

10 Tips for Autistic Learners and Religious Education



1. Spend time **getting to know** your autistic learners. What are their interests? How do they like to engage with learning? Use this information when planning religious education lessons and assemblies.
2. Always keep the **environment** to the forefront when teaching and supporting autistic learners. As much as is possible try to adapt the environment to suit the autistic learner rather than expecting the autistic learner to adapt to less-than-ideal environmental factors. These might include noise levels and lighting.
3. Be sensitive to the **communication preferences** of your autistic learners. Do you include multiple options when seeking answers and/or feedback from your learners? For example, in addition to verbal questioning and answering, provide **non-verbal options** like thumbs up and down, answers using traffic light systems, walking debates...
4. Consider ways to nurture a strong sense of **belonging** when including autistic learners in religious education and assemblies. Whole school celebrations at key points in the year are wonderful opportunities to create a sense of belonging for all members of the school community.
5. Incorporate the **strengths** and **interests** of your autistic learners. Although, this is good advice for all learners, emerging research into an autistic-led theory called **monotropism** indicates that this is of vital importance for autistic learners.
6. Consider and make **equitable adjustments** for **neurodivergent attention and sensory preferences**. These equitable adjustments may include providing a choice seating options during lessons and service.
7. **Critically reflect** on your expectations of autistic learners. What are these expectations based upon? Are they in anyway influenced or even biased by **neuronormative** expectations?
8. Are there other factors that **intersect** with autism for your learner(s)? For example, are any of your autistic learners **multiply neurodivergent** – AuDHERs, autistic and dyslexic? If so, what implications does **intersectionality** have on your approach to teaching this/these learner(s)?
9. Consider using **universal design for learning (UDL)** approaches in your teaching. This will benefit all learners.
10. Avail of any opportunities to **collaborate with neurodivergent colleagues** you might have when planning your religious education lessons, assemblies and services?