



## Children's Therapy Team

### Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

## Supporting young people with social communication and interaction differences/autism in primary school

Every person is different. The following strategies are things to consider in consultation with the child, the parent/carer and any relevant agencies involved.

**Create a predictable routine:** Support the child to have a routine and aids to support the daily routines. This can be a visual timetable with symbols and /or writing with opportunities to add any changes or offer choice.

**Allocate time for emotional regulation:** Timetable opportunities during the day with reduced demands when the child can have time to do what calms and relaxes them e.g. access a quiet room or use energy by walking or running. This supports them to be ready for learning.

**Differentiate the lesson to fit the person's needs:** Get to know the child's needs and strengths. Identify what support they need to access the lessons. This can be done in many ways in class e.g. by using objects, pictures, modelling or using videos to support what you are talking about. At a more individual level it could involve using structured worksheets to work towards carrying out homework independently. The child may need extra support outside the class for a specific subject. Considerations may need to be made for busy times. E.g. the child may benefit from working in a quiet area.

**Get the child's attention** before you make a request by calling their name and use literal language when you explain something to them.

**Break down instructions in small steps** and give them to the child a step at a time. Keep your language simple and your sentences short.

**Avoid non literal language or explain what it means:** *Say what you mean.* If you are using metaphors, idioms, irony or sarcasm it will lead to confusion and misunderstandings e.g. 'What time do you call this?'

**Allow time to process what has been said,** especially when asking questions.

**Check that the child has understood:** ask the child if they have understood. Maybe ask them to use their own words to repeat/rephrase what was said.

**Encourage the child to ask when they are unsure:** It is helpful for the child to know if they have not understood something is not their fault. Teach the child to be aware of what was difficult or unclear and how to ask for repetition, clarification or help.

**Focus on new vocabulary:** Support new vocabulary by linking it with their existing knowledge. Explore what the word means by asking the child what they know, and fill in gaps. Talk about how the word looks and sounds. Create a definition for the word and link key vocabulary that relates to the word. Support with pictures.

**Talk about the child's emotions** and how they express them. Name emotions as the child experiences them in daily life. Talk about the physical sensations in their body e.g. a fluttering in the belly when excited. Model how to share the emotion if appropriate. Highlight emotions in other people and explain why they may be feeling like that.

**Set up access to a social skills group:** This needs to be available on an ongoing basis throughout their time in primary school. It should be a safe place for the child to discuss and understand how they interact with others and why. There are published materials and they can be personalised to fit the child's needs and experiences.

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about the impact of your child's communication differences, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice:

<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/speech-and-language-therapy/>

- Contact your Specialist Advisory Teacher if the child has a diagnosis of autism
- Contact the Parent Educational Psychologist telephone line <https://www.york.org.uk/families/Local%20Offer/Education/Specialist%20Teaching%20Team/Universal%20Offer%20Autumn%202023%20v1.pdf>
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details

You can access further information from the following websites:

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