



Christmas Greetings



Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC)

In the run up to Christmas you may have planned lots of different and exciting activities for your pupils.

Changes to the timetable, parties, 'in class' games, music, decorations, noise, flashing lights, Christmas plays and assemblies, are all part of the usual fun. However, for some students with an Autism Spectrum Condition, Christmas can be a daunting, confusing and frightening, as well as an exciting time.

Students with an ASC can be agitated, upset and stressed by:

- Changes in routine.
- Sensory stimulation e.g. noise, lights, balloons.
- Unstructured time e.g. playtime, games and Christmas activities.
- The atmosphere and "excited" behaviour of others around them.

Many have difficulty managing their levels of excitement and their responses.

You can help by:

- Preparing pupils for any changes to their normal routine. Use a calendar or visual timetable to highlight any Christmas specific events that will alter the usual class/school routine.
- Preparing the pupil for specific events e.g. showing them a photo of a man dressed as Father Christmas or let them see/handle any 'character' costumes that are to be used in the Christmas plays.
- Trying to involve the pupil in changes to the school e.g. let them handle decorations, let them see decorations being hung up, or let them help put them up.
- Providing some Christmas-free time on visual timetable- this could help you to observe anxiety levels and make any adaptations for the rest of the day.
- Looking out for signs of stress/over-excitement.
- Limiting/avoiding situations and environmental factors that you know will cause anxiety e.g. excessive noise.
- Providing a quiet area or 'safe haven', for pupils to use at times of stress or over-excitement.
- Giving pupils some quiet time with a favourite activity in a Christmas-free zone, at key moments that may be stressful.
- Be patient.

*Have a very merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year.*

