



Asperger's Syndrome

- [Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders](#) [1]

There is no right type of Asperger's. People with Asperger's are as varied as Norwegians and trombone players.

Mark Haddon, author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Vintage: London (2004)

Asperger's syndrome is thought to fall within the spectrum of autism, but with enough distinct features to warrant its own label. It is characterised by subtle impairments in three areas of development: social communication, social interaction and social imagination. There is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in language acquisition. However, students with Asperger's syndrome have communication difficulties and may speak in a monotonous or exaggerated tone and at great length about a topic that is of particular interest to them irrespective of the reaction of the listener. Students find it difficult to interpret social signals and interact with others. They often excel at memorising facts and figures but exhibit difficulty thinking in the abstract ways required for subjects such as English and Religious Education.



Students may have additional motor co-ordination and organisational problems such as a tendency to compartmentalise thinking (e.g. completion of a task may be perceived as unrelated to the presentation of the task), difficulties in managing time and completing work, eating, drinking and sleeping irregularities, an inability to

block out distractions affecting attention span, inappropriate eye contact, and sensory and perceptual sensitivities. Asperger's syndrome affects students in the average to above average ability range.

The following table provides a summary of the range of approaches that have been developed to meet the needs of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). A decision to use a particular approach should be based on an in-depth knowledge of the student, what one wishes to teach and what the student needs to learn.

Approaches commonly used with students with ASDs

Interactive Approaches	Emphasis is placed on assisting the student in developing relationships and engaging in reciprocal communication through structuring naturalistic and incidental learning and teaching contexts.
Communicative Approaches	Students' communications skills are specifically targeted, promoted and developed through the use of approaches such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), the Lámh manual signing system and/or the use of real objects, symbols, pictures, photographs, drawings and written words.
TEACCH	The Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH) approach is based on the rationale that students with ASDs progress better in structured rather than in unstructured environments and incorporates a physical organisation of the environment, visual schedules, work-systems and task organisation.
Social Stories™	Social Stories™ are designed to enable the student to cope with social situations which he/she finds difficult. They are visual, identify relevant cues, provide easily accessible accurate information for the student and describe expected behaviours. Role play and video may be used to enhance this process.
Inclusion	Inclusion is used as the learning medium and students are taught to directly participate in activities with their non-ASD peers. 'Buddy systems', circle of friends approaches and Social Stories™ are successfully used to promote this process. The importance of providing mainstream peers with accurate, ageappropriate, ASD-awareness information in inclusive settings is stressed.
Behavioural Approaches	Behavioural approaches originate from Skinner's work in the 1950s and focus on modifying and shaping student's behaviour. The behavioural techniques of reinforcement, shaping, promoting and prompt-fading underpin the programme.
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Computers have features that distinctively appeal to students with ASDs. Information and Communication Technology may be used to support all areas of the curriculum and to meet student's needs associated with the triad of impairments. Concealing the computer and incorporating the computer in the student's daily work schedule are effective strategies for controlling computer access.



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