ASD, many of the strategies for understanding, preventing and dealing with bullying will be of practical use when you are supporting other children too.

You may also find it useful to read *Autism spectrum disorders: a resource pack for school staff*, available from the NAS Autism Helpline on **0845 070 4004**. See *Useful resources*, starting on page 25, for more details.

What is an ASD?

An ASD is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. 'Spectrum' means that, while all people with an ASD share three main areas of difficulty, their condition will affect them in different ways. With support, some young people with an ASD are able to live relatively typical childhoods but others may have an accompanying learning disability and need continuous specialist support at school, and for the rest of their lives.

The three main areas of difficulty (sometimes known as the 'triad of impairments') are:

> social interaction

Children with an ASD often have difficulty recognising or understanding other people's emotions and feelings, and expressing their own. They may not

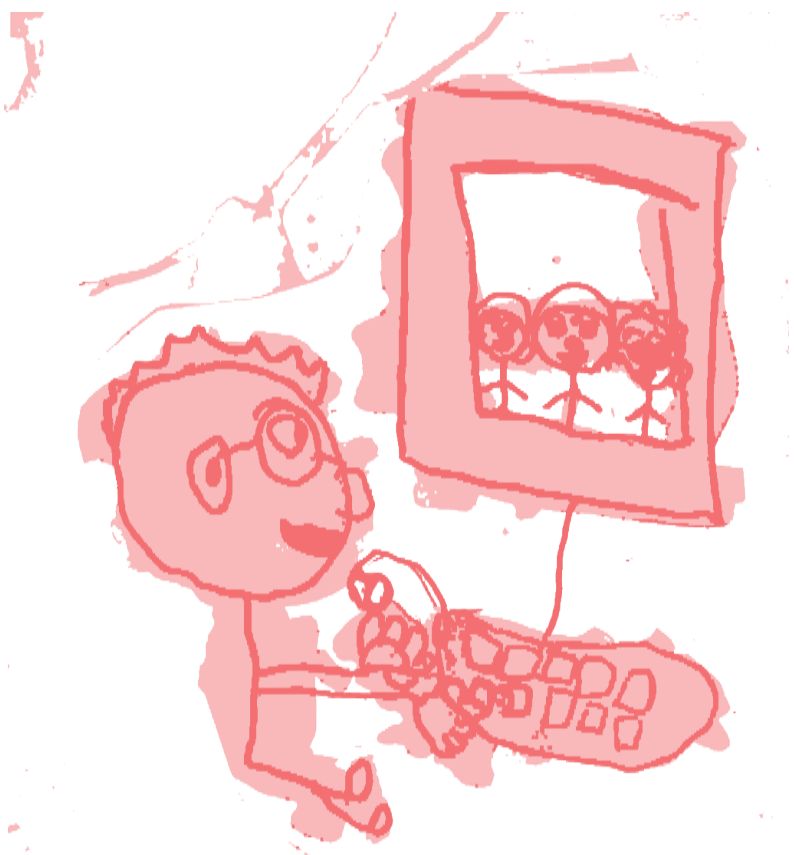
understand the unwritten social rules which most children pick up without thinking. They may appear insensitive, prefer to spend time alone and behave in ways that seem 'strange' or inappropriate. Not understanding how to interact with their peers can make it hard to form friendships.

> social communication

Children with an ASD have difficulties with both verbal and non-verbal language. Many have a very literal understanding of language and may find it difficult to use or understand facial expressions, tone of voice, jokes, sarcasm and common idioms. Some children with an ASD may not speak, or have very limited speech, while others may have good language skills but still find it hard to understand the give-and-take nature of conversation.

> social imagination

Many children with an ASD find it difficult to understand and predict other people's intentions,



Artwork by Jack Field, aged 10, who entered our make school make sense art competition

Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

thoughts, feelings and behaviour and to imagine situations outside of their own routine. They may find it impossible to predict what will or could happen next, may not understand the concept of danger and may have difficulty with imaginative play. This can be accompanied by a narrow, repetitive range of activities and an inability to cope with new and unfamiliar situations.

Children with an ASD may also experience some form of sensory sensitivity or under-sensitivity, for example to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours. This can make the hustle and bustle of the school environment frightening and even painful.

Asperger syndrome is a form of ASD. Children with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language. They do not usually have learning disabilities but may have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia.

What do we mean by bullying?

There are five main categories of bullying:

- > physical (causing physical pain or taking belongings)
- > verbal (name-calling, insults, taunting)
- > non-verbal (eye-rolling, gesturing, ignoring)
- > indirect (spreading rumours, excluding from social groups)
- > cyberbullying (sending malicious emails, texts or social network messages).

Bullying is usually distinguishable from friendly teasing or conflict situations. If a pupil is being bullied, they will often:

- > be targeted with repeated, negative actions with harmful intent

- > experience an imbalance of power in their interactions with the bully (for example, psychological, verbal, social or physical)
- > be affected by these interactions in a contrasting way to the bully (the target is usually distressed).

As well as the five main categories of bullying, some pupils experience 'backhanded bullying'. This involves the bully misleading the target or persuading him or her to carry out inappropriate activities, such as stealing from another pupil's bag or locker, which draws negative attention or gets the target into trouble.

2 Why pupils with an ASD are at risk of being bullied

Forty per cent of parents who have a child with autism say that their child has been bullied. This figure is even higher for children with Asperger syndrome¹.

Children with an ASD have difficulty 'reading' social situations and knowing how to engage in ever-changing social contexts. They find it hard to predict other people's behaviour and to interpret their body language and expressions to guess what they are thinking or feeling. This makes it difficult for children with an ASD to understand other people's intentions, and makes them an easy target for bullies.

At school, children with an ASD often become targets of backhanded bullying, where they are offered 'friendship' by someone who intends to mislead them or they are directed by their 'friend' to engage in absurd and inappropriate activities. Their social naivety means that pupils with an ASD may be unsure whether someone is being genuinely friendly or whether they are 'winding them up'. Some will do things that their peers suggest in order to be accepted into a group, but be unable to predict that their actions may be harmful, or get them into trouble.

Pupils with an ASD may prefer to play alone and this isolation from their peers, without any support structure from other pupils, will increase their vulnerability to bullying. Pupils with an ASD may also speak in an unusually formal manner, behave in an eccentric way or make inappropriate comments. They will often not understand sarcasm or punchlines, and they may have an 'obsessive' interest in a particular item or topic that their peers will use as an excuse to taunt or upset them.

Their difficulties with communication mean that pupils with an ASD may not be able to report an incident of bullying to school staff or their parents.

"In many respects, children with Asperger's make perfect 'victims'; a fact that most bullies are quick to discover: we have no tactics for verbal or physical self-defence, we are extraordinarily naive... We can be reduced to tears of frustration and rage with delicious ease by simple plays like making fun of our obsessions."

Clare Sainsbury, *Martian in the playground*²

Dominic

Dominic is in Year 7 and has a special interest in trains. He knows all the local destinations and connections. Dominic reads books about trains and collects pictures of them. He often tries to engage his peers in discussions about trains. When he becomes anxious, Dominic calms himself down by talking about trains and looking at the scrapbook he has compiled.

Some of the boys in Dominic's class make fun of him by getting him to repeat information, confuse him by talking about non-existent destinations, or try to upset him by reporting fake incidents involving trains. He finds it difficult to discern when people genuinely share his interest and when they are using it to tease him. On one occasion, the boys took his scrapbook out of his bag and laughed while he chased after them, becoming increasingly upset. He eventually caught up with them and was seen hitting one of the group by a member of staff. Because the staff member had not witnessed the lead up to this incident, and because Dominic was unable to clearly explain what had happened, Dominic was given detention for being physically aggressive.

¹ The National Autistic Society. (2006). *B is for bullied*. London: NAS

² Sainsbury, C. (2000). *Martian in the playground*. Bristol: Lucky Duck Publishing

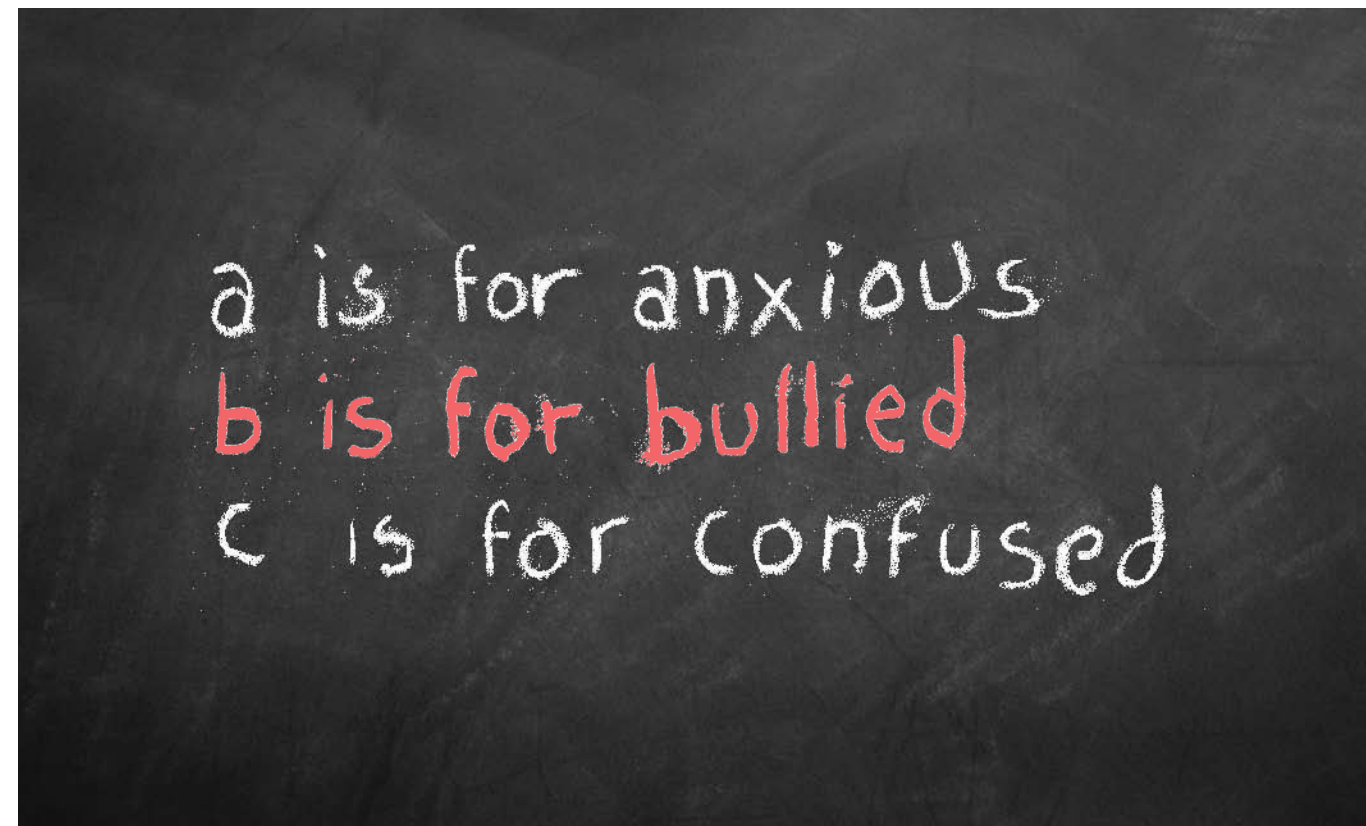
Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

Many of the characteristics we find in pupils who are the target of bullies are also common traits in people with an ASD. These include:

- > anxiety
- > passivity
- > low self-esteem (as a result of their difficulties in social contexts)
- > a seeming lack of humour
- > lack of friends (they may easily frustrate other children and therefore be rejected by them)
- > submissiveness to suggestions and instructions from peers
- > inflexibility
- > emotional vulnerability
- > clumsiness.

Key points

- > The behavioural characteristics and social naivety that accompany ASDs (for example, overly formal speech, unusual behaviour and obsessive interests) can make pupils with an ASD very vulnerable to bullying.
- > Pupils with an ASD are particularly vulnerable to 'backhanded bullying' because they take friendship at face value and find it difficult to discern ulterior motives.



3 Taking bullying seriously

Schools must meet a number of legal duties when it comes to bullying. These are set out in Government guidance (see *Useful resources* starting on page 25). Schools are expected to have anti-bullying policies³ which include a definition of bullying agreed by the whole school, and follow the principles of the Government's Anti-Bullying Charter⁴.

Principles of the Anti-Bullying Charter

- > Discuss, monitor and review the school's anti-bullying policy.
- > Support everyone in the school community to identify and respond appropriately to bullying.
- > Ensure that parents/carers expressing bullying concerns have them taken seriously.

Figure 1

Typical peer conflict	Bullying
Equal power between pupils	Imbalance of power between pupils
Pupils involved may be friends	No real friendship between pupils
Negative actions don't follow a pattern	Negative actions are repeated
Conflict not premeditated and no real intention to cause harm	Actions are purposeful and possibly premeditated
Followed by sincere remorse	Bully shifts blame, no sincere remorse
Interest in repairing relationship	No interest in repairing relationship
Both pupils play active role	Incident is one-sided
Pupils may be supported by other peers	Target is alone without peer support
There is an intention to resolve a situation	Intention is to gain power, control, or items

³ Department for children, schools and families. (2007). *Safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools*. London: DCSF

⁴ Department for children, schools and families. (2007). *Bullying – a charter for action*. London: DCSF

- > Ensure that children and young people are aware that all bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively.
- > Learn from effective anti-bullying work elsewhere.

The law also requires schools to make sure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against or substantially disadvantaged, and to eliminate harassment of disabled people, including bullying of children with autism⁵. Schools are required to develop a Disability Equality Scheme which describes how they intend to do this.

The Government is clear that it expects schools to create an ethos in which bullying is not tolerated. It is important not to view bullying as an unavoidable part of growing up or an inevitable part of school life, or to confuse it with typical peer conflict.

Figure 1 (below) may be useful in helping you to determine whether an incident is 'typical peer conflict' or bullying.

⁵ Department for children, schools and families. (2008). *Bullying involving children with special educational needs and disabilities*. London: DCSF

Signs that a child is being bullied

A pupil who is being bullied may display some of the following common responses:

- > increased anxiety (displayed through increasingly obsessive behaviours, hand movements, repetitive questioning and statements, or short temper)
- > withdrawal
- > aggression
- > seeming over-sensitive or over-reacting to minor occurrences (being 'on edge')
- > seeking revenge
- > repeatedly exposing him- or herself to the same kind of bullying situation. Although the pupil may know it is a negative interaction, they may still consider this better than no interaction at all. It becomes a scenario they are familiar with and which follows a predictable sequence.

Adam

Adam is a pupil with an ASD at a small independent school. The other children have learned that he has a short temper and finds it difficult to control his anger when he becomes upset. At break time the children like to play tag in the wooded playground. They are supervised by three members of staff but the trees make it difficult for the staff to see clearly what the children are up to.

Adam desperately wants to be included in the game but the other children will only let him do so if he's 'it'. So he always agrees and spends his playtime chasing other children as they run away from him. To make the game more exciting, the children have devised ways of provoking Adam so that when he chases them he is really cross, giving the game a 'dangerous' element. The children call out 'Adam Poopy Pants' and block their noses as if he has soiled himself. Adam becomes furious and chases

after them. On occasions where he has caught up with them he has been removed from the playground for thumping them.

The pattern repeats itself day after day because Adam wants to be included and this is the only way he knows how.

(How can this problem be addressed? See page 12).

Promoting understanding among school staff

No one deserves to be humiliated or teased, regardless of their idiosyncrasies, and school staff play an important role in communicating this to pupils and in promoting respect for others. An environment where intolerance and discrimination are accepted or ignored could be a contributing factor in children willingly humiliating others.

School staff can sometimes think that pupils attract or provoke a bullying response from other pupils because of their eccentricities, and that the bullying would stop if they modified their behaviour. A teacher might, for example, try to stop a pupil with an ASD flapping his or her hands when he or she is anxious in order to prevent teasing or mocking. Although this action is well-intentioned, it can serve to highlight difference rather than promote tolerance. Instead, the teacher should try to explain to the pupil's peers why it is unacceptable to imitate someone who behaves differently when anxious.

Regardless of their behaviour, manner or appearance, children can never be held responsible for provoking a bullying response from their peers. Schools should consider training for all staff, including supervisory staff, to develop their understanding of pupils with an ASD. This will help to prevent staff from unwittingly contributing to a pupil's mistreatment by being punitive or critical of idiosyncrasies that are beyond the child's control.

"A good teacher would be helpful, not impatient. They'd understand me and always get the full picture of what's going on. Not that long ago my teacher just didn't get the full picture of what was going on, so someone knocked my pencil case in class and I went to get it off them and then he shouted at me, who had just got up to get it back."

Pupil with an ASD

But while it is wrong to lay the blame for bullying on the eccentricities of the target, it is also unrealistic to allow the sometimes challenging behaviour of a pupil with an ASD to go unchecked in the classroom. Your actions to promote understanding of ASDs among the pupil's peers will be more effective if accompanied by a pro-active Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) for the pupil in question (see **Appendix 1**). This plan should recognise and tolerate the pupil's likes, dislikes and needs, but identify the things that trigger his or her anxiety and develop strategies to help him or her cope when things are difficult or stressful. Through long-term careful planning, as opposed to reactive behaviour control, the situations that lead to bullying can be kept to a minimum.

Key points

- > Schools are required by law to take measures to prevent and act on bullying and to make sure that people with a disability are not discriminated against.
- > School staff play a vital role in promoting understanding and tolerance of difference.
- > Training in ASDs can help staff to recognise why pupils with an ASD behave in certain ways, detect when they've been bullied, and help to prevent bullying situations from occurring in the first place.

As part of this support structure, it may be useful to assign one member of staff to mentor pupils with an ASD. This staff member would need to know how to support each pupil when they are feeling anxious or upset, and be able to offer guidance to other staff on dealing with situations that arise. Because children with an ASD often struggle to communicate what is happening to them, all staff - and especially the mentor - need to be alert to signs of distress.

It is also helpful for school staff to have regular opportunities to discuss issues that arise from having pupils with an ASD in their school. By understanding how the condition affects each pupil, what support is needed and what strategies work well - and by sharing this information with other colleagues - the school can establish a consistent supportive approach from all staff. This will be particularly helpful in secondary schools where pupils are taught by many different teachers. All this information should also be added to the pupil's profile.

See *Useful resources*, starting on page 25, for more general information about supporting pupils with an ASD in school.

4 Strategies for reducing bullying

Bullying is more likely to take place at unstructured times, such as lunchtime, break times, transition times between lessons and in the periods before and after school. Bullying is also more common in under-supervised areas, such as the playground, corridors, the lunchroom, school toilets and on the bus travelling to and from school.

Many of the strategies suggested in this section – some of which may already be familiar – will be helpful in preventing bullying across the school, not just the bullying of children with an ASD.

Strategies for all schools

- › **Make sure the school rules about bullying are very specific** so that there can be no misunderstanding about what constitutes bullying. Pupils should be encouraged to contribute to the list and should be aware of the consequences of bullying.
- › **Identify risk times and places** and, if possible, increase the level of informed staff supervision for these periods and areas.
- › **Choose groups and teams yourself** in lessons where pupils need to work in this way, and where bullying is more likely (for example, less structured lessons such as PE and games). This will prevent certain pupils from always being picked last for teams and prevent known bullies from targeting vulnerable individuals.
- › **Introduce a 'bullying box'** to the school. Many children who are bullied, or who witness someone else being bullied, are likely to be afraid of reporting the incident for fear of retaliation. Also, due to their communication difficulties, pupils with an ASD may struggle to communicate an incident effectively to a member of staff. A

'bullying box' allows pupils to write an account of a bullying incident and post it anonymously. An assigned member of staff reads the reports daily and deals with incidents as necessary.

- › **Examine group dynamics** in cases of persistent bullying. During risk times, groups of children may need to be split up to prevent intimidation or group pressure to gang up on individuals. If practical, this could mean designating different play areas, staggering play times to reduce the number of children in the playground at any one time, or designating specific tables in the lunch room. You could also consider changing class groupings in schools where there is more than one class per year group.
- › **Provide positive role models and celebrate positive behaviour.** Assemblies and classroom sessions that focus on and celebrate friendship, kindness and supportive peer relations, as well as academic achievement, can be a valuable part of your overall anti-bullying strategy. You could also consider rewarding pupils for their social achievements, perhaps through the school's existing credit or reward system.
- › **Tackle cyberbullying.** Ensure that your school has an agreed definition of what constitutes cyberbullying and that this is incorporated into the school's overall anti-bullying policy. Children and parents should be made aware of pupils' responsibilities when using ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and what the consequences are for their misuse. Positive use of technology can be promoted through sessions on 'netiquette', e-safety and digital literacy. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has produced guidelines for tackling cyberbullying, which are available from www.teachernet.gov.uk

The specific role of support staff

Teaching assistants and other support/supervisory staff can play an important role in the detection

and prevention of bullying, as they often see things that a teacher who is delivering a lesson may miss. It can be tricky for support staff to support a pupil with an ASD without getting in the way of them interacting with their peers. As children grow older, staff who supervise them too closely can become a barrier to them developing friendships because children are reluctant to include someone who has an adult tagging along. But if staff don't supervise closely enough, they may not notice or be around to help if the pupil becomes a victim of bullying. Each individual situation needs to be carefully considered according to need, and support staff need to have a clearly-defined strategy for supervision in each case.

Strategies for primary schools

- › **Develop a 'circle of friends'** - a group of six to eight children who volunteer to support and include the pupil with an ASD. This can be a positive experience for both the pupil in question and the circle, who will learn to understand, support and appreciate someone with a disability. The circle could take part in social skills sessions with the pupil with an ASD or work with them in group tasks. They could sit with them at lunchtime and include them in games in the playground. As there are six to eight children in the group it shouldn't become a burden for the individual group members, and it may be that the class decides to rotate members of the group on, say, a fortnightly basis.
- › **Introduce a 'friendship bench'** in the playground. This is a designated bench where anyone who wants to be invited to join a game can sit. Members of the 'circle of friends' or an identified 'playground friend/monitor' are then responsible for including those sitting on the bench in a group game.
- › **Designate an area of the playground for 'quiet play'** or allow break-time access to specific rooms in the school building. As most children with an ASD have sensory sensitivities, a noisy, chaotic playground can feel overwhelming. They may

prefer to retreat to a quiet space by themselves to unwind from the pressures of their day. Because such physically isolated spaces can be a target for bullies, staff supervision would be needed to make sure that these spaces are safe.

- › **Create structure at break times.** Children with an ASD respond best to structure, so they can find the unstructured nature of break times very challenging. If certain areas of the playground are designated for specific activities (for example, ball play, skipping, hopscotch), pupils with an ASD might find it easier to take part in one of these, or to avoid areas they find overwhelming. Also, other children will be less likely to bully if they are not bored in the playground.
- › **If possible, increase the level of supervision at break times.** This may mean staff staggering their break times so that more staff are available at these risk times.
- › **Assign specific seating positions to some children.** During classes and at lunchtime, the pupil with an ASD could be seated near to children who are more likely to include them. Any children who are likely to bully in pairs could also be separated from each other and from the target.

Strategies for secondary schools

- › **Introduce mentors or mentor groups** for pupils with an ASD. This is a more age-appropriate strategy than the 'circle of friends' suggested for primary-school settings. The mentor or mentor group wouldn't need to be with the focus pupil all the time; they would look out for them or support them during identified risk times. Bullying is less likely to occur if the target is in the company of a supportive group. It will be important to ensure that the mentors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the difficulties the focus pupil faces, and are themselves supported by all staff.

Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

- > **Introduce 'buddies' for travelling to and from school.** Pupils who use public transport to and from school may be vulnerable to bullying at these times. If possible, they could be 'buddied' with other pupils who they can travel with. As with mentors, these 'buddies' should be fully supported by school staff. It may be necessary to carefully plan the focus pupil's route and to assign a member of staff to bus stops around the school in the mornings and afternoons.
- > **Some schools have found it helpful to stagger break times** to avoid the whole school eating lunch or using outdoor space at the same time. This can prevent older pupils from picking on younger, more vulnerable pupils. Staff supervision must be carefully planned to avoid supervisors becoming another factor that provokes a bully to pick on a pupil with an ASD. During these times, the supervisory staff member should be situated close enough to have a clear view of vulnerable pupils but far enough away to avoid drawing attention to them.
- > **Allow pupils with an ASD to use a dedicated quiet area, perhaps a learning resource centre, during break times.** Many teenagers with an ASD say that they find the small talk of other teenagers tedious and alien, and they don't find the social interaction at such times a relaxing activity. Of course, social skills development should be an important part of their curriculum but this needs to be carefully planned and structured, and it won't necessarily be achieved by forcing these pupils to spend their 'down time' in noisy, overwhelming environments.
- > **Introduce lunch clubs.** Some schools have had great success with lunch clubs. These are supervised by staff and provide structured activities during longer break times. Any pupil can join a club, and activities are chosen by the pupils according to their interests. Examples include drama, dance, music, art and crafts, football, and one day a week for homework

support. Clubs can be rotated on a daily basis or run at the same time in different classrooms, depending on how many members of staff are available to run them.

Jessica

Jessica was a pupil in a secondary mainstream school. Carrying her backpack at all times helped to reduce her anxiety. She liked it to be tightly zipped and when she needed to open it to take out her belongings or put them away, she carried out a ritual of zipping and unzipping the bag three times.

Some of her peers found it amusing to see Jessica do this, and began to tell her that her bag wasn't properly zipped shut so that she would immediately stop what she was doing and carry out the ritual of zipping and unzipping the bag. Sometimes her peers would do this repeatedly so that Jessica became increasingly upset. She was unable to break the cycle of her ritual and became more frantic as they teased her. Sometimes, when she was moving from class to class, peers would follow her in the corridor and unzip her bag slightly. Again Jessica became highly anxious and upset. The other pupils were careful not to tease her when staff members were present.

One day Jessica had reached her limit and in her heightened state of anxiety scratched the face of one of the bullies. She was called to speak to the head of year after a teacher reported the scratches, and was unable to explain her side of the story. Fortunately, another classmate who had witnessed the incident gave a full account of what had happened. Jessica was assigned a 'mentor' - another pupil who volunteered to walk to lessons with her. Jessica was advised to join a lunch club so that she was not isolated during the long lunch break. After these measures were put in place, the bullying stopped.

"Normally, if I'm only feeling a little bit distressed, I try to cope with it. If it becomes uncontrollable the teacher asks me to leave the class and I go to a calm area, like the library or the entrance hall. The teaching assistant goes with me if they're there."

Pupil with an ASD

Key points

- > Bullying is most likely to take place at unstructured times and in under-supervised areas.
- > Support staff need to tread a difficult line between supporting a pupil with an ASD and allowing them to interact with - and be accepted by - their peers.
- > The school can adopt a number of strategies to help prevent bullying. These include: having clear rules about bullying and its consequences for the bully and making these known to all pupils; identifying areas and times when bullying is more likely to take place and increasing supervision at these times; celebrating 'positive behaviour'; providing quiet and safe places for pupils with an ASD; encouraging other pupils to look out for pupils with an ASD; being aware of group dynamics and separating 'trouble-makers'.



Artwork by Taylor Robertson, aged 7, who entered our make school make sense art competition

5 Promoting understanding of ASDs within the peer group

Understanding promotes tolerance. Inclusion is not about pretending that everyone is the same; it's about understanding, respecting and accommodating people's differences. A school with a culture that celebrates difference will be more successfully inclusive.

While it is up to the pupil with an ASD and his or her family to decide whether to disclose his or her diagnosis to the peer group, such a disclosure often vastly improves the way the peer group relates to and supports this pupil. It is also likely that other pupils will have already noticed that there are differences in the way the pupil with an ASD communicates, behaves, interacts and relates to the world, and knowing about the diagnosis will help them to make more sense of these differences.

When young people understand these differences and the difficulties associated with ASDs, they are less likely to target the pupil for being different, and are more likely to tolerate his or her idiosyncrasies. Talking to the peer group about ASDs in general will allow them to make links to the pupil they know without unnecessarily drawing attention to that pupil. Some pupils with an ASD may want to develop and deliver a presentation on ASDs themselves; others may choose not to attend the session where ASDs are discussed.

There are a number of books, DVDs and other materials available for teaching pupils of different ages about ASDs (see *Useful resources*, starting on page 25). By relating the information or characters in a book to a peer with an ASD, pupils develop understanding and tolerance, and learn practical ways to support their peer.

Adam

When Adam's teacher showed a short DVD and presentation about ASD to her Year 4 class she didn't mention any reference to Adam (in fact, he chose not to be in class that morning). The presentation included information about the social and communication difficulties experienced by children with an ASD, including sensory sensitivity.

The class played a game to feel what it might be like to try to concentrate on a task while noises were louder, or there were constant interruptions. The presentation also covered differences in behaviour and how children with an ASD find it hard to control their behaviour when they get very frustrated or angry. It explained special interests and the fact that many people with an ASD know a lot about some subjects and are really good with particular skills, like computers or Maths.

Before long, one of the children asked if this was what Adam had. They began to give examples of how Adam related to the information. The teacher then asked if they could think of any ways to show Adam real friendship and support him with the things he finds difficult. The class decided to form a 'circle of friends' and to take turns to include Adam in their games. They agreed to stop trying to 'wind him up' and instead stay out of his way if he needed space to calm down.

In the weeks that followed, the difference in Adam's interactions with his class was remarkable. The class group were much more tolerant of Adam's idiosyncrasies, much more willing to include him, and instead of laughing when he struggled to control his temper they reminded him of his appropriate calming strategies.

(See page 6 for the first part of this case study)

Here are some suggestions for promoting understanding and tolerance of ASDs among pupils. Some of these will be more appropriate for primary schools, while others will work better in a secondary school.

- > **Develop workbooks** where pupils learn to understand their own strengths and the areas where they need support. This will help them to understand that everyone is different. Pupils can find out information about their peers by sharing their strengths, interests, likes and dislikes, and the workbooks could use age-appropriate language to explain the common difficulties experienced by people with disabilities, including ASDs. Related activities might include: learning to sign their name in Makaton or BSL (British Sign Language); guessing objects by feeling them while blindfolded; having a 'silent' snack time where all requests are made using PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) symbols instead of talking. Useful activities and worksheets can be found in *Autism spectrum disorders: a resource pack for school staff*, available from the NAS website (www.autism.org.uk).
- > **Hold whole-school assemblies** on a range of disabilities, including ASDs, teaching pupils practical ways of being tolerant and supportive of each other.

Key points

- > Understanding, respecting and accommodating people's differences is the key to successful inclusion.
- > By learning about ASDs, pupils are more likely to be tolerant and supportive of the pupil with an ASD in their peer group.
- > Permission to disclose a pupil's diagnosis must always be gained from parents/carers and the pupil, where appropriate.
- > Books, DVDs, suggestions for activities, worksheets and lesson plans are available to help explain ASDs to different age groups. (See *Useful resources*, starting on page 25).

6 Addressing the topic of bullying

In primary schools

Role-play can be an effective tool in addressing bullying, particularly with smaller groups (perhaps a class or year group). Pupils take turns to play the 'target', the 'bully', the bully's 'followers' and 'witnesses', and together work out the best outcome in different scenarios. Role-play allows 'targets' to practise responses to being bullied and allows 'witnesses' to practise helping a 'target' or reporting the incident to a member of staff. Pupils can end by holding a 'pupils' court' where a suitable consequence for the 'bully' is decided.

There are a number of worksheet ideas that could also help your pupils address the topic of bullying. For example, you could ask pupils to rewrite a more appropriate ending to a bullying incident, in which the target develops new ways to avoid or respond appropriately to bullying and the bully finds a better way of entertaining him- or herself in the playground. Your worksheets could also include "what if..?" scenarios that develop problem-solving skills and empathy. These will give your pupils the chance to think about how they might respond to being bullied, being pressured into joining in with bullying, or witnessing a bullying incident.

Pupils need to be reassured that, if they report a bullying incident, staff will take steps to prevent retaliation on the part of the bully, and that they can report incidents anonymously using the 'bullying box' (see page 8). When you talk to pupils about reporting bullying incidents they've either witnessed or been involved in, it's important to explain that only by doing this can something be done to help someone or change a bad situation. It's also important to remind them of the difference between genuine reporting and 'telling tales', and to point out that by not reporting incidents, they might be

contributing to the target's distress. All pupils should understand that they have a responsibility to help stamp out bullying in their school.

Please note that while pupils with an ASD may be able to participate in role-play and "what if..?" scenarios, they might also find it difficult to imagine themselves in situations beyond their own immediate experience.

In secondary schools

Bullying can be addressed in depth during PSHE lessons by encouraging pupils to talk about scenarios or actual past incidents of bullying they have experienced. It is important that they are able to recognise different forms of bullying, not just physical bullying, and understand that intention, premeditation and 'balance of power' determine whether an incident is bullying, friendly teasing or straightforward conflict. You can use role-play to help pupils determine where the boundaries between these are, and to illustrate how 'winding someone up' can be interpreted differently according to the response of the person on the receiving end, the intention behind the incident and the relationship between the people involved.

You should also discuss more subtle kinds of bullying, especially 'backhanded', indirect and non-verbal bullying, which pupils with an ASD are particularly vulnerable to, so that pupils will recognise them as such. It would also be valuable to tackle issues like peer pressure and, by discussing the impact of different types of bullying, using role-play and acting out 'pupil courts' as described above, equip pupils with the strategies to resist the pressure to join in with bullying.

Talk about practical ways in which pupils can support a peer who is the target of bullying. These may include asking the target to join them at lunch time, waiting for the school bus with them, and being willing to report incidents they witness, either

in person to a member of staff or by using the 'bullying box'.

For more information on addressing the topic of bullying, see the DCSF's *SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)* guidance at <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>

SEAL encourages pupils to develop empathy, build positive relationships and establish a learning community where they feel responsible for including their peers. The guidance also outlines activities that explore and develop social and emotional skills within the context of bullying incidents.

Key points

- > PSHE lessons can be used to explore bullying in depth.
- > Role-play and "what if..?" scenarios are effective tools in helping pupils develop and try out new responses to bullying.
- > Discuss the difference between reporting bullying incidents and 'telling tales' and reassure pupils that measures are in place to prevent retaliation.
- > Involve pupils in developing strategies for eradicating bullying.



Artwork by Craig Docherty, age 9, who entered our make school make sense art competition

7 Dealing with bullying

If a pupil or group of pupils are known to have bullied a child with an ASD, the following approach may help in tackling and changing their behaviour.

- > If the peer group knows about the target's diagnosis, talk to the bully or bullies about disability in general and about ASDs more specifically. Firstly, remind them that deliberately mocking someone else is wrong, and that they wouldn't like it if someone made fun of the things they themselves find difficult. If the bully responds with the familiar excuse, "I was only joking", remind them of the difference between joking and mocking. Move on to explain how an ASD affects a person's communication, social interaction, ability to process information, and their senses. Make particular reference to the characteristic that was the focal point of the bullying. For example, if a pupil was bullied for wearing ear defenders during noisy activities, emphasise the sensory difficulties faced by people with an ASD; if a pupil was bullied for getting upset about an unexpectedly absent class teacher, discuss how people with an ASD find it difficult to cope with unpredictability and unexpected change. It's important to explain the impact of the bully's behaviour on the pupil with an ASD, including the seriousness of increased anxiety, and the effect it may have on the pupil's self-esteem.
- > If the peer group doesn't know the target has an ASD, a more general one-to-one discussion with the bully about aspects of the target's behaviour could still take place, but without mentioning autism or the fact that the pupil has a disability. For example, you could say something like: "Ahmed finds it difficult to cope with changes to his routine. He's working on it, but it's unfair for you to make fun of him just because of his differences. It's a form of bullying and it makes

school life horrible for him. If you can't be supportive when he's upset, then it's better to leave him and go and find someone else who can help him. We don't allow bullying in this school and if you bully Ahmed again you'll face sanctions." Make sure you explain clearly to the bully what the consequences of bullying will be, according to the school rules.

- > Allow the bully to make amends for his or her behaviour through an apology and state that, now the bully is better informed, you expect him or her not to repeat the bullying behaviour, and to show more empathy when interacting with the pupil with an ASD.
- > Clearly state the consequences for any further incidents of bullying (or retaliation for having been 'grassed') and carry these through if any more incidents occur.
- > In cases of cyberbullying, all of the above actions still apply, but it will be important to establish the bully's motivations and control over the incident. In some cases, the 'bully' may have quickly lost control of the circulation of offensive material, and the full extent of the incident may have been unintended. If the cyberbullying is shown to be deliberate, there should be specific consequences in place. You should also talk to the bully about using technology responsibly.
- > Record incidents of bullying in a detailed way that allows for risk situations and patterns of behaviour to be identified. The STAR recording system (see **Appendix 2**) allows you to do this in a quick and simple way:

Setting: where did it happen and who was involved?

Trigger: what happened just before the incident?

Action: what were the exact actions of the bully?

Result: how did the incident end and how did the target/witnesses respond?

Key points

- > Explain to the bully how his or her behaviour has affected the pupil with an ASD, referring to specific areas of difficulty that affect that pupil.
- > Make sure that the bully knows the consequences of his or her behaviour and that the appropriate sanctions are consistently carried through.
- > Record incidents in a format that provides enough detail to identify patterns and helps to develop future preventative measures.



Artwork by Charles Hall, aged 9, who entered our make school make sense art competition

8 Helping pupils with an ASD develop an awareness of bullying

Children with an ASD find it hard to 'read' social situations and understand other people's thoughts and intentions. This means that they may not always be able to correctly identify when they are being bullied. They will often think they're being targeted when a bump or push is accidental; or they may think repeated targeting is accidental or another person's way of interacting, without recognising it as bullying.

The naïve, and very literal, understanding of a child with an ASD means that he or she may accept an offer of friendship from a peer even if the peer's actual behaviour suggests they are anything but their friend. If someone tells a child with an ASD to do something potentially harmful or humiliating in exchange for friendship, the child may well do it out of a desperate desire to be included.

People with an ASD commonly find it hard to generalise across incidents and situations, and they may not be able to link current and previous experiences, making them vulnerable to repeated episodes of bullying.

You can help a pupil with an ASD to distinguish between bullying and one-off accidents or misunderstandings by teaching him or her social skills through role-play, or through problem-solving social scenarios using cartoon strips that illustrate situations. A well-established method of explaining social situations to children with an ASD is to use Social Stories™, which provide step-by-step visual depictions of particular situations (for books about Social Stories™ see page 26). Older children may benefit from multiple-choice quizzes, in which they are taught to pick appropriate responses to hypothetical situations (see also *Promoting positive interactions for pupils with an ASD* opposite).

Some pupils with an ASD may need very explicit explanations of bullying, and perhaps a visual reference (for example, a list or set of photos or pictures) that illustrates the difference between scenarios that constitute bullying and those which are less serious peer conflicts or misunderstandings. Other pupils may prefer written or spoken explanations – it depends on the method of communication that they respond best to.

Figure 2 provides some examples of the level of explanation that may be required.

Promoting positive social interactions for children with an ASD

Schools can adopt a proactive approach to developing social skills in pupils with an ASD through structured training sessions, preferably in small groups. These groups should address a range of skills at an age-appropriate level; for example, how to join in a game, ask others to play or initiate a game or interaction. These sessions could also cover notions such as winning and losing, asserting yourself politely, engaging in 'small talk' and initiating conversation about shared interests. Pupils with an ASD may well enjoy the structure of belonging to a club, where they are able to share common interests with other members.

Pupils with an ASD need to be taught that they're not expected to be friends with everyone, but that they need to behave in a friendly manner (giving specific examples) and display mutual respect to all other pupils. Social Stories™ (See page 26) can provide cues for different social situations and help children with an ASD to respond appropriately. They can be used to explain what is expected of them, giving practical suggestions of how to behave in different settings or circumstances.

Figure 2

✗ Bullying	✓ Accidents or misunderstandings
Someone thinks it's fun to upset you. They say things again and again and laugh when you get cross or sad.	Someone says something that they didn't know would upset you and they say sorry. They are sad you are upset.
They carry on when you ask them to stop.	They stop if you ask them to.
They take your things in order to see you get upset.	They borrow something without asking but give it back when you ask.
They kick, push, punch, or hurt you on purpose.	They accidentally bump into you or push past and then say sorry.
They mock things you say or call you names if you make a mistake.	They don't agree with everything you say but respect your opinion.
They send nasty messages to your phone or email.	
They ask you to do something that makes you look silly or might get you into trouble.	

Key points

- Because of their difficulties with 'reading' social situations, pupils with an ASD need to be taught how to distinguish between bullying and accidents or misunderstandings.
- Pupils with an ASD would benefit from structured social skills training to improve their social understanding and to help them learn how to respond in different social contexts.
- Social Stories™ are an excellent tool for teaching pupils with an ASD how to do this.

9 Supporting the bullied pupil

If bullying has taken place, you should allow enough time for the target to disengage him- or herself from the negative experience and then speak to the target privately to avoid him or her feeling intimidated.

Anxiety decreases a person's ability to communicate effectively, so the bullied pupil with an ASD may relay his or her perception of the incident more effectively through drawing, writing or creating cartoons. It will also help if you tell the pupil what measures are in place to prevent any retaliation by the bully.

Bullied pupils may need to be taught and practise set strategies, so that they know what to do if they recognise that they are being bullied. These strategies may include using standard phrases and following a prepared plan of action. For example, bullied pupils could:

- › use a standard statement, such as "I don't like that, please stop". A pupil with an ASD will need to give an honest response as he or she is likely to have difficulty pretending that the bully is having no effect.
- › walk to a safe place and report the incident to a safe person (for example, an allocated teacher, teaching assistant or mentor).

Key points

- › Pupils with an ASD may need to communicate incidents in other ways than talking; for example, through drawing, writing and creating cartoon strips.
- › Pupils with an ASD may need to practise set strategies in the event of being bullied, such as using standard phrases and following a prepared plan of action.
- › The school should maintain close links with the parents/carers of vulnerable pupils, and bullies where appropriate, and share strategies to reduce the risk of bullying.

- › focus on the facts of the incident (rather than feelings) in order to report it effectively.

"If I get anxious I get in a fizz. If I need help I ask my teachers and they tell me not to worry. If I feel upset I can go to another room."

Pupil with an ASD

Pupils with an ASD may also need a format for reporting incidents, and extra support to distinguish between fact and opinion. It is important not to imply to the target that his or her reaction to a situation may be a cause of the bullying or that a different reaction would be a solution (for example, "If you didn't cry then they would stop copying you"). This puts too much pressure on the pupil, who may have reduced control over his or her responses when upset.

Maintaining links with the parents/carers of the vulnerable child will often help both the school and the pupil to deal with bullying. These links may include periods where a daily diary is sent home so parents/carers can be kept informed of the day's events (something a child with an ASD may struggle to do). Parents/carers should be encouraged to reinforce strategies implemented by the school in order to reduce the risk of bullying. They should also be given a contact at the school who they can approach with any concerns. It will usually be appropriate to inform the bully's parents of any incidents, action taken, and why.

10 Perceived bullying behaviour in pupils with an ASD

It is unlikely that a child with an ASD would actually bully another child according to the typical definition of bullying. This is because people with an ASD have difficulty understanding other people's feelings and the affect of their behaviour on other people. They may learn these concepts cognitively, but still have difficulty internalising them. If a pupil with an ASD is seen to 'wind up' or target another pupil, their intention may be to get a particular response in a 'cause-and-effect' way, rather than to humiliate or gain power over them.

Pupils with an ASD may present with bullying behaviour for the following reasons.

- › It may be a learned behaviour that they have witnessed or used previously to gain a desired response.
- › 'Cause and effect' may be the only kind of interaction they know how to initiate - the motivation behind the behaviour is unlikely to be to cause intentional harm.
- › They may lack the skills to maintain an interaction appropriately, and have difficulty 'reading' another person's responses, so they don't realise when the other pupil is no longer enjoying the interaction.
- › They may seek out interactions in an 'in your face' way, lacking boundaries.
- › They may be following a 'leader's' instructions or be seeking approval or acceptance into a gang by joining in with someone else's bullying.
- › They may be mimicking incidents or behaviour that they have witnessed or been a part of.

- › Their behaviour may be an attempt to retaliate, without any understanding of the consequences of their own behaviour.
- › Displaying aggressive behaviour may be a strategy to avoid being bullied themselves.
- › They may be feeling frustrated at being left out and want to force other pupils to be their friend.
- › Many children with an ASD experience difficulties with winning and losing, and if they have lost a game, they may be aggressive towards the winner.

David

David is in Year 1. His teachers were concerned that he was displaying aggressive behaviour in the playground. He would run up to other pupils and jump on them from behind. They would often turn around frightened and push or hit out at David to get him to move away, but David would just laugh and try to jump on them again.

After speaking to his parents, school staff established that David liked to watch wrestling on TV and was trying to re-enact scenes with his peers. They developed a Social Story™ to help David understand that rough and tumble games were only for playing with Dad at home. He was also given a pack of cards with different, more appropriate, playground games and activities on each. At playtime, staff encouraged David to hand a card to a peer as a way of initiating an appropriate game with them.

The teachers also explained to the other pupils that they could help David learn to play better by following what the card said whenever they were handed one. Friendship qualities were reinforced in other pupils by giving them stars for helping David and responding to his cards.

Strategies for managing perceived bullying behaviour in pupils with an ASD

If a pupil with an ASD appears to display bullying behaviour, the school needs to decide what action to take. While it is important to apply behaviour and anti-bullying policies consistently, schools also have legal duties to make sure that pupils with a disability are not discriminated against or put at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability. Schools should consider what has led to the behaviour and make sure that these underlying causes are addressed.

Social skills training sessions (as described in section 8) can be used to help the pupil develop appropriate ways to engage with others, initiate interaction and gain attention.

Although children with an ASD have difficulty empathising with others, they can be taught about the effect their behaviour has on others. They may need clear guidelines for what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable ways of expressing their feelings. These should be specific, so that the child knows exactly what behaviours you are referring to. For example, you should say “Hitting, kicking and pushing are unacceptable” rather than “No

hurting others”. In this way, you can ensure that the pupil with an ASD understands what you mean by unacceptable and bullying behaviours.

Don't assume that pupils with an ASD know what you mean when you say “be kind”. You may have to list behaviours or actions that constitute being a good friend or which are expected in any given interaction. Pupils with an ASD need positive direction; for example, it is better to say “Now think of your own clever things to say” rather than “Stop copying Mark”. It will be beneficial to practise the positive, constructive actions involved in friendship through role-play, and through support during real-life situations.

To make sure the pupil with an ASD understands the potential consequences of their ‘bullying’ or aggressive behaviour, you could produce a written or pictorial list of these consequences. This list should be specific and relate to behaviours that the child has been known to display. For example, pushing at playtime might result in five minutes on the time-out bench. Consequences should always be fair, consistent, immediate and appropriate to the pupil's understanding. It may be helpful to point out to the pupil that people are only nice to bullies because they are scared of them.

You could reinforce specific acts of appropriate interaction through praise, a reward system or an explicit, positive consequence; for example, if the pupil shares his or her time on the computer particularly well, he or she could be rewarded with an extra five minutes on the computer. This kind of positive reinforcement is vital for children with an ASD if they are to understand what behaviour is required of them.

Pupils with an ASD also need to be taught strategies for calming down when they are upset, as an alternative to expressing their anger or frustration inappropriately. Many children on the autism spectrum experience high levels of anxiety and frustration, and this needs to be considered and catered for if they are to learn to manage their emotions. Some will need a designated area they can go to in order to remove themselves from a situation they can't cope with.

Behaviour issues can be addressed by setting pupils clear targets through their IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and equipping them with strategies to meet them. The following examples show the kind of targets that might be appropriate, depending on the pupil's specific difficulties.

- › David to hand a game card to a peer at playtime and engage in the game for at least five minutes.
- › Sam to take turns playing ‘Pop-up Pirate’ with a classmate. On the occasions when the other child wins, Sam to say “well done” and remain calm.
- › Nisha to hand the teacher a ‘five-minute chill-out’ card when she is frustrated during group work. Nisha to leave the room and sit on a bench in the corridor reading a magazine, then return to the group task after five minutes.

Key points

- › Due to their social and communication difficulties, it is unlikely that a child with an ASD would actually ‘bully’ another child in the typical definition of the word. But there are many reasons why pupils with an ASD may display behaviour that appears similar to bullying, such as poor understanding of interactions and a reaction to previous social experiences.
- › Pupils with an ASD should practise appropriate ways of engaging with others, initiating interaction and gaining attention, through social skills training sessions.
- › Pupils with an ASD need clear, specific guidelines on what are acceptable and unacceptable ways of expressing their feelings.
- › Pupils with an ASD will need to be taught cognitively how their behaviour can affect others.
- › Consequences should always be pre-determined and explained clearly to the pupil with an ASD in advance. They should be fair, consistent, immediate and appropriate to the pupil's understanding.
- › Specific acts of appropriate interaction should be reinforced through praise, a reward system or a specific positive consequence.
- › Pupils with an ASD will need to be taught strategies for calming down when they are upset, as an alternative to expressing their anger or frustration inappropriately.
- › Behaviour issues can be addressed by setting targets in IEPs.



11 Conclusion

Autism affects every person differently, so your response to cases of bullying involving pupils with an ASD will vary according to the pupil's individual needs. The strategies outlined in this booklet have been tried successfully in many settings and will provide an invaluable starting point for tackling bullying in your school.

Dealing with bullying involving pupils with an ASD should never be a case of simply reacting to incidents as they arise. By giving the pupil with an ASD a clear behaviour support plan, and supporting them to develop coping strategies, he or she can be helped to avoid the circumstances that lead to bullying. Likewise, by encouraging all pupils to address the topic of bullying and feel involved in developing the school's strategies to overcome it, you can create an environment where peer pressure works against bullies, rather than the other way around.

Pupils with an ASD can and do flourish in mainstream education settings, and their presence in the classroom can be a positive experience both for them and their peers, encouraging tolerance and understanding of difference. By using the right strategies and support, you can turn the difficulties faced by pupils with an ASD into opportunities that enrich the education of all pupils.

"I feel like I'm finally getting to the end of the tunnel. In the primary maths challenge, I got through to the final. They were a bit shocked because everyone thinks I'm dumb. Some of them thought I'd cheated, but most of them changed their opinion. It made me very proud."

Pupil with an ASD

12 Useful resources

Publications marked '**' are available through The National Autistic Society. Please order through our distributor, Central Books, on 0845 458 9911 or order online at www.autism.org.uk/pubs

Anti-bullying strategies and guidance

Cohen-Posey, K. (1995). *How to handle bullies, teasers and other meanies: a book that takes the nuisance out of name calling and other nonsense*. Highland City, FL: Rainbow Books Inc.

A resource for teaching children assertiveness skills. Suitable for key stages 1 and 2.

*Csoti, M. (2008). *How to stop bullying: positive steps to protect your child in your care*. London: Rightway

Dubin, N. (2007). *Asperger syndrome and bullying: strategies and solutions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Describes the bullying behaviour that is often targeted at people with Asperger syndrome and offers effective strategies for addressing bullying.

Field, E. (2007). *Bully blocking: six secrets to help children deal with teasing and bullying*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

*Thorpe, P. (2005). *Bullying and how to deal with it: a guide for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

(DVD). *Being bullied: strategies and solutions for people with Asperger syndrome*. (2006). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Outlines practical strategies for parents, schools and individuals on how to prevent bullying.

General support for pupils with an ASD

*Beaney, J. and Kershaw, P. (2003). *Inclusion in the primary classroom: support materials for children with autistic spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Beaney, J. and Kershaw, P. (2006). *Inclusion in the secondary school: support materials for children with autistic spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Colley, J. (2005). *Working with an Asperger pupil in secondary schools*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Hannah, L. (2001). *Teaching young children with autistic spectrum disorders to learn: a practical guide for parents and staff in mainstream schools and nurseries*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council. (1998). *Asperger syndrome - practical strategies for the classroom: a teacher's guide*. London: The National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society. (2009). *Autism spectrum disorders: a resource pack for school staff*. London: The National Autistic Society

This resource pack includes lesson plans for explaining ASDs to primary and secondary school pupils and is available through the NAS Autism Helpline on 0845 070 4004 or to download free from www.autism.org.uk

*Nguyen, A. (2009). *Environment and surroundings: how to make them autism-friendly*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Perepa, P. (2005). *Classroom and playground: support for children with autistic spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

*Sainsbury, C. (2000). *Martian in the playground*. Bristol: Lucky Duck Publishing
A beginners' guide to Asperger syndrome. Includes thought-provoking chapters on inclusion, labelling, normalisation and life after school.

*South Gloucestershire Council. (2005). *Guidelines for working with children with autism spectrum disorders at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1*. London: The National Autistic Society

*South Gloucestershire Council. (2005). *Guidelines for working with children with autism spectrum disorders in Key Stages 3 and 4*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Thorpe, P. (2009). *Moving from primary to secondary school: how to support pupils with autism spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

*Thorpe, P. (2009). *Understanding difficulties at break time and lunchtime for pupils with an autism spectrum disorder: a guide for school staff*. London: The National Autistic Society

Social skills and behaviour

*Baker, J. (2003). *Social skills training for children and adolescents with Asperger syndrome and social communication problems*. KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company
A useful guide for social skills training groups. Includes session plans appropriate for key stages 2 and 3.

*Dunn Buron, K. (2003). *When my worries get too big: a relaxation book for children with autism spectrum disorders*. KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company

*Dunn Buron, K. and Curtis, M. (2003). *The incredible 5-point scale*. KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company

*Gammeltoft, L. and Nordenhof, M. (2007). *Autism, play and social interaction*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
A guide to helping children build their communication and social skills through play.

*Gray, C. (2002). *My Social Stories book*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
A resource containing 150 Social Stories for common social situations and guidelines for producing individualised Social Stories.

*Howley, M. and Arnold, E. (2005). *Revealing the hidden social code: Social Stories™ for people with ASD*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Useful examples and advice on producing tailor-made Social Stories for older children and adolescents.

*Knott, F. and Dunlop A.-W. (2007). *Developing social interaction and understanding: a resource for working with children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders*. London: The National Autistic Society

Painter, K. (2006). *Social skills groups for children and adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome: a step-by-step programme*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Patrick, N. (2008). *Social skills for teenagers and adults with Asperger syndrome*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
A resource aimed to increase understanding of common social scenarios, and strategies for appropriate responses. Suitable for key stages 3 and 4.

Simmonds, J. (2003). *Seeing red*. MN: New Society Publishers
Improving anger management for children on the autism spectrum. Suitable for key stages 1 and 2.

*Whitaker, P. (2001). *Challenging behaviour and autism: making sense – making progress*. London: The National Autistic Society

Explaining ASDs to other pupils

*Hannah, L. (2007). *My friend Sam: introducing a child with autism to a nursery school*. London: The National Autistic Society

Explains autism in terms that very young children will understand. Suitable for nursery and reception.

Lears, L. (1998). *Ian's walk*. IL: Albert Whitman

A story book that helps children gain an insight into ASD. Suitable for key stages 1 and 2.

The National Autistic Society. (2009). *Autism spectrum disorders: a resource pack for school staff*. London: The National Autistic Society

This resource pack includes lesson plans for explaining ASDs to primary and secondary school pupils and is available through the NAS Autism Helpline on 0845 070 4004 or to download for free from www.autism.org.uk

Peters, C. (2007). *That's not fair! Explaining autism to very young children*. Leicester: Leicester City Council
Explains autism in terms that very young children will understand. Suitable for nursery and reception.

*Pike, R. (2008). *Talking together about an autism diagnosis*. London: The National Autistic Society
A guide for parents and carers who want to discuss diagnosis with their children.

*Telmo, I. (2004). *Play with me: including children with autism in mainstream primary schools*. London: The National Autistic Society

A story book about understanding differences and playing with children who have social difficulties. Suitable for reception and key stage 1.

Veenendall, J. (2008). *Arnie and his school tools: simple sensory solutions that build success*. KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Covers appropriate tools and strategies to help classroom peers understand and address sensory processing difficulties. Suitable for key stages 1 and 2.

*(DVD). *A different life: Rosie's story*. London: Eye Television

The story of a girl with classic autism as described by her brother. Suitable for key stages 1 and 2.

*(DVD). *A is for autism*. (1992). London: Channel 4 Television

An insight into the world of autism through the narration of individuals on the spectrum. Suitable for key stages 3 and 4.

*(DVD). *Autism and me*. (2007). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Teenager Rory Hoy gives first-hand insight into the world of autism and what it is like to take things literally and rely on routines. Suitable for key stages 3 and 4.

Government guidance

Department for children, schools and families. (2009). *Safe from Bullying: guidance for local authorities and other strategic leaders on reducing bullying in the community*. London: DCSF

A suite of resources to help children's services tackle bullying, covering play and leisure, youth activities, children's homes, extended services, further education colleges, cyberbullying and bullying on journeys. It includes guidance for local authorities and training resources.

Download from: www.dcsf.gov.uk/behaviour

All Government documents below can be downloaded for free from www.teachernet.gov.uk

Department for children, schools and families. (2007). *Bullying: a charter for action*. London: DCSF

The government's Anti-Bullying Charter for schools, endorsed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance and teaching unions.

Bullying and autism spectrum disorders

Department for children, schools and families. (2008). *Bullying involving children with special educational needs and disabilities*. London: DCSF

Government guidance for schools on bullying of children with SEN and disabilities.

Department for children, schools and families. (2007). *Safe To Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools*. London: DCSF

Government guidance for schools on what the law says about bullying and how to deal with it.

Useful websites

About.com: Autism (<http://autism.about.com>)

The autism section on About.com contains a large number of articles about diagnosing, treating and living with autism, including features on education and school life.

Beat Bullying (www.beatbullying.org)

A UK-wide charity that aims to support young people who are being bullied, re-educate and change the behaviour of young people that bully and prevent bullying in schools and communities.

Bullying UK (www.bullying.co.uk)

Bullying UK is one of the country's leading anti-bullying charities. It works with young people, parents, schools and adults to tackle bullying, and the website provides information and resources for schools.

Department for children, schools and families (<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>)

The DCSF website contains guidance on a wide range of national teaching strategies, including guidance on behaviour and SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning).

Kidscape (www.kidscape.org.uk)

A charity established to prevent child bullying and sexual abuse. It provides information and advice on bullying and offers training programmes and workshops for professionals.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) (www.autism.org.uk)

The NAS is the UK's leading charity for people affected by autism. This website is probably the most comprehensive online autism resource in the world, containing wide-ranging information about autism and Asperger syndrome.

Research Autism (www.researchautism.net)

Research Autism is a charity dedicated to researching interventions into autism. The website contains information about a wide range of support strategies and treatments, and gives advice about their effectiveness and scientific validity.

Scottish Autism Service Network (www.scottishautismnetwork.org.uk)

A support network for professionals working with people with autism in Scotland, providing information, advice and training.

Teachernet (www.teachernet.gov.uk)

Government website which provides resources for teachers and other professionals in education, including downloads of official bullying guidelines and strategies.

13 Contact The National Autistic Society

NAS Head office

393 City Road
London EC1V 1NG

Tel: 020 7833 2299

Email: nas@nas.org.uk

Autism Helpline

(Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm)

Tel: 0845 070 4004

Email: autismhelpline@nas.org.uk

Information centre

(Advice and resources for professionals, researchers and students)

Tel: 0845 070 4004

Email: info@nas.org.uk

Conferences

Tel: 0115 911 3367

Email: conference@nas.org.uk

Training and consultancy

Tel: 0115 911 3363

Email: training@nas.org.uk

Publications

Tel: 020 7903 3595

Email: pubs@nas.org.uk

NAS Scotland

Central Chambers
1st Floor
109 Hope Street
Glasgow G2 6LL

Tel: 0141 221 8090

Email: scotland@nas.org.uk

NAS Cymru

6/7 Village Way
Greenmeadow Springs Business Park
Tongwynlais
Cardiff CF15 7NE

Tel: 029 2062 9312

Email: wales@nas.org.uk

NAS Northern Ireland

57A Botanic Avenue
Belfast BT7 1JL

Tel: 028 9023 6235

Email: northern.ireland@nas.org.uk

14 Appendix one: Behaviour Support Plan

Likes and Dislikes

- > Likes Factual information, Solar system, Spongebob squarepants, Maths, Science, Geography, teachers using humour
- > Dislikes Writing, Games (PE), wearing a coat

Sensory Issues

- > Hypersensitive hearing: wears ear-defenders when concentrating on written tasks
- > Hypo-proprioception: poor body awareness; difficulty organising movements (ie catching a ball); if unfocused/stressed may forget to go to the toilet; rocks on chair during lesson; bumps into people/objects; difficulties with dressing
- > Tactile defensive: dislikes certain clothing, especially coats; often takes clothes off when arriving home from school
- > Poor eater: possibly due to taste/tactile defensiveness or not noticing own hunger.

Triggers/Cues to Behaviour

- > Unfairness/perceived injustice
- > Making mistakes on work
- > Noise
- > Laborious writing tasks
- > Peers taunting him
- > Insufficient time given for Ben to express his thoughts

Rewards/Motivators

- > Refer to reward chart: collects stickers towards reward, is able to 'bank' stickers to achieve bigger reward
- > See rewards on chart
- > Helping/participating in class

General Strategies

- > Allow him to wear ear-defenders
- > Write short instructions in filofax for each lesson
- > Use short comments on post-it notes to redirect/refocus attention on work tasks
- > Allow time for Ben to respond to instructions as his processing of verbal language can be delayed, especially if anxious or stressed.
- > Allow plenty of time for Ben to express himself clearly as his word retrieval is slow
- > Ben to request time out to calm down and sit on landing with a book. Teachers to use code word in order to suggest he has some time out.
- > All staff to follow reward and card charts
- > Staff to refer Ben to Mr Smith to issue cards according to list.
- > Staff to give warning and time to process instruction before referring Ben to Mr Smith.
- > When dealing with an incident, wait until Ben is calm and tell him to see Mr Smith at next break time.
- > All staff to use STAR approach sheets to record incidents.

Specific Behaviours and Strategies

1 See White list on card chart (Making a noise in class or assembly; Refusing to work; Not doing homework)

- > Give verbal warning
- > Send to Mr Smith at next break time
- > Mr Smith to issue white card
- > Complete work with Mr Smith
- > Mr Smith to discuss reasons for expected behaviour

2 See Yellow list on card chart (Running in corridors; Swinging pencil case/knocking people with it; shouting/screaming in class or dining room; crawling under tables/on floor; Throwing things; Jumping on people; Pushing people)

- > Give verbal warning
- > Send to Mr Smith at next break time
- > Mr Smith to issue yellow card
- > Mr Smith to carry out cartoon conversations to debrief incident and find a better solution for next time.
- > Or complete worksheets related to behaviour with Mr Smith.

3 See Red list on card (Hitting; Kicking; Hurting people in any way)

- > Remove Ben from situation
- > Send to Mr Smith at next break time
- > Mr Smith to issue red card
- > Mr Smith to carry out cartoon conversations to debrief incident and find a better solution for next time.
- > Or complete worksheets related to behaviour with Mr Smith
- > Card to be sent home to be signed by parents

Medication/Diet

Teacher: Parent:

Headteacher: Senior Master:

14 Appendix two: STAR recording system

STAR Approach

Name:		Date:	Time:
Settings: Where? Lesson? People?	Triggers: What happened just before incident? What seemed to start it?	Actions: What did the child do? Behaviour?	Result: What happened next? Staff action? How did incident end? Consequence?
