



St Matthew's

Church of England Primary Academy

A member of 

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Dear Parents,

I hope you are all keeping well – we are nearly through January so let's keep going! There is better weather to come.

This term's newsletter is mainly about Autism Spectrum Disorder – some children have a diagnosis but many go undiagnosed but display some characteristics. We are experienced in supporting children who have symptoms of ASD and receive advice from speech and language therapists, specialist teachers and Educational Psychologists. We are also using a program called Widgit to produce visuals and symbols to help communication and give choices to children who struggle with verbal communication. This has been really useful in producing personalised timetables and parents have asked for visuals to be used at home which help in routines and preparing children for changes.

The core symptoms of autism are: social communication challenges and restricted, repetitive behaviours. Many children with autism have sensory issues. These typically involve over- or under-sensitivities to sounds, lights, touch, tastes, smells, pain and other stimuli.

Social communication challenges: Children with autism have difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication. For example, they may not understand or appropriately use:

Spoken language (around a third of people with autism are nonverbal)

Gestures

Eye contact

Facial expressions

Tone of voice

Expressions not meant to be taken literally

Additional social challenges can include difficulty with:

Recognising emotions and intentions in others

Recognising one's own emotions

Expressing emotions

Seeking emotional comfort from others

Feeling overwhelmed in social situations

Taking turns in conversation

Gauging personal space (appropriate distance between people)

Restricted and repetitive behaviours

Restricted and repetitive behaviours vary greatly across the autism spectrum. They can include:

Repetitive body movements (e.g. rocking, flapping, spinning, running back and forth)

Repetitive motions with objects (e.g. spinning wheels, shaking sticks, flipping levers)

Staring at lights or spinning objects

Ritualistic behaviours (e.g. lining up objects, repeatedly touching objects in a set order)

Narrow or extreme interests in specific topics

Need for unvarying routine/resistance to change (e.g. same daily schedule, meal menu, clothes, route to school)

If you think your child may have some characteristics of ASD and you want more information or support, please contact me at school.

Yours faithfully,



Headteacher: Mark Mackley



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