

Just Ask Us

Supporting Autistic Students: Top Tips for School Leaders and Governors

1. Just ask

Avoid assumptions—ask Autistic students and their parents/carers how best to support them.

“People think they know what I’m like and treat me based on their idea of Autism rather than getting to know me.”

2. Build in flexibility

Autistic students have good days and bad days, just like everyone else. On some days they may not need as much support—but knowing it’s available can be reassuring.

“Some days I can cope better than others.”

3. Use clear language and allow time to process

Processing spoken information can take longer. Allow extra time for a response—waiting just 10 seconds can help. Think of it like a computer buffering: silence doesn’t mean rudeness.

“Taking a long time to process something doesn’t mean I can never get it. Give me time to get it.”

4. Small adjustments make a big difference.

Different learning styles and coping strategies can be easily supported. Simple, low or no-cost changes can enable Autistic students to thrive.

“There are plenty of simple and low-cost effective ways to help us... Adjustments can cost nothing, but they make a big difference.”

5. Build trust through clear communication

If routines change or a planned adjustment isn’t possible, explain why calmly and clearly.

“It was best not to assume I knew the why, because sometimes I didn’t.”

6. Protect quiet spaces

Quiet rooms should be a voluntary, positive refuge—not used as punishment.

“Quiet rooms should be voluntary and a positive protected space for students who need them, not a place where autistic and non-autistic students get sent as a punishment.”

7. Support self-awareness and coping strategies

Help students explore and develop what works best for them.

“Let me be me.”