

Key characteristics of autism:

- Differences in social communication and interaction
- Preference for routine and predictability
- Sensory sensitivities (to sound, light, textures)

In the Muslim school context

- Some autistic students may not make eye contact or engage in group activities. This is not disrespect – it is neurological.
- Meltdowns are not tantrums – they are signs of sensory or emotional overload.

What teachers can do

- Prepare students for transitions using visual timetables or verbal countdowns
- Use social stories for prayer time, assembly, and break rules
- Allow quiet spaces for recovery – e.g., wellbeing room or library corners

Example

Zaynab, a Year 6 student, doesn't like being touched during group activities. Her teacher creates a "choose your own seat" arrangement to respect her boundaries, and reinforces kindness through hadith on compassion.

Islamic value

"Verily, Allah is gentle and loves gentleness in all matters." (Bukhari)