

Teacher Support Notes for Stephen (2012)



Overview

Stephen has Autism which is an “invisible” disability affecting his communication, social and thinking skills. He also has sensory issues, which means he can be very sensitive to sounds or may sometimes have a reaction to textures, smell, light or taste.

These children experience the world differently to ourselves and can become extremely stressed and anxious. Often this is not outwardly apparent until a behaviour is exhibited.

Likes & Dislikes:

Red is his favourite colour.

He has many different interests - Dr Who, Star Wars, Lego design & build, space, history, travelling (he has been to many countries), animals/birds & computer games.

Dislikes – potatoes (except chips), getting muddy/dirty, games where he will be touched or a ball may hit him.

Strengths:

Stephen is good natured and has a happy disposition and a sense of humour.

He has an incredible memory and an interest in many things. He enjoys cycling and swimming/water activities.

Difficulties:

Verbal communication

Stephen has limited conversation skills and may not respond to questions or comments. If you refer to the “class” he may not realise that includes him as well.

Suggestions to assist with communication:

- Say his name “Stephen” prior to talking to him to get his attention.
- Give short clear instructions – minimum words
- “If he hasn’t seen it, he won’t have taken the information in”. Stephen is a visual learner, so where ever possible write down what is required to complete a task in small steps.
- Give him time to respond to you (approx 10 seconds processing time)
If you ask again, try to use the same words as before. If he feels pressured he will give an answer like “I don’t know” rather than the correct answer.
- Be clear, concise & concrete as possible. Tell him what to write about, rather than him think of an idea.
- He is a literal thinker, so avoid using metaphors such as” “Get your skates on”
- He may not understand the meaning of facial expressions, tone of voice, non verbal gestures. This means is often unaware of situations around him and may react suddenly i.e. if a teacher raises their voice.
- He is a visual learner, so writing things down really helps.

Listening

Stephen has difficulty looking at you and listening at the same time. Often he may appear not to pay attention, but is trying to listen.

Organisation

Poor organisation skills – inability to think ahead or plan what is required. This may mean books/work is forgotten, P E Kit, being in the wrong place/ timetable problems.

Staying on task

Stephen has difficulty in understanding what is required of him and in being “focused” and staying “on task” & completing a task. He may need more time to complete a task.

Please give clear instructions, ideally write down:

- What is required?
- How much/how long to complete?
- When is it finished?

Sensory Overload

Stephen is very sensory especially to sound – not necessarily loud. He uses cotton wool to counter this problem. It can change from day to day. Assembly or large gathering of people can be a difficult time for Stephen.

He may also react to smell, taste & touch from classes such as cooking, science and art. Bright lights/sunshine can also be a problem at times, so sun glasses may be needed.

Anxiety

Stephen may not appear to outwardly show anxiety, but it is something he cannot control. This can be reduced if he knows what will happen and is advised of any changes beforehand.

Behaviour

Stephen may exhibit protest behaviour or have an emotional outburst. This is due to his lack of communication skills and knowledge of how to express himself as an individual. He is still learning what is acceptable social response/behaviour.

He may become upset or angry if he is:

- Anxious/stressed (even if not apparent)
- Sensory Overload
- Emotional Deregulation (getting upset or angry quickly for no obvious reason) i.e. he is easily upset if someone else is told off, he can't tell that it is not “him” being told off.

What may help:

- Give clear, concise, very directive instructions “Stephen sit down” Tell him what to do – use “finish”, “later”, “time to...” **Avoid the use of the words “no” or “don't”**
- Ask him to take deep breathes- count to 5 & relax say “it's OK”.
- Have a drink of water - a few minutes break to look at a favourite book.
- If all else fails remove him from the room. Send him out to get a drink of water to give him a chance to calm down.

Give Regular Breaks:

- It is important that Stephen is allowed to take regular breaks from his desk, so that he can relax and keep calm. Tell him the amount of time he can have
Allowing him a few minutes to read a book or take a walk for some fresh air relieves built up stress. He needs to have plenty of water to drink.

Communication with Home

If there are any problems please let us know so that we can work on a solution.