

# 10 ways to create an Inclusive Festive Classroom...

The festive season brings many changes to the school environment which can be overwhelming for many autistic children and young people.

- ✓ Autistic learners can feel very unsettled with changes to their environment – consider adding festive decorations to the classroom gradually
- ✓ Create 'decoration-free zones' accessible to autistic students to spend time in if they need to
- ✓ Increased levels of excited noise may be uncomfortable for autistic pupils. Make sure they have access to resources such as ear defenders and fidget/stim toys to help support self-regulation
- ✓ Allow for more frequent breaks for quiet 'alone-time' and/or sensory calming breaks to support emotional and sensory regulation
- ✓ Give advanced warning of any festive changes to the usual daily routine, timetable and school processes
- ✓ Give a copy of your festive timetable to your autistic students to have in advance at home so they can prepare for any new events each day with family support
- ✓ Consider using visual aids such as a calendar and a timetable to show when planned festive events will happen
- ✓ 'Christmas lunch' may be a welcome menu change, but brings new canteen smells. Allow autistic pupils access to a separate eating space if they prefer
- ✓ A 'surprise visit' from Father Christmas can be very frightening for younger autistic children in particular. Plan and prepare a step-by-step explanation of 'Santa's visit' to support understanding and reduce anxiety. Use visual aids if/where appropriate (eg. a 'social story').
- ✓ If you're planning a festive dressing up day (eg. Christmas jumpers), be aware that autistic pupils may be sensitive to changes to clothing. Give advance notice, and consider the use of visual aids to help explain what changes might look like.

This is an example list and should not be regarded as comprehensive. Reasonable adjustments should be based on the profile of the autistic child or young person you are working with.