

## **Attention and listening**

Some children find it difficult to attend to various tasks and activities. Attention Autism is a programme that the Speech and Language Department run at school with many MLD and VB pupils; this programme is designed to build up attention levels. This Attention Autism programme can be run in your home environment too. This will enable these skills to be generalised into the home environment (please see the document titled 'Attention Autism activity ideas sheet' for further information.) Visual timetables, including a 'now and next' timetable, can also be used to help focus a child's attention (please see the document titled 'Visual Timetables and Coping with Changes'). There are many games and activities that can be completed to develop a child's levels of attention. The games and activities below can target various aspects of attention and listening, including:

- Taking turns (either on a 1:1 basis or in a small group).
- Requesting for the continuation of an activity using "more" and/or "again".
- Joint attention (shared attention of two individuals on an object) for an extended period of time.
- 'Ready, steady, go'.

### **Top tips:**

- Keep your language simple.
- Make sure that your child is ready to listen.
- Call the child by their name before asking him/her to do something. This will help to make sure they are looking at you and listening.
- Try to keep the environment as quiet as possible (turn off any unnecessary background noise, e.g. radio, television, iPads etc).
- Use visuals where you can, e.g. now and next visual timetable, sand timer etc.
- Practice little and often.

### **Tasks and activities:**

*(This list is not exhaustive and can be used with other items that you may have at home).*

#### **1. Attention Autism programme**

- Please see 'Attention Autism activity ideas sheet' for further information about this programme.

#### **2. Games/activities targeting 'ready, steady, go'.**

- Build a tower of bricks, then use "ready, steady, go" to knock it over. Make sure the child waits for "go" before knocking over the tower.

- Have a race – using “ready, steady, go”...
- Push a car to each other – using “ready, steady, go”...
- Roll a ball to each other – using “ready, steady, go”...
- Stack plastic cups – using “ready, steady, go”...

### **3. General turn taking games:**

- Use any games or activities you have which target taking turns.
- For example:
  - Pop up pirate, crocodile dentist etc.
  - Blowing bubbles
  - Jigsaw puzzles
  - Rolling/throwing a ball or beanbag to each other
  - Stacking plastic cups
  - Snakes and ladders etc.
- Remember to emphasise “**my turn**”, “**your turn**” when playing the games. See if your child can follow whose turn it is by asking “whose turn is it now?” Or “whose turn is next?”. These games can initially be completed on a 1:1 basis (adult and child). If your child can take turn on a 1:1 basis this can then be extended to incorporate other people, e.g. siblings or other family members. This means that the child will have to wait longer for their turn and will therefore help to extend their attention span and engage in larger groups.
- If your child is finding it difficult to take turns, be in control of the situation by keeping hold of the equipment/toys being used.

### **4. Listening to sounds:**

- You could use either pictures of animals or animal toys for this activity (or any other items you might have around the house). Before starting, make sure your child is familiar with the noise each animal makes. Put 2 of the animals in front of the child. Make the noise of one of the animals, e.g. “moo” and the child has to select which animal it is. Gradually increase the number of animals you use. You could also make this harder by covering the animals with a cloth and then revealing them.

### **5. Simon says:**

- You can play this game by simply asking your child to do different movements, e.g. “touch your nose”. If you want to make it harder then you can ask your child to do two actions. Finally, you can make them listen to see if Simon said. You can take it in turns to give the instructions within this task.

### **6. Name Game:**

- In a small group, take it in turns to throw a beanbag or ball to each other, saying the name (or gesturing) of the receiving person before they throw.