# Understanding Autism Spectrum learners

## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience and make sense of the world around them. Some autistic individuals will have a diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome however, since 2014, Asperger’s has been brought under the broader definition of autism spectrum disorder. In line with this, the following information on ASD includes those with Asperger’s.

### Strengths associated with ASD

* Attention to detail and processes
* Honest and strong principles
* Logical working style
* An ability to ‘hyper-focus’
* In-depth knowledge on topics of interest
* Good problem-solving skills

### Common challenges associated with ASD

No two people with ASD have the same experience or have the same strengths and challenges. The most common core features of ASD include:

* Difficulty maintaining eye contact • Difficulty reading non-verbal cues and understanding ‘office politics’
* Sensory sensitivity/altered sensory perception, which can affect concentration and anxiety
* Difficulty in dealing with change
* Increased anxiety, especially in social situations

# Understanding learners with Dyslexia

## What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a condition that primarily affects reading, writing and spelling. It can also affect short-term or ‘working’ memory, processing speed, and the ability to organise thoughts and tasks. These difficulties can cause people to struggle to concentrate in an open classroom, forget verbal instructions and lose track easily in class.

### Strengths associated with Dyslexia

* Creativity, originality and inventiveness
* Strong visual thinking skills
* Good at problem solving and seeing the ‘big picture’
* Resilience and determination

### Common challenges associated with Dyslexia

No two people with Dyslexia have the same experience or have the same strengths and challenges. They most common core features of Dyslexia include:

* Difficulty reading quickly and accurately
* Making spelling errors or missing out information/key words in written documents
* Slow processing speed
* Poor organisational skills e.g. prioritising tasks, meeting deadlines
* Poor short-term working memory
* Difficulty in structuring writing

# Understanding learners with Dyspraxia

## What is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia affects fine and/or gross motor skills, coordination and balance. It may also affect speech.

### Strengths associated with Dyspraxia

* Empathy
* Resilience and determination
* Advanced verbal comprehension
* Good problem solving skills
* Good long term memory

### Common challenges associated with Dyspraxia

No two people with Dyspraxia have the same experience or have the same strengths and challenges. The most common core features of Dyspraxia include:

* Difficulties with handwriting, and with tasks that need fine and accurate movements
* Difficulties with skills requiring balance
* Poor short-term working memory
* Slow processing speed, including reading and speech
* Poor organisational skills e.g. prioritising tasks, meeting deadlines
* Sensory sensitivity/altered sensory perception, which can affect concentration

# Understanding learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

## What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects attention, impulsivity, and activity levels.

There are three types of ADHD:

* Predominantly hyperactive,
* Predominantly inattentive, sometimes called Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
* Combined, with both hyperactive and inattentive features

### Strengths associated with ADHD

* Creativity, originality and inventiveness
* Energy and drive
* An ability to ‘hyper-focus’ when interested, stimulated or rewarded
* Rapid understanding of complex issues, bursts of inspiration and insight into a subject

### Common challenges associated with ADHD

No two people with ADHD have the same experience or have the same strengths and challenges. The most common core features of ADHD include:

* Speaking/acting before thinking, interrupting others
* Jumping to a new topic of conversation without finishing the current one
* Being restless and fidgety, difficulty sitting still • Poor sustained concentration on tasks, easily distracted
* Poor organisational skills e.g. prioritising tasks, meeting deadlines