

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

misunderstands instructions

takes longer than peers to follow instructions

watches peers to understand what to do

seems to ignore what others have said

has difficulty remembering new information

talks about something else when you ask them a question

waits for you to offer them help after you have explained what to do to the class

interprets what you say literally
doesn't understand sarcasm or jokes

What you can try:

- Reduce distractions in class e.g. close the door if it's noisy in the corridor, reduce clutter where the child sits.
- Get down to the child's level.
- Say the child's name before talking to them or cue them in visually to gain their attention.
- Use visuals as you talk to support understanding e.g. symbols, written words, showing what to do, photos, objects, videos, Makaton, communication boards, the child's communication system.
- Use a visual timetable throughout the day.
- Use a now/next board or a task board to break instructions down and to support the child to know what to do.
- Slow down your own talking and pause between chunks of information.
- Use simple words when giving instructions and repeat key information.
- Give the child extra time to process what has been said (up to 10 seconds).
- Tell the child what they should do, rather than what they shouldn't e.g. 'keep your books on your table', rather than 'don't put your books away'.
- Give instructions in the order you want the child to carry them out and break them down into smaller parts e.g. say 'get the blue box... then line up' rather than saying 'before you line up get the blue box'.
- Encourage the child to use strategies to support them to remember key points e.g. counting the things they need to remember on their fingers, saying it again in their head, picturing what they need to do in their head.
- Encourage the child to let you know when they have not understood.
- Set up systems for them to do this in class e.g. red/green cards on table, 1 minute peer talk to check everyone knows what to do.
- Check understanding by asking open-ended questions e.g. 'what do you have to do?'
- Link new ideas to previous experiences e.g. 'the goblin was fierce... does anyone remember who else was fierce in the book we read last week?'
- Explain non-literal language e.g. 'I'm only pulling your leg... that means I'm joking'.