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## Back to school

Returning to school, or indeed beginning school for the first time, is a time of enormous change for autistic pupils and involves new routines, environments and people.

Here we have gathered together a number of articles and resources for school staff on how best to support autistic pupils on their return to school. Some of the information is for all ages but we have also included specific sections for pre-school, primary and secondary ages. The document also contains some useful information for parents too.

### General information

The National Autistic Society (NAS) have produced an [information pack for school staff](#) which includes information about autism, how it may impact on children and young people in education settings, information on strategies, interventions and useful resources from the NAS and other organisations.

Dean Da Conceicao, Autism Helpline Adviser at the NAS, offers some [advice for teachers on what to do if they suspect a child they teach may be autistic](#).

Autism specialist and autistic adult Sarah Hendrickx discusses the topic of [anxiety and autism in education](#) and offers some approaches to help support pupils.

In this interview Jude Ragan, former Headteacher at Queensmill School, discusses how to [spot signs of anxiety in autistic pupils](#) and what staff can do to relieve it.

Sarah-Jane Critchley of the Autism Education Trust, explores when and how to support a young person [in deciding whether to disclose their autism diagnosis at school or college](#).

The National Autistic Society has materials that can help teachers [to plan a lesson or school assembly on autism awareness](#)

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Phoebe Caldwell explores the [sensory challenges that autistic pupils may face in the classroom](#), and outlines ways in which staff can reduce sensory overload.

Andy Cutting, the NAS specialist exclusions advisor, offers some tips for [overcoming the barriers to inclusion in education](#).

Ruth Fidler, Education Consultant and author, discusses some of the [difficulties facing pupils with pathological demand avoidance](#) (PDA) and how staff can best support them.

## **Pre-school**

The National Autistic Society have produced some [information and advice for professionals working in an early years setting](#). It describes some behaviours to be aware of, the challenges an autistic child may face and offer tips on introducing them to pre-school or nursery. The information also offers some advice on adapting the curriculum, and training for nursery and pre-school staff.

Amanda Haydock, a nursery teacher working with autistic children, outlines the approaches their [pre-school setting uses to develop communication, social and play skills](#).

## **Primary school**

Jacky Wyatt, a Reception Teacher in a mainstream primary school, gives us her advice on [the transition to primary school for autistic children](#).

Rebecca Wood, Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, explores [how autistic children in mainstream primary school access tests](#) and discusses how inclusion can be improved.

Sandra Craig, Principal Teacher of Additional Special Needs at Riverside School, gives an insight into The Autism Provision Gang - a group of children who [lead the school on autism awareness and acceptance](#).

The Autism Education Trust have produced [a peer awareness pack for ages 9 to 12 year olds](#) which involves a comic-strip adventure.

Louise Elliott, Specialist Speech and Language and Behaviour Specialist at Grange Park School, discusses a research project looking at [the needs of autistic children transitioning to secondary school](#).

## **Secondary school**

Victoria Hatton, ASD inclusion teacher in a mainstream secondary school, explores how to [support children and young people on their first day back at school](#).

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Lynn McCann, an autism specialist, teacher and consultant, gives her tips for secondary school teachers [on preparing an autism-friendly classroom](#).

Victoria Honeybourne, a Senior Advisory Teacher for Speech, Language and Communication Needs has some tips and advice for teachers on [recognising some of the less obvious differences in autistic communication](#).

Middletown Centre for Autism have produced an [online Teenage resource](#), aimed at supporting young autistic people, their families and the professionals working with them.

Ryan Bradley is a Research Fellow at the Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER), and his research focuses on the [inclusion of autistic students in mainstream secondary schools through peer mentoring](#).

Dr Catherine Tissot, Head of the Institute of Education at University of the Reading, gives us her top 5 autism tips on [sex education for autistic children](#).

Rachel Babbidge, Transition Support Service Coordinator at the National Autistic Society, explains how to use a [person centred planning approach to support young people as they transition into adulthood](#).

## **Gender and ethnicity**

Autistic girls may be better at masking their difficulties and tend to interact socially more often than autistic boys, leading to many being undiagnosed. The following is some information and advice on supporting autistic girls in school settings.

The NAS has some general information on [how autism may present differently in girls](#).

NASEN have published a [short guide about girls and autism for educational professionals](#) which includes advice on supporting autistic girls, and perspectives from parents and professionals.

Victoria Honeybourne presents the results of some research she did [looking into the hidden difficulties of autistic girls at school](#).

Sarah Wild is Head Teacher at Limpsfield Grange School, a secondary special school for girls with social communication and interaction needs. Sarah discusses [how autism presents in girls and how they support autistic pupils at the school](#), particularly with managing anxiety.

Education professionals working with minority ethnic families with autistic children will have cultural differences to consider. In this article by Olatokunbo Bankole we find out [how professionals can best support African families with an autistic child at school](#).

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## Parents

Some advice and strategies from the NAS [for parents whose child is about to begin or change schools](#).

Gianna Colizza, teacher and Chair of a local autism support group, discusses her approach to [supporting parents after a child's autism diagnosis](#).

## Useful resources

### MyWorld

[MyWorld is the NAS school and nursery resource programme](#) that helps you support autistic children in your school or nursery. Sign up to receive free emails on a range of different topics such as socialising and autism, sensory and behaviour issues and transition.

### Network Autism education groups

The following Network Autism groups are for professionals working in nurseries, primary and secondary schools. View school resources shared by other professionals, or why not add your own tools and strategies to share with others.

Group content is only available to Network Autism members. It's free and quick to register so please do join us!

- [Nursery autism resources](#)
- [Education professionals in primary schools](#)
- [Education professionals in secondary schools](#)

### Autism Education Trust

The [Autism Education Trust](#) has a range of toolkits and good practice for education professionals, including a [transition toolkit](#).

### Related resources from Network Autism

Corinna Laurie, specialist occupational therapist, explains [what occupation therapy is and how it can help autistic children](#).

Some autistic children and young people may be transgender. Wenn Lawson explores [what gender dysphoria is](#) and touches on his own experience as an autistic transgendered person.

Lucy Sanctuary, a paediatric speech and language therapist, [discusses the reasons why autistic young people may self-harm](#) and how professionals can help and support them.

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Dr Roberto Tuchman, Department of Neurology at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, and Angela Barker, Support Worker at the National Autistic Society, share their knowledge on the [relationship between epilepsy and autism](#).

An archive of Network Autism interviews with [professionals including Dr Judith Gould, Tony Attwood and Sarah Hendrickx](#)

Read the latest updates on [autism research and new autism publications](#), shared from the NAS information update service.