



Specialist Teaching and Learning Service

Ashford District

Newsletter Term 2 | 2020

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas, and hoping that you take time to rest and replenish!

I hope you find this newsletter and some of the signposted resources useful.

Remember that from January 2021, Nasen membership will be free for all individuals across the UK.

Nasen's new free membership will replace the current tiered model, to ensure the organisation's expertise in SEND is available to every school and setting across the UK.

Specialist Teaching Service looks forward to seeing you all in 2021!



Kerry Greene

VIRTUAL TRAINING

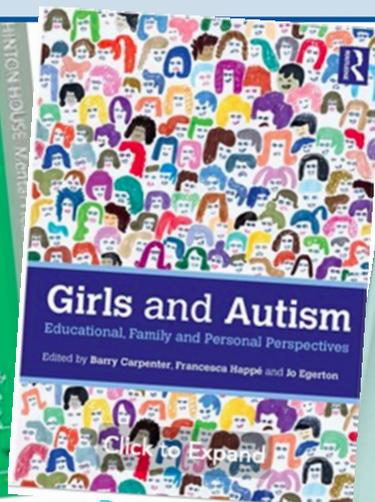
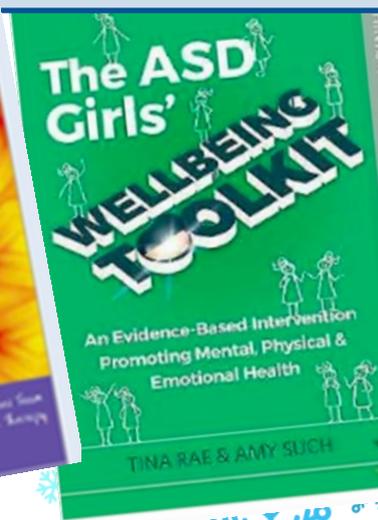
OUT NOW:

- STAR Approaches
- Understanding and Managing Anxiety
- Introduction to Measuring Wellbeing
- Closing the Gap & Differentiation
- Supporting Memory Difficulties
- Using Visual Supports
- 5 Point Scale
- Using the Outdoors : Delivering a Whole Curriculum

Email chloe.webb@goldwyn.kent.sch.uk to request access to the training for FREE.



Book Resource Bank



ASD & GIRLS

By Sarah Hopker | Specialist Teacher



Girls with Autism are often a misdiagnosed and misunderstood group. So much research has been directed to the male profile of Autism, which often led to autism being unidentified, unnoticed and unsupported in girls. As research and campaigning has grown it has meant that there is now more insight into autistic girls' experiences which we can use to help recognise, understand, support and teach them more effectively in school. Without good support and early intervention / diagnosis it can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders etc. This short article aims to give you an overview to spotting ASD in girls and some key strategies and resources that can be used to support them.

Girls with Autism may be hard to spot as the behaviours may not be seen in the early primary years. They might be quieter and passive in school. They may be considered as shy and reserved and achieving well in school. The girls can look quite sociable and be engaging well with peers. They may be mimicking behaviour, interests and even speech patterns of people they are friends with as they attempt to fit in and be accepted. Eye contact may be good. They may learn scripts so that they can talk to new people. They may become fixated on certain individuals and want to be their 'best friend'. Their special interests may be less unusual and don't stand out in the same way as boys. Most of them love structure, routine, consistency and order. Many of the girls will arrive in school feeling anxious, but the signs might be hard to read. It may not take much for their anxiety levels to be raised further.

Another warning sign that needs attention is that they may be exceptionally well-behaved at school but then really hard to manage at home where only the parents will see the anxiety and stress.

Girls with Autism may have intense emotions which are hard to be managed and controlled. Sleep may be difficult so they may seem more tired in school. Masking and holding in emotions in school will be exhausting for them so staff working with them will need to be mindful of this. Other related issues include high levels of constant anxiety and stress and other health issues which will impact significantly on school life and will need support.

Key Support Strategies

Anxiety and emotional Regulation

- It will help if they know there is someone that they can go to who will understand their concerns and help them find ways of dealing with their anxiety. Provide regular 'check-in's with this trusted member of staff. Providing a specific time for this may help them prepare as well.
- Set up a 'toolbox' to help them with self-calming strategies. Work with the girl to discuss what could / needs to be in the box.
- Have somewhere they can go if they are feeling particularly anxious or need special arrangements so that assemblies, break times and lunchtimes can be less stressful.
- Ensure all staff working with them know about needs and what will help them. Allow for flexibility. Pupil passports work great for this.
- Be aware of any anxiety-creating actions by a teacher (shouting, surprise tests etc.) that can lead to increased anxiety and maybe truancy.
- Utilise strategies such as the 5 point scale to support with emotional regulation.
- If they have a meltdown or shutdown don't ask questions, draw attention to them or judge. Time and space is what they will need.
- Depending on the age and ability use pupil voice and ask them how they would like to be supported. They will often be able to tell you what works / doesn't work.
- Help them to identify and contextualise their anxiety and how to manage and divert it into something else. Resources can be available to support with this.
- All staff would benefit from recognising that despite outward signs of a girl with autism coping in a given situation; she may be continually managing high levels of anxiety in any situation she faces; this is exhausting and debilitating.



Social skills, empathy and emotional understanding

- Work on understanding other people's emotions and their own. Explain how people feel, how you feel, how they feel.
- Help them to acquire the vocabulary they need to express how they feel and to control their own emotions. Use emotion coaching scripts with them.
- Use puppets, role play, dressing up, acting out stories and drama to help them appreciate different viewpoints. For older girls comic strip conversations are really helpful to support this.
- Discuss and demonstrate the differences between people, animals and objects as they might not know.
- Plan in social skills groups supporting peer relationships, social interactions, growing up etc.
- Introduce and teach them scripts to deal with difficult situations.

Key Support Strategies *cont.*

Classroom environment and lessons

- Utilise their strengths and interests. Their special interests can be used as a starting point for engaging autistic girls.
- Make use of visual aids and information to support learning and understanding the school day.
- Consider the 'welcome' given to girls in the classroom, particularly if they are turning up late due to high anxiety levels. Consider the question 'what needs to be done for you to feel welcome in the classroom?'
- Allow breaks where needed for physical activity or 'time out' from class to reset. These may need to be a subtle signal to not draw attention to them, i.e. Move a pen on their desk to indicate this.
- Bring structure to the unstructured - Give plenty of warning and preparation for off-timetable days, school trips etc. Provide visual information as much as possible. Visual is preferred to verbal.
- Provide clear guidelines for group work.
- Allow them to choose who they would like to sit with and whom they feel comfortable with.
- Avoid pressurising them to speak up or read in front of the class.
- Ensure the structure of the lessons is communicated as much as possible so that they know what to expect.
- Provide a clear framework for open-ended tasks.
- Avoid metaphor, sarcasm, idiom and jokes. These can be confusing. Be clear with what you want them to do.
- Allow more time to process questions and answers.
- Allow extra time for tests and exams and provide a small group or separate room if preferred. This would need to be evidenced as a normal way of working.
- If busy corridors are stressful, allow them to leave the lesson early so that they can get to the next classroom in a calm and quiet way.
- Be aware that the fear of detention / being told off is massive for them.



Other areas

- Encourage the use of sensory profiles to find out about an individual's hyper or hypo sensitivities and make adjustments accordingly.
- Offer opportunities for support to parents, carers and siblings.
- Work with the parents/carer to ensure that there is a common approach to helping the development of an autistic girl's steps to greater independence.



Useful Links

Preparing for Christmas: Autism Resources

The Christmas period, with lots of change, social interaction, expectations and demands to negotiate, can be a very exciting but often stressful time of the year for many autistic people. The National Autistic Society have put together a brief list of useful resources that we hope may prove helpful in making this festive period as special and as stress free as possible for those you work with.



<https://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/preparing-christmas-autism-resources>



Helpful hints for teachers to support children with ASD in the classroom

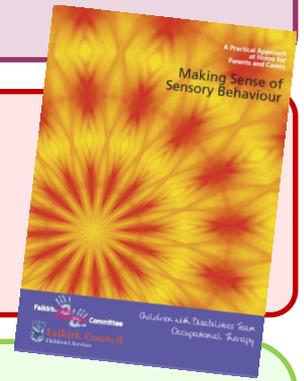
<https://www.ncfe.org.uk/blog/tips-for-teachers-autism-in-the-classroom>

Autism and Christmas – Teachers are you ready?

An excellent article about how to better include children on the spectrum in the festivities

<https://reachoutasc.com/autism-and-christmas-teachers-are-you-ready/>

<https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/disabilities/docs/young-people/Making%20Sense%20of%20Sensory%20Behaviour.pdf?v=201906271131>



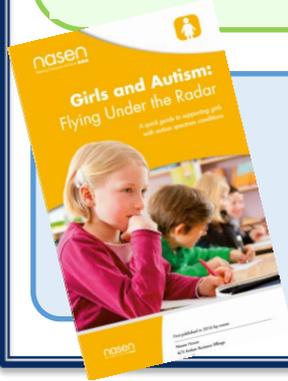
A useful resource based on the latest research and findings.

<https://limpsfieldgrange.co.uk/>

Link to Limpsfield Grange School – An outstanding residential and day school for girls aged 11 -16 with communication and interaction difficulties.

Students have a wide range of needs, and many have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) including Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism (HFA).

Many students who attend Limpsfield Grange are affected by high and persistent levels of anxiety, which can impact on their ability to engage with everyday activities.



<https://nasen.org.uk/uploads/assets/c6c70871-4de8-410f-a444ef1efa0261a6/flying-under-the-radar.pdf>

Link to the NASEN site to a PDF on Girls and Autism and key issues.



Private & Confidential

**Kent Educational
Psychology Service**
Room 2.42
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

Dear parents/carers

I am pleased to let you know that with effect from **2nd November 2020** Kent Educational Psychology Service will be offering free consultations via video/phone call for 30 minutes, where parents/carers can talk to an educational psychologist. The aim of this service is to provide advice and guidance to parents and carers to support children's wellbeing and learning.

Topics or areas that you may wish to discuss might include:

- Social and emotional issues
- Concerns about learning
- Family relationships
- Concerns about behaviour
- Daily routines including sleep

If you would like to make use of this service, please contact: kepscommunitysupport@kent.gov.uk on or after the 2nd November 2020 and include the following information:

- your name;
- phone number;
- convenient time to call (morning or afternoon)
- your child's education phase e.g. early years, primary school, secondary school;
- a brief description of what you wish to discuss.

We will do our best to respond within 5 working days but this may be subject to availability.

Data Protection

We will only keep email correspondence for the period that we are in contact with you. After this time all personal data will be deleted. In addition we will keep information on the type of concerns raised by parents/carers and our response to them on an anonymised spreadsheet. We will also keep information gathered through an anonymous evaluation sheet that you will be asked to complete. Please see the Kent Privacy Policy for further details about our data protection policies (<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/about-the-website/privacy-statement>).

Best Wishes
Kent Educational Psychology Service



Includes Us 2 “Zoom Time” Groups

For parents & carers of children with a disability or SEN living in Ashford, Shepway & Dover

Due to the current need for increased social distancing measures, Includes Us 2 will be offering a series of “Zoom Time” support groups over the next few months instead of our usual face to face meetings. “Zoom Time” provides a relaxed and informal space for parents & carers of children with a disability or a special educational need to get together “virtually” and access information and support. Speakers are regularly invited to these sessions to provide information and advice about specialist services.

“Zoom Time” Virtual Meeting Dates for January—March 2021

10am-12pm

January Meetings

Wednesday 6th

Thursday 14th

Friday 22nd

February Meetings

Monday 1st

Tuesday 9th

Wednesday 24th

March Meetings

Thursday 4th

Friday 12th

Monday 15th

Evening sessions could be available if there is enough interest.

We are considering trialling an evening support group . Please contact us if this is something you would be interested in.

To log into all meetings, please use the following Zoom access code;

Meeting ID: 965 565 7908

Passcode: 8KxrrE

Meetings will be facilitated by Nicola , our Family Support Officer.

One to one appointments can be provided at designated times. For further information please call Nicola (term time) on 07525 589321 or email familysupport@includesus2.org.uk

Phone No: 07525 589321 www.facebook.com/IncludesUs2 Email: familysupport@includesus2.org.uk

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