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Thank you for attending my course today, I hope you found it really useful. As part of the course I offer individual participants free one-to-one support for specific children. (Subject to availability, first come basis.) Just email me at geoff.hannan@btinternet.com and we can arrange at Teams/Zoom etc.

Using CBT, ABA, and FCT Approaches in Schools

KEY NOTES

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) – “The Thought Detective”

Importance:

CBT is important because many autistic children can feel anxious or get stuck in negative thoughts. By teaching them to notice and change those thoughts, CBT helps them stay calm, build confidence, and focus better on learning. It gives them tools to handle challenges without feeling overwhelmed.

Strategies for Teachers:

- Use visual thought charts (e.g., “Worry Thought” → “Helpful Thought”).
- Encourage the child to pause and take deep breaths when anxious.
- Provide positive self-talk scripts (e.g., “I can try one step at a time”).

Classroom Examples:

1. Child says, “I’ll never finish this maths sheet.” Teacher guides: “Let’s try one question first. You can do it step by step.”
2. Before a spelling test, child practices saying, “I’ve studied, I can do my best,” instead of “I’ll fail.”
3. Child thinks, “No one wants to play with me.” Teacher reframes: “I can ask someone to join me.”
4. Child erases work angrily; teacher reminds: “Mistakes help us learn,” and models calm correction.
5. Child worries about moving to art class; teacher uses a visual schedule and says, “It’s okay, we’ll go together.”
6. Child insists their drawing isn’t good enough; teacher encourages: “It doesn’t have to be perfect—it shows your effort.”

Applied behaviour Analysis (ABA) – “The Step-by-Step Coach”

Importance:

ABA is important because it helps children learn new skills in a way that feels achievable. Instead of facing a big, overwhelming task, ABA breaks it into smaller steps. This builds confidence and independence, while rewards motivate them to keep trying. It also helps reduce challenging behaviours by teaching positive alternatives.

Strategies for Teachers:

- Break tasks into manageable steps.
- Always use rewards (stickers, tokens, praise) for each successful step.
- Track progress with a visual chart in your Home-School link book.

Classroom Examples:

1. Child struggles with group work. Step 1: Sit with group → reward. Step 2: Listen quietly → reward. Step 3: Share one idea → reward.
2. Handwriting practice: Breaks writing into steps—holding pencil, writing one letter, then a word—rewarding each stage.

3. Classroom cleanup: Teach child to put one item away at a time, praising each step until tidy.
4. Answering questions: Reward child for raising hand, then for answering with one word, then for full sentences.
5. Following instructions: Teach child to follow multi-step directions (e.g., “Get your book, sit down, open to page 5”) by rewarding each completed step.
6. Independent work: Start with child completing one math problem alone, then gradually increase until they finish a whole worksheet independently.

Natural Environment Teaching (NET) – “Learning in Real Life”

Importance:

NET is important because it teaches skills in the child’s everyday environment rather than only in structured lessons. This makes learning more meaningful and easier to generalize. Instead of practicing in artificial settings, children learn during natural routines—like snack time, play, or group activities—so skills transfer more smoothly into daily life.

Strategies for Teachers:

- Embed learning opportunities into play, routines, and peer interactions.
- Follow the child’s interests (e.g., use their favourite toy to teach colours or counting).
- Reinforce skills immediately in the natural setting (e.g., praise or access to a desired item).

Classroom Examples:

1. During snack, child asks for “apple” → teacher reinforces by giving apple.
2. While playing with blocks, teacher prompts child to say “red block” → reinforces with more blocks.
3. Child wants to go outside → teacher uses the moment to practice “I want to go out.”

4. During art, teacher encourages child to request “paintbrush” instead of handing it automatically.
5. Child shows interest in a book → teacher uses it to practice turn-taking and answering questions.

Prompt Fading – “Helping Children Do It On Their Own”

Importance:

Prompt fading is important because it prevents children from becoming dependent on adult help. Prompts (like verbal cues, gestures, or physical guidance) are used to teach new skills, but they must be reduced gradually so the child learns to perform independently. This builds confidence and autonomy in the classroom.

Strategies for Teachers:

- Start with stronger prompts (e.g., hand-over-hand) and move to lighter ones (e.g., pointing).
- Fade verbal prompts by reducing words over time (from “Say ‘help me please’” → “Say ‘help’”).
- Use visual prompts (cards, pictures) and gradually remove them once the child learns.
- Reinforce independent responses more strongly than prompted ones.

Classroom Examples:

1. Teacher first guides child’s hand to write a letter, then only points to the line, then removes prompts entirely.
2. Child is taught to raise hand: teacher starts by modeling, then only gestures, then fades until child does it alone.
3. Teacher prompts child to clean up with “Put toys away,” later reduces to “Toys,” then just a visual cue.
4. Child learns to greet peers: teacher first says “Say hi,” then just nods, then fades until child greets independently.
5. Teacher uses picture cards for “break” requests, then gradually reduces reliance until child says “break” without the card.

Functional Communication Training (FCT) – “The Feelings Translator”

Importance:

FCT is important because communication difficulties often lead to frustration or challenging behaviour. By teaching children clear ways to express their needs—through words, cards, or devices—they feel understood and less stressed. This reduces meltdowns and helps them connect better with teachers and classmates.

Strategies for Teachers:

- Provide communication cards (e.g., “Help,” “Break,” “I’m finished”).
- Encourage the child to use words or cards instead of shouting.
- Model communication by showing how to ask for help.

Classroom Examples:

1. Child gets frustrated during reading. Instead of shouting, they show a “Help” card. Teacher responds quickly, reducing stress.
2. Break request: Child uses a “Break” card when overwhelmed instead of leaving the room without permission.
3. Choice making: Teacher offers two cards (“Playground” or “Library”) so child can choose their preferred activity.
4. Help request: Child uses a “Help” card when stuck on a puzzle instead of pushing it away angrily.
5. Finished task: Child shows a “Finished” card when work is complete, reducing anxiety about what to do next.
6. Sensory needs: Child uses a “Quiet” card to signal they need headphones or a calm space instead of covering ears and shouting.

Putting It All Together

- Morning routine: Child uses FCT to ask for help unpacking.
- During lessons: ABA helps them complete tasks step by step with rewards.

- When anxious: CBT strategies guide them to replace “I can’t” with “I’ll try.”

Approach	Importance	Teacher Strategy	Classroom Example
CBT	Helps manage anxiety and negative thoughts	Thought charts, positive self-talk	Reframe “I can’t” → “I’ll try”
ABA	Builds skills step by step with rewards	Break tasks, reward progress	Reward for joining group work
FCT	Reduces frustration by improving communication	Use cards/devices, model asking	Child shows “Help” card

Further Reading

(Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)

CBT books help educators and caregivers understand how to adapt therapy for autistic children, focusing on anxiety, emotional regulation, and social skills.

- CBT for Children and Adolescents with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders – Edited by Angela Scarpa, Susan Williams White, and Tony Attwood
- The CBT Toolbox for Children and Adolescents: Over 200 Worksheets & Exercises – A practical resource with activities for autism, anxiety, and ADHD
- Cognitive behavioural Therapy for Children and Adults with Autism – By Peter E. Langdon, in Evidence-Based Treatment for Anxiety Disorders and Depression

ABA (Applied behaviour Analysis)

ABA books provide structured methods for teaching skills step-by-step, with reinforcement strategies that are widely used in classrooms.

- Applied behaviour Analysis – By John O. Cooper, Timothy E. Heron, and William L. Heward (considered the gold standard textbook)
- The ABA Visual Language – By Alexandra Garcia, a beginner-friendly guide using visuals and simple explanations
- 12 Best Books for Children With Autism – Curated list from My World ABA, offering age-appropriate reading to support ABA-informed approaches

FCT (Functional Communication Training)

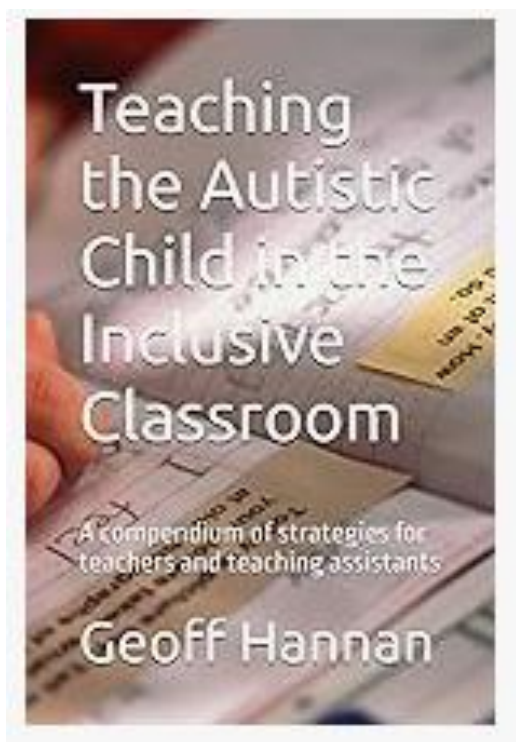
While fewer books are dedicated solely to FCT, many autism communication resources include FCT strategies. These books emphasize giving children tools to express needs clearly.

- Through the Eyes of Us – By Jon Roberts, a picture book reflecting autistic experiences and communication
- Pablo and the Noisy Party – By Andrew Brenner and Sumita Majumdar, showing how autistic children can communicate their sensory needs
- 18 of the Best Books for Autistic Children – Book Riot’s list includes titles that highlight communication and self-expression
- Picture Books Featuring Characters with Autism or Asperger’s – Reading Rockets collection, useful for modelling communication strategies

Geoff and Angela Hannan are providers to/funded by



The books you will receive in the post following this course:



In his latest book, well-known educationalist and trainer, Geoff Hannan presents a detailed best-practice guide to teaching the autistic child in the Inclusive Classroom.

Aimed at school leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, it presents a compendium of down-to-earth strategies for enhancing and improving learning, together with a complete 14-week life-skills and learning programme of study, adaptable to the needs of an individual child. It is fully supported by reproducible online resources and additional email support and advice by the author.

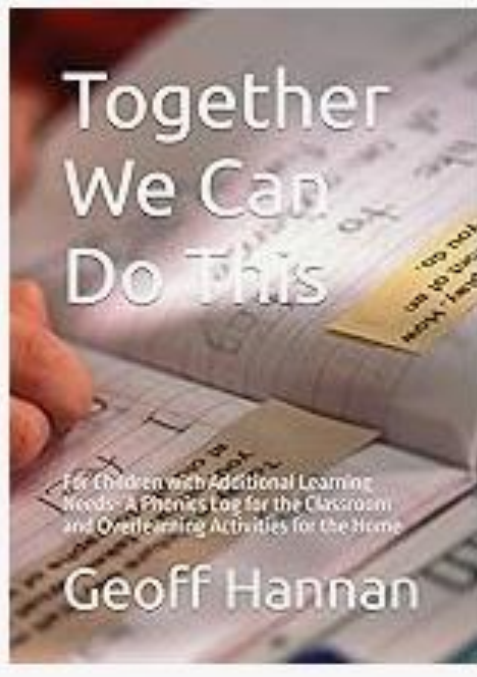
Contents

Section One: The Territory- a brief guide to autism, the potential difficulties autistic children face in their learning and best practices in the Inclusive Classroom.

Section Two: Teaching Core Learning Skills- five key multi-functional learning skills to teach autistic children.

Section Three: Positive Behaviour Management- a platform of proven tactics and techniques for establishing and maintaining good classroom behaviours for all, and ways to manage meltdowns, stimming and the unique potential challenges of the autistic child.

Section Four: 'Mind Gym'- a complete 14-week programme of study for an autistic child and their Teaching Assistant: to teach, practise and use important learning and life skills everyday in school.

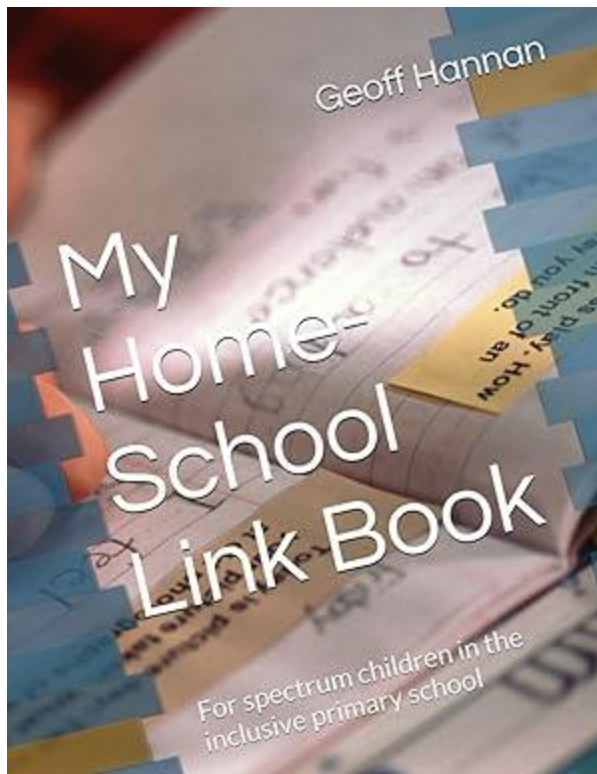


Together We Can Do This

Is a home-school link workbook with a wide range of materials for parents to use at home to support the phonics development of children with Additional Learning Needs- including those on the autistic spectrum and/or with ADHD and communication difficulties.

It includes a simple and quick log for Teaching Assistants to note a full year's learning content, lesson by lesson; plus resources to use at home for 'overlearning': a proven way to enhance AN children's progress and skills development.

Reading is crucial both to a child's academic success and their happiness at school. This book is designed to resource and engage children, teachers and parents to work together to enhance and improve their child's outcomes.



The home-school partnership is vital to the well-being and cognitive development of children on the autistic spectrum.

Yet, research, inspection reports, and feedback from advocacy groups consistently show lack of communication from schools is a major concern among SEND parents.

Parents report being left in the dark about interventions and accommodations; lack of communication and poor monitoring of their child's progress; lack of knowledge about the content of their child's learning (leaving them unable to provide support in the home); and lack of prompt and proactive communication about the changes in routine that can have such a negative impact on their autistic children's progress and happiness.

This simple Home-School Link Book provides a quick and effective framework for the school to share information with the home, communicate learning content, monitor targets, and empower and encourage the child to engage actively with their own learning needs.