

# Everyone's Included:

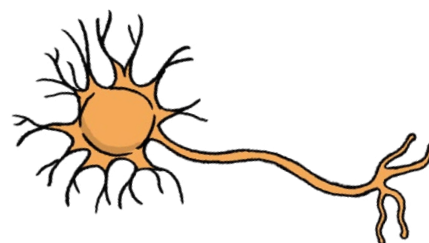
Talking to your child's school about neurodiversity

Parent and Carer Information Sheet and FAQs



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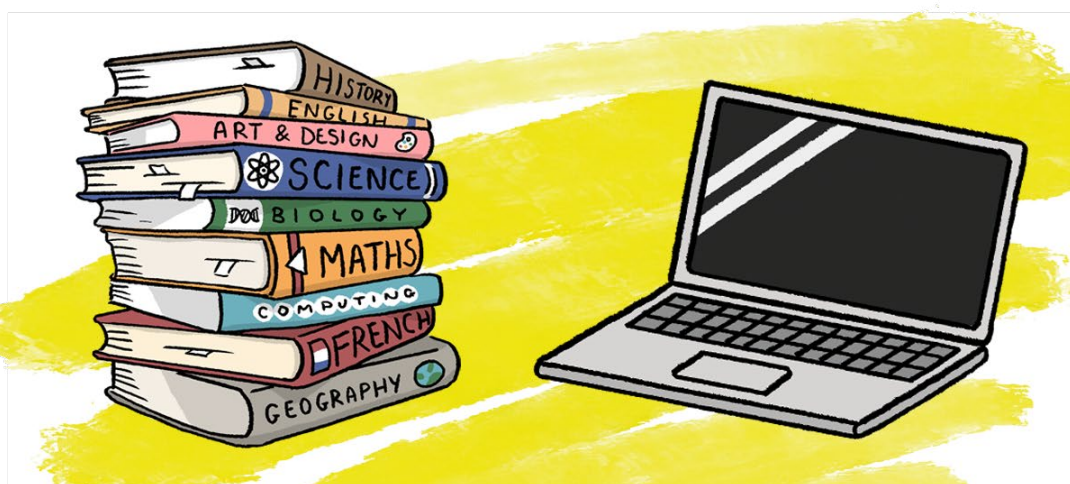
# What is LEANS?



If your child is neurodivergent or has an additional support need, you may feel there is much more their school could do to understand and accept neurodiversity. It may be that a lack of understanding is making your child's time at school less enjoyable and fulfilling than it should be. If you would like to improve your child's school experience by changing what people in the school community know about neurodiversity and how they respond to differences, the LEANS classroom resource pack could be a good choice for your school.

Learning About Neurodiversity in Schools (LEANS) is an innovative curriculum for mainstream primary schools to introduce children aged 8-11 years to the concept of neurodiversity. It is 100% free for schools to access and use. It has been developed by a neurodiverse team of experienced researchers and educators at the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre, University of Edinburgh, in collaboration with Salvesen Mindroom Centre.

Neurodiversity is a valuable form of human diversity. It means that we are all different in how we think, feel, and learn because our brains process information differently. LEANS introduces the idea of neurodiversity to children and explains how this is relevant to their school experiences and daily lives.



**LEANS**   
Learning About Neurodiversity at School

[www.ed.ac.uk/salvesen-research/leans](http://www.ed.ac.uk/salvesen-research/leans)

# Who is LEANS for?

LEANS is for mainstream primary schools. It is designed for delivery by qualified primary school teachers working with pupils aged 8 – 11 years. LEANS is a curriculum for the whole class – not only children with additional support needs.

## What are the benefits of LEANS?

LEANS aims to create a better-informed, more accepting school community, which makes school a more positive experience for everyone. It has been piloted in four Scottish primary schools and evaluated by researchers at The University of Edinburgh.

The resource has been designed to increase knowledge and acceptance among all pupils, which can have positive effects on wellbeing, mental health and reducing stigma and is guided by three key goals.

**The overall aim is for participating staff and pupils to:**

### KNOW:

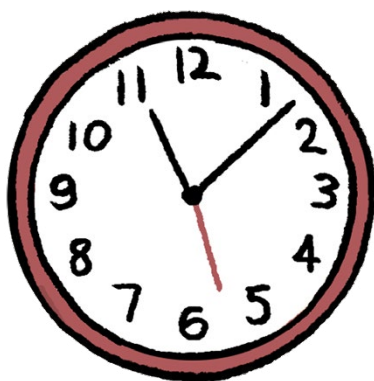
Increase their **knowledge** of neurodiversity terms and concepts.

### THINK:

Develop more positive **attitudes** towards neurodiversity and neurodivergence.

### DO:

Increase individuals' positive and inclusive **actions** within the school community.





# What's included in LEANS?

The resource pack is a 'one stop shop' and contains everything a teacher will need to prepare to teach neurodiversity, and then to deliver LEANS in class. Materials include explainer videos, activity instructions, printable guides and pupil instructions, PowerPoints, stories, and posters.

## LEANS is divided into seven units which cover:

- ✎ **Unit 1:** Introduction to neurodiversity
- ✎ **Unit 2:** Learning and thinking differently
- ✎ **Unit 3:** Communication and understanding
- ✎ **Unit 4:** Getting along together at school
- ✎ **Unit 5:** Is that fair?
- ✎ **Unit 6:** Different ways to make a friendship
- ✎ **Unit 7:** Neurodiversity in our classroom

## I think this would be great in my child's school: How can I introduce LEANS to my child's school?

The resources in the LEANS introductory resources for parents and carers are designed to support you to introduce LEANS to your child's school. You could consider discussing LEANS with your child's class teacher, raising it at a meeting with support for learning staff, presenting it at a Parent Council meeting, or making a request via email using the template provided.

## Useful contacts at your child's school may include:

- ✎ Your child's class teacher
- ✎ Parent Council
- ✎ Head Teacher
- ✎ Support for Learning Leader



## Further information

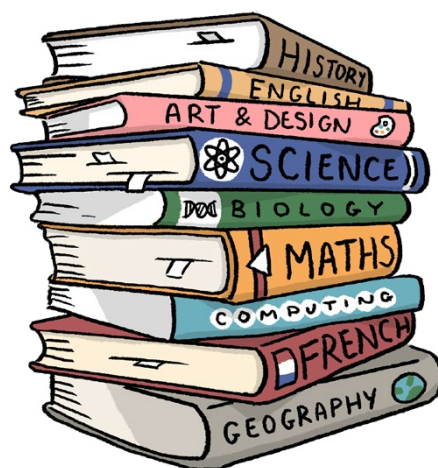
You can download the full LEANS resource pack for free from the LEANS website, and find more information about LEANS: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/salvesen-research/leans/download>

If you live in Scotland and have any additional questions, please contact us at [directhelp@mindroom.org](mailto:directhelp@mindroom.org) / 0131 370 6730 / [mindroom.org](http://mindroom.org)



# LEANS:

## Frequently asked questions



What does LEANS stand for?

Learning About Neurodiversity at School

What is LEANS?

Developed by a neurodiverse team of researchers and educators, LEANS introduces the idea of neurodiversity to children, explains how this is relevant to their own school and lives and promotes inclusive practice.

Who is LEANS for?

LEANS is a whole-class programme designed to be delivered by qualified primary school teachers and is aimed at mainstream primary school pupils aged 8 – 11 years.

How long does it take to deliver LEANS?

LEANS is designed to be delivered over at least one term, within the same school year (estimated 1-2hrs/week over the term). Due to the design of the pack, using LEANS to deliver a one-off session isn't recommended. All the activities are interlinked and build on each other to deliver a comprehensive and coherent programme.

How will a school know if LEANS is right for them?

The LEANS Teacher Handbook includes a self-evaluation tool to help teachers decide if it is right for their class. Ethics and pupil safety were key considerations for the LEANS team, and it is recognised that it will not be a practical or low-risk option for every class, right now.

Who should deliver LEANS?

The resources are designed to be delivered by a qualified primary teacher who is the main teacher for the class. The Teacher Handbook discusses this aspect of LEANS in detail.

How do you know it works?

LEANS was developed by a team of experienced educational professionals and researchers, including people who identify as neurodivergent. LEANS was piloted in four Scottish primary schools and thoroughly evaluated by the team at The University of Edinburgh. More information about the evaluation is available here: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/salvesen-research/leans/about/evaluation>



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## What are the potential benefits of LEANS and why should my child's school consider delivering it?

LEANS has been designed to deliver a range of benefits:

- ✎ LEANS recognises that many neurodivergent young people have negative experiences in schools due to harmful stereotypes and a lack of acceptance and understanding. By using activities and reflective opportunities LEANS has been designed to tackle these issues and aims to change what people know, think, and do.
- ✎ Better-informed, more accepting school communities can create more positive school experiences for everyone. LEANS' goals are to change pupils' knowledge about neurodiversity, their beliefs about neurodivergence, and to promote positive actions they can take at school.
- ✎ LEANS has been designed to increase knowledge and acceptance among all pupils, which can have positive effects on wellbeing, mental health, and reducing stigma.

## What does LEANS cover?

The LEANS curriculum is divided into seven units and covers the following topics:

### **Unit 1. Introduction to neurodiversity**

- Neurodiversity concepts and terminology

### **Unit 2: Learning and thinking differently**

- Different experiences with lessons and the physical school environment

### **Unit 3: Communication and understanding**

- Communication and miscommunication

### **Unit 4: Getting along together at school**

- Understanding differences between needs and wants, conflicting needs
- Offering and accepting help

### **Unit 5: Is that fair?**

- Equality and equity-based concepts of fairness
- Applying fairness concepts to classroom supports, treatment at school

### **Unit 6: Different ways to make a friendship**

- Friendship, relationships with classmates

### **Unit 7: Neurodiversity in our classroom**

- Reflecting on how our actions affect others
- Class and/or individual-level goal setting for the future

## Can a LEANS unit be adapted for use as a one-off session?

LEANS has been designed to be used in full and in a certain order. Concepts, vocabulary, and story content all build from unit to unit, so it is recommended the full programme is delivered.

## What is included in the LEANS resource pack?

The free, downloadable resource pack contains everything a teacher would need to deliver LEANS, starting with a Teacher Handbook. It also includes activities, printable guides, pupil instructions, PowerPoints, stories, and posters. There are also freely accessible links to LEANS videos.

## Does my child's class teacher need to be a specialist in neurodiversity?

Teachers do not need to be specialists in neurodiversity to deliver LEANS. The pack provides teachers with everything they need to know. However, it is recommended that LEANS is delivered by the qualified, main class teacher (or co-teachers), rather than another member of school staff, a student teacher, or a supply teacher.

## I am concerned delivering this programme will draw attention to my child or could lead to them being identified. Do you have any advice on this?

LEANS has been carefully designed to ensure the activities do not draw attention to one child or specific neurodivergent conditions. The teacher guidance discusses this specific issue. It highlights that neurodiversity is about everyone in the class, and the pack uses stories, fictional characters, and fictional situations so no one will be put on the spot or asked to disclose personal information.

Whilst the pack does not address individual diagnoses, it does address a range of perspectives that are inclusive of children with and without a diagnosis, those with additional support needs, those who may just feel different but don't know why, as well as children who don't fall into any of these groups.

The school are required to go through a self-evaluation when deciding whether it is safe or ethical to implement LEANS at this time, which includes considering the impact on neurodivergent pupils in class.

## There is an issue with bullying in my child's school. Can LEANS help with this?

No, the guidance specifically states that LEANS should never be used under these circumstances as this poses an elevated risk in the class. You can read more on this issue in the self-evaluation section of the Teacher Handbook.

## What if my child identifies themselves as neurodivergent after the session?

LEANS doesn't give any detailed information on diagnosis or individual neurodivergent conditions. If your child does raise this at home, it could be an opportunity for you to have an open conversation to explore why they feel different from their peers. The More Resources section of the LEANS website suggests content and organisations that might be able to support these conversations, at school or at home.





## What does LEANS say about individual neurodivergent conditions?

The LEANS pack is about explaining the larger ideas of neurodiversity and neurodivergence. It is not intended to diagnose anyone and does not provide information on individual conditions or encourage people to identify with a specific diagnosis. It is important to note that every classroom is neurodiverse. Neurodiversity impacts everyone, so LEANS takes a whole-class approach which is intended to reach and engage everyone. Some of LEANS' story characters do have formal diagnoses and are working on making sense of these in relation to their own experiences and their class's discussions on neurodiversity.

## What if my school says no to delivering LEANS?

The creators of the pack strongly advise your child's school to use the self-evaluation and safety planning tools provided in the pack, and to keep in mind that LEANS will not be the best option for all schools.

The school may decide that delivering LEANS is not right for them at this time. It could be that LEANS doesn't fit with the class or the school's circumstances or they may have identified a risk or ethical concern associated with delivering LEANS. The full pack provides detailed information about circumstances that may indicate LEANS isn't the best option for your child's class.

Even if your child's school decides not to use LEANS, opening that conversation about teaching neurodiversity could provide an opportunity to explore and identify other, more suitable approaches. As a starting place, the More Resources section of the LEANS website suggests neurodiversity-related books and other materials. Some of these would also be suitable for use at home. If you are based in Scotland, our Direct Help and Support Team can also provide advice on this issue.

These materials have been prepared for use in the Scottish education context. However, LEANS has been designed to be a UK-wide resource and may also be suitable for adaptation in other countries. The information contained in this leaflet may need to be adapted to your own context.

Salvesen Mindroom Centre is expert in education in Scotland, but you may need to seek support from a similar local agency if you are hoping to promote LEANS in other parts of the UK, or further afield.

