

Case study: Liberty Academy Trust



“Working with the Autism Education Trust has been a highly valuable process for our Trust. Expert guidance has been coupled with the availability of great resources and training that enable all staff in our schools to support pupils positively to access an education that meets their needs and aspirations”.

Jo Galloway, Director of Education, Liberty Academy Trust

Context

- Three autism specialist schools
- Aged 4 – 19 years
- c190 pupils
- London, Reading and Cheshire



The brief

This newly formed Trust has **high ambitions to deliver best practice** in its three schools, and push forward with improvements, to ensure it is at the vanguard of education for autistic children and young people.

With each school at a different stage in its journey, including some more established and others quite recently opened, the **Trust’s leadership team wanted to understand better the current approaches and strengths**, and where to focus plans in the future.

They wanted this review to be carried out in a way that **supported and influenced positive change**, leveraging examples of in-house expertise, while also bringing in latest practice and research from AET.

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What we did

We worked with a key member of the Trust's leadership team to design an approach which was responsive to the needs of individual schools and their staff group, whilst still **delivering the improved understanding and action plans required.**

We carried out informal, observatory visits to each school during which we spent a day with three staff representing senior leadership, teaching staff, and learning mentors. We matched our AET staff to the specific roles they had personal experience in so, for example, a former teacher was matched with a member of the teaching staff. AET staff observed practice in action through shadowing of staff and taking part in the school day.

We agreed to **focus on two of our Good Autism Practice themes:** understanding the individual and enabling environments. Before our visits, we asked staff to look at the AET frameworks for schools and think about their current practice, where they were working well and where there were areas for improvement, and the kind of support or training they would find useful.

We collated our findings and **produced a written report setting these out areas of focus** in future planning. These included:



Improvements to reflect latest thinking on the learning environment (visuals, displays, organisation of classrooms)



Transitions – **latest techniques** for managing change, creating structure and routines throughout the day



Opportunities for further training around autism, especially for new staff; and access to resources and tools from AET



Practical ways to access in-school mentoring or peer support



A network to facilitate visits to schools to see good practice in action

Outcomes



Brought **visibility** to examples of best practice in the schools, enabling the trust to build on this and develop a common approach



Provided **insight** on further training needs which led to the trust choosing our Work Based-CPD programme and mentoring package



Provided a **solid foundation** for the newly recruited Autism Leads in the three sites to take forward

