'95% of people don't understand me'

A review of initial consultation processes in the development of a professional National Competency Framework for educational practitioners working with pupils on the autism spectrum.

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Abstract

This paper reports on the development of a professional competency framework for practitioners working with pupils on the autism spectrum. This work has been commissioned by the Autism Education Trust (AET), in conjunction with the development of training material and national standards which aim at improving educational provision for pupils on the autism spectrum. The competency framework will be presented as a self-evaluation tool that practitioners can use to rate their current practice and understanding against a set of competency descriptors, accompanied by examples of good practice that highlight how these competencies can be implemented.

A number of consultation methods are being implemented to find out the views of practitioners, parents of children on the autism spectrum, and children and adults on the autism spectrum regarding educational practice. This consultation process is shaping the development of the framework, which will also be informed by expert advice from key stakeholder organisations, such as Ofsted, NASEN, and Autreach. Involving these organisations in the development of the framework will encourage its broad adoption. The findings from the consultation thus far suggest that a flexible interactionist approach to learning and communication between stakeholders needs to be at the centre of an effective professional competency framework for educational practitioners working with pupils on the autism spectrum.

The paper concludes with a review of how in the development of the framework, the voices of stakeholders have been prioritised, and how this project has utilised a number of research methodologies in order to address wider issues of inclusion and social justice, and an examination of the notion of 'excellence' in regard to the education of pupils on the autism spectrum, and how this may not equate with notions of 'elitism'.

Introduction

The Lamb enquiry (2009) found that among all carers of children with special educational needs (SEN) the most dissatisfied with service provision were the carers of children on the autism spectrum. In a changing climate of educational policy under the coalition government, it is thus essential that this issue be addressed. This paper reports on the

development of a professional competency framework for practitioners working with pupils on the autism spectrum. This work has been commissioned by the Autism Education Trust (AET), in conjunction with the development of training material and national standards which aim at improving educational provision for pupils on the autism spectrum. The framework will be presented as a self-evaluation tool that practitioners can use to rate their current practice and understanding against a set of competency descriptors, accompanied by examples of good practice that highlight how these competencies can be implemented. The feedback from which providing a reference point from which to evaluate current working practice and address any gaps in training that a workforce may have, and forming the basis of discussions between senior leadership teams and teachers/teaching assistants. This work when completed will be trialled through seven selected AET 'Hubs' that are spaced around the country, but ultimately this framework should reach beyond the delivery of the associated training programme being developed. The competency framework will be developed in time to be promoted throughout the academic year of 2012-13.

Consultation methodology

An initial consultation was undertaken with two 'local' parent groups in Kent and the 'Talk about Autism' website forums. This included a simple question regarding what parents would like to see included in the competencies for educational practitioners (see Appendix 1). This was followed by the use of online surveys via the AET website, that have asked a number of questions regarding educational practice to current practitioners working with children on the autism spectrum, parents of children on the autism spectrum, and children and young people on the spectrum. These surveys were designed by the 'Standards team' in relation to another part of the overall AET project relating to school-wide practices, yet also contained questions relevant to the development of competencies for practitioners, and hence the analysis of these surveys has also informed the development of competencies for individual practitioners. These surveys primarily contained open-ended short answer questions. The child and young people survey also contained emotion scales and 'smiley face' responses, for those who wished or needed to use them to express their views (see Appendix 2). The data from these surveys were then examined through a thematic narrative analysis, before being categorised into four main areas which reflected those set out by the Autism Education Trust prior to consultations with stakeholders: understanding the individual pupil, building relationships, curriculum and learning, and enabling environments.

Findings from initial consultation

During the initial consultation phase a number of issues were raised by the parents that responded. These included: structural issues such the size of class or school and the sensory difficulties that could lead too, but also concerns were voiced regarding how schools dealt with bullying and discipline problems, primarily those perceived as committed against their

child, and a general lack of staff awareness and training regarding autism. A chief concern for many was a perceived lack of communication and poor relationships between staff and parents.

When commenting upon what should be priorities in the education of pupils on the autism spectrum, the responses highlighted the need for schools to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to the learning style of the individual pupil and be child-focused and differentiated, and tailored to meet the individual's needs. One-size-fits-all applications of method were seen very negatively, as has been shown in previous studies (Milton, 2011). Other issues that arose included how staff should listen to other specialists, as well as the 'autistic voice' and include people on the spectrum in teacher training, and a general understanding of autism coupled with an understanding of specific issues that included: spiky profiles, sensory issues, language processing (differences in factual and conceptual understanding), the generalisation of skills, and the spectrum of attention difficulties from monotropism to ADHD.

"I cannot think of anything more pointless than getting him to read sentences that he does not understand. They might as well be teaching him Japanese."

Although staff training in autism was encouraged, it was also noted by many respondents that a 'little knowledge is a dangerous thing', and that having completed a day's training in autism that staff did not feel as if they had gained all the knowledge that they needed in order to practice, but that this was a continual process.

Findings – children and young people survey

The data produced from the surveys with children and young people on the autism spectrum highlighted a number of key areas of concern (see Appendix 3). In terms of the aspects of school that the respondents felt were important to them, the largest number were in the category of 'enabling environments', with the most common issue cited in this regard being the need for personal space, followed by the consistency and safety of the environment. There were also many comments regarding 'curriculum and learning' and these largely centred on specific subject areas of interest, particularly I.T. and Science. In terms of 'building relationships', the most important factor for the children and young people was that of bullying, and the need for supportive adults and peers, rather than those who misunderstood or mocked them. One response interestingly noted that adults and peers should adhere to the same rules that are expected of them. In terms of 'understanding the individual pupil', this was seen as less important by many respondents than the other categories, however, common responses included having trained staff, and guidance in learning that takes account of how the pupil learns.

When asked about the aspects of school life that the children and young people found difficult, the largest number of responses were in regard to 'curriculum and learning', most

commonly English and literacy, but also Maths was highlighted by a number of students as an area of difficulty. The most commonly cited difficulty was that of bullying. Other aspects of 'building relationships' that were seen as difficult included how friends could become bullies, or become a difficulty:

"Friends are overwhelming."

In terms of 'enabling environments', the most commonly cited difficulty was that of managing crowds of people, followed by having enough time to complete activities and uncomfortable seating. Many other aspects of school environments were also mentioned as being difficult, from climbing stairs, to school food, vandalism, and activities being cancelled or changed without warning. Again, 'understanding of the individual pupil' was mentioned less frequently, but was important to many respondents with regard to not feeling understood.

The data regarding the emotions felt by the children and young people toward school life indicated 'happiness' to be the most commonly indicated (n=17), however, this emotion was followed by 'sadness' (n=10), 'annoyance' (n=4), 'boredom' (n=3) and 'disappointment' (n=3). In total 27 negative and 23 positive emotions were expressed concerning the children and young people's experience of school life.

Positive emotions were connected to adults and peers being supportive, 'cool' or 'fun' lessons, and an enabling environment in which to learn. Negative emotions were expressed regarding a lack of understanding:

"95% of people don't understand me."

The most commonly cited reason for negative emotions being reported regarded bullying, with other areas of concern raised: not being left alone, children in the class who 'do not want to learn', consistency of staff, transitions, and the size and complexity of buildings.

The above data can be contrasted somewhat however with that obtained from the 'smiley face' activity. This data suggests that a number of respondents were happy with the school environment, the adults in the school, and the playground. A more 'neutral' response or lack of it was found in regard to lunchtimes, other children and the classroom, whilst school clothes were seen negatively. In total, 27 positive emotions were expressed, 9 negative, and 7 neutral or 'don't know' answers.

Findings – parent consultation survey

In total, 72 parents responded to the consultation survey (see Appendix 4), 53 of which had children attending a mainstream setting, with the others in either specialist provision, or a small number combining the two. The mean average age of child of these parents was 10, but ages ranged from 3 to 22 years old.

In response to which aspects of the school their child attended were working well, the most common response regarded communication between parents and staff (n=17). Other key areas indicated were a tailored curriculum (n=6), structure and routine (n=6), understanding of autism and level of training (n=5), and understanding the needs of the individual child (n=5). There were not many responses that could have been categorised in terms of 'enabling environments'. There were also a large number of non-responses (n=55/216).

The most highly valued aspect of educational practice for these parents was communication between staff and parents (n=20) and approachable staff (n=12). Understanding of autism (n=3) and individual differences (n=3) was again indicated as somewhat important. Four parents valued the location of the school most. Some (n=9/72 first choice answer, n=76/216 in total) did not write anything down, potentially suggesting that they did not value anything at all.

In terms of the aspects of school that could be improved upon, the parents surveyed indicated: ongoing staff training (n=10), and communication between staff and parents (n=10). Other highlighted areas regarded understanding and accepting the child and knowledge of their needs (n=5), a focus on the child's strengths and interests (n=3), and more support during break times (n=3).

Findings – practitioner consultation survey

The most commonly cited factor that the practitioners surveyed (see Appendix 5) wanted to see included in the 'Standards' concerned staff training, followed by a differentiated and adaptable curriculum, and quiet and safe spaces for children to use at break times that are well equipped. Also mentioned was the need to help parents become more autism aware through outreach programs. The need for social skills training was also expressed more frequently than in the parent responses or in those of the children and young people where it was not reported upon either positively or negatively. There also appears to be little consensus regarding curriculum and learning, apart for the need for individually differentiated approaches and visual timetables.

The resources that were most commonly cited as being useful to practitioners were visual timetables, small white-boards, sensory equipment, and 'widget' symbols. A host of other resources were also mentioned from social stories and PECS to Lego and iPads. In terms of the personal qualities needed by practitioners, the most often cited was 'patience', followed by knowledge of autism and the individual child, the ability to be clear, flexibility, and a sense of humour.

Future directions

The parents surveyed indicated that what they are looking for is primarily good communication and strong relationships with the school, where both child and parent are

listened to, and whose needs are met. There is a much often stated need for better staff training and understanding of autism in general and of how it affects their own individual child. One-size-fits-all models are rejected in favour of a tailored curriculum that focuses on social activities and integration, and on building upon the child's interests and strengths. Good relationships with outside agencies and practitioners were also valued.

The common message between both parents and children and young people were that school's need to be less imposing in their own ideologies, and more accepting of the autistic difference and the need to build more inclusive environments and learning strategies. The findings highlight much 'common ground' in the main concerns of these groups, for instance, the strong need for a personalised curriculum, or the need for teachers to see their learning in the area as a continual process. A number of potential tensions were also found however, for instance, the children and young people saw school as primarily about learning subjects and not learning social skills. Their main concerns were those of bullying, being understood, and being given personal space. Concerns were raised about their own academic progression and support in this regard, yet more research is needed to see which aspects of learning subject content are being experienced as difficult. The focus of some practitioners on social skills training and social stories is not reflected in parent accounts as much either, highlighting a potential tension between stakeholder accounts in need of further enquiry.

In future, it is envisaged that the consultation process will continue with a number of in-depth interviews to be arranged with a range of practitioners in the field, as well as individuals representing key organisations such as Ofsted, the AET Expert Reference Group, and Autreach, in order to consider how best to disseminate and encourage the adoption of the framework at the completion of the project.

Championing research and educating professionals

Upon reflection of the theme of this conference, it can be said that the AET competencies project is attempting to educate professional educational practitioners regarding 'best practice' in regards to autistic pupils. The development of this project and those of the related standards and training materials will be highly informed by both current research literature, and also primary research regarding the views and experiences of the various stakeholders. What is perhaps unusual is that the consultation data and part of the literature review for these projects is being undertaken by an autistic researcher with an 'insider' perspective utilising qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, rather than the imposition of educational ideologies and priorities from the outset that could little resemble the concerns of autistic pupils and those who care for them and teach them.

Elitism, inclusion and social justice

Unlike the conventional thinking of 'right-wing' politics, this researcher would not recognise 'elitism' in any way compatible with notions of inclusion and social justice. The traditional sociological interpretation of term 'elitism' suggests a privileged group within society wielding it over others. Mills (1956) suggested for instance, that in all advanced societies power had become controlled by a limited 'elite' that was often corrupt, signalling a degradation of representative democracy. This interpretation may stand in stark contrast to that of being the 'best one can be', yet not perhaps the 'Olympic spirit' of 'taking part'. One may wish to honour outstanding achievements, yet a highly unequal society based upon hierarchical social status and power is not a 'functional' one. By taking seriously the 'voice of the other', this project aims to unsettle the idea that 'elite experts' hold all of the answers to best educational practice, and that the inclusion of people on the autism spectrum and their carer's in full collaboration in research will also lead to a more 'democratic' education for all concerned. This is not to say that 'insider knowledge' is always superior to 'expert outsider knowledge', yet the power differential between them needs to shift to one of mutuality, as it does in teaching practice, as has been clearly shown and demonstrated in this consultation process.

References

Lamb, B. (2009) *Lamb Enquiry: Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence.* Annesley: DCSF.

Milton, D. (2011) 'Parenting, discipline, and educational preferences for children on the autistic spectrum – a survey of parental attitudes.' 10th Annual Postgraduate Education Conference. University of Birmingham.

Appendices available on request from DEM979@bham.ac.uk.

Appendix 1: Initial consultation question

Hello all,

I am part of a research team working on a project for the Autism Education Trust who will be putting together a framework of 'competencies' for educational practitioners working with children on the autism spectrum. As an initial consultation exercise to gather the opinions of both parents of children on the spectrum, and adults on the spectrum (also if you want to pass on any views your children have expressed about their education, this would be useful), I'd like to open up the following question for discussion (and/or you can message me your thoughts through facebook):

"What competencies (in terms of knowledge, skills and personal qualities) would you like educational practitioners working with pupils on the autism spectrum to have?"

Appendix 2: Sample surveys

Appendix 3: Data – children and young people

Analysis of survey data – children and young people

Category	Number of responses	Multiple responses	Single responses
Aspects of school that are important	18		
Understanding the individual child	6	Trained staff, differentiated and guided learning	Giving space to the child when needed
			Help with understanding anger issues
Building relationships	10	Bullying	Rules on behaviour that adults and peers also follow
		Supportive staff that listen	
		Supportive friends	
Curriculum and Learning	13	IT	Trips out
		Science	Being given help with work
		English and Literacy	Video clips and DVD's
		Use of pictures (visual stimuli)	Rewards
		P.E.	R.E.
		Art	Utilising special interests in learning
		More time to do work	Cooking club
			Teaching assistant support
			History
			Geography
			Design and Technology
			Utilising games in lessons
			Clear rules for group work
Enabling environments	15	Enough personal space	Secret garden or play area
		Accessible play areas	Sensory room
		Shorter days	Monitoring of bullying
		Small and tidy building	Libraries
		Spacious classrooms	One-to-one support
		Consistency of staff	Peers helping with learning
		Equipment that works	No crowds

		and is taken care of	
			Quiet environment

Category	Number of responses	Multiple responses	Single responses
Difficult aspects of school	18		
Understanding the individual pupil	6	A lack of understanding from staff	Transitions
			Memory issues
			Waiting
			Anger
Building relationships	8	Bullying	Being mocked
		Friends being bullies or being 'overwhelming'	Not given space to be on one's own
Curriculum and learning	16	English and Literacy	French
		Letters and sounds	Geography
		Maths	History
		P.E.	R.E.
			I.T.
			Science
Enabling environments	7	Crowds	Climbing stairs
		Finishing activities within time limits	Transitions
		Uncomfortable seating	Big complex buildings
			School clothes
			School food
			Things to do at break times
			Cancellations
			Vandalism

Emotion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Happiness	12	3	-	2	-	-	-
Sadness	7	1	1	-	-	-	1
Boredom	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Annoyance	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Disappointment	-	1	-	1	1	-	-
Friendliness	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Confusion	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Anger	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Content	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Excitement	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Unhelpfulness	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Stress	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Embarrassment	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Affection	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Disgust	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

Positive emotions = 23, Negative emotions = 27.

Category	Multiple – positive emotion	Single – positive emotion	Multiple – negative emotion	Single – negative emotion
Understanding the individual pupil				A lack of understanding from staff – '95% of people don't understand me'
Building relationships	Adults and peers being supportive		Bullying	Friends being hard and 'overwhelming'
			A lack of understanding from staff	Not being left alone
				Children 'who don't want to learn'
				Consistency of staff
Curriculum and learning	Cool and fun lessons	Cooking club		Boring lessons
		Getting support		
Enabling environments	Nice building	Playground		Crowds
	Time to play / long breaks	Comfortable seating		Big complicated buildings
		Good food		School clothes
				Transitions / clear instructions

Smiley face emotion	Going to school	Grown up's at school	Playtimes	Lunchtimes	Other children	Classroom	Playground	School clothes
Happy	5	5	4	-	1	-	5	2
Sad	1	-	1	-	1	-	2	4
Happy and sad	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	-	1	1	2	-	1	-	1

Appendix 4: Parent consultation data

Type of provision	No
Mainstream	53
Special	11
Special nursery	1
Special residential	1
Mainstream + home tutored	1
Health related education	1
Mainstream and special school	1
Mainstream nursery	1
Working	1
'Sutherland House – CEC'	1
Total number of respondents	72

Age range – 3-22

Mean average age – 10

Aspects of the school that are working well:

Category	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Understanding the individual pupil	Staff understanding and training – 5	Understanding needs of the individual - 3	Understanding of individual needs – 2
	Recognising qualities and strengths – 3		Staff understanding and training
	Teacher listens to pupil concerns		Extra attention given to autistic pupils
	Staff level of commitment		
Building relationships	Communication between parents and staff – 7	Communication between parents and staff – 6	Communication between parents and staff – 4
	Regular meetings with staff – 3	Support from CAT team – 3	Good use of therapists (OT / SALT) – 2
	External support from autism team – 2	Time for teachers to discuss progress – 2	Support from CAT team
	Having friends during play time	Feedback on issues – 2	Support from autism team
		'Parent strategies'	Reviews and meetings
Curriculum and learning	Structure and routine – 6	Increasing independence – 3	An individually tailored curriculum – 2
	An individually	One-to-one sessions	Teaching assistants – 2

	tailored curriculum – 4	– 3	
	One-to-one sessions – 4	Teaching assistants – 3	Consistency in methods used between school and home
	Good teaching assistants – 4	Rewards or 'reward chart' – 2	Encouraging social interaction
	Visual aids and timetables – 2	'Circle time'	One-to-one sessions
	Physical activity – 2	Art projects	Opportunities to try new things
	Having a 'shadow teacher'	Autism specific education	'Girl sessions'
	Child meeting targets	Personalised education	Good staff-pupil ratio
	A good support system	Speech therapy	Reduced number of subjects to study
	Praise	A variety of teaching strategies implemented	
	Reward charts		
	Behavioural program		
	Arrangement of assessments		
Enabling environments	Small classroom – 2	Activities at lunctime – 2	Interactions with peers – 2
	Accommodation of needs – 2	Patient staff	Time allowed for transition
	Quiet area provided	Safe haven provided	Relaxation area in classroom
	'Safe-guarding'	Equipment and facilities available	Adjustments to behaviour policy
	Inclusion in school community	Great atmosphere	Quiet area provided
	ASD support groups provided	Additional support in mornings	Child feels safe
		Good adult-pupil ratio	Small school
		Letting child enter school through a side entrance	Sensory diet features heavily
Other	Nothing written down – 3	Nothing written down – 20	Nothing written down – 32
	SENCO – 2	SENCO	SENCO
	'Can't think of	'Having a lunch time	'Sharing during lunch

	anything positive'	role'	time'
	'Help and support'	'Child's progress'	'The child enjoying learning'
	Lead practitioner in place	Key worker	'Flexibility'
	'Works well'	'Education'	'Learning platform'

Something valued about child's education:

Category	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Understanding the individual pupil	Staff understanding and knowledge of autism – 3		Willingness to learn about autism
	Understanding of individual differences – 3		
	Acceptance		
Building relationships	Communication between staff and parents – 15	Helpful and approachable staff - 4	Communication between staff and parents – 5
	Helpful and approachable staff – 7	Annual reviews - 4	Working well with outside agencies – 2
	Positive attitude – 2	Committed teachers	Approachable and friendly staff
	Staff following guidance from outside agencies	Parent volunteers	Respect for parents views on all matters
	Open door policy	Teacher feedback	School 'form'
	Communication between staff	Honesty	Helping family to meet child's needs
		'Somewhat listened too'	
		Working with parents	
		Supporting family	
Curriculum and learning	Teaching assistants – 3	Increase in performance assessment	Encouraging non-academic skills – social and emotional development - 2
	Quality of education – 2	Gender related material taught	Extra time and help given
	One-to-one support	Education	Individual help
	Visual schedules and timetables	Rewards for all achievements	Teaching assistant support
	Willingness to try	Teaching assistant	

	different teaching methods	support	
		Consistency in teaching procedures	
		ASD strategies	
Enabling environments	Location – 4	Supportive staff – 4	Facilities
	Good school leadership – 2	Small classes – 2	Out of school club
	Safe environment	Flexibility – 2	Nurture group
	Staffing levels	Safe environment / happiness	Friendship groups
	Size of school	Nurture room	Child's awareness of what is happening at school
	Small classes	Open minded and flexible approach	Transition between years/teachers
	Nurturing ethos	Friendly and helpful children	Soft play area
	Autism friendly environment	Meeting needs	Break and lunch time activities
	Staff – 'second to none'	Unique setting	
	Inclusive ethos	Community spirit	
		Positive attitude	
Other	Nothing written down – 9	Nothing written down – 24	Nothing written down – 43
	Missing page – 3	Missing page – 3	Missing page – 3
		SENCO – 3	'Staff'
		Experienced staff	

Aspects to be improved upon:

Category	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Understanding the individual pupil	Ongoing staff training – 7	Better staff training – 3	Knowledge of individual needs
	Understanding and acceptance of child – 3	Better informed of pupils concerns	Aware of the impact of anxiety
	Taking account of individual need	All teachers read child profile	Staff training
	Pupil voices to be heard		Understanding of autism and needs arising
			Knowledge of dyslexia

			and other hidden disabilities related to autism
Building relationships	Communication between staff and parents – 5	Communication between staff and parents – 2	Communication between staff and parents – 3
	Development of social skills – 2	Feedback regarding outside agency reports	More reviews
	Learning support – e.g. text books to bring home	More support from SALT	Educational referrals
	Clear reasoning given to child		Support for family
	Adopt strategies to increase social interaction		
Curriculum and learning	Focus on child's strengths and interests – 3	Visual aids	Less subjects to study
	Development of social skills – 2	1-2-1 teaching	Physical activities
	Opportunities to show talents	Increase social interaction	Teaching social skills to those who behave inappropriately to those with ASD
	Opportunities for involvement in activities	Emphasis on musical activities	Less formality
	Modifying group work (ASD not the same as behavioural difficulties)	Direct teacher involvement	Tailored curriculum
	More speech therapy	Extra reading time	1-2-1 support
	More flexibility in curriculum	Small group work	Help pupils to find different ways in which to present their work
	Specialist teaching – e.g. dyslexia support	More physical activities	Better classroom control
	Extra tutor	Not expecting all pupils to attain the same level	
		Extra time to process information on the board	
		Targets set	

		Teaching 'how to play appropriately with peers'	
Enabling environments	More support during break times – 3	Better organisation – 2	Providing prior information about lessons
	More supportive environment – 3	Involving child in all aspects of the school – choice / explanations	Social activities
	Adopt strategies to address name calling	Social groups	Monitoring of break times
	Following the school schedule	Whole school approach	More resources
	Maintenance of routines	More staff	Help with transitions
	Smaller groups and 1-2-1 teaching needed	Protection	
	Preventing bullying - 2	Support at lunch	
	Sustaining current provisions	Smaller group work and time out	
	Friendship groups	Friendship development	
	Better inclusion	IT specialist provision	
	Understanding and patience	More teaching assistants	
	Attitude of all the school staff	Better access to toilets for disabled people	
Other	Nothing written down – 9	Nothing written down – 29	Nothing written down – 42
	'Nothing to be improved' – 3	Missing page – 3	Missing page – 3
	Missing page – 3	'Diaries'	
	More funding		
	New head teacher		

Appendix 5: Practitioner consultation data

Areas of practice to be included in the Standards:

Category	1st area	2nd area	3rd area	4th+ areas
Understanding the individual child	Suitably trained staff*	Ongoing staff training*	Suitably trained staff*	Being updated on best practice
	Taking account of the individual child*	Knowledge of the individual child*	Knowledge of the individual child	Setting considers individuality
		Awareness and adjustment to verbal processing differences		Pupil addressed by name
		Taking account of specific difficulties		
Building relationships	Involving and supporting parents*	Autism outreach*	Training for peers	Peer Training
	Engaging child in decision making	Involving and supporting parents	Autism outreach	Access to therapeutic support
	Peer training	Working with wider staff in school	Consultation with pupil	Encouraging calm social interactions
		Lead practitioner in school	Buddy groups	Pupils encouraged to express views
		'Regular visits'	Funding for autism teams to work with families	
			Communication between staff and parents	
			Building trusting relationships	
Curriculum and learning	Differentiation*	Differentiation*	Visual timetables*	Clear instructions given
	Visual timetables*	Autistic specific curriculum*	Differentiation*	Trusted mentors in school
	Adult mentors*	Social skills training*	Tailored curriculum	Consistent use of visual aids,

				structure, and routines
	Autism specific curriculum*	Consistent use of methods	Intensive interaction	Individual timetable
	Willingness to adapt practice*	Encourages independence	Music therapy	Opportunities for pupil choice
	P.E.	Structured curriculum	OT support	Social skills training
	Arts and crafts	Positive behavioural support	Person-centred annual reviews	Opportunities to mix with mainstream pupils
			Independence training	Curriculum reflects interests and talents
			Positive behavioural support	Preparation for adult life
			Optimising pupil contributions	
			Structured language support	
			Looking at the causes and functions of behaviour	
Enabling environments	Support at unstructured times	Sensory needs taken account of	Specific play and learning areas	Taking account of sensory needs
	Quiet and safe spaces	Quiet and safe spaces	Notice given for changes to routines	Break and lunch time clubs
	Specific work areas	Augmented communication	Quiet and safe spaces	
	Sensory room / taking account of sensory needs	Adequate equipment in quiet areas	Taking account of sensory issues	
	Flexibility in timetabling	Specific work areas	Reducing stress	
		Alternative provision at break times		
		Relaxing start to the school day		

		Pupils made aware of support available		

Resources perceived as valuable

1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	Further choices
Visual timetables*	Small white boards*	Visual timetables*	Clutter free environments
Small white boards*	TEACCH*	Sensory resources*	Timers
Sensory equipment*	Sensory resources*	Books that interest the child*	
Widgit symbols*	Widgit symbols*	Workstation*	
Social stories*	Laminating and Velcro*	Early-bird course	
PECS	Home-school book	Books with auditory resources	
PSP	Visual charts	Coloured overlays	
Lap bag	'Glowing egg'	Jessica Kingsley books	
Puppets	'Photos'	Coloured key rings	
Do2Learn website	Emotion and scenario cards	'Volcano' cards	
Resources to aid emotional expression	Electronic resources	'Life skills'	
Home-school book	Reflection sessions	Direct contact with support team	
Augmented communication	Meet and greet sessions	Lego	
Choice cards	Key worker to relay information to parents	Playdough	
The work of Cumine et al.	Safe haven	Additional time allowances	
Trampoline and vestibular swing	Personalised transition booklets	Cameras	
Outside agency support	Timers	Small white boards	
Sensory integration literature	CBT approaches	Working journal	
Using interests as rewards	Reward system	Visual tools (Geneva centre)	
Special areas for timeouts	'Total communication environments'	Small group outings	
	Music	iPads and lap-tops	
	SCERTS assessment tools	The incredible 5-point scale	
	IDP of social	Cue cards	

	communication difficulties		
	'Tasks Galore' books	Music	
	Work stations	Blu-tac	
	Differentiated lesson plans	Emotional literacy resources	
	Puppets	Reading ruler	
	Visual timetables	'Black Sheep' language support	
		Social stories	
		Laminating and velcro	

Key qualities and skills for practitioners to have:

1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	Further choices
Knowledge of autism*	Patience*	Knowledge of the spectrum*	Sense of humour*
Patience*	Flexibility*	Patience*	Working with interests of pupil
Knowledge of individual child*	Ability to remain calm*	Ability to be clear*	Calm manner
Flexibility	Understanding sensory needs	Empathy*	Listening skills
Curiosity of how people on the spectrum learn	Knowledge of autism	Sense of humour*	Flexibility
Positive outlook	Consistency of approach	Resilience*	Enthusiasm / good health
Clear communication skills	Developing child's strengths	Adaptability*	Giving clear instructions
Organisational skills	Knowledge of the individual child	Enthusiasm	Consistency
Non-judgemental approach	Ability to take the initiative	Holistic approach	Empathy (with autistic person)
Understanding	Sense of humour	Intuition	Being creative and fun
Emotional literacy	Empathy	Ability to reflect on language use	Every day is a new start (as behaviour can be challenging)
Sense of humour	Good listening skills	Understanding literal thinking	
Observational and problem-solving approach	Desire to work with the pupil	Not normalising	
Language training	Makaton – sign language	Collaborating with parents and peers	

Ability to remain calm	Visual aids	Differentiation	
	Bank of resources to draw upon	Listening skills	