



## Behaviour is Communication

All of us show our views and feelings through our behaviour. For children and young people with autism who struggle with communication and interaction, behaviour is often the most effective method of communicating their needs, wants and views. If the autistic child has learned that the behaviour provides a function for them even if it impacts negatively on others, it is likely to continue.

## **Communication and Interaction**

Children and young people with autism struggle with social communication. Autism is a spectrum condition and how such impairments present can be very different. Some can lack social motivation and may not seek interaction and others may be very socially motivated but lack the skills and understanding to manage such interactions successfully.

Children and young people with autism usually struggle in acquiring the unwritten rules of social interaction, such as body language, use of eye contact and physical proximity. Difficulties with this “hidden curriculum” can frequently lead to interaction issues for children and young people with autism in schools.

Children and young people with autism have difficulties, to varying degrees, with their receptive and expressive language. This can impact their access to the curriculum as well as their social interaction with peers and adults.

## **Change**

Children and young people with autism tend to appreciate consistency and routine. They can struggle when things are different and are not as expected.

Activities within the mainstream school environment, although largely routine based, are subject to unforeseen changes which can have a negative impact on the child or young person’s stress levels and consequently, their behaviour.

Dealing with Change:

## **Theory of Mind**

Children and young people with autism have difficulty seeing the world from the perspective of other people.

This impairment will have obvious impact on the behaviour of the child or young person and can mean that they often do not understand the intentions of others and the implications of their behaviour on other people.

## **Sensory Issues and the Environment**

Children and young people with autism very often have sensory difficulties. These sensitivities can also have a major impact upon their ability to cope and learn in school. Problems in dealing with the number of people, smells, sounds and the variety of settings can raise anxiety levels. Such anxieties can impact on the behaviour of the pupil with autism.