

Top Tips for Working with Pupils with Autism and Significant Social Communication Difficulties

Communication:

- Simplify your language
- Use pupils name first before speaking
- Don't insist on eye contact
- Give one instruction at a time, not a sequence
- Keep facial expressions and gestures simple and clear
- Give the child time to respond to any instructions (take up time)
- Use additional visual clues to aid understanding

Social Interaction

- Understand the child may feel threatened by close proximity of others
- Allow for the child to have time alone if needed
- Identify likes and dislikes when planning social activities
- Interaction with familiar people is easier – give the child time to get to know you

Behaviour

- All adults to be consistent in approach
- Help him/her understand what is expected by having clear predictable routines eg visual timetable, visual task board
- If the child has an obsession/interest use it positively by building it into a plan

Organisation

- Pupils need an uncluttered, predictable work space
- Start and finish trays help structure the work
- A reward box with a variety of rewards that are motivating to the individual child
- Distractions to be kept to a minimum

Sensory: Can affect any of the 5 senses

- Be aware of sensitivity to lighting, noise, taste, touch and smells

Ten Tips for Teachers to use in the classroom to help pupils with ASD

1. Create a visual organiser in the form of a series of pictures/symbols to show the sequence of events or tasks to be done.
2. Warn about changes – tell the pupil what has changed and why, and indicate what will happen instead. Use the visual organiser.
3. Choose seating carefully – the pupil may be happier sitting on their own to complete tasks. Keep distractions (visual and auditory) to a minimum.
4. When teaching make it as visual as possible. If you are talking about how to do something reinforce it with the visual – use the Blue Peter method – “this is one I made earlier”.
5. Pupils with ASD need time to process language. Keep instructions/language consistent and allow time to answer questions. Get pupils to exchange questions/answers with a partner, then ask individuals.
6. Use teacher selected groups. This will mean that the child with ASD will not be left out.
7. Pupils with ASD find it difficult to make choices. Be direct in what you require.
8. Have a code for help – the pupil with ASD can have difficulty asking for help, he may leave a card on the desk, or leave his pencil case a certain way to indicate he would like adult intervention.
9. As a teacher check the following
 - a. Your voice is not competing against background noise.
 - b. You pause between sequences to allow processing time.
 - c. One instruction at a time is given.
 - d. Sarcasm or hints are avoided.
 - e. Metaphors and other figures of speech are explained.
 - f. Instructions given are unambiguous.
10. Home and school communication. Keep the lines of communication open between home and school. Use home/school diary or maybe a Dictaphone to record the events of the day. Children with ASD rarely see any connection between home and school.