

SELF-AUDIT · FREE TO PRINT AND SHARE

Belonging self-audit for your setting

A short, honest check on how far autistic students feel they belong – for a department, SENDCo, or SLT to run together.

Daniel Green – PhD Researcher, University of Kent & SEND tutor. Doctoral research on autism and belonging in UK secondary schools.

How to use this

This is a reflection tool, not an inspection checklist. Belonging is something students *feel*, so the point is an honest conversation about your own setting, not a score to defend. Work through it as a team. For each statement, tick how true it is of your setting right now. Then look at where the ticks fall to the left, and pick two areas to act on.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Embedded
1 - Being known and accepted				
Every autistic student has at least one adult who knows them well and is glad to see them.				
Staff can describe what each autistic student is like, not just what their needs are.				
Autistic students can be themselves here without it costing them socially.				
2 - The environment				
The sensory environment (noise, light, crowding) is manageable across the school day.				
The day is predictable, and students know what is coming and what to do if plans change.				
There is somewhere a student can go to regulate without it being treated as a problem.				

Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Embedded
--------	-----------	-------	----------

3 - Unstructured time and friendships

Break, lunch, and transitions are supported, not the hardest part of the day.				
Students have real opportunities to connect with others who share their interests.				
We help friendships form on autistic students' terms, rather than expecting them to socialise our way.				

4 - Masking and the cost of fitting in

We notice the students who seem 'fine' and check whether that is taking effort to maintain.				
A calm, compliant student is not automatically assumed to be a happy, included one.				
We pay attention to signs that show up later, at home or by the end of the week.				

5 - Student voice

We ask autistic students about their experience in ways that suit how they communicate.				
When students tell us something about belonging, we treat it as real and act on it.				
Decisions about an autistic student are made with them, not only about them.				

Making sense of it

Don't add up a total. Look at the pattern. The statements where you ticked 'Rarely' or 'Sometimes' are where belonging is most likely to be thin, and they are usually more about the setting than about the students. Pick the two that matter most and decide one concrete thing you'll change for each.

Where we're strongest	Where belonging is thinnest
Two things we'll change – and who owns each	
1. 2.	

A note on honesty

The most useful version of this audit is the one your staff feel safe being honest in. Low scores are not a failure; they are where the work is. Run it as a starting point, not a verdict.

Want to work through this with your staff?

I run talks, INSET, and workshops on belonging for autistic students, including sessions built around this audit and what your results point to.

Book a session: daniellouisgreen7@gmail.com · daniel-green-researcher.pages.dev

Based on: Goodenow, C. (1993) *Psychology in the Schools*, 30(1), 79–90. · Horgan, F., Kenny, N. & Flynn, P. (2023) *Autism*, 27(2). · Atkinson, E., Wright, S. & Wood-Downie, H. (2025) *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.