

Help! One of our young teachers is pulling her hair out. We have a child in Primary 1 with no support (his parents can't accept that there is something wrong with him). Unfortunately this lack of recognition is a major issue as he is going to need a lot of help. He is taking up all of the teacher's/Classroom Assistant's time and that is just to stop him disrupting the rest of the class. His echolalia means he repeats everything that is said by the teacher and by other pupils. , When she tries to read from a big book he repeats it after her. When told to be quiet or she just repeats it. He cannot follow a routine. He seems to need to hold something all the time but then bangs it against other things to make a noise. I have made a visual timetable and social story for him and am going to make cards for the teacher to show him when she wants to be quiet or sit. The teacher says the only way she can cope is to ask the classroom assistant to withdraw him continually now, from carpet sessions and group sessions. I know it is early and he needs time to learn a routine BUT we are now faced with an inspection and the teacher asked me what more she could do, and will the inspector expect to see all of the class in all of the activities.. Any ideas?

Answer 1.

Try permitting him to repeat some of the things that are said in class. At times this might even be useful - for instance repeating instructions. Decide with him a visual sign to show when you want him to repeat. This might not work but if he is concentrating to see when he gets the repeat sign it may mean that he forgets to repeat at other times.

Answer 2

Make a circle of carpet and place this on the floor - for a visual cue for him sitting in a group.

Practise being 'quiet' with him. When you want him to be quiet, use his name and be specific. John, I need you to be quiet now.

Keep language very, very simple and concrete. He may not know what 'shh' means.

Find out what he really enjoys and try to include this in any work/task you set for him.

Keep his visual timetables limited to a few items at a time - up to break time for instance.

Make your pictures large (he may not yet understand symbols) and have him take away the picture when activity is complete and put into a box (or similar) as finished. Next picture is what activity comes next. Build in a "waiting" activity - possibly related to his interest, so that he can be occupied between tasks.

Answer 3

Try giving him plasticene or pipe cleaners to play with during 'carpet time', rather than anything that can make a noise.

However, it may be that it is the noise which is stimulating the child. If this is so, try looking for some kind of device with a switch which can be activated but only heard through headphones.

I have a young pupil in class who is obsessed with brushing the same floor over and over again. Should we discourage him from doing this?

Answer 1.

Try slowly to get him to change a small part of this obsession. Maybe introduce putting the brush and shovel away into the cupboard. Then extend it to cleaning a different area of the room, dusting a shelf etc.

Answer 2.

Try to extend the brushing activity by encouraging him to decide what sort of brush was appropriate, e.g. long handled broom or hand brush. Does he need to move furniture etc. to do it properly. etc.

You might need to set aside a particular time when this activity is allowed. Use a very visual clock to let him know when he can do this. You may have to use a star chart or similar reward for him being good and conforming. Gradually you can restrict the time to shorter and shorter spells.