What is Autism?

Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may have difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal difficulties may include a delay in the development of language, comprehension difficulties, literal thinking and speech, poorly modulated intonation and delivery of speech, echolalia (echoing speech), unusual vocabulary, and repetitive use of language.

Non-verbal difficulties include difficulty in understanding social context, empathising with others and appropriately interpreting social cues, body language and facial expressions. Gestures are often stiff, stilted or over-exaggerated. Problems with social behaviour will sometimes arise from difficulties with understanding the changing context of social situations and understanding the intentions of others. This may present as difficulties in interpreting facial expression, gestures and vocal intonation. Also, as pupils with ASD tend to be literal thinkers, they will have problems with knowing the rules that govern social behaviour and understanding jokes or idioms.

Pupils with ASD can become anxious with changes in routine and have problems with sharing attention, turn-taking and with interactive, imaginative play with others.

Therefore, difficulty with participating in the activities or enjoyment of others is a particular challenge to teachers as it affects the pupil's ability to share and have varied interests, adapt behaviour according to the situation, accept changes in rules and routines, accept others' points of view, and generalise learning.

Pupils with ASD may also experience erratic sleep patterns, display unusual eating habits, engage in self-injurious or aggressive or hyperactive behaviour, exhibit an unusual posture or gait, and have irrational fears or phobias.

Teachers need to understand the strengths and difficulties experienced by each individual with ASD, in order to provide for effective teaching and learning for each pupil.

What we do:

- Early intensive behavioural interventions
- Structured play groups
- Interventions based on events.
- Task analysis
- Social Communication training
- Modelling
- Exercise
- Picture exchange communication system
- Reinforcement
- Visual support
- Scheduling
- Social Skills Training