

Planning in Children with and without Autism Spectrum Conditions

BACKGROUND

Research suggests that beyond the age of seven children without Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) rely on inner speech (talking to themselves in their head) to plan and problem solve, while children with ASC do not.

We think that children with ASC may instead think in pictures to plan and problem solve.

WHAT WE DID

15 children with ASC and 14 children without ASC took part in the study. Each of them did a computerised planning task where they had to move coloured blocks around on pegs to make a certain arrangement in as few moves and as quickly as possible (see the example at the bottom of the page). Whilst doing this, children had to either be silent, talk their thoughts out loud (encouraging them to talk to themselves to solve the problem), repeat a word out loud (preventing them from talking to themselves to solve the problem), or repeatedly tap two points on the table (preventing them from thinking in pictures to solve the problem).

WHAT WE FOUND

No differences were found between the performance of children with ASC and children without ASC.

These results are different to the results of previous experiments and suggest children with ASC may not plan and problem solve differently to children without ASC.

Thank you for your child's participation in this project. For more information please contact Chris Jarrold

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