



INFORMATION SHEET

Age Group: **Adolescents and Young Adults**

Sheet Title: **Education and Training**

Students with AS may have difficulty paying attention to relevant cues or information in their environment, and may focus their attention only on a restricted part of the environment, to the exclusion of what is relevant (i.e. a student may look at the ball, but not at the person to whom the ball is to be thrown).

Many children or adolescents with Asperger's Syndrome may also be affected by ADD.

Students with AS may also have difficulty disengaging and shifting attention from one stimulus to the next, which may contribute to the characteristic rigidity and resistance to change. They may also demonstrate a short attention span.

Information presented to students with Asperger's Syndrome, and any instructional activities planned for them, should be provided in a format that is emphasising the most relevant information in order to focus their attention.

Parents of students with AS can provide valuable information by sharing the methods they use to help their children focus. Ideally, a plan will include helping the student to manage these strategies themselves eventually.

Students with Asperger's Syndrome can be very sensitive to sensory issues (light, sound, taste, texture, proximity and smell), which can lead to inappropriate behaviour.

For example, people with severe sensory processing problems may entirely shut-down to avoid aversive stimuli or over-stimulation. Tantrums may be related to the desire to escape situations that are over-stimulating. Self-stimulating behaviours may help the individual calm down when stimuli become overwhelming, by generating a self-controlled, repetitive stimulus, i.e. rocking or flapping.



For any teacher who has a child or adolescent with AS in his or her class the most important thing to do is to look at the needs of that individual, in consultation with the AS and their parents, and consider all his or her specific problems.

Then plans can be made to practically deal with the things which cause the individual with AS anxiety, which in turn can lead to worse problems, i.e. if the child with AS finds the noisy halls difficult to deal with, allow that child to wait until the halls are clearer until making his or her way to their next class. Or if the child with AS finds the lunch room makes him or her anxious, allow them to eat their lunch in a quiet room elsewhere. Or if the individual with AS finds the school uniform uncomfortable and painful, allow his or her parents to find a suitable alternative, without being rigid in the keeping of School Rules.

If a child or adolescent with AS is to fit into the mainstream school system without encountering problems such as bullying (see section on this topic), then the school needs to accommodate them in a flexible way. Small concessions in these practical areas will lead to huge improvements in other areas.

A teacher or head teacher needs to look at the bigger picture. Is it preferable to have a child rocking and moaning under a desk because his or her shoes are agonising? Surely it would be better and less disruptive to allow this child to leave their shoes at the classroom door?

Once diagnosed, it is important that young people are offered a mix of education, social skills and communication within a caring environment. If this is achieved, then the child with AS can thrive in an educational environment.