

Strategies for supporting very young children on the Autism Spectrum in the Early Years



Bath & North East
Somerset Council

A guide for Early Years
education providers
written by the
Specialist Autism Support Service
B&NES

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Acknowledgements

This guide has been written by the Specialist Autism Support Service to support Early Years Education Settings to implement effective Autism strategies for very young children in their settings.



**Strategic
Partner**

Contents

Section 1:	Introduction	Page 2
Section 2:	Our Strategies	Page 3
Section 3:	What is Autism?	Page 4
Section 4:	The AET Progression Framework	Page 5
Section 5:	Communication and Interaction	Page 7
Section 6:	Social Understanding and Relationships	Page 13
Section 7:	Sensory Processing	Page 18
Section 8:	Interests, Routines and Processing	Page 23
Section 9:	Emotional Understanding and Self Awareness	Page 28
Section 10:	Learning and Engagement	Page 33
Section 11:	Healthy Living	Page 39
Section 12:	Independence and Community Participation	Page 44
Section 13:	Our 'Top Ten' Autism Strategies	Page 47
Section 14:	How We Can Help	Page 48
Section 15:	References	Page 50
Section 16:	Websites and Resources	Page 53

Introduction

Bath and North East Somerset Council has a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Education Strategy 2020 - 2023, which aims to meet the changing needs of children and young people with SEND, including children and young people with an autism diagnosis.

As part of this strategy, the ASD Support Service was recommissioned and has become the **Specialist Autism Support Service**; providing extended and enhanced support to children and young people with autism spectrum disorder so that *'Children and young people with ASD will be able to sustain their school placements and are supported to achieve and thrive'* (SEND Education Strategy).

The Specialist Autism Support Service supports children and young people living in B&NES, who have a confirmed diagnosis of ASD and are between the ages of 0-18, or 0-25 for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Part of the support we offer is helping all providers to develop a Graduated Approach. Therefore, we have put together this information pack to support educators to implement effective autism strategies and meet the needs of all children and young people in their settings.

Our Strategies

The strategies outlined within this information pack are designed to support learners on the autism spectrum.

However, we feel that many of these strategies support good practice for all children and young people, including those with Speech, Language and Communication needs and those requiring additional support within other areas of SEND.

This includes the areas of communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health difficulties and sensory and/or physical needs.

The Specialist Autism Support Service is based at Fosse Way School in Radstock, where these strategies are implemented to ensure that all learners can fulfil their potential and grow in independence and self-confidence, alongside making outstanding progress within a high quality, relevant and balanced curriculum: www.fossewayschool.co.uk.



What Is Autism?

Autism is not an illness. The AET approaches autism as a different way of being rather than as a 'deficient' or 'disordered' way of being. Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease. It means your brain works in a different way from other people. Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a "cure". Autism is a processing difference that can have an impact on many areas of a person's life.

(Autism Education Trust, 2021: Online)

What is autism?

Autistic pupils have differences in three areas of development. These are:



Social understanding and communication.



Flexibility, information processing, and understanding.



Sensory processing and integration.

We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths and challenges that might arise.

(AET Schools Professional Development Programme, 2021)

These three key areas of difference can have a profound effect on the level of stress and anxiety experienced by a child or young person and therefore the progress they make and behaviour they present.

Reports from adults and children on the autism spectrum reveal that it is not their autism that causes them difficulties, but the expectations and responses of others around them. It is integral that providers therefore understand that information is processed differently for these individuals and consequently their understandings, social relationships and sensory sensitivities will be different to their peers and to each other.

Providers have a responsibility to ensure they have an understanding of these differences and make adjustments to their provision to deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of all of their learners with autism.

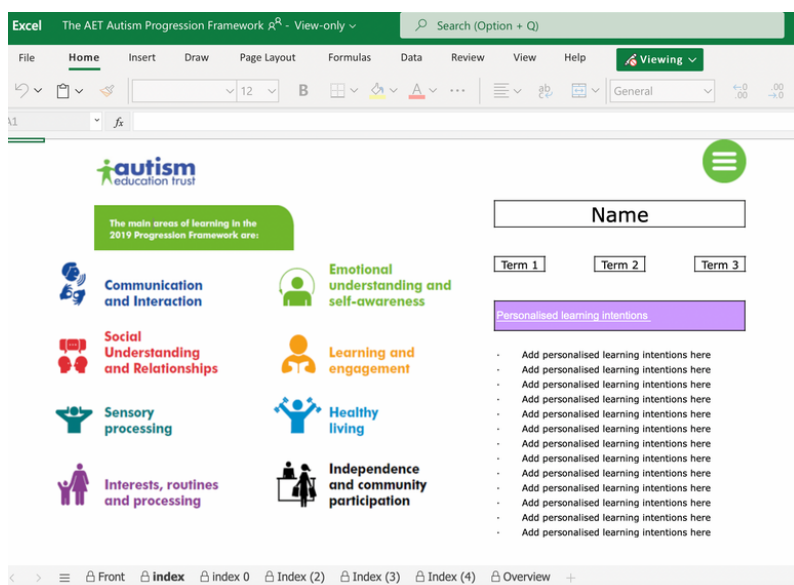
The AET Progression Framework

The Specialist Autism Support Service works with settings to support them in providing evidence of progress over time for children and young people on the autism spectrum. We recommend using the Autism Education Trust (AET) Progression Framework, which is a comprehensive interactive assessment tool for children and young people on the autism spectrum in mainstream or specialist early years, schools and post 16 settings.

(Autism Education Trust, 2020: Online)

Please see the Autism Education Trust (AET) website for a detailed introduction to using the framework - which is now downloadable in Excel format - including accompanying guidance notes:

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/progression-framework>



We also recommend using a progress tracker such as 'Show Progress', which has a bespoke AET Autism Progression Framework platform:

<https://www.showprogress.co.uk/aet-progression-framework.html>

This tool has been used effectively at Fosse Way School, where it has been found to be an outstanding way of tracking progress in areas within the school assessment framework and key areas such as life skills, independence and social understanding and relationships, which are all key priorities for children and young people on the autism spectrum.

The AET Progression Framework Continued

The AET Progression Framework has the following areas, which relate closely to autism differences and are colour coded:

- **Communication and interaction**
- **Social understanding and relationships**
- **Sensory processing**
- **Interests, routines and processing**
- **Emotional understanding and self-awareness**
- **Learning and engagement**
- **Healthy living**
- **Independence and community participation**

The following sections contain strategies to develop good autism practice in each of these areas, alongside providing examples of resources and recommendations.

These strategies have been written by the Specialist Autism Support Service team and have all been successfully implemented for children and young people on the autism spectrum.

The accompanying examples are all taken from Fosse Way School, including our residential Fosse Way House provision.



- Provide a visual timetable for learners, which is a set of pictures, symbols or photographs to resemble key parts of the day. This is key to ensuring learners understand what is happening now and next and provides a clear structure to refer to whenever they need. Visual timetables may be displayed for the whole class to use, alongside individual timetables which may be broken down into parts of the day for individual learners.
- Use visual supports to define areas and provide structure within the learning environment such as basic symbols and labels for learning zones, objects and storage. Ensure learners have clear access to resources when needed and an effective communication system to ask for what they need.
- Use basic symbols, choice boards, photographs and objects of reference to provide choice within activities and support understanding of transitions. Use 'Now/Next' boards and first-then sequences to add structure to activities and support with individual schedules, task sequence instruction strips, time trackers and use of visual resources.
- Use alternative tools of communication for pupils with limited verbal communication skills, for example: Grid Player, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Makaton signing, ensuring key staff are trained to use these systems and approaches.
- Check understanding and appropriate level of language used by asking learners to repeat instructions back to you. Ensure that you are allowing appropriate time to generate and provide a response, particularly when processing instructions and new information.



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- Ensure you have engaged the learner's attention before talking to them. This is particularly important when giving whole group instructions such as "Everybody, it's time to line up"... Remember to use the learner's name first where possible.
 - Model the use of appropriate phrases with simple language and reduce use of language where required, particularly when the learner is feeling stressed, worried or anxious.
 - Explicitly teach listening and attention skills and use special interests to support interaction and motivation to engage in communication with others. Learners may benefit from intervention models such as 'Attention Autism'; <https://ginadavies.co.uk> which incorporates the use of visually based and highly motivating activities.
 - Use clear visual cues, for example a card which is displayed when it is time to listen or talk, alongside discrete communication aids to be used when a learner requires support. This may include requests for help, toilet passes, access to a safe space, 'take a break' cards and other specific support needed.
 - Use written instructions where possible to support the learner in processing information. It is likely that information will be retained more quickly and effectively if represented both visually and verbally.



- Use paper or mini whiteboards to write or draw quick visual representations for learners. This may be particularly beneficial when a child or young person is in a heightened state of anxiety and information needs to be presented quickly, for example a recommendation to access a safe space.



Examples of Implementation...

Visual Timetable

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

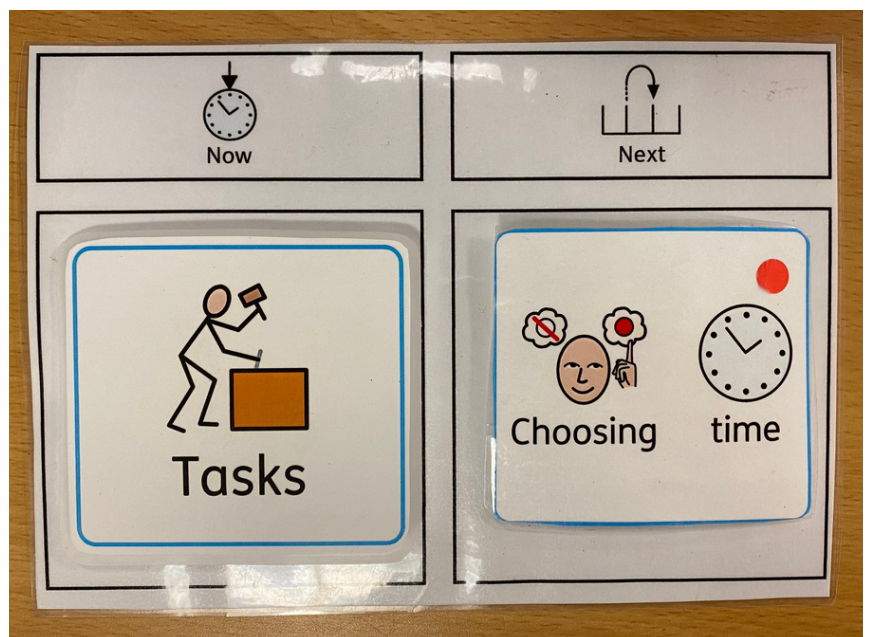
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'Now/Next' Board

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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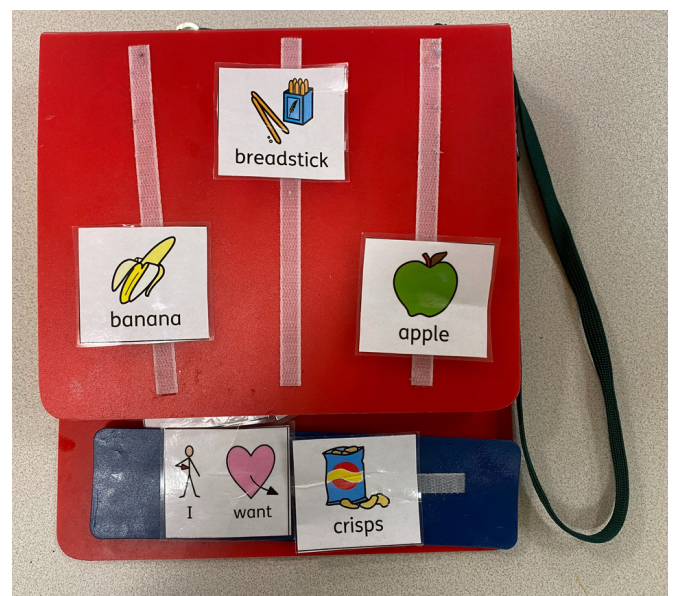


Examples of Implementation...

Use of PECS Communication Book

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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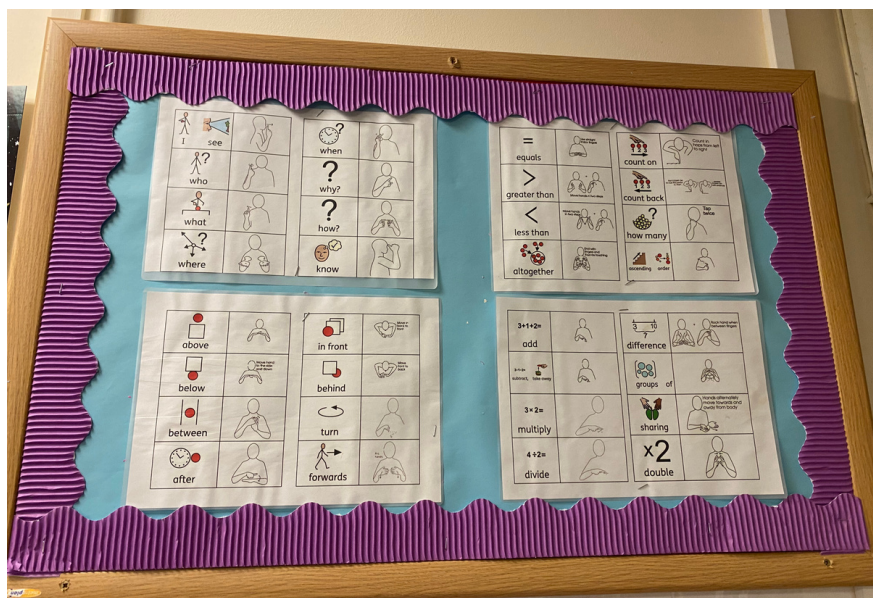


Examples of Implementation...

Makaton Signing Display Board

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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'Time Out' and Support Cards

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School





Social understanding and relationships

- Social Stories™ (Carol Gray, 2002) or social scripts should be used to prepare learners for specific situations or activities and help them to understand what to expect in a situation and why. They are particularly important if a learner requires support to understand and accept changes to their routine and unexpected or distressing events such as the absence of a key person, transitions, off-site visits and changes to personal circumstances.
<https://carolgraysocialstories.com>
- Use comic strip conversations to support learners to understand the views and actions of themselves and others by drawing a visual representation of social interactions. These can be used to explore feelings and intentions, alongside what could be said 'out loud' and what could be thought instead within social situations.
- Ensure named adults are consistently available as a point of contact and to provide reassurance to the learner. Consider having more than one key person who can provide specific support for pupils where possible and an accessible way of communicating with them when needed.
- Listen to the voice of the learner and ensure their views and opinions are valued. Provide learners with regular opportunities to talk about their own needs and contribute to their provision and learning priorities. Recognise the learner as an individual and include their voice within person centred planning.
- Teach social skills explicitly through the use of structured programmes and interventions and provide opportunities for learners to practice social interactions in a supportive environment.



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- Examples of social skills programmes include 'Circle of Friends', 'Socially Speaking' and interventions may include LEGO® Based Therapy and buddy systems.
 - Support peers to develop their awareness and understanding of autism. This could include PSHE lessons, circle time and school assemblies on developing autism awareness by exploring and celebrating differences.
 - Provide structured alternatives during unstructured times such as break and lunch times. This may include introducing lunch time clubs based on learners' special interests such as lego, chess or puzzle clubs.
 - Provide structure during free times where no alternative is available, for example by giving learners the choice to take a book or favourite toy out to the playground or following a schedule of activities within the allocated free time period.
 - Ensure all staff are aware of potential triggers and can proactively teach de-escalation strategies. This may include breathing exercises, use of the 'Incredible 5-Point Scale' or similar resource, visual prompts, self-regulatory items and access to safe spaces.
 - Support families to help their children to understand their autism diagnosis including accepting and celebrating their differences, alongside signposting resources such as books and journal articles.



Social understanding and relationships

Continued...



Examples of Implementation...

Choice Strip and 'Not Available' boards

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Display to support social understanding

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School



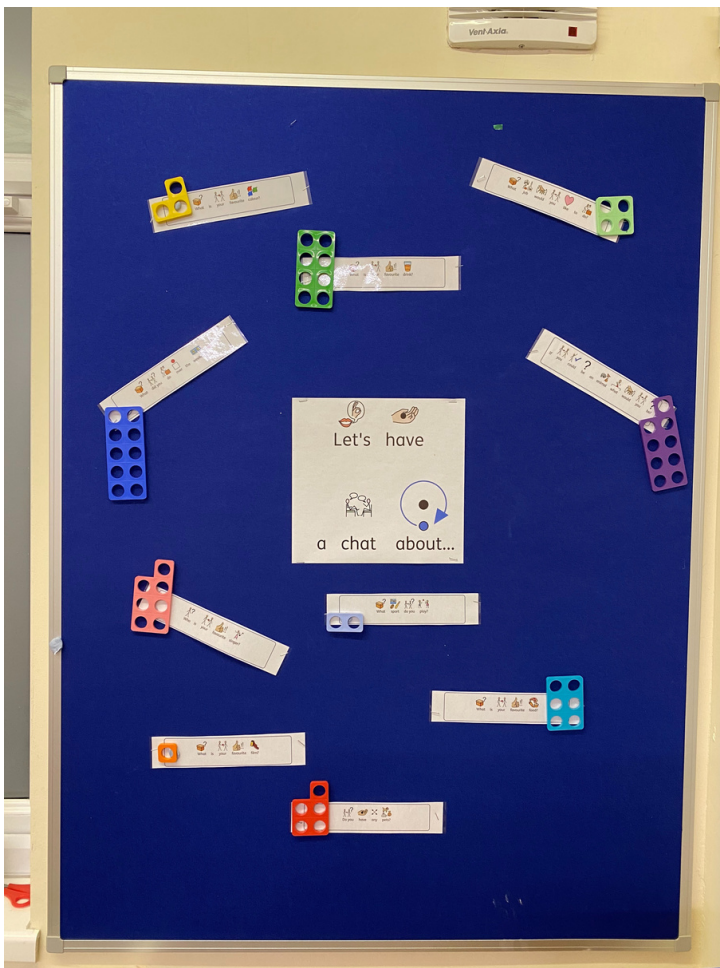


Examples of Implementation...

'Chat Board' with numbered questions to ask during social interaction times

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Questions on this display:

- What is your favourite colour?
- What job would you like to do?
- What is your favourite drink?
- What did you do over the weekend?
- If you could be an animal, what would you be?
- Who is your favourite singer?
- What sport do you play?
- What is your favourite food?
- What is your favourite film?
- Do you have any pets?



Examples of implementation...

Social Script: 'Personal Space'

Example written for a pupil at Fosse Way School

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I like to play with my friend ----- in the classroom and on the playground.



It is good for me to play with my friends at school.



When I try to play with -----, sometimes I stand too close to him and give him lots of hugs.



This is OK, but I need to remember not to hug my friends at school and save my hugs for when I get home.



I need to remember to stand back and leave some space between me and ----- . This is called 'personal space'.



My teacher will show me a 'personal space' card if I am getting too close to help me to understand that I need to move back.



If I am not sure how much space to leave, I can ask my teacher or another adult for help. This is OK and they will be happy to show me.



If I respect my friends' personal space then my friends will be happy and everyone will be happy with me. This will make it easier for me to play with ----- and ----- will be happy with me too.

- Provide an autism-friendly learning environment to enable participation by creating a low arousal, organised workspace with minimal distractions where possible. Even the smallest of changes can make a significant impact for learners on the autism spectrum. It may be beneficial to complete a sensory audit from the Autism Education Trust: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/sensory-resources>
- Complete a sensory assessment for learners to gain an understanding of their sensory preferences. This should be completed between the school and home environment to build an accurate picture of the learner's needs. It may be beneficial to complete a Sensory Preferences activity and Environmental Checklist, which can be accessed through the AET Good Autism Practice Training.
- Ensure all staff have an awareness of the unique sensory profile of each learner. This can be included either in their one-page profile or within a separate document and should include information about learners' hypo sensitivities and hyper sensitivities to the following inputs:

Visual Auditory Vestibular
Gustatory Tactile Olfactory Proprioceptive

This should be discussed with the learner and produced with contributions from the learner and their family where possible.



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- Timetable sensory breaks for learners, which are identified and referred to within the individual or class visual timetable. This might include an outside break where the learner can engage in movement activities such as walking, running, jumping on a trampoline, climbing, carrying objects, completing fine/gross motor skills activities or a mindfulness activity such as colouring.
 - Provide learners with access to their own safe space, which is available when needed. Depending on the individual needs of the learner, this can be an alternative area within the school or a designated space within the classroom such as a quiet area, soft corner or tent. Safe spaces should include strategies to support self-regulation and provide a safe, calming environment.
 - Adapt learning areas as required to ensure learners are able to work effectively, for example by ensuring furniture is the appropriate size and height, seating plans have been carefully considered and physical supports are provided where needed.
 - Ensure learners have access to an identified workstation where appropriate, where they have access to visual resources to support communication and self-regulation. Incorporate the principles of TEACCH® to promote understanding of schedules, activities and expectations.
 - When producing displays, ensure they are not too visually stimulating and contain only key information needed. Where possible, aim to use neutral colours and do not create resources which hang from boards or ceilings, as these can be extremely distracting and overwhelming. Have clear spaces between display boards and keep displays simple and meaningful.



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- Be aware of lighting in the room and use consistent fonts and colours on the whiteboard. Consider where the learner is positioned to ensure they can see the whiteboard, alongside considering other environmental factors that may affect learner's sensory responses and ability to concentrate.
 - Ensure learning environments are calm and supportive, where learners feel they belong and their contributions are valued. Take time to listen to the learner and ensure they are given opportunities to speak and be heard.
 - Be mindful of smells and noises in the classroom and other areas within the school such as the corridors and lunch hall. Consider providing access to shared spaces at an alternative time and aim to reduce background noise where needed by providing ear defenders or headphones.
 - Provide access to sensory regulators and fiddle toys to improve concentration and attention. For learners with sensory processing differences, acknowledge they may require higher levels of sensory input and regulators to help the brain to filter out distracting sensory input not related to the task. This may be an individual 'fiddle box', or a box of items which is accessible to small groups or the whole class.
 - Provide visual supports for seating where appropriate such as a coloured or textured carpet square for younger learners or a chair with a learner's name or photograph on.



- Provide dedicated time to practice and develop fine motor skills for tasks such as writing, drawing or cooking.
- Provide learners with access to a visual clock and regularly provide an update on time allocation for tasks. For some learners a sensory visual timer may be appropriate, however other recommendations include a whiteboard timer, sand timer, egg timer or stop watch.
- Consider the individual needs of the learner and make adaptations to uniform expectations where these relate to learners' sensory sensitivities, rigidity surrounding preferred items of clothing or a lack of confidence or self-esteem which is having a profound impact on their wellbeing.



Examples of Implementation...

'Communication' Display with Makaton Signing and key communication tools
Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Ear Defenders and Sensory Timers
Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Interests, routines and processing

- Schedule structured time for learners to explore and develop their special interests. Some learners will have obsessions or interests which are highly motivating to them, so these should also be incorporated into learning activities where possible to increase engagement.
- Break learning tasks down into small, manageable steps, which are supported by visual prompts. This may include cutting up worksheets to provide one task at a time, folding paper into thirds/halves to make tasks appear more manageable, using tick lists, visual schedules, numbered instructions or writing templates.
- Support learners to understand their own barriers to learning and provide regular opportunities to celebrate their achievements. Some learners may respond well to praise and celebration using a class visual display or certificate system, whereas others may require more discreet recognition of their achievements.
- Prepare learners for transitions and support them to accept change using visual timetables, individual schedules, language jigs and Social Stories™. Learners may require additional support prior to and following transitions and may experience heightened anxiety levels, therefore providing opportunities to ask questions and planning effective calming activities for learners is essential during periods of transition. It is also important to share this preparation with families, so that they can support their children at home.



Interests, routines and processing

Continued...

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- Provide alternatives to written recording where appropriate, for example making use of available ICT. This may include using specialist programmes, touch typing and audio/video recording.
 - Promote independence using visuals, self-help checklists and work systems, including having an identified workstation for learners where appropriate. Aim to reduce reliance on adult support and encourage learners to complete tasks with increasing independence.
 - Make work expectations clear and make use of timers to visually represent how long a learner needs to work for and how long they have left to finish a task. Provide advance warning in preparation for a task finishing such as '10 minutes left, 5 minutes left, 2 minutes left, 1 minute left' and a 10 second countdown prior to 'finished'.
 - Allow additional processing time to support with planning, organising and completing tasks and wait an appropriate amount of time before expecting a learner to respond. A recommended waiting time for answering questions is at least 10 seconds, so be willing to adapt your approach to 'ask and wait'.
 - When planning, make connections and explain relevance or links to the 'real world' and include learners' direct experiences and interests where possible.
 - Incorporate backward chaining strategies where appropriate by giving learners the opportunity to complete the final stages of a task, then complete the earlier steps over time as their confidence grows and abilities develop.



Interests, routines and processing

Continued...

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- Involve learners in identifying and reviewing their own targets and explain steps taken to work towards these. Provide opportunities to explore what learners feel is important to them and discuss learning styles or approaches.



Interests, routines and processing

Continued...

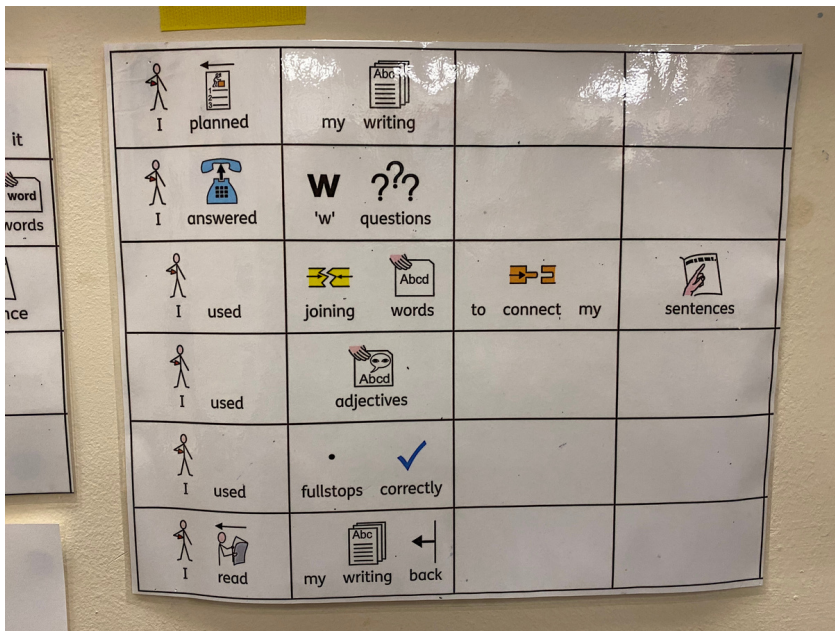


Examples of Implementation...

Independent Checklist following writing task

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Visual Timetable to support preparation for school trip

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Interests, routines and processing

Continued...



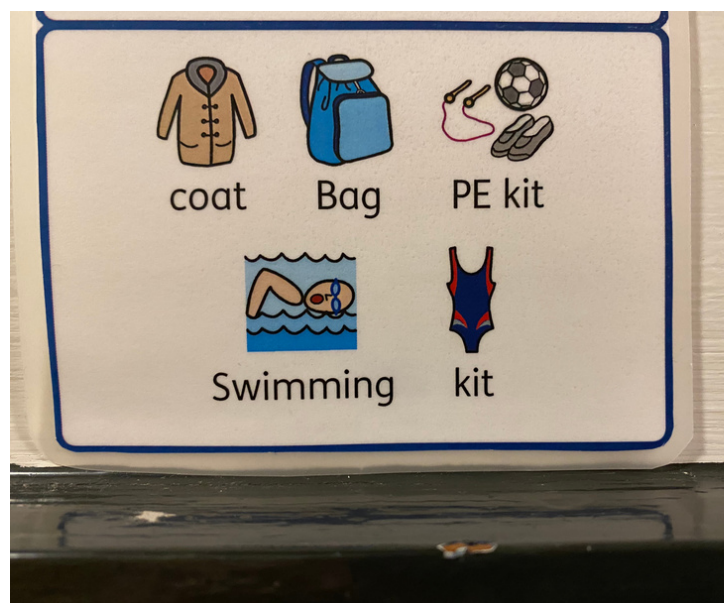
Examples of Implementation...

'No Entry' Sign on office door
Example from office at Fosse Way School



Visual Support for pupil pegs
Example from corridor at Fosse Way School

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Emotional understanding and self-awareness

- Support learners in recognising and understanding emotions, including identifying and labelling emotions experienced by themselves and others. Teach emotions such as ‘happy’, ‘sad’, ‘excited’ and ‘worried’ using visuals including pictures, photographs and videos, alongside recording emotional responses where appropriate to label, discuss and describe.
- It may be useful to create an emotions book to explore what different emotions look like and how this may affect behaviour, facial expressions or physical responses.
- Encourage learners to recognise and reflect on their emotions and explicitly teach strategies for calming and self-regulation. This may include access to visual resources such as the following:

Emotions thermometers

Traffic light systems

The Incredible 5-Point Scale

The Zones of Regulation™

- When using the above tools, support learners to know what they can do when feeling anxious or overwhelmed by providing access to a safe space, modelling calming techniques and teaching self-regulation. This may include breathing exercises, calming activities such as reading, mindfulness or drawing and use of sensory regulators or physical activities.



- Introduce visual tools based on relatable characters such as the 'Turtle Technique' to support learners to understand and manage their emotions. This particular approach uses the analogy of a turtle, who withdraws into its shell when feeling in danger or threatened, therefore may support learners to explore what to do when they feel upset, angry or scared.
- Encourage learners to develop an understanding of their own physical sensations and triggers by exploring what makes them feel upset or angry and recording these in a format such as a one page profile, 'my anxiety triggers', 'what makes me angry' or 'what pushes my buttons' booklet. Remember to consider the learner's sensory needs.
- Ensure learners have access to safe space at all times where they can go when feeling overwhelmed. This may be in the form of a nurture space, sensory room, low arousal area or a key person's office where they know they can receive support when needed.
- Provide learners with opportunities to 'check in' regularly with a trusted adult and develop a network of adults who understand the learner's needs and can support when needed. Ensure staff members are communicating regularly and that strategies are shared with anyone who is likely to come into contact with the learner.



-
- Consider implementing an Emotion Coaching approach, such as the Five Steps of Emotion Coaching by John Gottman:

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com>

Be aware of your child's emotions

Recognise emotion as an opportunity for connection or teaching

Help your child verbally label emotions

Communicate empathy and understanding

Set limits and problem solve

- Aim to reduce anxiety where possible by setting clear and consistent expectations and preparing for change and transitions using visual schedules and social scripts, alongside communicating effectively with parents/carers. Provide regular opportunities for learners to have additional time to re-set and calm with an activity they enjoy and provide breaks during learning activities where needed.
- Develop confidence and self-esteem by providing learners with opportunities to share their strengths and achievements and take responsibility within tasks. Ensure learners are given the tools needed to express their ideas and opinions and contribute meaningfully.

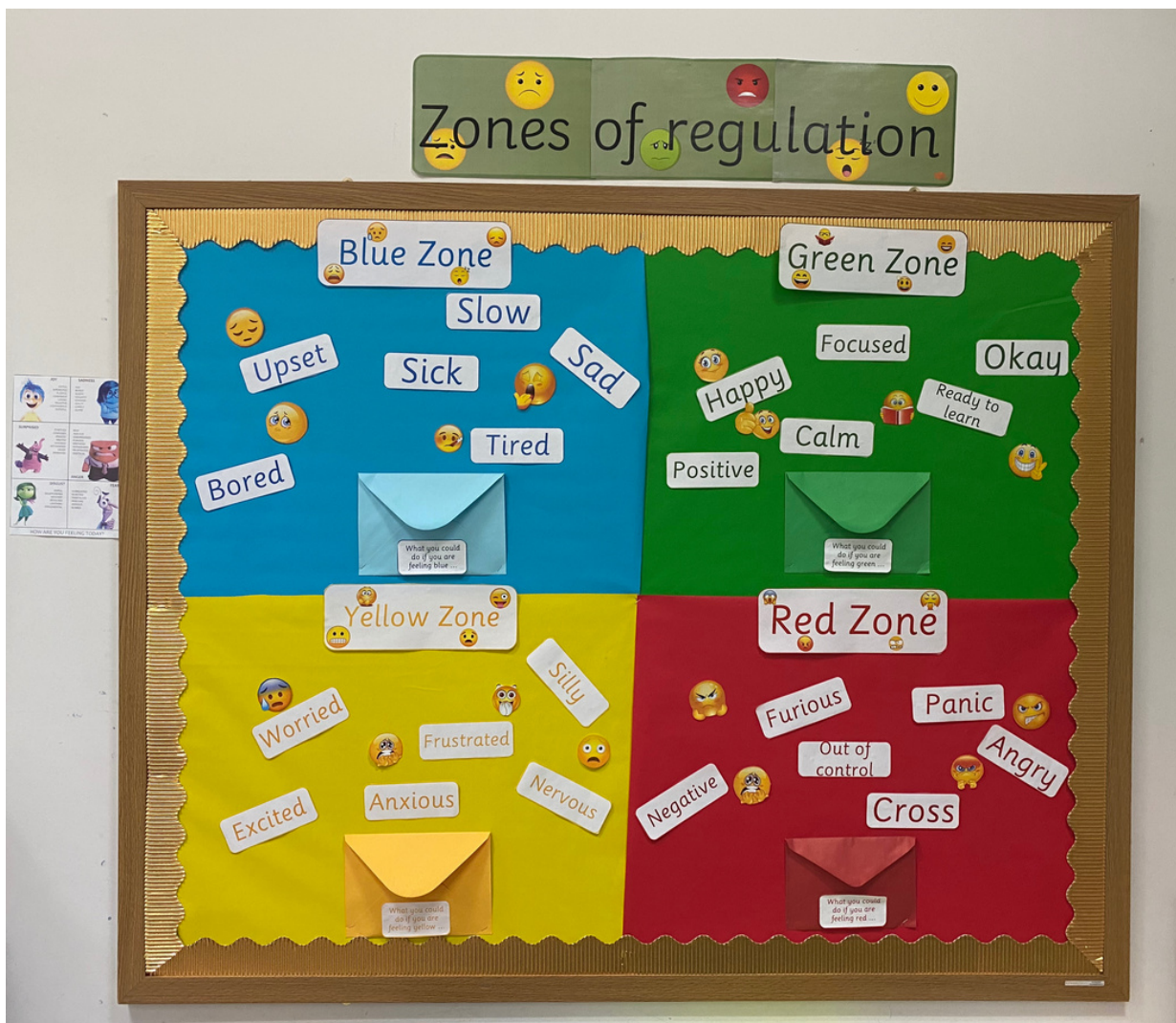


Examples of Implementation...

Interactive 'Zones of Regulation' Display

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Examples of Implementation...

'How I'm Feeling' Support Cards

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

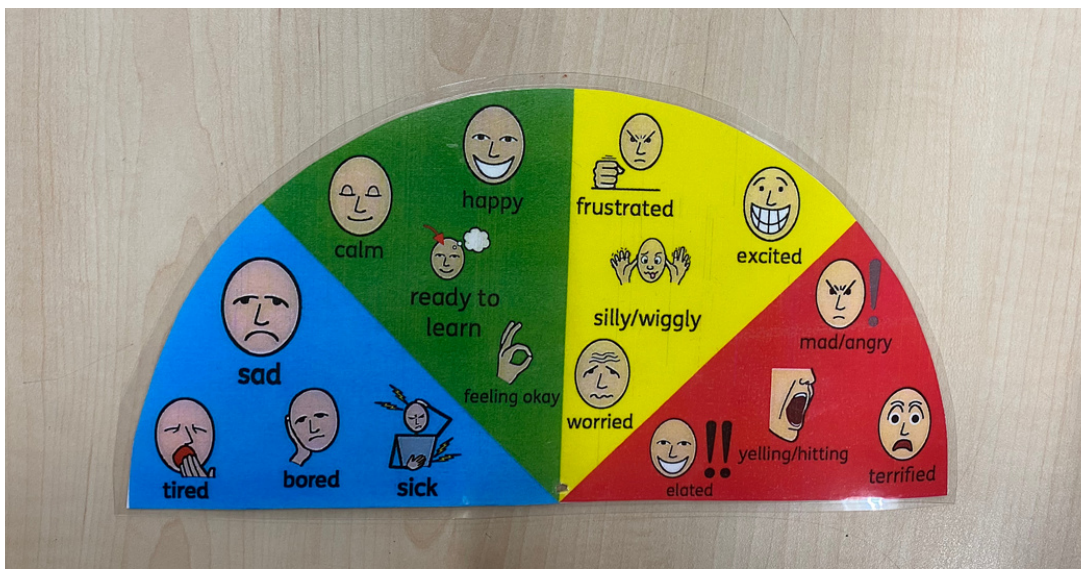
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'How I'm Feeling' Emotions Fan

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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- Provide opportunities to learn through play by exploring toys, objects or materials and discover their purpose in relation to the ‘real world’. Encourage learners to make connections to their own lives and experiences to make tasks feel relevant and interesting.
- Set clear expectations for learning and behaviour and be consistent in your approach. Provide visual supports for class and/or school rules by including pictures or symbols in class charters. Re-visit rules and expectations regularly and discuss with learners individually using social scripts, providing opportunities to ask and answer questions.
- Use special interests as motivators for tasks, by rewarding learners with access to an item or activity they enjoy once they have achieved something. There are many strategies which will also help to encourage independence such as:
 - Reward charts, sticker charts, behaviour charts or tick charts, where learners earn stickers towards an independent/shared reward
 - Token boards, where learners earn tokens usually towards an independent reward. This often starts simply with quick reinforcement, then gradually develops as the learner develops their understanding of the system.

Whichever system you implement, the motivating item or activity should be highly appealing to the learner in order to promote engagement and a positive attitude towards learning.

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- Use token boards to promote independence and quickly reward positive behaviours or actions. These typically use the language of ‘I am working for’ and provide learners with a choice of motivators to choose from prior to starting a task. These should be personalised and can be designed for each learner, using their special interests.
 - Introduce a ‘pause folder’ with alternative activities. This means you can ‘press pause’ if the learner is not engaging and can present them with an alternative activity. Learners can then return to the original activity at another time.
 - Ensure the learning environment is appropriate for the learner, including making adaptations to meet their individual needs. Many learners will benefit from having their own workstation to provide structure, support concentration and reduce anxiety. Workstations may contain visual supports and reminders and should follow a system that reinforces working from left to right, with a work tray and ‘Finished’ box. Learners may benefit greatly from completing TEACCH® style tasks and following the principles of TEACCH®.
 - Provide a quiet workspace or area in all classrooms where distractions can be limited, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. If independent workstations are not allocated to learners at this time, consider creating a low arousal work area that learners can use on a rotation basis, or as a new learning station for independent work within topics.

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- Provide opportunities for learners to organise resources and take responsibility for their own belongings. Ensure classroom areas and zones are labelled and organised in a consistent way to ensure this can take place.
 - Make use of assistive technology to support communication, including the use of pictures and symbols where required. This may include Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Gestures/Signing, Big Macks and Switches or iPad applications.
 - Make use of technology to support recording skills such as having a dedicated laptop or computer available for completing written tasks. Some learners may require support with developing their fine motor skills and find writing by hand challenging, so provide alternative systems where required to enable them to complete specific tasks. Teach touch typing and use of programmes such as Clicker to provide word processing alternatives to increase writing productivity within literacy tasks and other areas of the curriculum.
 - Incorporate activities to improve working memory and information recall such as repetition, sequencing tasks and memory games. Provide these regularly and incorporate them into brain breaks and movement breaks where possible.
 - Consider the impact of homework demands for learners and anxieties which may arise from these. Plan clear, structured homework activities using writing frames and schedules or tick lists to follow to ensure learners are able to complete tasks independently. Consider whether homework demands should be negotiated or simplified and apply a time limit or extended deadline where required.

-
- Where a teaching assistant has been allocated to support a learner, ensure they are promoting independence and not encouraging reliance on adults. Teaching assistants, learning support assistants or other identified members of staff can still support effectively whilst not working alongside the learner throughout the entirety of the school day. Encourage support staff to facilitate small group learning in addition to setting up and monitoring tasks involving the learner, alongside providing them with specific resources and support as and when needed as per their individual support plan.
 - When supporting learners with exam preparation, recognise the potential impact and anxiety of the exam environment and challenges that accompany this. Exams can be stressful for all learners, but particularly for those on the autism spectrum who may find revision difficult and exams extremely stressful.
 - Ensure access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are made where needed and provide opportunities for learners to practice working with any nominated support ahead of the exam such as a reader or scribe.
 - Provide an adapted/personalised curriculum which takes into consideration learners' individual needs and EHCP outcomes where appropriate. Consider individual outcomes and priorities for learners on the autism spectrum and how to teach transferrable skills that will equip them for life beyond school.

Use the AET Progression Framework as a comprehensive interactive assessment tool to set priorities and measure progress in areas that fall outside the National Curriculum, but are key for children and young people on the autism spectrum:

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/progression-framework>

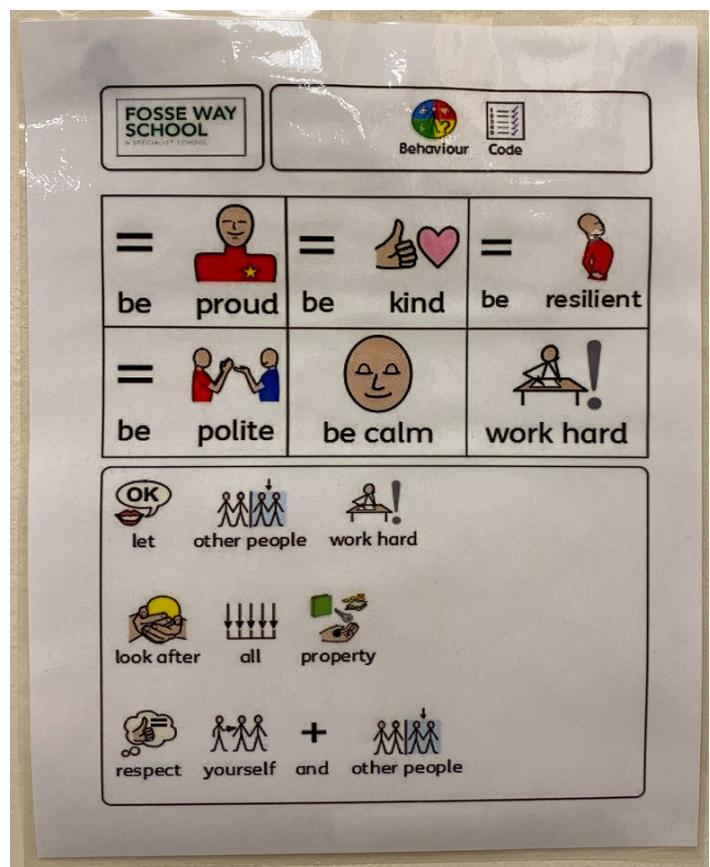


Examples of Implementation...

Visual Representation of School Behaviour Code

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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'Our School Values' Display to be developed with pupils

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Examples of Implementation...

Personalised Token Boards based on learners' special interests
Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

Widgit Symbols © Widgit Software 2002-2020 www.widgit.com





-
- Recognise that developing self-care skills such as identifying own health needs, making healthy choices and understanding health risks can be challenging for learners. Provide support with healthy eating and accept that eating problems are common for autistic people including having restricted diets, feeling unable to eat at school and pica.
 - Provide visual tools to help learners to express their needs and explore the use of food group charts. Present information visually and produce daily or weekly food menus, taking into consideration the eating environment and whether access to an alternative eating space would be beneficial.

Further information can be found on the National Autistic Society (NAS) website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/behaviour/eating/all-audiences>

- Support learners with personal care and understanding how to maintain good bodily hygiene such as washing their hands and managing their sensory needs in relation to hygiene and clothing. Consider sensory differences such as heightened sense of smell or touch and develop strategies to overcome these barriers such as using particular soaps, sponges, towels and other resources. Provide visual schedules to support understanding of hygiene routines and support with social scripts and praise/reward.



-
- Provide support with accessing shared facilities such as toilets and recognise the challenges that may accompany this. Learners may require access to shared spaces during quieter times and may require adaptations such as placing a mat on the floor where they stand, using soft lighting to make the space less overwhelming and support with loud noises such as flushing the toilet and using the hand dryer.
 - Provide learners with opportunities to access physical development and sport activities and ensure school clubs are accessible for learners with sensory differences. Support learners to develop social skills needed to join specific clubs alongside making considerations for sportswear or participation requirements. Signpost learners to physical activities outside of school where possible and support their family with enabling access.
 - Monitor learners' mental health and wellbeing using resources such as 'The Zones of Regulation' and address anxiety, which can lead to meltdowns, self-harm, depression and eating disorders. Arrange for learners to access counselling and therapy where needed and advise learners to keep a diary, try relaxation techniques and practice mindfulness. The following two apps have been developed to support autistic young people and adults experiencing anxiety:

Brain in Hand – Includes a diary, notes and reminders of daily tasks, individual coping strategies, system to monitor anxiety levels and access to support from the National Autistic Society.

Molehill Mountain – Includes mood tracking, identifies triggers and gives evidence-based tips on how to self-manage anxiety levels.



- Link with health professionals and work collaboratively to support learners by making referrals where needed. Ensure a multi-agency approach is implemented and the contributions of parents/carers are listened to and valued.
- Teach learners where to seek advice or help when needed including relationships and sex education, including how to keep safe within relationships. Consider using a framework such as SoSafe! which incorporates visual teaching tools and concepts to explore relationships, alongside providing visual communication tools for reporting physical or sexual abuse: <https://sosafeprogram.com>

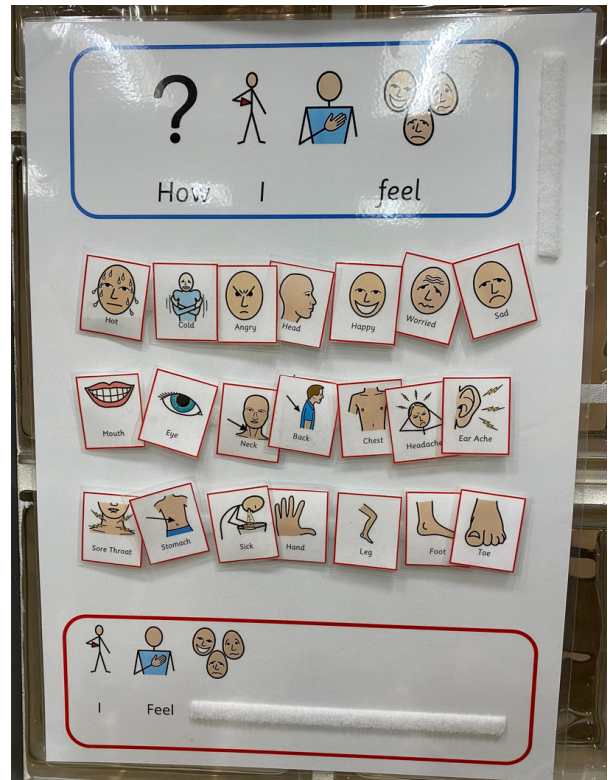


Examples of Implementation...

'How I feel' Choosing Board

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

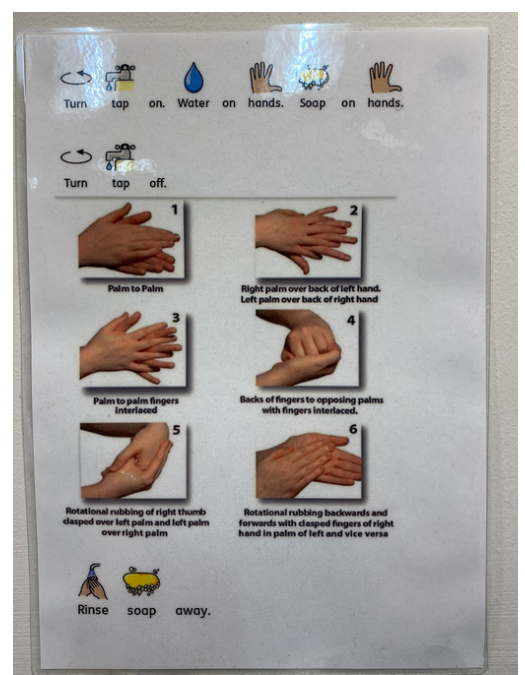
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Hand Washing Visual Supports

Example from classroom at Fosse Way School

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Examples of Implementation...

Visual Support for Personal Care

Example from Fosse Way House - Residential Provision at Fosse Way School

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'Meal Choices' board

Example from Fosse Way House - Residential Provision at Fosse Way School

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- Provide support with independent living skills and involve learners in activities such as food preparation and links to household tasks. Role play ‘real world’ experiences such as making and using lists, visiting shops, using and managing money and accessing the local community.
- Provide opportunities to access community provision where appropriate such as walking in the local area, using transport, visiting local shops and supermarkets and accessing local gyms and leisure facilities.
- Encourage learners to access social groups outside of school including autism-friendly clubs or events and groups linked to learners’ special interests. The Live Well Bathnes website provides information on events for children and young people, so explore this resource to find groups that may provide additional social interaction for your learner: <https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/special-educational-need-or-disability-send>
- Explicitly teach independent skills including self-care, travel and work skills and engage in independent travel training with B&NES Travel Support to ensure learners have the confidence to travel independently and develop transferable skills.
- Practice personal safety including how to keep safe at school, in the home and in the community, including how to keep safe online. Facilitate visits from the emergency services to teach learners to understand what help is available and how they can get help in the community.



Independence and community participation

Continued...

- Practice road safety and travel and involve learners in preparing for school visits out. Ensure advance preparation is shared with learners, which may be in the form of a visual schedule and social script, alongside opportunities to ask questions. This should be shared with families to help their young person prepare for a trip out and answer any questions which arise at home.
- Develop learners' understanding of how to use technology appropriately and provide opportunities to increase their independence when managing their own schedules using electronic diaries, reminders and calendars.



Independence and community participation

Continued...



Examples of Implementation...

After School Visual Support

Example from Fosse Way House - Residential Provision at Fosse Way School

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After school support with

 Monday	 I am very good at unpacking my case and putting clothes away. Sometimes I like to ask for help.
 Tuesday	 Changing bedding, I can take of my bedding but need a little support to put clean covers on, I need encouraging to help with the bedding task. I like to have someone to support me a little to keep me on task.
 Wednesday	 Support me to check that I have enough clothes left for the rest of the week and help me to put them in the washing machine and dryer if needed.
 Thursday	 I can pack my suitcase by myself, I just need reminding to do it.

Support me to complete Zones of Regulation when I arrive from school and after activities during the evening.

Our 'Top Ten' Autism Strategies...

- ★ Use and interact with visual timetables to support learners to understand and predict what is happening throughout the day.
- ★ Use 'Now/Next', 'Now/Next/Then' and 'First/Then' to support learners in understanding what will happen next.
- ★ Use visual cues such as objects of reference, symbols, pictures and timers to develop understanding of daily routines and activities.
- ★ Provide independent workstations for learners that are clear, organised and follow the principles of TEACCH®.
- ★ Use social scripts to support learners to prepare for situations, events and activities, to help them understand what to do and why.
- ★ Use personalised reward systems to provide access to motivating items and activities consistently and regularly.
- ★ Use special interests when planning activities to acknowledge learners' strengths, reduce stress and promote engagement.
- ★ Provide learners with access to safe spaces such as a low arousal environment where they can be supported to self-regulate.
- ★ Use resources such as the 'Incredible 5-Point Scale' or similar to support learners to understand and manage their anxiety.
- ★ Ensure classrooms are autism-friendly by organising and labelling the room, reducing clutter and creating a low arousal environment.

How We Can Help...

The Specialist Autism Support Service is an all year round service and can be contacted using the details below:

Specialist Autism Support Service

Fosse Way School
Longfellow Road
Radstock
BA3 3AL

01761 412198 Ext 2
sass@fossewayschool.com

Lead for Specialist Autism Support Service

Rebecca Tranter

Other Professionals

Specialist Teachers
Specialist Curriculum Support Technicians
Service Administrator
Specialist Occupational Therapist



How We Can Help...

Continued...

The Specialist Autism Support Service operates a telephone helpline on Wednesday mornings throughout the year, where a member of the team will always be available to provide support to professionals and families.

For more information regarding any of the strategies included in this document, please contact the team using our helpline as detailed below. A team member will be able to advise on different approaches and provide support to implement the right strategies for individual learners.



**Specialist
Autism
Support
Service**

**WEDNESDAY
TELEPHONE HELPLINE
01761 412198 Extension 2
9am-12 noon throughout the year**

for more information:
www.fossewayschool.co.uk

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**
Improving People's Lives

- ✓ Member of the team always available
- ✓ Advice and Support
- ✓ for Professionals
- ✓ for Families
- ✓ Child or Young Person must be living in B&NES, with a confirmed diagnosis of Autism, between the ages of 0-18, or 0-25 for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

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Websites and Resources

Autism Education Trust (AET)

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk>

Autism Education Trust - Progression Framework Resource

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/progression-framework>

Autism Education Trust - Sensory Resources

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/sensory-resources>

Carol Gray Social Stories

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com>

Clicker

<https://www.cricksoft.com/uk/clicker>

Emotion Coaching UK

<https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com>

Fosse Way School

<http://www.fossewayschool.co.uk>

Gina Davies Autism Centre

<https://ginadavies.co.uk>

LEGO® Based Therapy – A Social Skills Programme For Children

<https://bricks-for-autism.co.uk>

Websites and Resources

National Autistic Society (NAS)

<https://www.autism.org.uk>

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

<https://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/pecs/>

Live Well Bathnes: Bath and North East Somerset's Local Offer

<https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/special-educational-need-or-disability-send>

Show Progress: Online Progress Tracking for the AET Progression Framework 2.0

<https://www.showprogress.co.uk/aet-progression-framework.html>

SoSafe!

<https://sosafeprogram.com>

TEACCH® Autism Program

<https://teacch.com>

The Makaton Charity

<https://www.makaton.org>

The Zones of Regulation

<https://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html>

Widgit

<https://www.widgit.com>