Best Practice Network

Proudly part of Supporting Education Group

Liberty Academy Trust

Autism Support Practitioner

What you need to know about the Level 5 Apprenticeship



Supporting a growing number of Autistic pupils

According to the DfE, Autism Spectrum Disorder is the most common primary need for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

In the last year, more than 25,000 additional pupils have been identified as autistic across EHCP and SEN Support provision.

As the number of pupils identified as autistic continues to rise, schools need to develop in-house specialists to provide effective support and help create truly inclusive learning environments.



Best Practice Network
Proudly part of Supporting Education Group

About the apprenticeship

The Level 5 Autism Support Practitioner Apprenticeship is designed to help schools build specialist autism expertise within their existing support teams.

Developed in partnership with Liberty Academy Trust, the programme supports: **TAs, SEND TAs, LSAs** and **HLTAs** to identify learning barriers earlier, support autistic pupils more confidently and strengthen inclusive practice across their school.

This is the first autism practitioner apprenticeship for schools!

Best Practice Network

Proudly part of Supporting Education Group



About the apprenticeship

- Delivered across 18 months + Assessment
- Virtual learning: online sessions, monthly coaching and dedicated support
- Designed for TAs, SEND TAs, LSAs and HLTAs
- Gain specialist knowledge and expertise in autism support
- Qualifications: Liberty Academy Trust Certification and a Specialist Teaching Assistant Level 5 qualification
- Fully funded through the Growth and Skills Levy



AUTISM SUPPORT PRACTITIONER

Best Practice Network

Proudly part of Supporting Education Group

Delivered in partnership with Liberty Academy Trust

Liberty Academy Trust is a specialist education trust with deep expertise in SEND and autism.

Liberty Academy Trust is committed to providing an exceptional education for autistic children and young people, combining personalised teaching with therapeutic support to meet the needs of each learner.

Liberty Academy Trust

Best Practice Network

Proudly part of Supporting Education Group



Why does this partnership matter?

Liberty Academy Trust's specialist knowledge ensures the programme is grounded in real practice, autism-informed approaches and the day-to-day realities of supporting autistic pupils in schools.

- Liberty Academy Trust schools are designated as autism-specific
- Their approach combines personalised teaching and therapeutic support
- Their expertise ensures the programme is shaped by real classroom practice and learner needs



Best Practice Network brings national apprenticeship delivery, SEND and CPD expertise, while Liberty Academy Trust brings specialist expertise in autism education.

Together, the partnership supports schools to build confident, specialist autism practice from within.

Best Practice Network & Liberty Academy Trust

Programme delivery

Delivered over 18 months, the Autism Support Practitioner Apprenticeship is delivered through a structured blend of:

- Facilitated online classes
- Monthly coaching
- Online resources for independent learning
- Workplace learning



Curriculum modules

- Wellbeing, resilience and study skills
- Reflective practice and professional development
- Safeguarding
- Health & safety
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Curriculum
- The learning environment
- Child development and how children learn
- Theories of learning
- Pedagogy
- Supporting individual needs
- Learning resources and technology
- Planning
- Assessment
- Advocating for learner needs
- Effective teamworking and partnership working
- Preparation for End Point Assessment

Autism-specific learning

Understanding Autism

Develop an understanding of autism, its prevalence and impact in schools, and how it may present in the classroom

Practical strategies to support pupils

Develop strengths-based strategies to identify and remove barriers linked to sensory needs, communication, emotional regulation and behaviour

Supporting learning, development and inclusion

Explore how to create structured, low-arousal environments, use routines and visual supports and build a stronger sense of belonging

Planning, assessment and improving outcomes

Learn how to support curriculum access, observe pupil progress, adapt support and work closely with teachers to meet individual needs

Working with others to support pupils

Develop confidence in sharing observations, advocating for pupils and working with teachers, SENCOs, families and external professionals

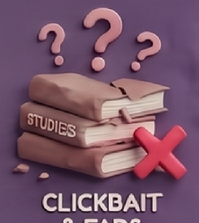
Example materials...

Making the Most of Professional Development

Why Research Matters for TAs

Detecting Fact from Fiction





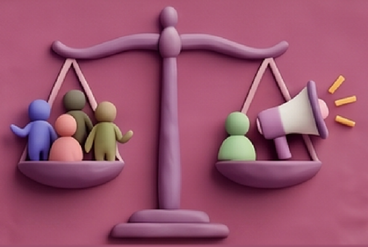
Research helps TAs navigate 'clickbait' and educational fads by prioritising peer-reviewed, reproducible studies over unproven trends.

Reflective Practice



TAs should regularly evaluate how their specific actions affect pupils, using those insights to refine and strengthen their approach.

Driving Towards Social Equity



By providing scientific validity to marginalised voices, research helps TAs address discrimination and foster inclusive environments for diverse pupil populations.

Cultivate a Growth Mindset

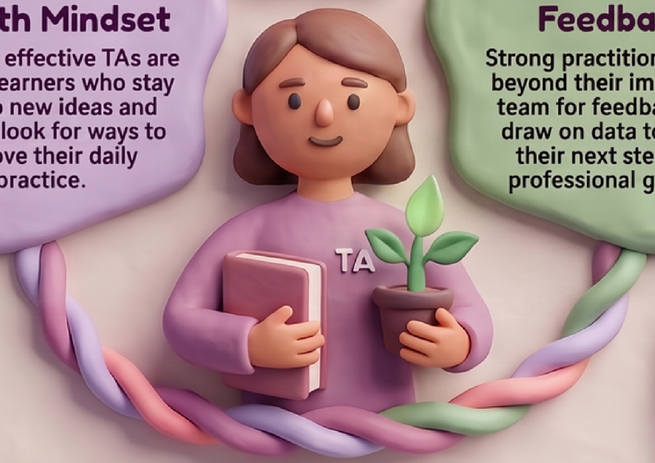


The most effective TAs are lifelong learners who stay open to new ideas and actively look for ways to improve their daily practice.

Seek External Feedback



Strong practitioners look beyond their immediate team for feedback and draw on data to guide their next steps for professional growth.



Supporting Health and Wellbeing



Research-informed insights allow TAs to better support student mental health while also safeguarding their own wellbeing in a demanding role.

Inciting Change and Reflection



Engaging with research allows TAs to evaluate both "successes and disasters," providing the power to Improve everyday routines and habits.

The Foundation of Professional Growth

NotebookLM

Affirming Autistic Learners:

A Guide for Teaching Assistants

The Affirming Mindset



Use terms like "autistic person" to value neurodiversity and avoid deficit-focused or medicalised labels.



Adopt a Strengths-Based Approach

Focus on a learner's interests and talents to build their confidence and engagement.



Maintain High Expectations

Set challenging, achievable goals without placing artificial limits on what a learner can accomplish.

Affirming Actions in Practice



Foster Learner Agency

Provide regular opportunities for learners to make choices and take ownership of their learning.



Promote acceptance and a culture where difference is valued among peers and the community.



Take Pride in the Impact

Value the relationships you build and the positive ethos created by affirming autistic identity.

NotebookLM

Off-the-job training for your apprenticeship

Off-the-job training are flexible learning hours are completed alongside your day-to-day role and focus on activities that help you progress toward your apprenticeship goals.

Your **Apprenticeship Tutor** will work with you to identify opportunities for off-the-job training in your role, helping you balance learning with your existing responsibilities while staying on track with your apprenticeship.

Off-the-job training could be...

- Applying theory-based learning from online sessions in your role
- Shadowing qualified staff members
- Scheduled virtual classroom sessions and interactive learning
- Curriculum planning
- Coaching and mentoring meetings
- Networking & training events

Your Apprenticeship Tutor: Supporting you at every stage

Choosing an apprenticeship is a major step. But with Best Practice Network, you are not alone. Our team is here to support you on your apprenticeship journey.

A dedicated Apprenticeship tutor provides **regular support,** guidance and coaching. They **help learners connect their learning** to real pupils, real provision and day-to-day challenges they may face in school.



EMMA MINCHELLA



ZOE ASHE

What kind of support is offered? →

Support at every stage



Personalised learner support

Support is tailored to each participant's needs, and learners can ask for help at any point during the programme.



Dedicated tutor guidance

Tutors check progress regularly, identify barriers early and help learners stay confident and on track.



Additional Learning Support (ALS)

A specialist ALS team is available for learners who need extra support, strategies or reasonable adjustments.



Wellbeing & confidence

Learners are supported with both their development and wellbeing, with regular check-ins and open communication



Support in the workplace

Mentors are involved so participants can apply their learning effectively in their setting.

Who is the programme designed for?

Designed for	Teaching Assistants (TAs), SEND TAs, LSAs, HTLAs, support staff working in schools
Who want to...	Develop specialist expertise in autism while gaining a Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assitant qualification
Ideal for those supporting...	Pupils with autism
With a particular focus on...	Communication, sensory processing, social interaction and engagement

Benefits for participants

Develop specialist autism knowledge	Build a deeper understanding of autism, neurodiversity and how autistic pupils may experience school.
Grow confidence in practice	Learn practical strategies to support communication, sensory needs, regulation, engagement and participation.
Make a greater impact day to day	Apply learning directly in the classroom and wider school environment.
Progress professionally	Work towards a Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant while developing a more specialist role within your school's support team.
Advocate for autistic learners	Develop confidence in sharing observations, supporting pupil voice and working with others to improve outcomes.
Free for the learner	The programme is fully funded through the Growth and Skills levy making it free for you as the learner

Benefits for schools

Develop in-house expertise	Develop existing support staff into confident autism practitioners who can apply specialist strategies across the school.
Strengthen inclusive provision	Support autistic pupils to access learning, participate more fully and feel a stronger sense of belonging.
Improve consistency of support	Create a more joined-up approach between TAs, teachers, SENCOs, families and external professionals.
Support earlier identification	Equip staff to recognise barriers sooner and respond with practical, evidence-informed support.
Reduce pressure on SENCOs and teachers	Develop practitioners who can contribute more confidently to planning, observations, adaptations and pupil support.
Make the most of funding	The programme is £12,000 but fully funded through your school's Growth and Skills levy, helping schools develop specialist capacity without using standard CPD budgets. NOTE: Most schools can access funding through their local authority or MAT.

What next?

Start your application	Visit bestpracticenet.co.uk/autism-support and register to receive the application link.
We will arrange funding	Our friendly funding team will support the employer and manage the Growth and Skills Levy funding process. Remember: this programme is free for the learner. The cost of the programme is covered by your schools Growth and Skills Levy (for eligible schools).
Join our next cohort!	Start with support from day one. Learners receive induction, onboarding and guidance before beginning the programme.

Scan QR code to apply:

Best Practice Network

Proudly part of Supporting Education Group



Questions?