

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER CONFIDENCE WHEN SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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According to the [Department for Education](#), about 15% of students in England have autism as their primary educational need. This underlines the importance of supporting students with autism in mainstream classrooms. However, many teachers may feel unprepared when helping students with autism. One reason for this could be teachers' low confidence, known as "self-efficacy."

This article summarises the main points [of a recent study](#) which examined teachers' willingness to provide accommodations to students with autism and their confidence in teaching them. The research paper highlights the importance of developing inclusive teaching practices; providing teachers with flexible strategies to assist students with autism. Read on to learn more about...

- What teacher self-efficacy is
- Factors influencing teachers' confidence in aiding pupils with autism
- Key research findings
- Ways schools can boost teachers' self-efficacy
- Practical strategies to aid students with autism

WHAT IS TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY?

[Self-efficacy is](#) an individual's belief in their own ability to successfully complete tasks and achieve desired outcomes. In the context of teaching, it refers to a teacher's confidence in their skills and abilities to effectively educate and support students in reaching their academic goals.



Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to implement inclusive practices confidently and persist in the face of difficulties, thereby fostering a positive impact on student outcomes. Conversely, low self-efficacy may result in reluctance or apprehension towards adopting new strategies or making accommodations, potentially hindering the academic and social development of students with autism.

Therefore, boosting teacher self-efficacy through targeted training and support is essential for the successful integration of inclusive teaching practices.

WHICH FACTORS INFLUENCE TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE IN AIDING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM?

According to this study, the two key factors identified by teachers as the most influential in affecting their levels of self-efficacy are:

1. Access to high-quality ongoing professional development – The study revealed that teachers had limited training in teaching students with disabilities during their teacher preparation programme, indicating a need for more comprehensive training. In addition, teachers expressed a desire for ongoing professional development to improve their skills and understanding in this area.

2. Level of support and available resources – In the study, teachers noted a lack of training and support from both their schools and teacher preparation programmes in the study. As a result, they felt less prepared to provide the essential guidance needed to support students with autism.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

The main findings concerning teacher willingness to accommodate students with autism and their own self-efficacy are as follows:

- Teachers demonstrated a strong willingness to make accommodations for students with autism, such as classroom reorganisation, checking in with students on field trips, repeating instructions, and providing emotional support. This willingness was positively correlated with their self-efficacy in teaching students with autism.

- The study found a relationship between teachers' willingness to provide accommodations and their self-efficacy to teach students with autism. This suggests that in order for teachers to have confidence in working with students with autism, it is important for them to be willing to provide accommodations and vice versa.

- The online intervention showed a significant increase in teachers' empathy, self-efficacy and willingness to accommodate students with autism after viewing their personal experiences. This highlights the importance of providing exposure and perspectives to enhance teacher understanding and confidence when teaching students with autism.

2 WAYS SCHOOLS CAN BOOST TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

According to this study, the two key factors identified by teachers as the most influential in affecting their levels of self-efficacy are:

1. To provide access to high-quality, ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers

This could include workshops, seminars, webinars or online courses specifically focused on teaching students with disabilities. [Studies show](#) that tailored CPD designed to address the unique challenges of autism can significantly boost a teacher's confidence and skills. It equips them with the necessary strategies and insights for inclusive education.

2. By implementing a comprehensive support system

This could include having a designated special education department or team that works closely with teachers to provide individualised support and guidance. This can also involve providing regular check-ins and feedback on the progress of students with disabilities. [Research has shown](#) that the extent of support and resources, such as teaching aids, specialist consultations, and adaptable teaching materials, directly influences a teacher's ability to effectively cater to the needs of students with autism.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Tailored training programs and continuous support are crucial in empowering teachers to effectively educate and cater to students with autism. With the right training and assistance, schools can boost teacher self-efficacy and encourage a more inclusive learning environment for all students. This study highlights the importance of ongoing professional development, institutional support and tailored training programs in promoting teacher self-efficacy and creating inclusive learning environments for students with autism.