



**Autism  
Education  
Trust**

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# Working together with your child's school

A guide for parents and carers



Supported by:



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**This guide is for parents and carers of autistic children to help identify what is important in their education. Parents and carers can then use this guide to help staff understand what their priorities are for their child's education.**

### How to use this guide

There are four main sections in the guide. Each section has a number of statements which you can rate to identify what is most important for your child at school.

**Your child**

**The school**

**Adapting learning for your child**

**Supporting your child at school**

### There is a 4 point rating scale

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

You may rate a number of the statements as essential or important for your child. We recommend that you choose between 1 to 3 of these as priorities to work on with school staff. The **next steps** form at the end of each section can be used to share this information with staff to identify ways of working effectively together.

It is useful to try to prioritise what is absolutely essential for your child and to discuss how this might be acted upon with the staff. This does not mean that other areas need to be left out with nothing being done. It may be that other areas are revisited in the future.

### When to use the guide

You can use this guide when your child is starting a new school or setting to start the conversation of what is important to you as a parent. You may also like to use this guide if you feel there are certain areas that their current school could improve on. It is important that you work closely with the school so that they have a good understanding of your child's SEND.

# Top tips in working with the school

## 1. Identify the Key People in the school

Establish with the school which staff are the best people to contact if you have any information or concerns to share. This may be the class teacher, the SENCo, support staff or the Headteacher.

## 2. Make contact with staff early and make it positive

Contact key people before your child starts school and meet them regularly, as and when needed. Do not wait until your child has a problem. Parents who share relevant information help school staff to prevent problems occurring. Try to stay positive and calm as discussions are easier and more fruitful when staff and parents are in this state.

## 3. Use an agreed method to communicate with staff

Agree with the staff the best method for contacting staff and for them to contact you. This may be by email, by phone, by letter, by text or a combination of these. Before meetings it is helpful to write down a list of things you would like to discuss. You could consider keeping a home/school book that you and the school write in daily.

## 4. Keep your messages short and focused

Keep your written comments, e-mails or voicemail messages short and state your main point(s) clearly. Follow up with information about how and when staff can best reply to your message. If you think a short message will not work, ask for a meeting with staff to discuss your concerns in more detail.

## 5. Be clear about dates, actions and responsibilities

Parent-staff discussions often result in an action plan. You need to clarify who (teacher, child, parent, other professional) will do what (make an assessment, help develop friendships, check the arrangements for the school trip) and when (every day, weekly, monthly). At the end of a meeting or discussion, it is helpful to confirm the list of actions and the date of the next review.

## 6. Be patient, but be persistent

Most school staff will try to acknowledge contact from parents within 48 hours or sooner if the issue is urgent. If you do not get a reply, send a brief follow-up e-mail or call the school office to ask to have a message delivered to the staff member. If you feel there is a lack of response from staff then you can discuss this with the head teacher or principal of the school.

## 7. Ask staff to explain the reasons behind their actions and decisions

Allow staff the opportunity to explain the circumstances and reasons for their decisions about your child. If necessary, take time to think over the explanation and your response. If the explanation does not satisfy you, explain your reasons for this. Agree next steps for resolving any issues with the school.

## 8. Ask a friend, relative or a professional to attend meetings at the school

It is often useful to ask another person to come along to meetings at the school as it can be difficult to listen to what is being said as well as to think of the questions you might want to ask. Another person can remind you of what you wanted to get from the meeting.

## 9. Ahead of meetings with the school familiarise yourself with the SEND Code of Practice 2014

This document provides statutory guidance on the SEND system for children and young people aged 0 to 25. Where the code uses the word 'must', it means that this is something the school/LA is required to do by law.

Where it uses 'should', it means that they must consider the guidance.



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# Your child

Please rate the following statements:

1. Staff find out from your child on a regular basis, which aspects of school s/he enjoys and finds challenging.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

3. Your child is motivated to engage in activities by focusing on their strengths, special interests and favourite activities.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

2. Information about your child's strengths, interests, needs, emotional well-being and learning is obtained from your child, from yourselves and other professionals involved with your child.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

4. Staff assess your child's ability to engage socially with other children and how s/he feels about work and play with other children.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

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5. Staff assess your child's sensory differences and how these might be addressed.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

7. The school take steps to safeguard your child from teasing and bullying.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

6. Staff are confident in knowing how to support my child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

8. Staff understand and take account of your child's health needs e.g. eating, drinking and toileting.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

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9. Your child's actions and behaviour are understood and managed from their perspective. Staff are aware of their triggers and put strategies in place to reduce these.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

11. Staff consult with you and your child about their preferred means of communicating and use this daily.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

10. Staff have a good understanding of your child's autism and how this can become a barrier to learning at times.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

12. Your child is carefully prepared for all transitions from one activity to another and when moving classes or schools.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

13. Staff understand that your child is often highly stressed or anxious and have some strategies to reduce this.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

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# Next steps

## Your child 3 priorities

Name:

Date:

**First priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Second priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Third priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:



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## The school

Please rate the following statements:

14. The school allocates a named professional to work with you on shared goals and priorities for your child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

16. The school provides training on autism for all staff, including support staff and non-contact staff.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

15. The school has a named person (autism lead or specialist) with general information on autism and specific information about your child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

17. There is good and open communication between all the staff that work with your child and with yourselves, as parents

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

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18. The school has a number of ways of informing you about your child (eg reports, training, email, DVD, photos)

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

20. Supply staff and new staff are informed about the needs of your child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

19. Your child is given opportunities and support to develop relationships with other children in a way that suits them

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

21. Parents/carers have a dedicated time and space to meet as a group.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

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## Next steps

### The school

#### 3 priorities

Name:

Date:

**First priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Second priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Third priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

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# Adapting learning for your child

Please rate the following statements:

22. Your child has a safe and quiet place to go to within the classroom or school when needed.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

24. The learning environments are structured, understandable and predictable.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

23. Objects, pictures, photos, symbols, written lists are used with your child to ensure that the sequence of activities during the day is predictable.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

25. Staff have a calm, quiet, empathic and consistent manner with your child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

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26. Staff give your child time to process and respond to instructions.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

28. Staff are flexible and will make adjustments to activities, lessons and homework, as necessary, for your child.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

27. The school fosters calm, low arousal learning environments

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

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## Next steps

### Adapting learning for your child

#### 3 priorities

Name:

Date:

**First priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Second priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Third priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

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# Supporting your child at school

Please rate the following statements:

29. Your child is given advanced warning of any changes to staffing, the timetable or familiar routines.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

in free time such as break and lunch times both within the building and outdoors.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

30. Your child's engagement and enjoyment of activities and lessons is observed and action taken, where needed.

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

32. Staff work to include your child in all activities offered to other children, within and after school, which your child would like to join (this includes school trips).

Essential  
Important  
Not very important  
Not necessary

Additional notes:

31. Your child is supported to know what to do

33. Your child is taught daily living skills to promote independence (eg cooking;

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shopping; clothes washing; use of public transport).

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

35. Your child is helped to understand autism and how this affects them and to have a positive view of autism and themselves.

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

34. Your child is helped to understand what s/he reads and access arrangements for tests and exams are given or applied for, where necessary

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

36. Staff promote positive attitudes towards autism and have high expectations of all pupils

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:

37. Staff work on helping your child to understand and manage his/her emotions

- Essential
- Important
- Not very important
- Not necessary

Additional notes:



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## Next steps

### Supporting your child at school

#### 3 priorities

Name:

Date:

**First priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Second priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:

**Third priority** Statement number

Actions to be taken together with the school:



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