

## Local People - A Teenage Perspective .....

A small group of students from various year groups at Macclesfield Academy meets regularly to discuss ideas, work together and support each other as writers. The articles they write for us look at life from a sometimes refreshingly alternative perspective!

This month, a lovely and very personal piece by Eleanor Adshead.



### Autism doesn't define me, I define autism

Imagine you are at the movies and you have someone talking behind you, someone's mobile ringing in front of you, someone chewing popcorn next to you, someone with really smelly shoes, and someone with a bright hat on in the front row. It would be hard to concentrate on what's going on in the movie, wouldn't it? That's how people with autism feel a lot of the time.

Autism affects 1 in 68 children and boys are nearly five times more likely than girls to have autism. I have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It's a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioural challenges.

Personally, I struggle with social interactions like ordering off a menu or asking something in a shop, eye contact and busy places. Having a routine is ideal for me as it helps me know what will happen next. I prefer to spend my free time alone snuggled up with a book or writing stories on my iPad. Sometimes, I struggle understanding people, especially when they use sarcasm and I take their words literally. I have no regard for other people's feelings and I find it hard to spark a conversation or take part in one. For example, I'll just talk about something that I like and not give my friends a chance to talk or add their opinions. But I prefer to be alone and not having to worry about talking to people. Body language and emotions are a mystery to me. How am I supposed to know that you're happy or sad just by looking at your posture or face?

Some famous people, like Tim Burton, have autism or autistic traits and genius Albert Einstein was thought to have Asperger's Syndrome; which is a type of Autism. Lots of characters in TV series are portrayed with autism/Asperger's, like Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock Holmes and Jim Parsons' Sheldon Cooper. Most people watching these shows don't understand why, for example, Sherlock acts like he does and has no regard for other people's emotions, but I can relate to him and my family constantly points out that I act and behave like him.

There is no known cause of ASD or a way to treat it. Lots of people are aware of autism and go out of their way to help us, but there is still discrimination. Recently, rapper 50 Cent mocked an autistic airport janitor, who has trouble communicating. Unfortunately, some people with autism don't realise they are being mocked because they don't understand. People make snap judgments when they see a child throwing a tantrum, but that child could be autistic and having a sensory overload.

We just want to be loved and treated the same as everyone else. Support is what we need to get through difficult situations and more people need to understand how to help. I hear things more loudly, I see things more clearly, I feel things you don't, I taste things differently; I have autism.



**Eleanor is 14 and her interests include reading, writing and watching *Sherlock* and *The Walking Dead*.**