

Autism Friendly School Audit – September 2025

Parents, pupils and staff participated in an Autism Friendly Audit. This valuable initiative was delivered by the SAFR team from Surrey County Council, whose mission is to ensure that school environments, processes and support systems are inclusive and welcoming for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The audit involved a comprehensive approach, including questionnaires, personal interviews, parental discussions, observations and a full tour of the school. The findings have been both insightful and encouraging. We received initial detailed feedback from the SAFR team, highlighting areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement. We pride ourselves on maintaining an open mind and a willingness to embrace new ideas and constructive feedback. Some recommendations can be implemented swiftly, while others will be thoughtfully embedded into our school procedures over time. This is an important step forward in our ongoing commitment to inclusivity.

The children had the opportunity to express their thoughts about what makes them feel anxious or what can be challenging, and they also completed a questionnaire. These insights were kindly shared with us by SAFR, and the overall findings were very positive.

See below feedback from the audit and the key changes which we made to the school as a result.

Change to Bells

Following the Autism Friendly School Audit we have already implemented one key change already made is the reduction of school bells. Many autistic individuals find loud noises including bells disturbing and distracting and the autistic adults reported that they found the bells a stark contrast to the gentle and welcoming atmosphere of the school. Bells are not popular or common and so their reduction is a sensible step to take. Most bells that remain are the start of day, end of morning play, end of lunch and wellbeing bell at the end of the day reminding staff to go home. The majority of the bells occur when children are in the playground not in the school building, and this will allay the fears and anxieties for the ASD children and speaking to some of them, they are already very grateful for this change.

Visual Timetables

As part of our commitment to being an autism friendly school, every classroom has a clear visual timetable on display on each day. At the start of each day, teachers take time to go through the day's routine with pupils and this remains on the board. This simple but important practice helps autistic children, and those with autistic traits, to feel calm and prepared for the day ahead. Following our recent autism friendly review by SAFR (SCC), this approach was highlighted as good practice for the school to maintain. We would like to thank all staff for consistently talking through the daily

schedule and ensuring this visual display is available. It makes a significant difference to creating a settled and supportive learning environment for all.

Reducing Anxiety and Increasing Belonging

Following feedback from SAFR (SCC) about how to make the school more autism friendly – the children reported that there are some times where they feel more anxious and some situations can be unnerving. One of these in the cloakroom transitions at the start of the day, playtimes and lunchtimes. Recent research shows that children develop a stronger sense of belonging if they are greeted and monitored closely at transitions. Teachers always greet their own class at the start of the day and at the start of the afternoon (after lunch). In addition to this teachers and staff have been reminded to monitor the cloakrooms more closely and to ensure there is less crowding whilst coats and bags are being hung up or collected. We hope this will go toward lowering anxiety levels for those children with ASD or similar traits and extends the welcoming practices we have in school already.

Quiet and Friendly

Children told us they appreciate quiet classrooms and calm activities throughout the day. While some lessons, such as Design & Technology or orienteering, are naturally more interactive, most activities remain calm and structured, which they find reassuring.

Our visitors observed several strengths in our approach, including:

- Low-demand questioning by teachers, helping children feel comfortable.
- Friendly and supportive staff, creating a welcoming environment.
- Positive teaching strategies, with many teachers offering 'brain breaks' and tailored resources for children who need them.

Behind the scenes, we also use specific pedagogical systems that children may not always notice. To help them understand and appreciate these strategies, we plan to promote them more clearly in class. This will ensure children can connect the calm and clear classroom environment to the thoughtful measures we have put in place.