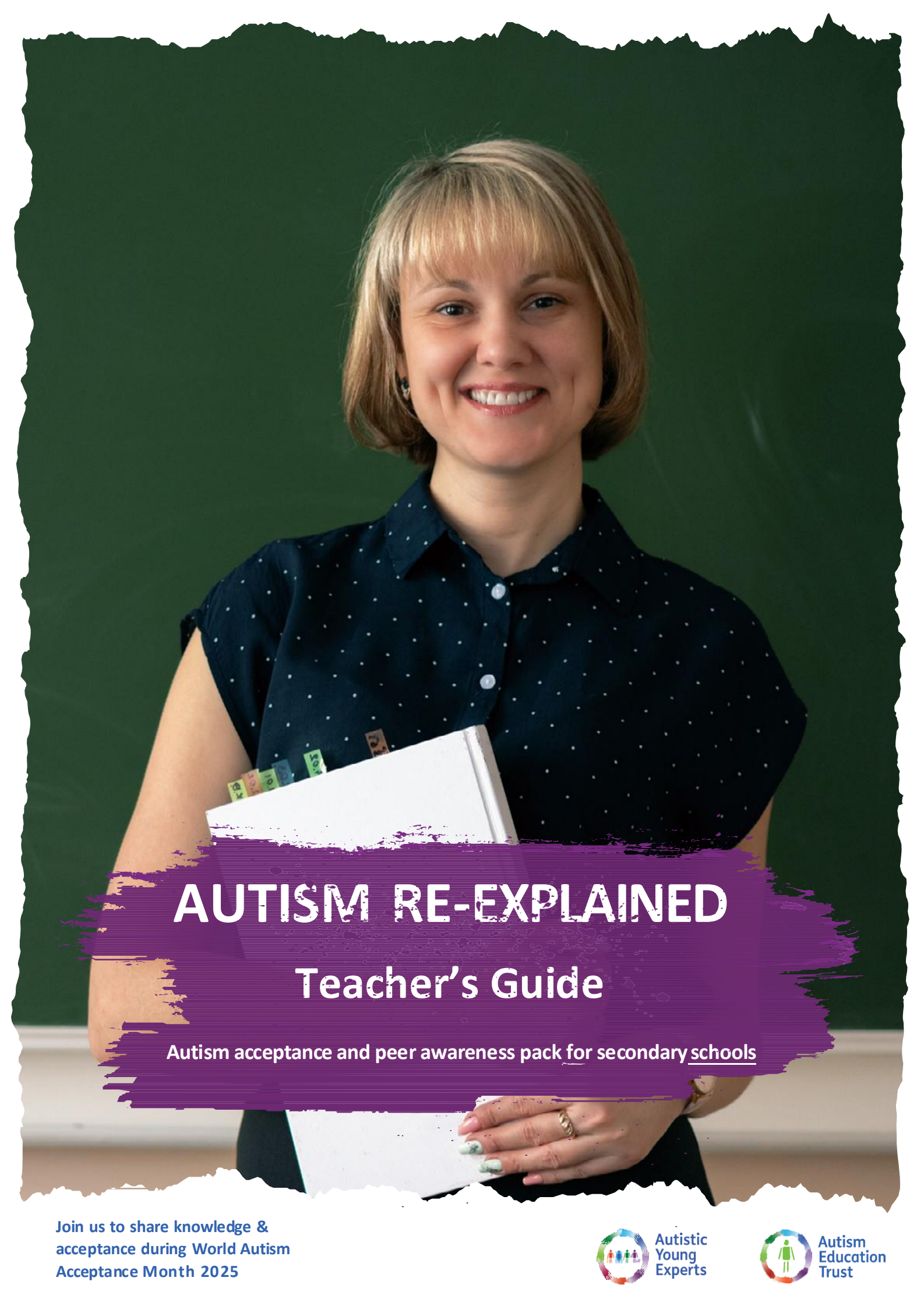




AUTISM RE-EXPLAINED

Teacher's Guide

Autism acceptance and peer awareness pack for secondary schools

Join us to share knowledge &
acceptance during World Autism
Acceptance Month 2025



Autistic
Young
Experts



Autism
Education
Trust

Teacher's Guide

The Teacher's Guide resource pack will help you talk about autism with your students.

It contains the following resources :

- **Important information to read before delivering the lessons:**

- Introduction to Autism and key terminology
- Things to bear in mind
- FAQs from students
- Links to further learning and resources

Two Lesson Plans:

A bitesize version (25 - 30 minutes)

A full-length version (50 - 55 minutes)

These include links to 5 educational videos covering the following topics:

[Communication](#)

[Sensory Differences](#)

[Special Interests](#)

[The Small Things That Make a Difference](#)

[What Kindness Means to Me](#)



Materials to support teaching

Introduction

These resources have been created as an introduction to autism and to help young people think about how they can support their autistic peers.

These sessions are just the beginning. This should not be a one-off conversation with students but a way to ignite understanding and start to foster an inclusive environment of acceptance and celebration.

Through their experiences in education, we know that improving understanding and acceptance amongst their peers is one of the most important things that can happen. For there to be a truly inclusive educational setting, the whole school community - the students as well as the staff - need to value difference and be supportive of autistic students.

How the lessons can be used

The lesson plans can be used in a way that suits you and your group of students the best. For example, you can use either the bitesize session (25 – 30 minutes) if you are limited on time or the full length version (50 – 55 minutes) to go into more depth. Both will introduce the topic of autism to your students and initiate important discussions.

The lessons are centred around videos our Autistic Young Experts have created to talk about different elements of autism. These videos are then followed by an activity to promote discussion and reflection.

If you would prefer, you can also deliver the session over five 10-minute ~~blocks~~ (for example during tutor time), focussing on a different topic each time. ~~This~~ could involve watching one video, followed by its activity and so on.



The Autistic Young Experts



The AET Autistic Young Experts are a group of autistic 16-25-year-olds, who meet online every month. The group add their voice and life experience to AET projects and input into the strategy of the AET. Since 2016, this group of young people have shared their voice and lived-experiences to steer the work we do.

In the past, the panel have been involved in activities such as, speaking at events, co- delivering training, sharing their experiences with professionals in film and contributing to national consultations and research projects.

[Click here to find out more about the Autistic Young Experts and what they do.](#) Below,

the Autistic Young Experts describe what they do in their own words:



We are a panel made up of autistic young people from across England.



We have different experiences of education and of being autistic.



We bring experience of different types of education from home education, mainstream, specialist, alternative provision, college and university.



While we are all autistic, that doesn't make our experiences the same. Many of us struggled with education and we don't want that to be the experience for other autistic young people.

[Click here](#) to watch a short video and meet the Autistic Young Experts

About Autism

Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease. It means your brain works in a different way from other people. Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a “cure”. Autism is a processing difference that can have an impact on many areas of a person’s life.

Autistic people will experience differences in three key areas:



Social Understanding and Communication



Sensory Processing and Integration



Flexible Thinking, Information Processing and Understanding

There is no ‘typical’ autistic person.

While autistic people share these similar characteristics to some degree, they are also all different from each other. This is because autism is considered a spectrum. The autism spectrum is not linear from high to low but varies in every way that one person might vary from another. Every autistic individual has their own strengths, differences and needs, their own life journey and their own unique story.



About Autism

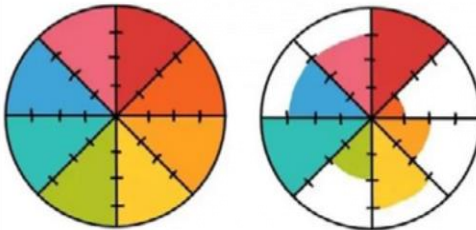
Autism Spectrum

The Autism Spectrum is NOT linear



less autistic very autistic

The Autism Spectrum looks more like:



- Social differences
- interests
- repetitions
- sensory sensitivities
- emotional regulation
- perception
- executive functioning
- other

Terms like "high functioning", "low functioning" are harmful and outdated.

Autism_sketches



very autistic

Legend:

- Social differences
- Interests
- repetitions
- sensory sensitivities
- emotional regulation
- perception
- executive functioning
- other

Autism_sketches

You can find out more about the three key areas of difference by watching the following video, [Why Autism is a Difference, not a Deficit.](#)

Terminology

Over the years there have been a lot of changes and differences to how people talk about and understand autism.

Some young people see autism as their identity and would like you to use 'autistic person' (this is the preference of the Autistic Young Expert's Panel). Others may prefer to use 'has autism' or 'is on the autism spectrum' to describe themselves. Always ask the young person what their preference is.

It is also best to avoid using terms like 'suffer' or 'disease' and 'high/low functioning'. High/ low functioning is not a useful way to describe an autistic person and their needs.

Please refer to the [AET Terminology Guide](#) for more guidance on how to talk about autism when delivering these sessions.

Things to bear in mind

Very important - please read this before you deliver any of these sessions:

- Some autistic young people may not know about their diagnosis and attending an assembly or taking part in a lesson could raise their feelings of difference. Ensure that you have checked in advance with their families about the way they want this to be approached.
- Alongside peer awareness, there may be a need for supporting young autistic people to understand, accept and celebrate their own diagnosis.
- Be aware that running these lessons or assemblies may raise questions for some young people about themselves or people they know. After leading the lesson or assembly, provide a box for anonymous questions. This allows young people to ask questions without the pressure of being identified.
- Even if your young people are aware of their diagnosis, let them know that you'll be discussing autism with their peers in lessons and/or assemblies, and give them an opportunity to contribute if they wish to do so.
- Inform their families so that they can provide extra support in case the young person becomes anxious about this topic being discussed.
- If the young person doesn't feel comfortable taking part in the lesson or assembly, ensure they have a choice in attending, and plan an alternative option.
- Do not single out young people within your setting by providing examples which reflect their behaviour, unless this has been previously agreed.
- Do not call on them to provide support or give their personal experiences if they have not explicitly given permission.
- If a young person does want to be involved in the assembly or lesson, allow them to set the boundaries of what they share and how they do so.
- Do not solely focus on exceptional autistic people such as celebrities or inventors when you are trying to explain autism. This adds to stereotypes about autism and is not always helpful.
- Encourage everyone to speak positively about autism. Make sure that you yourself are using positive language and are focusing on differences and not deficits.
- After leading the lesson, signpost the young people to the list of trusted resources, so they can learn more on their own if they wish.
- Educational professionals should always be honest about their level of knowledge and experience – young people are not expecting you to be an expert on autism.
- Admit when you are unsure about something and commit to find out more information from a trusted source.
- You can use the AET Terminology Guide to help you. Available [here](#).

Possible FAQs from students

Q: Are you born with autism / How do you get autism?

A: It is likely people are born autistic. Whether or not someone receives the label of being 'autistic' is largely due to whether they have gone through a diagnostic process. How autistic traits show in a person is heavily determined by the environment and culture they grow up in. Autism is likely genetic but whether they identify as autistic and how their traits show differs between individuals.

Q: How do you know if you (or someone else) is autistic?

A: There is no way to tell if someone is autistic just by looking at them. Someone could be autistic and they may not even know it themselves. The only way to know for certain if someone is autistic, is if they are happy to disclose it.

Q: Can autism be cured?

A: No, autism can not be cured. Being autistic is just as part of who someone is and if someone is autistic, they are autistic for life.



Possible FAQs from students

Q: If someone is autistic, does that mean they have a disability?

A: Autism is a processing difference that can have an impact on many areas of a person's life. Autistic people often experience differences in how they process information, their sensory environment and how they interact with other people. It is estimated that one in 100 children, teenagers and adults in the UK are autistic.

Over the years there have been many different terms and phrases used to describe autism, some of which are still in use today. However, more recently there has been a shift in understanding and changes and developments in how people talk about autism.

When you meet an autistic person, they might use different terms to describe themselves:

'Autistic person'

'On the spectrum'

'Person with autism'

'I have Asperger Syndrome'

Q: Talking about autism makes me nervous / anxious. I don't know what the correct language to use is?

A: When talking about autism don't use terms like 'suffer' or 'disease' or 'problems' or 'issues'. Autism is not a mental health condition or a disease, it is a different way of experiencing and processing the world around you.

Don't use 'high functioning' or 'low functioning'. Instead you could describe a person's support needs. Some autistic people may need higher levels of support than others.

People have different preferences of what they like used when describing them and autism, so it is always best to ask the individual themselves what their preference is.

Learn More: Resource Links



AET Resources:

[Terminology Guide.](#)

[Click here](#) to find more resources from the AET that may help you develop Good Autism Practice in your setting.

[Autism Education Trust Shop.](#)

[Autism Education Trust YouTube Channel.](#)

- [NAS – What is Autism?](#)
- [Young People Explain Autism.](#)
- [Ambitious about Autism - Autism and Associated Conditions.](#)
- [Autistic Young Experts YouTube Channel.](#)



World Autism Acceptance Month is the whole of April 2025

There are lots of different and creative ways to get involved including doing a 5km fundraising walk for the National Autistic Society or simply fundraising in your own way.

Find out more and get more resources to help you at www.autism.org.uk

For more information on autism and education, visit:

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk

Autism Education Trust

info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk



To hear more from our Autistic Young Experts, you can follow them on their YouTube channel:



Assistive technology enabled document

