

Autism / Social Communication Differences

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

needs extra time to understand what has been said before they can answer.

takes language very literally and struggle with jokes, sarcasm or hints.

finds long or complicated instructions difficult unless broken into small steps.

misunderstands facial expressions, tone of voice or hidden meanings.

uses limited spoken language or repeat phrases they've heard.

even if fluent, may talk mainly about their own interests or find back-and-forth conversation tricky.

struggles to ask for help or explain what they need.

finds turn-taking in conversation difficult or does not notice when it's their turn to speak.

finds it hard to understand eye contact, gestures or body language.

might not pick up on unwritten social rules unless taught directly.

struggles to understand what others are thinking or feeling.

misunderstands expectations in different social situations.

prefers to play alone or alongside others instead of directly with them.

Communication and Interaction

What you can try:

- Use concrete, experiential and consistent visual supports.
- Emphasise using and applying skills across a variety of contexts with different people.
- Use language that is adapted, with visual supports to promote understanding.
- Plan an adapted curriculum with modifications that include a focus on developing expressive and/or receptive communication skills and reducing anxiety.
- Use daily visual supports such as objects of reference, photographs, symbols.
- Pre-teach and post-teach new vocabulary.
- Post-teach to consolidate and reinforce understanding.
- Check the child's understanding at key points.
- Plan opportunities for the child to make contributions within lessons, either verbally or using non-verbal communication methods (such as signs, symbols and gestures).
- Develop and promote peer support systems which provide mutual respect as well as supporting understanding.
- Use a variety of methods to enable the CYP to develop an understanding of vocabulary related to new topics, including the use of digital media, real-life experience, community visitors and educational visits.
- Use flexible groupings which include positive peer models, with input and oversight from the class teacher/additional adults.
- Provide multi-sensory learning opportunities, utilising a range of sensory tools.
- Use visuals to reflect on and understand social situations, e.g. Social Stories™ or Comic Strip Conversations™.
- Plan in learning breaks and additional time for information processing needs.
- Use flexibly sized groupings focused on developing communication & interaction skills
- Model and teach social relationships explicitly, including the language used within social interactions linked to real situations.
- Use choice boards, writing frames, story boards, cue cards or sequencing cards
- Use task boards, sequence strips, visual timetables, word banks, sticky notes, digital recording equipment or apps to help the child organise their work.
- Use literal language and explain any colloquial language or figures of speech.
- Ensure a One Page Profile is in place detailing strengths, developed with the child and their Parent Carers, and used by all staff. Sharing the One Page Profile with all relevant staff.