

BRISTOL AUTISM TEAM

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TOOLKIT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This toolkit has been produced by Bristol Autism Team to support Primary schools to further develop their understanding of strategies for pupils on the autism spectrum and with social communication & interaction needs.

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

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For further information regarding local organisations, groups and advice, please see Bristol City Council “Local Offer”

www.findabilitybristol.org.uk





Source "Bristol Autism Team"

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The classroom environment

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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 adapt the environment by introducing visual signposting, structure to consider a child's autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs.



Source "Wikimedia – Flickr"

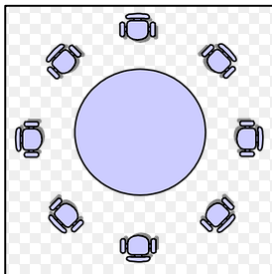
Making your classroom structured

- 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.

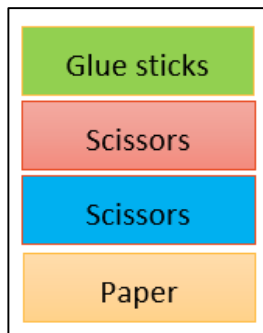


Seating positions

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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).



Source "CCO Public Domain"



Source "Gay Elms Resource Base"

Labels

- Label your areas/equipment so that it is clear what each area is for / contains.
- If you have a set a 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.

Structured work space

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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: -
 - What am I expected to do?
 - How much work I have to do?
 - How I know I've finished?
 - What I will do next?
- A good workstation will: -
 - Use activities the child can do independently and has a high chance of succeeding without support.
 - Use activities that are naturally interesting to the child, building on their strengths and interests.
 - Has limited distractions.
 - Helps a child to generalise skills.
 - Develops the concept of working in a standard organised fashion e.g. top to bottom, left to right.



Source "Bristol Autism Team"



Source "Pixabay"



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Low arousal work space

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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 lesson anxiety.
- A child may work at their specific work space for some periods of the day and alongside peers at a group table for other periods
- This low arousal work space should not be used as a "time out" place as the aim is to convey the message that this is a "time to work" place.

Other comments

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can experience heightened anxiety at school, especially if they do not know what to expect from a situation.
- A well-structured, visual classroom may lesson 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 can feel safe, learn and achieve.



- 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.
- A profile captures important information about a child's strengths, challenges and interests.
- 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 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.

What do others like and admire about me?

- I'm good fun to play with at playtimes – I make up imaginative games
- My maths and counting skills
- My reading – I use great expression
- My sense of humour, I like making people laugh
- My drumming
- My typing skills – I can type 80 words per minute

What is important to me?

- My home
- My family: My Mum, Dad and My Brother
- Minecraft
- My iPad
- My friends – particularly Tommy
- My Music – I love listening to music and playing the drums & harmonica
- My fiddle toy, this might be a straw or soft toy.

How can you support me?

- I like to know what is happening each day by using my timetable
- I like to be first into the classroom in the mornings
- I like to be first in line or the 'back of line leader'
- I like to get to know key adults so they are familiar to me.
- I like to know about changes to the daily routine

What do people like and admire about me?
(My positive qualities, strengths and talents)

--

What is important to me?
(Important people in my life including pets, hobbies and activities)

What is the best way to support me?
(What is helpful to me & what is not?)

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Details to include

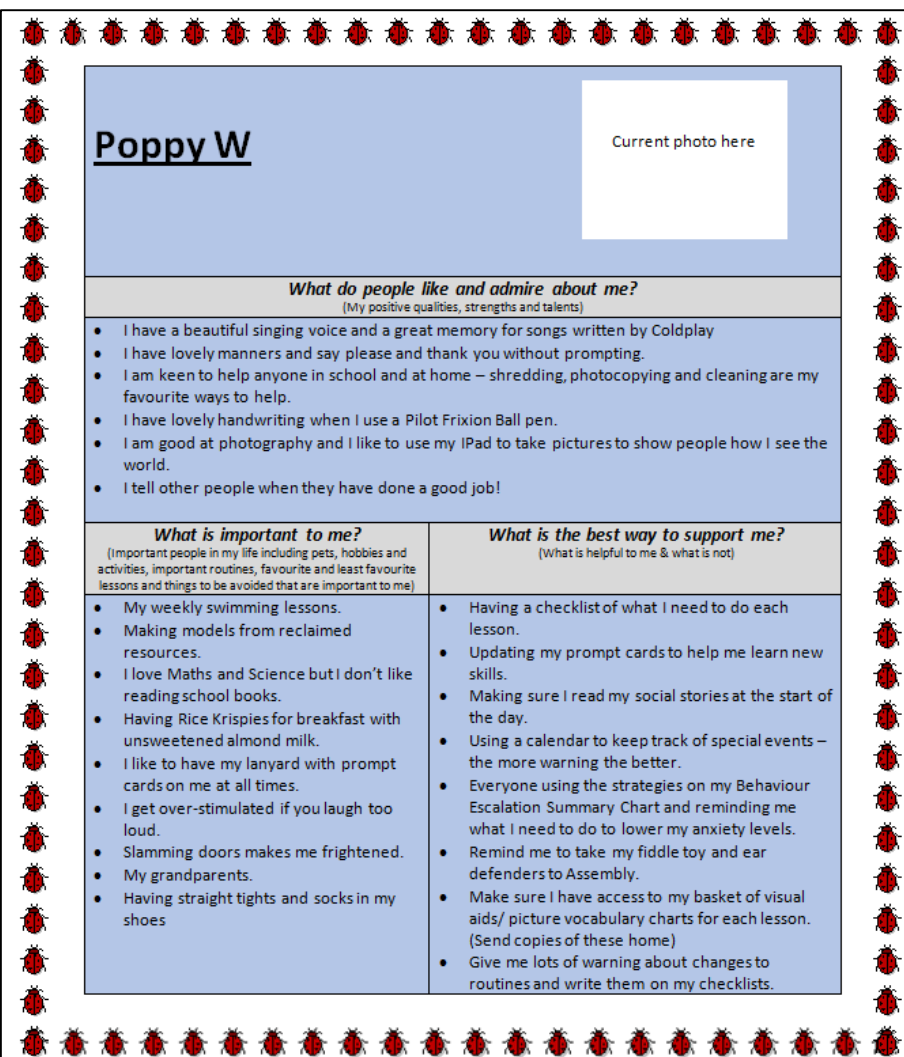
- A good one page profile is designed with children so that the sections reflect what is important to them. Sections might include:-
 - What really matters to the child from their perspective (even if others do not agree).
 - What the child likes/does not like.
 - Who the important people are in the child's life, and when and how they spend time together.
 - Important/ favourite activities and hobbies, and when, where and how often these take place.
 - Any different routines that are individual/ important to the child.
 - Important/ favourite lessons and school activities.
 - Things to be avoided that can create anxiety for the child.

- 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).

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.
- The information in this section includes what people need to know, and what people need to do in order to support the child.



	
<div> <div> Poppy W </div> <div> Current photo here </div> </div>	
What do people like and admire about me? <small>(My positive qualities, strengths and talents)</small>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have a beautiful singing voice and a great memory for songs written by Coldplay I have lovely manners and say please and thank you without prompting. I am keen to help anyone in school and at home – shredding, photocopying and cleaning are my favourite ways to help. I have lovely handwriting when I use a Pilot FriXion Ball pen. I am good at photography and I like to use my iPad to take pictures to show people how I see the world. I tell other people when they have done a good job! 	
What is important to me? <small>(Important people in my life including pets, hobbies and activities, important routines, favourite and least favourite lessons and things to be avoided that are important to me)</small>	What is the best way to support me? <small>(What is helpful to me & what is not)</small>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My weekly swimming lessons. Making models from reclaimed resources. I love Maths and Science but I don't like reading school books. Having Rice Krispies for breakfast with unsweetened almond milk. I like to have my lanyard with prompt cards on me at all times. I get over-stimulated if you laugh too loud. Slamming doors makes me frightened. My grandparents. Having straight tights and socks in my shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a checklist of what I need to do each lesson. Updating my prompt cards to help me learn new skills. Making sure I read my social stories at the start of the day. Using a calendar to keep track of special events – the more warning the better. Everyone using the strategies on my Behaviour Escalation Summary Chart and reminding me what I need to do to lower my anxiety levels. Remind me to take my fiddle toy and ear defenders to Assembly. Make sure I have access to my basket of visual aids/ picture vocabulary charts for each lesson. (Send copies of these home) Give me lots of warning about changes to routines and write them on my checklists.

Other comments

- Schools might have a "Profile Wall" in the classroom.
- 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 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 profiles.

Your language

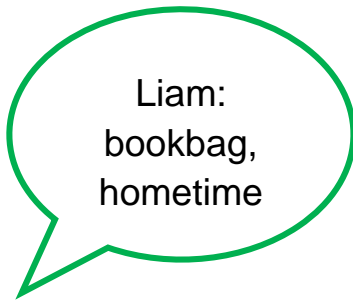
- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may have a wide range of communicative ability. It is very important not to make assumptions about an individual child's skills solely on the basis of their diagnosis. Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs:-
 - may not understand the need for communication
 - may not initiate communication
 - may fail to communicate clearly what they want or need
 - may have difficulty with attention and listening skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication
 - may have difficulty understanding language
 - may have difficulties processing language, especially when combined with maintaining eye contact and non- verbal communication (gestures, body language)

Feet on
floor please

Put the
book on my
desk

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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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.



Source "Open Clip Art Library"

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 / with social communication and interaction needs to process information.



Use appropriate questions

- Don't use too many questions. A child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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 / with social communication and interaction needs.



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Facial expressions

- Remember that a child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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.



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Be aware of using sarcasm, humour and expressions of speech

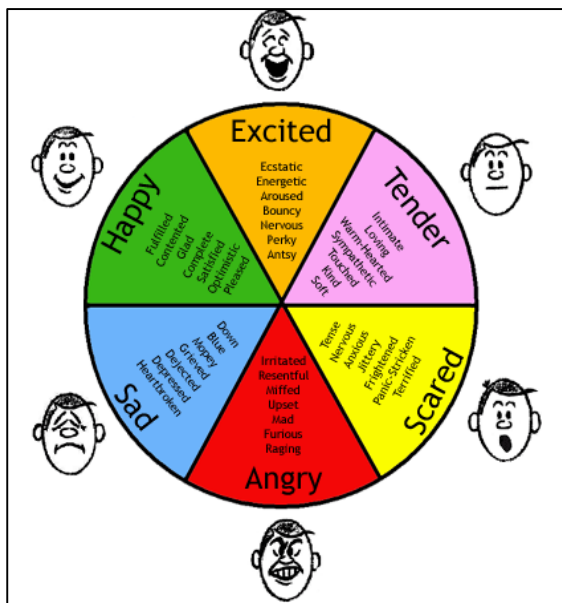
- Idioms and metaphors such as "Did you get out of the wrong side of bed?" and "You need to pull your weight" and "It's raining cats and dogs" are commonly used in everyday speech. A child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may take these literally.
- Similarly, sarcasm may be very confusing for a child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs. 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 / with social communication and interaction needs, 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 / with social communication and interaction needs. 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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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.



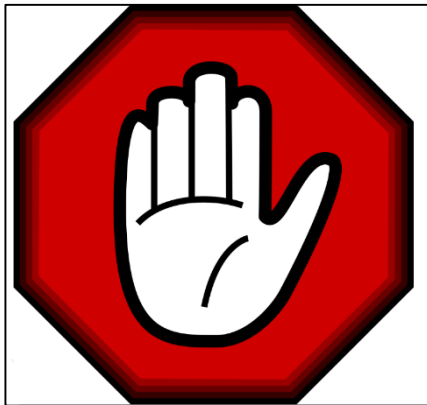
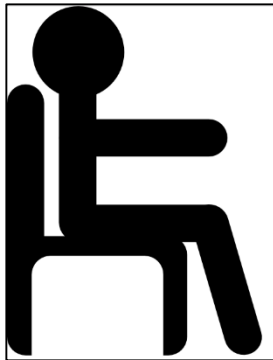
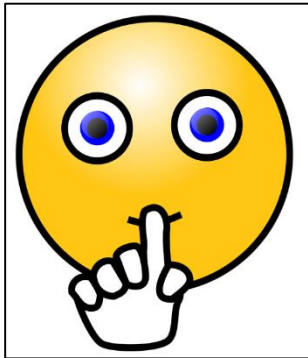
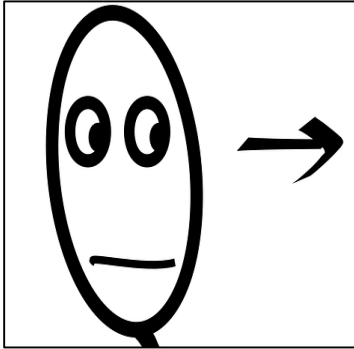
Source "CCO Public Domain"

"How are you feeling" prompt cards

- A child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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.



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All images - Source "CCO Public Domain"

Expected behaviour prompt cards

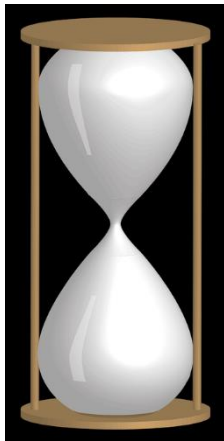
- Prompt cards can be used in the class to support the understanding of instructions and what is expected behaviour.
- All staff working within the class need to use these and should also know about a child's reward scheme for responding to the prompt cards.
- The prompt card can be shown without the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

How these prompt cards support a child on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs

- 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 / with social communication and interaction needs to focus on important details and instructions and can help them cope with change.

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.



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Range of visuals

- Visuals are not limited to pictures on a card.
- A visual prompt to convey an instructions/expected behaviour/activity etc can be through a range of means, for example:
 - 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
 - iPad apps can provide visuals to show instructions/expected behaviour/activity
 - Objects of reference can be used instead of/alongside an image on a card
 - Black & white or coloured images can be used

Other comments

- We all use visuals every day and children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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 adults chosen image.

First ... Then

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs respond to predictable routines.
- First - Then boards provide support in the following areas:
 - Addressing difficulties with sequential memory and organisation of time
 - Assisting with language comprehension so the child understands what is expected of them
 - Reducing anxiety by making school life predictable
 - Providing opportunities to introduce new vocabulary or phrases
 - Clarifying what is going to happen within a specific time period
 - Assisting children in transitioning independently between tasks
 - Motivating a child to engage with less favoured tasks. E.g. **First** worksheet, **Then** time on the computer
 - Identifying expectations. E.g. **First** 3 Maths questions, **Then** 5 minutes break



Source "CCO Public Domain"

- Collect a selection of visual resources (real objects, photographs or pictures) that represent the different activities the child encounters throughout each day.
- Visuals for using the bathroom, sensory breaks and health/ hygiene practices can be 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.
- First-Then boards are arranged in a **left-to-right** format with a **minimum of two** scheduled tasks/ activities presented at a time.

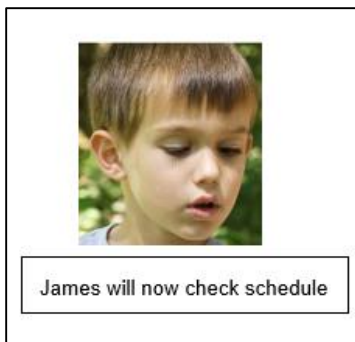




Source "Boardmaker – Bristol Autism Team licence"



Source "Boardmaker – Bristol Autism Team licence"

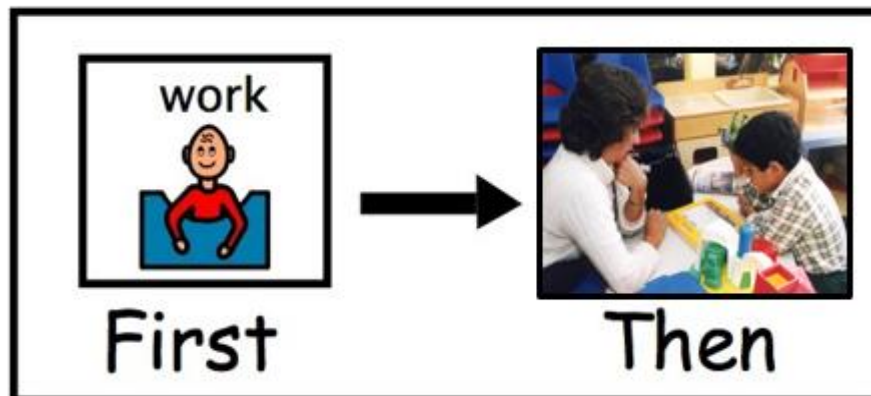


Source "CCO Public Domain"

- 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 a 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.



Source "Boardmaker – Bristol Autism Team licence" and "Commons Wikimedia"

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

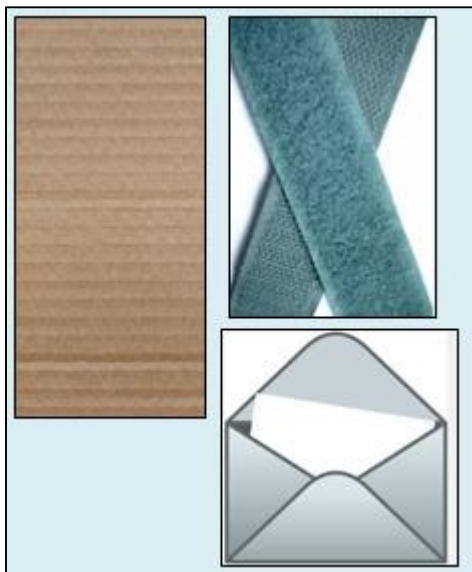
- Ensure the design use of visual resources meet the academic, as well as interest needs of the individual child.
- Increasing the number of tasks develops progression and independence. First – Next –Then for 1 session, then for the morning and/or tasks, then for the whole day task etc.
- They can be 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.




Source ""Pixabay" and "Commons Wikimedia"

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 or blue tac can be stuck to it.
- Velcro or blue tac can be used to stick the visuals to the timetable (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.

Bill’s timetable	
Writing	
Reading	
Computer	
Football	
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.

Source “CCO Public Domain”

Bill's timetable	
✓ Writing	
✓ Reading	
✓ Computer	
✓ Football	

Source "CCO Public Domain"

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 may prefer to tick or cross off items rather than place in "finish" section
- 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.

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 / with social communication and interaction needs can experience heightened anxiety at school, especially if they do not know the daily routine of the day.
- A visual timetable may lesson 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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Put my lunch box on the green shelf	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sit at my table	<input type="checkbox"/>

Source “CCO Public Domain”

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.

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

Source "CCO Public Domain"

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

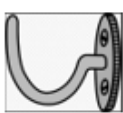



- A mini checklist for steps to complete a task may help a child with self-organisation/motivation and focus.
- For a non-reader, a visual representing each step will be needed.
- For a reader, the written word alone may be sufficient.
- You can add an additional column to make each step "time bound".
- 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.



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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.

	Get my coat off my peg	
	Get my lunch box off the green shelf	
	Stand next to Mrs Robinson until the bell rings	

Source “CCO Public Domain”

A home time schedule

- A mini checklist may be used to help a child person get ready for home time
- For a non-reader, a visual representing each step be needed
- For a reader, the written word alone may be sufficient

Other comments

- We all use mini checklist or schedules, i.e a shopping list or “to do” list.
- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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”.



- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can find many everyday social situations confusing.
- Social Stories (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.
- 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 have a secure 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 pleased that I am calm

- Children on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs 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.

Sometimes I hear people swear.

Swearing means using bad words that other people usually don't like to hear.

Sometimes I might hear people swear when they fall and hurt themselves.

Sometimes I might hear people swear when they break something.

Sometimes I might hear people swear when they are angry.

Sometimes I might hear people swear because they think it will make others laugh.

But I know that swearing is not funny. It does not make people laugh. It makes other people feel bad.

If I use swear words, other children might think that I am being rude.

If I use swear words, other children's parents might think that I am being rude.

If I swear at school, my teacher might get upset with me.

It is not a good idea to swear at school.

It is not a good idea to swear at home.

My parents might get upset with me.

They might think that I am being rude.

I will try not to swear.

That will make my parents happy.

I will be happy too.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

- 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.
- More information on Social Stories can be found on <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

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	
 <p>Source "Pixabay"</p>	I can tap someone lightly on the shoulder and say "Excuse me"
 <p>Source "CCO Public"</p>	I can give a high 5 and say "Great"
 <p>Source "CCO Public"</p>	I can shake hands to say "It's nice to see you"

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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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

Mary will ...



Sit cross legs

Source "CCO Public Domain"

Mary's reward
for doing this



Source "Pixabay"

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 am working towards ...



Source "CCO Public Domain"

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.



Source "Flickr"

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".

THOMAS' TOKEN BOARD

Have safe hands



Keep feet on floor



Quiet voice



I WILL EARN ...



Source "Bristol Autism Team"

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



Source "Pixabay"



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Number of raffle tickets earned	I can use my raffle tickets for ...
50	An extra session with Mr Smith doing Forest activities
40	Tea and biscuit with Mrs Robbins
30	An afternoon with Class 5 with Lego
20	Football in pen for 20 minutes
10	15 minutes extra on the iPad

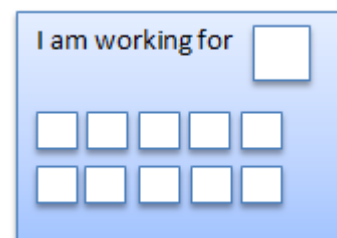
Source
"Bristol Autism Team"

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 / with social communication and interaction needs Some children 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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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:
 - Ask for help
 - Recognise their emotions and those of others
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Manage their emotions
 - Develop coping strategies and calming techniques



Source "Pixabay"



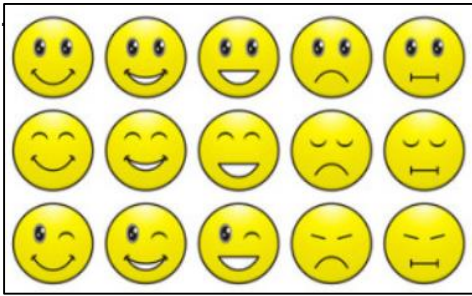
Source "Public Domain"

Independent working cards

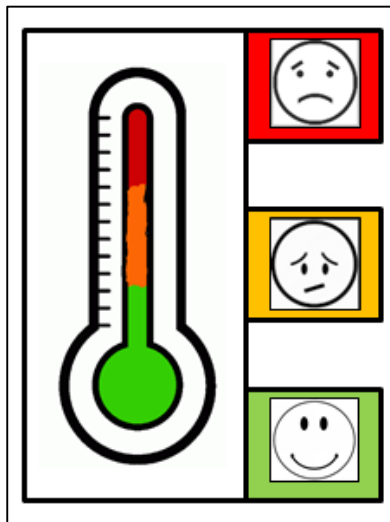
- These cards allow children to communicate their understanding/confidence of a task.
- Card is double sided and placed on desk where the child is working.
- The child displays "ok" or "I need help"
- Adults can quickly check how the pupil is getting on without constant questioning.
- Make the cards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

Traffic Light systems

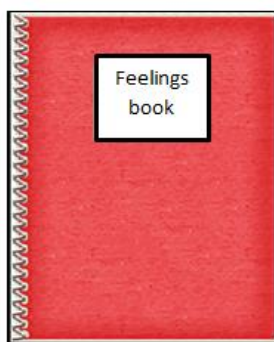
- These work in a similar way to independent working cards offering a visual way to communicate understanding or anxiety.
- Green = OK
- Amber/Yellow = I'm Unsure or I can give it go
- Red = Help
- An arrow or object can be placed on the colour to indicate how the child is feeling.
- Coloured pencil 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.



Source "Pixabay"



Source "Public Domain"



Source "Pixabay"

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:

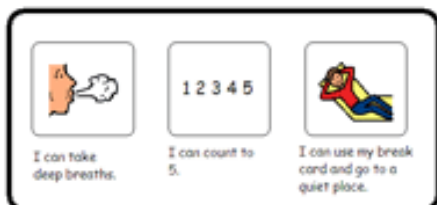
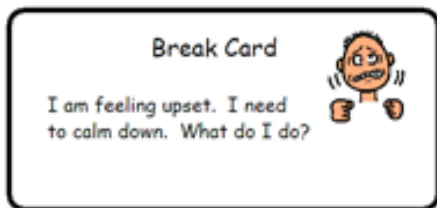
- Encourage the child to point to or verbalise the emotion which is relevant to them at the time using the board as a visual support.
- Use the board in conjunction with feelings/emotions books (see below) to enable the child to increase their understanding of emotions.

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 a 'feelings "or "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".



Source "Boardmaker – Bristol Autism Team licence"



Source "Pixabay"

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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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 / with social communication and interaction needs to talk to others about their emotional wellbeing, and therefore their responses to anxiety may be individual and unexpected.

"Meltdowns"

- 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 / with social communication and interaction needs 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

- ABC 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.

ABC Behaviour Diary

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



Source "Free Stock Photo"

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:
 - Keep the child safe
 - Keep other children safe
 - Keep yourself safe



Source "Free Stock Photo"

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.



Source "Pixabay"

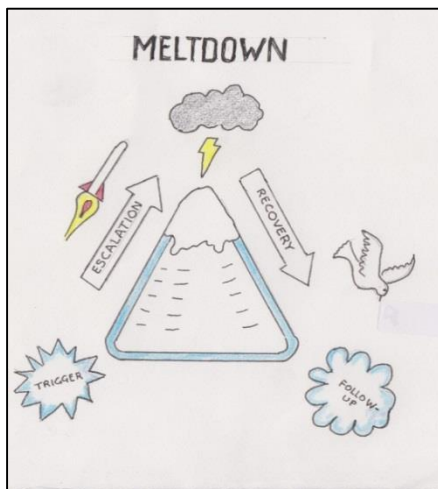
Give it time

- "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
 - Time in their safe place
 - Time spent engaging in a low-level classroom activity
 - Re-joining peers but with reduced expectations and with support



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.



Source “Bristol Autism Team”

Remember

- When a child has escalated to a “meltdown”:
 - keep them safe
 - give them time
 - reflect on the trigger
 - decide how to support the child in future

Other comments

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 be 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:-



Source "Pixabay"

- Asperger Syndrome – a practical guide for Teachers by Val Cumine.
- I am special by P Vermeulen
- Can I tell you about Asperger Syndrome by J Welton
- 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
- 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)
- www.bristolparentcarers.org.uk (Bristol Parent 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)



Source "Pixabay"