

Guidance for non-lesson activities

Dinner Time

- Option to eat in class, and possibly build up to eating in hall if appropriate
identify pupils/classes this is needed for, check staffing, inform MDSAs
- Using social stories and timetables if appropriate- **for pupils that need extra support with this, timetable strips can be made to show pupils exactly what is going to happen at lunch time e.g. go to hall-sit- eat dinner- drink- eat pudding- wait- clean table- classroom. Depending on the pupil this may need to be broken down further.**



Transitions between classes or other events in the school day can be difficult for a child on the autism spectrum. It is useful to plan these transitions for children to help them complete them successfully. The example here is of a transition to assembly.

How to use:

Use the schedule to prompt the child to complete the transition successfully. If the child begins to lose focus redirect him back to the schedule. Once a child begins to be able to complete the transition successfully, gradually reduce adult support.

NB: It can also be useful to explain to the child why we go to assembly. The importance of attending assembly may have been lost on a child on the autism spectrum.

Tool 16: Jigs

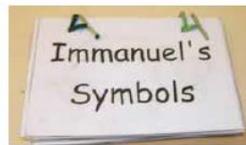


A "jig" is a means of presenting a task in a step by step fashion. So for example, rather than asking a child simply to 'wash their hands' (a complex task), the task is broken down into manageable chunks to enable the child to complete it successfully. The examples included here cover common areas of difficulty: hand washing, dressing and toileting. Cut out and laminate as shown in the pictures where necessary.

How to use:

Create jigs for specific tasks. The child will need adult support initially to work through each step of a task. As his understanding increases, adult support can gradually be withdrawn and the child can use the jig independently to complete the activity. Once the child has mastered the task the jig can be removed.

Tool 10: Support adult communication: Symbol sequences



Using visuals to support your communication can assist children's understanding when processing spoken language. Symbol sequences can be used for times the child find particularly difficult. These can help a child to complete tasks more independently rather than relying on adult's constantly telling a child how to complete certain activities.

How to use:

Create sequences of difficult transitions for example, the morning routine, transitioning from lunch to lessons and so on. Support the child through the transitions and introduce the sequence cards. As the child becomes more confident using the sequence symbols slowly withdraw adult support until the child is able to complete tasks or transitions independently.

Tool 11: Support adult communication: Symbol supported instructions



Verbal instructions can be difficult for a child on the autism spectrum to process. This is due to the length of time it can take for a child to process individual words. Rather than using lengthy and wordy explanations of a task, consider using succinct and precise instructions. In order to promote further success and independence with tasks, use visual supports when delivering instructions. Where appropriate, encourage children to take notes when a teacher is delivering verbal instructions.

How to use:

Ensure children are given a written or symbol supported copy of any activities you ask the class to complete. For children who are taking notes, use adult support initially to help the child record the main points of the verbal instructions. As the child begins to master this, gradually reduce adult support.

Tool 1: Social Stories™



Social Stories™ were developed by Carol Gray in 1991 to assist individuals with autism to develop greater social understanding. A Social Story™ is a short description of a particular situation, event or activity, which includes specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. They can provide an individual with some idea of how others might respond in a particular situation and therefore provide a framework for appropriate behaviour. Social Stories™ also enable others to see things from the perspective of the individual with autism and why the person may appear to respond or behave in a particular way.

For further information on Social Stories™ visit www.thegraycenter.org

Tool 23: Use of timers



It is important to ensure children are specifically aware of what is expected of them and how long they are expected to work or play for as is demonstrated in the picture.

Use a sand timer as an additional visual support to allow the child to see when the time is up for a given activity.

Top tip!

Put a label on one end of the sand timer as is shown in the picture so you know if it has been turned back over when your back was turned!!!!

Working in this manner can also assist difficult transition times such as moving on from a preferred activity.

- Consistency with MDSAs
- Time go early/stay late
- Consider sensory issues- noise, smell -pupils can be provided with ear

defenders or eat in another area

- Use first/then strips

Tool 21: First/Then boards



'First' and 'Then' boards are a further means of structuring a child's day. They provide the child with information on what they will be doing (a work activity) and what that will be followed by (a reward).

How to use:

Stick on a work activity using Velcro in the 'First' box and then stick on a reward using Velcro in the 'Then' box. Explain this to the child using the board as a visual support. For example, "Ben, look. First writing, then train."

Dinner menu to have photos and symbols of what is available **each class to also have smaller copies for pupils to choose from**

- If pupils are anxious teach them to use 'break cards' so that they can ask to leave before anxiety/challenging behaviour starts

Tool 12: Break cards



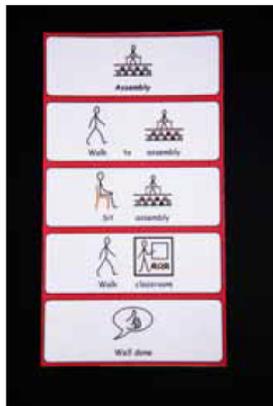
Break cards are used when a child is feeling overwhelmed and needs a break from the session he is in.

How to use:

In conjunction with recognising escalating anger/excitement, teach the child that when he reaches a certain level (e.g. 'annoyed') he needs to take a break. The child may use a finite number of break cards throughout the day. The number he can use should be decided in advance by staff. When he uses a break card he must be allowed to leave the classroom immediately. Teachers should reward the child for using his break cards effectively. Initially staff will need to support the child and teach him when to use a break card. Once the child has mastered the use of the break cards, adult support can gradually be withdrawn to promote independence.

productions

- Make practises part of lessons include in planning and lessons e.g. practise songs as part of circle time, make resources in group-work, enrichment (seniors)
- Practise songs in 'singing time' on a Friday so that everyone knows the songs and can join in (primary)
- use social stories to explain what to expect in the rehearsal/performance e.g may be loud
- Have a structure-keep the same each time, ensure all staff know what is happening before pupils arrive, no 'dithering' or unnecessary waiting.
- Individual timetables for those pupils that need it- break down the performance e.g. star song- red class dance- cake song- blue class song..... etc



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Use the schedule to prompt the child to complete the transition successfully. If the child begins to lose focus redirect him back to the schedule. Once a child begins to be able to complete the transition successfully, gradually reduce adult support.

NB: It can also be useful to explain to the child why we go to assembly. The importance of attending assembly may have been lost on a child on the autism spectrum.

- During individual class performances have everyone involved doing something (holding activity)-e.g. waving flags/stars, actions to songs
- If pupils find it difficult to attend the whole of the performance/rehearsal they can just come in for a bit or leave before they become anxious
- Use ear defenders if necessary
- Use now/next strips
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- Take items into hall that pupils can look at, play with, twiddle if they find waiting hard or need something to fidget with.

Tool 4: Use resources to address individual need



There are many great resources available on the market which address sensory sensitivities. The further information chapter cites a number of websites which supply these resources. Some examples are outlined below:

Tactile: Stress balls, fidget toys

Visual: Light sticks, torch projectors

Auditory: Noisy toys, rain sticks

Gustatory: Vibration toys, food stuffs

Olfactory: Essential oils, smell books

Proprioception: Weighted blankets/vests, fidget cushions

Vestibular: Exercise opportunities/ active lessons

Build up a 'relax' box which the child can have access to whenever he is feeling anxious.

Assembly

- Use a timetable- large for everyone, individual for those that need it-e.g. certificates-song-story-prayer, Jenny to ask Andrea to make large symbols and small symbols + strips, person leading assembly to prepare before assembly
- Use now/next strips
- More interactive/sensory teachers to plan interactive activities that keep pupils on task/motivated
- Set seating arrangements, same each week (seniors)
- Not so formal/Shorter
- be on time, ready to start on time at 9:30
- Flexibility in attendance: If pupils find it hard to attend assemblies, accessing for shorter periods and building time up, always making experience positive
- Look at why individual pupils find assemblies hard-(sensory issues, waiting, sitting, boredom) what could be put in place?
- The assembly could be done in a classroom where it is quieter for pupils not accessing the main assembly.
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Activity Days

- more structure (not a free for all) pupils start on one activity and move around in a circuit, a bell/or alternative could signal when activities are to be changed.
- activities to be manned one member of each class to stay with their activity to 'man' it, they can explain what is to be done and help pupils
- activities suitable for all ensure that activities are suitable and differentiated for all needs of pupils, each activity, if needed, could be differentiated 3 ways, ensure there are ways for pupils in wheelchairs to access activity- trays etc.
- duplicate of activities to be put in one classroom (or taken back to pupil's own classroom) where it is quieter.
- mixed groups to encourage social skills, each group will be mixed with pupils from each class.
- definite start and finish everyone to come into the hall on time, activities explained, starting activity e.g. song to start the session, at the end pupils could have a calming time before returning to class.
- Use a timetable strip if needed e.g. hall, song, painting, icing biscuits, sand tray, classroom.
- Activities to be planned and shared with all teachers in advance so that they can prepare pupils for what is happening.

Wet play

- still take pupils out if they want to go out (unless absolutely tipping down) for those pupils ask for water proofs to be kept at school/sent in daily. **MDSAs to be informed.**
- go out at different times- be flexible if forecast is bad all day but it stops raining at 11:30 take advantage and go out then.
- go out for a shorter period **could be just a quick 5 minute run around.**
- Plan more lessons outside so pupils are getting outside more- **use outdoor classroom for lessons (whatever the weather)**
- If inside offer pupils a choice of what they want to do.

Tool 12: Structure leisure times: Playtime activity schedule



Playtimes can be very difficult for children on the autism spectrum to cope with. The nature of playtime is noisy and busy. There are lots of different games to play and the time demands sophisticated social interaction. As a result, children on the autism spectrum may feel overwhelmed and may not know how to behave during these times. Structuring these times can help to overcome these difficulties.

How to use:

Use a choice board (as shown in the image on the right) to enable a child to pick out activities they would like to engage in. Limiting choices for those who need more support will prevent a child being confused by the number of activities on offer and can work to reduce anxiety. Use a schedule to prompt the child through each activity, letting him know what he will do first, second and so on. Use symbols or photographs for these according to the child's level of understanding.

Tool 13: Structure leisure times: 'Golden time' / 'Choose time' choice boards



'Golden time' or 'Choose time' can be another difficult time for a child with autism to navigate. Again, ensuring these times are structured with limited choice boards will enable the child to access the sessions more successfully.

How to use:

Allow the child to pick a number of activities from the choice board. He then places these on a schedule (with adult support if necessary) and completes them in succession. Once these are completed he can have some 'down time'.

End of day

- Option for some classes/pupils to stay in class ensure caller knows who these pupils are.
- Have something to do - box of books? classes to sort a box of books for their class that they can bring down to the hall for pupils to look at after the creed.
- Use timetable strips: e.g. creed, wait, read book, bus, home

playtimes

- Option to stay in pupils should be given the option to stay in if they want.
Use a playtime choose board

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- Safe space/ quiet area (sensory garden/wildlife garden- primary) Using other areas- quad/common room (seniors)
- Some pupils may need to go out when no one else is out or just a few pupils
- Grass clippings to be collected
- Free flow between playgrounds
- Fence of muddy areas
- Better locks on gates
- Staff to interact and provide play activities for pupils.
- Defined playgrounds- quiet/activity (seniors)
- Have a choice board outside on playgrounds

Tool 1: Support pupil communication: Playground communication boards



Playground communication boards allow children to indicate their desires to staff. They can also support staff communication.

How to use:

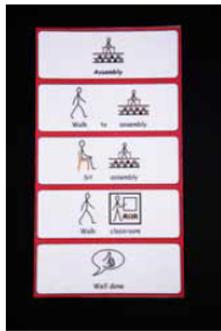
Refer the child to the communication board. The child can then indicate whether he would like to engage in particular activities or whether he has a particular need for something, for example, the toilet or a drink.

Ensure playground communication boards also have "rest" activities like reading a book or time out as well as typical playground activities.

trips

- Social stories
- Go to familiar places- repeat
- Prepare
- Use photos
- Have individual timetables.

Structure transitions



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