



Autism
Education
Trust

Teacher's Guide

Let's Learn About Autism

Teacher's Guide

Autism acceptance and
peer awareness pack
for secondary schools



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This resource pack will help you talk about autism with your students. It contains the following resources:

- This teacher's guide document with important advice on how to prepare for your autism acceptance session
- A PowerPoint presentation that explains autism and helps you start a discussion
- A quiz and myth buster worksheet that helps young people explore differences and think about how to support their autistic peers
- A session plan document with step-by-step guidance and ideas on planning your session or sessions, depending on how much time you have (45/60/90 min)

Materials to support teaching

Introduction

The following resources have been created as **an introduction to autism and to help young people think about how they can support their autistic peers.**

These sessions are just the beginning. This should not be a one-off conversation with students but a way to ignite understanding and start to foster an environment of acceptance and celebration.

Through their experiences of education, we know that **improving understanding and acceptance amongst their peers** is one of the most important things that can happen. For there to be a truly inclusive educational setting, the students as well as the staff need to value difference and be supportive of autistic students.

The presentations in this pack can be used during a lesson or in an assembly, depending on the time you have. Discussion points appear in the materials to support teaching; these can extend the length of a lesson or assembly and can be adapted to the level of the group. There are also complementary worksheets with creative activities.

The resources aren't exhaustive, but they do link to places where you can find more information, along with a suggested reading and watch list at the end.

Very important - please read this before you deliver any of these sessions:

- Some autistic young people may not know about their diagnosis and attending an assembly or taking part in a lesson could raise their feelings of difference. Ensure that you have checked in advance with their families about the way they want this to be approached.
- Alongside peer awareness, there may be a need for supporting young autistic people to understand, accept and celebrate their own diagnosis.
- Be aware that running these lessons or assemblies may raise questions for some young people about themselves or people they know. After leading the lesson or assembly, provide a box for anonymous questions. This allows young people to ask questions without the pressure of being identified.
- Even if your young people are aware of their diagnosis, let them know that you'll be discussing autism with their peers in lessons and/or assemblies, and give them an opportunity to contribute if they wish to do so.
- Inform their families so that they can provide extra support in case the young person becomes anxious about this topic being discussed.
- If the young person doesn't feel comfortable taking part in the lesson or assembly, ensure they have a choice in attending, and plan an alternative option.
- Do not single out young people within your setting by providing examples which reflect their behaviour, unless this has been previously agreed.
- Do not call on them to provide support or give their personal experiences if they have not explicitly given permission.
- If a young person does want to be involved in the assembly or lesson, allow them to set the boundaries of what they share and how they do so.
- Check the terminology you are using. Some young people see autism as their identity and would like you to use 'autistic person' (this is the preference of the Autistic Young Expert's Panel). Others may prefer to use 'has autism' or 'is on the autism spectrum' to describe their condition. Always ask the young person what their preference is.
- Do not solely focus on exceptional autistic people such as celebrities or inventors when you are trying to explain autism. This adds to stereotypes about autism and is not always helpful.
- Encourage everyone to speak positively about autism. Make sure that you yourself are using positive language and are focusing on differences and not deficits.
- After leading the lesson or assembly, signpost the young people to the list of trusted resources, so they can learn more on their own if they wish.
- Educational professionals should always be honest about their level of knowledge and experience – young people are not expecting you to be an expert on autism. Admit when you are unsure about something, and commit to find out more information from a trusted source.



For autism training, information and free resources, visit: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/schools-professional-development-programme>

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