



Autism  
Education  
Trust

Schools

# Practical Support Pack:

## Developing Inclusive Leadership in Schools

A collection of practical tools, templates, top tips, checklists and strategies for busy professionals to use to support autistic pupils.



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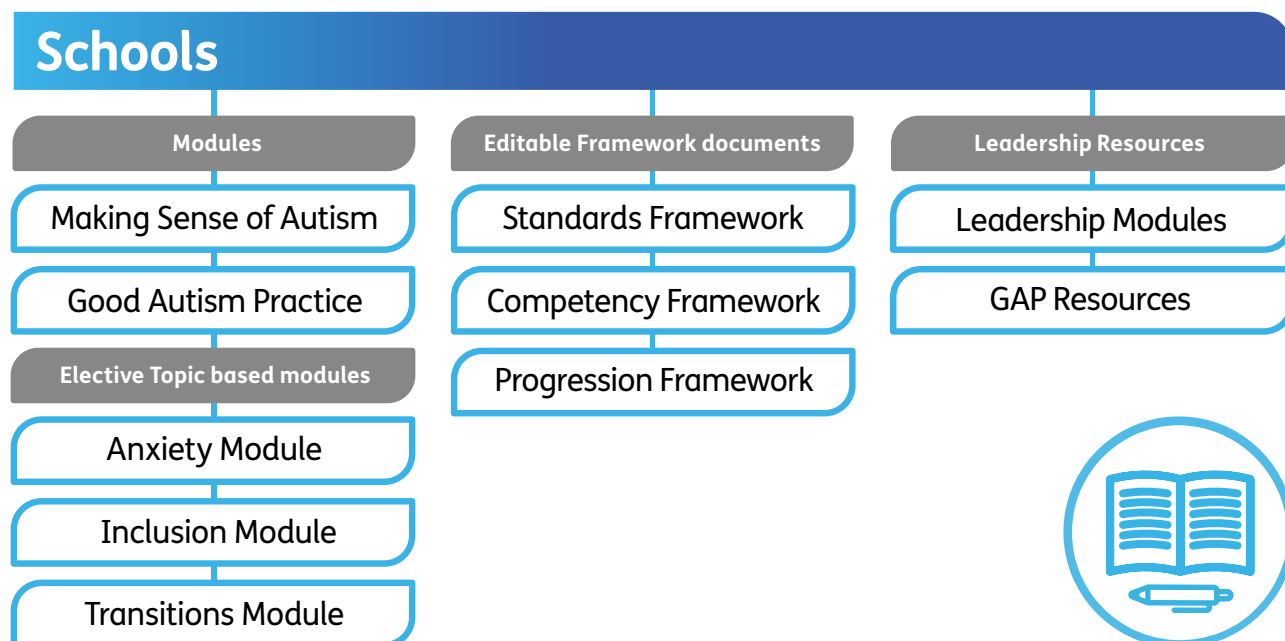
Autistic  
Young  
Experts



Autism Education Trust  
2023/24 Award Winner  
Autism Programme of the Year



# The AET Schools Professional Development Programme



## Policy expectations

The AET Schools Professional Development Programme (PDP) enables practitioners to enhance and embed good practice and provision for autistic pupils in a way that complies with statutory framework, Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014), legal requirements and equality duties whilst also complying with the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2019). For more information about the Schools PDP visit the AET website here: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/schools-professional-development-programme>

The AET professional development resources are structured around four themes:

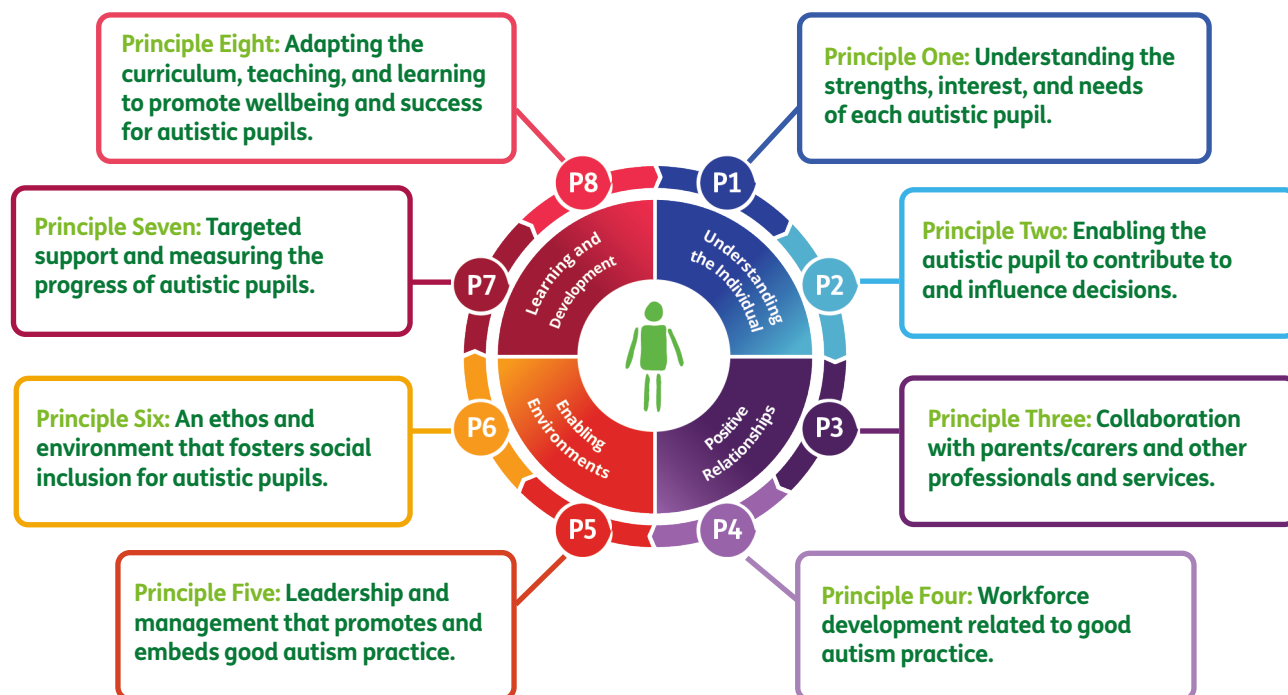
- Understanding the individual
- Positive relationships
- Learning and development
- Enabling environments

Within the framework of those four themes, eight principles guide the development of good autism practice when working with autistic children and their families. These eight principles emerged from an examination of the current evidence from research and practice, as well as key policies, and the perspectives and insights of autistic individuals (Guldborg et al., 2019). The reports outlining this work are available on the [Autism Education Trust website](https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk). They consist of two reports: Good Autism Practice: Full Report, and the Good Autism Practice Practitioner Guide.

# The AET Schools Professional Development Programme

## The AET Eight GAP Principles

This is how the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice are embedded in the four themes.





# The Eight Inclusion Promises

[The AET is supported by a panel of Autistic Young Experts to share the voices of autistic young people.](#)

The Panel brings their diverse experiences in different types of education to our work, including the creation of our professional development materials.

To ensure the eight principles of good autism practice are accessible, the Panel created the eight inclusion promises for autistic young people to better understand what staff should be doing to support them.

## We promise to:

1

Understand what you are good at, what you like doing, and when you might need help.

2

Listen to and act upon your ideas about how we can help you if you need it.

3

Listen to and work with the people who know you best and who you trust.

4

Make sure we are always progressing towards your goals and aspirations.

5

Make sure all staff know the best way to support you, both in and out of lessons.

6

Help you to get involved and be included in the activities you wish to participate in.

7

Work together to set achievable goals that are important to you, and that help you see how well you are doing.

8

Help you to feel safe, secure, empowered, and able to learn.





# Developing Inclusive Leadership in Schools

An Overview of the Tools for Developing Inclusive Leadership and Culture Change in Schools.

## Tool 1 – Summary of Key Legislation:

This tool is an indispensable guide for leaders, outlining some of the key statutory duties and responsibilities of schools in relation to equalities and SEND.

## Tool 2 – Stakeholder Mapping Tool:

This tool is a useful template for mapping out what the key priorities will be for individual stake holders in relation to autism and good autism practice. There is space to consider how stakeholders can be engaged as well as the key messages school leaders will want them to take away.

## Tool 3 – Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice Poster:

This tool is an adapted poster version of the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice graphic which outlines the eight principles identified in The Good Autism Practice Report and the four themes around which the Autism Education Trust focuses its core messages.

## Tool 4 – Eight Inclusion Promises:

This tool is an accessible poster version of the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice graphic, produced by the AET's Autistic Young Expert Panel.

## Tool 5 – Autism Education Trust Framework Documents Link Page:

The AET Standards Framework outlines, for leaders in schools, the standards required for good autism practice at an organisational level. It provides a means by which provision can be audited and areas of strength and targets for improvement identified.

The AET Competencies Framework is a tool that can be used to audit and identify the good autism practice of individual educational professionals. It facilitates reflection on professional practice and the ability for individuals to identify areas of strength and areas they can focus on to improve their good autism practice further.



## Developing Inclusive Leadership in Schools

### Tool 6 - Autism Education Trust Professional Development Offers:

This tool outlines the Autism Education Trust's main professional development offers for education professionals.

**Offer 1:** The Professional Development Programme

**Offer 2:** The Work-Based CPD Programme

**Offer 3:** Consultancy

### Tool 7 – ‘Next Steps’ Planning Tool:

This tool provides a template for leaders to reflect on what they will take away from the training session, their next steps towards inclusive culture change and how the AET could further support them with this.



## Tool 1 – Summary of Key Legislation:

### ? What is it?

This tool is a summary of key legislation and statutory guidance that every senior leader in schools needs to know and use to guide their actions in relation to SEND provision.

### 🕒 When should it be used?

This tool should be referred to as a summary overview of some of the key legislation and statutory guidance that leaders and SENCOs must be familiar with and use to guide their work. It is also vital to understand that leaders and SENCOs must enable all other staff in the setting to understand where they fit into the overall strategic SEND plan to enable transformative change.

### ✅ How should it be used?

This tool should be used to remind leaders of some of the key statutory responsibilities that should be used to guide their work with SEND students in schools.





## Tool 1 – Summary of Key Legislation:

Summary of Some of the Key Legislation and Guidance Pertinent to the Leadership of Special Educational Needs in Schools

Legislation	Education Act 1996	Equality Act 2010	SEN Regulations 2014 - Part 3	The Children and Families Act 2014
<b>Main Duties</b>	<p><b>Section 316</b> Duty to educate a child with SEN in a mainstream school if in accordance with parental wishes and compatible with the efficient education of other pupils.</p>	<p><b>Section 13</b> Duty to not discriminate.</p> <p><b>Section 15</b> Duty to not treat disabled pupils unfavourably.</p> <p><b>Section 19</b> Duty to not make policies which indirectly discriminate against pupils.</p> <p><b>Section 20</b> Duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.</p> <p><b>Section 85</b> Above applies in terms of admission of pupils, exclusion and provision of any service.</p> <p><b>Section 149-Public Sector Equality Duty</b> All functions must be carried out with due regard to the need to promote equal opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Reg.49</b> Qualifications of SENCO.</p> <p><b>Reg.50</b> Functions and duties of SENCOs including identifying pupils with SEN, monitoring provision and promoting inclusion.  Advising and training teachers.</p> <p><b>Reg.51</b> Information to be included in SEN report and duty to publish on school website.</p>	<p><b>Section 20</b> Definition of SEN.</p> <p><b>Section 66</b> Best endeavours duty on Governors to provide the SEN support a pupil requires.</p> <p><b>Section 67</b> Duties relating to SENCOs.</p> <p><b>Section 68</b> Duty to inform parents of their child's SEN.</p> <p><b>Section 69</b> Information to be included in SEN report.</p> <p><b>Section 100</b> Duty to provide education for those pupils with medical conditions.</p>
<b>Guidance</b>	<p><b>SEND Code of Practice 2015 - Chapter 5</b> (Early Years Settings) <b>Chapter 6</b> (Schools) <b>Chapter 7</b> (Post-16 settings). Provides detailed guidance on <b>EHCPs</b> and <b>SEN Support</b> - Assess, Plan, Do, Review in each setting.</p>			<p><b>Technical Guidance for Schools</b> (Updated 2023). <b>Equality and Human Rights Commission</b>. Non-statutory.</p>

## Tool 2 – Stakeholder Mapping Tool:

## ② What is it?

This tool is a template that should be used to consider the different roles that stakeholders take in schools in relation to SEND as well as the different ways leaders might approach communication with them.

## 🕒 When should it be used?

The tool should be used by leaders to consider the different perspectives of stakeholders and their different priorities so that leaders might tailor messaging appropriately around inclusion and culture change.

## ✓ How should it be used?

The tool should be used to ensure that leaders are targeting the key concerns of stakeholders and making sure communication content and style are well matched and more likely to be effective.



## Tool 2 – Stakeholder Mapping Template Example:

Stakeholder	
<b>Identify a stakeholder</b> <i>Teachers, lunchtime supervisors; parents; Ofsted; local authority</i>	Parents.
<b>List the priorities for the stakeholder</b> <i>What are their priorities in relation to Autism and implementing Good Autism Practice?</i>	<p>They need to be involved in decisions if this is in line with the young person's wishes.</p> <p>They need to receive information that is easily accessible and in a variety of formats.</p> <p>They need access to support groups and clear sign posting to additional support in their local area.</p>
<b>How will you engage this stakeholder?</b> <i>How will your vision to implement Good Autism Practice, address their priorities?</i>	<p>Hold regular meetings with everyone present including relevant professionals, to discuss preparation for adulthood planning.</p> <p>Ensure staff have received autism training and are able to identify individual needs e.g. how does their autism impact on their learning?</p> <p>Ensure staff are confident in supporting autistic learners and making appropriate reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>Have accessible websites with clear and consistent information about autism and SEND.</p> <p>Have a range of support groups, including some aimed at single parents.</p>
<b>What are the key messages you will use to communicate with the stakeholder?</b> <i>What key messages will you deliver to gain stakeholder buy in?</i>	<p>Support is available when you need it from non-judgemental staff.</p> <p>Working together we can achieve positive outcomes for all learners.</p> <p>Staff have a good understanding of autism and have received training that is relevant to their role.</p> <p>All staff see and value the learner's strengths and individual needs.</p> <p>Our approach is person-centred and always has the young person's best interests at the centre of decision making.</p> <p>The transition between phases and settings needs time and preparation.</p>



## Tool 2 – Stakeholder Mapping Template:

Stakeholder	
<p><b>Identify a stakeholder</b>  <i>School governors; parents;  Ofsted; local authority</i></p>	
<p><b>List the priorities for the stakeholder</b>  <i>What are their priorities in relation to Autism and implementing Good Autism Practice?</i></p>	
<p><b>How will you engage this stakeholder?</b>  <i>How will you implement Good Autism Practice to address their priorities?</i></p>	
<p><b>What are the key messages you will use to communicate with the stakeholder?</b>  <i>What key messages will you need to deliver to gain buy in from this stakeholder?</i></p>	

## Tool 3 – Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice:

### ? What is it?

The **Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice** came out of the **Good Autism Practice Report**. These summarise the ethos, values and practice that should inform inclusive education for all children and young people, whilst specifying the distinctive knowledge and teaching approaches required. **Eight Principles** are identified which are linked to the **OFSTED Framework**, the **SEND Code of Practice** and the **Teacher Standards**.

This poster has been developed to remind all staff about the **Eight Principles** so that they can embed them in their own practice, to secure culture change across the school.






### 🕒 When should it be used?

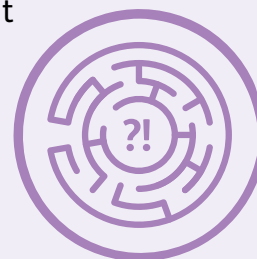
The poster should be referred to by leaders when they are considering aspects of the school vision, ethos and culture and making any strategic decisions. The principles should also be applied when staff are completing long, medium and short term planning. In this way, good autism practice should be embedded across the whole school.

### ✅ How should it be used?

The **Eight Principles Poster** can be used in many ways. The intended use of the poster is to increase awareness of what is needed to ensure good autism practice.

Below are a few suggested ways to use your **Eight Principles Poster**:

-  Using the Poster as part of SEND reviews or discussions with parents.
-  Including the Eight Principles Poster on your website.
-  Reviewing your current policies, in light of the Eight Principles.
-  Reviewing your processes around involving children and young people in their SEND reviews and conversations about their support needs.
-  Considering how you gather, use and share information about pupils with staff.



# The AET Eight GAP Principles

This is how the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice are embedded in the four themes.



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## Tool 4 – The Eight Inclusion Promises:

### ? What is it?

The **Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice** have been distilled into **Eight Inclusion Promises**, developed by the AET's **Autistic Young Experts panel**. The panel are a group of autistic young people aged from 16 to 25 from all over England who share their experiences of education and hold the AET team accountable for the work we do. The panel understands the challenges of education and are experts in what works best for autistic young people in education.

This poster has been developed for school staff to highlight the importance of the Inclusion Promises in their school and classroom environments.

### 🕒 When should it be used?

The **Inclusion Promises Poster** can be used any time of any school day, for staff or pupils to refer to.

### ✅ How should it be used?

The **Inclusion Promises Poster** can be used in many ways. The intended use of the poster is to increase the awareness of the **Inclusion Promises**, and to ensure consistency and clarity of your ethos towards the autistic pupils in your setting.

**Below are a few suggested ways to use your Inclusions Promises Poster.**



Ensuring that all staff and pupils are aware of the **Inclusion Promises**.

#### **You can do this by:**

- Introducing the **Inclusion Promises** to pupils in a whole school assembly.
- Including the **Inclusion Promises** in a whole staff meeting.
- Displaying the **Inclusion Promises Poster** in every classroom, or key areas of your setting.



Ensuring that parents and carers are aware of the **Inclusion Promises**.

#### **You can do this by:**

- Using the **Inclusion Promises Poster** as part of SEND reviews or discussions with parents.
- Including the **Inclusion Promises Poster** on your website.



Using the **Inclusion Promises** to guide your policy and processes.

#### **You can do this by:**

- Reviewing your current policies in light of the **Inclusion Promises**.
- Reviewing your processes around involving children and young people in their SEND reviews and conversations about their support needs.
- Considering how you gather, use and share information about pupils with staff.

# The Eight Inclusion Promises

## As Professionals, we promise to:

**1**

Understand what you are good at, what you like doing, and when you might need help.

**2**

Listen to and act upon your ideas about how we can help you if you need it.

**3**

Listen to and work with the people who know you best and who you trust.

**4**

Make sure we are always progressing towards your goals and aspirations.

**5**

Make sure all staff know the best way to support you, both in and out of lessons.

**6**

Help you to get involved and be included in the activities you wish to participate in.

**7**

Work together to set achievable goals that are important to you, and that help you see how well you are doing.

**8**

Help you to feel safe, secure, empowered, and able to learn.



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### The Standards Framework:

#### 🔍 What is it?

The **Schools Standards Framework** can be used by leaders to enhance and embed inclusive practice and improve outcomes for autistic pupils.

#### 🕒 When should it be used?

The framework can be used by leaders across a range of provisions - from mainstream, to specialist, to support settings - to reflect on, plan and implement improvement processes.

#### ✅ How should it be used?

**By using the AET School Standards, leaders and leadership teams can:**

- Identify priority areas to work on.
- Create an action plan to improve school-wide practices.
- Implement reasonable adjustments for autistic pupils.
- Improve the engagement, retention, and academic achievement of autistic pupils.
- Monitor practice and provide evidence of embedding good autism practice.
- These standards support school leaders to meet Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policies, legal requirements and their equalities duties, whilst complying with the **OFSTED Education Inspection Framework** (2021) and the **Teacher Standards** (2011). They also align with the **Head Teacher Standards** (2020).





### The Competencies Framework:

#### 🔍 What is it?

The **Schools Competency Framework** can be used by staff in schools, across a range of settings - from mainstream to specialist - as an ongoing self-reflection tool to help them improve their autism practice.

#### 🕒 When should it be used?

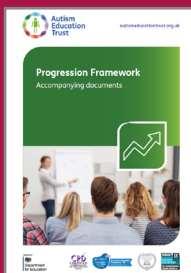
These competencies support staff/practitioners in meeting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policies, legal requirements and their equalities duties, whilst complying with the **OFSTED Education Inspection Framework** (2021) and the **Teacher Standards** (2011).

#### ✅ How should it be used?

This tool can be used to assess teacher skills and competencies. The framework can highlight which aspects of autism practice are particular strengths as well as helping to identify areas that require further development. Completion of the audit will help schools to consider - and plan how to meet - their professional development requirements.



## Click the images below to access our Framework Documents



**Progression Framework**



**Standards Framework**



**Competency Framework**

**For more information about our Framework Documents  
[click here](#)**

**Need further support?**

**Contact your local Partner or send an email to  
[info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk)**

## Tool 6 – Autism Education Trust Professional Development Offers Overview:

### ? What is it?

This tool provides an overview of the different professional development opportunities for schools, available through the AET, to support the embedding of good autism practice in their settings.

### 🕒 When should it be used?

This tool should be used when leaders are considering what support they will require going forwards, to embed inclusive culture change and enable good autism practice across their settings.

### ✓ How should it be used?

Leaders should use the tool to consider the different professional development opportunities currently offered by the AET. They should then consider which offer best suits their school or setting.



## Tool 6 – Autism Education Trust Professional Development Offers Overview:

### AET's Professional Development Offer:

#### The Professional Development Programme (PDP)

The PDP is the only DfE-supported, CPD-certified autism training programme that is co-produced with autistic people, parents and educational professionals. It consists of the three phases, covering all school age children and young adults.

Early Years – 0-4 yrs

Schools – 5-16 yrs

Post-16

All the phases can be accessed face-to-face or virtually and all the modules are delivered by local trainers with experience in the field of autism education and understanding of the local context.

#### The Work-Based CPD Programme

Is a series of video-based learning units which focus on developing autism awareness and good autism practice in schools and trusts.

Facilitated in-house by a member of staff in each participating school. This individual will be known as the AET Work-Based CPD Champion. They may be a school leader, a teacher or a SENDCO, amongst other positions, and will receive ongoing support from the AET as they progress through delivering the programme in their setting.

#### Consultancy

The AET consultancy service is bespoke to you and our expertise and experience is applied flexibly and expertly, to support your organisational goals, circumstances and needs.

Our approach is threefold:

- Evidence-based – Always applied flexibly and expertly to consider your organisational circumstances and needs
- Outcome-focused – We draw upon our wide skills base, in-house expertise and network of associates, and always take the time to understand your organisation. This ensures we can co-deliver the outcomes you need
- Collaborative – Partnership and collaboration has always been at the cornerstone of our work, and this extends to every consultancy project we undertake

**To find out more about our Professional Development Offers, please email us at: [info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk)**





## Tool 7 – The ‘Next Steps’ Reflection Planning Tool:

### ? What is it?

This tool is for leaders, to enable them to plan their school’s next steps, following completion of this leadership module.

### 🕒 When should it be used?

The tool should be completed as part of leaders’ reflections at the end of the Module, to facilitate their thinking about their ‘next steps’ for embedding an inclusive culture and good autism practice across their settings.

### ✓ How should it be used?

Leaders should use the template and complete the questions. They should then use their reflections to enable them to think about what steps they need to take next - as a leader and as a school - to secure culture change across their setting and good autism practice at all levels in their organisation.



## Tool 7 – The ‘Next Steps’ Reflection Planning Tool:

### Next Steps Planning Tool

#### Areas of Strength

*Having considered the School Standards Framework, add up to 3 perceived strengths of your setting.*

#### Areas for Improvement

*Having considered the School Standards Framework, add up to 3 perceived areas for improvement.*

#### What actions do you need to take to embed good autism practice across your setting going forwards?

*List up to 5 actions and link to identified areas for improvement.*

#### Next steps planning: What support do you need going forwards?

*You may wish to consider the further support that the Autism Education Trust can offer you in this regard.*

#### Additional Notes:

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Take your knowledge to the next level. Explore our training modules, framework documents and resources:

- Extend your knowledge of autism with the AET Good Autism Practice training module: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/schools-professional-development-programme>
- Use our free competency and standards frameworks to evaluate and improve your practice: [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/framework-documents](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/framework-documents)

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