

# Teaching Resources | Teacher Training



## Supporting children with ASD Outside

BEE GREEN AND ONLY PRINT IF YOU HIVE TO :)

### Preparation and safety

Each season, nature will bring you the resources that you need. However, if you do not have a natural setting or lack certain natural items, try to collect these in advance of your sessions. Make a habit of going out for a walk at weekends - you'll improve your own physical and mental health, which is good for you, and you'll collect your missing items. You can also encourage parents to get collecting through your newsletters! Make your world one big healthy, Muddy community. You will get an idea of the types of resources that you need each season. The only resource that you may need to buy is air-drying clay.

Weather wise, we will provide you with ideas for all types of weather. The only time that we advise you NOT to go outside is on extremely windy days and during thunderstorms. Otherwise, there's no excuses - get yourself out there!

Always risk assess with the children present. As you enter the natural environment, spend 30 seconds talking about the dangers that the weather conditions may present, such as slippery surfaces and hot sun. If possible, offer the children a solution to any issues, such as seeking out a safe, shady area if the sun is too hot. Keep sticks low and only use stones no bigger than the palm of the children's hands. remind them to use feet first then hands when collecting from the floor and wash hands thoroughly after.

Please be aware that all guidance and resources suggested within this guide are carried out at your own risk. We stipulate that all Muddy Puddle Teacher resources and guidance must be used within the context of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments and insurance. We do not, in any way, suggest that you follow our guidance if it does not meet the requirements of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments or insurance. It is your responsibility to ensure that any activities or resources used are suitable for the individual needs of the children within your care, including any needs related to age, health or allergies.

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# Supporting Children with ASD Outside

## Being Consistent

Whether you are a parent or a teacher, decide on a specific way to enter your garden or outside space. Take the same path and mark this with paint and arrows so your child can feel comfortable and secure with where they are going. It may be nice to give your a child a 'den' as well. It's another safe comfortable, secure and familiar space for them if the outdoor space becomes too much. For many of you, you may have an autistic child but will be also managing other children too. A safe spot 'den' can be a nice place that offers comfort to your child and that they can go too if they want a time out. You can then continue the learning with others. A 'den' gives them that choice. When they are out there, they do not feel panicked - it's a long way back in doors if it all gets too much but their 'den' is just there to turn too. This could have a few favourite cushions your child or children choose, a blanket, or make a den from tarps and leave it out permanently. I would also make a point of playing in this area with your child or children, so it does not become a place where they're always alone. But, on the other side, some children may want that alone time. You must have patience and be creative, try different things and stick with it. If it is not working, try something else. This could take weeks, months or years to achieve but you and your child/children will get there.

## Stick to a Schedule



Having a written schedule for the day up in your class or home is important for all children. It just settles their behaviour. We, as adults, have adapted to being spontaneous and changing routine but, for years, our babies have been in feeding routines and we do this because it makes them feel safe and settles their behaviour. So, be careful about dramatically changing this just because they're that bit older. They still like to know whats going on. They're not mind readers! Get your self a flipchart stand or a small pretty blackboard for home and every day write in as much detail as your child needs how the day is going to go, including when you're going outside. If you change things, take your child back to the board and tell them and explain in detail why you have made the change. If your child loves going outside, tell them when they're getting that back. Its is very hard for a child with autism to understand why you would do that and would immediatley feel hurt, although unable to tell you. So make sure they get it back somehow. Over time, as your child grows, you may be able to slacken the detail you put in this but, to start, make it detailed. If your child is non-verbal, use pictures. If you're a good artist, go for it or print pictures off the internet, or use the form of sign they're using, like Makaton.

“The best way to make children good is to make them happy.” - Oscar Wilde

Does your child not like touching mud? We have a pack on that too!



## Reward Positive Behaviour and Achievements

You know your child, children, best. What do they really like? Dinosaurs, cars, Frozen, friendship? Reward them for when they challenge themselves or overcome a hurdle. Ensure you tailor that reward. So, if they like dinosaurs, go on the internet and find some dinosaur stickers. If its playing with their friends they love, give the whole class an extra play. We are a big believer at Muddy HQ in group rewards for indivudal achievements as it stops isolation of others withn big groups. Instead a group rewards makes the child who achieved happy and the others proud of them, happy they got rewarded too and more supportive, bringing the community together more. Think about it - give one child a sticker. How do the others feel? Always go for group rewards! Personally at Muddy HQ, we're against any stars of the days or stars of the weeks, because our ASD children are often the ones that find these really hard to understand and can take it really personally, each week leaving school upset they have not 'won' it. We promote an inclusive community, where we all work together. These little hits can be just what takes a childs confidence away.



# Supporting Non-verbal ASD Children Outside

## Non-verbal Cues

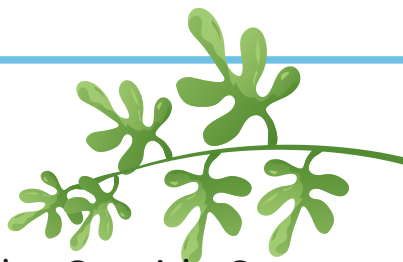
Over time, you will get to know your child or children and pick up on their own signs to communicate with you. If you're a parent, you will know the cues, but, if you're a teacher with a class of 30, you need to make sure you are given time to spend one-to-one with your child, so you can get to know them and form a bond. Often the teaching assistant is assigned, which is fine, but the teacher plans for the child, so they need time to bond and get to know one another. Once you are aware of the child's non-verbal cues - use parents to help, they know their child best - write them down and hand them out to all of the staff involved. With permission from parents, also share with the other children. For a non-verbal ASD child, it is incredibly hard for them to connect, yet they really do want to, so help them all you can. Feeling belonging and loved is important to all of us. As teachers and SENDCOs, we find the most successful stories happen when classes come together, bonding and supporting all our differences. This may mean bringing all parents in, educating them about non-verbal ASD, how in particular they can help the child or children in their class and how they can educate their children to support their friend. Be open and let community help and bond! However, when you go outside because of the sensory change, you may find your child stops using their normal cues. Look out for changes, new cues and be mindful of how your child is or is not enjoying the experience.



All of our SEND resources can be found under 'Muddy Special Needs Resources'

## Have Fun

All of the resources at Muddy Puddle are fun. We don't do it any other way! We link in the curriculum but, each time we sit down to write a plan, it has FUN at the top. All children want this and it is certainly something all schools need to place more focus on. Having fun outside will give your child/children confidence that this is a place they want to be. The outside can be a very happy place for children with ASD as they can move, be loud and be around nature.



## The Outside Sensory Experience

The outside can be a great thing for children with ASD, because sounds and senses are calmed and, what bothers them inside the classroom does not on the outside. Many non-autistic children can be hypersensitive to senses, such as touch, smell, light, sound and taste. The outside can be another place they need to get used to. Either way, Mother Nature will help. Many of our Muddy Teachers work at special schools and our approach is very successful and happy in these settings, as it is a way of helping your child make progress if they are hypersensitive in a very subtle, nurturing and natural way. We have packs to help with this, so keep a look out in the Special Needs section. It takes time but listen to your child. If they don't like touching mud, do not do it until they're ready. Offer gloves and read the pack on 'Touching Mud'. Make time for peaceful activities outside, like cloud watching and sitting in the rain. Listen to your child and be calm. Use our 'Care Plan' to make small goals and work with parents get their advice and take small Muddy steps. We also have a pack on 'Supporting Hypersensitive Children', which is full of ideas to help develop this area.

