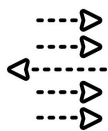


The following tips aim to support autistic children or those experiencing social communication difficulties during the wider opening of schools. As with all generic advice, the individual needs of pupils will need to be taken into account and adaptations made as necessary.



Pre-warn for change

Give clear information on what will be the **same** and what will be **different**.

Use visuals to support this e.g. pictures, social stories, videos on the website. Offer a pre-visit if this is practical.



Allow for recovery

Find out what the pupil's experience of lockdown has been. Build on the positives and allow for the recovery of relationships, social skills, resilience within the school environment, learning, etc.



Maintain 'what works'

As far as possible, keep doing the things that were supporting a pupil prior to lockdown. Ensure these are communicated to staff supporting the pupil. If these need to be adapted, explain the change and the reasons for this to the pupil.



Routine and Structure

This can be key to maintaining regulation. Use visual timetables, now and next, pictures of 'what it looks like' for routines such as lining up, hand washing etc. This will be especially important for new rules and expectations.



Support transitions

Pre-warn for changes in the day using timetables, timers, verbal and visual warnings, transition objects (e.g. taking a ball onto the playground). Some children might need learning breaks or sensory/mindful activities in between tasks.



Be aware of sensory stressors

Children who are sensitive to noise, touch, smells, light etc. and have become used to a lower arousal environment might find these amplified when back in school. Use headphones, quiet spaces (if available) etc.



Watch for anxiety

Be aware of the signals that a child is anxious. These will be individual and may be communicated through behaviour. Identify supportive strategies and provide individual resources. Liaise closely with families and agencies.



Support social interaction

Being with a larger group of people may be stressful after a long period of time at home. Re-establish contact with a familiar adult and supportive peers where possible. Have contingency plans where time out would normally be offered.



Facilitate communication

Be aware that pupils' experience of communication at home will have been different. They may now need additional support to manage face to face interaction and to communicate their needs.

For additional guidance on specific autism friendly strategies and resources to support these, please refer to the Autism Service 'Key Factors for Quality First Practice' which has been shared with all schools.