

## Level J descriptor

Description of needs: Likely to have a diagnosis of ASD or needs that present very similarly, and moderate to severe learning difficulties and associated needs.

### Cognition and Learning

- Children and young people should / are likely to have a diagnosis of Autism. Some may not yet have a diagnosis or may have a social communication difficulty and associated needs that present in a very similar way to children and young people with Autism, requiring a specialist approach in line with best practice for children and young people with Autism.
- Children and young people will also have learning disabilities within the moderate learning difficulties range (MLD).
  - should /are likely to have Autism identified as their primary need and are likely to have other co-occurring conditions and / or associated needs such as anxiety that is likely to affect their social, emotional, mental health and general well-being and may limit their access to a broad range of life opportunities.
- Additional needs may be because of:
  - Previous or recent trauma
  - Mental well-being
  - Significant change in circumstances
  - Medical, physical and/or sensory needs
  - Behaviours that can challenge that are mainly because of difficulties arising from their needs
  - Social and economic factors
  - Complex family circumstances and needs
- will have attainment significantly below expected levels in most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate intervention. Attainment at YR is likely to be at 22-36 months and at Y7 accessing a year 1 curriculum.
- will be able to maintain attention on suitable differentiated activities for sustained periods in a suitably structured supportive environment, particularly on subjects of specific interest.
- will have differences in their attainment, retention of learning and present with an uneven cognitive learning profile which could mask/disguise their needs and are likely to make small steps of progress (depending on their individual needs).
- will have needs that affect how they understand their environment, communicate, process information (including sensory information), their social understanding and their ability to form relationships.
- may have significantly more difficulty than their mainstream peers in acquiring basic functional skills and applying them in the correct context and generalising these to other contexts.
- will respond positively over time to the interventions embedded within their support network and will make progress in response to autism specific strategies and interventions.
- may have a spiky profile, with higher achievement in some areas of the curriculum.
- Some pupils will have difficulties / anxieties around using the toilet which may impact on their anxiety and learning.

### Communication and Interaction

- may present an uneven profile within their expressive and receptive language and communication skills which may lead to frustration and / or lack of engagement in learning and / or social interactions.
- may have spoken language that is echolalic.
- may be highly articulate which may not give a true reflection of their understanding resulting in their communication and interaction difficulties not being evident to others.
- may have difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships which is likely to impact on their learning and may increase their vulnerability.
- may have difficulties in reciprocal social interaction and communication (such as their ability to make appropriate peer relationships, appropriate use of non- verbal communication, difficulties expressing/reading/regulating emotions and / or following another person's lead).
- may be non-verbal or have selective mutism.

### Social, emotional, and mental health

- will have difficulties with regulating their emotions, behaviours, and responses to social situations. This may also be greatly impacted by puberty and their understanding of these changes and expectations.
- may communicate their needs through distressed behaviours (such as shut down or melt down) that may be harmful or unsafe towards themselves and others.
- may be negatively affected by their perception of their autism / needs and how they are impacted by this. This may lead to low self-esteem and poor mental health.
- may be limited in their access to community and leisure opportunities by their autism / needs.
- may have restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests, movements, and activities that can cause barriers in their ability to access learning opportunities.
- may display vulnerability and naivety in social relationship, sexual health, mental health, independence, stranger danger, and online activity and will have difficulties in assessing risks and keeping themselves safe.
- May have specific anxieties / phobias.

### Sensory, physical, and medical needs

- will have difficulties with sensory overload which will impact on their ability to access learning and the curriculum.
- may have fine and / or gross motor difficulties.
- may have a visual and / or hearing difficulty.
- may have difficulties with digestion and constipation.

### Staff training and expertise

Staff working with these children and young people require specialist and ongoing training to understand and meet physical, learning, sensory and health needs. This will include training on:

- Specific ICT support programmes / software.

- Moving and handling (Manual Handling) training: to ensure competent safe practice and minimise children and young people risk to body shape e.g. contractures impact on health, mobility, and provision
- Delivery of therapy programmes, including ongoing guidance and assessment of competency assessed by all health professionals (physiotherapists, occupational therapists etc.) to ensure effective support of healthcare and mobility needs.
- Delivery of integrated therapy programmes, focus on functional independence and life skills
- Medical needs and procedures e.g. epilepsy, eating and drinking problems), including ongoing guidance and assessment of competency assessed by health professionals (school nursing team).

## Level descriptor J support needed

### Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- An Autism specific specialist approach to minimise barriers to learning and enable progress.
- Will be able to access a subject-specific curriculum delivered to meet their developmental stage.
- The curriculum will need to be highly differentiated, and children and young people will require an individualised approach considering their specific interests and needs
- The focus of the curriculum is on embedding functional skills and increasing independence. Preparation for adulthood is key at every stage of learning
- Concepts and abstract ideas will need to be taught repeatedly and rehearsed in other contexts. This may help them to generalise skills across several different social contexts.
- A predictable and structured routine, usually in class sizes of 8 – 10.
- A higher level of adult support in younger classes with 3 / 4 additional staff (depending on class size and needs), reducing to 2 / 3 in secondary years.
- Support in understanding their diagnosis/ needs and the implications.
- Support in understanding why personal care and hygiene is important and how to manage this independently.
- A high level of pastoral support to move towards greater independence and life skills. Preparation for the next stage in their lives is embedded throughout the curriculum.
- Children and young people are encouraged to participate in pupil-centred planning and supported when needed.
- Older young people will need access to FE College Link courses and work experience, with some needing greater levels of support for this.
- The appropriateness of the provision is reviewed annually and assessed at transition point at Y1, Y5, Y9 and Y11.

### Environment

- Access to enabling learning environments that considers the needs of an Autistic learner, including their sensory needs and adapted as appropriate.
- Access to proximal indoor and outdoor spaces for when their anxiety is high, and they are experiencing sensory overload. These should include spaces across the school environment that support children and young people to self-regulate.
- Easy and frequent access to a local community that facilitates the development of a range of functional skills in a real-life settings in preparation for adult life.
- Likely to be grouped in classes according to their needs and abilities. Class groupings will consider:
  - Age
  - Peer group
  - Communication stage
  - Developmental stage
  - Environmental factors
- Due to their spiky profile and higher ability in some curriculum areas, some children and young people would benefit from access to a mainstream school for specific subjects, or a dual placement.

### Behaviour support

- Enhanced staffing levels may need to be provided to address needs to lower identified risks (and support individual behaviour support plans)
- Regular support and guidance on keeping themselves safe in a variety of contexts including online and in the wider community.
- Multi-agency and family support
- Varying levels of inter-agency co-operation and planning, which may include health teams, sensory needs team etc.
- Children and young people require support from a multi-disciplinary team in line with provision identified within their EHCP.
- Close liaison between the school and the family to support and joined up approach, including using family workers / support to help recognise training and support needs in the home and community as well as school and help prepare for meaningful adulthood.
- Some children and young people children and young people may require mentoring, counselling or long-term inter-agency co-operation and planning.
- Some children and young people will require input from a range of agencies, including specific therapists. This will have been identified in their EHCP.

### Staff training and expertise

- Teaching and support will be provided by a team with appropriate specialist skills, experience, and ongoing training in autism.
- Delivery of integrated therapy programmes, focus on functional independence and life skills

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- [Neutral](#)
- [No](#)