

<p><b>Key advice for mainstream class teachers/TAs on supporting girls with ASC in a class situation</b></p> <p><b>Learning – Social – Emotional</b></p> <p><b>“We are different from the boys”</b></p>	<p><b>Key advice for senior leaders on supporting girls with ASC in a mainstream setting</b></p> <p><b>Awareness – Girl Specificity - Home Liaison</b></p>
<p><b>Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make learning concrete, contextual and visual;</li> <li>• Like routine, dislike change;</li> <li>• Understand fears, triggers and sensory overload;</li> <li>• Enjoy reading;</li> <li>• Check understanding. May not ask for help, or be avoidant, to mask difficulty;</li> <li>• May be quiet, shy, awkward, compliant, passive;</li> <li>• Incorporate their special interests;</li> <li>• May have a good imagination;</li> <li>• May prefer touch typing;</li> <li>• Perfectionists. Build flexibility in making mistakes and re-drafting work;</li> <li>• Very determined and may like to be in control: offer guided choice;</li> <li>• Help with all transitions: eg after school holidays;</li> <li>• Praise and reward.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will mirror behavior;</li> <li>• May affect different personalities and may not have a strong sense of identity;</li> <li>• May be socially immature and vulnerable;</li> <li>• Need structured activities for social time;</li> <li>• Select partner/s to model behaviour;</li> <li>• Use video, role play, social scripts to show how to respond;</li> <li>• Encourage reciprocity to diminish scripted, controlling play.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Build whole school awareness of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an ‘enabling’ school environment;</li> <li>• Presentation of ggirls with ASC, their strengths and special interests;</li> <li>• Analysing ppatterns, function and triggers of ASC behaviors;</li> <li>• Social imitation causing exhaustion during the day;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising anxiety or mental health issues are indicated by increasing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ demand for routines or sameness</li> <li>○ trouble sleeping</li> <li>○ meltdowns</li> <li>○ avoidance of social situations</li> <li>○ reliance on obsessions and rituals</li> <li>○ stimming</li> <li>○ self-harm (head-banging, scratching skin or hand-biting)</li> <li>○ poor attendance (‘illness’ allows control)</li> <li>○ eating problems (due to sensory sensitivities, control or demand avoidance. Lack of nutrition prevents menstruation and physical development);</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Specificity: Girl-Oriented Programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to build their own, age-appropriate, understanding of autism, sensory sensitivities and anxieties;</li> <li>• Extracurricular provision and resources match ASC special interests;</li> <li>• Social Language programme to navigate social rules, with peer mentoring schemes for friendship and bullying issues;</li> <li>• PSHE specificity to facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SRE: adolescence is unpredictable. Menstruation, growth of breasts and body hair heighten anxiety due to perceived lack of control;</li> <li>○ Independence, to reduce vulnerability;</li> <li>○ privacy awareness, personal space and touching rules;</li> <li>○ permission to say ‘No’: self advocacy;</li> <li>○ e-safety and grooming: girls are more vulnerable to complying</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Emotional

- Need to feel that someone “gets” them;
- May camouflage emotions or mask symptoms at school;
- Their ‘Social imitation’ mirroring exhausts them;
- Experience anxiety more intensely than others;
  
- May shut down or cry over small things due to sensory/emotional overload;
- Hate injustice;
- Use social stories and factual evidence to explain fears;
- Where appropriate, need to confirm that this is a “normal” reaction or feeling;
- Tell them it will be ok.

with a demand, more likely to respond to communication;

- self image, self esteem, assertiveness and confidence;
- gender identity;
- emotional wellbeing and mental health;
- developing vocational interests and leisure activities.
- Careers IAG specificity: Girls, who are systematisers, can prefer male-dominated occupations, where need to follow rules is high;
  - Celebrate the right to choose their own path, despite ‘female’ cultural influences;
  - A big picture of careers pathway can ease current difficulty.

### Liaison with Home

- How is anxiety being acted out at home?
- Support independence and generalisation of skills, building flexibility into challenges;
- Practise dealing with fears and rehearse difficult situations in a safe environment;
- Parent support group to share experiences;
- Signpost to specialist services and local ASC support: e.g. Cygnet, Early Bird, CAMHs, Mindworks etc.