

## **Achieving successful transitions into school or a new classroom for children with autism**

Transitions into a new school or another classroom can be confusing for many children with autism. For those starting school it is a huge change, going into an environment with lots of unfamiliar children, noise, rules and routine. These things can be very stressful for any child with autism and they can cause high levels of anxiety, and possibly lead to inappropriate or challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour can occur when the child experiences “overload” and cannot cope with the sudden changes, a new environment and the sensory stimuli (noise etc).

Preparation is a key factor to making the transition as easy as possible. As well as preparing the child we must also prepare the classroom environment, the other children, and the teacher. A team meeting prior to the start of the term is important to make sure everyone is following a consistent program. The school and teacher need to know as much as possible about the child:

Sensory sensitivities - is the child sensitive to light, noise etc.

Diet - is the child allergic to certain foods, or do they need to follow a certain type of diet.

Toileting - is the child able to use the toilet without help.

Medication - does the child require daily medication.

Communication - is the child verbal, and what is their main form of communication (e.g. Speech, visuals, sign etc).

Motivators and agitators - are there certain things that can be used to help motivate the child and are their things that may upset the child.

Strategies for calming or tackling inappropriate or challenging behaviour - are there strategies for calming the child e.g. Music, deep pressure, timeout etc.

Visual strategies - does the child use visuals and/or visual schedules, and how do these need to be set-up in the classroom.

Classroom set-up - think about seating, lighting, door locks, access to cupboards, access to food and drink etc

School set-up - is there a chance the child may wonder from school premises, is the school appropriately fenced and is the child supervised at break-time.



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For the pupil, it is important to visit the school prior to starting. Spending time in the classroom with other children and becoming familiar with the environment may also be appropriate. It may be worthwhile starting part time and only attending for a morning each day or for 2 days a week, and then increasing this over a period of time. It all depends on the child and how easily they can adapt to new environments and experiences..

It may be helpful for the parent or teacher to explain to the rest of the class that the new pupil has autism and describe how this may effect his behaviour, so the other children have an understanding. For younger children a social story can be used.

See [www.icommunicatetherapy.com](http://www.icommunicatetherapy.com) for information on Autism, adapting the classroom and curriculum, using social stories and visuals and facilitating communication.



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To learn more about Autism, classroom strategies, and communication, click this link to see our [Book Shop](#) and look at, and purchase books.

### **Suggested Reading:**

**1001 Great Ideas for Teaching and Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders** by Veronica Zysk and Ellen Notbohm

**Enabling Communication in Children With Autism** by Carol Potter and Chris Whittaker

**Sensory Perceptual Issues in Autism and Asperger Syndrome: Different Sensory Experiences, Different Perceptual Worlds** by Olga Bogdashina

**Using Intensive Interaction and Sensory Integration: A Handbook for Those Who Support People With Severe Autistic Spectrum Disorder** by Phoebe Caldwell and Jane Horwood

**Functional Behavior Assessment for People With Autism: Making Sense of Seemingly Senseless Behavior** by Beth A., Ph.D. Glasberg

**Visual Supports for People With Autism: A Guide for Parents and Professionals** by Marlene J. Cohen and Donna L. Sloan

**Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community: Strategies for Individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome** by Jennifer L. Savner, Brenda Smith Hyles, and Brenda Smith Myles

**A Picture's Worth: PECS and Other Visual Communication Strategies in Autism (Topics in Autism)** by Andy, Ph.D. Bondy and Lori Frost

**Solving Behavior Problems in Autism (Visual Strategies Series)** by Linda A. Hodgdon

**Visual Language in Autism** by Howard C. Shane and Sharon Weiss-Kapp

**The New Social Story Book : Illustrated Edition** by Carol Gray

**My Social Stories Book** by Abbie Leigh White, Carol Gray, and Sean McAndrew

**The Social Skills Picture Book Teaching play, emotion, and communication to children with autism** by Dr. Jed Baker

**Comic Strip Conversations** by Carol Gray