

# Autism Spectrum Disorder Training Pack

Resources for schools



# let's play behaviour detective

part two - secondary



a case study - a secondary school student with an autism  
spectrum disorder and challenging behaviours

**James is a Year 9 student**



# James is a Yr 9 student with autism

- has 'borderline' Moderate Learning Difficulties - but is in a mainstream school
- mum is supportive and caring
- has a younger brother, likes to cycle fast with dad
- has never behaved badly and never showed obvious negative reaction to work
- has never been bullied
- has one good friend
- gets on very well with his support assistant
- has recently learned how to make small jokes, like word plays



James has  
serious issues  
with school  
which are  
affecting him

# James is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- doesn't look at people
- doesn't talk much or touch
- 'sticks out' as being odd
- does everything very s-l-o-w-l-y
- won't engage with any other student unless prompted
- won't volunteer answers
- rarely shows any enthusiasm
- is body rigid
- is 'socially invisible'

# James is a 'behavioural nightmare'

- can be very physical at home, with objects and his mum and brother
- pulls his eyelashes out and squeezes his hands
- some staff think he may be depressed or be a candidate for other mental health issues



what do his  
behaviours  
tell us?

**task**

**write down five ideas about  
the effect of**

*and/or*

**the purpose**

**of his behaviours in school or home**

# some clues from behaviours?

- lack of eye contact, body rigidity, slowness, passivity
- the difference between home and school
- are his body signals serving some other function? - 'masking' or 'coping' strategy for dealing with school?

# task - discuss, then present your ideas

- what is it about school that is difficult for him?
- what clues do you have for your ideas?

# here are some clues

**low academic ability = been in the 'low sets'**

- what might this tell you about the kind of learning environment he's been exposed to?
- what might this tell you about the kind of social contact he has in his classes?

**after 3 years at school he only has one friend**

- what might this tell you about his social communication skills?



what strategies  
would you  
consider to  
begin to  
modify these  
behaviours?

# strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

## Social Skills groups:

- start small groups on a regular, timetabled basis - target sessions during lessons that are the most anxious for him
- include his friend in these groups as a 'way in'
- build security - same structure every session
- use non-verbal games to start sessions, build engagement and confidence e.g. Jenga, building construction models, cards
- when he's ready, introduce others in the group

# strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

## Social Skills groups

- include an emotional literacy programme e.g. reading faces, reading gestures
- tell him how he should feel, 'model' it for him

## practice communication

- use set phrases to initiate and respond to common situations, start with non-verbal 'hello's' and 'goodbye's'

# strategies for intervention

the curriculum is not working for him - change it

- use Social Stories™
- tackle self-harm, harming others, safety issues
- use whatever method engages him, be flexible
- drawing with pen and paper or computer
- use humour, get him to enjoy the sessions
- limit language, use repetition and small steps to deal with his low ability, confidence, high anxiety, build familiarity

# strategies for intervention

the 'social side' of school is not working for him -  
improve it

- avoid free-play and big assemblies
- encourage him to go to lunch-clubs, the library and other social environments with low noise, control and good behaviour
- give him an 'exit card' and a 'place of safety'
- teach him how to use it, rehearse going there, make contact with staff there, let all staff know

# strategies for intervention

## share aims and success

- inform support staff and teachers of aims and successes  
*e.g. ask all staff to use his name and ask for 'hello's*
- inform home of successes

## encourage social contact out of school

- put home in contact with local organisations
- encourage his friend to visit home and vice versa
- encourage out of school club/activities e.g. karate

what will you change first?

