
What to consider when creating an inclusive learning environment



The
Spectrum



No two students with autism develop in the same way.

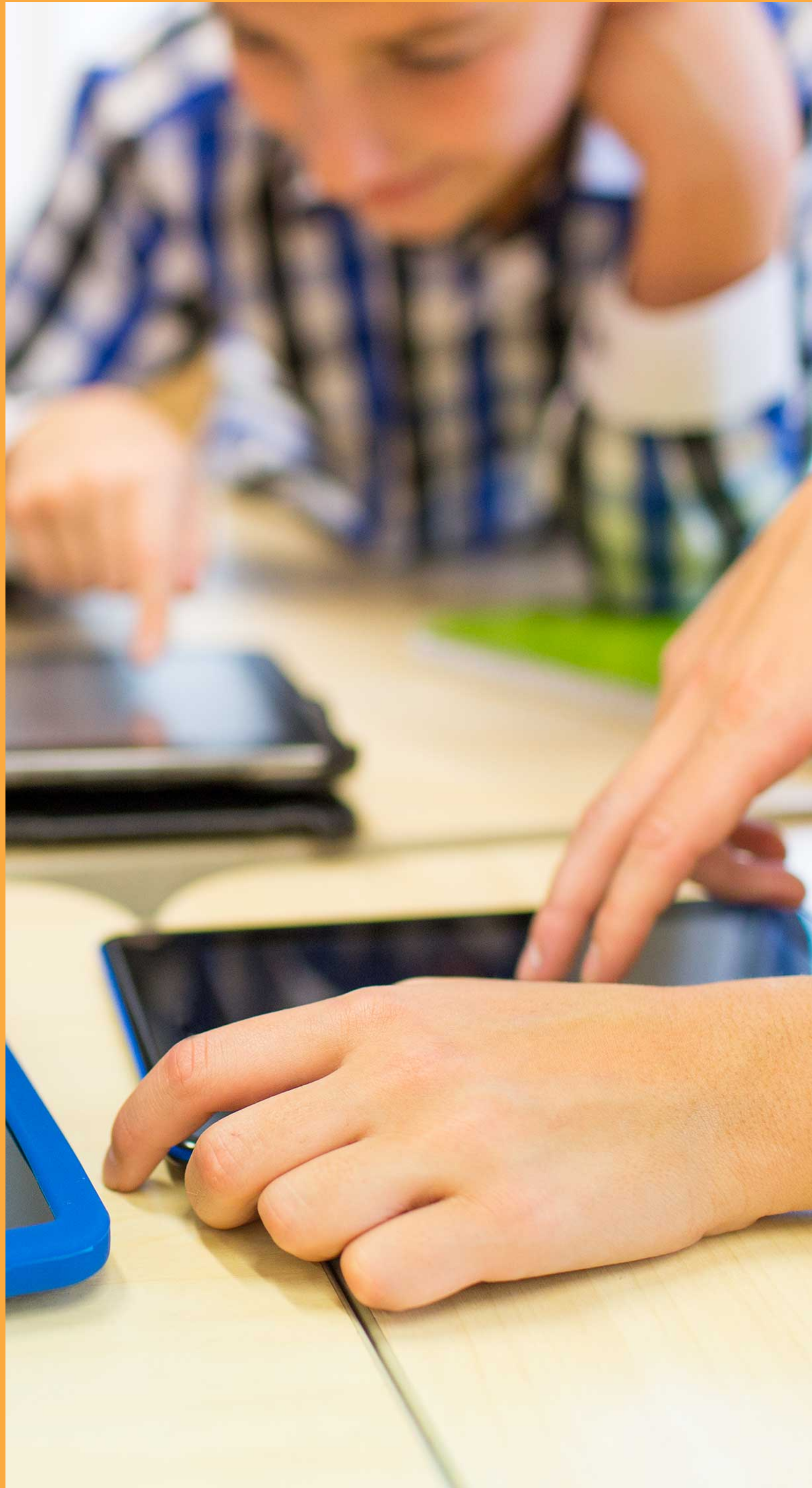
Some students on the spectrum have an intellectual disability. Others have average or above average intelligence.

At school, students with autism will have an uneven pattern of skills. They will have particular areas of strength as well as areas where additional support is required.

**Students with autism
may nevertheless face a number
of common challenges at
school:**

Fitting in socially
Understanding what is expected
Expressing their needs
Engaging in learning
Coping with change





Students on the spectrum will benefit from an inclusive learning environment

What makes an inclusive learning environment?



Whole school organisation



Planning for structured teaching



Classroom organisation



Developing social and communications skills



Effective learning approaches



Sensory processing and support



Whole school organisation

Students on the spectrum benefit when their schools adopt a whole school approach to teaching, learning and support.

A whole school approach means that all members of the school community take responsibility for ensuring that students with autism have opportunities to maximise their learning. It is also important that students on the spectrum understand the school's ethos, expectations and behaviour rules.

Classroom organisation



A calm and predictable environment is important, while places and times for breaks can also be a helpful way of supporting students with autism. A clear understanding of students' individual needs and preferred ways of working also helps to create an inclusive classroom environment.

Students on the spectrum can be significantly affected by their physical learning environment.



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Effective learning approaches

Skills for effective learning may need to be explicitly taught for students on the spectrum.

Classroom talk, timetables and tasks need to be presented in a structured way for students with autism. The challenges in social interaction faced by students on the spectrum also need to be prepared and planned for if learning is to be effective.

Planning for structured teaching



This requires teachers to understand the pattern of strengths and abilities of students on the spectrum. Adjustments need to be made so that the curriculum can be accessed by students with autism, which means that teaching approaches should be clear and explicit, and tasks broken down into manageable steps

Structured teaching approaches should be in place across the school and curriculum to create an inclusive learning environment.



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Developing social and communications skills

Students with autism may not develop social and communication skills in the same way as students not on the spectrum.

An inclusive learning environment for students on the spectrum is one where social and communication skills are explicitly taught. This can also help to reduce the anxiety that students with autism may experience in the sort of social interactions that occur in the classroom.

Sensory processing and support



This means that the response of students with autism to sensory experiences may be hypo-sensitive in certain areas whilst being hyper-sensitive in others. An inclusive learning environment will have strategies in place that accommodates a student's sensory profile.

Students on the spectrum may experience sensory processing difficulties that have a significant impact on learning.



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