The * in the resource column indicates that a resource is being built.
Where there is no * the resource has already been built and is available **www.thirdspace.scot/nait**

Supporting autistic learners returning to PRIMARY SCHOOL

This resource is intended to support and guide anticipatory planning for autistic learners returning to school. Content is informed by evidence, consultation and experience and is likely to be relevant for children and young people with a range of neurodevelopmental needs, acknowledging that support should not be dependent on diagnostic labels.

Getting it right for every child requires the team around the child to take an individualised approach to planning. This guidance seeks to inform professionals working in schools, and those supporting school staff, of the range of concerns that may arise for an individual learner and to suggest appropriate steps to take in addressing these concerns.

Support will necessarily be very different for children at different developmental stages, e.g. you would not write a Social Story about returning to school for a child who is without the language to understand and utilise such a tool. For this reason, we have divided this document into three developmental stages:

- Social partners: children who have fewer than 10 meaningful words
- Language partners: children who use phrase speech
- Conversation partners: children who communicate in sentences across several turns

For all autistic learners returning to primary school the following **Key Messages** are relevant:

1. Ensure adjustments are anticipatory
2. Listen to parents
3. Provide predictability
4. Use visual supports
5. Provide a Safe Space
6. Plan for movement breaks
7. Seek to understand distressed behaviour

Social Partners	Concerns	Support considerations	Resources
All Social Partners Children who have *fewer than 10 meaningful words*	• Re-establishing routines • Creating new routines • Learning from successful new 'home routines': 　• A later start to the day 　• More time spent outdoors 　• Increased use of ICT 　• Predictable lesson times 　• Used to moving around whenever needed • Re-establishing relationships • Building trust in new adults • Not used to being around large groups of people • New interests • Anxiety at leaving home/ parents • Parent concerns • Bereavement/loss	• Plan with parents • Consider maintaining 2019-20 staffing into 2020-21 • Consider maintaining 2019-20 class environments into 2020-21 • Engage the multi-disciplinary team in individual planning • Offer a visit to the school prior to opening • Encourage parents to walk past school with child where possible • Encourage parents to practice term time bedtimes and getting up times • Work with parents to create a Communication Passport • Provide familiar resources • Provide predictability (people, activities, routines, etc.) • Plan for consistent communication with parents	• Key Messages for supporting children returning to school (school and parent versions?)* 'Let's not just see how it goes!' • NAIT Home/ School Communication Guidance* • NAIT Visual Support Guides for Social Partners • NAIT Movement Break Guidance • NAIT Communication Passport Guidance* • NAIT Safe Space Guidance for Social Partners*
Transitioning to P1	• Lack of transition visits • Unfamiliar physical environment • Unfamiliar adults • Wearing uniform • Lunch out of home - may be a first	• Deliver parent information sessions online • Avoid phased transitions with lots of changes • Any transition should chain backwards – arrive earlier each day keeping home time consistent • Send spare uniform home to practice dressing and undressing and adapting to wearing new items • Be flexible about uniform	• VSP How to Guide 1: Objects of Reference • NAIT Eating and Drinking Guide

		• Create plan for break and lunch times • Plan for observing before participating (assembly, PE, etc.) • Plan for participation first – becoming familiar with simple routines and engaging in motivating activities • Create photographs of the school environment and share with family • Prepare objects of reference to support transitions across the school day	
Returning to primary school	• Changes to the physical environment of the school	• Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family	
Transitioning to a new school (not P1)	• Unfamiliar building • Changes to the family context, e.g. new home, financial situation, parental separation or bereavement	• Create photographs of the school environment and share with family • Arrange an early Getting it right planning meeting • Consider requesting familiar professional to support the transition stage	
Transitioning from a Hub School	• Familiar with some 'new' aspects of school life (e.g. social distancing/ hand washing but may have difficulty transferring these or may not expect these in their main school setting)	• Don't assume that the child will transfer skills. Plan to re-teach familiar skills in the new setting • Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family	

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	• Changes to the physical environment of the school		

Language Partners	Concerns	Support considerations	Resources

All Language Partners
 	
Children who use *phrase speech*
	• Re-establishing routines
	• Creating new routines
	• Learning from successful new 'home routines':
	  • A later start to the day
	  • More time spent outdoors
	  • Increased use of ICT
	  • Predictable lesson times
	  • Used to moving around whenever needed
	• Re-establishing relationships
	• Building trust in new adults
	• Not used to being around large groups of people
	• New interests
	• Parent concerns
	• Wearing uniform
	• Bereavement/ loss
		• Plan with parents
		• Consider maintaining 2019-20 staffing into 2020-21
		• Consider maintaining 2019-20 class environments into 2020-21
		• Engage the multi-disciplinary team in individual planning
		• Offer a visit to the school prior to opening
		• Encourage parents to walk past school with child where possible and talk about school starting
		• Encourage parents to practice term time bedtimes and getting up times
		• Offer a visit to the school prior to opening
		• Prepare, using visuals, for changes in advance of visits (e.g. new adults, school or class layout, class cohort)
		• Provide appropriate individual Visual Timetables
		• Create individual Safe Space
		• Create individual Transition Passport
		• Provide familiar resources
		• Provide predictability (people, activities, routines, etc.)
			• Key Messages for supporting children returning to school (school and parent versions?)*
			'Let's not just see how it goes!'
			• VSP How to Guides 9-15: Using Visual Timetables
			• NAIT Safe Space Guidance
			• NAIT Movement Break Guidance
			• VSP Transition Passport Template
			• NAIT Home School Communication Guidance*
			• NAIT Social Distancing Visual Supports*
			• NAIT Homework Guidance*

		• Provide curriculum which is structured but with low social and task demand • Be flexible about uniform • Plan for consistent communication with parents	
Transitioning to P1	• Lack of transition visits • Unfamiliar physical environment • Unfamiliar adults • Wearing uniform • Lunch out of home - may be a first	• Provide parent information sessions online • Create photographs of the school environment and share with family • Avoid phased transitions with lots of changes • Any transition should chain backwards – arrive earlier each day keeping home time consistent • Send spare uniform home to practice dressing and undressing and adapt to wearing new items • Plan for observing before participating (Assembly, PE, etc.) • Focus on supporting emotional regulation through providing predictable and motivating activities	• NAIT Eating and Drinking Guide
Returning to primary school	• Changes to the physical environment of the school	• Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family	
Transitioning to a new school (not P1)	• Unfamiliar building	• Create photographs of the school environment and share with family	

	• Changes to the family context, e.g. new home, financial situation, parental separation or bereavement	• Arrange an early Getting it right planning meeting • Consider requesting familiar professional to support the transition stage	
Transitioning from a Hub School	• Familiar with some 'new' aspects of school life (e.g. social distancing/ hand washing but may have difficulty transferring these or may not expect these in their main school setting) • Changes to the physical environment of the school	• Don't assume that the child will transfer skills. Plan to re-teach familiar skills in the new setting • Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family	

Conversational Partners	Concerns	Support considerations	Resources

All Conversational Partners
 	
Children who *communicate in sentences* across *several turns*
	• Re-establishing routines
	• Creating new routines
	• Learning from successful new 'home routines':
	  • A later start to the day
	  • More time spent outdoors
	  • Increased use of ICT
	  • Predictable lesson times
	  • Used to moving around whenever needed
	• Re-establishing relationships
	• Building trust in new adults
	• Not used to being around large groups of people
	• New interests
	• New fears or anxieties
	• Anxiety about leaving home/ parents
	• Wearing uniform
	• Bereavement/ loss
	• Individual concerns
	• Parent concerns
	• Re-establishing friendships and new social routines
		• Plan with parents and child
		• Consider maintaining 2019-20 staffing into 2020-21
		• Consider maintaining 2019-20 class environments into 2020-21
		• Engage the multi-disciplinary team in individual planning
		• Offer a visit to the school prior to opening
		• Encourage parents to walk past school with child where possible and talk about school starting
		• Prepare, using visuals, for changes in advance of visits (e.g. new adults, school or class layout, class cohort)
		• Communicate new rules and routines visually and in advance of returning (e.g. social distancing, hand washing)
		• Provide individual Visual Timetables
		• Create individual Safe Spaces
		• Create Individual Transition Passport
		• Provide familiar resources
		• Provide predictability (people, activities, routines, etc.)
		• Provide curriculum which is structured but with low social and task demand
		• Be flexible about uniform
		• Plan for consistent communication with parents
			• Key Messages for supporting children returning to school (school and parent versions?)*
			'Let's not just see how it goes!'
			• VSP Visual Timetables
			• NAIT Safe Space Guidance
			• NAIT Movement Break Guidance
			• VSP Transition Passport Template
			• Social Story template/ guidance/ links*
			• NAIT Home School Communication Guidance*
			• NAIT Social Distancing Visual Supports*
			• NAIT Homework Guidance*
			• Visual Support Project: Guides to Using Visual Supports for Conversation Partners

		• Develop individualised strategies for self and mutual regulation, including visual supports	
Transitioning to P1	• Lack of transition visits • Unfamiliar physical environment • Unfamiliar adults • Wearing uniform • Lunch out of home - may be a first • Understanding it's not just 'for August'	• Provide parent information sessions online • Advise parents to talk about nursery finishing and school starting (avoid saying 'Going to school in August') • Create photographs of the school building and share with family	• NAIT Eating and Drinking Guide
Returning to primary school	• Changes to the physical environment of the school	• Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family	
Transitioning to a new school (not P1)	• Unfamiliar building • Changes to the family context, e.g. new home, financial situation, parental separation or bereavement	• Create photographs of the school building and share with family • Arrange an early Getting it right planning meeting • Consider requesting familiar professional to support the transition stage	
Transitioning from a Hub School	• Familiar with some 'new' aspects of school life (e.g. social distancing/ hand washing but may have difficulty transferring these or may not expect these in their main school setting) • Changes to the physical environment of the school	• Try not to assume that the child will transfer skills. Plan to re-teach familiar skills in the new setting • Create photographs focusing on adaptations to the school environment and share with family • Communicate similarities and differences between settings visually	• 'Same and different' hub school and main school sorting materials*

Existing based anxiety absence	• Increased anxiety • Possibly a long gap since last at school • Home school is now 'possible' and has happened • Impact on parents and siblings	• Arrange an early Getting it right planning meeting and review regularly • Where appropriate, consider ongoing use of some virtual learning opportunities	• NAIT Anxiety Based Absence Guidance*
Emerging anxiety based absence	• Increased anxiety • Home school is now 'possible' and has happened • Impact on parents and siblings	• Arrange an early Getting it right planning meeting and review regularly • Where possible, aim for a clear end and beginning when switching from home to school; "Home school has finished" • Increase predictability (environment, routines, communication, activities, expectations)	• NAIT Anxiety Based Absence Guidance*