

12 Adjustments to Christmas

Christmas can be a difficult time of year for our neurodiverse pupils. Here are 12 adjustments we can make to our practice in school that might help to make the festive period as problem free as possible.

- 1 Use visuals to explain** to the child what will happen at different events such as Nativity Play arrangements, Father Christmas visiting, Christmas Dinner etc.
- 2 Use a visual calendar** to show countdown to Christmas/changes in the school day.
- 3 Forewarn** children and families of **decorations** being put up and especially if and when a **Christmas tree** is going in the hall/reception area.
- 4 Allow the child a favourite toy** to help keep them calm.
- 5 Allocate a Christmas-free, calm area** that is easily accessible and feels safe in. Make sure familiar activities and calming toys are available.
- 6 Ask the child if they would like to help put up the classroom decorations.** Leave some area of the classroom not decorated.
- 7 Allow and encourage more sensory breaks** as the environment may become increasingly overwhelming.
- 8 Have a box of calming activities** available if there is a **lot of waiting** for example for their part in the Nativity/Christmas dinner.
- 9 Forewarn** of any **loud noises** – crackers, whistles, Music in the play. Make sure ear defenders are with the child and encourage their use as appropriate.
- 10 Allow the child to follow their normal school routine** if they wish to. Aim to keep areas of the classroom tidy and clutter free.
- 11 Be mindful that the child may not like surprises:** show a photo of the man before he is dressed as Santa, leave some presents unwrapped.
- 12 Be aware that increased use of glitter, glue shiny paper can also add to sensory overload.**