

BACK TO SCHOOL, BACK TO POSSIBILITY

The Simone's Oasis Back-to-School Toolkit

Practical tools for children, parents and teachers to help
make the new school year a positive and inclusive experience.

Different
Learners.
Brighter
Futures.



For Parents

For Children

For Teachers



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Keep what helps. Adapt what does not.

Going back to school can bring excitement, uncertainty and a lot of change. For some children, transitions need a little more preparation. This toolkit is designed to make that preparation easier.

A

There is no single way to support a child with Down syndrome, autism or another neurodevelopmental difference. Start with the individual child. Use the tools that are useful, change the language, add photographs or symbols, and leave out anything that does not fit.

The goal is not a perfect first day.

The goal is a school year in which children are welcomed, understood, supported and given genuine opportunities to participate.



PARENTS

Prepare, share information and build a bridge between home and school.



CHILDREN

Help me know what is happening, who can help and what I can do when I need a break.



TEACHERS

Get to know the child, remove barriers and keep expectations meaningful.

MY CHILD AT A GLANCE

A one-page profile to share with school staff

MY NAME IS

MY TEACHER IS

CLASS / YEAR

THIS IS ME

Things I enjoy, my interests and what makes me smile.

THIS IS HOW I COMMUNICATE

Words, signs, gestures, pictures, AAC, drawing, writing or other ways I communicate.

THIS IS HOW I LEARN BEST

For example: visual instructions, demonstrations, repetition, smaller steps or extra processing time.

THINGS THAT CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR ME

For example: noise, crowds, unexpected changes, transitions, textures or other known triggers.

WHEN I AM OVERWHELMED

What you may notice, what usually helps and what adults should avoid.

BACK TO SCHOOL CHECKLIST

Before school starts and once the term begins

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS

- ☐ Find out who my child's teacher will be
- ☐ Share the one-page child profile
- ☐ Ask about changes to the classroom or routine
- ☐ Visit the school or classroom if possible
- ☐ Practise the journey to school
- ☐ Take photographs of important places and people
- ☐ Find out where my child will eat, play and use the toilet
- ☐ Identify who my child can go to if they need help
- ☐ Discuss communication, learning and sensory needs
- ☐ Prepare uniform, school bag and other essentials
- ☐ Practise the school morning routine

ONCE SCHOOL BEGINS

- ☐ Ask my child how they are feeling
- ☐ Give them time to adjust
- ☐ Keep communication with school open
- ☐ Share what is working at home and ask what is working at school
- ☐ Celebrate small wins
- ☐ Remember that a difficult day does not mean a difficult year

PARENT REMINDER

You do not have to have all the answers. Your knowledge of your child is valuable information for the school team.

MY SCHOOL DAY

You can add drawings, symbols or photographs

1 WAKE UP

What happens here?

2 GET READY

What happens here?

3 GO TO SCHOOL

What happens here?

4 ARRIVE

What happens here?

5 CLASS

What happens here?

6 BREAK / LUNCH

What happens here?

7 HOME

What happens here?

8 AFTER SCHOOL

What happens here?



Knowing what comes next can make a new day feel more predictable. Add the details that matter to you.

MY SCHOOL PEOPLE & MY BREAK PLAN

People I can ask for help

MY TEACHER	ANOTHER ADULT	SOMEONE I CAN TALK TO
Name: _____	Name: _____	Name: _____
Photo / drawing: _____	Photo / drawing: _____	Photo / drawing: _____

WHEN I NEED A BREAK

Sometimes school can feel like too much. I can use the plan that works for me.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Ask for help | ☐ Ask for a break |
| ☐ Go to my agreed quiet / calm space | ☐ Use headphones or another regulation support |
| ☐ Use my communication card or device | ☐ Take some deep breaths |
| ☐ Use another strategy that helps me | |

WHAT HELPS ME FEEL CALM?

GETTING TO KNOW MY STUDENT

Start with the child, not the diagnosis

What does the child enjoy?

What motivates them?

How do they communicate?

How do they show that they understand?

How do they show that they are confused?

What helps them participate?

What can make the environment overwhelming?

What helps them regulate?

What are their strengths and interests?

What are we going to help them achieve this term?

TEACHER REMINDER

A diagnosis can inform support, but it cannot tell you who this child is. Get curious about the person in front of you.

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM QUICK GUIDE

Remove barriers without lowering meaningful expectations

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Use clear, concrete language
- ☐ Use visuals where helpful
- ☐ Demonstrate unfamiliar tasks
- ☐ Check understanding
- ☐ Allow alternative ways to respond

PROCESSING

- ☐ Ask → pause → give time → respond
- ☐ Avoid immediately repeating the question
- ☐ Avoid answering for the child before they have had a chance

ROUTINES

- ☐ Make routines predictable where possible
- ☐ Use visual schedules
- ☐ Give warning before significant changes
- ☐ Explain unfamiliar activities beforehand

SENSORY ENVIRONMENT

- ☐ Consider noise, lighting, crowding, movement, touch and smells
- ☐ Ask whether the environment is creating a barrier to participation

LEARNING

- ☐ Break larger tasks into smaller steps
- ☐ Model the task
- ☐ Use repetition
- ☐ Connect learning to interests
- ☐ Offer different ways to demonstrate understanding

Inclusion is not about expecting less. It is about providing the support that allows a child to participate and show what they know.

WHEN BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

Pause before you decide what it means

ASK: WHAT MIGHT THIS CHILD BE COMMUNICATING?

- What happened before it?

- Could there be a sensory factor?

- Could the child be confused?

- Could they need more processing time?

- Could the task be too difficult or unclear?

- What happened afterwards?

- What can we change next time?

Understanding behaviour does not mean removing boundaries. It means understanding before responding.

PARENT TEACHER CONVERSATION

Use these prompts at the beginning of term and revisit them when something changes.

- What is going well? _____
- What is proving difficult? _____
- What are we noticing? _____
- What helps? _____
- What does the child enjoy? _____
- What are we working towards? _____
- What should we try next? _____

ONE SHARED GOAL FOR THIS TERM

FURTHER RESOURCES

Practical guidance from established organisations

National Down Syndrome Society

Printable education resources include a back-to-school checklist, learning profile and inclusion checklists.

<https://ndss.org/resources/printable-education-resources>

Down Syndrome Australia

Education Toolkit with resources for educators, families and people with Down syndrome.

<https://www.downsyndrome.org.au/resources/toolkits/education-toolkit/>

Down Syndrome Education International

Evidence-based guidance and learning resources for families, teachers and professionals.

<https://www.down-syndrome.org/en-us/resources/>

National Autistic Society

Guidance on starting or switching school, visual supports, social stories and transitions.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/transitions/england/starting-or-switching-school>

BACK TO SCHOOL BACK TO POSSIBILITY

Our children deserve to be welcomed, understood, supported and included. The goal is not a perfect first day. It is a school year full of opportunity to learn, grow, participate and belong.