AUTISM TOOLKIT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This Autism Toolkit has been produced to support Primary schools to further develop their understanding of strategies for children on the autism spectrum.

These strategies are offered as a starting point. There are numerous further strategies that schools can use.

The strategies in this toolkit can be used to support pupils on the autism spectrum. However, they are equally applicable for pupils with social communication & interaction needs.

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Permission has kindly been given for editing for South Gloucestershire Council

For further information regarding local organisations, groups and advice, please see South Gloucestershire "Local Offer"

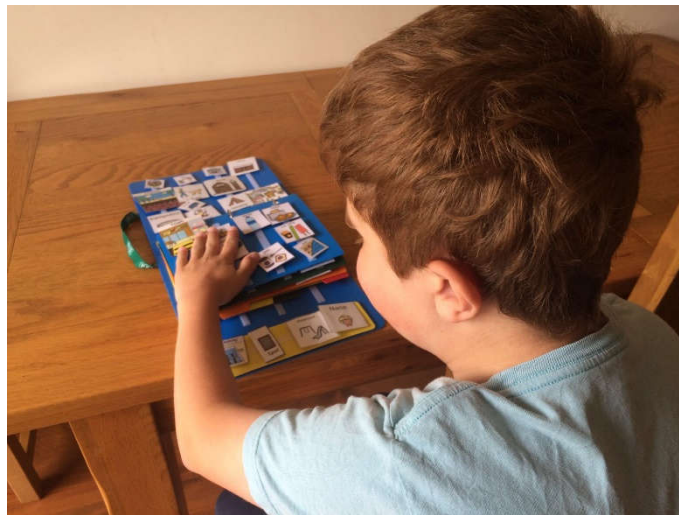<div style="text-align:center">

AUTISM TOOLKIT (PRIMARY)

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Photo with permission from member of Bristol Autism Team

Contents

| Page reference	Strategy
4 - 6	• Creating an Autism friendly classroom
8 - 10	• One page pupil profiles
12 - 14	• Your language
16 - 18	• Visuals
20 - 22	• "First" … "Then"
24 - 26	• Visual timetables
28 - 30	• Mini schedules
32 - 34	• Social Stories
36 - 38	• Rewards
40 - 42	• Emotional understanding
44 - 46	• "Meltdowns"
48	• Further reading and useful websites

Creating an Autism friendly classroom

- Children on the autism spectrum may find open, unstructured spaces disorienting or confusing.
- This may make it difficult for them to sit and concentrate or move between activities without distractions.
- Schools can make their environments autism friendly by introducing visual signposting, structure and considering a child's needs on autism spectrum.
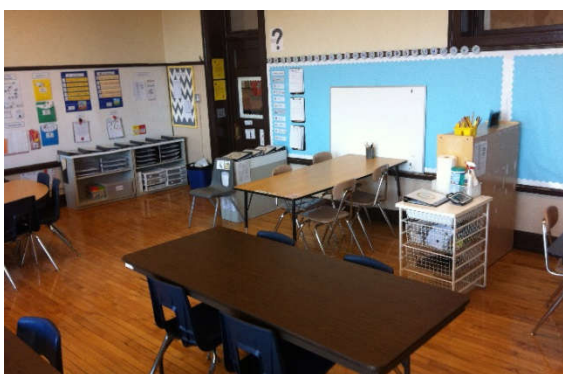

Making your classroom structured

- Give your classroom structure by organising the furniture to mark out designated work areas.
- You can use bookshelves or desks as room dividers to create separate zones.
- Make sure it is clear where each space begins and ends.
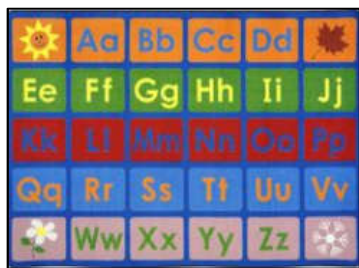
Seating positions
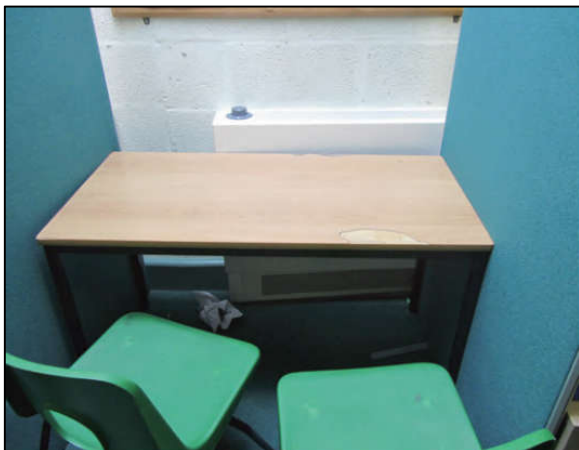
- Children on the autism spectrum can be easily distracted by obvious distractors (colourful displays, the computer etc.) but also by less obvious distractors (humming of projector, a 3D display hanging from ceiling etc.).
- Consider the child's seating position and ensure their place is visually identified (i.e. on a specific letter on an alphabet carpet or specific chair at table).
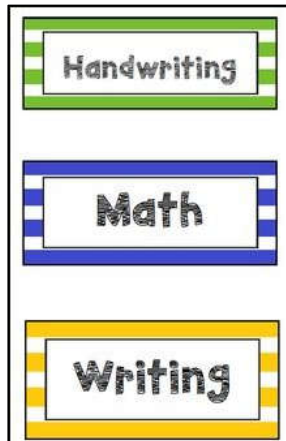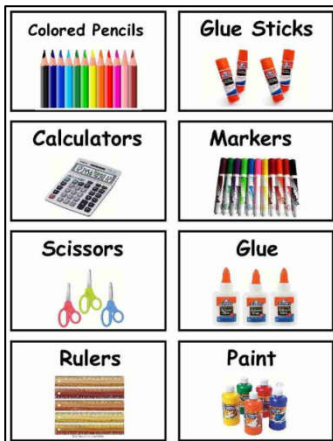
Labels

- Label your areas/equipment so that it is clear what each area is for/contains.
- If you have a set number of children who can work in one area, a visual to remind children of this may help.
- Colour coding labels i.e. green labels for all handwriting areas/equipment can also be helpful.

Low arousal work space

- Children on the autism spectrum may need a specific work space (in addition to opportunities for working with peers).
- For some children, a low arousal space with no distractions can support concentration and focus and lessen anxiety.
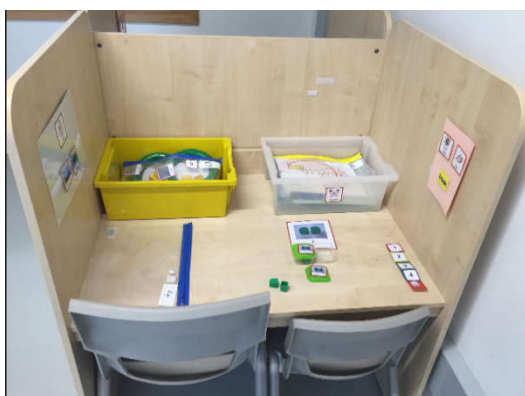
Structured work space

- Children on the autism spectrum may also respond to a structured work space.
- A workstation needs to be set up with the individual child's needs in mind.
- A workstation will enable the child to know: -

    o What am I expected to do?
    o How much work I have to do?
    o How I know I've finished?
    o What I will do next?

- A good workstation will: -

    o Use activities the child can do independently and has a high chance of succeeding without support.
    o Use activities that are naturally interesting to the child, building on their strengths and interests.
    o Have limited distractions.
    o Help a child to generalise skills.
    o Develop the concept of working in a standard organised fashion e.g. top to bottom, left to right.

Other comments

- Children on the autism spectrum can experience heightened anxiety at school, especially if they do not know what to expect from a situation.
- A well-structured, visual classroom may lessen anxiety, as the child will develop a better understanding of what is required in the classroom.
- A structured classroom represents a meaningful place where the child on the autism spectrum can feel safe, learn and achieve.

**One page
pupil profiles**

- A one page profile is a summary of what matters to a child and how best to support them in different contexts such as at home, at school and in the community.
- One page profiles capture important information about a child's strengths, challenges, interests and specific support needed to enable staff to personalise learning.
- They are used to inform action planning and outcome setting in order to make learning and development opportunities more meaningful and relevant to an individual child.
- One page profiles are a way for the child to have a voice in their support at school, and to have their strengths and what is important to them as an individual acknowledged.
- They are a highly effective way to share information between staff. For example, when supply staff need to cover a class or a pupil is transitioning from one class to another, a one page profile gives staff strategies to get the best out of each and every child.

- A one page profile is developed by bringing together contributions from the child, parents/carers, teachers, teaching assistants and any external agency staff involved. This creates a rounded picture of the child that reflects their views and everyone's knowledge and expertise.
- Once the one page profile is developed, it needs to be updated and shared between all staff, professionals and key people at different points in the school year.
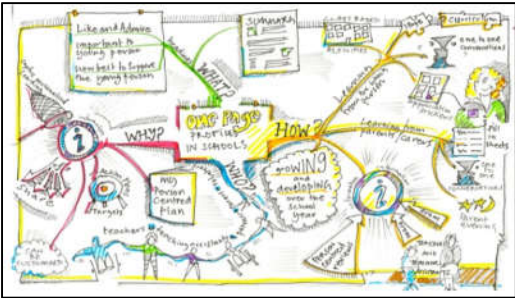
- It is essential that the class teacher fully understands the reasoning behind the one page profile and that all teachers involved with the child incorporate aspects of information gathered into planning and support for the child.
- The child plays an important part in the development and review of their profile with their contribution of key information (in written form, photographic evidence or pictorial representation of thoughts, ideas and needs).

My One Page Profile

Child Name:
Matilda Smith

Class:
3

Age:
8 years old

Things I like
- Swimming
- Riding the bikes with my friends
- Mashed potato
- Playdough
- Funky Fingers Box
- Reading
- Ipad Time
- Golden Time
- Horse Riding

Things I don't like
- Loud noises
- Sand
- Washing my hands
- Numeracy
- Tidying up
- Sausages

How you can support me
- Talk clearly and quietly to me, saying my name first
- Give me short activities to do
- Give my activities I can complete on the Ipad
- Reward me with stickers and praise.
- Encourage me to try new things, especially foods.

I am good at
- Playing with my friends
- Swimming with school
- Reading 3 letter words
- Working independently using my Funky Fingers box
- Painting

People who work with me say
- I am friendly and play well with others
- I work hard in class
- I have good manners
- I am getting better at reading

Details to include

- A good one page profile is designed with children so that the sections reflect what is important to them. Sections might include:-

  o What really matters to the child from their perspective (even if others do not agree).
  o What the child likes/does not like.
  o Who the important people are in the child's life, and when and how they spend time together.
  o Important/ favourite activities and hobbies, and when, where and how often these take place.
  o Any different routines that are individual/ important to the child.
  o Important/ favourite lessons and school activities.
  o Things to be avoided that can create anxiety for the child.

How best to support me at school

- This is a list of support needed for the individual child at school.
- It might list what support is helpful and what is not. It can include any specific 'triggers' and how to avoid or handle them.

Pupil Support Plan		Name:		D.O.B:	Class	Date
Pupil's Behaviours	Anxieties/ Triggers/ Early signs	Becoming defensive/ Escalation of behaviour	Types of Behaviour	Recovery/ Calming down	Depression and regret	Best way to debrief pupil

Other comments

- Schools might have a "Profile Wall" in the classroom so that all children are included.
- Schools can use one page profiles to create a whole class 'What is important to us' and 'How we can help each other in class' posters and/or displays.
- A class assembly can be a forum where children can share and discuss elements of their profiles.
- A one page profile file on the teacher's desk is particularly useful for supply cover.
- Having summary information from the 'How best to support me in school' section on cards on a ring that can be easily flicked through can be useful for quick reference.
- A child might like to have a copy of their one page profile on their desk/ work space.
- Schools can use parents' evening, annual reviews, transition meetings etc. as opportunities in which children, parents/ carers and professionals can add to or review the one page profile.

Your language

- Children on the autism spectrum may have a wide range of communicative ability. It is very important not to make assumptions about an individual child's skills solely on the basis of their diagnosis. Children on the autism spectrum:-

  o may not understand the need for communication
  o may not initiate communication
  o may fail to communicate clearly what they want or need
  o may have difficulty with attention and listening skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication
  o may have difficulty understanding language
  o may have difficulties processing language, especially when combined with maintaining eye contact and non- verbal communication (gestures, body language)

Use positive, directive language

- Always say exactly what you want to happen. For example: "James, feet on floor" rather than "James, stop kicking". The child may only process 'kicking' and continue with the behaviour.
- Another helpful strategy is to model the behaviour so that the child sees exactly what 'feet on floor' looks like. The desired behaviour can be shown by the adult or a suitable peer and be supported with a visual prompt of the expected behaviour.
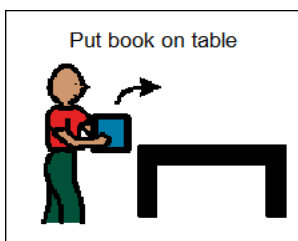
Use clear, non-ambiguous language

- Language should be as concrete as possible, i.e. relate to the 'here and now', particularly with younger children.
- Be aware that the child may not be able to understand personal pronouns such as 'he', she',' they' or what words such as 'it' or 'there' refer to. Rather than saying "Put it over there" an adult needs to be specific, for example, "Put the reading book on my desk."

Reduced language

- Present verbal instructions in small, manageable 'chunks' and if necessary, back up with written or visual prompts. This helps children to remember key information and the order in which they have to be completed.
- Speak clearly and precisely using short sentences. A child on the autism spectrum can find it difficult to filter out the less important information. If there is too much information, it can lead to 'overload', where no further information can be processed.
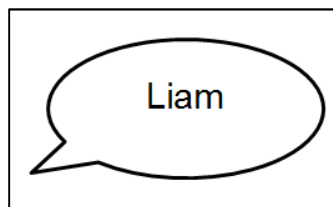
Attention and Processing

- Use the child's name first and wait until they are giving you their attention before speaking. This 'tunes in' the child to the fact that you are talking to them.
- The child may not recognise themselves as part of 'Puffin Class' or 'the red group' or 'everyone' so may not respond to group instructions. Try saying "Liam, and everyone else, please put your book away in your tray." "Liam, you and the people sitting at your table, can line up at the door."
- Wait for the child to respond or complete the task before repeating yourself or giving further instruction. It can take up to 30 seconds for a child on the autism spectrum to process information.

Use appropriate questions

- Don't use too many questions. A child on the autism spectrum may find 'where', 'when', 'who' and 'why' questions difficult.
- Some children have extensive factual knowledge about particular subjects, and are most comfortable with specific questions of a factual nature.
- Open questions (e.g. "Tell me about your house") are generally much more difficult than closed questions (e.g. "Who won the football match?") for children on the autism spectrum.

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Facial expressions

- Remember that a child on the autism spectrum may not notice or understand the meaning of non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions or tone of voice.
- You will need to back up these "implied meanings" with a verbal instruction or commentary.

Be aware of using sarcasm, humour and expressions of speech

- Idioms and metaphors such as "Did you get out of the wrong side of bed?" and "You need to pull your weight" and "It's raining cats and dogs" are commonly used in everyday speech. A child on the autism spectrum may take these literally.
- Similarly, sarcasm may be very confusing for a child on the autism spectrum. For example, if a child chews with their mouth open and you say, "Oh, lovely!" the child may think you genuinely mean 'lovely' and do it again.

Other comments

- It is generally better to avoid the use of sarcasm for younger children. For older/more able children if sarcasm is used, the meaning of this needs to be explained.
- With younger children on the autism spectrum, some language may need to be supported with visual prompts showing the desired behaviour/actions.

Visuals

- Visual prompts can be used to help children on the autism spectrum. They are adaptable, portable and can be used in most situations.
- We see and use visual prompts every day, for example road signs, maps and shopping lists.
- Visuals help us understand the world around us, and provide us with valuable information.
- Many children on the autism spectrum are thought to be visual learners, so presenting information in a visual way can help to encourage and support communication, language development and ability to process information. Visuals can also promote independence, build confidence and raise self-esteem.

How I Feel

happy	sad	mad	sick
sleepy	hungry	worried	frustrated
silly	okay	surprised	afraid

"How are you feeling" prompt cards

- A child on the autism spectrum does not always understand the hidden meaning to facial expressions used by others.
- Prompt cards can help to support understanding their own and others emotions.
- Some children can manage to identify a range of emotions, whereas some may be ready to identify just a few emotions.

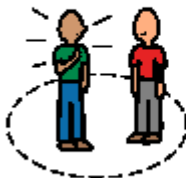| happy | sad | upset | frustrated |
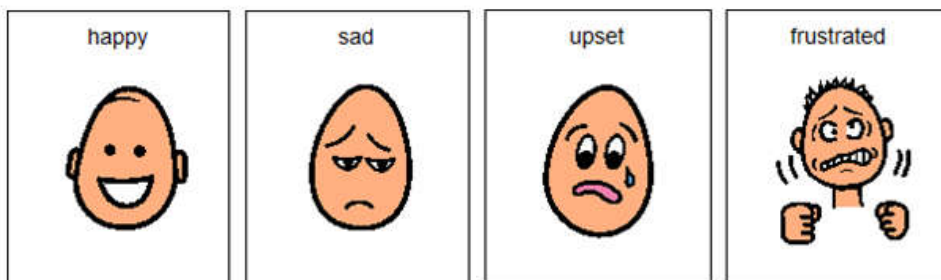
sit on floor

look

listen

quiet

Expected behaviour prompt cards

- Prompt cards can be used in the class to support the understanding of instructions and what is expected behaviour.
- All staff working within the class need to use these and should also know about a child's reward scheme for responding to the prompt cards.
- The prompt card can be shown without the need for verbal language or it can be supported with a simple phrase.

my turn

wait

line up

choose

How these prompt cards support a child on the autism spectrum

- Visuals can be used to support a child to make choices.
- They help to encourage making the right choice.
- Visuals can help a child to understand what to expect, what will happen next and also reduce anxiety.
- Visuals can help children on the autism spectrum to focus on important details and instructions and can help them cope with change.
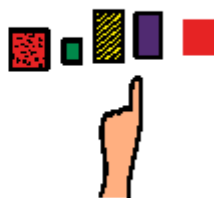
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NO HITTING

Unexpected behaviour prompt cards

- Prompt cards can be used in the class to support the understanding of what is unexpected behaviour.
- All staff working within the class need to use these and should also know about a child's reward scheme for responding to the prompt cards.

Sand Timers

Tablet

Range of visuals

- Visuals are not limited to pictures on a card.
- A visual prompt to convey an instruction/expected behaviour/activity etc. can be through a range of means, for example:
  o Sand timers can be used to indicate how long a task will last. They can also be used to give a warning that an activity is coming to an end
  o iPad apps can provide visuals to show instructions/expected behaviour/activity
  o Objects of reference can be used instead of/alongside an image on a card
 o Black & white or coloured images can used

Other comments

- We all use visuals every day and children on the autism spectrum respond to them in school and at home.
- It is important that school matches the level of visual to the child's age and understanding (for example if a child is not a reader, then a picture accompanying the written word will be needed).
- Schools can be creative in their range of visuals by adapting a visual to a child's interest which may be more motivating than an adult's chosen image.

First … Then

- Children on the autism spectrum respond to predictable routines.
- First - Then boards provide support in the following areas:

  o Addressing difficulties with sequential memory and organisation of time
  o Assisting with language comprehension so the child understands what is expected of them
  o Reducing anxiety by making school life predictable
  o Providing opportunities to introduce new vocabulary or phrases
  o Clarifying what is going to happen within a specific time period
  o Assisting children in transitioning independently between tasks
  o Motivating a child to engage with less favoured tasks. E.g. **First** worksheet, **then** time on the computer
  o Identifying expectations. E.g. **First** 3 Maths questions, **then** 5 minutes sensory break

- Collect a selection of visual resources (real objects, photographs or pictures) that represent the different activities the child encounters throughout each day.
- Ensure visuals for using the bathroom, sensory breaks and health/ hygiene practices are included.
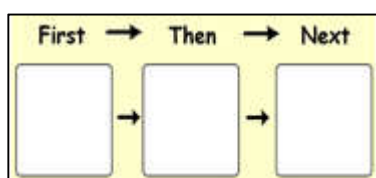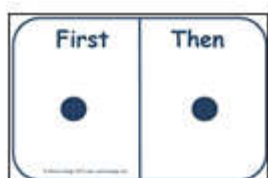
- First-Then boards are arranged in a left-to-right format with 2 - 3 scheduled tasks/ activities presented at a time.
- This helps the child to understand that events and activities happen in a sequential manner, not in isolation.
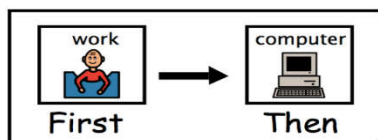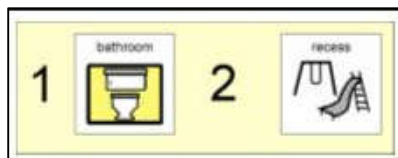
- Laminate a board or piece of card and use either Velcro or blue-tac to attach the visual images.
- Pre-readers can be introduced to the concept through using the numbers 1, 2 & 3 to indicate the sequence of a task/ routine.
- The child can then progress to having the words "first" and "then" and "next" on their schedule, used in conjunction with pictures.
- Older/ more able children who can read are able to access the same strategy in written form.
- Use the board as visual support. E.g. *'Harry, look. First toilet/ loo, then outside play'.*

- First-Then schedules must include a method for the child to manipulate the board in order to indicate that an activity is finished. For example:
  - Removing the picture card and putting it in an box/ envelope marked 'finished' or 'all done'.
  - Rubbing off an item off a list with a dry marker eraser
  - Drawing a line through a written scheduled activity
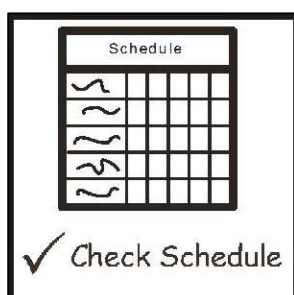
- The child will need to be introduced to a 'check schedule' visual prompt to teach them to independently check what is happening next, rather than remaining reliant on an adult/ peer prompts.
- This 'check schedule' visual prompt can also be used to alert the child to changes in usual day-to-day routines.

- First –Then boards can also be used to encourage social interaction with peers and adults in the classroom.
- For example:
  - **First** work, **Then** show the teacher,
  - **First** playtime, **Then** read to Miss Brown

VISUAL DIRECTION CARDS

line up

By Mary Ann Reeve

- Some children may need to transition to their next activity or task by taking their scheduled item, photograph or picture card with them in order to sustain attention throughout the transition.

Other comments

- Ensure the design use of visual resources meet the academic, as well as interest needs of the individual child.
- Increasing the number of tasks develops progression and independence. First – Next –Then for 1 session, then for the morning and/or tasks, then for the whole day task etc.
- They can be used in conjunction with a Visual timetable. A Visual timetable gives a broad overview of day, a First – Then board breaks down each area in more detail.
- First – Then boards can be used in lots of different contexts to break down activities into manageable bite-sized chunks.

Visual timetables

- Visual timetables are a means to prepare a child for the times, places and activities that they will be involved in during their day, giving them a clear structure and routine.
- Visual timetables answer the questions:

What the child needs to do?   Where they will do it?   What will happen next?

- Children who have difficulty with understanding spoken language are able to see and recognise visual representations more easily. This helps them to feel more secure about what is going to happen.
- Visual timetables can be a useful resource for the whole class, as well as individual children.

What you need to get started

- Make a bank of symbol cards, photos or words.
- Laminate them so that they can be re-used.
- A board/piece of card for the background of the visual timetable is needed. This should be laminated so that the Velcro can be stuck to it.
- Velcro or blue tac can be used to stick the visuals to the timetable (although Velcro would be a preferred option).
- You will need a 'finished' box/envelope for removed symbols.
- The child needs to remove each card as the task is completed and put it in a 'finished' box/envelope.

What you need to know

- Visual timetables can run "top to bottom" or "left to right" depending on the most suitable space.
- They can be made using pictures, symbols or words, depending on the child's level of understanding.
- The child needs to be cued to refer back to the timetable throughout the day.
- Visual cards should be removed and placed in the finished box/envelope at the end each activity.
- Involving the child in setting up the timetable in the morning/afternoon or making alterations such as a change of teacher can help avoid unexpected behaviour.
- Saying "Let's check the timetable" or 'Let's see what is happening next" may reduce anxiety.

Aimee's Timetable

register

literacy
Aa Bb Ff
Dd Ee Ff

toilet

playtime

finished

How to implement a visual timetable

- Introduce the visual timetable using only three or four visuals.
- Gradually increase the amount of visuals over time, building up to morning or afternoon activities.
- Older children may be able to manage a whole day once the timetable is an established part of their routine.
- Timetables should include all subject lessons or activities, including breaks and lunchtimes and be amended on a daily basis to include specific events, for example, visitors, classroom changes or school trips.

Timetable

Register

Aa Bb Cc
Dd Ee Ff   Literacy

Science
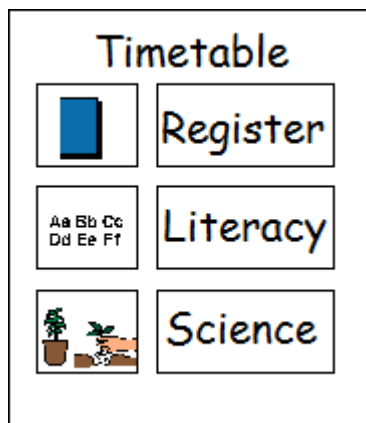
All staff should know

- How to use the timetable i.e. that visual cards should be removed and placed in the finished box/envelope at the end each activity.
- Some children do not appear to engage with the visual timetable. However, having it in the class gives them the predictability and stability they need. These children may only need to briefly glance at the timetable for it to be effective.
- Visual timetables are very effective during times of change. This might be a change of adult within the class or when transitioning to a new room/area of school building.
- If a child is used to having a visual timetable, make sure it (along with all the other visual resources) transitions with them at the start of a new academic year.

Timetable

Register

Literacy

Science

Break

Maths

Silent reading
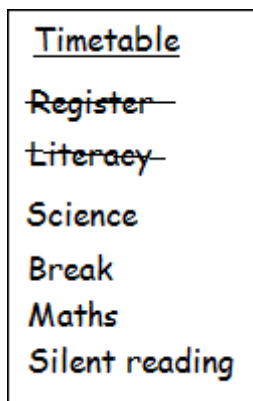
Using technology

- You can create visual timetables using apps on an iPad, tablet or interactive whiteboard.
- "Call Scotland" have a good visual list of apps (see www.callscotland.org.uk)
- Examples of apps include:-
  - Visual Schedule Planner
  - Popplet
  - Grafio
  - Pages or Keynote
- If you would like to develop a visual timetable using your interactive whiteboard, there are numerous programmes including "Communication 4 All".

Other comments

- Children on the autism spectrum can experience heightened anxiety at school, especially if they do not know the daily routine of the day.
- A visual timetable may lessen this anxiety, as the child will develop a better understanding of what is happening during the morning, afternoon or whole day.

Mini schedules

- Mini schedules are also called "Task checklists" or "Visual schedules".
- Children on the autism spectrum may find following verbal instructions difficult. Short written instructions outlining the key activities, in the right order, provide a visual list of steps to achieve a task.
- Mini schedules can promote independent working, rather than a child relying on adults to 'break down' instructions.
- A child will need to understand the concept of sequencing (i.e First, Next, Then) to understand sequences in a mini schedule.
- Mini schedules need to be visual to help the child to know what steps are needed to achieve a task
- Don't forget to make the mini schedule interactive – i.e ensure the child ticks off/crosses off each step as it has been completed.
- Mini schedules can be used for in class and out of class tasks.
- The key to success is SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic target.
- When a mini schedule is completed, the child will need to know what is "next" or what they can do when they have "finished" the mini schedule.

	Hang my coat on my peg.	✔
	Put my lunchbox on the green shelf in the classroom.	
	Put my drink in the blue box on the green shelf in the classroom.	
	Put my chair in my place.	
	Put my reading folder on my chair.	
	Go out to the playground until the whistle blows.	
	Look at the board to see what I should do next.	

A morning schedule

- A mini schedule for coming into class may help a child with self-organisation and may lessen anxiety, as it provides structure in the transition time from home to school.
- Each child will manage a different number of steps – you can always add more steps.
- For a non-reader, a visual image representing each step will be needed.
- For a reader, the written word alone may be sufficient.
- When the morning schedule has been completed, the child will need to know what is "next". This may be another mini schedule or a visual for carpet time etc.

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What do I need for this task?	I have got this
Pencil	
Ruler	
Maths book	

An equipment schedule

- This may help a child with self-organisation by providing a list of equipment needed for a task.
- For a non-reader, a visual representing each step will be needed.
- For a reader, the written word may be sufficient.
- When this mini schedule is completed, the child will need to know what is "next". This may be a task mini checklist or a visual for carpet time etc.

What do I need to do?	I have done this
Write LO	
Write 2 sentences about my weekend	
Draw a picture about my sentences	
Colour in the picture	

What do I need to do?	How long have I got to do this?	I have done this
Write LO		
Write 2 sentences about my weekend		
Draw a picture about my sentences		
Colour in the picture		

A learning task schedule

- A mini checklist for steps to complete a task may help a child with self - organisation/motivation and focus.
- For a non-reader, a visual representing each step will be needed.
- For a reader, the written word alone may be sufficient.
- You can add an additional column to make each step "time bound".
- When this mini schedule is completed, the child will need to know what is "next". This may be a task mini checklist or a visual for carpet time etc.

Skills schedule

- A mini checklist may be used to help a child get dressed after PE, wash their hands after going to the toilet etc.
- For a non-reader, a visual representing each step will be needed.
- For a reader, the written word alone may be sufficient.
- When this mini schedule is completed, the child will need to know what is "next". This may be a task mini checklist or a visual for carpet time etc.

An afternoon schedule

- An afternoon schedule can be introduced.
- This may help a child with self-organisation and develops independence at the end of the school day.

Other comments

- We all use mini checklist or schedules, i.e a shopping list or "to do" list.
- Children on the autism spectrum respond to checklists or schedules because these provide visual structure to a sequence of tasks.
- As children progress through the key stages, schools can continue to use checklists or schedules but they become smaller/more discreet, so that young people can continue to discreetly remind themselves of "what to do next".

Social Stories

- Children on the autism spectrum can find many everyday social situations confusing.
- Social Stories ™ (first created by Carol Gray), are brief "stories" about a situation, event or activity.
- Social Stories contain specific information about what to expect in that situation and why, as well as guidance on expected behaviour within that situation.
- They have a huge range of applications. They can be used to learn new routines, adjust to change, modify behaviour, develop social understanding or to reduce anxiety.
- Social Stories can take many forms, depending on what works best for the individual child, and what situation/scenario is being addressed.
- Whichever form is chosen, the social story will be most effective if it is introduced during a calm time, and shared regularly with the child, so that when they find themselves in the situation described, they already have a secure frame of reference for what to expect and how to manage the situation.

Stay calm – Social Story

- Sometimes I feel worried because of something that has happened or something I don't want to do
- I can tell that I feel worried when I want to shout or cry or bite my fingers and thumb
- When I feel worried, I can try to take a slow deep breath, close my eyes and count slowly to 5.
- After I count to 5, I can tell the teacher or another grown up that I feel worried
- I can say "I feel worried"
- When I talk to my teacher or teaching assistant, I will try to use a calm voice to tell them what made me worried.
- My teacher or teaching assistant can help me to think of ways to fix the problem that made me worried
- This will help me to feel calm
- My teacher and other people will be please that I am calm

- Children on the autism spectrum often experience high levels of anxiety in social situations, without being able to articulate or manage their feelings.
- Social stories can provide reassurance, and teach strategies for regulating these feelings, as well as providing practical ways of seeking help.

Answering questions in class

Sometimes we all sit on the carpet and our teacher talks to us to help us learn.

I must listen to my teacher when she is talking because it will help me learn.

Sometimes the teacher asks the class a question. My teacher can see me and all the other children at the same time, but she can only listen to one voice. We put our hands up to show the teacher that we know the answer to her question. She can see all the children who know the answer, but she can only listen to one child saying their answer out loud.

Sometimes I know the answer to a question that my teacher has asked the class.

If I put my hand up the teacher will see that I know the answer. Sometimes the teacher will pick me to say my answer out loud. She will be pleased that I joined in.

Sometimes other children also want to answer the teacher's question, so they put their hands up as well as me.

There is not time for my teacher to pick all the children, so that means she will not always pick me to say my answer out loud. She will still be pleased that I joined in.

Putting my hand up is a signal to the teacher that I know the answer to her question. Even if she does not ask me to say my answer out loud, she has seen my signal and she is pleased that I know the answer.

- This Social Story was written for a child who became frustrated if she was not chosen when she raised her hand to answer a question.
- It described the situation to explain how others are thinking and feeling.
- Writing in the first person, helps the child to identify with the Social Story.
- The Social Story provides reassurance for the child in this situation.

I am sitting on the carpet

What are the rules?
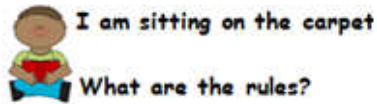
Sit still on my wedge.

Look at my teacher.

Listen to my teacher.

- A Social Story can take the form of a few simple strategies or 'rules', agreed together with the child to manage a specific issue.
- At its simplest level, the Social Story provides a social script of expected behaviour in a particular social situation.
- Visual images provide additional ways for the child to understand the message being conveyed and relate this to their real-life experience.
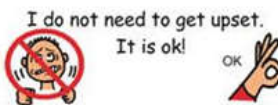
Good ways to touch other people at school

|	
	I can tap someone lightly on the shoulder to say "Excuse me".
	I can give a high 5 to say "Great!"
	I can shake hands to say "It's nice to see you".

Mistakes

When I am trying something new or when I am doing my work, it's ok to make mistakes.

When I make a mistake, I will stay calm and try again.

I do not need to get upset. It is ok! OK

If I need help with something, I will ask a friend or my teacher.

Can you help me please?
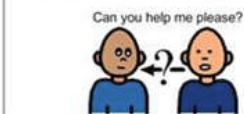
Everyone makes mistakes.
When something isn't right I can always try again.
That is how I learn.

Try it again

Other comments

- Use a format that will be accessible and appealing to the individual child.
- Use language that the child can understand.
- Use visual images for younger children and for those who are non readers.

Rewards

- Children on the autism spectrum may not respond to whole class/whole school motivators or rewards such as stickers, stamps or praise from staff.
- Linking a child's special interests to rewards can be highly motivating.
- Reward systems that are visual and structured may also be highly appealing.
- Sharing effective rewards/incentives which are used at home with school, can be beneficial for the child and may increase motivation.
- Always consider a child's special interest before making resources or adapting materials. A child may only like a particular dinosaur in a certain colour, not just any dinosaur.
- You may need to review your reward systems on a regular basis if they lose their impact/effectiveness.


Make a deal

John will ...   John's reward for doing this is:-

crossed legs

Make a deal reward chart

- This reward system is similar to "Now/Next".
- The expected behaviour or completed activity is agreed, along with the "reward" for completing this.
- Ensure the chart is interactive by encouraging the child to remove the "will" visual when completed, so that the "reward" visual is next.
- When the "reward" has been completed, the child will need to know what is "next". This may be a task mini checklist/visual for carpet time etc.


I'm working towards

Working towards reward chart

- A child may be motivated to work towards a reward.
- Tokens/stars can be earned for general behaviour or for a specific behaviour.
- If the token/stars are earned for a specific behaviour, this needs to be displayed visually with an image of, for example "sitting on carpet "etc.
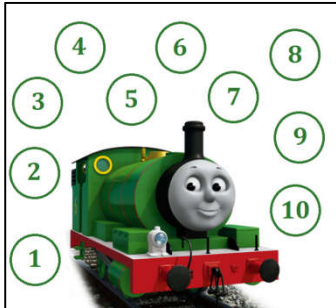
Interest reward chart

- If a child has a special interest, this may be motivating within a reward chart.
- It is important to discuss the special interest with the child as knowing a child likes "Thomas the Tank" may mean they like a specific engine in the series not just "Thomas".
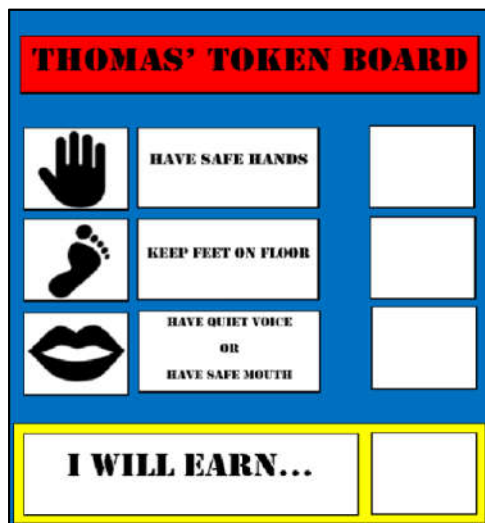
Rewarding specific expected behaviour

- If there are specific behaviours you would like to promote, a reward chart listing these behaviours can be used, with the reward clearly specified.

Earning steps towards a reward

- Some children are motivated to see a bigger picture being built up in steps.
- You might like to reward a child for a specific behaviour or completion of an activity by giving them a piece of puzzle.
- The child will need to know (either with a visual image or object) what the reward is going to be when the puzzle is completed

Number of "raffle tickets/marbles/coins" earned	To receive this reward
40	Tea and cakes with Mrs Robbins
30	An afternoon in Class 5 with Lego
20	Football for 20 minutes in pen
10	10 extra minutes on iPad

Token system rewards

- An effective motivator for some children is to be able to earn tokens and "bank" them for a larger reward.
- This process takes a while to implement with consideration of:-
  - What tokens will be used?
  - What will the child earn the tokens for?
  - What rewards can the child "save" their tokens for?
- Some children like to "spend" their tokens quickly, whereas some like to save to earn the "bigger reward"
- You will need to consider how the child will feel when they have "spent" their tokens – some may be disappointed to suddenly have no tokens. Adults will need to ensure the child is quickly re-motivated to start earning the tokens again.

Other comments

- We are all motivated by "rewards".
- A class/whole school reward system may be motivation enough for children on the autism spectrum.
- Some children on the autism spectrum may also be motivated by individual reward systems.
- Any new reward system needs to be explained to the child, with consideration of use of language and visual support to explain how the reward system will work.
- It can be very beneficial for home and school to use the same rewards to provide continuity for the child.

Emotional understanding

- Children on the autism spectrum often experience heightened stress levels in comparison to their peers. They may have reduced coping strategies and fail to recognise their anxiety before it becomes overwhelming.
- Children on the autism spectrum may need encouragement to:
  o Ask for help
  o Recognise their emotions and those of others
  o Talk about their feelings
  o Manage their emotions
  o Develop coping strategies and calming techniques

Independent working cards

- These cards allow children to communicate their understanding/confidence of a task.
- Card is double sided and placed on desk where the child is working.
- The child displays "ok" or "I need help"
- Adults can quickly check how the pupil is getting on without constant questioning.
- Make the cards so they are unobtrusive and discreet.
- The cards can also be used as a whole class resource for all pupils.

Traffic Light systems

- These work in a similar way to independent working cards offering a visual way to communicate understanding or anxiety.
- Green = OK
- Amber/Yellow = I'm Unsure or I can give it go
- Red = Help
- An arrow or object can be placed on the colour to indicate how the child is feeling.
- Coloured pencil can also be used in a similar and more discreet way, with the child drawing on a piece of paper to indicate how they are feeling.

Feelings board

- Feelings boards allows a child to communicate how they are feeling to others.
- They are particularly useful when discussing incidents that have occurred.

How to use:

- Encourage the child to point to or verbalise the emotion which is relevant to them at the time using the board as a visual support.
- Use the board in conjunction with emotions books (see below) to enable the child to increase their understanding of emotions.
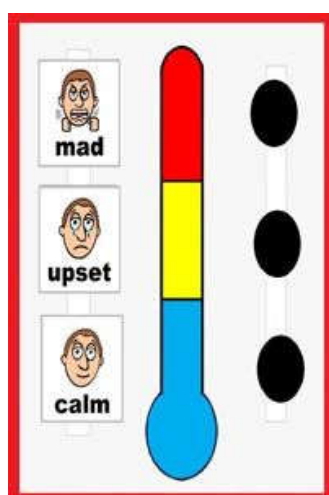

An emotions thermometer

- These encourage a child to think about changes in how they are feeling.
- The child places their name or photograph on the thermometer as a visual indicator to show their level of emotion, or indicate the emotion that they are experiencing at that particular time.
- Ensure that the thermometer is accessible to the child at all times.
- It can also be used as a whole class resource.

Feelings Book

- Create an 'emotions book'. Explore basic emotions first, such as happy, sad and angry before moving on to more complex ones.
- Focus on one emotion at a time. Take photographs of the child or other children showing a particular emotion in different situations and contexts, or cut out photographs from a magazine.
- Stick these in a book, exploring and recording how a child is feeling.
- Ensure that the child is also taught how to manage emotions, for example, ways to calm down if feeling "angry".

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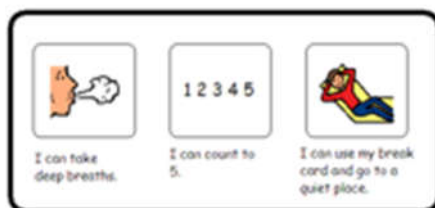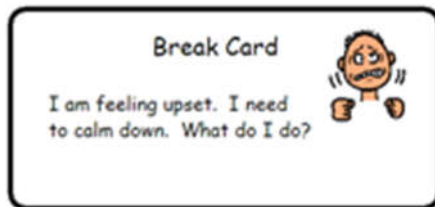
I need a break cards

- "I need a break" cards allow a child to communicate that they need downtime or access to a safe haven/safe space.
- All staff need to know that a child has a "break card" and responses by staff to these needs to be consistent.

Safe and quiet place

- It is useful for children on the autism spectrum to have an agreed safe and quiet place for them to go to when they feel anxious or are overloaded by sensory stimuli.
- A pop up tent situated in an area of the classroom or a quiet reading area can be used.
- A safe haven room situated outside the classroom might also be beneficial.

Other comments

- Visual tools help children on the autism spectrum to communicate their emotions and adults working with them to identify/recognise these emotions.
- A child's facial expressions may not reflect their true feelings and a change in behaviour may be mistakenly attributed to another cause, such as a sensory sensitivity, heightened anxiety etc.
- It does not always occur to children on the autism spectrum to talk to others about their emotional wellbeing, and therefore their responses to anxiety may be individual and unexpected.

"Meltdowns"

- It is important to understand that a meltdown is not a tantrum, so we need a different approach to managing them.
- A meltdown is triggered by an overwhelming experience from which the child cannot escape, such as a confusing social situation, a change of plans or sensory overload.
- Children on the autism spectrum have great difficulty regulating their feelings and working out solutions when things go wrong, and so can quickly escalate to a meltdown.
- Once a meltdown has been triggered, this is a complete system overload, which the child cannot control or manage, no matter what the consequence.

Trigger

Note the triggers

- Being aware of what triggers a meltdown is absolutely key to avoiding these in future.
- Also key is helping the child learn how to identify the triggers themselves, so when a meltdown happens, try to identify the trigger or what appeared to be the starting point.
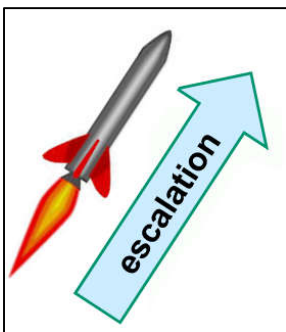
Keep a record

- ABCC charts are a good way to record meltdowns, so that patterns can try to be identified.
- Once the meltdown has been managed, it is best to record it while the incident is still fresh in people's minds.

ABCC Behaviour Diary

| Date	A (Antecedents) Setting/task/who else was around/other.	B (Behaviour) What did he/she actually do? Describe without interpreting. Include duration of behaviour.	C (Consequence) How did you and other adults respond? What did you and they do?	C (Communication) What is the behaviour communicating?	Initials

Action Plan

- Once a "meltdown" has been triggered, a child can escalate rapidly into a full meltdown.
- It is important to have a clear Action Plan in place that all relevant staff have been made aware of, and which has been discussed with Parent/Carers in advance.
- The primary considerations should be:
  o Keep the child safe
  o Keep other children safe
  o Keep yourself safe

Safe place

- Ideally, when experiencing the overwhelming physical and emotional symptoms of a meltdown, the child needs to be removed from the situation, and taken to a safe place where they will feel enclosed and sheltered, and can begin to recover.
- This should be an already established and familiar place to the child, and needs to be clearly identified in the Action Plan.
- It may not be possible to safely move the child, in which case you should create a safe place where s/he is. You may need to remove other children from the situation.
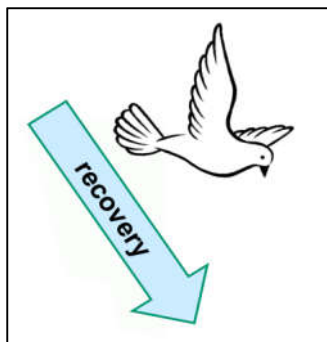
Give it time

- Meltdowns have a huge impact, both physically and emotionally, and the child will need time to recover.
- The amount of time needed will vary depending on the individual child and the severity of the meltdown – it can be as little as 30 minutes, or as much as the whole day.
- The child will not be ready to talk about what happened when they are feeling emotionally and physically drained. Recovery may include any of the following
  o Time in their safe place
  o Time spent engaging in a low-level classroom activity
  o Re-joining peers but with reduced expectations and with support

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After the "Meltdown"

- The child will experience a variety of complex feelings after the "meltdown"
- They may not be able to tell you why the meltdown happened, and it is for adults to reflect on the triggers, and to put in place strategies to help the child avoid or manage that situation better/differently in future.
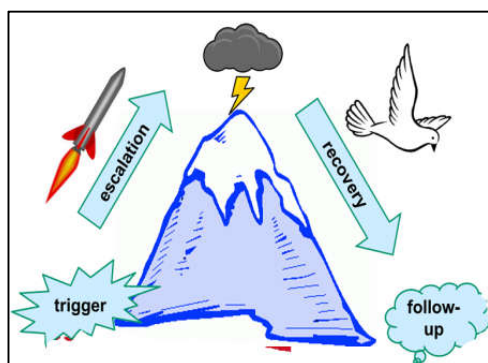
Remember

- When a child has escalated to a meltdown:

  o keep them safe
  o give them time
  o reflect on the trigger
  o decide how to support the child in future

Other comments

Dos	Don'ts
• Take a deep breath and remember that however hard this is for you, it is hard for the child too. • Make sure other members of staff have been informed of the situation, so that the child can be monitored and supported by adults during the period post meltdown. • Stay quietly with the child, and use short, soothing phrases that offer reassurance.	• Don't get angry and raise your voice. It just adds to the noise and stress. The child is not being naughty or trying to get his/her own way. • Don't attempt to deal with the "meltdown" on your own, but also don't have too many adults in close proximity as this may cause further distress to the child. • Don't try to reason with the child, issue reprimands or ask what's wrong while they are in the grip of the meltdown. Their system is in shutdown and they will not able to respond.

FURTHER READING:-

If schools would like to find out more about the autism spectrum, there is a vast range of material available. The following are a few recommendations from Bristol Autism Team:-

- Asperger Syndrome – a practical guide for Teachers by Val Cumine.
- The Teaching Assistants guide to Autistic Spectrum Disorders by Ann Cartright & Jill Morgan
- Asperger's Syndrome: a guide for parents and professionals by Tony Attwood
- Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome by Luke Jackson
- Ten things every child with Autism wishes you knew by Ellen Notbohm
- All cats have Asperger syndrome by Kathy Hoopmann
- Red Beast: Controlling anger in children with Asperger Syndrome by K Al-Ghani
- Everyday education: visual support for children with autism by P Dyrbjerg
- Learning about friendships by K Al-Ghani
- The Panicosaurus - Managing anxiety in children by K Al-Ghani
- Can I tell you about Asperger Syndrome by J Welton
- I am special by P Vermeulen
- Understanding and Managing Autism by Andrew Powell
- Why Do I Have To?: A Book for Children Who Find Themselves Frustrated by Everyday Rules by Laurie Leventhal - Belfer
- Can I Tell You about Autism?: A Guide for Friends, Family and Professionals by Jude Welton
- Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Elizabeth Verdick
- The Disappointment Dragon: Helping Children Including Those with Asperger Syndrome to Cope with Disappointment by K.I. Al-Ghani
- The Incredible 5-point Scale: Assisting Children with ASDs in Understanding Social Interactions and Controlling Their Emotional Responses by Kari Dunn Buron
- A 5 is Against the Law by Kari Dunn Buron
- The Asperkid's (Secret) Book of Social Rules: The Handbook of Not-So-Obvious Social Guidelines for Tweens and Teens with Asperger Syndrome by Jennifer Cook O'Toole

USEFUL WEBSITES:-

- www.autism.org.uk (National Autistic Society)
- https://www.sglospc.org.uk/ (South Glos Parents and Carers)
- www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk (Autism Education Trust)
- www.findability.org.uk (Findability – local information)
- www.supportiveparents.org.uk (Supportive Parents)
- www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk (Autism Education Trust)