

Supporting children with autism spectrum disorders

Children who have or are suspected of having an Autism Spectrum Disorder usually display a particular and distinct individual learning style. The following are key points to consider when working with these children:

- No matter how verbally articulate a child may seem **spoken language can be problematic and is not the best medium for teaching**. Children with ASD tend to have strengths in visual / mechanical / concrete / rote learning rather than having a more creative, intuitive style of learning.
- ASD children have a particular language profile which means they frequently have **difficulty inferring meaning, predicting outcomes and drawing together strands to make sense of the whole**. Always check that an ASD child has made the required links or drawn the expected conclusions. **Never assume they have interpreted information in the same way as their peers**.
- Children with ASD will have **difficulty understanding emotions, feelings and motivations of others - 'reading people's minds'**. Never assume a child has understood a situation verbally explained.
- Children with ASD also have **difficulties affecting their ability to understand or conceptualise the consequence of their actions**.
- **Environmental factors** can significantly affect the child's ability to learn / function in the classroom - eg sounds, smells, physical proximity to others, small changes to familiar surroundings. **They can be easily distracted / disturbed by relatively minor events not noticed by others**.
- Children with ASD are likely to have **difficulty predicting or anticipating what will happen next in the school day**. Providing a visual timetable (or similar), describing sequences in the school day and reminders of routines can help.
- **Unstructured times of the day** can be stressful and consideration should be given to providing clear structure, boundaries and establishing familiar routines. Pre-arranged playtime activities with one or two peers supported by an adult can be beneficial. Sometimes the child will need time to himself to chill or 'regroup'.

Strategies to support children with ASD in making the transition to a new school or pre-school setting	Date implemented	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extra visits to the new setting with parent/staff from current setting 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take photos of key places/people and activities during visits (e.g. where to line up in the morning, where child goes for lunch). New setting staff to take extra photos that may be needed. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Photo book made showing key people/places and activities in the new setting. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New setting staff visit child in current setting (or at home for a pre-school child) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning meeting with parents to share ideas/concerns re the transition. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on the child and strategies used with the child passed on in writing to the new setting 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visual supports passed on to new setting. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New visual supports made - ready to support the child in new activities in the new setting 		
<p>To summarise: The child needs to have as much information as possible on what will be the same/different when he/she moves to the new setting. Information presented visually (i.e. in writing/symbol/photos) can be referred back to as many times as the child needs to do this.</p>		