

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES



WELCOME TO BIRCH COPSE'S TERMLY LETTER FOCUSED ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES.

After-school restraint collapse - what is it?

Sound familiar? Your child walks out of school smiling, and their teacher says they've been a star all day. But as soon as you get home, the tears, shouting, or sulking begin.

You're not alone. This is something many parents experience and it's often referred to as *after-school restraint collapse*. It occurs when children have spent all day working hard to manage the ups and downs of the school day. By the time they get home – their safe space – everything comes pouring out.

So what can you do to help?

1. Build in space to unwind

Every child is different – some need movement after school, others prefer quiet time. Try not to dive straight into homework or activities. Instead, offer time to decompress. Some children may benefit from –

- A snack
- A walk/ run or scooter ride
- Heavy work – Wearing a backpack with a few books or water bottle inside
 - This provides proprioceptive input (deep pressure to the muscles and joints), which can help calm the nervous system and support emotional regulation.
- Pushing the buggy
- Stopping at a park to climb, hang, or swing
- Listening to music
- Sitting quietly with a book

Avoid peppering them with questions. Instead of “How was your day?”, try:

- “I’m so happy to see you.”
- “I missed you today.”



2. Acknowledge their feelings

Let your child know their emotions are valid. If they're angry or upset, respond calmly:

- “I can see you're upset. Let's go somewhere quiet.”
- “Your feelings are OK. I'm here for you.”

Give them language for their feelings: *"I can see your fists are clenched. That might mean you're feeling angry. Let's take a deep breath together."*

3. Build in moments of connection

Even small moments of connection help your child feel safe and loved:

- A cuddle after school
- Reading a book together
- A shared laugh
- Leaving a note in their school bag

These moments remind your child they're loved for who they are – not just for what they do.

4. Ask for help if you need it

Sometimes emotional outbursts are linked to something unresolved at school. If your child's behaviour changes or seems 'off', check in with their teacher. After-school restraint collapse is normal for lots of children but can also be a sign of possible neurodivergence.

5. Remember that school can be very tiring for some children

For many children school can be mentally, emotionally and physically tiring. They've been holding in big feelings, navigating social rules and trying to keep up all day. When they see you, the floodgates may open. It's not because you've done anything wrong. It's because you're their safe place.

Remember that meltdowns don't mean failure – they mean your child trusts you enough to let their guard down.

Focus on Fidgets

Fidgets can be effective tools – but only when used thoughtfully, not as toys.

Research and teacher experience show that quiet, low-tech fidget tools can sometimes help children with sensory needs or attention challenges to stay calm and focused

However, not all fidgets work well in a learning setting. Items like fidget spinners, pop-its, or flashing light-up toys are often brightly coloured or noisy—and may turn into distractions rather than supports. Research shows some of these can even reduce attention or academic performance for the child using them and for those around them.




We have a range of fidget tools at school that teachers will provide if they believe a child could benefit from using one.

If you believe your child might benefit from using a fidget tool, please talk to your child's class teacher.


Please do not send fidgets from home. Instead, the school will provide safe, consistent tools that won't distract other students or become something to play with during class.

Alternatively, other strategies may be more effective – short brain breaks, breathing exercises or movement opportunities often help children to focus.


Upcoming Events in Our Area – Please click on the links for more details and eligibility criteria

 Understanding More About Autism – Autism Berkshire Thursday 18th September, 10.00–11.30am
Online workshop for parents of children (up to age 18) with autism. Free to Berkshire West NHS families.


 [Event info](#)

 Jodie Clarke: Understanding Autistic Burnout in Children and Young People Thursday 18th September (evening)
Online webinar exploring autistic burnout and how to support recovery.


 [Event info](#)

 Special United – Reading's SEND Youth Forum Wednesday 24th September, 2025
A safe, inclusive youth forum for young people with SEND and their siblings (ages 8–25) living in Reading Borough.


 [Event info](#)

 Online Workshop: Autism & Teenagers Thursday 25th September, 10:00–11:30 am
For parents/carers of autistic teens (11–18) in Berkshire West—focuses on independence, puberty, friendships, and transitions.


 [Event info](#)

 Neurodivergent Parents and Carers Support Group (Online) Tuesday 30th September, 7.00–8.30pm
A monthly online peer support group for self-identifying neurodivergent parents and carers of children with SEND.


 [Event info](#)

 Sensory Differences Part 1 – Autism Berkshire Thursday 2nd October, 10.00–11.30am
Online workshop for parents and carers of autistic children, focusing on how sensory processing affects learning and behaviour.


 [Event info](#)

 Sensory Differences Part 2 – Autism Berkshire Thursday 9th October, 10.00–11.30am
A follow-up session to Part 1, offering deeper understanding of sensory strategies and practical support ideas. Online via Zoom.


 [Event info](#)

 Community Parent/Carer Support Group: Reading Friday 10th October, 9.15–11.15am
Face-to-face monthly support group at South Reading Community Hub, open to parents and carers of children with additional needs.


 [Event info](#)

 Ethnically Diverse Communities Coffee Morning Wednesday 22nd October, 10.00am–12.00pm
A welcoming session for parents and carers from diverse backgrounds, supporting children with SEND. Held in Reading.


 [Event info](#)

 Community Parent/Carer Support Group: Reading Friday 7th November, 9.15–11.15am
Face-to-face monthly support group at South Reading Community Hub.


 [Event info](#)

 Sleep Well Workshop (Trauma Informed) Friday 14th November, 10.00am–12.30pm
Online workshop for adoptive, foster, kinship carers, and birth families of children affected by early life trauma. Covers sleep hygiene, routines, anxiety and the environment.


 [Event info](#)


 PSC Conference 2025: Neurodivergence & Emotional Regulation Tuesday 18th November (all day)
Held in person at The Ozone, Thames Valley Park, Reading, and also online via Zoom. A full-day conference for parents, carers and professionals.


 [Event info](#)

 Supporting Behaviour Part 1 – Autism Berkshire Thursday 13th November, 10.00–11.30am
Online workshop looking at distressed behaviour and meltdowns in autistic children; how to respond and support.


 [Event info](#)


 Supporting Behaviour Part 2 – Autism Berkshire Thursday 20th November, 10.00–11.30am
Follow-up to Part 1, with more strategies for understanding and supporting behaviour.

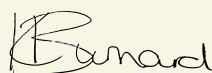
 [Event info](#)

 Community Parent/Carer Support Group: Reading Friday 5th December, 9.15–11.15am
Monthly face-to-face group at South Reading Community Hub, supporting parents and carers of children with additional needs.

 [Event info](#)

 Emotional Regulation in Autistic Children – Autism Berkshire Thursday 4th December, 10.00–11.30am
Online workshop exploring strategies to help autistic children manage their emotions, with practical tips and visual supports.

 [Event info](#)



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