



## Tips for teaching kids with ASD

## **Tips for teaching children with ASD**

### **Behaviour**

- Challenging behaviour is nearly always an attempt to communicate – remember that the child is not being naughty. Try to identify the trigger for the behaviour.
- The child may have outbursts of aggression just like a much younger child due to delayed emotional development.
- Be consistent in everything you do. Discuss behavioural issues with others and make sure everyone agrees on the same approach.
- Stick to well-defined and predictable routines so that the child knows what is expected of him and what he can expect each day.
- Always give advance warning of changes in routine.
- Tell the child what you expect of him rather than telling him what you don't want.
- Remember that common techniques for calming an anxious child, like cuddling, or sitting the child on your knee, may have the opposite effect on a child with ASD.
- Don't try to stop odd or repetitive behaviour unless it interferes with learning or threatens the wellbeing of other children. It is better to modify the behaviour.
- Look at ways of using the child's obsession or preferred interest in play and learning activities.
- Monitor the child's ability to cope in the playground; he may need time to unwind after recess and lunch breaks if he finds this time stressful.

### **Communication**

- Simplify your language. Be aware of language that is likely to be interpreted literally.
- Take care not to overload the child with verbal directions or requests.
- Avoid sarcasm and irony. Metaphors may be confusing.
- Before you speak, say the child's name to gain his attention.
- Give one instruction at a time. Allow the child sufficient time to interpret then respond to an instruction. This may take longer in children with ASD.
- Encourage eye contact, but don't insist if this causes anxiety.
- Be aware that facial expressions and gestures may be misinterpreted.
- Use visual cues to support verbal communication, e.g. daily timetable.
- Be sensitive to the child's efforts to communicate.

### **Sensory**

- Children with autism can be distracted by minor background noise that other people 'filter out'.
- The child may feel sensory overload from visual stimuli, the close proximity of others or from physical contact.

### **Social interaction**

- Help the child become aware that other people have thoughts and feelings that may be different to their own.
- Be explicit - the child may not focus on what you consider to be obvious.
- Accept that the child may need time out from the demands of social interaction – have a plan for these times.
- Understand the child's difficulty interpreting social cues. Model and prompt appropriate social behaviour.

### **General tips**

- Predictability and routine are important but allow for some flexibility in the child's routine so that he learns to cope with minor changes in a supportive environment.
- Children with ASD need lots of opportunities to learn the same thing in various situations and contexts to encourage generalisation of skills.
- Ensure that the student has all the books and materials they need for each class or activity.
- Be persistent and consistent. Progress may be slow and results can be difficult to see at first.
- Try to stay calm and positive.
- Every child with ASD has individual abilities and needs – what works for one child may not work for another.
- Every child can have a bad day. Don't feel at fault if things are not going well.