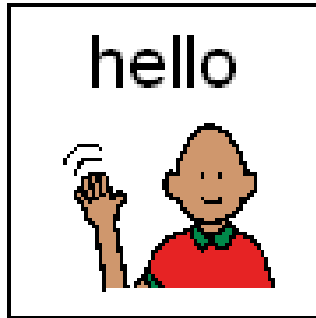


Early Years Speech and Language Therapy

Getting Ready for School

How to support Autistic children and
Children with Social Communication Differences
that are moving from nursery to School Settings





Introduction

- Your child is due to start at school in September. They may be starting at a Mainstream School, an additional provision/resource base for Autistic pupils or a Special School.
- Preparing for change is important for all children. It is particularly important for children who have social communication differences or Autism as these children can find change difficult to deal with.
- As you will already know Autistic children have difficulties with communication and understanding social routines. They like predictability. Starting in a new class or school can make a child feel anxious and stressed.
- You are an expert on your child. By working together with you, we want to ensure your child's transition into their new school is as smooth as possible.
- You can support school staff in getting to know your child and make this a smooth transition.



Before the Summer holidays...

- Speak to your child's current nursery and their new school. Ask for, or create some simple visuals to help prepare your child for the changes. For example, you could gather photographs of their new school, new teacher and the uniform they will wear. These may be available on the school's website or the school may be able to send you some photographs. You could then look at these with your child over the summer holidays.
- Some schools might produce a video, transition book or a social story for you and your child to look at over the summer holidays.
- You can also **make some visual supports yourself**—see “visual support” section of this pack.
- Find out from the new school, who the key people helping your child will be. This might be their class teacher, a learning support assistant (LSA), the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (**SENDCo**) and/or the Inclusion Manager.



During the Summer holidays...

- Practise putting on your child's new school uniform. This way you can check if there is anything that your child finds uncomfortable for example, if there is a label in your child's jumper than is going to be irritating.
- Look at your transition book or the photos you gather of the new school, teacher etc. together over the summer holidays. Remember repetition is key!
- Read books about going to school—see “books about starting school” section of the pack
- Practice the new journey or route you will take to school with your child. Depending on your child's level of understanding, you could draw a picture or a map together, from your home to their new school and talk with them about the route and the things you will see or hear on your way.

Visual Support

Using objects, pictures, photos and symbols to support your child's communication.

- Visual support can help your child understand what is going to happen next, when they may not be able to understand an explanation in words.
- Children can also use visual supports to express themselves. They can use a visual to show you what they want or need if they are not quite able or ready to say the words.
- Visual supports include objects which remind the child of something familiar, photos of familiar objects or activities, symbols that represent a familiar objects or activity or Makaton signs.
- Depending on your child's level of understanding, different visual supports may be helpful.

Some examples of how using visual support can help your child's understanding at this time of change but also in general in their day:

Photos on your phone (portable): Having photos available on your phone to show your child is really easy and helpful!

You could take photos of your child's school, their new teacher, the classroom, the playground etc. You may be able to access these on the school's website or the school may be able to send some to you via email.

You can also show your child photos on your phone of other items or activities to let them know what is going to happen next in your day.

If you want to make symbols to support your child's understanding, you can use the following link:

<https://www.boardmakeronline.com/>

But you don't need to have special software to make symbols - taking pictures on your phone or using images from the internet can be just as good!



Visual timetable (at home/nursery/school):

This is a sequence of pictures, symbols or photos that tells your child what you are going to be doing for example for the day.

You can look at what's happening and take the pictures off after each activity, which gives you an opportunity to talk about what's up next.

This supports your child to understand what is happening but also gives them an idea of what's coming up later, helping them to move from one activity to the next.

It can help to have a symbol to represent events that pop up unexpectedly—this encourages your child to be flexible.



Social stories (at home/nursery/portable):

Social stories are a great way to help your child understand specific situations they might find stressful or challenging. You can write them yourself, tailoring them to your child's level of understanding and need for visual support.

They can help your child predict what is going to happen and what will be expected of them. They are a way of helping your child manage and prepare for the unexpected.

See the “**how to write social stories**” document and “Peppa Pig” example at the back of this pack.

Check out other examples on 'Pinterest' (www.pinterest.co.uk)
And '**Story Maker**' in the 'App Store' on your phone

In September: Communicating with your child's new school...

- Make contact with these staff members early on, don't wait until there is a problem. You will be able to provide advice and information about your child so they can help them settle in better.
- When your child starts at school agree how you can regularly share information about your child. This could be by using a **home-school book**. Both you and the relevant staff members can share information about your child e.g. successes and/or challenges at home/school and useful strategies. Or it could be an online system that school use.

If there is something you are really concerned about however, it can be better to talk face-to-face. The class teacher and SENCO are your main contacts.



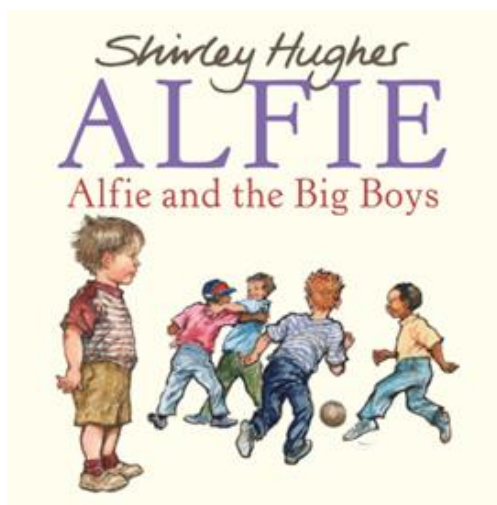
Inclusion Passport....

- A great way to communicate with the key people who will be working with your child is to make a "**Inclusion Passport**".
- You can find a blank "Inclusion Passport" template at the back of this pack. Fill this in with the key information, staff need to know about your child and give it to their new teacher.
- A "Inclusion Passport" helps adults who don't know your child get to know their likes and dislikes and how s/he communicates.

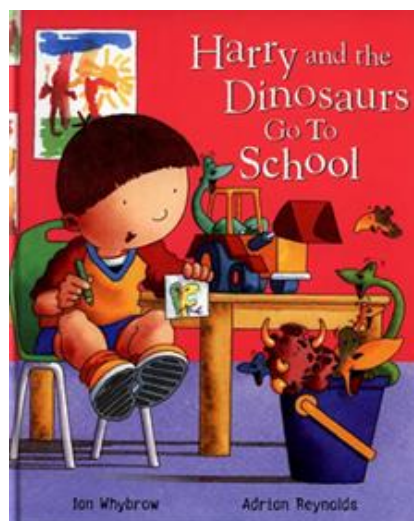


Books about starting school:

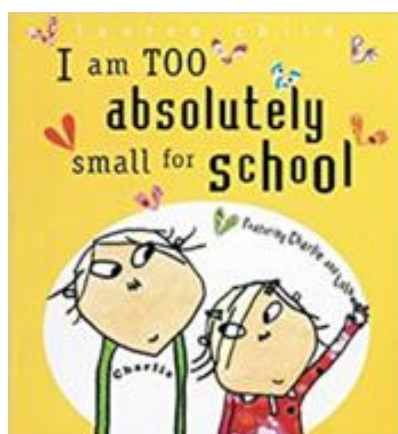
Another great way to prepare your child for school is to read stories together about this topic... here are a few book suggestions, but there are many more!



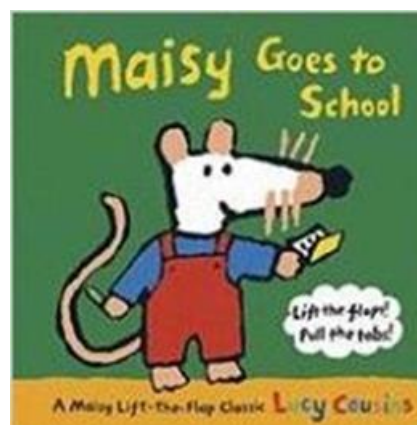
'Alfie and the big boys'
by Shirley Hughes



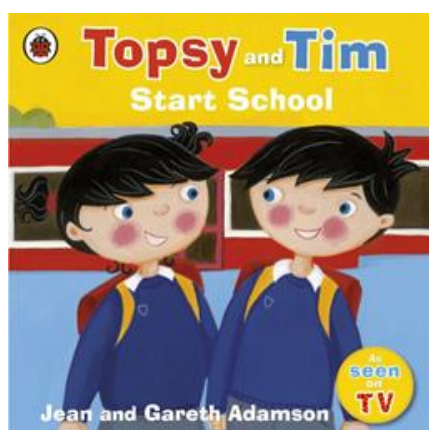
'Harry and the Dinosaurs go to school'
by Ian Whybrow &
Adrian Reynolds



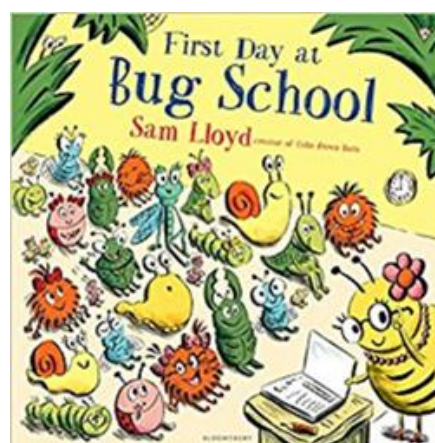
'I am absolutely too small for school'
by Lauren Child



'Maisy goes to school'
by Lucy Cousins



'Topsy and Tim start school'
by Jean & Gareth Adamson



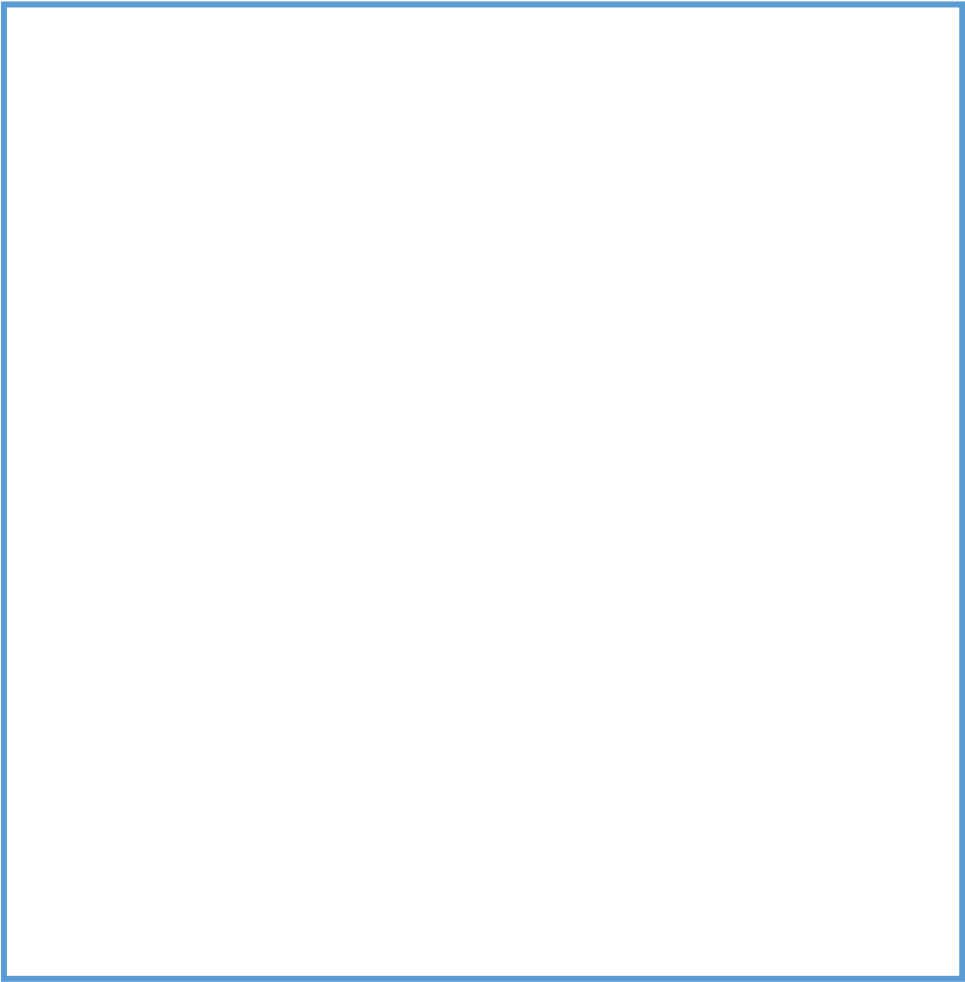
'First Bug Day at School'
by Sam Lloyd

Appendix:
Forms and Information
about support and
accessible activities

Inclusion Passport

All About...	(Child's Name)	I like to be called...	
D.O.B		My new school is...	


This is a photograph/drawing of me:



Inclusion Passport

All about me	
People (or animals!) who are important to me: 	
Things I like to do or play with 	
Things I am good at 	
Things I don't like 	
Things I find difficult 	



Inclusion Passport

Communication	
<p>How I communicate</p>  <p>My home languages are</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 50px; width: 250px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<p>e.g. pulling people towards what I want, making sounds, single words, phrases, pictures etc</p>
<p>How you can help me</p>	
<p>Please don't</p>	

Inclusion Passport

Emotional Regulation	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Sometimes when I am feeling..	I might....
What helps	
Please don't	

Inclusion Passport

What I can and cannot eat (allergies) 	
How I eat (cutlery, finger food, specialist equipment)	
About my health (any medication, swallowing or mobility difficulties etc) 	
Other professionals who work with me	
Other important information	e.g. If your child is still in nappies or needs support/prompting to use the toilet

This passport was made by _____ (FAMILY, NURSERY, CHILDMINDER ETC)

on date _____.

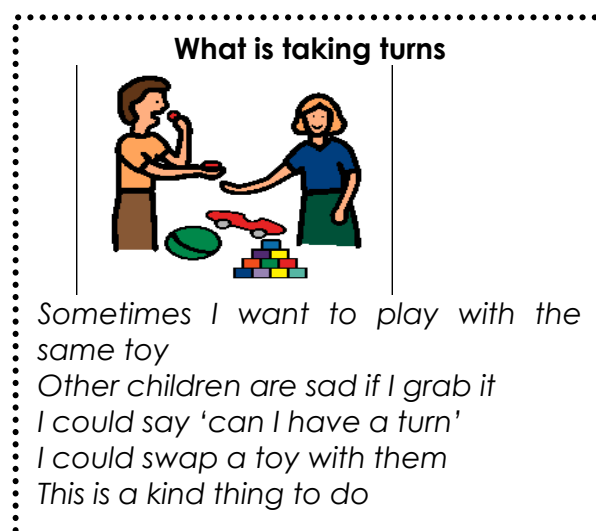
Social Stories

What is a social story?

- Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular event or activity which include specific information about what to expect in the situation and why.
- Social stories are written for children to help them learn and understand social rules and cope in social situations.
- Social stories are devised for your child's level of ability and may include photos, symbols, pictures, and words/written text.
- Social stories are normally quite short – just 2 to 12 sentences long.

Introducing a social story

- Identify a social situation, friendship skill or event that your child needs help with (such as 'saying hello to people', 'going to the doctors' etc)
- Think of a title that asks a question that the story will describe (e.g. 'how do I say hello to people?')
- The social story is written from the child's perspective and uses positive sentences instead of negative (I should look at people.....)
- A social story has a reassuring and patient quality and it is important to introduce it in the same friendly, gentle way
- Share the story only when your child is calm. Do not share the story during the difficult or upsetting event or as a consequence for bad behaviour
- The social story should be individual to the child and address what it is about the situation that is difficult



Tips for writing a social story

- Write it from the child's perspective, in the first person
- Use photos where possible. Include the child's photo in the story
- Read it before the situation happens, not afterwards. Otherwise, it may be seen as a 'telling off'
- Ask other people if needed to help you figure out why your child is doing something and what alternative strategies they could possibly do instead
- Use a computer program like iphoto photobook or i-social story app
- Use the following structure for a simple social story:

1. **Describe the situation:** *you need to explain what the situation is from the child's perspective*

Sometimes I.....

2. **Say what effect this has on others:** *This may not be obvious to a child with social communication difficulties and needs to be explained clearly*

This makes other people feel.....

3. **Give your child an alternative that they could do.** *A social story isn't about pointing out the negative behaviour but showing that there is another way. Think about what your child might do instead and be realistic about how possible it is what you are asking them to do*

instead, I could.....

4. **End on a positive statement:** *It is important to explain why your strategy is better. e.g. why is tapping someone on the shoulder a better attention-seeking strategy than shouting?*

This is a good thing to do.....

Each section could have one page or as many as you need!

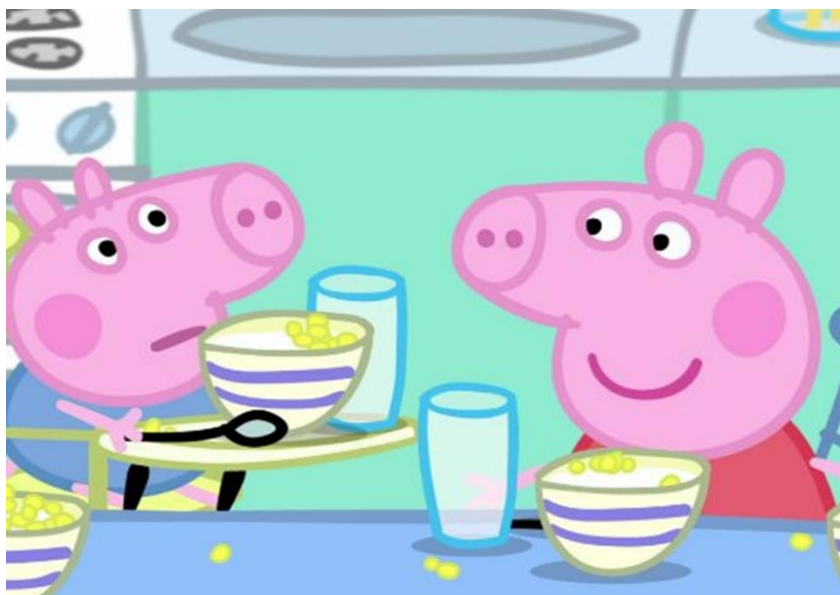


Social story about going to school...

Going to
school....

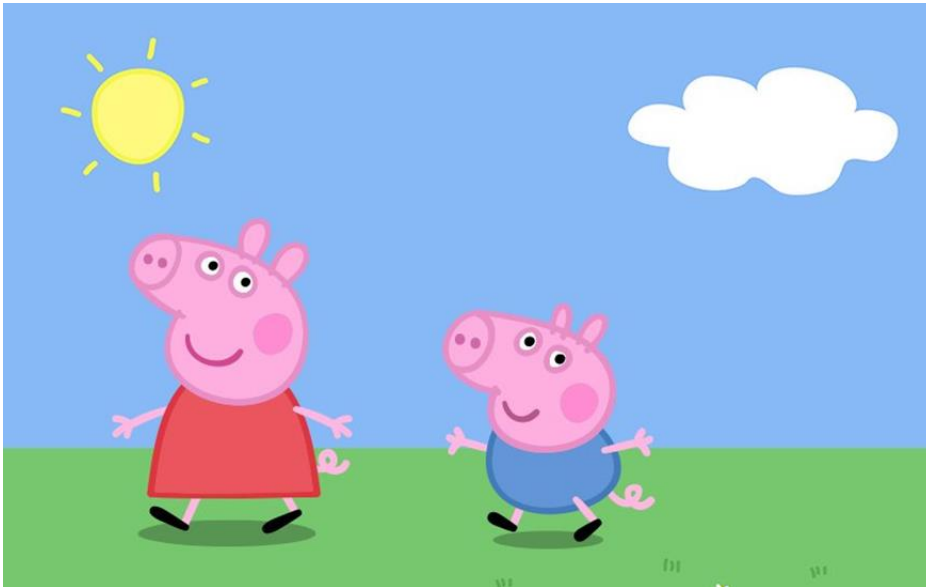


First, I have my
breakfast...



Then I
get
dressed





Next, I
walk to
school

Sometimes
we go in
the car.



When I
arrive at
school, I
see my
teacher
and all my
friends.

Ideas for home...

- **"Talking is Teaching"** - activities, information and helpful tips for parents.
Check out the Staycation toolkit!: <https://talkingisteaching.org/resources>
 - **"Vroom!"**: Boost your child's learning with Vroom's fast and fun tips to your phone or via email: <https://www.vroom.org>
 - **"Hanan"** - Information about supporting communication in children with ASD (See More Than Words programme). Parents can sign up for top tips and weekly updates and a newsletter:
<http://www.hanan.org/Home.aspx>
 - **"The National Literacy Trust"** as lots of ideas at <https://small-talk.org.uk/> and <http://wordsforlife.literacytrust.org.uk/baby/milestones>
 - **"First Words Project"** - information and helpful tips for parents:
<https://firstwordsproject.com/resources/>
 - **"Attention Autism,"** Gina Davies — ideas for fun at home:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPPw7lj3k2Zhe19Fb3CO-aq>
 - The **"Tiny Happy People"** created by BBC can help you develop your child's language and communication skills. Explore simple activities and play ideas here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>
 - Learn **"Makaton"** Sign Language with Singing Hands:
<https://singinghands.co.uk/what-we-do/forthcoming-events/> and CBeebies: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/something-special-getting-started-with-makaton> There are lots of ideas on their website <https://www.makaton.org/>
 - **Sensory Play** at Home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWtmkj45so>
- AND [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) – loads of ideas for craft messy play and baking!

Useful Websites

- **National Autistic Society** on “Starting or Changing School”:
<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transitions/scotland/starting-or-switching-school>
- **PACEY**: Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years on “Being school ready”:
<https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/being-school-ready/#readyforschool>
- **BBC “Bitesize” Article** on “Planning for transition when schools are closed”:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrynnrd>
- **Bi-Borough Childcare and Early Education Service**—Starting School ; Practical Tips for Parents and Carers:
https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/biborough/directory/files/starting_school_tips_for_parents_carers.pdf
- **ERIC The children’s bowel and bladder charity Toileting support.** [Children with additional needs - ERIC](#)

and apps...

- Social story Creator and Library (App store)

Search: “**Autism**” in “Google Play” (android app store) or the Apple “App store” for lots of options.

Local Centres for Activities and Support: The following are specialist centres for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their families:

Hammersmith and Fulham:

The Stephen Wiltshire Centre Old Oak Children's centre [Stephen Wiltshire Centre | London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham \(openobjects.com\)](#)

Family information Service Directory

<http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/lbhf/fis/service.page?id=YhvL7YW7bOk&localofferchannel=0>

Old Oak Children's Centre [Your community - Peabody](#)

Kensington and Chelsea:

St Quintin's Centre North open 7 days a week

St Quintin's Centre South open Saturdays and school holiday

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/st-quintin-centre/st-quintin-centre-0>

Westminster:

Bessborough Family Hub (in Westminster, but open to families from all 3 boroughs)

[Bessborough Family Hub | Westminster City Council](#)

Tresham Centre

<https://fisd.westminster.gov.uk/kb5/westminster/fis/service.page?id=Hb8ZbVn90Rk&localofferchannel=0>

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Local Offer:

The local offer contains information on local services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families.

Hammersmith and Fulham: www.lbhf.gov.uk/localoffer

Kensington and Chelsea: www.rbkc.gov.uk/localoffer

Westminster: [What is a 'Local Offer'? | Westminster FIS](#)

Support Groups for families:

With information about local events, sources of support, tips and advice:

Hammersmith and Fulham: <https://www.family-support.org.uk/>

Masbro Centres (Urban partnership group) [Masbro Children's Centres, play and learn in Hammersmith & Fulham \(upg.org.uk\)](#)

Kensington and Chelsea: <https://www.fulloflifekc.com/>

Westminster: <https://www.wppg.org.uk/>

SEN Summer Activities 2023

Jack Tizard Playscheme Jack Tizard School, South Africa Road, W12 7PA

Monday 24th July – Friday 5th August

Free activities including messy sensory play, bubble show, yoga, BLINK dance company and much more. Along with swimming sessions available to book in the Hydro pool. For children with additional needs aged 3yrs to 25yrs, must attend with a carer, siblings are welcome to attend as well.

[For more information](#) **Call: 0208 735 3597 or Email: pool@jacktizard.lbhf.sch.uk**

Swimming

- Paddling pool & splash pad - [Make a splash in Ravenscourt Park and Bishops Park | LBHF](#) Free!
- Community swimming & hydro scheme - [What's on \(jacktizard.lbhf.sch.uk\)](http://What's on (jacktizard.lbhf.sch.uk)) Free!
- Free swimming for under 8's, discounted prices for adults - [THE HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM RESIDENTS PAY AS YOU GO CARD \(better.org.uk\)](#)
[Kensington & Chelsea Residents Pay As You Go Card \(better.org.uk\)](#)
- Discounted swimming [Get active for less with the Active Westminster Card - Active Westminster](#)

Summer In the City

Free events over the summer organised by Hammersmith and Fulham for the whole 6-week holidays.

[For more information go to: Welcome to Summer in the City | London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham \(lbhf.gov.uk\)](#)

H&F Play and Picnic in the Park

Free play day for all with bouncy castles, face painting, etc. 15th July 2023

[For more information go to: 1082993_cmc_site23_picnic_flyer_a4_rev2.pdf \(emlfiles4.com\)](#)

Accessible Parks – with play equipment for wheelchair users

- Ravenscourt Park, W6 OUA
- Wormholt Park, W12 OLQ
- Kensington Water Memorial Playground, St Marks Road W10

Activity Stations Barns

Run a range of free activities including drumming workshops, disco, arts & crafts and trips throughout the summer for young disabled children and their families. Look up their program at www.activitystation.org.uk

Oxygen Trampolining Park

Peaceful Play session Every Wednesday & Sunday afternoon for autistic jumpers or those with sensory or learning difficulties [Select date and activity - Oxygen Freejumping](#)

Toddler sensory play [Acton Toddler Sensory Play | Oxygen Freejumping](#)

Sensory session every Sunday between 5pm-6pm carers go free.

More info: www.oxygenfreejumping.co.uk/locations/acton/

SEND Friendly Cinema

Range of Sensory screening performances at cinemas throughout the summer.

CEA cards - This scheme allows carers to accompany a child with additional needs to the cinema for free info@ceacard.co.uk. Or

Telephone: 01244 526 016

<https://www.ceacard.co.uk/>



Solidarity Sport

Run a programme throughout the summer of sports, Health eating, Arts, Crafts, Dance, Games

More info at: <https://www.solidaritysports.org/>

London Transport Museum

Covent Garden Piazza, London WC2E 7BB

Early Morning explorer day Saturday 29th July 2023 08:30-10 when the museum is quieter

More Info - [London Transport Museum Families with SEND | London Transport Museum \(ltmuseum.co.uk\)](https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/families-with-send)

Max Card – Days out for Disabled Children

UK's leading discount card for families of children with additional needs. Families can use their Max Card at venues across the UK to get free or discounted admission.

For more info:

[Contact Us – Discounts for fostered and disabled children – MaxCardMaxCard \(mymaxcard.co.uk\)](https://www.mymaxcard.co.uk/contact-us)

[Venues – Discounts for fostered and disabled children – MaxCardMaxCard \(mymaxcard.co.uk\)](https://www.mymaxcard.co.uk/venues)

London Dockland Museum

SEND afternoon sessions. Sessions focused on meeting needs for children with ASD that are not open to the public.

More Info - <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/>



Summer of Sculpture Workshops

Cromwell Gardens, SW7 2RL

V&A are running 2 creative family workshops in August 2023

More Info - [Drop-in Design: Body Sculptures - Workshop at V&A South Kensington · V&A \(vam.ac.uk\)](https://www.vam.ac.uk/drop-in-design/body-sculptures-workshop) and [Drop-in Design: Land and Body Sculptures - Workshop at V&A South Kensington · V&A \(vam.ac.uk\)](https://www.vam.ac.uk/drop-in-design/land-and-body-sculptures-workshop)

Science Museum Free admission

- **Pattern Pod** interactive sensory space [Pattern Pod | Science Museum](https://www.science.org.uk/pattern-pod) under 9's
- **The garden**-interactive space construction water, light and sound.
- **BRING YOUR OWN APRONS** or bring a change of clothes. [The Garden | Science Museum](https://www.science.org.uk/the-garden)
- Accessibility info [Accessibility | Science Museum](https://www.science.org.uk/accessibility)

- **Early Birds** is a sensory friendly event for families with members who need a quieter environment to enjoy the museum. [Early Birds | Science Museum](#) Dates in June and July 2023

Natural history Museum

Sensory story telling [Adventure Babies | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#) little ones up to four 4, 11, 18 July, 1, 22 August, 5 September

Story Telling

383-387 High Street, Stratford, London E15 4QZ

Taking place in July and August

More info - [Discover Centre](#)

Theme Parks – Chessington World of Adventures, Lego Land, Thorpe Park

Ride access Pass - [Apply Online \(merlinannualpass.co.uk\)](#)

Helpful Website

Accessible area/attractions

Information and guide routes for accessibility around London and Britain.

For more info:

<https://wheelmap.org/>

https://www.motability.co.uk/cs/accessible_guide/index.html#page=1



Changing Places Toilets

Website locating the nearest fully accessible toilet, with height adjustable changing beds, peninsular toilets, and ceiling hoists.

Weblink: [Changing Places Toilets \(changing-places.org\)](#)



Gatwick Airport

[Hidden Disabilities | Gatwick Airport](#)

Pre book through Special Assistance

Hidden Disability Lanyard - HiddenDisability@gatwickairport.com

Visual guide to travelling through the airport

Sensory room – North Terminal - [Sensory Room | Gatwick Airport](#)

Heathrow Airport

[Hidden disabilities | Heathrow](#)

Sunflower lanyards – various locations across the different terminals

Extra assistance is available