



Children with Social Communication difficulties and Autism returning to school.

As children gradually return to school - whatever that might look like – there will be challenges for everyone, but for children and young people with Social Communication difficulties and Autism this will be even more challenging particularly as change and unpredictability can result in heightened anxiety that can be displayed in a range of ways. To help the children, staff will need to provide a calm, consistent, structured approach using key strategies. This will enable the children to process and understand their transition back into a very different school life with new rules and expectations.

We have identified some key strategies to support you in school.

	Challenges	Strategies that may reduce the challenges
Visual preparation and routines will be really important given that there will be significant changes to overcome.	The classroom layout has changed The student may be in a different classroom. There are different adults in the room Different start dates Changes to the way that children arrive, leave school, lunchtime, breaks and assemblies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send photographs home showing the changes • Visual timetables will be really important to establish new routines. • Countdown to school calendar to have at home. • Encourage parents/ carers to establish routines at home, getting up, dressed, having breakfast in time for the school routine as these may have been more relaxed during school closure. • New visual rules displayed/ visual reminders – keeping 2m distance, handwashing on arrival before eating, after eating etc. • Free resources Coronavirus Widgit Symbols • Handwashing visuals by the handwashing facilities Washing your hands - symbols and posters
Social Stories	The different rules in school – not being able to hug their friends, frequent hand washing, not being in school with all of their friends, not sharing resources, wearing masks etc.	Social Stories support children to understand the changes in school, provide reassurance and reduce anxiety. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources • Create your own social story by using a free 30 day trial using Widgit Online https://www.widgit.com/products/widgit-online/index.htm

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		Write a social story in preparation in case the school needs to close suddenly due to an outbreak of COVID 19.
Emotional Wellbeing	Anxiety resulting from these changes, concerns about catching the virus, difficulties understanding what is happening and why, managing demands and sensory overload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe space, children may need to take a break more frequently as they phase back into school. • Encourage children to think about the positives in school. Regular check in by staff. Regular times to talk/ play with an adult as part of the daily timetable. Increased opportunities for movement and sensory regulation. Having time with special interests will also support regulation. • For those children in Year 6 who may not be able to have the usual celebrations at the end of Year 6 provide a goodbye book using photographs.

See more information to help you to support children with SEND returning to school on the [Help for Covid 19 - STePS](#) page.

If you need further advice and support supporting a child with social communication difficulties or with a diagnosis of Autism please contact StepsAdmin@derby.gov.uk and one of the team will contact you.

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