

I'M A PARENT, GET ME OUT OF HERE!

THE HALF TERMLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM



Welcome to our new half-termly newsletters. We will be producing our three newsletters – 'The Lift Up' - for secondary aged pupils, 'Cosy Crew' - for primary aged pupils and our parent newsletter on a half termly basis. Accessible versions of all our newsletters are available on our [Local Offer Page](#).

Autism, Anxiety and Attendance

Rob Emery – Autism Advisory Teacher Service

Pupils with Autism often have increased levels of anxiety (Vasa & Mazurek, 2018). For some, this anxiety can make the demands of school/the school environment too much to bear which leads to 'school refusal' and decreased attendance. 'School refusal' is a term that should be used carefully here as without context it can imply that the pupil has a choice and is unwilling; however, the pupil may be not be able to tolerate the anxiety that school causes. In these unique times, the COVID-19 measures can increase or alleviate this anxiety. Here we discuss some advice for parents and look at how new measures often present some opportunities for pupils.

Advice for Parents

The key to solving the issue usually lies in finding out the underlying cause for the anxiety and addressing it. There are many possible underlying causes; anxiety about the complex social situations that school may present, difficulty with accessing the curriculum due to problems with processing the way the information is presented or sensory issues related to the school environment. The reasons can be multiple and complex.

Look for patterns in behaviour that might suggest particular days or lessons. Ask your child or young person to score parts of the day, introduce a 'worry box' but most importantly speak to the school. Children/young people's behaviour can differ hugely between settings and parents and schools need to form a partnership to get an accurate picture of the issue. Parents have a legal duty to educate their children which means they must ensure regular attendance at school. If your...



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...child/young person is unable to attend for longer than a couple of days you should try to get a medical certificate from a health professional. If your GP can't provide this it may be that you approach the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for support. You should also contact your school and the local authority for guidance.

COVID-19 Measures

The Covid-19 measures in place in schools can cause increased anxiety in some pupils. Schools are aware of this impact and are taking steps to address pupil mental health. For others, it can offer new opportunities. Measures such as staying in 'bubbles' can mean that there is less changing of classrooms which might ease sensory anxieties. Less pupils on the playground or in the lunch hall and no use of group/partner work in lessons might ease anxieties around social situations. Video recorded lessons, that can be watched remotely at the learner's own pace, might help some to access lessons more effectively. Some of these measures are helping to effectively support pupils with ASD in new and innovative ways.

Some thoughts for enjoying the half term holidays.

Megan Williams – Autism Advisory Teacher

Do you ever hear that moan: "it's not fair!"? Children often feel they are hard done by compared to their siblings and this can be even more the case if one of your children is autistic and needs more of your time, so here are some suggestions to help manage this.

1 Helping has a positive impact on our emotional wellbeing. Don't underestimate the ability of all your children including your autistic child – they can help around the home but play to their strengths! It could be putting the shopping away in a tidy order, laying the table, or folding the laundry. Don't assume they know what to do. Tell them clearly and show them and they may well end up being the most reliable at completing their chores.

2 Timetable in daily individual times with each of your children even if it's only 10 minutes. This can reduce jealousy, and also helps with behaviour if you give your children attention for doing the right thing. For younger children have an activity jar with ideas written on slips of paper that they can pull out to do with you. For older children chat about their interests, friends, music, what are they looking forward to? Journeys in the car can sometimes be an ideal opportunity, but remember, it is better for each child to have your full attention for a shorter amount of time than a lot of time with distractions.

3 Having family or friends round to play (Covid restrictions permitting). Try to include your autistic child in more structured activities such as board games and watching a film but be mindful that they may also need a lot of alone time especially after a half term back at school. They probably recharge their batteries best having solitary time.

4 Have a film/games evening where different family members take it in turns to choose what to play or watch. Or get each person in the family to put one thing they would like to do during half term onto a timetable so everyone can see that what is happening when, and also feel that they have had their choice included.

5 Look for ways that all your children can play together to build up bonds. For example, young children usually love blowing bubbles or playing trains. Could older ones play video games together? Your children may have very different interests but search for overlaps. If one child loves dinosaurs and the other loves running around, could you set up a dinosaur treasure hunt?

Parent Top Tips

In this section we want to share your tips and advice. Have you got a great activity? Found a brilliant resource? We'd like to hear about it! Please share your top tips at:

SENandInclusion@Peterborough.gov.uk

ACTIVITY:

Nene Park Autumn Festival (24.10 - 01.11). Different activities each day including "Witches and Broomstick", "Meeting Magical Mammals", arts and crafts, archery sessions.
Pre-book: nenepark.org.uk



Check out our other newsletters:

Cosy Crew – A newsletter for Primary Aged Children with Autism.

Lockdown Lift Up – A newsletter for teenagers and young people with Autism.

Available from our [Local Offer Page](#) half termly.

Boredom Bashers

Resource:

In preparation for Strictly returning to the TV, as a family learn the Strictly dance by watching the Dance tutorial

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p089h234>



SOMETHING FOR ME:

BY THE CREATOR OF ITV'S "VERA" AND "SHETLAND", THIS IS AN EASY READ. IT IS SET IN NORTH DEVON AND HAS ALL THE USUAL TWISTS AND SUB PLOTS OF A MURDER MYSTERY.

