

# Professional Development on autism for education staff

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# Overview

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**Why** should we focus on professional development for education staff?

**What** examples do we have that we can turn to?

**What** is the impact on pupils and staff?

**What** could be done in Latvia?

# The English context

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- Currently 2.2% of children in English schools have an autism diagnosis
- Approximately three quarters are in a mainstream school
  - With no support
  - With in-class support
  - In a specialist unit attached to the school
- The remainder are mainly in autism special schools
- Legislation underpins what happens in schools but it isn't autism specific
  - Obligation to make reasonable adjustments
- Professional knowledge has significantly improved but it is a long way from being perfect

# Why should we focus on professional development for education staff?

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## Schools...



Work within an **established framework**



Part of a larger framework



Staff are already trained



Naturalistic environment



# Why should we focus on professional development for education staff?

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## **Because the experience for many autistic pupils is not a positive one....**

*Because I did not fit in Because I was being bullied. Because I was too slow. Because I was too different. The classes were too overcrowded I was not being taught properly.*

*When I look back on my time in school it fills me with sadness. My parents tell me I started out as one of the top in my class but all the teasing and bullying, and the intensity of the noise, meant I got more and more unhappy.*

*If the experience has taught me anything or has had any impact on my life it has taught me that the only person I can rely on is myself.*

# Why should we focus on professional development for education staff?

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## **And many identify the important role teachers played in that experience**

*My teachers hated me. My teachers never helped me with anything. They blamed me for everything. My teachers bullied me and often singled me out in front of the class to be shamed, because I'd made a mistake*

*The staff didn't take the time to listen or get to know me properly.*

*Teachers need compulsory neurodiversity training, they need to stop labelling children who are different as naughty or bad. They need to stop blaming parents, for their own lack of understanding.*

# Why should we focus on professional development for education staff?

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## **Teachers often feel poorly equipped and unconfident about autism**

*To be honest I'm not comfortable with autistic children. I'm a little bit scared to approach them.*

*But how do I teach them? I don't know about different needs. It's terrifying.*

*Us not having training on autism is almost anti-inclusive.*

*Teachers just don't have the time – it's easier to stick them on the computer.*

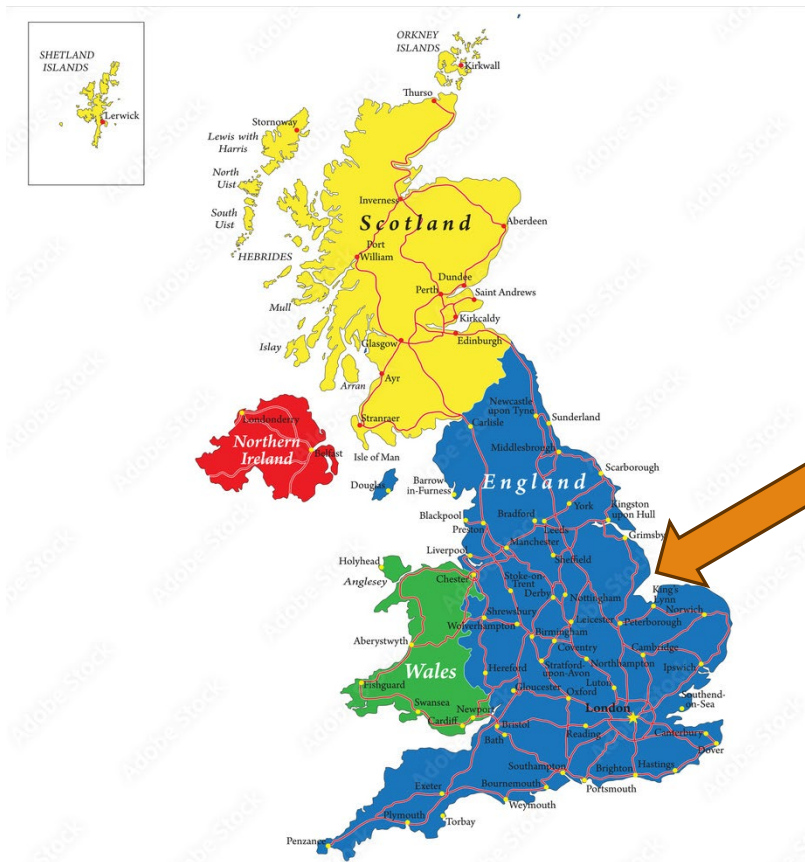
*We need to figure out what teachers should be asked to do. Too much is being expected of teachers today.*

*I just assumed they sat around all day eating mud.*

Ravet, J. (2018). 'But how do I teach them?': Autism & initial teacher education (ITE). *International journal of inclusive education*, 22(7), 714-733.

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

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child  
draw

# Inclusion Development Programme Primary and Secondary

Supporting pupils on the autism spectrum -

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

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## **What are some of the components to consider in terms of the model?**

1. Needs to be flexible but have a structure
2. As much as possible the design should be based on an assessment of local need
3. Some of what is delivered should be all-staff training
4. There should be more than one level depending on the needs of trainees
5. Consideration of settings
6. Content should be multimodal
7. Delivery model needs to be taken into consideration
8. Needs to build on existing skill

What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

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**Autism  
Education  
Trust**

## Frameworks

### Standards

School leaders can assess the standards of the school in regard to autism provision; to reflect, plan and implement improvements

### Competencies

School staff can reflect on their skills, knowledge and values and decide where improvements are required

## Professional Development Programme

### Making Sense of Autism

Ninety minutes; can be completed online; for all staff in school.

### Good Autism Practice

Six hours; delivered face to face; for those working regularly with autistic pupils.

### Additional modules

Ninety minutes. Topics include: school leadership; anxiety;

## Content

- ✓ Presentations
- ✓ Case studies
- ✓ Practical activities
- ✓ Videos
- ✓ References to other materials
- ✓ Discussion points
- ✓ Links to resources

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

## Understanding the Individual

### Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of each autistic pupil.

#### STANDARDS

**S1.** We are committed to developing knowledge about autism, and we gather information from a range of sources to fully understand the individual autistic pupil.

**S2.** We take into account how each pupil's co-occurring differences, including anxiety and stress, can affect behaviour and can cause barriers to learning. We are committed to understanding the causes and functions of behaviour.

#### COMPETENCIES

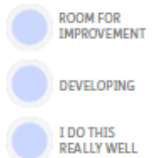
**C1.** I identify the key strengths and challenges pupils face in the areas of social understanding; flexibility, information understanding, and sensory processing.

**C2.** I recognise that many autistic pupils have co-occurring conditions and differences. They experience high levels of anxiety and stress, and these can create barriers to learning. I know that a pupil may display behaviour based on a combination of factors and I work hard to understand the causes and functions of the behaviour.

## Understanding the Individual

**Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of each autistic pupil.**

**Competency Two: I recognise that many autistic pupils have co-occurring conditions and differences. They experience high levels of anxiety and stress, and these can create barriers to learning. I know that a pupil may display behaviour based on a combination of factors and I work hard to understand the causes and functions of the behaviour.**



### Examples of how we can do this:

I have a good understanding of autism and co-occurring conditions. I am able to develop a holistic understanding of the child's individual needs based on this knowledge.



I work closely with the pupil, parents/carers, and other staff to identify and understand the reasons for and the functions of behaviour, particularly if it signifies distress. I use positive behavioural support for learning, and functional behavioural analysis to understand the functions of behaviours, and plan effective and individualised approaches.



I record any co-occurring conditions and differences of children I work with in the one-page child profile and I ensure medical records are up-to-date.



### Links to statutory frameworks

A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual's needs is identified, not simply the primary need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs and seek to address them all (SEND Code of Practice, 2014:96).

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

## Understanding Autism

### The impact of the three areas of difference:



**Social understanding  
and communication**



**Flexibility, information  
processing, and understanding**

**We need to look at these differences in terms of support needs that might arise. We need to look at these differences on the pupil's levels of anxiety.**

Check if delegates have attended 'Making Sense of Autism'. You can recap on the three areas of difference if you think delegates need it.

#### Key points

- Autistic pupils have differences in three areas of development. Every pupil will have a range of abilities within each of these areas.
- Highlight that strengths and barriers to learning may arise as a result of the areas of difference.
- Many autistic pupils will have high levels of anxiety as a result of these differences.

#### Examples of impact

1) Social understanding and communication: The pupil may be preverbal or echolalic (repeating what is said to them, reciting songs or poems). They may need more time to process what is being said to them, may not understand instructions given generally to the group. May not know how to play, as they cannot read the signs.

2) Flexibility, information processing and understanding: tendency to like routine and "sameness" in everyday events: clothes, food, etc. They may be very interested in certain areas that interest them, but less willing to engage with a range of activities. Can find it very difficult to see things from another's perspective.

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

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## **How materials are delivered**

- Videos
- Activities
- Reflection on practice
- Practical strategies and tools to take away



# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

## Practical Support Pack



Autism Education Trust

Schools

**Practical Support Pack:**  
Making Sense of Autism in Schools

A collection of practical tools, templates, top tips, checklists and strategies for busy professionals to use to support autistic children.

Autism Education Trust

Department for Education

Autistic Young Experts

CPD CREDIT

Autism Education Trust

**Schools MSA Tool 2: One Page Profile**

Autistic pupils will all have differences in:

- social understanding and communication
- information processing, flexibility and understanding
- sensory processing and integration

A pupil's skills and differences will vary from individual to individual. In order to meet the needs of autistic pupils, it is vital to get to know them as an individual.

All staff who work with the pupil should understand both their strengths and differences and know how to support participation and learning. It is therefore useful to build a profile and ensure it is shared with relevant staff, including supply staff and any new staff.

**What is it?**

The profile should summarise the key information that staff need to know in order to work with and support the pupil. It should be based on a detailed and robust assessment taken over time, and signpost any additional information staff need to be aware of. It should highlight what the pupil is good at and also any areas where they may need additional support as well as letting staff and others know what their preferred means of communication is.

**When should it be used?**

To encourage staff to listen to the pupil's voice through observation and discussion with those who know the pupil best.

When a new pupil starts at the setting, the key worker should begin to gather information for the profile through assessment, observation and consultation with the pupil and their parents.

Profiles should be updated regularly to reflect progress and changes in support needs.

The profile should be updated ahead of any transitions to new settings so it can be shared with any new staff members who will be working with the pupil.

**How to use it?**

You may find this profile template useful. It should be adapted to reflect the pupil, not all headings may be relevant.

Complete with at least two members of staff who know the pupil well. Circulate to staff as appropriate.

**Schools MSA Tool 2: One Page Profile**

When you can do to help me:	My name is:  I am _____ years old I communicate by:	What is important to me:
What people like and admire about me:	<b>Me</b>  Click to add photo here	My strengths & talents:
My dream is to:	My fears / worries / things I don't like:	My favourite things:

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?

## Activities Pack

Understanding the Individual

**Activity 3: One Page Profile**


Tool – One Page Profile template







Think of an autistic pupil you currently work with. What might be included on their OPP? What do you think the pupil/ pupil's parents would say in response to the headings?

How is this information sought in your setting/ by whom?  
How often are OPP's updated in your setting?

Discussion

Making Sense of Autism in Schools • 2017 Schools Professional Development [Page 44/50](#)



Activity 3 – Understanding the Individual – OPP

Think of an autistic pupil you currently work with.

**What might be included on their OPP? What do you think the pupil/ pupil's parents would say in response to the headings?**

Resources: One Page Profile template

Instructions:

- Divide the delegates into groups of 2 or 3 if training is delivered face to face. Otherwise, delegates work individually online.
- One delegate is a copy of the OPP template.
- Ask delegates to think of an autistic pupil they currently work with/ or have historically. Can they already think about what might be included on the OPP? What do they think the pupil/ pupil's parents would say in response to the headings?
- Discuss what/ how this information might best be sought.
- Think about how often these could be updated in their setting.


Reflection:


- Discuss where they are/ could be stored to ensure all staff have access to them.
- Is there any changes to practice (specific to OPP's) that could be made following the training?

Learning:

- Reflect on the individual pupil's strengths and needs. One size does not fit all.
- Consider tools to gather information.
- Identify key adults (parents/careers/other professionals) who can support you to help the pupil learn and develop.

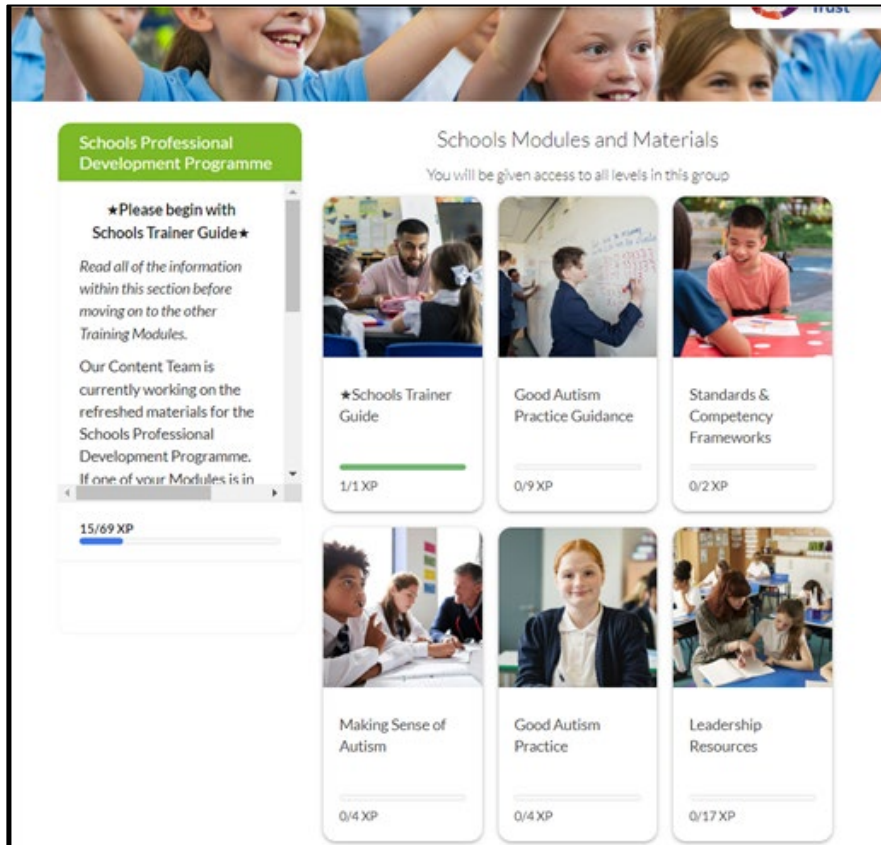
TOOL 2: One Page Profile template

5 Activities for Making Sense of Autism in Schools 



Autism Educa

# What examples do we have out there that we can turn to?



**Schools Professional Development Programme**







**Schools Modules and Materials**  
You will be given access to all levels in this group

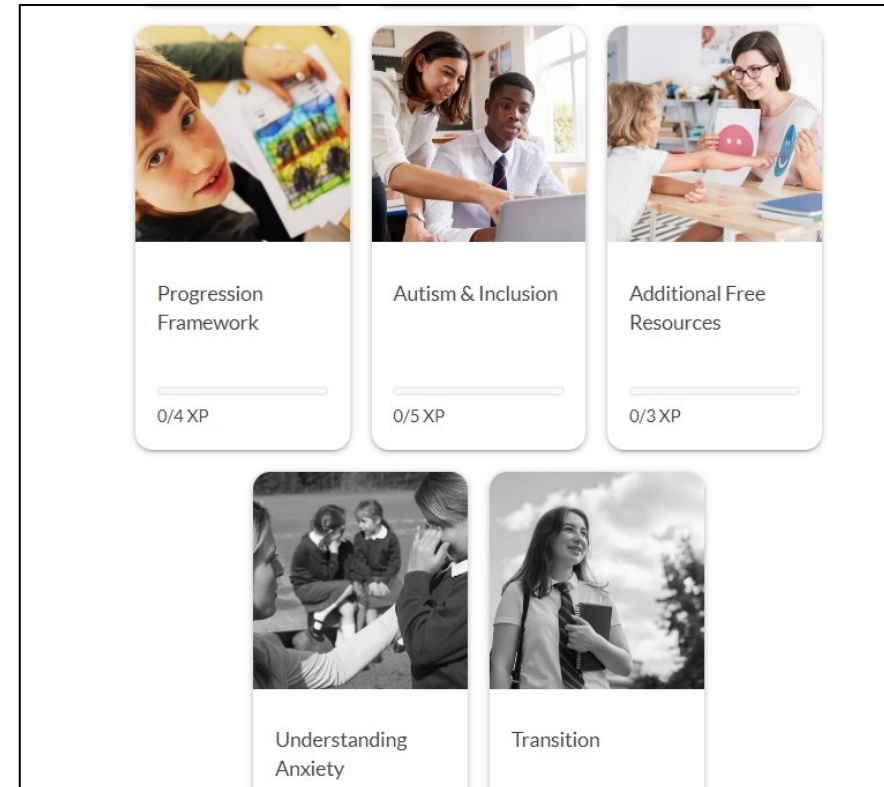
★Please begin with Schools Trainer Guide★






Read all of the information within this section before moving on to the other Training Modules.

Our Content Team is currently working on the refreshed materials for the Schools Professional Development Programme. If one of your Modules is in

15/69 XP

 ★Schools Trainer Guide 1/1 XP	 Good Autism Practice Guidance 0/9 XP	 Standards & Competency Frameworks 0/2 XP
 Making Sense of Autism 0/4 XP	 Good Autism Practice 0/4 XP	 Leadership Resources 0/17 XP



 Progression Framework 0/4 XP	 Autism & Inclusion 0/5 XP	 Additional Free Resources 0/3 XP
 Understanding Anxiety	 Transition	

# What is the impact on pupils and staff?

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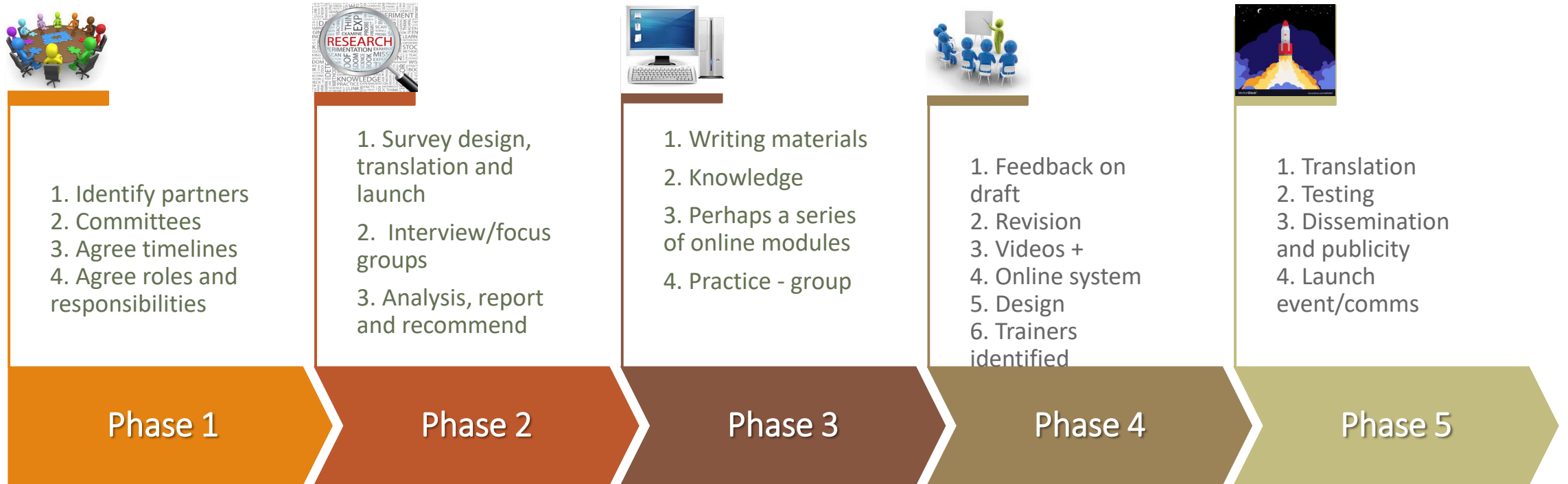
- Between April 2022 – 2023 almost 75,000 educational professionals in England received some professional development (across early years, schools and post-16).
- Approx 85% agree or strongly agree that both their knowledge has improved and it will beneficially impact their teaching
- Pre to post training there was a 20% increase in confidence levels working with autistic pupils
- Similarly there was a 20% increase in the application of autism-specific methods in the classroom

## What is the impact on pupils and staff?

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- Survey to parents showed an increase in the amount of inclusive practice
- Pupils report after training improvements in peer relationships. Also, improvements in other key areas of the training, such as their voice being listened to.

# What could be done in Latvia?



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# What could be done in Latvia?

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## What could school staff be doing differently?

*Some staff need to be more accepting of people with autism.*

*For teachers to understand what my working level is.*

*Tell us when the fire alarm is going on.*

*Have a wellbeing lesson so autism isn't used as an insult. Because, people are using it as an insult.*

*We process information quite slowly so give me a little extra time.*

*Don't pressure us as it can be overwhelming.*

*If I'm having a meltdown, please let me leave the classroom for a while.*

*I'd like staff to understand that this is a spectrum and that they don't have to treat us all the same.*



# Small things can make a big difference

**Schools MSA Tool 2: One Page Profile**

What you can do to help me:	My name is:  I am _____ years old I communicate by:	What is important to me:
What people like and admire about me:	<b>Me</b>  Click to add photo here	My strengths & talents:
My dream is to:	My fears / worries / things I don't like:	My favourite things:

*One-page profile*

Photo of young person here

*Like and admire*

This element needs to be a positive, proud list of the learner's qualities, strengths and talents.

Avoid words like 'usually' or 'sometimes' or anything that sounds like faint praise.

*What's important to an individual*

Include enough detail so someone who doesn't know the individual can understand what matters to them. If you took the names off the **one-page profiles** in a class, it should still be easy to identify everyone.

**Instead of this**      **...write this**

Loves break time      Playing games (usually involving running and skipping) with Hannah and her other close friends at break times.

Being organised      Having her pencil case and school bag packed the night before, and making sure her tray in class is tidy.

Having friends      Walking to school with her friend Ella every day, and sitting with Ella, Lucy and Nina at lunchtime.

*How to support an individual well at school*

Include enough detail that a supply teacher could immediately support the individual well and know both what to do and what to avoid.

**Instead of this**      **...write this**

Be patient with Liam      Liam may need you to repeat a task a couple of times before he feels confident trying it. You can tell if he is unsure because he will look out of the window and chew his pencil. Asking if he has any questions about the activity usually works better than asking if he understands what to do.

Chloe needs help with friendships      Chloe takes time getting to know people and making friends. It helps if you can find ways for her to spend her time and sit with different girls in the first weeks of term. She appreciates you asking how her friendships are going in one-to-one time.

# Small things can make a big difference

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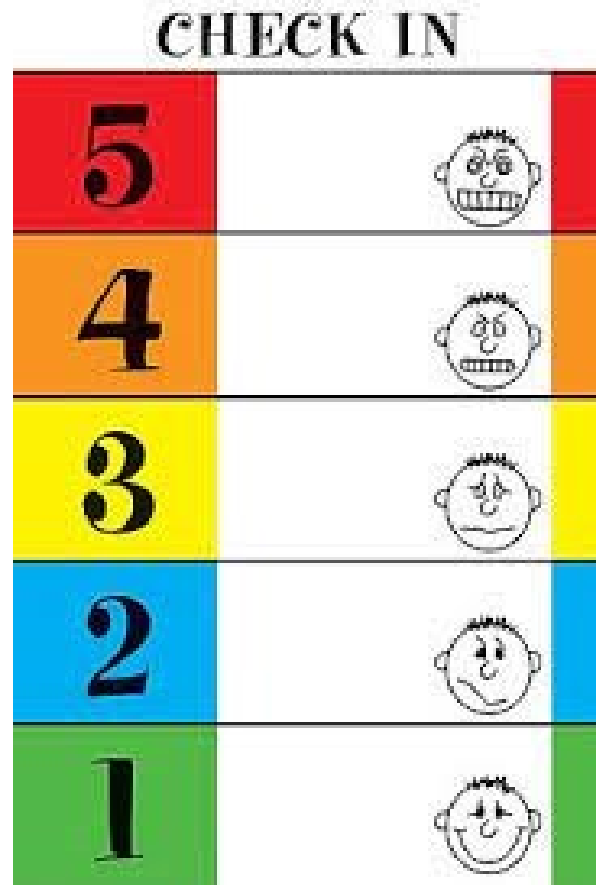


Framework on embedding  
a whole-school approach to  
emotional and mental well-being



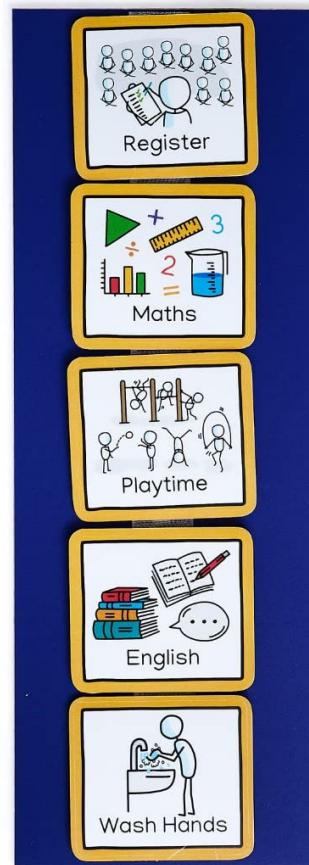
Small things can make a big difference

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# Small things can make a big difference

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# Small things can make a big difference

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BORRI

# What could be done in Latvia?

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# Thank you

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