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EXPERIENCE SHEET ON AUTISM

- Teachers have an important part to play in supporting children with autism.
- **Autism** is a **lifelong developmental disability** associated with poor social skills. It is sometimes referred to as an “invisible disability” as there is nothing about how people with autism look that sets them apart from other people. However, people with autism may communicate, interact, behave and learn in ways that are different from most people.
- Individuals with autism have **emotions** and are able to form attachments with others although they may express them differently. Similarly, many individuals with autism are able to **communicate**. This may through the thorough use of language, use of gestures, picture exchange, sign language, spoken language, or computer technology. Individuals with autism will display a range of **sensory needs** that can affect their behaviour.
- **Autism is sometimes referred to as a “spectrum condition”**. This means that just like people without autism are different from each other, people with autism are different too. Autism can translate into a wide range of symptoms. The intensity with which it affects their ability to function also varies from mild to severe. The range of consequences is also extensive. At one end, the

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autism of a computer scientist may not be noticeable to others; at the other, a quarter of children with autism do not speak.

- Research on autism continues. There are currently no known **causes**, although genes are considered as one of the risk factors that can make a person more likely to develop autism.
- Autism also does not have a **known cure**, although research shows that early intervention therapies can help an individual's overall prognosis.
- Teachers can play an important role in recognizing signs and symptoms of autism and supporting parents during the diagnosis.
- Teachers can try help make school environment work well for children and young people with autism by detailed planning; tailoring support to the needs of individual children and ensuring that every teacher that works with the child has a good understanding of autism.
- For more information on how you can help learners with autism please visit www.oursmallwonders.org

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