

How to Support Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

ASD is a congenital developmental disorder caused by abnormalities in the functioning of the brain. Although the symptoms may vary from person to person, individuals with autism mainly have difficulties in the following two aspects:

Social Communication and Interaction

- Weak in social interaction, lack initiative to interact, or fail to display appropriate social behaviours
- Difficult to understand or express feelings
- Difficult to establish and maintain friendship with others or have an insight into the change of social situation and adjust their behaviours accordingly
- Weak in understanding non-verbal information and applying it in communication, e.g. lack of eye contact and facial expression
- Weak in verbal communication, e.g. use repetitive speeches or speak with an unusual pitch

Obstinate or Repetitive Behaviours and Interests

- Rigidly stick to certain practices and resistant to change, e.g. insisting on using the same route
- Have restricted patterns of interests, e.g. only interested in dinosaurs, buses or maps
- Rigidly repeat certain actions, speeches or movements
- Overreact or underreact to external sensory stimulations, or even have abnormal reactions

Roles of Parents

I suspect that my child may have ASD...

- Initiate contact with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, class teacher, student guidance personnel or school social workers so that the school may arrange appropriate assessments and guidance services

My child is assessed to have ASD...

- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively, including forwarding his/her psychiatric report to the school for arrangement of appropriate support services
- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning, social interaction and emotional conditions; and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary
- Learn to handle your own emotion first and adjust your expectations towards him/her. Praise your child for his/her efforts and positive deeds
- Help your child develop peer relationship as early as possible, e.g. arrange your child to interact with peers sharing the same interests
- Help your child understand his/her own and others' emotions and thoughts with strategies such as demonstration, role play and story-telling, and help him/her learn social rules
- Give him/her instructions in simple, clear and direct language to

enhance his/her verbal comprehension

- Make use of visual cues (such as picture cards, schedules, good behaviours record forms and mind maps) to help your child understand abstract instructions, daily routines, and the content of texts
- Encourage your child to express his/her needs in simple words or sentences through repeated demonstrations and imitation
- Help your child adapt to changes by giving prior notice
- Make use of your child's interests to foster his/her motivation in learning, communication, and developing good behaviours, e.g. by rewarding him/her with pictures of his/her favourite things
- Guide your child to express and regulate his/her emotions to reduce problem behaviours, e.g. give him/her emotion cards to help him/her express himself/herself
- Identify your child's interests and strengths with a view to helping him/her develop his/her potential

Support Services and Strategies

In general, students with ASD having average intelligence will attend ordinary schools. Students with both ASD and Intellectual Disability (ID) are placed in schools for children with ID with the consent of the parents. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of the students:

Ordinary Schools

- “3-Tier Intervention Model”
 - Provide Tier-1 quality teaching to students by adopting effective pedagogical methods and teaching materials, and making adjustment in the instruction based on continuous monitoring of the students' learning progress; by doing so, students' needs in class can be met and their adaptability in learning and social interaction can be enhanced.
 - Arrange Tier-2 “add-on” intervention support, such as small group learning, after-school remedial programmes, and pull-out

remedial programmes to train students' skills in social communication and emotion regulation.

- Provide individualised Tier-3 support for students who need relatively greater support, including designing “individual education plans” for them, setting up appropriate individual learning objectives for them based on their needs, providing individualised intensive training, and conducting regular review on their learning progress and the effectiveness of the plans.

➤ Common strategies deployed by schools to support students with ASD

Structured Learning Environment

Establish clear classroom routines and schedules to facilitate the adjustment of the students

Visual Strategies

Post “visual cues” such as pictures, photos and text in the classroom to remind students of the classroom rules and appropriate behaviours

Peer Support

Enhance peer interaction between students with ASD and their peers, such as arranging integrated play groups for students with ASD to learn to interact with others

Speech and Communication Training

Provide students in need with individual or group training on speech and communication

Social and Emotion Training

Provide students in need with individual or group training to enhance their social and emotional management skills

Social Narrative Stories

Help students understand social situations and teach them appropriate social responses with social narrative stories

Good Behaviours Reward Scheme

Set concrete behavioural goals with students and strengthen their good behaviours through feedback and rewards

➤ Professional Support

Arrange school-based educational psychologists, speech therapists, etc. to provide services on assessment, consultation and professional support.

Special Schools

Through the “Resource Teaching Programme for Autistic Children in Special Schools”, students with ASD studying in special schools are provided with enhanced support in addition to normal classroom teaching. Under the Programme, resource teachers will arrange individual or small group intervention, in-class support and follow up intervention in consideration of the students’ needs, learning performances and the nature of teaching activities.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en>

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| Hong Kong Regional Education Office | 2863 4646 |
| Kowloon Regional Education Office | 3698 4108 |
| New Territories East Regional Education Office | 2639 4876 |
| New Territories West Regional Education Office | 2437 7272 |
| General Enquiries on Special Education | 3698 3957 |
| Educational Psychology Service Section | |
| • Hong Kong | 3695 0486 |
| • Kowloon | 3698 4321/ 3907 0949 |
| • New Territories East | 3547 2228 |

- New Territories West

2437 7270

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with ASD

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/autism-spectrum-disorder/index.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- Operation Guide on the “Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>