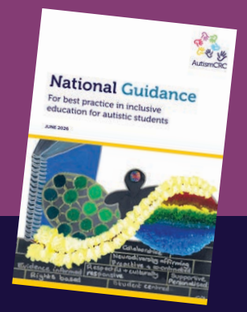
Create safe, connected, and supportive school communities



Autistic students thrive when schools prioritise wellbeing, belonging, positive relationships, and emotional safety.

Mental health support

Reduce stress and uncertainty through predictable routines, proactive supports, and trusted relationships. Ensure students can access neurodiversity-affirming mental health support when needed.



Positive peer relationships

Build inclusive school cultures where all students feel accepted. Teach and model respectful social interaction while recognising and respecting individual communication and friendship preferences.



Bullying prevention

Use whole-school strategies to prevent bullying before it occurs. Respond quickly, consistently, and safely when concerns arise.



Sense of belonging

Create emotionally safe environments where autistic students feel heard, valued, included, and connected to their school community.

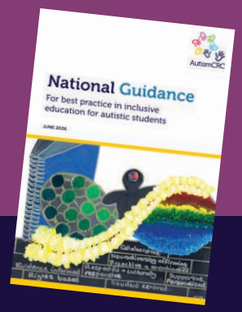


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Design learning environments that support every student



Thoughtfully designed environments help autistic students feel safe, regulated, independent, and ready to learn.



Inclusive design

Create safe, accessible spaces that support sensory wellbeing, regulation, inclusion, and independence.

Student agency

Include autistic students in decisions about learning environments and support choice, autonomy, and flexibility within spaces.

Knowledge and understanding

Provide neurodiversity-affirming training for staff and students and regularly review environments to adapt sensory elements where needed.

Practical adjustments

Consider lighting, sound, seating, movement spaces, visual supports, and quiet areas to reduce sensory overload and increase accessibility.

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What guiding principles should be followed when providing inclusive education to autistic students?

Collaborative
Genuine and mutual collaboration

Evidence-informed & practice-based
Ongoing learning

Neurodiversity-affirming
Celebrate neurological diversity

Personalised
Tailored to needs and strengths

Proactive & coordinated
Strategic whole-school approach

Respectful & culturally responsive
Culture, context, and diversity

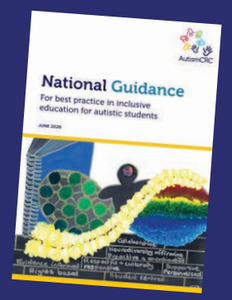
Rights-based
Grounded in human rights

Student-centred
Whole-child, holistic focus

Supportive
Spaces designed for all

Want to learn more?

The full National Guidance offers evidence-based practical teaching strategies to meet the needs of your autistic and neurodiverse learners.

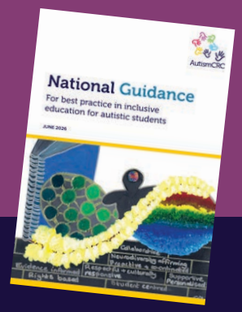


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Lead a whole-school culture of inclusion



Inclusive schools are built through strong leadership, respectful partnerships, and ongoing collaboration with autistic students, families, and professionals.

Leadership for inclusion

Develop and communicate a clear vision for inclusion. Prioritise professional learning and establish consistent, school-wide inclusive practices.



Collaborative relationships

Build respectful partnerships with students, families, educators, and allied health professionals. Create clear systems for communication and shared planning.



Professional learning

Provide ongoing opportunities for staff to build knowledge of autism, inclusive education, and neurodiversity-affirming practice.



Resourcing inclusion

Allocate time, staffing, and resources to enable professional learning, collaborative planning and support across teams and with families.

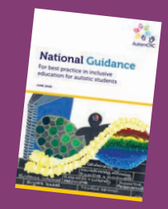


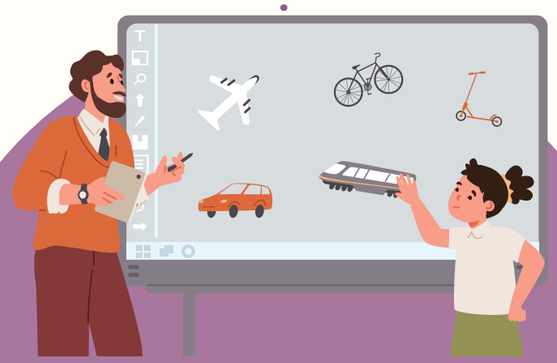
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Practise inclusive teaching every day





Flexible, strengths-based teaching improves learning, participation, and outcomes for autistic students, and benefits every learner.

Why it matters

Autistic students learn best when teaching is structured, predictable, personalised, and responsive to individual strengths and needs.



What to do

- ☑ Use inclusive curriculum planning, flexible assessment and explicit instruction
- ☑ Develop individual education plans collaboratively
- ☑ Embed strengths-based and neurodiversity-affirming practices across classrooms and the school.



How to do it

Provide ongoing professional learning, coaching, and collaboration so all staff understand autism and its impact on learning, participation, communication, and regulation.



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