

# Introduction

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The information contained in the following sections complements the information contained in the supplementary guidance on additional learning needs (ALN). The information that follows is specific to a particular additional learning need and/or disability.

The reporting inspector will be aware of the ALN profile within a school and will make suitable provision during the inspection for the following enquiries to be made. All members of the inspection team need to be aware of the general considerations for effective classroom practice and should judge the effectiveness of pupils' standards and teaching in relation to pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), individual development plans (IDPs) or statements of special educational needs (SEN).

Inspectors should also take account of advice to educational settings from the Welsh Government guidance on ASC in '[Support for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) in Educational Settings](#)' (Welsh Government, Crown Copyright, January 2019).

We have used the term 'additional learning needs' in this guidance, but we acknowledge that 'special educational needs' may also be used in this context during the period of implementation of reforms.

## Definitions

- Autistic spectrum condition is a pervasive developmental disorder characterised by deficits in social interaction and communication and by restricted and repetitive behaviour including sensory differences, which limit or impair everyday functioning. (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th edition DSM-V, 2013)
- ASC is a medical diagnosis and assessment is recommended in the document by NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) 'Autism Spectrum Disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis' (September 2011, updated December 2017 part 1.1.3) to be undertaken by a multi-disciplinary group or 'autism team' including as its core group a paediatrician or adolescent psychiatrist,

speech and language therapist and clinical or educational psychologist.

- Alternative terms for ASC include 'autism spectrum disorder', 'ASD', 'being on the spectrum' or 'autism'. Inspectors are likely to find variation in terms used in different providers. Inspectors should use the term ASC or refer to autistic pupils/learners/children whichever is most relevant.
- Autistic spectrum condition is a recognised disability as classified in the Office for Disability Issues: HM Government Equality Act of 2010. However, learners with ASC do not always have associated learning disabilities.
- Current estimated numbers of learners with ASC is around 1 in 68 or potentially 1 in every dual form entry primary school class or around 3 in a high school year group of 200 learners (The NHS Information Centre, Community and Mental Health Team, Brugha, T. et al (2012). Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum conditions in adults: extending the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey. Leeds: NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care). Learners with ASC have a high rate of comorbid difficulties, that is, they may also have other additional needs or diagnoses such as developmental co-ordination difficulties (DCD), hypermobility, dyslexia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among other conditions.
- Up to 29% of learners with ASC have a comorbid social anxiety disorder, 28% have comorbid ADHD, 84% meet the criteria for at least one other anxiety disorder and 70% have a comorbid disorder (Rosenblatt, M 2008. I Exist: the message from adults with autism in England. London: The National Autistic Society, p3)
- It is important to recognise learners with ASC are on a 'spectrum' and thus have varying difficulties and widely differing learning needs. Around half of learners with ASC have an associated learning difficulty whereas others excel academically but can experience more profound difficulties in social interaction and communication.
- Autistic spectrum condition is a communication disorder, and therefore learners may use a variety of communication methods including visual symbols and photographs, real life objects of reference, picture exchange systems, speech generating devices and technologies or Makaton sign language.
- Five times as many males as females are diagnosed with ASC, however current research which is ongoing suggests girls have historically been 'under-diagnosed' due to differing presentation of need.