



Introduction

This includes brief and general guidance on the nuances of classroom learning which might impact a child with autism. Each child is different, so strategies will need to be adapted accordingly.

Language and Communication

Using Positive Language

Negatively framed language can be confusing for children with social and communication needs. For example, if I say to you, *"don't think about a pink elephant!"* What are you now thinking about...?

Therefore, when delivering instructions to children it is better to use a positive sentence structure.

For example:

Instead of saying; *"Don't put your feet on the chair!"* you could say; *"Put your feet on the floor"*. This is because the child will often focus on key words such as, *"feet"* and *"chair"*.

Chronological and Concise Instructions

Deliver instructions in the order in which you would like them performed. This is easier to follow and removes the need to reorganise sentences.

For example:

Instead of saying; *"before you go outside you need to finish this work"* you could say; *"First write this sentence, then you can go outside"*.

It may be useful to use additional resources to support instructions and transitions in the day. You could try using a 'Now, Next, Then' table. (See section on resources).

Literal Language!

It is important to use straight forward language as some children may take things literally. ALWAYS avoid sarcasm and use jokes sparingly and considerately. When giving instructions avoid sentences such as; *"Go to the toilet and wash your hands"*, and instead opt for; *"Go wash your hands in the sink"*.

Sentence Length

When giving instructions start with longer sentences, give space for the child to respond or act. If they do not, repeat the instructions with shorter sentences. For example: *"Please can you sit down?" "Time to sit down", "Sit now"*. Sometimes saying *"we are sitting now"* can be useful.

Additional Points:

- If a child does not respond to their name because they cannot attend to it, try singing their name. Never shout!
- Avoid relational concepts when giving instruction such as *bigger* or *smaller*.
- Do not force eye contact! Find a way for that child to demonstrate that they are listening which does not make them uncomfortable.
- Use basic Makaton or visual aids to support language.

Social and Emotional Needs

Managing Meltdowns

Meltdowns occur when an individual becomes overwhelmed by a situation or certain stimuli and loses control over of their own behaviour.

Whilst these meltdowns might appear to occur out of nowhere, this is not the case. It is useful to identify triggers, so that you can then either avoid these or prepare the child for when they might occur. However, meltdowns are not always avoidable.

Once a meltdown has begun change the adult who is supervising the child, approach the child with empathy and without judgement.

Remember, a meltdown is NOT a tantrum! It is not bad behaviour, or about good or bad choices.

Playtime

This can be a stressful time of the day, as there is little structure and challenges for those with sensory differences and communication difficulties. You may choose to; use lunch time clubs, create structure in playtime, prepare Sensory Circuits for the start of the afternoon (see section on resources) or use a buddy system.

Managing Anxiety

Research suggests that anxiety tends to be prevalent in autistic individuals. Many things may exacerbate anxiety, these might be; unexpected change, sensory overload, and difficulties expressing emotions. You can help by providing safe spaces for pupils to go to when they are overwhelmed, offering visual supports and preparing them for change.

Sensory Differences

Stimming

Stimming, or self-stimulating behaviour involves behaviours such as, hand or arm-flapping, rocking, jumping or spinning.

People stim for different reasons, this may be as a stress relief, for enjoyment or to gain/reduce sensory input.

As long as the child is not harming themselves or others and as long as they are safe, then they should be left to stim.

Sensory Toys

Using certain toys can be useful for a child with sensory processing and attention difficulties.

These can include; balloons filled with flour to squeeze, fidget spinners or putty. Remember you're not giving the child a reward by giving them what they need. These toys aid concentration and can be relaxing.

Hypersensitivity and Hyposensitivity

Hypersensitivity is when a person is very sensitive to certain stimuli.

- Sounds may seem louder and intrusive.
- Smells, such as perfumes, may be intense.
- Certain tastes and textures of foods might be unpleasant.
- Might not like to be touched, or find clothes and shoes uncomfortable.
- Lights might be too bright or glaring.

Hyposensitivity is when a person is under-sensitive to certain stimuli.

- Lack of attention to some sounds.
- May not notice smells, even foul ones such as body odour.
- May like spicy foods or eat non-food objects, this is known as pica.
- May not notice pain, chews on a lot or enjoys the feel of heavy objects.
- Poor depth perception or objects may lose features.

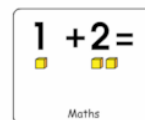
Useful Resources and Activities

Visual Timetables

A visual timetable is a sequence of images with words, demonstrating what the day ahead will look like. Using visual timetables can decrease anxiety in pupils, prepare them for the day ahead and act as a point of reference throughout the day.

Tips:

- Make sure the timetable is displayed where pupils can easily see it. Away from other posters or images so it is not cluttered.
- Set up the timetable in the morning with the children. You can ask some of them to participate.
- Walk through each part of the day.
- Refer to the timetable throughout the day “now we are doing Maths, next it will be lunch”.



Now, Next, Then

A Now, Next, Then, table is a sequence of three images with words to express what is happening for part of the day. This is helpful for children who struggle with transitions. It can help redirect attention to the task at hand and remind them of what's coming next

Tips:

- Use with the child – they can move the tasks themselves.
- Personalise it – add images to the timetable of the child's favourite toy or film.

Now	Next	Then
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Sensory Circuits

A Sensory Circuit is a type of Sensory Integration intervention. It is a sensory motor skills programme which can energise and calm children, enabling them to focus and attend to the rest of the day.

It involves activities split into three sections; Alerting, Organising and Calming.

Tips:

- Start each day with a sensory circuit lasting around 15 minutes.
- Add in extra circuits in the day if needed, such as, after lunch.
- Make it fun! Include activities you know that child will enjoy.

Communication Passport

Communication Passports are small booklets containing information about a specific child which they would like staff members to know. It can contain the following information:

- Special people in a child's life
- Foods they like/dislike
- Favourite activities in the day.
- Triggers which may lead to a meltdown, such as loud noises.
- Best ways to communicate with them, such as, using quiet voices, or Makaton.

These are specifically useful for when new staff arrive or a child changes year groups.