



## What teachers can do to identify & minimize the impact of 'masking'

**Identify** the anxiety/issue and look to ease that pressure rather than commenting if they do or don't have ASD. The results will speak for themselves. Most children, especially girls don't like to look different or cause a fuss, but it doesn't mean they aren't struggling!

Address the whole class at school, see it as an exercise. Give them photos of different aspects of school (playground, lunch, maths, music lessons, PE etc) and ask them to rate which they enjoy/find harder. Maybe a green smiley face for happy or sad face for don't like. This will flag-up which areas that child and others in the class are struggling with.

**Discuss**- separately one to one, explore and identify what they find difficult about those situations, but be mindful of the fact they may not have all the answers. This is where your knowledge and experience of ASD come in!

**Solve**- involve the child in the problem-solving process:

e.g. If a child finds the classroom noisy, what could they do or use?

- schedule regular movement or sensory breaks
- wear ear defenders or silicone ear plugs
- identify a quiet area where the child can work
- leave the room when needed

What's right for one child, may not be suitable for another. Ensure they're happy with the solution and that they'll be able to follow it:

e.g. Leaving the room, can be really difficult for many girls, as it draws attention to them, so maybe work in a quiet area from the start.

**Plan**- anxious children, particularly those on the autism spectrum, need to know the 'What ifs...'

Together, make a 'What if...?' planning sheet:

e.g. If..... I can .....

If ..... I can .....

Whether we have evidence of an autism spectrum disorder or not, a needs- led approach, can minimise the anxiety and subsequent overwhelm a child experiences.

For further information and tips, visit [www.key2confidence.co.uk](http://www.key2confidence.co.uk)