



Information Note SE 0001/2022

To: Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of Recognised Primary, Secondary Community and Comprehensive Schools and The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Information Note on the publication of Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People

Introduction

This information note is to outline the publication of the document *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People*.

Background

Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People has been developed by the Department as a resource for schools and others to support the wellbeing, learning and participation in education of children and young people with autism.

In 2016, the National Council for Special Education's policy advice, *Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Schools*, set out a number of recommendations to improve education provision for children and young people with autism.

As a priority action, the Department established a working group to develop autism good practice guidance for schools to support children and young people. Membership of the group included NEPS, the Inspectorate, the NCSE, the Middletown Centre for Autism and the Department's Special Education section.

In developing the guidance, the working group drew on Irish and international research and practice on the education of students with autism, as well as engaging in a consultation process with the education partners and stakeholders.



Scope of the Guidance

The guidance supports the wellbeing, learning and participation of autistic students in education by assisting schools to understand the varied nature of these students' strengths and needs.

The guidance will help school leaders, teachers, SNAs and other school staff to respond to the needs of students with autism. The guidance provides information on evidence-based whole-school and individualised approaches to effective intervention.

The guidance is relevant to supporting students across mainstream, special class and special school settings. It will be of particular use to school staff working in specialist education roles and settings.

It provides information and support across eight key areas of practice, as follows:

- Learning Environment
- Language and Communication Development
- Social Development
- Emotional Development
- Sensory Processing
- Functional Skills for Daily Living
- Academic Development
- Behavioural Development

The guidance also addresses specific areas of practice relating to anxiety, transitions, relationships and sexuality education, digital learning and assistive technology, and teacher professional learning (TPL).

A companion resource, *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Indicators of Effective Practice*, can be used by staff as part of a whole-school reflective process to review aspects of provision for students with autism.

It is envisaged that the guidance will have wider benefits and utility. Many of the approaches and strategies can be adapted to support students with a range of special educational needs (SEN), including learning, social-emotional and/or



behavioural needs. It may also be helpful to parents and others working with children and young people with autism.

The guidance will be of relevance to teacher educators and will inform professional development programmes for school leaders, teachers and other school staff.

Circulation of Information Note

Please ensure that the contents of this Information Note are brought to the attention of all relevant staff in the school.

This information note can be accessed on the Department's website.

Eddie Ward
Principal Officer
Special Education Section
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