

# Attention Autism

## What is it and why do we use it?

The Attention Autism philosophy is to make the curriculum meaningful and accessible for all children with autism. It is initially a six week programme designed to meet the needs of children who are struggling with attention, communication and social skills. Activities are exciting and visually appealing; providing something which is worth attending to. The aim is to focus attention on the adult led agenda and engage attention with enthusiasm (Davies, 2011). Attention Autism is fundamentally about ensuring pupils are motivated therefore they are learning. Within the interventions pupils are learning valuable skills such as not always getting a turn, taking risks, and also the power of communication. The adult leaving pauses in the activity allows for spontaneous communication from the pupil. Also above all the intervention is FUN!

The stages of developing attention through this approach are:

- How to focus
- How to sustain attention
- How to shift attention from group activity to an individual activity

## Who is it for?

At Riverside School we use this approach to best meet the needs of our diverse pupils. The approach is hugely beneficial for all pupils working at a range of levels, who have difficulties focusing, establishing and sustaining their attention. This may include pupils without a diagnosis of autism.



## What does it look like?

Use a whiteboard and draw out each stage so pupils know exactly what is coming next. Remember to have resources ready but out of sight until you need them.

Stage 1: How to focus - Attention Grabber

Stage 2: How to sustain attention - Attention Builder

Stage 3: How to shift attention from group activity to an individual activity - Turn Taking games

Stage 4: How to shift and re-focus attention from an individual activity back to the group - Independent task

Example of each stage are detailed below

Remember it may not be appropriate for pupils to participate in all four stages.

If completing all for stage in one session this should not take longer than 30 minutes.

Remember to be creative! Think about the resources used, sometimes less is more! Think about mess and how to limit it! Show pupils that tidying is part of the session!

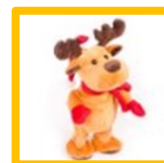


# Examples

## Stage 1: How to focus attention - Examples

### Bucket

- Bucket or box containing 3 items (for example):
  - Small attention grabber toys
  - Anything that moves and or lights up
  - Important to think from perspective of pupils, would they be motivated by this?
  - Toys that move and dance/ sing
  - Remember batteries
- One item presented at a time. The adult presenting the item to give lots of interest in the item
- Only language related to the item to be used "Wow" "Spin"
- Replace item back in bucket and present next item
- Stage 1 to last no longer than 10 minutes



## Stage 2: How to sustain Attention - Examples

### Spinning water

- Bottle with holes in
- Fill with colour water. Say 'fill it up' "pour it in" "SPIN" Adult to pause during repetitive phrases e.g. "fill it up" "and..." allowing pupils to complete the phrase "pour it in". Try and only continue once a pupil has vocalised.
- Spin, pupils are mesmerised as the water pours out of the holes.



### Water tube

- Poly-tubing, with one end tied up.
- Fill with water. Say "fill it up" "pour it in"
- Add food colouring
- Could add bubble items
- Remember to pause to allow for communication



### Flour shaking

- Have everything in a box ready
- Take our sieve and flour
- Put black paper on the floor/or think about the background. Outside if possible
- Fill sieve up and shake flour onto paper
- "shake" change intonation in how you say it. Shake the flour high and low.
- Draw in flour



### Stage 3: Turn taking game - Examples

"It's raining on you"

- "It's raining on you"
- Sing song as water is poured over see-through umbrella
- An adult should model taking turn first
- Pupil is invited to take a turn by adult presenting them with their hand (palm upwards) whilst saying "(Name) turn"

"Roll you up"

- Blanket on floor
- Sing "Roll, roll, roll you up like a sausage roll, roll, roll back again, like a sausage roll" (to the tune of row your boat, leave pauses for pupils to fill the gaps.

- Tickle at the end point

"water splat"

- Colour water in syringes
- Two pupils to squirt the water at same time
- Focus on anticipation through the count down of activity starting



### Stage 4: Independent task - Examples

Mini shaving foam domes

You will need:

- All pupils, the lead adult and one supporting adult, to have their own kit with:
  - 2 plastic cups, one with holes around the top (or flower pots)
  - Shaving foam and food colouring
1. To be modelled first at front by lead adult
  2. Lead adult gives a kit to a supporting adult first
  3. Hand out each kit
  4. Supporting adult copies what lead adult modelled
  5. Supporting adult bring finished kits to front of circle and sits down
  6. Pupils then follow the supporting adults lead
  7. Lead adult waits at the front and praises each pupil as they return with their finished kit.
  8. Big exciting activity to finish altogether. Could in this example be big shaving foam domes.



Playdough cakes

You will need

Each pupil, lead adult and one supporting adult to have kit with: 1 silicone cupcake case, 1 pot of playdough, pipe cleaner for candle (or real candle if appropriate), additional cupcake box—for pupils able to put these together.

Follow steps 1-8 as above. Finish could be everyone singing happy birthday together in the circle

