



## **Can my child go to a mainstream school and do exams like other children his/her age?**

Autism is a spectrum condition and children with this diagnosis will be affected in very different ways:

- Some children with Autism will be able to access education through their local school. A child's language skills are likely to be a key determining factor in what education will best support their needs. Children who are able to have conversations but may have difficulties with the subtle aspects of language will often be able to go to mainstream school and follow the same curriculum and exams as other children their age. It is important that the school are aware of your child's needs, however subtle, so they can support them best in the school setting, in case any minor difficulties arise.
- Some children will be able to go to a mainstream school but may need additional support in school, for example, a support worker with them in class; extra support from a speech therapist or a special educator; and for the work to be amended to a level they can cope with. They may be able to sit exams but may sit fewer exams than other children of their age as available in the National Open School. They may find certain subjects easier than others.
- If a child is struggling to take part in classroom activities despite having support and if it becomes difficult to amend activities to a level they can cope with, parents may wish to consider other school options. These may include schools for



children with additional language or learning needs, educating at home or one-to-one tutoring. For some children, it is clear before they start school that a mainstream option may not be the best to meet their child's needs. For others, it may be appropriate to start in mainstream but the child's progress and well-being will need to be consistently monitored to ensure this option continues to best meet their needs.

Where your child goes to school will be your decision, as parents, at the end of the day but we strongly advise that you listen to the perspectives of school staff and any other professionals involved with your child to enable you to make a balanced decision that is in the best interests of your child. You will need to find out all the school options that are available and be open to all options by visiting different settings and speaking to staff, parents and current pupils. Key factors to bear in mind when making decisions about schools need to be the level of support the school can offer; their level of experience of helping children with Autism or willingness to learn and accept support from professionals involved; where your child will be able to access classroom activities at a level to suit their level of development; and, let's not forget, where does your child want to be? Where is s/he happiest and most comfortable?

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**Date submitted: November, 2012**

**Date of renewal: November 2013**