all children at participating institutions
- aged 4;0 – 6;11
- diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder
- no serious sensory disorder
- no previous experience of music therapy

first contact with investigator:
agreement to participate in the study? (written informed consent)

yes

pretest/baseline assessment on ASD (ADOS, ADI-R) & cognitive ability (K-ABC) by blind assessors; parent report (SRS); obtaining information on concomitant treatment

randomisation – continued until stopping boundary is reached

High-intensity music therapy: improvisational music therapy, three sessions per week (up to 60 sessions), parent counselling (3 sessions) continued for 5 months

Low-intensity music therapy: improvisational music therapy, one session per week (up to 20 sessions), parent counselling (3 sessions) continued for 5 months

Standard care: parent counselling (3 sessions), no music therapy

assessment of treatment fidelity: therapist/counsellor self-rating, videotaping of all sessions, independent rating of randomly selected sessions, supervision of therapists/counsellors

2 months (intermediate) & 5 months (end of intervention) after randomisation:
assessment using ADOS (blind assessors) & SRS (parents); obtaining information on concomitant treatment

12 months after randomisation (follow-up):
assessment using ADOS (blind assessors) & SRS (parents); obtaining information on concomitant treatment