Oughton Primary and Nursery Special Educational Needs Newsletter

December 2025.

As we approach the Christmas holidays, it's a time filled with excitement, celebration, and changes to our usual routines. For some children, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), these changes can feel overwhelming. At school, we are always committed to supporting every child to feel safe, understood and included, and this continues beyond the classroom during the holiday period.

In this newsletter, we would like to share some helpful ideas, resources and gentle reminders to support children with SEND over the Christmas break, helping families enjoy a happy, calm and positive holiday together.

Common Christmas Challenges for Neurodivergent Children

While Christmas can be a joyful time, it often brings changes that can be difficult for neurodivergent children. Common challenges may include:

- **Changes in routine** – school holidays, later bedtimes, visitors and travel can feel unsettling
- **Sensory overload** – bright lights, decorations, loud music, crowds and busy environments
- **Unpredictability** – not knowing what will happen, when visitors will arrive, or how long events will last
- **Social demands** – seeing lots of people, being expected to interact or coping with unfamiliar relatives
- **Transitions** – moving between activities, houses or events more frequently than usual
- **Expectations to behave differently** – pressure to sit still, be quiet or "perform" socially
- **Waiting and anticipation** – counting down to Christmas Day or waiting to open presents
- **Gift-related anxiety** – surprises, new toys or not knowing how to use unfamiliar items
- **Food changes** – different mealtimes, new foods or strong smells
- **Emotional regulation** – big feelings such as excitement, anxiety or disappointment
- **Sleep disruption** – later nights, excitement or changes to bedtime routines

Practical Tips for Supporting Neurodivergent Children at Christmas

- **Keep routines where possible**
  Try to maintain familiar routines for sleep, meals and daily activities, even during the holidays.
- **Prepare children in advance**
  Talk about upcoming plans, visitors and events ahead of time. Visual timetables or simple countdowns can be helpful.
- **Offer predictability and choice**
  Let children know what will happen next and give choices where possible (e.g. "Would you like to open one present now or after breakfast?").
- **Create calm, quiet spaces**
  Provide a safe, quiet area where children can take breaks from noise and activity when needed.
- **Be mindful of sensory needs**
  Reduce background noise, dim lights if needed and allow children to avoid uncomfortable clothing or decorations.
- **Manage expectations**
  Keep celebrations simple and flexible. It's okay to change plans or leave events early.
- **Support social interactions gently**
  Avoid forcing children to interact or hug others. Allow them to engage in ways that feel comfortable.
- **Plan for transitions**
  Give clear warnings before changing activities and use timers or verbal countdowns.
- **Offer reassurance and understanding**
  Acknowledge children's feelings and remind them that it's okay to feel overwhelmed.
- **Celebrate in their own way**
  Remember that joy can look different for every child — a quiet Christmas can be just as special.

Links to support:

ADD-vance

Preparing for Christmas: autism resources

Your Christmas, Your Way – SPACE Hertfordshire

Christmas | Ambitious about Autism

How to make your Christmas deaf aware - RNID

Supporting a child who finds Christmas overwhelming

Podcasts - Angels Support Group podcast episode 14- Christmas

Things to do:

SEND Local Offer | Hertfordshire County Council

Events for Young People – SPACE Hertfordshire

At-Home & Low-Key Ideas

- **Sensory Crafts:** Simple decorations, playdough or sensory bins with festive textures.
- **Cosy Movie Days:** Favourite Christmas films with familiar blankets and snacks.
- **Quiet Walks:** Local parks or woods for fresh air without crowds.
- **Sensory Play:** Set up a Christmas-themed sensory tray (e.g., pasta "snow", glitter, themed toys
- **Quiet Christmas activities**
  Colouring, Lego, puzzles, sticker books or simple crafts with no pressure to "finish".
- **Christmas-themed role play**
  Small-world play with figures, trains or dolls can help children process excitement and emotions.
- **Calm music choices**
  Use soft or familiar music rather than loud or constant Christmas songs.
- **Create a quiet retreat**
  A cosy corner with cushions, blankets, headphones or favourite toys for breaks.
- **Routine-based activities**
  Include everyday activities like walks, bike rides or board games to provide structure

Updates:

We have had a busy couple of weeks making sure that the children's Individual Support Plans have been reviewed and new targets have been set. These will be shared with you via Provision Map. You will receive a code in the new year and you will then be able to access the plans and add any comments. Some of you may already have your codes from previous ISP's.

If you have any concerns, please see the class teacher in the first instance as they will know your child better on a day-to-day basis.

A gentle reminder that Mrs Phillipson and Mrs Murray work within the role of SEND in school on a limited number of days each week. Mrs Phillipson teaches on a Monday or Tuesday and is not available on these days. Mrs Murray works Tuesday and Thursdays. While every effort is made to respond to Parents as promptly as possible, replies may take a little longer outside of these working days. We thank you for your patience, understanding and continued support.