

## An Introduction to SPELL

The Kent 'Special Educational Needs Mainstream Core Standards' communication and interaction guidance (2021), recommends that schools adopt the use of the 'SPELL Framework'.

The framework was developed through the National Autistic Society and further information can be found on their website.

The purpose of this handout is to provide a brief overview of SPELL, so that school staff are familiar with the basic principles.

**SPELL = Structure, Positive (approaches and expectations), Empathy, Low arousal & Links.**

**Structure:** Structure supports an individual to predict and understand events and therefore reduces anxiety. Examples of structure in school include routines, timetables, and labelled areas and resources.



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**Positive approaches and expectations:** Positive approaches and expectations are about providing support to enhance self-confidence and develop opportunities for learning. Examples of positive approaches and expectations in school include utilising children's interests and skills, and providing praise to encourage motivation and engagement.



**Empathy:** Having empathy involves developing an understanding of how a person thinks, communicates, learns, and experiences the World. Examples of empathy in school include getting to know children and responding to their learning and communication style, and being aware of their sensory profile so that potential stressors can be reduced.



**Low arousal:** A low arousal area should be an environment where sensory 'clutter' is reduced as much as possible. Examples of low arousal approaches in school include providing quiet areas to work with minimal distractions and staff using non-confrontational styles of interaction.



**Links:** Close collaboration between schools, services and families ensures views and information are shared and there is a consistent approach in the best interest of the child. Examples of encouraging links in school include regular parent meetings, use of communication books and talking to children about their own views.

