



INCLUSION



NEWSLETTER

MARCH
2026

Welcome to the Inclusion Newsletter for Term 4.

Our focus this term is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as the week beginning Monday 30th March marks the beginning of World Autism Acceptance Week for 2026.

Riverside has a specialist provision for children with ASD, which is fully integrated with the mainstream classes. We also have lots of other children throughout the school with a diagnosis of Autism. We believe it is really important that everyone in our school learns about the condition, so that they are aware of the various ways in which we can support Autistic people, and can show understanding when children with ASD are finding things difficult or feeling overwhelmed. Next week, all children will be taking part in ASD awareness activities, so please do ask them at home to share what they have learned.

There is lots of support available locally for parents of children with ASD (either diagnosed or suspected/under investigation), including a Medway Support Group run by the Kent Autistic Trust, which offers opportunities for parents of children with ASD to meet and chat to others with similar experiences. You can find out more about what they offer by visiting the website at <https://www.katfamilysupport.co.uk/home>. I would also like to mention 'Club Ausome', a charity which was founded by a parent whose daughter attended Riverside's specialist ASD Provision a few years ago. This organisation aims to offer children and families lots of different opportunities to learn, socialise, have fun and be with others that won't judge. They provide a wide range of activities for Autistic children and their families, including coffee mornings, youth clubs, sensory play sessions and day trips to places like wildlife parks and theatre shows. You can visit www.clubausome.co.uk to find out more. Finally, I would highlight the Family Action 'Small Steps' service, which provides a variety of support to families both pre- and post-diagnosis. Find more details here: <https://family-action.org.uk/services/medway-small-steps/>

We have listed some other websites overleaf which will be useful for finding out more information about ASD and sourcing support and advice.

As always, if you have any queries or concerns about your child's additional needs, or any other aspect of SEND or Inclusion, please don't hesitate to contact us at the school.



Wishing you all a lovely Easter Break when it comes!

Mrs Huggett and Mrs Richardson



SPOTLIGHT ON AUTISM



Key Information

Autism is a lifelong disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others. It is a spectrum condition, meaning that people with ASD will be affected in different ways, and will need varying levels of support.

There are a wide range of behaviours associated with ASD, but the most common traits include:

- ~ Difficulties with social communication – interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language. Autistic people may need help or extra time to process what is said to them, and may not understand gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice or body language. It is common for children with ASD to have a speech and language delay.
- ~ Difficulties with social interaction – being able to empathise with other people and express their own emotions appropriately. Some people with autism find it hard to form friendships and may easily become anxious or overwhelmed in social situations.
- ~ Difficulties coping with changes to routines, wanting things to be exactly as expected and often displaying repetitive behaviours or having obsessions and fixations.
- ~ Difficulties with sensory processing – being either over- or under-responsive to sounds, smells or textures, maybe having a limited diet.

Did You Know?

Around 1 in every 100 children in the UK has a diagnosis of Autism. It appears to be more common in males than females, although there is research to suggest that females are better at 'masking' their difficulties and are therefore less frequently diagnosed.



Useful Websites

www.autism.org.uk

www.childautism.org.uk

<https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-autism/>

<https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/find-information/parenting-perspectives/parenting-autistic-child/>

Handy Hints

~ People with ASD benefit from having clear, simple instructions to follow. It is often helpful to minimise the use of language and use familiar pictures or keywords instead.

~ Try to keep things consistent, and make sure that wherever possible they are warned in advance of any changes to their normal routine. Visual timetables and the use of 'first... then...' can help.

~ Give them safe ways to express themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed. Children who tend to lash out could have a bean bag or pillow to squeeze instead; children who prefer to withdraw could have a blanket to wrap themselves in, or a tent in which to hide. We can provide you with Zones of Regulation resources which help children to increase awareness of their own emotions and feelings, and find strategies that support calming.

