

5 step guide to **AsIAm** Secondary School Programme

Introduction



"Welcome to the ChangeX guide to the AsIAM Secondary Schools Programme. This guide is primarily designed for teachers hoping to bring the programme to their school but will also be useful for parents who would like to see the Programme run in their local school. I hope it's helpful and we're looking forward to hearing from you!"

Adam Harris, Founder of AsIAM

What is AsIAM?

AsIAM is an Irish charity that aims to create a more inclusive society through education, empowerment and advocacy. Asiam.ie is Ireland's central online hub for the Autism community. The website aims to provide information and support to individuals with Autism, their families and professional supports. It also provides a platform for the Autism community to engage society in understanding the condition. The organisation is working towards an Ireland where every citizen, including those with Autism, can live and succeed "as they are".

What is the Secondary School Programme?

The Programme aims to educate students to understand Autism better, to realise that it is an invisible condition, to understand the challenges and the strengths of people with the condition, and also

to see students with Autism as students, just like other students, first. The programme involves a once-off workshop as well as ongoing support and access to resources. The workshop is delivered by a member of the Autism Community (person with Autism, parent, professional) and involves talking about Autism in the context of difference generally, a difference that brings challenges, opportunities and even strengths. The workshop gives students an attention-grabbing experience of Autism and also empowers students to consider how THEY can be more Autism friendly. The Programme came about because many parents and young people with Autism highlighted the difficult challenges students with Autism face in Secondary Schools, while many schools had the desire to educate their students to understand the condition. AsIAM believes that successful education outcomes for students with Autism are not only about resources or legislation but also about school culture and the attitudes of other students. The Programme began its national roll-out in November 2014 and now has 35 speakers in the field, delivering workshops around Ireland.

The Background

The organisation was formally launched in March 2014 and was established by Adam Harris, a young adult with Aspergers Syndrome, in response to his own experiences of growing up with the condition and his desire to do something to give back to the Autism community.

Overview



5 STEPS

1. Request a Workshop
2. Meet your assigned Speaker
3. Prepare for the workshop
4. Workshop day
5. Design a school 'Inclusion Charter'

WHO

Someone who...

- is a member of staff in a secondary school or a local parent who wants to improve understanding of Autism and build an inclusive school culture
- Is committed to ongoing work and improvement in the area of inclusion

RESOURCE CHECKLIST

- Completed contract with AslAm
- Permission slips to parents
- Computer, Projector and Speakers for Workshop

TIME



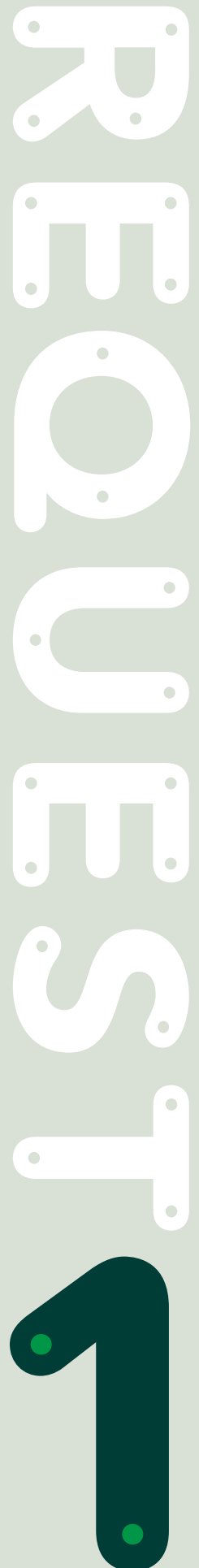
Organising a workshop in your school will take 2-3 hours of administration, the workshop itself will take 2 hours in total.

Step 1: Request a Workshop

Schools request an AsIAm workshop for many different reasons. Sometimes they're experiencing difficulties, there is a lack of understanding among students or staff or sometimes a staff member is simply keen to ensure that the school is as inclusive as possible. Whatever the reason, AsIAm works hard to ensure that your workshop is personalised and tailored to your needs. You'll be assigned a local speaker that is a member of the Autism community.

There are a couple of things involved in requesting a Workshop. Firstly, the very practical issues of deciding which year will participate and setting a time and date. We'll provide you with a short form to capture your preferences. You should note that the maximum number of students for a workshop is 35.

Fill in this short [form](#) to request a workshop and get started.



VISIT



We can connect you with a local school who have already engaged in the AsIAm Schools Programme. You can arrange a visit or just a quick chat on the phone to learn about their experience.

Step 2: Meet your assigned Speaker

Your speaker will be assigned based on the information in your Request form completed at Step 1. Your speaker will be a member of the Autism community (person with Autism, parent, professional) ensuring that the workshop is as engaging and real as possible.

Once a date for your workshop has been agreed with AsIAM, you can begin preparations. This will start with talking to your assigned speaker to ensure they have a good understanding of your school, the reason you've requested the workshop and anything else they need to bear in mind to make the workshop as valuable and relevant as possible for your school.

If possible, they'll visit you at the school beforehand or else you can speak on the phone. They will also ask you to fill out an 'AsIAM Schools Contract' - this contract is not overly legalistic but just sets out the basic principles of what the programme wants to achieve, what's expected of the school and what you need to do before and after the workshop.



TIPS



Investing a little bit of time with your workshop speaker beforehand will ensure that the workshop is as valuable and relevant as possible for your school.

MEET

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Step 3:

Prepare for the Workshop

Complete the "All About Me" booklet

Where there are students in your school on the Spectrum, your Speaker will give you an "All about Me" and a "My Child Booklet" to be completed by parents or the student themselves. This enables AsIAm prepare for the workshop and to flag any concerns in advance.

Permission from parents

Different schools have different approaches to informing parents of workshops which are taking place. Due to the personal nature of Autism, it is really important, that every school sends a permission slip home to every student before the workshop. The school is responsible for compiling this themselves and can use the introductory text of this guide to explain the workshop in the letter.

Survey

Your speaker will circulate a survey to your school prior to the workshop, this enables AsIAm to measure knowledge and attitude of the students before and after the workshop so it is an important quality assurance test. You should give it to students one week before the workshop and return it to your speaker.



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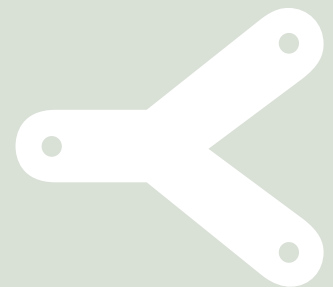
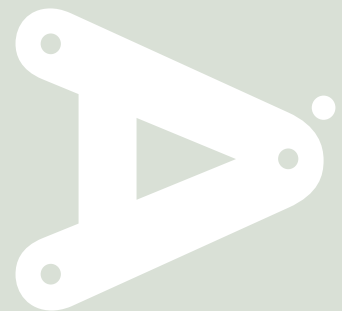
Step 4:

Workshop Day

The Workshop takes place over 90 minutes and involves talking about Autism in the context of difference generally, a difference which brings challenges, opportunities and even strengths. It will be very tailored to your school's needs and while it is a once-off event, AsIAM will work to maintain active relationships with schools wishing to implement the ideas for inclusion their students come up with.

What you'll need on the day:

1. Computer, Projector and Speakers – these will need to be set up before your Speaker arrives.
2. A teacher present at all times – For insurance reasons, a teacher is present at all times during the presentation
3. Donation - AsIAM asks schools to make a donation towards their work. The donation is not compulsory as they would hate to restrict their message to schools that can afford it, however most schools can afford to give something and are happy to do so. The suggested donation is 250 euro. An invoice is issued from AsIAM HQ for this.



Step 5:

Design a school 'Inclusion Charter'

This is one of the most important parts of the workshop. Your Speaker and the students will have designed an "Inclusion Charter" during the course of the workshop.

AsIAm will use this to create a Poster that can be used as a momento of the visit and a statement of intent from students moving forward!

It'll be good to give this prominence in the school to remind everyone of what they committed to.

AsIAm will also keep in touch with your school, adding you to the schools newsletter and send you new materials as they become available.

CHARTER 5

What's Next?

Now that you know what's involved you're probably wondering what's next?

We'll provide all you need to get started including assigning you your very own mentor and providing the ongoing support you need to make sure the programme is a success in your school.

[Sign up here to get started](#)

