

Covid 19: continuing to support pupils with SEN/ASD

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Dr Michele Dunleavy, Webinar, Mayo Education Centre, September 2020

Managing environmental changes for SEN

- Sensory integration difficulties with or without ASD
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment

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Remember

- We have all experienced stress as a result of Covid 19
- This is normal
- We have to acknowledge our own stress
- We have to allow the pupils to acknowledge and discuss their stress
- Fine balance between over discussion on stress and helping pupils feel reassured about returning to school

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Ease back in gently

- Begin with academic exercises that all pupils can relate to.
- Through discussion get the pupils to think about what they are good at
- Get to know about the activities pupil's did during their time at home
- What did you learn while you were at home?, how did you learn that?

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NEPS

- This might be a good time to go back to the NEPS Continuum of Support –Resource Pack for Teacher



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Basic Needs Checklist

- Physiological needs – is the child returning to school with adequate food/clothing
- Safety needs – physical and psychological protection
- Belonging needs – feeling part of the class
- Esteem needs – positive feedback

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My thoughts about school checklist Adapted from NEPS (2007)

- My friends are:
- The things I like about coming back to school are:
- The things I missed about school when I was at home:
- The things I miss about not being at home:
- The things I am good at: these can be home or school
- The things I need help with: these can be home or school
- The things that make me happy in class:
- What I like about break and lunch time:
- Things I need help with: give hints e. g. making friends, remembering to wash my hands, or academic
- Adults can help by: - give hints e. g. giving me a visual cue
- The class rules are:

Remember to tell the child that everyone is excited and a bit worried about being back in school. This will help to reassure the child.

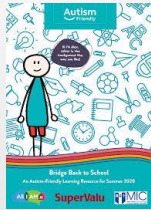
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DES guidelines for returning to school

- For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement.
- Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) - be aware of sensory difficulties

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Bridge back to school



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Teachers of children with SEN/ASD

- We need to understand and acknowledge that everyone will feel anxious about the return to school
- School is now a very different place – children will not be going in and out of the classroom as they were before Covid (BC)
- The first few weeks will be less about the academic learning and more about helping pupils cope with the changes in school

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Children with SEN/ASD

- Pupils with ASD/SEN may not understand stress
- They may feel that there is something wrong but may not be able to verbalise these feelings
- They will need a lot of reassurance
- They will need time to re-adjust to being back in school

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Knowledge is a powerful coping tool

- First teach pupils how to recognise and name feelings
- Secondly teach coping strategies
- Thirdly teach them how to use these coping strategies independently

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How do you feel?

- A pupil, especially those with SEN (and infants) may not have the vocabulary to answer this question.
- Start by teaching this vocabulary
- Teach them about the physical manifestations of stress, this will also help them to tell us how they feel

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Visuals – how are you feeling?



Happy

Sad

Embarrassed

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How do you feel?



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How do you feel (SPD)



This is particularly useful for pupils with sensory processing difficulties

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Visual – how do you feel today?

How are you feeling?



Usually better to use photographs of real people – easier to identify with the facial expressions. Some children with ASD will identify with cartoon figures and others won't.

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Visual – expanded vocabulary

A List of Emotions

Go beyond the obvious to identify exactly what you're feeling.

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilt	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

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Physical manifestations

- Butterfly feeling in the tummy
- Heart beating faster
- Pain in tummy
- Headache
- Hands shaking
- Feeling sick

Signs of stress and anxiety

We may need to teach pupils with SEN that these are all normal and teach strategies to overcome stress and anxiety

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Physical manifestations

- By teaching pupils how to recognise the physical symptoms of stress we will help them to get in touch with their emotional state. This helps to move the process from their gut to their head
- This will help them to verbalise their feelings and begin to work through them

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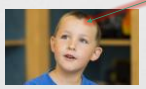
What does this mean?

Do I have?:

- Headache
- Sore tummy
- Heart beating fast
- Hands sweaty
- Red, warm face
- Tight muscles
- Feeling afraid in the dark

What does this mean?

- I am anxious or stressed
- I need to remember my calming strategies
- I can talk to the teacher or SNA if I need help



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Teach relaxation techniques (body)

Sitting in their chair get the children to:

- Slow deep breath in – count to 5, breathe out slowly – count to 5.
- Shake out arms and legs
- Tighten muscles in your hands by clenching your fist – now release – feel the difference
- Squeeze your eyes tightly for the count of 5 – relax and feel the difference
- Close teeth tightly together for the count of 5 – relax and feel the difference

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Relaxation techniques (body) continued

Sit on the floor:

- Squeeze legs together and point toes away from you – hold for 5- relax and feel the difference

Repeat all the exercises 5 times at each session

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Teach relaxation techniques (mind)

Sit comfortably in your chair:

- Visualise yourself in a place you feel secure
- Ask – what sounds can you hear when you are in this place?
- What can you smell when you are in this place?
- How do you feel when you are in this place?
- When you get upset you can think about this place to help calm down
- Tell yourself “I can calm myself down when I get upset”

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Additional relaxation techniques

- Watching bubbles float can be very soothing for children with SEN
- 'Feely box' textures that can help calm –for all but especially for children with sensory integration difficulties

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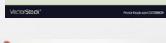
Organisation in Covid environment

- Mark pupil's belongings with the same colour sticker
- Markers on floor to indicate the pupil's area
- If they share a desk mark out pupil's area
- Visual supports for packing and unpacking their bag
- Visual supports for hanging up their coat
- Visual supports for lining up 2 metres apart



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Visual Supports



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Visual supports



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Youtube videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Srig59LN6ik> – teaching children how to put on a mask
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9QTxUkJE0v> – song why is everyone wearing a mask
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEe-N0vrVv0> – wearing a mask
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoXxmzKdick> – how to teach children about Covid 19

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Sensory integration

- It will be particularly important to be aware that some pupils with SEN / ASD will have difficulty with sensory integration.
- This may make it difficult for the pupil to use hand sanitizer/wear face covering etc

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Sensory Integration (SI)

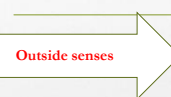


- Each day we receive information from our senses.
- Our senses give us information about the physical status of our body and the environment around us
- We use this information to organise our behaviour to successfully interact in our world
- Our brain organises this information to enable us to function in everyday situations
- When processing is disordered the brain is unable to organise sensory messages i.e. to integrate and sort all the messages that may be received simultaneously

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Senses

Senses



1. Touch
2. Smell
3. Taste
4. Sight
5. Sound



1. Vestibular
2. Proprioception

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Sensory Diet

- A balanced sensory diet is a planned and scheduled activity programme developed by an Occupation Therapist. The programme is designed to meet the needs of a specific child's nervous system.
- The diet will help the child to become more focused , adaptable and skilful
- The diet will have a positive impact on the physical and emotional needs of the child
- Specifically designed to include a combination of alerting, organising and calming activities

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Sensory checklist from NHS

- https://www.nhstaysidecdn.scot.nhs.uk/NHSTaysideWeb/idcplg?IdcService=GET_SECURE_FILE&Revision=web&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=prod_247894
- This will help identify if the pupil has a sensory difficulty.

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Clear directions

- Ensure there is a clear timetable of events
- Keep to this as much as possible (for the first few weeks)
- Have as much consistency of routine as possible until the child gets used to being back in school
- May need additional visual schedules to help learn the new routines
- Remember to add putting on face masks/washing and sanitising hands on the child's timetable/schedule
- In the first week try to reduce the number of transitions as these can be stressful and difficult for pupils with SEN/ASD
- Give as much advanced warning as possible when transitioning
- Young pupils (particularly) may revert to using a transitioning object

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Clear directions

- Mark out the pupil's own space – give plenty of visual markers for social distance
- Teach the pupil about social distance and what the markers mean
- Put a sticker (e.g. yellow sticker) on student's belongings and teach him or her that they cannot touch things that do not have a yellow sticker
- If you are wearing a mask remember that children with hearing impairment will not be able to lip read

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Unfamiliar environment

- All the sights/sounds/smells etc. of school will be unfamiliar to the child after a prolonged absence
- There will be new smells e. g. sanitizer
- There will be new ways of working, they may not be going out to the SET teacher
- They will have to remember to keep their distance and not be able to share things

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Hearing impairment

- Be aware that pupils with hearing impairment need to see the teacher's face for context, visual cues and lip reading.
- Masks and face shields conceal the face, and voice will be muffled– additional visual cues needed
- If pupils are wearing face coverings or are socially distanced – teacher needs to repeat what other pupils have said
- Social and emotional needs

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Visual Impairment

- The other senses will be heightened
- Tactile signage needed
- Braille signage if possible (where appropriate)
- Additional obstacles
- Additional sanitization needed where technological items are used
- Social and emotional needs

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Summary

- Remember that we are all living with a new way of doing things – be gentle with yourself and each other
- Use visual supports to help pupils with SEN/ASD to navigate their new environment
- Be very aware of pupils who may have sensory integration difficulties
- If pupils are happy and relaxed they will find it easier to learn

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