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## Back to school: autism resources for school staff

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 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.

They also have materials that can help teachers [to plan a lesson or school assembly on autism awareness](#).

Dean Da Conceicao, Autism Helpline Adviser at the National Autistic Society, 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.

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

A free downloadable booklet by the National Autistic Society provides practical strategies for [delivering sport and physical activity to autistic people](#).

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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 National Autistic Society specialist exclusions advisor, offers some tips for [overcoming the barriers to inclusion in education](#).

The National Autistic Society and Autism Education Trust have produced new [teachers' resources to avoid excluding autistic pupils](#).

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.

Middletown Centre for Autism, partners of Network Autism, have developed an [online resource for education professionals](#) offering a range of educational resources and ideas for good autism practice.

## **Pre-school**

The National Autistic Society have produced some [information and advice for professionals working in an early years setting](#). It describes the challenges an autistic child may face and offers 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](#).

Lynn McCann, an autism specialist, teacher and consultant, has some advice on her website about [preparing an autism-friendly primary classroom](#).

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.

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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](#).

Lynn McCann, an autism specialist, teacher and consultant, gives her [top 5 tips for teaching secondary school autistic students](#).

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.

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](#).

Network Autism has collated a range of resources aimed at [supporting autistic students before and during exam time](#).

Martyn Brown and Rachel from the National Autistic Society offer advice and information on [supporting autistic students into university](#), including what and where to study and preparing for university life.

## Gender and ethnicity

Autistic girls may be better at masking their difficulties and may 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 National Autistic Society 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.

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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.

Joe Butler, special educational needs and disability consultant and trainer, explores how best to [support trans or gender questioning autistic pupils in schools](#) and gives advice and practical support.

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](#).

## Parents

Some advice and strategies from the National Autistic Society [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](#).

Kabie Brook, an autistic parent and chairperson/co-founder of Autism Rights Group Highland (ARGH), gives [advice for professionals on how to support autistic parents](#).

## Useful resources

### MyWorld

[MyWorld is the National Autistic Society 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 groups

The following Network Autism groups may be useful for educational professionals. View a range of resources shared by others 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!

- [Autism and education](#)

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- [Women and girls](#)
- [Interventions and approaches](#)
- [Autism and mental health](#)

### Autism Education Trust

The Autism Education Trust is a not-for-profit programme led by the National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism. They offer [training and resources for the three education phases](#) – early years, school and post-16. Some resources are specific to England.

### **Related resources from Network Autism**

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

Lucy Skye has had a recent diagnosis of autism and in this article she gives a very personal and fascinating insight into [some of the challenges she experiences with food and eating](#). Lucy discusses the sensory aspects of eating, the relationship between anxiety and controlled eating and how these can be understood and supported by those around her.

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

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