

Autism Spectrum Education Team

North Lincolnshire ASET Support and Strategies Toolkit

Key Stage 3/4

Revised April 2018

Acknowledgements

The starting point for the development of this document was the Leicestershire City Council's Education Department's publication:

**Asperger's Syndrome - Practical Strategies for the Classroom -
A Teacher's Guide**

Thanks go to the National Autistic Society for Permission to adapt and add to these materials

North Lincolnshire Autism Spectrum Education Team Support and Strategies Toolkit

Aims

This North Lincolnshire Autism Spectrum Education Team Support and Strategies Toolkit is intended to develop good practice for children and young people who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or who may be on the autism spectrum, as part of the graduated approach to inclusion.

The ASET Support and Strategies Toolkit aims to enable practitioners to:

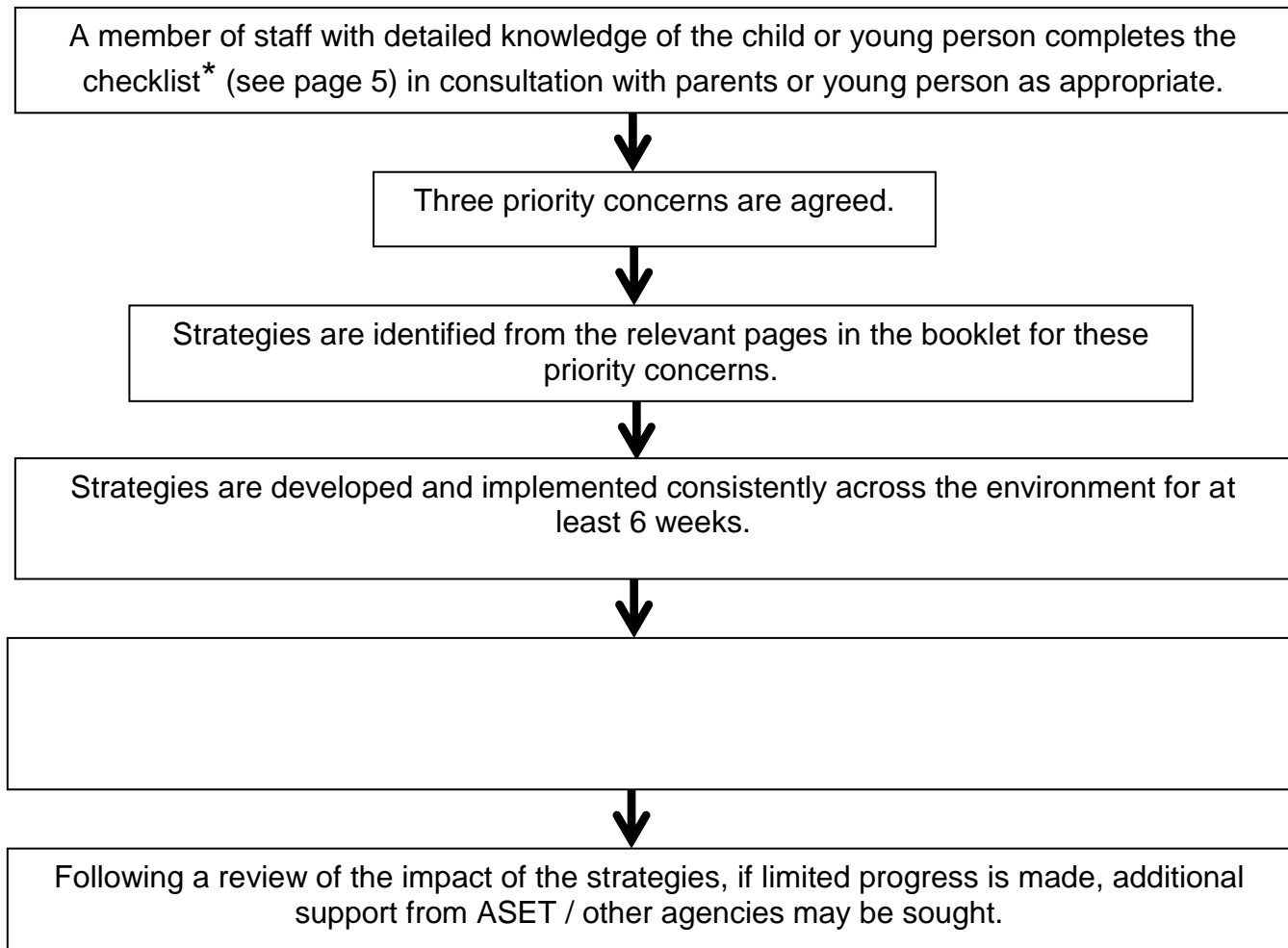
- increase awareness of individual need
- help schools to develop strategies
- provide agencies, including ASET, with information about a child's strengths and difficulties.

The autism spectrum encompasses a wide range of needs. Whilst those on the spectrum will have individual needs, they may show a number of autism specific problems in coping with everyday life.

The toolkit will support practitioners to:

- understand elements of the autism spectrum
- understand the individual
- be aware of sensory sensitivities
- analyse behaviour
- be aware of the effects of anxieties
- be prepared to make reasonable adjustments to the environment
- adapt communication including the use of visual strategies
- understand the need to allow extra time for processing
- recognise the need to prepare a young person for change
- have a framework for discussion with parents
- use the individual's strengths and interests to motivate and maximise learning opportunities

Using the toolkit



*It may be appropriate to use a checklist from the key stage above or below the child's current key stage, depending on their developmental level.

Advice and training in the use of this toolkit is available from ASET

Good Practice Guidelines for use of the Toolkit

Any evaluation and assessment cycle relies upon a variety of perspectives including:

- staff who know the child well, including those who see them at unstructured times (e.g. lunchtime)
- parents/ carers, and wider family as appropriate, at all stages
- views of the child or young person, as appropriate to their developmental stage

When implementing the strategies to address the priority concerns, practitioners should have regard to:

- realistic and attainable targets, considering the child's level of development, that are measurable over time
- forward planning
- choosing a calm time / atmosphere for the introduction of new routines, strategies and expectations
- daily reinforcement and repetition and positive reinforcement of required responses
- use of rewards that are motivating for that child which are appropriate and sustainable
- consideration of the progression sequence for visual prompts: object, photograph, symbol, word (see advice sheet page 36)
- establishing routines with a key adult but engaging the child with all adults across the setting

Remember – there may be an increase in unwanted behaviours whilst the strategies are becoming embedded so be prepared to persevere and follow the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle adjusting expectations as necessary.

Checklist to Identify Support Needs (Key Stage 3/4)

Child's Name: _____

Date completed: _____

Person/s completing the record: _____

PLEASE NOTE - THE CHECKLIST IS NOT A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL.

IT IS A MEANS OF IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND STRATEGIES.

IT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH TYPICAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES.

Does the child experience <u>significant</u> challenges with.....?	Usually experiences significant challenges	Sometimes experiences significant challenges	Rarely experiences significant challenges	KS 1/2 page	EYFS page
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS					
Joining in and making friends				6	6,7
Coping with group work				7	
Understanding others' non-verbal communication				8	15
Taking turns (including during conversations)				9	10-12
Understanding social conventions (e.g. politeness)				10	
COMMUNICATION					
Responding to instructions				11	17
Understanding adult language				12	16
Interpreting non-literal language				13	16
Moderating their volume or speed of speech				14	
Reducing repetitive questioning				15	18
FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT AND ACTION					
Moving on from a particular topic				16	20
Understanding flexibility around rules				17	
Managing irrational thoughts				18	
Accepting change in routines				19	22
Coping with transitions				20	
SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES					
Processing auditory sensory input				21	28
Processing tactile sensory input				22	26-28
Processing visual information				23	28
WORK SKILLS					
Motivation				24	
Personal organisation				25	
Coping with the learning environment				26	25
Working independently				27	
Fine and gross motor skills				28	28
Retaining key information				29	
Completing homework				30	
EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES					
Developing self-control				31,32	
Anxiety				33	
Accepting their differences				34	
Recognising feelings of self and others				35	9

Please highlight 2 or 3 manageable priority concerns then identify and implement appropriate strategies.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

See Unit 2 IDP

Joining in and making friends

Some children on the autism spectrum may be acutely aware of their difficulties and be desperate to make friends, but they do not grasp the informal understandings that underlies much social 'chat' and struggle to follow the social rules of play.

They may prefer their own company and show signs of stress if others approach or they may want the friendship of others but be socially awkward.

They may struggle to develop 'make believe' games and purely re-enact things they have seen, which may cause conflict if others try to change the 'script'.

Children may become stressed and aggressive when they fail socially, developing low self-esteem. They may also find it difficult to recognise and understand their own feelings and fail to realise others want to help.

Some children find it a strain to maintain social interaction and need time alone to recover.

Children on the autistic spectrum may find free time, such as break and lunch, confusing and stressful because of the lack of structure. They find the unwritten and flexible rules that usually govern playground activities difficult. As a result they tend to:

- Find the 'rules' about how people relate to each other difficult to understand.
- Seek to avoid or minimise contact, even on a one to one basis.
- Seek to control the interaction by sticking to very rigid routines.
- Be anxious in less structured group situations or when sitting close to a large group of children.
- Avoid others as a result of bullying.

Possible Strategies

- Use visual supports to facilitate interaction.
- Teach/develop play skills in a structured way with adult/child and moving to adult/child/one peer and then to child/peer with adult supervision.
- Have clear rules and boundaries for games presented visually.
- Use a buddy group / circle of friends to support the child. These may need to be specific buddies for the child, not general playground buddies.
- Model and rehearse social situations. Record strategies learnt in a visual format.
- Involve the child in organised playground games. (Be aware the games may need teaching).
- Respect the fact that the child may want some time on their own and educate peers to respect this and also to understand the child's differences.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

See Unit 2 IDP

Coping with group work

Children on the autism spectrum may find group work confusing and challenging. They may

- have difficulties accepting others ideas/points of view causing friction with peers in collaborative work.
- not understand what their role is and as a result either dominate and try and control the group or be passive and not participate.
- find it difficult to choose a partner.
- may struggle to understand the social interaction within a group.
- struggle to turn-take/predict when it is their turn to contribute.

Possible Strategies

- Have clear rules/roles and structure for group work – specify roles and tasks and present them visually.
- Provide adult intervention/direction to model strategies and support group work.
- Use visual prompts for turn taking e.g. pass round an object to indicate whose turn it is to talk, use of a 'my turn, your turn' card.
- Provide structure when choosing a partner e.g. offer a limited choice.
- Consider the child's tolerance for other children in close proximity when considering seating positions.
- Teach/develop group work skills in a structured way as a separate activity, including how to resolve conflict. Teach initially with adult / child, moving on to adult / child / one peer and then to child / peer with adult supervision. Rehearse the skills outside of classroom group work activities then support them to be transferred into the classroom (use visual prompts).
- Raise awareness of the child's difficulties with peers.

LEGO Intervention is useful for teaching group work skills and interactions – see ASET for further details if needed.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	See Unit 2 IDP
Understanding others' non-verbal communication	
<p>Children with autism have trouble working out the meaning of non-verbal signals such as facial expression, body language and eye contact. It may be easier to listen and understand if they block out the non-verbal signals (for example, by not looking at the speaker). It might be very hard for them to grasp what another person is thinking or feeling, therefore, empathy can be difficult.</p> <p>Sharing a joke with others is often a way to get accepted socially. The child on the autistic spectrum may have great difficulty in coping with the double meanings that are essential parts of humour.</p> <p>To deal with these difficulties in understanding the child may try to impose very rigid rules or routines on situations.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say what you mean (avoid idioms or teach them). • Use role play and discuss social situations. • If trained, a member of staff can use social stories. • Do not rely on body language and facial expression when interacting with the child – communicate your feelings explicitly. • Use videos with the sound turned off to help focus on how to use and interpret body language. • Teach about joking, sarcasm etc. (have visuals for the child to refer to). • Use real life examples as teaching opportunities. • Explain what others may be thinking and feeling, while pointing out facial expression and body language. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other strategies may be found on page 15 of the EYFS Toolkit</p>	

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

See Unit 2 IDP

Taking turns (including during conversations)

It can be difficult to teach a child on the autism spectrum how to take part in social situations which require 'give and take'. Children on the autism spectrum have difficulty in judging both when to join a conversation and when to allow the other person to speak. This is due to poor understanding of the social cues involved in conversation; for example pauses or signs of disinterest.

They may have a desire to talk about their area of special interest to the exclusion of everything else, or have a very limited interest in the views of others if these are not directly related to their area of interest. A child may expect to be chosen first all of the time, may want things to happen immediately and struggle to wait their turn.

They may struggle to process verbal information quickly which may lead to a slow or apparent lack of response.

They may display a tendency to impulsivity; the need to 'say it now' resulting from short term memory difficulties and difficulty organising thoughts.

Possible Strategies

- Make interactions meaningful and desirable for the child when teaching skills (use topics of interest).
- Build up turn taking experiences first with one adult and then introducing other children. Use visual prompts to remind them of what to say. Be aware they may need extra time to process what has been said and respond.
- Use an object, stone or bean bag or other age appropriate item to be held as a cue for whose turn it is.
- Agree signals with child to indicate whose turn it is to speak.
- Teach about pauses in conversation (watch TV programmes). Social stories can be used to inform the child about social conventions.
- Arrange an identified time for talking about special interests (highlight it on the child's timetable / schedule).
- Social skills groups can be invaluable for practising the skills in a safe environment.
- Develop scripts with a child for specific situations and rehearse them.

The CALL programme may have some useful ideas for activities to develop turn taking skills.

Other strategies may be found on pages 10,11 & 12 of the EYFS Toolkit

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

See Unit 2 IDP

Understanding social conventions (e.g. politeness)

When speaking to others, children on the autism spectrum lack intuition about the appropriateness of tone of voice, level of familiarity and where to stand in relation to the other person, etc.

They may fail to alter their tone when speaking to an adult rather than a child. They may not have the empathy to realise the impact of their comments. Some children have a stilted speech style or may speak too loudly as a result of sensory differences.

Children on the autism spectrum tend to lack self-instructional skills and can be anxious, especially in new or less structured situations. This can lead to impulsive responses.

Possible Strategies

- If the child may present as being direct / rude, without that being the intention, raise awareness amongst staff as to the child's strengths and challenges. A pen picture / one page profile can be a very useful way of doing this.
- Social Stories can be used to help develop the child's understanding of social conventions.
- Explain and model, in a calm, private environment, how the child appears to others, and how to speak in order to appear less rude. Have a visual prompt or an agreed signal to warn the child if they are coming across as rude.
- Use a mirror to show facial expression.
- Agree a signal to warn the child if they are coming across as rude.
- Direct teaching about saying things 'in your head' and saying things 'out loud'.
- Rehearse set phrases for situations.
- Have visuals to identify appropriate volume levels and rehearse the levels.

COMMUNICATION	See Unit 3 of IDP
Responding to instructions	
<p>Some children on the autism spectrum fail to take in group instructions, perhaps not understanding that they are part of the group and that the instruction is meant for them as well as for the others in the group.</p> <p>Some have poor receptive skills and may not understand the language the adult is using when addressing the whole group.</p> <p>They may struggle to process verbal information quickly which may lead to a slow or apparent lack of response.</p> <p>Some develop alternative coping strategies when unable to follow group instructions, for example copying what the other children do which may mask serious comprehension problems.</p> <p>Poor motivation may mean that children do not put in the extra effort which is needed for them to listen to and process instructions.</p> <p>The child on the autism spectrum may need additional reassurance or reminders about the task, either because of their poor internal regulation or a lack of confidence.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the child's name first to gain their attention. • Speak calmly and clearly and keep to the point– reduce language. • Use an appropriate language level. Avoid using abstract/non literal language – (be aware an explanation may be needed if used). • Allow the child extra time to process what has been said. • Use visual cues (pictorial, written, diagrams) to support the spoken word. • Be aware instructions may need repeating or clarifying. • Model how to respond – (i.e. hand up). • Use visuals to support / remind the child of the process. • Check understanding by encouraging the child to explain to you what they need to do rather than just repeating back what was said. • Clearly identify appropriate small step targets to focus on and reward developing skills with motivating rewards. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other strategies may be found on page 17 of the EYFS Toolkit</p>	

Communication	See Unit 3 of IDP
Understanding adult language	
<p>Children with autism often have good memories (particularly for facts) and can acquire extensive vocabularies. This may lead us to over-estimate their understanding of language and their ability to cope with abstract concepts. They are often very concrete in their thinking and understanding of language.</p> <p>There is likely to be difficulty attending to instructions or explanations in group settings, not be 'tuning into' the relevant aspects of what's going on or being distracted by non-essential details.</p> <p>The longer the explanation or instruction and the more abstract the underlying ideas, the more difficult it is for children on the autism spectrum to process and understand.</p> <p>They often have a very concrete and literal understanding of language. Metaphors, idioms and uses of language such as sarcasm or jokes may be interpreted literally.</p> <p>Social difficulties experienced may also affect their understanding of language - they may understand the actual words but not be able to grasp the speaker's underlying meaning, intentions, or the all-important non-verbal signals which accompany speech. For instance they are likely to fail to spot body language indicating growing impatience.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the child directly by name to gain attention before delivering an instruction. • Allow the child extra time to process what has been said. • Keep language simple. • Breakdown key instructions to 1 or 2 steps and present them visually where possible, especially routine instructions. • Use visual cues (pictorial, written, diagrams) to support the spoken word. • Avoid using abstract / non literal language (be aware an explanation may be needed if used). • Explicitly teach idioms, jokes etc. and reinforce them in real life situations (see interpreting non-literal language, page 13). 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other strategies may be found on page 16 of the EYFS Toolkit</p>	

Communication	See Unit 3 of IDP
Interpreting non-literal language	
<p>Individuals on the autism spectrum may interpret what other people say and mean in a very literal, concrete way.</p> <p>Figures of speech (e.g. 'stretch your legs'), humour and sarcasm may pose particular problems.</p> <p>Indirect (and polite) forms of speech such as 'Can you put your books away', or 'Would you like to...' are actually instructions but may be treated as questions by the child.</p> <p>Part of this difficulty is caused by problems in interpreting the speaker's intentions and motivation – this requires making sense of non-verbal cues and being able to put yourself in the speaker's shoes.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visuals to support language used. • Say things in the order you want them to happen. • Use simple, short, direct instructions. • Teach simple idioms. • Re-phrase vocabulary around idioms and colloquialisms, checking what has been understood. • Model and teach what to do if the child doesn't understand. • Encourage understanding of jokes at the level of child – explanations may need to be given. • Say what you want rather than what you do not want. • Avoid phrasing instructions as questions. 	
Other strategies may be found on page 16 of the EYFS Toolkit	

COMMUNICATION	See Unit 3 of IDP
Moderating their volume or speed of speech	
<p>Individuals on the autism spectrum may not have learned the social 'rules' of communication. They are unlikely to recognise that their social behaviour is out of place and inappropriate.</p> <p>They are likely to have difficulty 'reading' non-verbal expressions and body language and may not 'recognise' emotions, such as embarrassment in other people.</p> <p>Children on the autism spectrum may have little understanding of what other people are thinking or feeling and so do not understand that their behaviour may embarrass someone they are with.</p> <p>The inappropriate volume may be an indicator that the person is anxious in that situation.</p> <p>They may talk too quietly, too quickly or too slowly as well as too loudly.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model appropriate voice levels – provide opportunities to practice this – use visual cues / social story (available from ASET). • Use visual cue (gesture or card) to let them know when they are talking too loudly or too quickly. • Listen to different examples of people talking at a range of volumes and speeds and the adult to model feedback. • Record their voice to recognise and evaluate volume / speed. • Use rewards to reinforce appropriate use of correct volume. 	

COMMUNICATION

Reducing repetitive questioning

Some young people talk or ask repeatedly about particular topics.

Some become very anxious about events that aren't part of familiar routines and will ask repeatedly about what is going to happen. The actual questioning and answers can turn into another ritual.

Some can be very confused about timing and sequence of events and need reassurance and explanation.

Possible Strategies

- Make the environment as predictable as possible for the child (e.g. use of visual structure – schedules / timetables)
- Begin by building up a sense of the immediate future for them. Talk to them about what is going to happen. You could say, 'first..., and then...' They can be helped to understand what is going to happen next by being shown a visual cue. For example, use a visual timetable to communicate the day's events.
- Acknowledge that repetitive questioning may indicate raised anxiety levels then consider what might be the underlying cause and address it.
- Use visuals to show the sequence of events and break down of tasks (see visual support checklist, page 30, to identify the level of visual support) These could include:
 - objects of reference
 - a first and then board using photographs or symbols
 - separate morning and afternoon schedules
 - full day schedule
 - secondary school type timetables
 - calendars
 - jobs list outlining what is to be done, broken down into small step 'jobs' or tasks.
- Use symbols or gestures to prompt them to stop / wait (e.g. hand up palm outwards).
- Turn the question back to the child, "you tell me".
- Have a consistent approach across school and home.

Other strategies may be found on page 18 of the EYFS Toolkit

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT & ACTION	See Unit 4 of the IDP
Moving on from a particular topic	
<p>Talking about a special interest to the exclusion of other topics and without regard to the listener's interest is a common feature of children on the autism spectrum.</p> <p>This type of behaviour may serve the function of reducing anxiety – just like other forms of rituals do. Alternatively, an individual on the spectrum may be doing this because he actually wants to engage in conversation but doesn't know how to 'chat'.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give clear guidelines and expectations about appropriate times and places for talking about interests. Use visuals to communicate this. • Acknowledge that an inability to move on may be serving the function of reducing anxiety – make the environment as predictable as possible (see page 15) • Raise self-esteem by allowing them the use of their 'expert knowledge' in teaching other students. • Give positive feedback for conversations which are not special interest based. • Use communication around his or her interest to directly teach social conversational skills. • Develop cues to indicate when to stop or pause. Engage trusted peers and staff in supporting this. 	
Other strategies may be found on page 20 of the EYFS Toolkit	

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT & ACTION	See Unit 4 of the IDP
Understanding flexibility around rules	
<p>Explicit rules provide useful boundaries to and guidance for people on the autism spectrum. In a confusing world, rules and expectations provide comforting structure and predictability.</p> <p>Due to a difficulty with flexible thought children on the autism spectrum may not appreciate that there are times and situations where rules can be bent, re-negotiated or broken.</p> <p>Some may be unable to see another person's point of view and therefore be unable to appreciate why they might not have strictly adhered to a rule.</p> <p>Individuals on the autism spectrum need a sense of order and stability. If rules change or appear 'flexible' they may become anxious.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an explanation of rules and expectations visual support to aid understanding. • Provide a mentor with a regular time slot; weekly or more often as needed to discuss social issues and expectations. • Support to identify the difference between a serious rule break and rule bending. • Involvement in a peer mentoring or social skills group providing opportunity to talk through frustrations about rules and explanations. • Explicit teaching about why rules get "bent" or "broken". • Make it very clear that staff members will deal with rule breaking not the student. • Encourage the child to accept others' rules through 1-1 or small group work where others take a turn to make up the rules in games. 	

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT & ACTION

See Unit 4 of the IDP

Managing irrational thoughts

Children on the autism spectrum sometimes make very rigid connections. Some aspect of a situation or experience may have caused them distress in the past – similar situations then trigger exactly the same reactions.

As with all phobias, continued avoidance allows fears to grow out of all proportion. For instance being stung by a wasp then leads to an irrational fear of going to the park, where wasps are likely to be encountered.

Possible Strategies

- Make situations as predictable as possible.
- When they are calm find out what it is about the situation that the child dislikes.
- Try to set realistic small step targets to help the child manage their anxiety.
- Communicate visually (write / draw) expectations about stressful situations and identify pre-taught calming strategies.
- Managing phobias is an area in which it is vital for home and school to work together on a joint plan.
- Educational Psychology may be able to offer further advice and support.

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT & ACTION

See Unit 4 of the IDP

Accepting change in routines

Children on the autism spectrum often depend on routines, especially if they have difficulty predicting future events. Because of this, some insist on things happening in a set order. This order can provide a sense of security and comfort. A change in routine may threaten this sense of security and cause anxiety. If no routine is apparent they may try and impose their own routine.

Changes to routines can cause major problems. It is as if the person is frightened by the uncertainty of not being able to predict what comes next. Smaller changes can be just as distressing as major ones. Routines mean safety, a routine can be helpful, but must not take over.

Possible Strategies

- Use of visuals can help increase predictability and acceptance of change. (see page 16 for a range of visuals that can be used)
- Whenever possible prepare the child for changes to routines and staffing.
- Teach coping strategies for when things change five point scales and cue cards are useful prompts to remind a child of coping strategies and to help them express emotions.
- Staff in school need to weigh up the best option between maintaining the routine to help the student remain calm and supporting the individual in breaking the routine, if this is possible.
- Use of mentor to spend time with individual developing tailored strategies to adjust routines in order for the child to cope in the setting.
- Use of technology to provide reminders and prompts.
- Use home/school communication book / e-mail / phone call to engage parents in supporting changes.
- Within lessons / classes give clear and precise descriptions of expectations and what will happen. Break down tasks and communicate the 'jobs' visually.
- Changes to routine such as trips and visits need preparing – looking at photos, video and websites can be helpful. A calendar can help provide a countdown to the change.

Other strategies may be found on page 22 of the EYFS Toolkit

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT & ACTION

See Unit 4 of the IDP

Coping with transitions

Transition between year groups and key stages are particularly challenging for young people on the autism spectrum.

However, it is often small, seemingly trivial changes which cause more distress than larger life changes, for instance a different route to school causes huge stress but a family holiday is less of a problem because everything changes.

Some pupils on the spectrum seem to have a strong need to complete something, once they have started it. This can take priority over whatever else they should be doing and they may become very upset if unable to 'finish off'.

Possible Strategies

- Develop a transition plan for the end of each school year / key stage.
- Provide opportunities to visit or see photos of new places and people – particularly at times of transition.
- Plan regular visits to new school/class – look at playgrounds, toilets, cloakrooms etc.
- Provide opportunities to build relationships with class teachers and TA's.
- Invite new members of staff to get to know the child in their current setting.
- Send the child with messages to their new teacher / TA.
- Build up a scrap book containing child taken photographs, maps etc. for pupil to keep.
- Use calendars to provide a countdown to the transition.
- If the child becomes upset if unable to 'finish off' communicate a clear end to tasks when they start them – this could include use of a timer, explicit targets, jobs lists and marks on the page of where they need to get to.

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 5 of IDP
Processing auditory sensory input	
<p>Unusual reactions or over-sensitivity to specific noises are common. Some may be irritated and distracted by noises occurring in the environment, e.g. the lawn being mowed, an aeroplane passing overhead, a light buzzing faintly in the classroom. They may react to sounds that other people do not hear.</p> <p>Some children place their hands over their ears. Some fiddle with equipment. Some interrupt frequently. Some make humming noises. These may be methods of 'tuning out' the sound which is disturbing them.</p> <p>Some will find it difficult to pay attention when the noises which distress them are nearby. They may find the noises painful or very intrusive.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ear plugs or defenders as appropriate. Teach the child strategies they can ultimately use independently in order to self-regulate. • Try to cut down as many sources of extraneous noise as possible – or deal with specific sources of noise (e.g. chair legs which have lost their rubber tips and which squeak on the floor). • There are always going to be certain sounds and noises in the environment which may upset a child with ASD. It will be necessary to gradually expose the child to these stimuli to increase his tolerance and ability to cope appropriately when they occur. (More detail see phobia section) • Adapt the environment – look at where child is placed – are they near any sources of sound i.e. computer, clock, windows. Can the pupil sit away from noise? E.g. sit outside hall for assembly, move lunch table away from the noisiest area. • Prepare them in advance for noisy experiences. 	
Other strategies may be found on page 28 of the EYFS Toolkit	

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 5 of IDP
Processing tactile sensory input	
<p>Pupils often display a heightened, over exaggerated response to touch. They may dislike certain types of touch in particular situations. When touched by another person in an unpredictable way the pupil may show a flight or fright response. Light touch i.e. someone brushing past them may provoke an extreme reaction.</p> <p>Some like physical contact if it is on their terms, however have difficulty coping with it when approached by other people.</p> <p>Other children may seek out touch.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid touching children with tactile sensitivity, especially if they are in an emotional state. Always try to approach the child from the front and give a clear verbal warning of what is going to happen. • Role model situations and practise appropriate responses with the child to help them cope with unexpected contact. • Use approaches to minimise the impact of busy environment for children who have a heightened response to touch. Identify an area for the child to be where there will be minimal footfall around them. For example, allow the child to sit at the end of a table, or by the edge of the group on the floor – they may need their own space to feel comfortable or may need a cushion or mat to sit on. During assembly let them sit at the end of a row near an exit. • For children who seek out touch / hugs, redirect them to more appropriate interaction i.e. high five etc. Modify their environment to provide more intense tactile experiences. 	
Other strategies may be found on page 26 - 28 of the EYFS Toolkit	

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 5 of IDP
Processing visual information	
<p>Some pupils may stare through people and avoid looking them in the eye. Some children will find it difficult to look at someone and listen at the same time.</p> <p>They may appear clumsy, often seeming hesitant about negotiating steps and kerbs, etc. The child may pay no attention to peers but will locate a tiny scrap on the floor and give it most careful and prolonged inspection. They may find it hard to determine which piece of visual information is relevant, and rarely see the 'bigger picture'.</p> <p>Some pupils see words on a page as merging together to become a meaningless jumble.</p> <p>Pupils might be unable to tolerate bright, flickering lights or sunlight and may be calmed in a darkened room. Certain light can be painful to some children on the autism spectrum.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the visual distraction in the environment by making it as structured as possible. Work areas, worksheets, even display spaces, where possible, should not involve 'cluttered' visual information. • Adjust worksheets so that they are uncluttered, but provide clear visual information, such as: where to start, where to finish, where to put the answers etc. • Be aware of where the child sits – are there any visual distractions e.g. lights, blinds, displays etc. • If the pupil has difficulty giving eye contact, respect this. Teach socially acceptable ways of giving minimal or no eye contact. For example, glance occasionally or look at the mouth. • After consultation with ASET or the EP it may be appropriate to provide the pupil with a 'distraction free' work area. This might mean turning their desk so that it faces a blank wall to limit visual stimuli. It will be important for this work area only to be used when child is expected to be doing work on their own. There will be other times where they should be part of the group. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other strategies may be found on page 28 of the EYFS Toolkit</p>	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of IDP
Motivation	
<p>A typical feature of children on the autism spectrum is an intense interest in a specific topic and often limited interests in anything else.</p> <p>The “social” sources of motivation in many pupils don’t seem to operate as strongly in children on the autism spectrum. The desire to please people, get work finished or to master particular skills may not be as strong in pupils on the autism spectrum.</p> <p>Long term incentives and considerations may be ineffective – external rewards and motivators are best given as close to the action being rewarded as possible.</p> <p>Children on the autism spectrum may be easily overwhelmed by sensory input (see sensory section) and often become pre-occupied by their thoughts (which others may deem irrelevant or insignificant). This means that they often have little spare ‘capacity’ to focus on work.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible address areas of the curriculum via the pupil’s interests. Opportunities to use special pens and paper may be motivating. • Personalised rewards work best - use their area of interest as a reward for completed work and positive behaviour. Where possible involve the child in choosing their reward. • Direct praise (including an explanation as to why the praise is being given) is often more effective than whole class praise. • Make it clear and explicit what the child has to do to earn a reward. Systems that earn rewards rather than have privileges taken away are more effective. • Use visual means (e.g. timers) to help them get a sense of how long things will / should take (both for own choice & adult directed activities). • Break tasks down into small, achievable chunks presented visually (e.g. a jobs list). Give short rest breaks to help maintain focus in between each ‘job’ as appropriate. • Be aware that some sanctions may inadvertently reinforce unwanted behaviour e.g. stopping in at break time if a child doesn’t finish their work when the child finds playtimes difficult. • Consider the type and size of paper the child is presented with to work on. 	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of the IDP
Personal organisation	
<p>Pupils on the autism spectrum often seem to have great difficulty with personal organisation. They can appear to be overloaded and confused by having to simultaneously cope with language, mental planning and social demands. Busy times of the day and crowded environments can add to the difficulty. The youngster on the autism spectrum may also not be particularly motivated to be organised in school.</p> <p>Despite a lack of general personal organisation some children may be particularly anxious about having things in the right place or in the right order and this may impact on their ability to engage with a task.</p> <p>Organisational difficulties may present at many different levels, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning routes and journeys. - Presentation and recording of work, especially if faced with a blank page. - Having the right materials and equipment out at the right place and right time. - Knowing how to tidy up. - Knowing what to bring from home and take home on a given day. - Managing time within the lesson so work is completed. 	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy the child with a peer to support them moving around the school. • Visual prompts can be used for many situations e.g. what to take home, equipment needed for a lesson, the order for changing for PE. These can be presented using photographs, symbols or the written word dependent upon the child's needs. Reminders may be needed for the child to use to use prompts and checklists. • Break tasks down into small, achievable chunks presented visually. Make work expectations clear e.g. 3 sentences in 5 minutes and use timers to help them gauge the passage of time. • Provide structure / scaffolding for tasks and a clear finish point. • Mind-mapping may be a useful strategy to help a child organise their thoughts for writing. • Have a personal visual timetable with organisational prompts added. • Avoid overloading with too much work. Extra time may be needed. 	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of the IDP
Coping with the learning environment	
<p>When motivated or particularly interested most children on the spectrum are able to concentrate at the appropriate developmental level.</p> <p>However they are susceptible to internal and external distractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally – thoughts and preoccupations • Externally – sensory related (see sensory section) or social expectations (see social relationships section). <p>Anxiety may result in the child withdrawing or employing avoidance strategies. Additionally there may be difficulties processing instructions or what is being said.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the child is aware the task applies to them. Use their name first. • Allow time for verbal information to be processed. • Ask the child to relay to someone else what is expected (be aware they may repeat exactly what has been said but without understanding). • Support verbal instructions visually. • Provide high levels of structure; this can be done at number of levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual prompts such as – first (task), then (motivator) - Visual timer to show time scale. - Narrow down choices / provide structure during free flow activities. • Break tasks down into small, achievable chunks presented visually with the end product being clear to the child. • Try to use the child's interests to capture and maintain focus. • Identify set times for the child to talk about their thoughts and preoccupations. • Ensure their workspace is as distraction free as is practical but provide a fiddle object if needed. • Use a clear reward system (see motivation section). • Be realistic about pace of work and level of concentration expected. • A work station may be of benefit – please seek advice from ASET (see page 23). 	
Other strategies may be found on page 25 of the EYFS Toolkit	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of the EDP
Working independently	
<p>Many pupils on the autism spectrum dislike change and tend to be more comfortable with familiar activities. Sometimes the adult's presence acts as a physical prompt which, if removed, prevents the child from continuing, even if the task is very familiar.</p> <p>Some pupils do not have the social motivation to be independent. Also pupils may have poor self-esteem and lack confidence within their peer group leading to the child constantly asking the same question to different adults.</p> <p>Adults need to promote the child's independence skills throughout the school day.</p> <p>An overwhelming need for perfection can lead to a pupil repeatedly checking progress or have a tendency to give up or destroy work if a mistake is made.</p> <p>Conversely, the child may be too independent; driven by a lack of tolerance to criticism or anxiety with time leading to rushed work.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make independent tasks as structured as possible with clear indications of expectations, start, finish and what to do when finished. Making such tasks easily attainable, small step and enjoyable will help promote independence. • Use visual cues (written or pictorial) for task expectations – broken down into small manageable steps. • Help to organise equipment needed (see personal organisation section). • Provide additional arrangements which would support independence such as alternative means of recording, having tables pre-drawn etc. • Check the child's understanding of what is expected (be aware they may be able to repeat the instruction back without understanding). • Use a clear reward system (see motivation section). • Vary the adult supporting and encourage peers to support as appropriate. • Model strategies for dealing with making mistakes. 	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 5 of IDP
Fine and gross motor skills	
<p>Many children on the autism spectrum have difficulty with motor skills and may be diagnosed with Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia). If there are considerable difficulties, the Occupational Therapists may undertake an assessment and offer advice.</p> <p>Motor skills difficulties will result in poor performance in practical activities which can easily lead to poor self-esteem. Getting changed or packing a bag may be major undertaking. The child may struggle with drawing and writing tasks; where to start on the page, drawing diagrams and tables. They may also tend to trip and fall easily.</p> <p>Some children on the autism spectrum have difficulty in judging the force they are using for fine or gross motor activity. This can result in pressing very hard on the page or a very spidery script with insufficient pressure. It can also lead to physical contact being unintentionally forceful during play.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of the effect motor skills difficulties can have on self-image/self-esteem. Staff need to be aware of the very real difficulties arising from poor motor and spatial planning skills and the importance of assessing the content rather than the presentation. • Offer alternative means of recording if assessing understanding e.g. dictation, computer, voice recording etc. • Apply small steps teaching for motor skills. Use backward chaining to teach specific skills i.e. complete the last step of a sequence first and progress gradually from there. e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ adult fastens the zip parts and pulls half way ○ pupil completes the process. • Use visual supports for physical sequences. • Be aware that motor activities (including fine motor activities) can be very tiring for children with motor skills difficulties. • Use structured handwriting programmes such as 'Write from the Start' handwriting programme. • Aids such as pencil grips and writing slopes may be helpful. • Use prepared templates to eliminate the need for free drawing or making tables etc. • Be aware a motor skills programme may be necessary - seek advice from Occupational Therapy. 	
Other strategies may be found on page 28 of the EYFS Toolkit	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of the IDP
Retaining key information	
<p>Personal organisation, sensory issues, poor independent working skills, anxiety about time, concentration issues, difficulties processing verbal information and poor recording skills all exacerbate the problems around memory task completion for children on the autism spectrum.</p> <p>While long term memory is often excellent, the short term memory, which is key to retaining instructions and remembering recently acquired information and facts, is often significantly impaired.</p> <p>In addition, the usual social motivators for completing work are not always present. The strategies identified in other sections will complement the strategies outlined in this section.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support key information visually.• Use lists for tasks and steps in tasks.• Use a journal or diary, with parental support as necessary.• Give the child time to process verbal information and also to formulate a response.• Use mind maps.• Check the child has understood what they have to do (be aware they may be able to repeat instructions back without understanding).• Be prepared to repeat instructions. Always back up verbal instruction with visual prompts.• Consider pre-tutoring to prepare for new vocabulary and skills.• Break tasks down into small, achievable chunks presented visually.	

WORK SKILLS	See Unit 7 of the IDP
Completing homework	
<p>For some pupils on the autism spectrum homework blurs the line between what they see as two very discrete areas of their life.</p> <p>There is likely to be little social motivation to please parents and teachers with the completion of homework. There is a lack of understanding of the role of homework and an inability to see the connection with improved outcomes in the future.</p> <p>Poor organisational skills may result in homework not being recorded accurately, being done at the wrong time, forgotten or misinterpreted.</p> <p>It may be that skills learnt at school are not transferred to the home environment and a pupil may be unable to do an activity at home that they could do while in school.</p> <p>Some pupils are very stressed and exhausted by the end of the day and it is unrealistic for the child and the family to battle with anything but the most essential reinforcement at home.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide time in the school day for homework to be done - access to a 'Homework' club if available. • Support the recording of homework/coursework in a diary, using peers as appropriate. • Make expectations and deadlines very clear. • Liaise directly with home so skills learnt in school can be reinforced from home. • Some pupils are very stressed and exhausted by the end of the day and it is unrealistic for the child and the family to battle with anything but the most essential reinforcement at home. • School expectations around homework may need to be reduced if the situation at home is particularly stressful. A time limit rather than full completion may be a more appropriate approach. 	

EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

See Unit 2/6 of the IDP

Developing self-control

Most individuals on the autism spectrum have problems in understanding the motives and intentions of others. They may find coping with other people, particularly in less structured situations, very stressful. On occasions tension can manifest itself as frustration and as the situation continues, 'meltdown' or withdrawal. Sensory overload may also result in similar behaviour.

The emotional development of a child on the autism spectrum is likely to be slower than a typically developing child, and this may result in reactions similar to a much younger child. A child may expect to be chosen first all of the time, may want things to happen immediately and struggle to wait their turn.

Pupils on the autism spectrum are less motivated by what other people think of them and may not understand how their behaviour looks (or feels) from someone else's perspective. They may be less likely to inhibit their own behaviour.

Many individuals on the autism spectrum will not develop the social awareness which inhibits most people's behaviour and may show their frustration if made to wait or defer their wishes.

Some children on the autism spectrum may want friends but have difficulty in making or sustaining relationships. Angry outbursts are sometimes a reaction to the frustrations and disappointments they experience in this area.

Some individuals on the autism spectrum dwell on things that have happened, or re-live incidents that may have taken place some time ago. They may become fixated on real or imagined wrongs to them – these memories and resulting actions may be triggered at any point after the event.

Possible Strategies

- Look for environmental changes which might contribute to stress. Avoid or modify triggers.
- Have a whole school strategy to manage 'meltdown' situations.
- If there is a 'meltdown' make the environment safe - move others to safety if needed.
- Record any incidents and look for any patterns / triggers.
- Reduce language when a child is in crisis or coming out of it.
- Calmly and simply de-brief the pupil after an incident when he or she is calm. This calming process may take a long time. Focus on the triggers and the outcomes of the behaviour in a non-judgemental way and then teach/model alternative, more acceptable behaviours/coping strategies e.g. breathing techniques, retreat to a safe space, physical activity.
- Use a keyboard or drawing to 'talk' about an incident.

- Do work with the pupil about recognising the signs for when they are getting upset. Identify calming strategies or develop a routine to escape difficult situations. 5 point scales (www.5pointscale.com) or zones of regulation (Leah Kuypers) are useful for this.
- Gradually increase the amount of time the pupil has to wait for gratification. Start by choosing them first when they correctly indicate they want a turn, then slowly increase the amount of time before being chosen.
- Use visuals to indicate when it will be their turn, for example, an object being passed round to indicate whose turn it is or lollipop stick with children's names on being drawn out of a pot at random.

EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 2/6 of the IDP
Anxiety	
<p>Most individuals on the autism spectrum find it difficult to predict what is going to happen. Some become highly dependent on routines for their emotional security. Some may ask questions repetitively just to make sure the answer is still the same or because hearing the answer makes them feel safe. Some may become anxious about being on time.</p> <p>Many pupils have difficulties recognising and expressing emotions, which may lead to anxiety. Difficulty with empathy results in problems in understanding others' expectations and the motives behind others' behaviour.</p> <p>Some individuals internalise their anxiety resulting in self injurious behaviours e.g. hand biting, cutting, picking sores etc.</p> <p>Sometimes the anxiety results from an earlier traumatic experience heightened by sensory issues or lack of understanding of what was happening, for instance, a fire alarm sounding, or noise in the dining hall. Fear of this being repeated may come to dominate the individual's life – even in situations which bear little resemblance to the original one.</p> <p>Sometimes anxieties arise from news items or unexpected events.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual structure and consistent routine to promote predictability. • Prepare the child for changes in routine and environment – verbally and visually. If it's not possible to prepare them in advance give an explanation as to why the change is happening. • Help the pupil to understand social situations – see Social Relationships section. • Help the child become accustomed to the feared object/event in a safe setting e.g. quietly played tape of fire bell; picture of spider. (See Imagination / Rigidity section). • Explain the science behind events / objects to allay their fears. Make a judgement as to how far the school environment can be altered to remove the source of stress (e.g. muffle the bell nearest the individual in the short term or provide alternative eating arrangements). • Introduce new activities in a planned manner, using concrete examples, in a calm environment. • Provide calming sensory input. Relaxation routines and stress-relief toys can help. Support the child in developing appropriate self-regulatory strategies. 	

EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 2 / 6 of the IDP
Accepting their differences	
<p>Most individuals on the autism spectrum develop awareness that they are different from others.</p> <p>For diagnosed children the decision about whether or not the pupil should be told of their condition must be left to the child's parents, though school may want to raise this possibility with parents if they believe this is becoming an issue.</p> <p>If a student is to be told (at parental request), ASET can provide support for preparing and supporting the individual.</p> <p>Other children may have differences similar to those experienced by children on the autism spectrum – social and emotional or sensory – but may not go on to get a diagnosis.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<p>For children with a diagnosis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the pupil understand these differences after they have recognised them - ASET can offer 'explaining diagnosis' sessions at parental request. • The school, with parental and pupil permission, may speak to peers through circle time activities in order to raise awareness of an individual's strengths and needs. • Where the pupil <u>is</u> aware provide opportunities for discussion with a trusted and knowledgeable adult about the implications of being on the autism spectrum. • Offer opportunities to meet and discuss the autism spectrum with other pupils displaying a similar profile. • Staff and the pupil can be supported by written material by appropriate professionals or others on the autism spectrum. ASET have a library of resources that can be loaned out. <p>Where the pupil is <u>not</u> aware or is not diagnosed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff can speak to the child's peers about celebrating individual differences and supporting each other to develop tolerant and supportive attitudes and behaviours. The Anti-Bullying Alliance has suitable materials as will the school's own PHSE programme. SEAL materials may also be of use. 	

EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES	See Unit 2 / 6 of the IDP
Recognising feelings of self and others	
<p>Some children with autism can't interpret gestures and expressions and may, for example, behave as if they think a person is angry, when they are really in a good mood or vice versa.</p> <p>They may not be able to read other people's facial expressions or understand how others may be feeling in certain situations. This is particularly relevant when with unfamiliar people.</p> <p>Often children with autism do not use signs and gestures effectively. Their facial expression and body language may not communicate their emotional state. They may make odd gestures or grimaces, which don't mean anything, or may laugh or shout for no apparent reason.</p>	
Possible Strategies	
<p>ALWAYS TEACH EMOTIONS WITH CONTEXT – tears can have very different meanings dependent on the context they are shed in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model facial expressions (own and others) use mirrors – make a happy face, angry etc. • Talk about what people are doing and how they might be feeling. Prepare them for unfamiliar situations when people may dress or behave in ways they have not come across before. • Communicate how people's actions make you feel and explain why, support the child in doing the same. • Verbalise what you feel or mean when you use gestures, such as a shoulder shrug for 'don't know' or 'not bothered' dependent upon context. • Look at books or pictures together. Say, 'let's find a happy face,' or 'which one is cross?' Then ask why. • Cut out cartoons, pictures of faces from magazines or take photographs. Make emotions collections. • Watch TV / DVD clips with the volume turned down – discuss the character's body language and facial expressions to work out how they may be feeling. • ASET have packages to support learning about emotions, please contact a member of the Team for more details. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Other strategies may be found on page 9 of the EYFS Toolkit</p>	

Visual Support Checklist

Child's Name: _____

Date completed: _____

Format		Yes / No	Notes, comments
Objects of reference	Holds and explores objects		
	Can use object appropriately		
	Can select object from choice		
	Can name object		
Pictures/ photographs	Able to recognise photos, pictures		
	Can select from choice		
	Can match objects to photos, pictures		
	Can name pictures		
Symbols	Can match pictures to symbols		
	Able to recognise symbols		
	Can select from choice		
	Can name symbols		
Written words	Can match pictures, symbols to written words		
	Able to visually recognise familiar words		
	Can select from choice		
	Can read and recognise familiar words		
Level	Single item		
	Sequence of 2; 'first...then...'		
	Short sequence		
	Full day		
	Week overview		
	Calendar/diary overview		
Consider	Motivating format		
	Layout of sequences; strip		
	Storage; folder, keyring		
	Vocabulary needed		

Autism Spectrum Support Strategies – Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Name		Group / Class		Lead Person	
Date written		Date reviewed			

ASSESS Identified priority	PLAN Strategies / resources	DO Who / when / how?	REVIEW Outcomes / next steps / adjustments

REVIEW COMMENTS		
Child's views	Parent views	School / setting comments

Further useful reading

The Autism Education Trust website has a wealth of resources and good practice guidelines
<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources.aspx>

The Inclusion Development Programme – Autism
<http://www.aet-idp.org.uk/>

AET Professional competency Framework
<http://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/competency-framework/>

Professional Standards for Autism
www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/schools/national-autism-standards

Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Practical Strategies for teachers and Other Professionals
Author: Northumberland County Council Communication Support Service,
Published by: David Fulton Publishers
ISBN 1-84312 037-2

Supporting Children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Author: Hull City Council
Published by: David Fulton Publishers
ISBN 1-84312-219-7

Asperger Syndrome – practical strategies for the classroom, a teacher's guide
Author: Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council,
Published by: NAS
www.nas.org.uk publications catalogue

Inclusion in the primary classroom – support materials for children with autistic spectrum disorders
Authors: Joy Beaney & Penny Kershaw
Published by: NAS
ISBN 1 899280 952

Guidance to support pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (the daily mathematics lesson)
DfES Date of issue: 09/01
Ref: DfES 0511/2001

Asperger Syndrome – what teachers need to know
Author: Matt Winter
Published by: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN 1-84310-143-2

ASD advice for teachers
www.autism.org.uk/teachers

Asperger Syndrome - practical strategies for the classroom - a teacher's guide.

Authors: Leicester City Council & Leicestershire County Council

Published by: The National Autistic Society

Moving from Primary to Secondary School - how to support pupils with autism spectrum disorders

Author: Patricia Thorpe

Published by: The National Autistic Society

Supporting Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders - A Guide for School Support Staff

Authors: Lynn Plimley, Maggie Bowen

Published by: SAGE Publications

The Zones of Regulation

Author: Leah Kuypers

Published by: Think Social Publishing

The Incredible 5-Point Scale: The Significantly Improved and Expanded Second Edition

Author: Kari Dunn Buron

Published by: AAPC Publishing