

Spare play



What is it?

Spare play is where a child skips about the schoolyard so it looks like they're playing with others when they're not interacting with anyone else at all.

It's carried out by children who are autistic and/or situationally mute and can be thought of as a form of pain-masking behavior

Why does it happen?

Spare playing is caused by two factors:

Firstly, the child cannot or will not join in with other children playing,

Secondly, they don't want their solo playing to be noticed.

Some spare playing children actually prefer to be alone in the schoolyard.

Others would prefer to play with their peers but feel excluded or rejected

Why knowledge of spare play is important

School staff can miss that the child has social difficulties because it looks like they're playing just fine

How to spot spare play

The trick is to keep on watching the child.

If they're spare-playing, it soon becomes clear that they're not interacting with their peers at all

