Strategies for Supporting Autistic Pupils with Reading Comprehension

Autistic pupils may have differences in how they comprehend text. This may include:



- Literal interpretation of language.
- Not being able to accurately interpret the difference between fact and fiction.
- Misunderstanding metaphors and similes.
- Not always seeing 'hidden or implied' meanings and or seeing these in a different way.
- A difference in interpreting 'symbolic meanings' and instead applying literal thinking.
- Pupils may read text very well but struggle to gain the meaning or meet the criteria you are aiming for.
- Have differences in understanding different viewpoints.
- Could have unexpected gaps in general knowledge; they may lots about things that are of interest to them and so we assume they have this for a wide range of topics.
- Differences in interpreting concepts of time and changes over time which may make it challenging to understand texts set in the past, future or across cultures.
- Differences in understanding attitudes and bias.

Useful strategies:

- Share the outcome criteria for reading the text: today we are reading piece of text about Romans', I want you find two things the Romans' invented.
- Use 'wh' questions to guide the student to gain meaning from text.
- Pupils may struggle to listen and taking notes at the same time. Written notes, charts, visuals or infographics may be given out to pupils so that they can concentrate on listening.
- Allow time for short 'breaks' to aid concentration.
- Write 'clues' down as text is read to provide structure or to note key pieces of information.
- They may need to be guided, supported and directed towards implied meanings.
- Attempt to make links between literary works and daily life experiences.
- Make notes, highlight or use pictures to teach key words.
- Number events and teach order and sequencing using comic strips.
- Allow time to read text more than once, provide texts in advance.
- Make important points memorable through active teaching.
- Ask the child to listen out for specific things; provide a written list with tick boxes.
- Highlight key features in text, as they may be unable to pick out relevant pieces of information.
- Allow a quiet space for a child to read text (they may need to read it out loud as they cannot read in their head). Alternatively, you could read it out loud to them.
- Clearly explain the **social context** of a text e.g., in Shakespearean times there was no TV.
- Consider colour coding relevant information; e.g. fact in one colour, opinion in another colour