

Practical Strategies for Autistic Pupils Returning to Education Settings



Department
for Education



Learning Aims

- Practical strategies for supporting autistic pupils to cope with changes to the education environment and their daily routines.



Supported by:



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Considerations due to Covid-19 and Strategies to Support these...

- Social Distancing
- Handwashing and Hygiene
- Managing Rising Anxiety
- Developing resilience



Social Distancing

- Explain the rules of social distancing using a personalised social story.
- Teach personal space through modelling and explicit instruction.
- Explain the structure and expectations of breaks/lunchtime.
- Use predictable and named seating arrangements.
- Give clear markers and visual reminders.

Handwashing and Hygiene

- Can hand washing be included on a pupil's timetable?
- Use a social story to encourage and explain the importance of hand washing.
- Use visual prompts in handwashing areas.
- Use special interests as a motivator e.g a song/dance.
- Some autistic pupils may present with sensory seeking behaviour.
- Can hand sanitizer be used instead?
- Be mindful of obsessional hand washing behaviour.

Managing Rising Anxiety

- Talk openly about different experiences of lockdown.
- Introduce a worry box.
- Weekly emotional wellbeing lessons.
- Provide de-briefings/check-ins for emotionally vulnerable CYP.
- Provide increased access to sensory equipment (such as fiddle toys) and activities.

Tool 18: How do I feel?



Developing resilience

- Keep a positives wall.
- Plan plenty of fun games and activities into the day.
- Keep everyone busy.
- End everyday on a positive activity.
- Raise the focus on Art and creative subjects.
- Share strengths and talents.
- What can the class /group do for the community to feel they are helping and to feel good about themselves.

Further AET Resources...

- Covid-19 Information Centre:

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/covid-19-information-centre/>

Where you will find our latest Tools for Teachers Covid-19 edition booklet and a wealth of support materials from our partners across England.

- All of our Covid-19 content is free to access and download. The full Tools for Teachers, consisting of 44 tools, is available to purchase for £35.99 here:

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

Links to AET Schools Autism Standards...

The Individual Pupil – Standard 4

- Your setting safeguards the well-being of pupils with autism by recognising that they are vulnerable to high levels of stress, anxiety and depression and that these can be prevented or reduced if needs are recognised early and met.

Enabling environments – Standard 8

- Your setting effectively communicates key transitional information on pupils with autism to all relevant adults, including parents and/or carers, and ensures that this information is given to the pupils in the most appropriate way and at the right time.

Building Relationships – Standard 2

- Your setting understands that in order to build effective relationships it needs to actively listen to pupils, parents and carers and promote opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas. This will enable families to feel that staff are open and approachable to discussions.

Curriculum and Learning – Standard 3

- Your setting has activities that are well organised, structured and planned for and ensures that, where possible, advance warning is given (to both pupil and parent/carer)of any changes to familiar routines in a way that is meaningful and helpful to the pupils with autism and their families.

You can download the standards for free here:
<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/shop/>

Links to AET Schools Autism Competency Framework...

Enabling environments – Competency 8

- You understand that enabling environments through making reasonable adjustments is a statutory obligation in disability law (see Equality Act 2010), and that in terms of 'good autism practice' this is a minimum requirement.

Curriculum and Learning – Competency 5

- At times of transition you co-ordinate and disseminate important information from all key stakeholders (including parents/carers and other family members) and ensure this information is shared with all, including the pupil on the autism spectrum.

The Individual Pupil – Competency 2

- You use a range of strategies to get to know the individual pupil on the autism spectrum and find out about their particular profile of strengths, challenges, interests and aspirations.

Building Relationships – Competency 1

- You understand the importance of listening to the voice of the pupil on the autism spectrum and identify strategies to ensure that communication systems are not just used to inform and instruct pupils, but also offer the opportunity for pupils to express their views.

You can download the competency framework for free here:

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