

**West Sussex**  
**Autism and Social Communication Team**  
**and**  
**Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team**

present...

**Planning for Positive  
Transitions from  
Early Years Settings  
into Schools**

A Best Practice Guide  
for  
Settings and Schools



## Introduction



This booklet has been put together by professionals from the Autism and Social Communication Team (ASCT), the Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team (LBAT) at West Sussex County Council (WSCC) with input from Early Help and the Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) Service, with the aim of demonstrating good practice for transitions between settings and schools. In it, we will highlight appropriate steps and strategies for transition within the Early Years (EY). These are organised in the following way:

- Strategies for **quality universal transitions** between settings and schools for all children
- **Targeted transition support** for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/ or other identified additional needs
- **Specific transition support**, regarding the Covid 19 pandemic.



The key to successful transitions lies largely in robust planning within an appropriate time-frame. Quality transitions:

- Are person-centred and supportive
- Are outcomes-based and futures-focussed
- Recognise individual strengths and needs
- Engage children and their families
- Are reliant upon effective communication between key adults

## Universal Transition Offer



### Quality Universal Transition will:

- Be well planned and proactive
- Promote effective communication between the setting/ school, parents and other people involved with the child
- Promote fact-finding about a child's needs, interests, what is currently working well and any specific details that will help them to settle
- Prompt discussion about changes or adaptations to the environment/ routines where needed
- Ensure that the well-being of the child is at the heart of the transition process
- Ensure the child's and parent/ carer views are evidenced



### Quality Universal Transition will include some of the following:

- A transition timeline for staff and parents including key dates and information
- Opportunities for parents/ carers and children to attend open mornings/ afternoons/ evenings prior to selecting school preferences. Ensure that key staff are available at these events to answer any questions
- Collection of admissions information from parents including who the key people are for the child e.g. if a grandparent or childminder will be collecting or dropping off and the level of information to be shared with that person.
- Encourage parents to attend further transition times with their children at school e.g. story time with the teacher
- Encourage parents to bring children to school for sessions where they become increasingly independent e.g. Stay and Play sessions
- Consider home visits and setting visits- will these be part of the universal offer?



## Best Practice: Promoting Positive Behaviour



### Children may become frustrated and cross for a variety of reasons

- They are learning to identify and experience feelings: this should be celebrated as it is an integral part of emotional intelligence
- They may be finding it difficult to be understood
- They have limited experiences and are often experiencing new situations
- Feelings can feel extremely intense to young children

### Helping children to learn

- Try to see things from their point of view – understanding how children see the world will help you to help them as they learn
- Feelings matter – develop an understanding of how children present in different situations: gain parental voice and seek children's view on how they feel in different situations
- Be mindful that research suggests that the adult's emotions can effect the children's

### Be clear about what you want

- Have clear expectations about expectations in class, ideally phrased in positive language
- Use positive language, describe what they 'can do' rather than what they can't

### Focus on the positives

- Make the effort to catch children 'being good' – these may be very small things
- If there are things your child is struggling with focus on one change at a time
- Give clear information e.g. 'Well done, you let Gary have some of your bricks'.

## Best Practice: Promoting Positive Behaviour (continued...)

### Help children to manage their feelings

- Talk about feelings (your own, your child's and other people's) in day-to-day experiences e.g. 'I'm happy we're going to the park today' or 'I'm sad we've run out of milk'
- When children are struggling to play together, you may wish to consider using conflict resolution. More information can be sought from the Autism and Social Communication Team
- Explaining feelings helps children to begin to understand their intense feelings and learn new ways of managing next time

*These ideas have been taken from the leaflet 'Helping children with their behaviour' by Jennie Lindon from the 'Learning Together' series*

### Useful Publications:

- Dorman (2002) *The Social Toddler: Promoting Positive Behaviour*, London: The Children's Project
- Bayley (2006) *More than Happy and Sad: Young Children and Emotions*, London: British Association for Early Childhood Education
- *The Zones of Regulation*: by Leah Kuypers. Think Social Publishing.
- *How Are You Feeling?* by Molly Potter
- *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas



# Best Practice: Speech, Language and Communication Strategies



## Classroom Environment

- Clearly **label** learning areas with pictures/ symbols throughout the classroom
- Consider **noise levels** and reducing unnecessary noise and distractions
- Try to keep **visual clutter to a minimum** (e.g. materials not needed for current activity are kept out of sight; busy shelving is curtained; computers and whiteboard screens are switched off when not in use)

## Visual Support

- Display **classroom rules** including listening rules in picture form
- Check **Visual timetables are displayed and used appropriately and regularly** (e.g. at eye level, referred to across day, consistent symbols across school etc.)
- Display **pictures of equipment** for daily routines (eg.PE)
- Use **concrete visual aids** to support understanding, working memory and expressive language (e.g. timelines, number lines, models, speaking frames, multilink, question word symbols)
- **Break tasks down** into smaller steps with visuals where needed

## Teacher Language and Teaching Style

- Display and demonstrate simple **listening rules**, giving specific praise for good listening behaviours e.g.



- Remember to **speak slowly and clearly**

## Best Practice: Speech, Language and Communication Strategies (continued...)



### Teacher Language and Teaching Style (continued...)

- Keep **instructions concise** and **in sequence**
- Use **natural gesture, facial expression and tone of voice** to back up language
- Emphasise and recap **key information**
- Give the child time to **process** instructions, **wait for 10 seconds** before **repeating** your instruction

### Children with significant speech, language and communication difficulties

- Check to see if they have a recent report and/or an intervention target sheet from the speech and language therapy service which can be used functionally in the classroom
- Ensure children are seated near the teacher/ key adult so it is easier for them to participate fully in the classroom communication
- Remember that they may become very tired from concentrating hard to process verbal information and/or formulate their responses – they therefore may need extra quiet times and rest breaks
- It may be useful to offer individual visuals and timetables for use in class and to take with them when moving around the school
- Use Total Communication principles e.g. signing, symbols, pictures, real objects alongside verbal language in the classroom to support understanding
- Agree on an effective way of regular parents/school liaison e.g. a home- school communication book
- Be aware that evidence of challenging behaviour may be linked to frustration due to communication difficulties

# Best Practice Speech, Language and Communication Strategies (continued...)



## Children who stammer

- Give them extra time to finish what they are saying and do not be tempted to interrupt or finish their sentence
- Avoid asking questions in large group/class situation or putting them under pressure
- Provide paired work, opportunities to work with familiar peers for small group work

## Difficulties in understanding or using language

- Use visuals to support both understanding and use of language – e.g. lanyard cues, choice boards, now-next, timers for turns, aided language boards in different activity areas, etc. (see visual strategies on page 6)
- Ensure your language is at their level: keep phrases short and vocabulary simple, modelling correct language and social behaviours, signing key words or using gesture, etc.
- Set up activities to encourage requesting and interaction where an adult is available to model and prompt as appropriate e.g. shops, café role play, favourite toys out of reach but visible, having things missing/unexpected, requesting and social language at snack time

## Speech Difficulties

- Check seating position, noise levels – so they can hear and see your models clearly
- Try to avoid correcting or asking for repetition: use modelling, respond positively to all attempts at communication
- Focus on phonological awareness and listening skills rather than speech production
- If you have not understood what the child has said then don't pretend that you have. Encourage them to show you what they mean, or repeat back any part that you did understand, giving them the opportunity to add to this.



## Non verbal children

- Check what modes and systems of communication they are using to communicate e.g. PECS, signing, electronic devices, communication boards and how these can be used functionally in the classroom
- Ensure they have an effective and consistent means of communicating their needs, likes/dislikes e.g. communication aids, visuals, gestures etc.
- Encourage and create structured and unstructured situations where they are able to interact with others e.g. turn taking games/ activities, paired activities, role play.

## Hearing impairment

- When seated, make sure they have a clear view of the teacher's face when speaking e.g. close, face not in shadow, keep hands away from mouth
- Use visuals, gestures and signing to reinforce the spoken word
- Consistently check if hearing aids / implants / radio aids are switched on and working
- Check and minimise background noise e.g. keep doors closed, have soft furnishings on tables, felt in / under pen containers / drawers etc.
- Repeat what other children in group have said
- Summarise information and warn about change in topic. Check child has heard and understood

## Useful Links:

- I CAN [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk) > Talking Point
- Afasic, voice for life [www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)
- East Sussex County Council [www.eastsussex.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk) > Total Communication Resource Pack
- Sense [www.sense.org](http://www.sense.org) > Information and advice > Communication + Technology
- The Communication Trust- <https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years/>
- Inclusion Development Programme – SLCN: <https://www.idponline.org.uk/eyslcn/launch.html>



# Best Practice: Autism and Social Communication Strategies

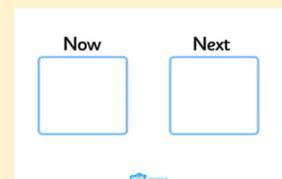


## Building Familiarity

- Are staff available to visit the child at home?
- Is it possible for the child to visit the setting, multiple times when no other children are present and be introduced to adults, the environment and resources?
- Where possible/ appropriate, invite the pupil to visit the school on an INSET day in September to see their new classroom set up for the new term (10 mins max)

## Resources and Environment

- A transition book/ PowerPoint presentation may be helpful to build familiarity of the environment and adults
- Are the child's favourite activities and familiar resources available?
- Is the child able to self-select resources? This is an area that children with ASC/ Social Communication differences often find difficult. They may benefit from a choice board
- Consider whether a quiet space/ workstation is needed
- Provide visual supports, for example:
  - ◆ Are areas clearly labelled, trays labelled with both pictures and words?
  - ◆ Provide a pictorial visual timetable at child's eye level that is referred to throughout the day, cards are removed when activity is completed; an individual timetable may be appropriate or now and next
  - ◆ A 'What's different today?' board to support pupils when there are differences in the routine.



## Best Practice: Autism and Social Communication Strategies (continued...)

### Visual supports continued....

- ◆ A visual support of any staff changes and which adult will be supporting during the day
- ◆ Visual lunchtime menu choices, reminders of the order of eating, access to a quieter area to eat lunch
- ◆ A choice board of resources to plan their “play”



### Sensory

- Consider the child’s sensory needs in relation to the environment, is there anything that causes the child distress? Can the environment be altered to suit needs?
- Does the child have a sensory profile that could be shared? If not could the parents be asked to complete one? One is available from the West Sussex County Council Local Offer here: [https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/public/system/attachments/1116/original/NEW\\_Sensory\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/public/system/attachments/1116/original/NEW_Sensory_Toolkit.pdf)) this can help to identify any sensory responses
- CRAE at UCL: <http://crae.ioe.ac.uk/post/130547691038/sensory-sensitivities-in-autism-explained>
- Falkirk’s booklet ‘Making Sense of Sensory Behaviour’: <https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/disabilities/docs/young-people/Making%20Sense%20of%20Sensory%20Behaviour.pdf?v=201507131117>

# Best Practice: Autism and Social Communication Strategies (continued...)



## Social Communication and Play

- It is likely that the child's social understanding and social development will be different to that of their neurotypical peers and more support may need to be offered during play. Consider using mirroring and copying techniques to engage children
- Consider how play will be supported
- Children may need to be taught how to play with resources
- Support children's social understanding through the use of social stories. For example a story that explains the routine of the day, the environment, why we go to school, expectations of on the environment. More information regarding social stories can be found here: Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/>



## Emotional Understanding and Self Regulation

- The use of specific techniques may be helpful to support the pupil to develop their ability to regulate their emotions and school may like to look at the resource: '**Zones of Regulation**' in order to increase the pupil's emotional understanding and ability to self-regulate
- Perhaps consider introducing **calming or mindfulness activities** after busy times or to support transitions such as from break time to class time or after school, e.g. quiet time in the book corner, listening to music with headphones or a word search or puzzle to support self-regulation.

## Useful resources:

- Inclusion Development Programme: <https://www.idponline.org.uk/eyautism/launch.html>
- National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- The Zones of Regulation: by Leah Kuypers. Think Social Publishing.



## Best Practice: Learning Strategies

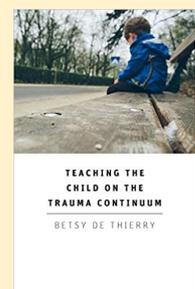
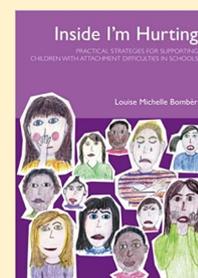
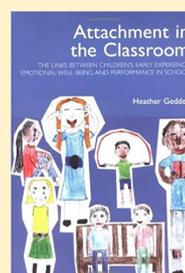
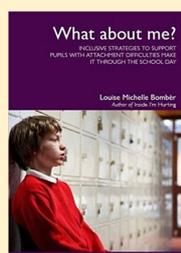
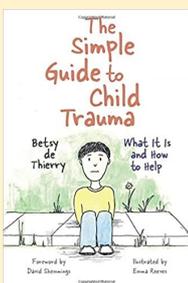
- Consider providing transition packs: to introduce key staff, routines and information : include photographs of key staff and areas of the school e.g. the classroom, toilets, hall, cloakroom. It will be helpful for parents and settings to refer to these often, particularly during the weeks before school begins in September
- Provide clear, accessible guidance for new pupils that is appropriate to their developmental level on starting school for example:
  - ◆ trays labelled with both pictures and words
  - ◆ a pictorial visual timetable at child's eye level that is referred to throughout the day, cards are removed when activity is completed
  - ◆ a 'What's different today?' board to support pupils when there are differences in the routine
  - ◆ pictures of the above could be included in the transition pack
- Offer sessions for parents/ carers of pupils with SEND either, in person, or remotely, with additional opportunities for potential pupils at a later date. Ensure that the Inclusion Leader or SENCo is involved in supporting EY staff to do this
- Work closely with feeder settings to provide phased transition opportunities for pupils with significant additional needs: discuss what works well in the setting and consider how this could be replicated in school
- If the child is in a dual placement or has outside agency involvement, consider how best to work with all stakeholders, perhaps organise a meeting or conference call. Best practice will include both parent and pupil voice and SENCos from both the setting(s) and the school(s)
- Focus on key skills such as turn taking, sharing resources, exploring, playing imaginatively and asking/ answering questions, willingness to take part when discussing strengths and areas for development

## Best Practice: Trauma and Attachment



- Prior to transition, work collaboratively with parents/ carers and setting to establish what works well at home/ in the setting and how this can be replicated at school
- Consider additional visits, in liaison with the parents/ carers and how these will best equip the child to settle well e.g. for a child who struggles with large crowds, begin by inviting them after school when the school is relatively empty
- Identify a small team of key adults within school with whom the child can begin to build safe, attuned relationships. This could include the class teacher, teaching assistant, midday meals supervisor, office or maintenance staff, a member of the SLT
- Consider how the team of adults might keep in touch with the child during the holidays e.g. send a postcard or photograph to introduce themselves, email a recording of them reading the child's favourite story, send pictures of the classroom or film a virtual tour that the child can look at with a parent/ carer
- Remember to match expectations with the developmental stage of the child, rather than their chronological age, where appropriate
- Consider providing a transition booklet with key information at an appropriate level for the child's understanding, include photographs e.g. of the school uniform, classroom, outside areas, toilets etc as well as key staff

### Useful Resources:

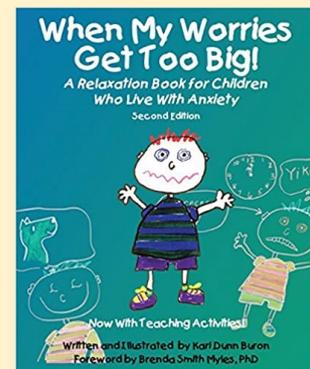
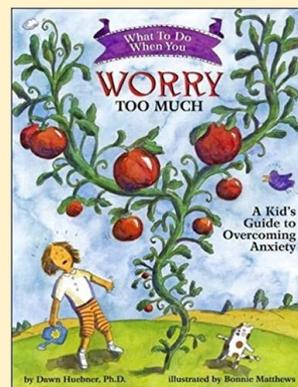
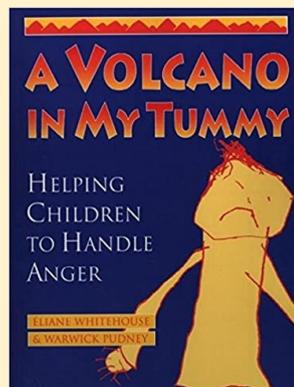
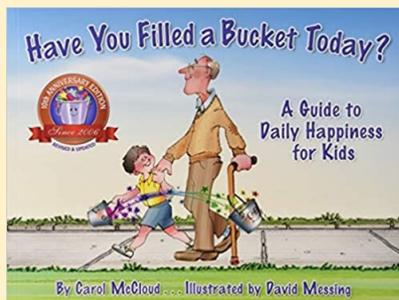


- Beacon House resources: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Supporting-Transitions-2.pdf>

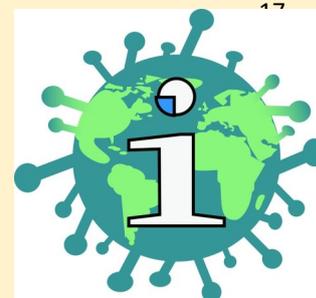
## Best Practice: Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs

- Talk with parents/ carers and practitioners to understand the nature of the SEMH needs of the individual child, their triggers and how to help
- Consider the need for a risk assessment/ behaviour plan, particularly if the child is at risk of hurting themselves or those around them. What signs will you likely see if the child is struggling? What can you do to deescalate a situation? What should you not do? What equipment might you need to help (e.g. bubbles, something to fiddle with, a weighted object or blanket)? The parents/ carers and setting will be able to advise on what works well currently
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the plan for an individual, what to do, what to say, how to respond– staff do not necessarily need to know the history/ background, just the procedure and process
- Contact any outside agencies involved with the child to seek support
- Consider the use of Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence, Communication (ABCC) records or Setting/ situation, Trigger, Action, Result/ response (STAR) records to collect information and unpick behaviours resulting from SEMH needs

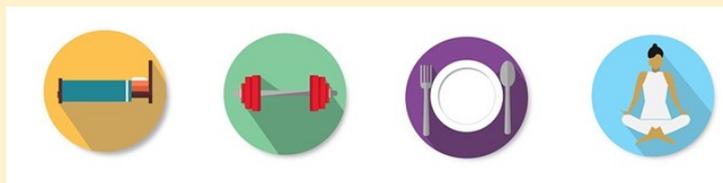
### Useful Resources:



# Suggestion for Specific Transition Support and Strategies in response to COVID 19



- Where additional visits or face-to-face meetings are not possible due to shielding or lockdown procedures, use phone calls and email to make initial contact with settings and parents/ carers
- Consider the use of multi-user platforms, such as Skype or Microsoft Teams to hold meetings with parents/ carers, practitioners and other outside professionals e.g. Occupational Therapist (OT), Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)
- Plan your time– give start and end times to online meetings and plan additional sessions as needed
- Ensure that the transitions information on your school website is readily available and clear to navigate. Include links to key information on WSCC website and FAQs about your school.
- Share information that is related to the COVID19 Pandemic including: bereavement, hospitalisation of members of the family friends, events and routines that have been different and have impacted on the child



## Useful Resources:

- Beacon House – a therapeutic service provider: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/covid-19-support-resources/>
- boingboing is an organisation supporting young people: <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/boingboing-coronavirus-resilience/>

## Best Practice: Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs, continued...

### Useful Resources continued:

- WSCC- [https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information\\_pages/333-semh-the-early-years-strategies](https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/333-semh-the-early-years-strategies)
- WSCC- [https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information\\_pages/505-emotional-resilience](https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/505-emotional-resilience)
- The Boxall Profile is an invaluable resource for the assessment of children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development- <https://www.nurturegroups.org/introducing-nurture/boxall-profile-online>
- Winston's Wish provides support for grieving children- <https://www.winstonswish.org/>
- Child Bereavement UK provide support for the schools and families of bereaved children. The website has a range of useful resources and links and a guide for schools- <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/primary-schools>
- Solihull Developmental Milestones- [https://inourplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emotional-and-Development-Milestones\\_FULL.pdf](https://inourplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emotional-and-Development-Milestones_FULL.pdf)

## Suggestion for Specific Transition Support and Strategies in response to COVID19 (continued...)



Consider the following innovative ways to build relationships, impart knowledge of the school and develop understanding of the child, their needs and personality:

- Provide a virtual tour of classroom/ school/ communal spaces
- Story time on YouTube with new Class Teacher/ LSA/TA
- Individual Zoom Chats
- Parents if possible, to complete a pupil profile as parental information may differ between settings. Setting to complete pupil profile. From both the pupil profiles could you buy the child a birthday present? Could you plan them a birthday party? If the answer is yes to these questions then you have begun to gather a clear picture of the child
- Teachers to complete their own profile to share with children, this will enable the child to begin to develop some knowledge of their new grown ups
- Produce a Booklet with photos of environment and key members of staff
- Transition meetings held via skype/ phone– consider the use of the West Sussex Early Years Pack
- Perhaps make videos of Teachers and support staff introducing themselves, talking about their hobbies
- If the child has no diagnosis, consider use of Neurodiversity checklist which may help you gather more information
- Request a video clip of the child at play from the setting and/ or parent/ carer



## Suggestion for Specific Transition Support and Strategies in response to COVID 19



### Focus on Wellbeing

- The cohort of children will likely have more attachment needs (they will have spent much more time at home with their parents) and may need a curriculum that has a focus on emotional literacy and well-being
- Children may be unsettled for longer: this is okay
- Have children's routines been disrupted, are they sleeping, have their eating habits changed?
- Structure and routine including predictability will be important for all children. This will enable children to feel settled and build familiarity. However, children will benefit where possible from having long periods of uninterrupted play as this will be something that they are familiar with: adults should engage with children at these times to build relationships
- Help children build their emotional understanding: use of the SEAD resources and The Zones of regulation would be supportive tools/programmes to do this



### Useful Resources:

- Trauma-Informed Approaches in the return to school- <https://www.epinsight.com/post/applying-the-4-rs-of-trauma-informed-approaches-in-the-return-to-school>
- A Recovery Curriculum – loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic a podcast by Professor Barry Carpenter- <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/2020/05/03/episode-1-the-recovery-curriculum-part-1-a-recovery-curriculum-for-children-schools-post-pandemic/>
- Free online module by Pooky Knightsmith– support a safe and successful return to school using the SWAN framework <https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/>

**Contact your ASCT or LBAT Advisory Teacher or email [schoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk) for further advice, support and training.**