

Schools Report 2013



**Are schools delivering
for children and young
people with autism?**

www.AmbitiousAboutAutism.org.uk



**Ambitious
about Autism**

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Schools continue to face many challenges. Reforms to the education system require them to navigate new funding arrangements, while implementing major changes to the way children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities receive support. So what impact are these reforms having on children with autism?

This report brings together key statistics to build a picture of what school is like for children and young people with autism in 2013. Where possible we have tracked changes in figures published in the Schools Report 2012¹. We hope this report will help policy makers assess the impact that reforms to education policy are having on children and young people with autism.

Around **71%** of children with autism are educated in mainstream schools and the remainder in specialist provision². Given the right support, children with autism can — and do — thrive and achieve at school.

We have looked at five key areas of children's educational experience:

1. support at school

2. exclusions

3. bullying

4. achievement

5. outcomes

1. Support at School

- Since 2012 the number of children whose Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) lists autism as a primary need has increased by **6.5%** to **47,225**³. The number of children at School Action Plus⁴ with autism has increased by **8%** to **23,560**⁵.
- **60%** of teachers in England do not feel they have had adequate training to teach children with autism⁶.
- **35%** of teachers think it has become harder in the last 12 months to access specialist support for children with autism⁷.

Although the total number of children identified as having SEN is falling, the number of children identified with autism is increasing⁸. Of those **216,030** children who have a Statement of SEN, **22%** list autism as the primary need⁹. Given this trend, it is worrying that over half of teachers do not feel they have had the training they need to teach children with autism and many are finding it increasingly hard to access specialist support.

Recommendation: Local authorities should ensure all schools can access an autism specialist teacher to advise them on how to support children with autism, and develop school staff capability and capacity in this area.

2. Exclusions

- In a survey of **500** families conducted by Ambitious about Autism, **23%** reported their child with autism had been formally excluded within the previous 12 months. **4 in 10** of these had been subject to unofficial and illegal exclusion in that period¹⁰.
- Pupils with a Statement are **eight times** more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those pupils without SEN¹¹. Pupils with SEN but no Statement remain **11 times** more likely to be permanently excluded¹².

Exclusion costs children dearly in terms of their educational progress and well-being¹³. The lifetime cost to the state of a single permanent exclusion is estimated to be **£65,000**¹⁴.

The most common reason for exclusion was persistent disruptive behaviour, accounting for **33%** of permanent exclusions and **24.1%** of fixed period exclusions¹⁵. This is a concern as some children with autism display behaviour that challenges when they are not supported to communicate effectively, or are struggling to understand what is expected of them at school.

Recommendation: The new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice should include a duty for schools to carry out a multi-agency assessment and review of support for children with SEN who are at risk of exclusion.

3. Bullying

- **42%** of parents and carers of children with autism report that their child often tells them they are being bullied at school¹⁶.
- **74%** say their child finds break or lunch times particularly difficult or frightening¹⁷.

For children with autism, bullying behavior often stems from the differences between them and other children in school — in the way they speak, look or act, or how they are treated by adults.

A number of successful anti-bullying campaigns have been designed to address bullying but this data highlights that they are not used widely enough as children with autism are still subject to bullying.

Recommendation: Schools should continue to promote autism awareness among staff and pupils. Consideration should be given to how break times can be structured and supervised to keep children with autism safe.

4. Achievement

- **23.8%** of pupils with autism achieved 5 A*–C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics in 2011/12, a decrease of **0.6%** from 2010/11¹⁸.
- **58.8%** of all pupils achieved 5 A*–C GCSEs including English and mathematics an increase of **0.6%** since last year¹⁹.

The number of learners with autism who achieve 5 A*–C grades including English and mathematics is decreasing out of step with the rate for all learners. This trend could in part be attributed to the increasing difficulties teachers face in accessing specialist services to support students with autism.

Recommendation: Key Stage 4 and 5 destination measures published by the Department for Education should be broken down by primary need. This will encourage a greater analysis and understanding of outcomes for young people with autism.

5. Outcomes

- Of those pupils with no special needs only **9%** did not go on to further/higher education, employment or training when leaving school. **16%** of pupils with a Statement did not go on to any form of further education, employment or training when they left school. Of those pupils on School Action Plus, **25%** did not go on to further education, employment or training²⁰.
- **6%** of young people who are not in education, employment or training cited health or disability issues as a barrier to engaging in education or training²¹.

Access to further education and training is crucial to ensuring a successful transition to adulthood. The Children and Families Bill offers an opportunity to address this worrying trend. For the first time, young people will be able to keep their package

of support when in education up to the age of 25. However, we have grave concerns that the Bill as currently drafted allows local authorities to take away the support a young person receives without regard for whether they have had sufficient time in education to acquire the skills they need.

Recommendation: The Children and Families Bill must be amended to ensure that local authorities continue to maintain a young person's Education, Health and Care Plan until they have made a successful transition to adult life.

Conclusion

It is disappointing that little progress has been made across the five areas we have focused on.

Given that over half of all teachers do not have the training necessary to teach children with autism, it is critical that schools are able to access specialist services to support teaching staff where necessary. It is important that the Children and Families Bill addresses the fact that **35% of teachers report that it is now harder to access these specialist services**. The Bill will require all authorities to publish a Local Offer setting out what services are available. It is essential that this contains details of autism specialists that schools are able to contact.

We have been working to make sure that the Children and Families Bill makes it easier for children and young people to access the support they need to succeed at school.

Please support our recommendations as the Bill goes through Parliament, to help children with autism to **learn, thrive and achieve** their potential.

To support our work on the Children and Families Bill, or for more information, please contact:

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What we have done to help schools in 2013

- Trained hundreds of teachers and other professionals on behalf of the Autism Education Trust
- Provided information via Talk about Autism, our online community
- Set up the Autism Schools Trust to support the establishment of our first free school, The Rise School
- Developed ground-breaking research into outcomes for pupils at TreeHouse School
- Launched Woodfer's World, a teaching resource for schools to reduce bullying of children with autism

Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism. We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and influence policy. We exist to enable children and young people with autism to **learn, thrive and achieve**.

About Autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects 1 in 100 people in the UK. It affects the way a person communicates and how they experience the world around them.

Autism is described as a spectrum condition. This means that while people with autism, including Asperger's Syndrome, share certain characteristics, they will be highly individual in their needs and preferences. Some people with autism are able to live independent lives but others may face additional challenges, including learning disabilities, which affect them so profoundly that they need support in many areas.

1 http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/page/what_we_do/campaigning_change/schools_report_2012.cfm
2 Department for Education (2013) Special Educational Needs in England
3 Department for Education (2013) Special Educational Needs in England
4 School Action and School Action Plus are levels of additional or different support provided to pupils who are not making progress through the schools usual differentiated approaches
5 Department for Education (2013) Special Educational Needs in England
6 NASUWT Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs (June 2013)
7 NASUWT Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs (June 2013)
8 Department for Education (2013) Special Educational Needs in England
9 Department for Education (2013) Special Educational Needs in England
10 'Understanding Exclusion' survey conducted by Ambitious about Autism July 2013
11 Department for Education (2013) Permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England 2011/12
12 Department for Education (2012) Permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England, 2010/11
13 Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) They never give up on you
14 Brookes, M; Goodall, E and Heady, L (2007) Misspent Youth: the costs of truancy and exclusions — a guide for donors and funders. New Philanthropy Capital
15 Department for Education (2013) Permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England 2011/12
16 Anna Kennedy & Anti-Bullying Alliance (2013) 'Give us a Break'
17 Anna Kennedy & Anti-Bullying Alliance (2013) 'Give us a Break'
18 Department for Education (2013) GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2011/12
19 Department for Education GCSE and Equivalent Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England, 2010/11
20 Department for Education Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils by Characteristics, 2010/11
21 BIS Motivation and Barriers to Learning for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training, (2013)