

- Teach how to give things, using hand over hand. Take the object, react to it with pleasure as if it had been given, then return it. Give the child things you find interesting, then ask for and guide their return.
- Encourage the child to join in with action rhymes and songs. Encourage physical and verbal responses. Use props to support physical and verbal responses.
- Use short, achievable turn taking activities of interest to the child. Do them with an adult first and then introduce other children when appropriate.
- Play sharing games, dividing objects between you. Later extend this to involve other children.
- Introduce the idea of choices, including a mix of preferred and less preferred activities.
- Play games such as rolling balls, pushing cars, pouring water, building up the anticipation and ability to wait by using terms like... '1, 2...3' or 'Ready, steady...go'.
- Use agreed spoken words and phrases consistently across home and setting.
- Use motivators relevant to the child to encourage engagement.
- Use a simple commentary when alongside the individual.

Other strategies may be found on page 6 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Recognising feelings of others

Some children on the autism spectrum cannot interpret gestures and expressions. For instance, they may not respond to a 'cross' face in an expected manner.

A common problem is that they interpret children playing and running around as being threatening.

Often children with autism can't use signs and gestures properly themselves and they may make odd gestures or grimaces, which are hard to interpret. They may laugh or shout for no apparent reason.

Strategies

- Ensure the child's language is at a level to understand feelings.
- Use mirrors – make happy, sad or angry faces, reinforcing all attempts at imitation.
- You may need to explain what you feel or mean when you use gestures, such as a shrug for 'don't know'.
- Explain what you feel like, when you laugh or cry or get angry. Explain how others are feeling too.
- Look at books or pictures together. Say, 'Let's find a happy face,' or 'which one is cross?'
- Cut out pictures of faces from magazines or take photographs. Make a 'happy' collection, sticking them on paper to go up on the wall.

Other strategies may be found on page 35 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Taking turns

It can be difficult to teach a child on the autism spectrum how to take part in turn-taking games, where a sense of 'give and take' is needed.

They find it difficult to respond to reciprocal social contact e.g. waving goodbye, playing peek-a-boo etc.

They may not be motivated to wait or be able to predict when it will be their turn.

Strategies

- Use a variety of very simple activities with the aim of getting the child to make you 'stop and start'. E.g. blowing bubbles, moving a toy car, making sounds etc.
- Build anticipation into jumping and stamping games such as '1-2-3-go' and 'Ring o' roses'. Make sure you emphasise the build-up to the 'event' (the 'go' or the 'all fall down') and pause before it happens.
- Develop 'two-way interaction' games, such as see-saw or rolling a ball back and forth between you, or using a swing.
- Practise taking turns with one other initially. Use a physical cue to pass back and forth to indicate change of turn. A second adult may be needed to give gentle hand over hand support.
- Games which need at least two people are particularly useful when you are trying to encourage the child to relate to other children.

Other strategies may be found on page 9 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

COMMUNICATION

Communicating needs / desires

Some children with autism seem to use people as if they were objects, just to get what they want. They appear almost to perceive other people as an extension of themselves.

Some children will throw an adult's arm towards an object to indicate that they want it. Some go through complicated manoeuvres to put someone in the right place or position.

Strategies

- Respond to the child leading you as a form of communication or request.
- Model appropriate set phrases for different situations; for example, 'I want a biscuit', 'Do it again', 'I want to jump'. Leave a pause in the hope that they might copy your phrase, but do not worry if they do not. Just model again.
- Have photographs, symbols or objects available, so when the child leads you to the activity, they make the link.
- Prompt the child by having photographs / symbols of individual activities. When they take you to that place, encourage them to touch or match the picture.
- Use pictures or photographs of activities to give the child a choice of things to do, using however many they are able to choose from. When you know they can make a choice from pictures or photographs, think about how the pictures / photographs are stored e.g. in a folder, on a board. Encourage the child to independently fetch one to show you what they want.
- Give the child opportunities to choose, e.g. which game, toy or musical instrument? Initially limit the choice to one of two. Gradually increase the number of things to choose from, but only when ready.

COMMUNICATION

Linking words to objects

Some children with autism may use an object for a repetitive activity like tapping. However, they may give no sign of knowing what the object is, or what it can be used for.

Other children just repeat words they have heard without seeming to attach them to a particular object or picture. They appear to be practising speaking, but they are not communicating with anyone else.

Some children with autism may take no notice when an adult tries to draw their attention to an object.

They may not show things to people around them, or look towards them to gain their interest.

Strategies

- Shadow the child and then see if they will respond to you, eventually copying your play.
- Model appropriate play next to the child.
- Use motivating games to build up the child's interest in things you are talking about e.g. try putting things down a long tube and waiting for them to appear. Name the object during the activity using minimal language that is clear and consistent.
- When the child is able to follow a pointing gesture, point to things that are interesting and say, 'Sam, look ...'
- Use consistent words, photographs, pictures, gestures or phrases each time you talk about a particular object, action or event. Do not be tempted to say too much. Keep what you say simple, and use pauses to encourage the child to look at you and the thing you are talking about.
- Generalise the child's understanding of a range of single words by asking them to find objects in a bigger environment or show them to different people.

COMMUNICATION

Understanding gestures and facial expressions

Children on the autism spectrum may appear not to notice, or interpret what people mean by the looks on their faces, even when these are exaggerated.

Some children can misinterpret teasing, for example, 'I am coming to get you'. The words sound fierce and the child may not notice the smiling face.

Some may appear rude in the way they talk, or in the faces they make. They may simply turn their back on people. They may not understand everyday gestures. For example, they may not come to an adult if beckoned, or come to outstretched arms.

Many children with autism do not use facial expression, or make gestures to let you know what they want.

Some learn to copy other people's movements, but it is as if they just mirror everything without understanding. Even obvious gestures have to be specially taught.

Strategies

- Exaggerate all your gestures and expressions. Look very surprised, shocked, pleased, upset etc. Make your gestures match your words and label your expression.
- Build anticipation through interactive games using voice and actions.
- Use the same expression, with the same words, in similar situations.
- If there is some understanding of language say 'Look at Mrs ...'s face' and tell them what the expression means or describe how other children are feeling.
- Look at photographs, pictures of faces and the television. Talk about happy, sad, frightened and excited expressions. Look in a mirror together and practise making different faces.
- Make the same gesture, over-emphasised, in the familiar situations again and again. For example, pat the chair before the child sits down as you say, '(Name), sitting' e.g. at snack time.
- Extend the use of the gesture to more unfamiliar situations. You may need to teach each new gesture, one at a time, in this way.
- Use your hands to emphasise the things you are saying, for example, big, little, round, in here, on here, this one etc.

Other strategies may be found on page 8 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

COMMUNICATION

Understanding spoken language

Some children on the autism spectrum may struggle to make sense of what people are saying. Processing language takes longer for those on the autism spectrum – they may need considerably longer to assimilate an instruction or information. Re-explaining the task may add confusion by providing more information to process.

Some children become confused when people talk to them. They may not be able to work out what is important from the words and gestures used, the tone of the voice and the expressions on people's faces, therefore, they need to be taught to look out for expressions on faces and changes in the way words are said to them.

Sometimes children on the autism spectrum can become puzzled by idiomatic expressions. Things like 'Pull your socks up', 'Get a move on', 'Cut it out', may be very confusing, because they may take what is said literally.

Even when children have not fully understood the meaning, they may repeat words and whole phrases they have heard. Their spoken language may be in advance of understanding.

Strategies

- Simplify and slow down language.
- Give extra processing time (try mentally counting to 20 after you have spoken).
- Accompany important instructions with visuals.
- Try to tell the child exactly what you want them to do. Say, '(Name) bring the book' rather than 'Can you fetch the book?'
- Use gesture and demonstration to support your spoken language. Show the child and tell them at the same time.
- If the child does not do what you ask, be aware it may be because they have not understood or are not interested or motivated.
- Break longer instructions down in to smaller steps.
- Try to keep your language concrete and literal / to the point.
- If you are not understood by the child, reduce your language but do not change the key words within the phrase.

Other strategies may be found on page 12 / 13 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

COMMUNICATION

Following instructions without distraction

Some children with autism do not seem interested, or do not respond, when people talk to them. They do not respond to things like, 'It is dinner time', or 'Let us go and play outside'.

They may appear stubborn or unwilling to do as they are told.

A child may start to do something they have been asked to do, but seem to forget half-way through.

Children may pick up part of something that has been said, but miss the important bit. When told, 'Put your cup on the table', they may just react to the word 'cup' and bring it to you.

Children may misunderstand what people really mean, and take things too literally. For example, they may hold out a hand if asked, 'Come and give me a hand'.

Some repeat what others say, in part or completely, often just repeating the last few words. For example, they might say, 'You cold' when asked, 'Are you cold?'

Many children with autism ask the same questions over and over again.

Strategies

- Look out for situations when the child does respond to what people say then try to use the same words in similar situations. Stick to the same phrase rather than changing it and model or prompt the child to comply.
- Use the child's name and wait until you have gained their attention.
- Use objects and / or symbols to show the child what is going to happen. (If using objects, always keep the objects the same).
- Keep your language simple and demonstrate wherever possible. When a task is more familiar, you can increase their understanding by using slightly different language.
- Always give the child time to do as you ask or to think of something to say.
- Know the child and give them an appropriate time to respond.

Other strategies may be found on page 11 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

COMMUNICATION

Making appropriate verbal responses

Some children on the autism spectrum seem to learn to talk by copying exactly what they hear other people saying. This is called echolalia.

Echolalia can be immediate, that is, repeated straight after the person has said it, or delayed, so that the child learns the phrase and uses it as a chunk at a later time.

A child may repeat the whole phrase, or only part of what he has heard.

Other children learn how to make up their own short sentences, but repeat echoed phrases when they do not understand or if they are upset or worried.

Some children learn whole conversations they have overheard or scripts from TV shows. They can repeat them perfectly right down to tone of voice.

When given a choice, for example, 'Do you want milk or juice?' some children will echo, 'milk or juice' or will always repeat the last word, 'juice'.

Strategies

- Check the child's understanding of what you have asked / said.
- Use simple, concrete language.
- Use specific gestures or show them what you are talking about, using photographs, symbols or signs to help them understand what will happen next.
- Know the child and recognise how they are feeling. Look for any signs of upset or anxiety. They could be echoing to comfort themselves.
- Talk to them about things as they happen depending on the child's developmental stage. Try to make comments to them, rather than asking lots of questions. The use of too many questions can sometimes make echolalia worse.
- Make use of their echoing style, by giving it meaning. If they echo a question, such as 'Do you want to go outside?' by repeating 'Go outside', interpret this as if they are asking to go outside, and get ready to go. Model appropriate responses e.g. 'Outside please' or 'Fred wants to go outside'.

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT

Playing imaginatively with objects

Some children on the autism spectrum seem to handle toys and other objects purely for the look and feel of them. Obsessively lining up items is a good example of this. They need help to find new ways of playing with objects.

This kind of play can be a way of controlling their environment.

Children can focus intensely on particular objects, perhaps twiddling them in front of their eyes. Spinning and rocking are other examples. This kind of play prevents focus on other positive skills or activities. Changing this behaviour is difficult. Its function is related to the 'need for sameness' and perhaps sensory over-stimulation.

The creation of rigidity and sameness provides safety in a world that is hard to understand and control.

Strategies

- Reinforce the action of the object / activity e.g. eating banana / drinking juice.
Demonstrate the play version with child and adult.
Introduce teddy / doll etc. and play cups of tea and eating food etc.
If appropriate for the child's developmental level, introduce the word 'pretend'.
Repeat the process from real to imaginary life experiences e.g. buying something, baking etc.
- Model and use role play.
- Have set times for this repetitive play which are clear for the child and are socially appropriate.
- Note that it is useful to ration or limit the time a child spends on endlessly watching DVDs or TV programmes. This interest can also be used as a reward on occasions.

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT

Accepting changes in routine

Routines represent 'safety'. At times of change the child is frightened by the uncertainty of not being able to predict what comes next. Unexpected events can cause the same problems. A major change may sometimes not be as stressful as a very minor one.

A child may insist on following the same route or routine.

Strategies

- Start with 'Now' moving to 'First... then...' and gradually build a timetable which clearly shows the routine of the day.
- Choose a particular object, photograph or symbol to go with each part of the daily routine, depending on the child's developmental stage. (See visual support checklist page 30).
- Adults to reinforce the use of visual prompts alongside the activities to help the child understand the link between a particular picture and what it stands for.
- Once the timetable is established use it to build in new events via a new object, photograph or symbol.
- Go through the new sequence in advance. It may need to be taught / practised over an extended period of time.
- Use photos of new people (e.g. supply teacher) where possible in advance.
- Allow comfort items and routines (e.g. blanket, rocking) to help the child through change.
- Use very simple, precise language.
- Explain what happens next, before a new event, to reassure.
- Use a timetable which misses out some short or unimportant steps.
- Gradually remove steps from the timetable or vary the order.
- The visual aids are to move with the child to different environments and at transitional points e.g. accessing outside play, trips, calm area.

Other strategies may be found on page 19 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT

Managing repetitive physical actions

Unusual mannerisms and repetitive movements are characteristics of some children on the autism spectrum.

They may become anxious and use stereotyped behaviour to block out uncertainty. These behaviours may provide pleasant and predictable sensations, over which the child has some control.

Professionals need to judge when it is in the child's best interests to try to reduce these movements.

Strategies

- Limit the behaviour by providing specific times and place to carry out the activity.
- Offer different ways of stimulation. You need to discover what other actions are enjoyable.
- Use positive language like 'Hands down', rather than 'Stop' e.g. if flapping hands. Use a distractor.
- Some children find it useful to be given something to do with their hands, for example, to carry a bag or to hold a book or a small soft toy / stress object. Find something they like the 'feel' of.
- **Be aware** that the behaviour might be replaced by another less acceptable behaviour if stopped.

FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT

Responding to adult directed activity

For some children with autism, settling to a task may be a problem because too much stimulation or choice creates anxiety.

It can be difficult for some children on the autism spectrum to understand or remember instructions.

Also instructing themselves through a task is problematic, because of poor executive function.

Strategies

- Give the child a simple and consistently organised space.
- Use visual prompts for activities - these could be objects, photographs, or symbols. Maximise the use of gestures and demonstrations with repetition.
- Play lots of copying games.
- Mark a physical boundary, especially if you want the child to stay in one place. For example, at carpet time they could be encouraged to keep themselves on a mat. Carpet samples and tape as boundaries are very useful as are visual symbols to represent STOP (e.g. hand up palm outwards) if developmentally appropriate.
- Provide visual sequences for activities.
- Use simple clear language. 'First....then' if they want to continue with a preferred activity.
- Use timers to help them get a sense of how long things will / should take.

Other strategies may be found on page 26 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES**Accepting being touched**

Some children on the autism spectrum may seem aloof, isolated and avoid physical contact.

Some children with autism get agitated if people are near, and may get up and move away.

Some do not like being touched lightly or in a hesitant way.

Some accept a cuddle, but only when they choose, others are lively and active and will give and accept cuddles.

Strategies

- Be aware of the child's needs, as they may not seek comfort in the way most children do. Through observation and trial and error find out what gives comfort in times of stress. Liaise with home to gain an understanding of the child.
- Warn the child before touching and avoid unnecessary touching.
- Play alongside and initiate touch through play.
- Use a variety of approaches such as handshakes, cuddles and high fives as appropriate to what the child can tolerate.
- Be aware of your physical position when engaging with the child.

Other strategies may be found on page 22 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES

Awareness / acknowledging pleasure or pain

Some children with autism do not seem to react to pain or some may have an adverse reaction. They may not cry when they are hurt, and may show little interest in seeking comfort.

Often they show little or no awareness of danger.

Clearly there can be serious consequences to these responses. Occasionally children are found to have broken limbs but they have been unable to register the pain or assign it to the injury.

In addition their lack of pain registration will make it difficult for them to appreciate / acknowledge pain in others.

Strategies

- **Know the child** – observe reactions to hurting / falling.
- Teach them how to avoid danger using simple words and visual prompts e.g. stop, do not climb or not allowed symbols.
- To avoid danger try drawing barrier lines in chalk or tape on the ground. Teach them not to step over the line and reward success immediately.
- If you think they have been hurt, bring the child's attention to their situation. Be aware of extreme reactions in some individuals.
- Use visuals – have a body outline for the child to point to and say where it hurts.
- Liaise with home to gain an understanding of a joint approach on how to support the child.

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES

Heightened or lack of response to sounds, visual or tactile stimuli

Some children with autism are startled or distracted by sensory input e.g. sounds, tactile, and visual stimuli.

Some may react differently at different times and may, for example, sometimes respond to your voice or their name being called, but not at other times.

Occasionally, a child on the autism spectrum will get confused about sights and sounds. They may cover their eyes to shut out a sound, or cover their ears when they do not want to see something.

Some children become overwhelmed by an overload of sensory information which they cannot filter, leading to meltdown.

Strategies

- Be aware when working or playing with the child of trying to reduce any background noises and visual distractions.
- Introduce the child to a wide range of sound / touch gradually.
- Some children may respond to simple rhythms with instruments or objects. Encourage them to take part in this activity. Leave gaps for them to fill and act as if you expect them to take part. Copy sounds they make.
- Reassure the child. Be aware of the sensory needs of the individual. If necessary redirect them to a calmer, quieter space where possible.
- Warn the child when a disliked sound / tactile stimuli is about to start. To begin with let them watch from a distance with someone else. Then, when you think they are ready, try to support them to tolerate more.
- Consider using ear defenders at times when you know there will be distressing noises. (Much smaller versions can be purchased now. Ask ASET staff for recommendations).
- Please seek specialist advice from the Early Years Inclusion team or ASET if you think a child has significant hyper or hypo responses to sensory stimuli.
- Should meltdown occur, ensure the child and peers are safe and provide a safe, calm place of retreat.

Other strategies may be found on page 21, 22, 23 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES

Fine and / or Gross Motor Skills

Many children on the autism spectrum have difficulty with motor skills and may be diagnosed with dyspraxia. If there are considerable difficulties, the Occupational Therapy team may undertake an assessment and offer advice.

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 also tend to trip and fall easily and as a result of additional sensory difficulties may suffer from motion sickness.

Some children on the autism spectrum have difficulty in judging the force they are using during a 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 misunderstandings about physical contact between children.

Possible Strategies

- Adults to model and use appropriate language to promote positive self - image.
- Apply small steps teaching for motor skills.
- Use visual supports for physical sequences.
- Use backward chaining to teach specific skills i.e. complete the last step of a sequence first and progress gradually from there e.g.
 - the adult fastens the zip parts and pulls half way.
 - the child completes the process.
- Use differentiated activities such as 'Write from the Start', 'Write Dance', 'Dough Disco' to assist with fine / gross motor development.
- Use a variety of mark making equipment to best suit the child.
- Be aware a motor skills programme may be necessary - seek advice from Occupational Therapy.

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

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources

The Inclusion Development Programme – Autism

www.aet-idp.org.uk

AET Professional competency Framework

www.aetraininghubs.org.uk/competency-framework

Professional Standards for Autism

www.aetraininghubs.org.uk/schools/national-autism-standards

ASD resource pack for teachers

NAS publication

Download from:

www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers

National Autistic Society (NAS)

www.autism.org.uk

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

www.jkp.com

Guidelines for working with children with autistic spectrum disorders at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

NAS and South Gloucestershire Council

ISBN: 1-899280-64-2

Teaching young children with autistic spectrum disorders to learn - a practical guide for parents and staff in mainstream schools and nurseries

Liz Hannah

NAS

ISBN: 1-899280-32-4

Autistic Spectrum Disorders in the Early Years - a guide for practitioners and parents

Dr Rita Jordan

QEd Publications

ISBN: 978-898873-29-7

Supporting Children with an autistic spectrum disorder – Hull City Council

David Fulton Publishers

Tel: 0500 618052

ISBN 1-84312-219-7

Asperger Syndrome – practical strategies for the classroom - a teacher's guide – Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council

Inclusion in the primary classroom – support materials for children with autistic spectrum disorders

Joy Beaney & Penny Kershaw

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

Matt Winter

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN 1-84310-143-2

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

Author: Leicester City Council & Leicestershire County Council

Published by: The National Autistic Society

Supporting pupils with autistic spectrum disorders - a guide for school support staff

Authors: Lynn Plimley, Maggie Bowen

Publisher: SAGE Publications