Communication and Autism SEND BIRMINGHAM Birmingham City Council

Adaptive Teaching: autistic pupils

Adaptive teaching supports diverse learners. With adaptive teaching, pupils' different abilities and backgrounds are recognised but their ability to understand and carry out tasks is not presumed. Adaptive teaching is focuses on pedagogy which engages, motivates, and challenges learners. It includes differentiated learning and strategies to support SEND pupils' learning.

All teaching staff to be aware of the three areas of difference and the child's strengths in each area.



Strategies for Social Understanding and Communication:

- Keep language simple, short, clear and unambiguous.
- Gain attention first – say the child's name at the start of an instruction. They may not understand that 'everyone' includes them.
- Keep your tone neutral.
- Use appropriate modes of communication: visual timetables, objects of reference, modelling, demonstration, Social Stories etc.
- Be consistent with language. Have one name of an item (trousers, pants, jeans – too many can be confusing).
- Avoid metaphors, idioms and sarcasm, and if used be prepared to explain them.
- Remember that facial expressions and gestures used in regulating classes may not work with autistic pupils: e.g., raising eyebrows, waiting for quiet – these will likely **not** be picked up.
- Do not use nicknames or 'cute' names, e.g. 'sweetie'.
- Do not expect eye contact and do not force it.
- Establish a mutually agreed 'buddy' in class.

Strategies for Flexibility, information processing, and understanding:

- Give **one** instruction at a time.
- Allow **extra time** for processing verbal information. Give time to respond to questions (National Autistic Society 6 second rule).
- Always acknowledge an attempt to communicate and see all behaviour as a communication.
- Give definite instructions, not vague choices like 'would you like to …?', 'Shall we …'.

- Avoid negative language of instruction. **Teach what to do rather than what not to do**; e.g. “walk” rather than “stop running”.
- Check for understanding; do not assume that because pupil has repeated an instruction, they have understood it.
- Slow down the pace; be prepared to repeat things individually to the pupil.
- Avoid using vague terms like “later” or “maybe”.
- Prepare for change. Be as predictable as possible (visual timetable).
- Offer consistent daily routines.
- Offer maximum consistency of approach from **all** staff working with the child.
- Avoid surprises; prepare thoroughly and in advance for special activities. Be aware that even minimal changes can really be massive for autistic pupils.
- If a pupil has a special or intense interest; use this as a motivator and if possible, link it to learning.
- Avoid giving too many options, especially if there are not any options; be absolutely consistent.
- Identify what the pupil likes and dislikes socially and use this when planning activities; using ‘first (work) then (reward)’.
- Pre-teach new topic vocabulary and word meaning with use of visual clues to support e.g. infographics, icons, photographs and shortened texts.
- Provide a workstation that provides opportunities for: 1:1, individualised curriculum content, with access to learning tools and equipment to support independence.
- Have all necessary equipment available for learning tasks as it may take longer for them to organise these or use in the correct order.
- Do not do for pupils what they can do for themselves – they may just need extra time for some activities such as writing or cutting and sticking/art.
- Ensure that both staff and peers allow as much independence as possible.

Strategies for Sensory Processing and integration:



- Understand the pupil’s individual sensory needs and how and when these impact them.
- Know what can create sensory overload and make note of any times or activities that are particularly triggering.
- At times of dysregulation, have a clear and agreed strategies to support the individual.
- Remember that some increase in unusual behaviour may be an indicator of stress or overload.
- Give the pupil space and time to calm if anxious.
- Use a seating plan, in consultation with the child or young person, that takes into consideration; sensory needs, peer relationships, proximity to others, access to support and their preferences.
- Reduce distractions and sensory overloads; noise, smell, vision, proximity…
- Keep classroom well organised and free of clutter. Label equipment consistently to encourage increased independence.
- Plan into teaching opportunity for movement breaks.
- Accept fidgeting as part of the child or young person’s need for movement or as part of self-regulation, especially when seated for extended periods of time.