

GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

Aiden is 8 years old and has Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) considered to be on the “high functioning” end of the spectrum. Affected children and adults have difficulty with social interactions and exhibit a restricted range of interests and/or repetitive behaviours.

The difficulties caused by the condition are there from birth or soon after and continue throughout life. It affects approximately 1 pupil in every 250, and the majority of those affected are boys.

Students with Asperger Syndrome typically have a low average to higher IQ but comparatively low social performance and emotional awareness of others' feelings and thoughts, struggling to read facial expressions and body language. They usually have difficulties communicating effectively with others, often having problems interacting with adults and other children appropriately and adhering to the 'unwritten' social rules, which come naturally to other children.

Children with Asperger syndrome are likely to have special educational needs that require additional and special provision (although not all will require a statement of special educational needs).

Each pupil with the diagnosis will be different. What unites each pupil is a fundamental difficulty in the understanding of other people (an inability to put themselves in the other persons shoes) and an inability to behave in a way that will make them make and keep friends easily. School can therefore be a stressful and anxiety-provoking place for many such pupils with social isolation, loneliness and possible bullying.

In recent years, there has been a significant impetus to teach these pupils in mainstream schools. Despite the large number of pupils with AS attending mainstream schools, the process of facilitating their learning and participation remains a complex and poorly understood area of education (Barnard et al., 2000; Davis and Florian, 2004 in Lewis and Humphrey, 2008).

Current practices within mainstream schools may contribute to disaffection and exclusion among such pupils (Connor, 2000; Osler and Osler, 2002 in Lewis and Humphrey, 2008). Indeed, they are on average 20 times more likely to be excluded from school than their peers. One in five (21%) are excluded at least once, compared with approximately 1.2 percent of the total student population (Barnard et al., 2000 in Lewis and Humphrey, 2008).

The search for what constitutes 'good practice' in inclusive schools continues. This case study aims to highlight the good practice in an inclusive school where the pupil is supported appropriately to overcome any barriers to learning, and where the parents feel confident that their child is included in the whole life of the school.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Aiden is 8 years old. He lives with his Mum, dad and his older sister who does not have any special educational need or disability. Mum is a teaching assistant in a special school.

Aiden was at a previous mainstream school until the age of 5. Whilst Aiden attended this school his parents were told every day about his behaviour and often in front of other parents. They felt that the messages they were receiving about Aiden were very negative and that the ethos of the school was not inclusive. Aiden was at risk from exclusion and his parents were very concerned. Aiden's parents decided to move Aiden to another nearby primary school. Aiden is now in Year 4 of a primary school which he has been attending since joining there in the reception class. Since starting, his parents say that Aiden has been a fully inclusive member of the school.

Aiden was diagnosed at the age of 6 with Asperger's Syndrome by a clinical psychologist. Aiden's difficulties are with social interactions and communication. Academically Aiden is very capable. He has strengths with mathematics, particularly with number and pattern. He is able to give answers and describe orally his thoughts in English and other subject lessons but is often reluctant to write.

MATERIALS

- **WRITTEN CASE STUDY**
- **Background reading: Journal article 'Make me Normal'**

Video "A day in the school life"

Link to web page on how to write a social story:

Click on the link: <http://www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/how-to-write-a-social-story.html>

DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

Aiden has Asperger's syndrome and his needs and difficulties are associated with social skills and communication. All of the staff at the school have completed training on the Autistic Spectrum Condition with a specialist leader. They are able to meet Aiden's needs due to the collaborative approach. Aiden has one key teacher who is very skilled and knowledgeable about ASC, but he also has other teachers for other subjects. This ensures shared responsibility to meet his needs. There are also two teaching assistants who support Aiden in mathematics and English lessons. The teaching assistants are not always with him; for example in the playground. This is to enable Aiden to develop his independent skills and friendships. The team around the child, who directly work with Aiden meets regularly to discuss any matters that will impact on Aiden's inclusion and provision in school.

Key: Ethos

The school is fully inclusive. On the school website the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Report states that:

'(We are) an inclusive community school. The school is well respected within the local community for supporting children with Special Needs and Disability (SEND). Every pupil with SEN and/ or a disability in our inclusive school has an entitlement to fulfil their optimum potential. This is achieved by ensuring the wellbeing of all pupils so that they are able to access the curriculum and learn within an environment sympathetic to their learning needs. We have high expectations for all pupils including those with an identified special need'.

Children with special needs and/or disabilities are encouraged to participate fully in school life. They are encouraged to join clubs attend breakfast club and participate in school trips. We actively promote participation in extra –curricular activities and with reasonable adjustments have enabled our children with additional needs to participate fully in school life.

The school's last Ofsted inspection in 2013 praised the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

'As a group, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the school provides well for them with extra support when appropriate. There is compelling evidence of their progress and personal successes. Skilled classroom assistants provide well for many of these pupils' Ofsted March 2013.



The adults who work with Aiden communicate on a daily basis on the day's timetable and Aiden's needs. They make sure that Aiden is aware of the day's events through a visual timetable approach and communication verbally (see appendix). Aiden has also been taught how to use a planner so that he can use organisation lists and make additional plans and notes for homework. He also uses task organisers to manage time and organise tasks. The planner also enables Aiden and his parents to understand what has happened each day and whether Aiden has homework or needs to remember to bring items into school, for example his PE kit. The communication between teachers, teaching assistants, parents and head teacher is very clear and open.

Parents and school communicate well together daily about Aiden's needs. At first there were phone calls home about what was working for Aiden in school. Now Aiden's parents prefer communication via email every day so that they know the how well the day has been for Aiden. The emails consist of positive statements and celebration of good news. If there are any concerns, a face to face meeting or phone call is more appropriate. His parents say that the school staff are genuinely interested in their child and they receive positive comments; unlike his previous school where the comments were always negative. If there are any behaviour issues, Aiden's parents know that there must have been a reason for the behaviour

and they feel that the teachers and the head teacher are very good at analysing the root cause of the behaviour and dealing with it appropriately.

The school staff appreciate that Aiden's parents know him best and find the conversations with his parents very useful, so that adults supporting him can ensure the best provision for Aiden.

The occupational therapist will come into school to assess Aiden's fine and gross motor skills and plan a programme of work to address his needs.

A pupil profile (see appendix) has been created with Aiden so that all adults in school are aware of his strengths and needs. This means that throughout the day, anyone who is contact with Aiden can help meet his needs.

All adults involved with Aiden see the whole child. Aiden's social and emotional learning needs are met as well as his physical and mental needs alongside his academic education. The aim is to fully include Aiden in the life of the school and beyond. For example, if Aiden is taking part in a school performance, his parents will come and watch the dress rehearsal. This is so that Aiden can feel included and his parents can see Aiden perform as he sometimes finds the actual performance on the day, too daunting. This year Aiden successfully performed the lead role in the play and his parents sat proudly with the other parents to watch on the opening night.



The key point of content for Aiden and his parents is the deputy head teacher who is also the Special Educational Needs Co-coordinator (SENCo).

Everybody in school, including lunchtime supervisors, know Aiden's pupil profile and therefore he can be supported throughout the school day, especially with his behaviour and social skills at lunchtime. At lunchtime Aiden needs to be encouraged to eat, because he will eat slowly and talk too much. The lunchtime supervisors are also aware that Aiden chooses the same kind of food to eat for a sustained period of time. Aiden will often have difficulty at lunchtime during play outside because he finds it hard to socialize and follow the rules of games.

Reasonable adjustments are made to meet Aiden's needs in terms of assuring his well-being, behaviour, emotions and feelings, his achievements and especially his social interaction.

- Aiden can swim well but does not go swimming at the same time as the other children in school. This is because he cannot cope with the size of the swimming pool, where it is noisy and there are many people. He finds it very difficult in this environment and his behaviour becomes inappropriate. Aiden's parents take him to individual swimming lessons outside of school hours.
- Aiden has been encouraged by the head teacher and his parents to join extra-curricular sports activities to develop his self-control and his social and communication skills. The school, parents and Aiden have established that Judo is one sport most suited to Aiden's needs and his own choice, as he likes the rules and control that Judo provides.
- The children in each year group at the school where Aiden attends are set for Mathematics and English lessons, according to their ability. Aiden is very able academically and is in the highest set for mathematics and a high set for English. He can articulate his answers and thoughts well in English lessons, but does not always want to write. Therefore, he has to be supported and encouraged, so that he will put pen to paper. The teacher or teaching assistant who support Aiden in English lessons use a reward system to extrinsically motivate him. If he completes his written work he gains time to play on an I-pad. He also uses the I-pad as a technology aid to record his work and likes to record work on a computer.
- Aiden also has hypermobility and he has had input from an occupational therapist to help strengthen his fine motor control and handwriting skills. At the end of every lunchtime he works with a teaching assistant on these exercise and activities, provided by occupational therapy.



- Aiden likes rules and boundaries and likes to know what is happening on a daily basis. When another child breaks a rule he believes that he can break the rules too. Adults have had to teach Aiden about rules and boundaries and the sanction matching the severity of the rule breaking.
- Aiden has some sensory needs and school knows that Aiden finds rolling blu-tack between his fingers or the use of a fidget toy when he was younger helped Aiden to concentrate in class. Parents felt as if the school listened to

them when they spoke about Aiden's sensory processing. Now all staff in school are receiving sensory awareness training.

- Aiden needs support with organisational skills, therefore the school and home use a checklist to help Aiden remember materials and resources he might need. Aiden is developing his independence skills and has 5 or 10 minute warnings before a task or an activity comes to an end so that he can be prepared for the ending of an activity.
- Aiden does not like change of routine. He can manage change if he is made aware of the changes to routine in advance, but will get very anxious if a change occurs and he wasn't prepared for it. A social story is used to help Aiden identify root triggers for anxiety. This is another reason for close communication between adults involved with Aiden's education and well-being. Aiden had access to a visual timetable when he was younger so that he could be prepared for the day ahead. Now, adults communicate verbally with Aiden to make him aware of any changes to the daily routine. For example, if another teacher is in the classroom on that day or the assembly time has changed.
- Aiden is self-aware and can self-regulate his emotions with scaffolded support. For example if he finds assembly particularly difficult due to the noise/music and/or number of people present then he will remove himself and go somewhere quiet after letting adults know how he feels. He might communicate how he feels through a visual aid or traffic light system.
- Aiden does have friends in school but finds it difficult to socialise with his peers outside of school. The school and his parents encouraged Aiden to join clubs after school hours. Aiden now attends steel pan club, judo, chess and gymnastics clubs. This has helped with friendships and communication skills. Aiden is a very good 'buddy' when helping the younger children at playtime.
- A planner is filled in by Aiden with the support of the teaching assistant. The planner records the activities and key points of the day and any homework Aiden needs to do. Aiden's parents can also record in the planner to communicate with the school about Aiden's attitude towards homework and any activities he completes at home or in clubs.

Aiden joins a local support group for children who are on the autistic spectrum one afternoon each week. Aiden attends the session at another venue one afternoon a week. The aim is to develop Aiden's social and communication skills with other young people who have similar difficulties and Aiden enjoys the sessions. The school receives regular reports on how Aiden is doing in the group so that they are aware of progress with his social skills and can share strategies.

The next step for Aiden in his educational career is to move to a mainstream high school. Aiden's family and the staff at the primary school need to liaise with the high school so that they can carefully consider the best provision for Aiden as he makes this transition. Aiden will need to complete a daily planner when he transitions to the high school. Therefore this is preparing him for the future.

EXPLANATION of used words/terms

Ofsted: **Ofsted** is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Social Story: A **Social Story**[™] describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant **social** cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically **defined** style and format. The goal of a **Social Story**[™] is to share accurate **social** information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience.

Teaching Assistant: is an individual who assists a **teacher** with instructional responsibilities.

SENCO stands for "**Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator**". A **SENCO** is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy. All mainstream schools must appoint a teacher to be their **SENCO**.

Blu tack[™]: a pale blue adhesive substance typically used to attach paper to walls or other hard surfaces.

Appendix 1 Example of a visual timetable



Figure 1 A visual timetable.

Appendix 2 Social Stories

Aiden finds communicating with his peer group difficult and he thinks that everyone is his friend. Social stories are used so that Aiden understand how he can make friends with others and join in properly with their games, as he does not always understand the rules of games and social cues. Aiden also finds it hard to see the consequence of his action and genuinely lacks understanding when he has done something wrong, as he uses literal thinking.

- Adults working with Aiden also use Social Stories. These resources are useful for supporting Aiden's social and communication.

One of the major symptom categories of autism is social skills deficits, considered by many to be the defining characteristic of this disorder. Examples can range from lack of engagement to unusual patterns of interacting with others, and trouble understanding facial expressions.

- Aiden's new targets are around friendships and personal space. He has a social story to help him to know what to do if he gets anxious.

Characteristics of autism social stories

Social Stories are short, straightforward descriptions of social situations which provide details of what a person might expect from a situation, and describes what may be expected of the person.

Link to web page on how to write a social story:

<http://www.child-autism-parent-cafe.com/how-to-write-a-social-story.html>

Tell me and I will forget

Show me and I will remember

Involve me and I will understand

a well-known educator's mantra

According to its author Carol Gray, creating autism social stories involve a process which requires consideration of, and respect for the perspective of the person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As a product, it is a short story that describes a situation, concept or social skill using a format that is meaningful for people with ASD.

They address the needs and improve the social understanding of people on both sides of the social experience. The result is a person with ASD has an improved sensitivity of others to the social experience, and an improvement in the response of the person with ASD.

Autism social stories are a tool or strategy used to establish replacement social skills for both children and adults with autism. Though they do not necessarily fix the problem. An autism social story gives a person information about social situations they find difficult or confusing. They are a strength-based teaching strategy, which builds on natural skills and behaviours.

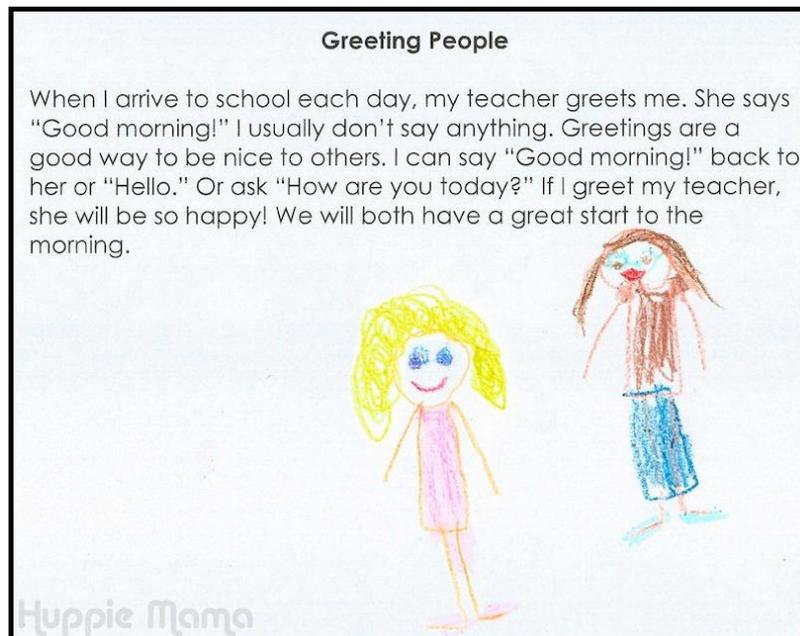


Figure 2 A social story to show how and why we greet others.

CAN THE STUDENTS FIND THE 6 KEY COMPONENTS IN THIS EXAMPLE?

You write down where you find the keywords in the case study

Key	Where do you find it? Explain	Questions for focus
Communication		How would you describe communication between teachers and teaching assistants, teachers and the child, teachers and parents, teachers and specialists? Explain.
Collaboration		Which partners are involved in the support of the child? What models of collaboration can be recognised in this case study? In what ways and what activities are parents involved? What are the results of parents-teachers' collaboration? What are the results of teacher-teaching assistant collaboration? Where are other examples of collaboration? What would you propose for improvement of collaboration between all the partners?
Holistic observation		Is the approach for this child holistic? What do you think about the well-being of a child in this school? Where do you learn that from? What aspects of the child's development show the holistic approach? Evaluate.
Ethos		How can you describe the ethos of this school? Is there equal participation for all children (with different social, cultural background or abilities) provided in the educational process/ by what means? Are the staff prepared to work with socially different children and with children with different abilities? Are different needs of children equally fulfilled? Give examples and your argument.
Adaptation		Are the teaching content, materials, methods and learning support adapted for every child according to her/his developmental speed? Is the environment adapted to children's needs? How/ does a child receive special pedagogical support, if it is needed? What kind of support? Is it sufficient? Is it too much?
Reflection		Does reflection take place in the educational process? What are the indicators of reflection presented in the case? Do all the participants of the educational process make their reflections? What aspects of the educational process are reflected upon?

ADAPTATION: How can the good practice example become a best practice? What can you add?

Key	How can the good practice be improved to best practice?
Communication	
Collaboration	
Holistic observation	
Ethos	
Adaptation	
Reflection	

References

Lewis, S., & Humphrey, N. (2008) *Make me normal The views and experiences of pupils on the autistic spectrum in mainstream secondary schools* SAGE Publications and The National Autistic Society Vol 12(1) 23–46; 0852671362-3613(200801)12:1

What does good practice look like in your school for children with language and communication difficulties or who need to develop their social skills?

Key	What does good practice look like in your school?
Communication	
Collaboration	
Holistic observation	
Ethos	
Adaptation	
Reflection	