

Autistic and OK implementation framework for multi-academy trusts

This guide is for directors of SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), lead practitioners and similar multi-academy trust (MAT) staff members overseeing SEND and wellbeing provision in secondary and specialist academies.

The guidance below provides strategies for disseminating the Autistic and OK programme across the schools you support. Based on our work with a range of UK academy trusts, we've created a best-practice framework, documenting suggested approaches and key considerations for MAT SEND leads who feel their schools could benefit from our free wellbeing programme.

We know that, for each school, the most effective and impactful interventions will look different, based on factors such as pupil demographics, staffing capacity, school size and more. The Autistic and OK programme is delivered very flexibly to accommodate these factors. To ensure flexibility, we have suggested a variety of methods for trust SEND leads to support their schools and we advise you to consider your own best approach in using this programme.

We've also included some accounts from the MAT SEND leads we have collaborated with, describing how the Autistic and OK programme has been implemented by their schools to achieve impactful, positive change for autistic pupils:



I'm always looking for resources that genuinely resonate with the young people I support, and the Autistic and OK toolkit does exactly that. It's a thoughtful, practical and affirming guide that empowers autistic students to better understand themselves and their mental health. What sets it apart is how it centres autistic voices, allowing students to see themselves represented and respected. I've found it incredibly useful in guiding staff training, supporting conversations with families, and - most importantly - helping autistic young people feel confident that they are not just supported but truly seen and accepted. This is a useful resource for any school committed to inclusion and wellbeing."

Becca Caddy, Director for SEND, Delta Academies Trust



Ambitious about Autism provided training to introduce the Autistic and OK programme and develop whole-school inclusive practice to a range of secondary SEN practitioners. All participants spoke very highly about the training and resources. They liked the straightforward presentation of resources, as well as the skilled, reflective and exploratory nature of the training. Ambitious about Autism has also provided additional supervisory support with the implementation of the programme. One academy has taken part in a research project and described the impact as 'transformative', both in terms of student understanding and acceptance of diagnoses, and the development of relationships and social skills in real terms. Whether facilitating or attending the interventions, students love the programme, with attendees graduating to become facilitators. We would highly recommend the Autistic and OK programme."

Karen Sitch, Secondary SEN Consultant, Harris Federation

Step 1: how could this programme support my schools?

Start by downloading the [Autistic and OK toolkit](#) and exploring the resources. Once you have a grasp of the programme, you might want to reflect on the following:

- What autism/wellbeing support is already in place in your schools? How could the programme complement that support (e.g. ELSA (emotional, literacy and support assistant) sessions, social communication support)?
- Are there some schools better placed than others to run this programme? Why? What challenges do different schools face in supporting their autistic pupils?
- How could schools/SENCOs (special educational needs coordinators) use this programme in different ways to support their pupils? Are there some elements that would work better than others?

Step 2: disseminating Autistic and OK to school staff

Before disseminating, you might want to consider:

- Do you want to share Autistic and OK with all secondary academies and see which schools take up the programme?
- Would you prefer to share with a small group of schools/staff initially to gauge the suitability of the intervention?

- How could you best share the programme? For example, simply emailing out the Autistic and OK webpage, or presenting the programme at a SEND network/forum meeting, using our free [programme slide deck](#).

Step 3: trialling the programme in schools

We suggest that, whether selected by you or self-selecting, one or more schools are identified to trial Autistic and OK. You may want to identify a school which has strong SEND provision and an experienced SENCO, or a school in need of a new intervention to address gaps in support for autistic pupils.

We recommend allowing the school(s) a one- or two-term period to run the programme and gather evidence of impact. They might use the pupil surveys included in the toolkit to assess wellbeing impact, as well as gathering feedback from their pupils and staff.

Step 4: sharing trial outcomes with schools

Invite any schools who have used Autistic and OK to share their findings. They may have run the complete programme or just used specific elements, like the assembly or teacher training. If you have another SEND forum meeting, this is a great way for schools to share reflections and best practice tips with other schools.

Step 5: including Autistic and OK in whole-MAT SEND practice

Consider how you could signpost Autistic and OK in future.

- Do you send out information to schools/SENCOs about suggested SEND resources and interventions regularly?
- Could you present the programme to schools each year? You may wish to use the presentation slides at a summer term SEND forum or training session, ahead of provision mapping for the following academic year.



Download the Autistic and OK toolkit:
www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/autistic-and-ok

Please share this link with SEND staff at your secondary and specialist academies, encouraging them to explore the resources.

Download the Autistic and OK slide deck:
[A&OK slides for MATs and LAs](#)

These slides can be used to present the Autistic and OK programme to schools as a 20–30-minute training session.

Contact us:

autisticandok@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

If you'd like further guidance, advice or support on using the Autistic and OK programme, please contact us and we'll be happy to meet with you.