

Parent Guidance for Supporting Children with ASD during Coronavirus or Non-Attendance at School

Be Aware of Emotional and Physical Changes

Pupils with ASD may struggle to express how they feel during this uncertain time of being off school and being at home. They might find it difficult to express how well they feel physically and emotionally. They might be confused, scared, anxious, more stressed or display different behaviour due to their response to what is currently happening. Now your child is at home, keep an eye out for any changes in their behaviour or emotions as this will help support you in identifying how they are feeling, both emotionally and physically.

Provide Clear Information Using Visual Support

Use visual supports including photos, social stories, signs, symbols and gestures to communicate clearly with your child what is currently going on and why they cannot be at school. You could use [this social story](#) with your child, which explains what the coronavirus is and how we can keep safe.

If possible, talk openly to your child about what is currently happening in their world and answer, in an honest way, any questions or concerns they may have. Explain to them, using pictures or social stories, the measures in place to keep them and the rest of their family safe and what we can do at home to keep safe. For example, washing our hands regularly.

Ensure the information you give them is factually correct. Use the most recent government guidelines or information from the NHS. Try not to expose them to news articles or information that could be misleading or overwhelming.

Listen and Acknowledge Your Child's Worries and Concerns

Listen to your child's concerns and worries as it might be good for them to communicate their feelings. You may not have all the answers but it will still be good for them to tell you how they feel.

They may be able to write their feelings down or draw pictures of how they feel. This will help you discuss and talk about these worries together. [This resource](#) is great for supporting you with this.



Create a New Home Routine

Routine is key to help manage the changes that are happening around us. Particularly for children with autism, a routine can give an increased feeling of safety and comfort. Create a new home routine using a [visual timetable](#), [now and next cards](#), [schedules](#) and calendars.

There are many [workstation packs](#) on the Twinkl website. Try completing one workstation activity in the morning and another in the afternoon. This will help focus and organise your child's day. Their teachers may also provide further advice for learning at home and there are many online educational resources and fun ideas to try at home on the Twinkl website.

You can then build things like snack time, walks, garden activities and technology time into your daily routine and update the visual timetable accordingly.

Be Aware of Their Use of Social Media

Monitor your child's use of social media during this time as they may feel worried or distressed upon seeing false or misinterpreted information. Listen and discuss with them what they have read or heard and try to answer any questions or concerns they may have in an honest way. Avoid going into too much detail if possible. Using visual supports to communicate information could be really helpful.

Instead of cutting out all media, consider limiting the amount of news your child sees on the television or online to once or twice a day. This can be something that you talk about at the beginning or end of the day to minimise the worry and stress your child may have.

Be Aware of Your Own Reactions

Be careful how you yourself respond to the situation of being at home. Children and young people can be aware of emotional cues, body language and high levels of stress around them so it helps them if you remain calm. Again, listen to their concerns and worries and try to answer any questions they may have.

Have Fun!

Where possible, include fun and exciting activities in your daily routine. This can help make both your child and you as a parent feel happy and calm. Follow your child's interests and see where they take you! This could be cooking together, watching a film, building dens or painting in the garden. Remember, you know what works best for you and your family so continue doing a great job.

