

Autism Spectrum Education Team

North Lincolnshire ASET Support and Strategies Toolkit Early Years Foundation Stage

Revised December 2017

Acknowledgements

The starting point for the development of this document was Leicestershire City Council's Education Department's booklets published by the National Autistic Society:

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

Autism; How to Help Your Young Child

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:

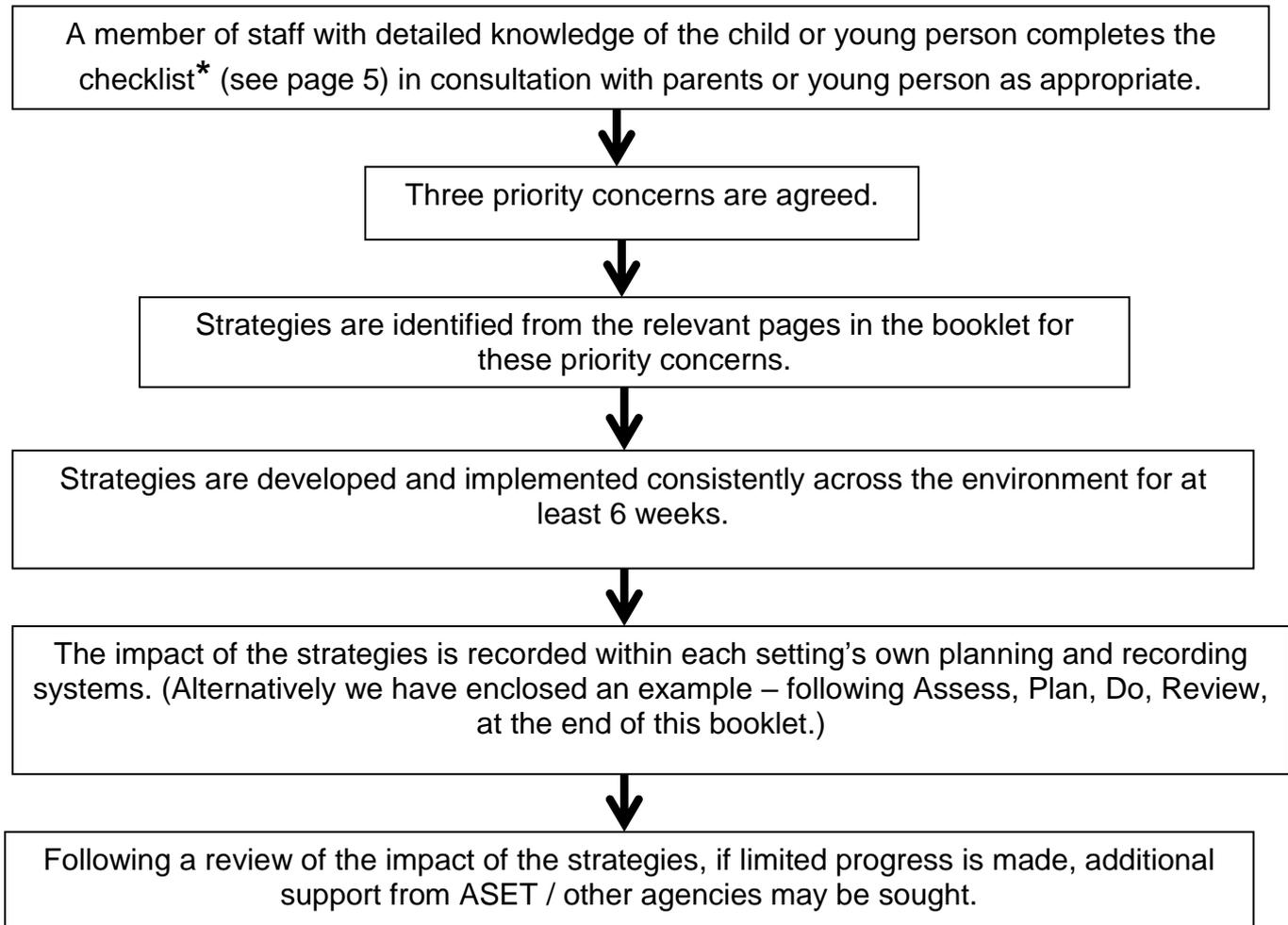
- increase awareness of individual need
- help schools to develop strategies
- provide agencies, including ASET, with information about a child's strengths and difficulties

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 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 30)
- establishing routines with a key adult but engaging the child with all adults across the setting

Remember - it may get worse before it gets better so be prepared to persevere and follow the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle adjusting expectations as necessary.

Checklist to Identify Support Needs (Early Years)

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	EYFS Page	KS 1/2 page
SOCIAL AWARENESS					
Engaging with adults and peers				6,7	6
Looking towards adult or object				8	
Recognising feelings of others				9	35
Bringing things to share with adults				10	9
Taking turns				11	9
COMMUNICATION					
Understanding conversations involve another				12	9
Communicating needs / desires				13	
Linking words to objects				14	
Understanding gestures and facial expression				15	8
Understanding spoken language				16	12, 13
Following instructions without distraction				17	11
Reducing repetitive speech				18	15
Making appropriate verbal responses				19	
FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT					
Being overly fascinated with objects				20	16
Playing imaginatively with objects				21	
Accepting changes in routine				22	19
Managing repetitive physical actions				23	
Accepting objects being in a different place				24	
Responding to adult directed activity				25	26
SENSORY / MOTOR DIFFICULTIES					
Accepting being touched				26	22
Awareness / acknowledging pleasure or pain				27	
Heightened or lack of response to sounds / visual or tactile stimuli				28	21,22, 23
Fine and / or gross motor skills				29	

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

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Engaging with Adults and Peers

Children on the autism spectrum are often exceptionally unaware / oblivious of other people.

They may appear aloof, distracted or in their own world.

They may appear not to be listening, but you may sense that they really are, even though they do not turn to their name.

The child may be engaged in solitary activities with little recognition of others.

Some children on the autism spectrum will not tolerate anyone joining in or interfering with their play.

Many children with autism can play well, as long as it is something they have started, but they do not follow a lead or take up anyone else's suggestions.

They can be very persistent in completing what they are doing to the exclusion of others.

Strategies

- When you notice the child doing anything, or making sounds, copy them and act as if the sounds or actions mean something. Make a game of mirroring their actions. Eventually, once you have established patterns of imitation started by them, you can introduce a few sounds or actions of your own, aiming to get them imitating you.
- Establish contact with the child in any way you can. Make good use of vision, hearing and touch. Join in with whatever they are doing.
- When the child is looking at something, talk to them about it. You may find it helps to touch their cheek and gently turn their head towards you, if they will allow it, as you say their name.
- Use the child's name to get their attention. Bring a motivational / preferred object from behind your back to show them, or open your hand to show them what you have hidden in it.
- Once the child is tolerating an adult playing alongside, gradually introduce something new. For example if you are both adding to a long line of blocks, you could introduce one which turns a corner, or one which stands on top of the others. The child is unlikely to accept it the first time, but keep on trying.
- Show the child and tell them who they are, saying 'Sam's nose, Sam's ears' as you touch them. Don't expect eye contact but react positively if it comes, however fleetingly. Hold the thing they are interested in, or want beside your face and close to your eyes. Say the child's name and 'Look'.

- 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

Looking towards adult or object

Some children on the autism spectrum show an absence of eye contact, but it is more common to find unusual eye contact.

They may not look at people when they talk, or when they are being spoken to. Others stare fixedly at people when they are talking.

They may look at people with a rapid sweeping or sideways glance. They may look at your clothes, your hair or your jewellery rather than at your eyes or your face.

Sometimes they may lower their eyelids or cover their eyes with their hands.

At times they may come up to look very closely at another person.

Note of caution – sometimes looking and listening at the same time is very difficult for children on the autism spectrum as they can only cope with processing information from one sensory system at a time.

Strategies

- Reinforce looking towards an object or person as a form of communication or shared attention.
- Encourage the child to look towards you by moving into their line of sight and using a motivational object.
- If you see that the child is looking at something, name it repeatedly in agreed basic language and move into the line of their gaze as you talk.

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

Bringing things to share with adults

Children on the autism spectrum do not usually attract people's attention to the things they are interested in by pointing or sharing glances.

They do not appear to realise that you might be interested in them.

The child may touch and name pictures or objects in a mechanical way, which does not depend on anyone else being there to listen or see. They may need to learn that we point in order to involve other people.

They may not understand how to share interest and may not look where you are looking, even if you point and say, 'Look!'

Their interest may be confined to things which are obvious and close by and they may not realise that other people could also be interested.

Strategies

- Comment on what the child is doing.
- Moderate your praise and attention depending on the individual child and their ability to cope with it.
- Make your presence more obvious and interesting. Do things yourself, which you think they may find interesting. Bring what you are doing close to them to attract their attention.
- Show them things, keeping it simple, showing one thing at a time. Keep any talk simple and clear; talk about what you are looking at. Use gestures and actions.
- If the child is standing in front of you with a toy, react as if it is being shown or offered to you. Look at it or hold it. Show interest and talk about it before returning it.
- Use interactive stories or rhymes. Stories with objects hiding under flaps are particularly useful.
- Once the child is able to look at something with you, engage with them and extend the experience.
- When they are ready, get them to show someone else what you have both been doing.
- If they have finished an activity, encourage them to take it to show and share with a different adult.

Other strategies may be found on page 9 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

Understanding conversations involve another

Children with autism may not understand about taking turns when they are playing or talking. They lack insight into the needs of others.

As they are more interested in what **they** have to say, they may say things in conversation which are totally unconnected with what has just been said by someone else.

Children on the autism spectrum can lack self-instruction skills which can lead to impulsive behaviours.

Strategies

- Encourage the child to look at or towards you during shared interactions and activities.
- Use visual systems, such as symbols, pictures and gestures to get the message across. (See visual support checklist document page 30).
- A prompt to indicate 'waiting' can be helpful.
- Practice taking turns in speaking with one other initially, perhaps passing a visual cue (object / symbol) to indicate a change of turn.
- Bring the child back to the focused activity using a verbal or visual prompt.
- Build in appropriate time for talking about special interests.
- Help the child to realise that sometimes the listener will be busy with other tasks or people and that they need to be patient or wait.

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**Reducing repetitive speech**

Some children with autism talk or ask repeatedly about particular topics.

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

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

Strategies

- Begin by building up a sense of the immediate future for the child. 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 an object or picture. For example, use a cup to show snack time.
- To establish this link you need to build up the connection by showing them the object or a picture of it every time the activity is about to happen (keep the object or picture the same). Support using the word.
- Use the child's name and a stop gesture e.g. hand up palm outwards, also using the word.
- Talk about what people are doing and what is going to happen next. Prepare them for unfamiliar situations when people may dress or behave in ways they have not come across before.
- Use an appropriate amount of language, visuals and social stories depending on the child's developmental stage.

Other strategies may be found on page 15 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

Being overly fascinated with objects

Some children on the autism spectrum seem to handle toys and other objects purely for the look and feel of them.

Children can focus intensely on particular objects (or parts of objects), perhaps twiddling them or spinning them. This may prevent focus on other positive skills or activities.

This kind of play may be a way of controlling their environment or blocking out the environment around them. It may also fulfil a sensory need.

Strategies

- Limit the object to one or a smaller number.
- Have set times and places for this repetitive play which are clear for the child and are socially appropriate, shown visually.
- Use positive language and gesture to redirect to another activity.
- 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.
- Is it an action that needs to be stopped because it prevents interaction or is dangerous? **Be aware** that the behaviour might be replaced by another less acceptable behaviour.
- Reduce the time the child has with the object or perhaps by making the object gradually smaller and smaller and more age appropriate.

Other strategies may be found on page 16 of the Key stage 1 / 2 Toolkit

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

Accepting object being in a different place

Lining up objects or arranging furniture in a set way is again aimed at maintaining 'sameness'.

Some children with autism get very distressed if aspects of furniture or ornaments are changed at home, or when displays are changed at school or the supermarket.

Another trigger is when the packet for their favourite food or perhaps the crockery at school lunch is changed.

Strategies

- Prepare for change wherever possible and make the changes gradually.
- Where a child needs to organise much of their surroundings, create a defined place that is for them. Always seek professional advice before creating a separate workstation / area. Some children do need a very predictable and calm space to work.
- Always have a calm place to retreat to if the situation is overwhelming. Offer familiar and calming activities.
- When making the change, get the child involved in an activity they enjoy and during this activity make a small change to their pattern and then restore this. Later make a bigger change and again restore the pattern during the enjoyable activity.

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