wymondham
h i g h

Inspiring excellence

Guide for Parents to Support Home Learning

SEND Dept 2020-2021

Contents

Overview

The requirement to work from home presents a particular challenge for students with SEND and for their parents/carers. Students with SEND need the professionals working with them to make specific adaptations to teaching in order to aid learning and progress. At present, parents/carers are being asked to undertake the challenging role of trained teachers within the home – and we hope that this guide will provide some support for parents of SEND students at this very difficult time.

We've put together a few 'top tips' in an effort to provide some assistance and support learning. Of course, not all tips will necessarily be applicable to all children, of course. However, our real 'top tip' is that **over-learning and consolidation of previous learning** is really important, so that children with SEND do not return to school at a further disadvantage.

Crucially, supporting learning at home *should not result in conflict within the home*; we fully recognise that families are likely to be confined to their homes for extended periods of time – and that SEND students can find traditional schoolwork to be very stressful, even at the best of times. Therefore, our tips for activities are designed to minimise stress to both students and their parents/carers – it's possible to undertake meaningful and supportive activities without these being a source of stress, anxiety or conflict.

In addition to our guidance, we've also signposted several websites and organisations that may be useful to you during this period of time – and added our contact details too. Please do get in touch if you need to and we will endeavour to provide guidance whenever and however we can.

Wishing you and your families all the very best at this difficult time,

Miss L. Sacre   Mrs K. Bailey
Director of Learning Support   Assistant Director of Learning Support

Top Tips

Time Management and Organisation:

Students with SEND often experience difficulties with time management; they may require additional time in which to process information, or complete tasks. Students with SEND may also experience difficulties when completing tasks, in that they may not identify when it is appropriate to move on to the next stage of a task. The following strategies may help:

- Make use of a colour timetable, so that 'learning time' and 'home/rest' time is clear – and, where necessary, to divide up time to be spent on different subjects. An example timetable and blank timetable is provided at the end of the booklet. Where possible, ensure timetables are displayed visually and clearly.

- Avoid making your child sit down to 'complete' a task. Instead, divide time into 15 minute 30 minute or 45 minute blocks and tell your child they'll be working on a task for that set period of time; when the time elapses, that's it – it doesn't matter if the task is 'finished' or not. Praise your child for working continuously during the time set and avoid saying things like 'but that's not finished!'

- Try to create opportunities for movement between blocks of time, so that (for example) 30 minutes of English is followed by time in the garden, or time undertaking something practical and active.

- Where possible, give time warnings between activities, so that students are clear that transition between one activity and another is expected. This means children will have time to process that kicking a ball in the garden will be followed by time working; being consistent with timings of 'fun' activities will support children in understanding that timings of desk work will also be consistent.

- You may find an egg timer, or visual timer useful – so that students can see how much longer they need to spend on a task.

- Allow children time to *think*. For example, if a child doesn't respond to a question immediately, *wait*. A general rule of thumb is 6-10 seconds before a response is required. A good strategy is saying to a child, before a question, 'I'm going to ask you this in a minute…and I want you to take some time to think about it before you answer.' Sometimes, it can seem as though students don't understand something when actually they require time to process information – or experience word-retrieval difficulties that slow responses. Give children thinking time.

Activities and Spaces:

Often, students with SEND can present fixed and rigid views with regard to a need for a clear division between 'home' and 'school.' During an ordinary term, this can be most likely to present itself in a resistance to completing schoolwork at 'home' – because 'home' is not school and vice versa.

Obviously, at present, the lines between 'home' and 'school' are increasingly blurred – and some students with SEND may find it *exceptionally* difficult to accept or acknowledge home as school or parents as teachers. It is possible that some students may exhibit challenging behaviours as a consequence – it's important to understand that where this happens, this is not students being badly behaved; we'd understand this as being an entirely logical reaction to confusion of roles and to unanticipated change. To help and support students, you may find the following helpful:

- As far as possible, try to divide the available spaces in your home – so that there is a clear designated area for 'working' and clear areas for not working. Try not to confuse the two (for example, if the sofa is a 'rest' area, then no schoolwork should take place in that area). If you have a kitchen table, for example, designating that as an area for 'work' and keeping other spaces free from 'work' can help.

- If you find that children are challenging you with statements such as 'well, you're not a teacher so you can't teach me anyway,' try to remember that this may arise from a genuine resistance to the blurring of roles for some children – who would be far more comfortable with parents as parents and teachers as teachers. Using a visual timetable can help, along with statements that acknowledge the strange merging of different roles: 'I know I'm not your teacher, but we're just going to do our best at this for the next 15 minutes and if we get it wrong, it doesn't matter – we'll have tried.'

- Where possible, try not to prioritise one type of activity over another. Doing something active, like gardening, cooking or building something with Lego, can be every bit as important as sitting at a desk. Lego, for example, is proven to aid communication skills; so don't feel that if children aren't writing all day, they aren't working - they are. Try to make sure you give practical activities the same level of importance as written ones. Don't assume that Lego is just for younger children – it can be used to develop interests and skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM subjects).

  One of the books we use in school is 'Building Blocks for Communication' by Amy Eleftheriades. It's currently priced at £27.45 on Amazon (new), although you can view some pages on Amazon. We've provided a number of links to work by Amy Eleftheriades in Section 6.
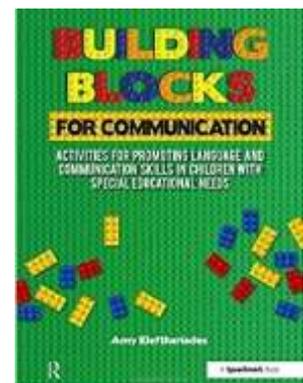
Overlearning and Consolidation: Literacy and Numeracy

Students who have experienced significant difficulties with the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills may be at a double disadvantage at this time. If possible, we should aim to ensure that SEND students returning to school do not find that literacy or numeracy skills gaps have widened. <u>This may well mean that parents may choose to prioritise literacy and numeracy activities over work that has been set by teachers on Teams – and that is ok</u>.

The most important thing to remember when trying to support over-learning and consolidation at home is that this *can* look like practising something a child already knows or can do. For SEND students, opportunities for practise (over-learning and consolidation) are *exceptionally important*. For example, the gains that a student may have made during a period of intervention are often lost over a longer period of time if not revisited. It is also often the case that children with literacy/numeracy difficulties can be the most resistant to undertaking literacy or numeracy-based activities.

Supporting Literacy and Numeracy at Home:

- Make use of board games. There are plenty of word and/or number games available ('Scrabble,' 'Boggle' 'Upwords' 'Yahtzee' – almost any game involving words/numbers will be useful). It's also possible to obtain games specifically designed to develop literacy for SpLD Learners, such as 'Spelling Board Games' or 'Maths Board Games.' Even card games can support consolidation of basic numeracy skills such as adding and subtracting.

  As you would if using Lego: *treat board games as work* when timetabling them. Children are much less resistant to board games than they might be to ploughing through lists of spellings…and older children can be asked to play games to support the learning of younger students. We've provided links to providers in Section 6.

- Make use of free online games. Again, we've provided links in Section 6.

- Wherever possible, <u>read to children</u> – guidance is provided below.

- You may find that when reading with children, you encounter unfamiliar words. When reading with Dyslexic children, you may find that a word previously encountered is still not recognised by the child. To support the development of sight-vocabulary, you may wish to create vocabulary cards with students. An example of a card is provided below.

Front   Back

| Unfamiliar | Unfamiliar:

Not known or recognised. |
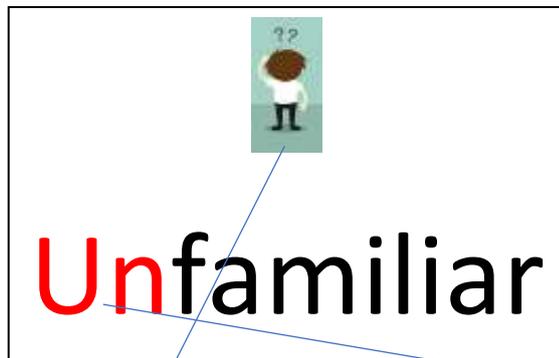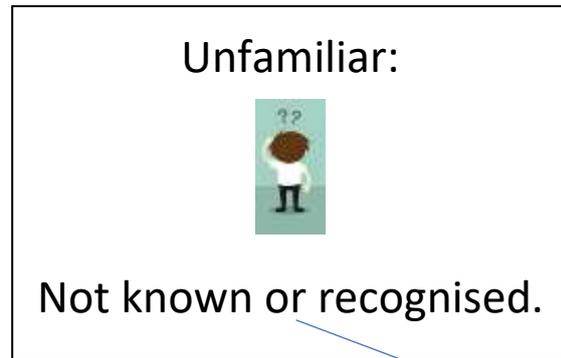
Try to encourage your child to draw an image related to the *meaning* of the word. Images support memory.

Where possible, encourage your child to use colour for parts of the word that may be repeated in other words. Colour helps to cement connections in memory.

Put the definition of the word on the back of the card. If possible, this should be in the child's own words to aid memory.

There are several ways of using cards created by students. When using word cards to develop sight vocabulary, you can:

Hold the front of the card up to the child, say the word and ask the child to repeat it. Repeat this several times, until the child says the word independently.

Turn over the card and read the definition to the child- encourage the child to repeat the definition.

Hold up the front of the card and have the child read the word, followed by the definition. Turn the card over to reveal the definition- either to prompt memory or confirm memory.

Ask the child to think of a sentence containing the unfamiliar word. Ask the child to write a sentence containing the unfamiliar word. Ask the child to read out the sentence containing the unfamiliar word.

Older students can follow these steps independently- but always ensure that this involves reading aloud.

Make sure that children are not producing or using too many vocabulary cards at once – so that children are not overloaded. Aim for a maximum of 6-7 cards per week and tell students that this is about over-learning and consolidation: recognising the word they wish to learn; knowing the meaning of the word off by heart; practising using the word in writing.

The key is repetition – and a 'little and often' approach works best…

- In addition to the online games or resources it is possible for you to access, we will also provide home access to Lexia Reading Strategies for students demonstrating below average attainment in either reading or spelling – which is one of our intervention programmes – for free. Many students do not enjoy Lexia: it is very repetitive. However, Lexia is *designed* to be repetitive and provides students with opportunities for over-learning and consolidation. It is best used for 20-25 minutes daily. Mrs Bailey will be in contact with log-in details for these students.

- School also have a site licence for an online resource called Read, Write Gold. This is an electronic computer reader and spellchecker that can be incredibly useful for supporting students with independent study. The programme provides access to a multi-functional accessible toolbar – and each function comes with a video tutorial. Access to Read, Write Gold will be provided to students with below average or low average attainment in reading and/or spelling. If you would like home access to 'Read Write Gold,' please contact Mrs Bailey (baileyk@wh-at.net) and, as with Lexia we will provide this free of charge.

- You may find other software useful. For example, the free 'Speech to Text' software on Windows 7. Students can use speech to dictate text to a PC; this function converts spoken words into text that appears on the screen.

Reading with Students at Home

For students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), reading can be particularly challenging. The Simple View of reading (links provided in Section 6) suggests that there are two sets of abilities that contribute to reading: Language Comprehension (the ability to understand language we hear and language we read) and Word Recognition (the ability to read the words on the page – also referred to as *decoding*).

A competent reader is likely to have good language comprehension *and* good word recognition skills. Some children will, of course, have poor language comprehension *and* poor word recognition skills. It is not uncommon for children with SEND such as Autism to demonstrate good word recognition skills in combination with poor language comprehension skills. It is very common for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) to have good language comprehension skills but poor word recognition skills. What this means for Dyslexic students is that their ability to understand a text is often confused with their ability to read (decode) independently.

We are able to provide individual guidance on request and if required – please see the following guidance for reading with students at home:

Where you aren't focusing on decoding skills (the child reading), read text to children where possible. This means that you can choose texts appropriate to the child's age and interests, rather than their reading ability.

- As a general rule of thumb, when selecting texts for children to read – students should not struggle with more than four words out of ten (on average). Texts for children to read aloud (to you) should be appropriate to their *reading ability*. For SpLD students – this means that they may be likely to need books that are not age appropriate. However, certain publishers do produce texts that are both age and ability appropriate – Barrington Stoke, for example.

- When reading to children, it can be helpful to pause and ask students questions that support comprehension. We tend to divide questions into categories: *Recall* questions ask the child to remember things that have happened in a story. *Retrieval* questions ask the child to simply retrieve information from the text. *Inference* questions require the child to use the information in the text to work out what may be unwritten or unsaid. *Interpretative* questions ask the child to consider what the author might want the reader to think, feel or believe.

  For example: 'Lord of the Flies' would be a good example of a challenging and age-appropriate text for a 14-15 year old Dyslexic student with poor word recognition skills and good language comprehension skills.

  The poor word recognition skills would mean that the child should not be expected to read the text independently, but *definitely* has the ability to understand the story – which is certainly age-appropriate. To aid the child, the novel should be read a Chapter at a time –

with pauses to ask questions. Pausing too frequently can interrupt the story – so questioning should be 'every now and then' to check understanding.

'Lord of the Flies' starts like this:

> THE BOY with fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon. Though he had taken off his school sweater and trailed it now from one hand, his grey shirt stuck to him and his hair was plastered to his forehead. All round him the long scar smashed into the jungle was a bath of heat. He was clambering heavily among the creepers and broken trunks when a bird, a vision of red and yellow, flashed upwards with a witch-like cry; and this cry was echoed by another.

Here are some examples of questions that could be asked:

Retrieval – What has the boy with fair hair taken off, or removed?

Inference – Why *do you think* the boy's shirt is stuck to him?

Here, the retrieval question simply asks the student to select information from the text. There is a right or a wrong answer. The inference question has no 'right' or 'wrong' answer – but can be more or less sensible based on the student's understanding. A student who says 'because the shirt is wet' would not be incorrect – but you could help develop an answer by saying 'the boy is sweating because the temperature is so hot and therefore his shirt is sticking to his body.'

- If it is not possible to read to children (for example, if you're also trying to work from home), you may wish to consider audio books; where children are using audio books, it is always best if they also try to follow either a hard copy or online copy of the text – so that they're seeing the words while hearing them. YouTube has visual copies of some chapters of some GCSE set texts available with voiceovers.

- At the end of each chapter, or at regular intervals, it is *really helpful* for students to write a short summary of what they have read. This can help with recall questions at the start of the next period of reading: short summaries aid memory.

- While reading, students can be encouraged to highlight unfamiliar words. Unfamiliar words can then be targeted using cards (see above).

Being read to, or reading together, should be pleasurable…encourage your child to choose books that interest them; if it's 'too hard' for independent reading – read it to them!

If your child is reading to you, try not to interrupt the flow of reading too often in order to correct errors; correct errors when they are likely to affect understanding – and where mispronunciation is very clear, or reading is laboured. If a child is struggling with a word, don't interrupt the reading by making them sound it out laboriously: say the word, make the child say the word, praise them for getting it right and move on. Don't be frustrated if three lines later, the child needs prompting with the same word again…just 'give' the word; make the child say the word; and move on. Struggling through a text makes reading tedious – try to keep the reading moving!

If your child is reading to you (and therefore you're practising word reading skills) use praise and reassurance wherever possible: 'you're doing well,' 'that's great' or 'I'm really enjoying this' can help reinforce reading as being a pleasurable experience – for many students with SpLD, it's not. Modelling enjoyment in reading is therefore really important.

(Anticipated) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. My child has been set work on Teams and s/he hasn't a clue what to do. I have no idea how to help because I don't understand it either.

A. Don't worry! It's more important that your household remains calm; please don't allow it to cause stress and anxiety. Where students have a question or require further explanation of in order to undertake work set – they can attend the Q&A sessions that they are invited to by teachers. We would strongly advise students to attend all Q&A sessions because they may involve aspects of live instruction (modelling, feedback) and therefore it may be beneficial for students to attend. We are also very conscious that access to computers may be shared within households and it may not always be possible for every student to attend every live Q&A session. Really, we understand that this is a very challenging time. Do what you can and try what you can, but really, the independent work set should not be causing you anxiety or stress. If there's something you really don't feel you can manage, leave it and pick something you can.

Q. I'm looking after children at home and I'm expected to work from home too – I can't teach at the same time as I'm supposed to work…but my child can't work independently and can't manage the work set.

A. Again, don't worry. Children with SEND require adaptive instruction – they may well struggle to complete some of the tasks set by teachers without adult supervision and instruction. What we'd suggest is constructing a timetable, so that there are clear times during the day when you are able to support learning as best (for example, with literacy/numeracy-based tasks, reading to or with children) and times when your child *can* be left to work independently – such as when drawing, designing a poster, making a PowerPoint or colouring in.

Q. I've got a number of children at home – all of different ages and all doing different tasks set by different schools…how am I supposed to manage?

A. Try to produce one timetable for all rather than two/three/four or more (see example, below). That way, it may be able to allocate blocks of time to different activities – either so that if one child is drawing, all children are drawing, or so that the use of one family computer is fairly distributed…and it's clear to everyone what they should be doing at different points during the day.

Q. Some of the resources you've suggested aren't free – and some of them seem quite expensive. Do I have to purchase these things? Will my children be at a disadvantage if I don't?

A. No. We have signposted resources that *might* or *could* help – based on our knowledge, experience and the things we often use in school, but there is no requirement for you to spend huge sums of money on these things. We'd love to be in a position where we could loan school resources but, unfortunately, it is not possible to do this fairly or safety at present – where we can provide access to

resources for free (Lexia / Read Write Gold), we have done so. If your child is Pupil Premium, it may be possible for us to purchase resources on your behalf. Please contact Mrs Bailey in the first instance.

It should not be the case that your child is disadvantaged because you are unable to spend money on specialist board games at what may well be a challenging time financially. We're just trying to provide suggestions for supporting literacy/numeracy activities within the home in a way that makes things as easy as possible for you.

Q. My child is absolutely refusing to work at home. Every time I suggest schoolwork I am met with resistance.

A. The situation we're currently in is unprecedented – and it would be fair to say that nobody in society is feeling particularly relaxed or calm at present. For some children with SEND, *any* change to 'normal' circumstances (even turning up to a lesson to find a cover teacher) produces heightened experience of anxiety. The closure of schools, therefore, is a *huge* change in day-to-day routines for these children…who will also be picking up on national anxiety (as communicated in the news/disturbances to television scheduling) as well as anxiety at home.

Therefore, it may be unrealistic to (at this stage) expect these children to immediately adapt to following a full school timetable at home. However, it is likely to be helpful to (gradually) re-establish a routine over time – both to provide structure during the day and ensure that the eventual return to school is not too great a shock.

It may be helpful to agree a gradual timetable with a child and to plan that timetable together. For example, 'we need to do some reading, when would be the best time for us to spend half an hour…' or 'you need to be practising Maths skills regularly – when should we plan for you to spend half an hour on Hegarty Maths…' The time spent on particular subjects could be increased gradually – and children given time to prepare for the increase: 'this week, we're going to spend one hour on…' and 'next week, we'll need to…'

If you're finding things exceptionally difficult – over a longer period of time – please do get in touch with us via email in the first instance.

Q. Now I'm working with my child at home, I'm amazed at how difficult s/he seems to find things. I can't believe that my child manages the tasks that have been set on Teams in classrooms with twenty to thirty other children!

A. Remember that individual tuition can feel particularly intense. In a classroom setting, your children may imitate peers; ask peers; benefit from the questions asked of peers and which peers ask themselves. In a classroom, for example, one child may ask a question and the answer given benefits everyone. In a 1-1 tuition situation, all questions are directed at one child. It may also be the case that, in this situation (assisted by a comfortable, familiar adult), a child *might* be quicker to say 'I don't know' than they would in a classroom environment – and therefore less likely to try working out a problem independently. You may very well be surprised by how well your child actually manages in a classroom – and by how well your child is able to 'pick up' information in a whole-class setting. In the same way that a Dyslexic student may use pictures and other devices to

'work out' the meaning of a text, children with Learning Difficulties often develop extremely useful strategies for picking things up in a room full of people. In a home learning situation, these methods become unavailable – and it can look like the child is struggling far more than he or she would in a classroom environment.

Your child's teachers, of course, will also be employing a range of whole-class teaching strategies that are adapted to help your child progress *within a whole-class setting*. Some of these strategies (reading to a class, for example, or demonstrating how to complete a sum) are also employed in a smaller group or individual setting. Some would be less effective. Whole class questioning, for example, is particularly effective in developing the comprehension of all students.

Q. I'm not a teacher! Help!

A. Like the students, you can only do the best you can. The most important thing, we think, is that you do not end up in frequent battles or unnecessary conflict with your child/children while you have to remain in the home together.

Board games are great. Lego's great. Listening to audio books: great. Reading to or with children: great. All of these things involve learning. Do what you can. Don't worry about what you can't. Drop us a line if we can offer anything further.

Q. My child finds school exhausting on a day-to-day basis as it is! How can I keep up the intensity of individual tuition for an indefinite period of time?

A. School is particularly exhausting for SEND students. For students with SpLD, they spend hours each day doing things (reading, writing, calculations) that they find challenging. For students with Autism, hours every day are spent trying to understand the 'unwritten rules' of social communication. Learning at home during the day will also be tiring. It will also be unfamiliar.

It's fine to shorten periods of learning as well as lengthen them. If you find that, to start off with, an hour of schooling is enough – then don't feel guilty: it's enough! In a normal school day, children are 'carried' along by other children; they have opportunities for interaction that break up learning/activities for them. An hour in an English classroom is not equivalent to an hour of English work undertaken at a dining room table. Adjust timings as you see fit…but do make a timetable if you possibly can! If you end up with about two hours of learning per day – you'll be doing very well. Remember, it's *very* different to the five hours of lessons at school – and not all children will be able to replicate five hours of lessons a day at home.

Q. Should I try to make my child do some work if they become unwell, but I think they could still manage to 'do a bit?'

A. No. Follow any advice given by the NHS, including that relating to isolation as a family – and do not worry about any work set on Teams. You might want to continue reading stories to children who are unwell, but this is more about comfort than schoolwork.

External Sources of Support and Useful Websites

Websites:

- BBC Bite Size - https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

- BDA – British Dyslexia Association - https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

- The Dyslexia Shop - https://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk/

- Online Board Games http://www.classicwebgames.com/board/scrabble/

- Online Board Games - http://www.classicwebgames.com/board/scrabble/

- The Indigo Centre - http://www.4dyslexics.com/resources

- Autism Anglia - https://www.autism-anglia.org.uk/

- Alpha Inclusion - http://blockbus.co.uk/alpha-inclusion/

- Autism Parenting Magazine - https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/author/amyeleftheriades/

- For visual timetables -TES https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/secondary-school-visuals3002371 and https://www.reachoutasc.com/blog/the-right-way-to-use-visual-timetables

Useful Books and Resources:

- 'Mind Maps for Kids,' or 'The Memory Book' by Tony Buzan

- 'The Self-Help Guide for Teens with Dyslexia' or 'Fun Games and Activities for Children with Dyslexia' by Alais Winton

- 'The Dyscalculia Toolkit' by Ronit Bird

- '101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism,' Tara Delaney.

Contact Us

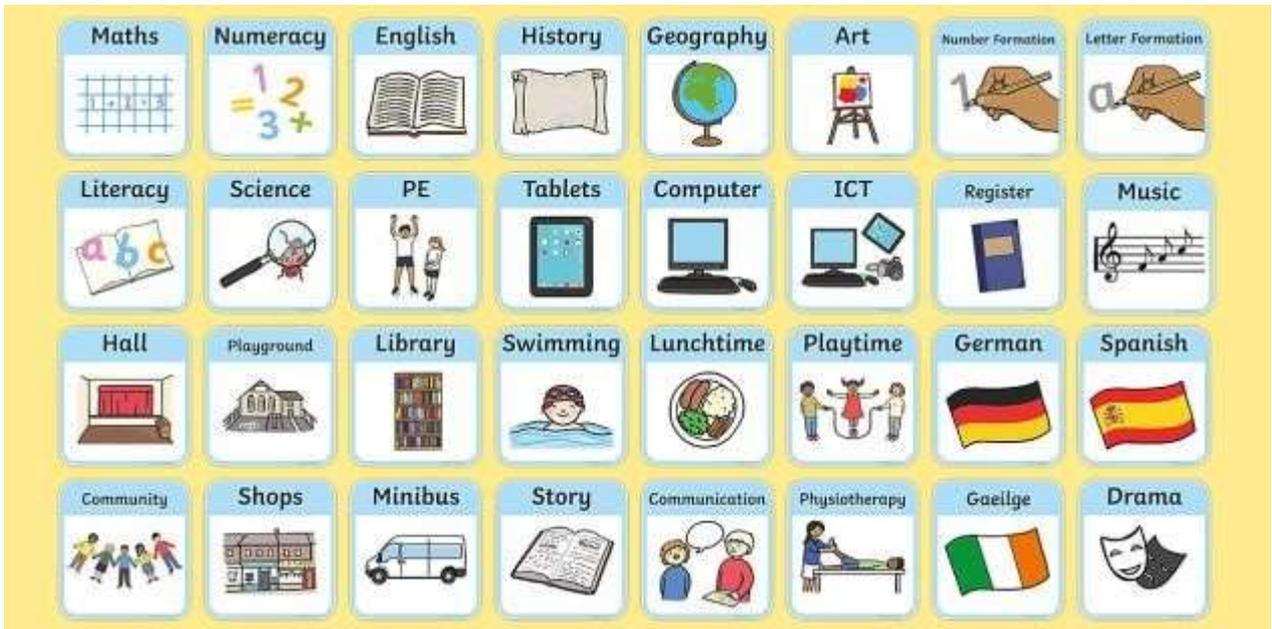Miss L. Sacre – sacrel@wh-at.net

Mrs K. Bailey – baileyk@wh-at.net

Examples: Timetable

DAY	1 25 mins	1 25 mins	Break	1 25 mins	1 25 mins	Lunch	1 25 mins
MONDAY	Lexia	English Task + vocab card 1		Gardening Task	Hegarty Maths		Reading: Novel
TUESDAY	Lexia	Hegarty Maths		Science Task	English Task + practise vocab card		Reading: Novel
WEDNESDAY	Lexia	English Task + practise vocab card		Practical Activity			Exercise Activity
THURSDAY	Lexia	History Task		IT Task	Hegarty Maths		English Task + practise vocab card
FRIDAY	Lexia	Hegarty Maths		Practical Activity			Free Choice

Timetabling – Additional Suggestions:

As stated, it's a really good idea to involve your child in the production of their home timetable; it's more likely to be successful if it's something they're involved in creating and have some (limited) degree of control over, rather than something that is fully imposed.

- You can create boundaries and non-negotiables, but within those, you can also allow a degree of autonomy and choice for the child. This increases the likelihood of the timetable being successful. For example: 'we're going to do five sessions of Maths this week – when do you think it would be best to do them?'

- Once a blank weekly timetable is created, you can adjust within those boundaries. In the example of a colour-coded timetable (above), timings have been indicated at 25 minutes. Timings can be adjusted (of course) and again it could be a good idea to work with your child at this: 'so, you've got some History work set and your teacher has indicated it should take an hour. Did you want to spend one full hour on that or break it into two half hours?'

- On the example above, we have put in a Friday afternoon 'Free Choice.' For SEND students, we'd almost always suggest choice within a range of options – choice within boundaries. And choice separate from leisure activities. So, if your child relaxes by playing on the computer – keep that firmly outside of the 'timetabled day' and, if possible, in an entirely different physical space.

- Colour coding a timetable is a good activity for children and also allows a degree of autonomy in that they can choose which colours to allocate to subjects.

- For some students, it may be an excellent idea to create a visual timetable – where pictures associated with subjects are used instead of words. There are a number of visual timetable suggestions online – and we've suggested some links (above).

- Your child may well enjoy the process of constructing and decorating a weekly timetable – allow them time to decorate and personalise it before displaying a copy that can be referred to when the child inevitably tries to deviate from it!

Maths	Numeracy	English	History	Geography	Art	Number Formation	Letter Formation
Literacy	Science	PE	Tablets	Computer	ICT	Register	Music
Hall	Playground	Library	Swimming	Lunchtime	Playtime	German	Spanish
Community	Shops	Minibus	Story	Communication	Physiotherapy	Gaeilge	Drama

Spelling Strategies

Working on Spellings in the Home:

Working on lists of spelling, usually during the primary phase, can become a significant source of conflict, anxiety, and resistance within the home – as parents/carers respond to the demands of weekly spelling lists and students to the pressure of weekly spelling tests. It may well be true to assert that difficulties with spelling can be one of the key early signifiers of literacy difficulties – and therefore there is often a great deal of importance attached to learning spellings within the home and at school. We often find that an emotional response to spelling is conditioned by the time students reach us.

Spelling may also, while you're at home with your child, be one of the first things you notice. You might read a piece of your child's writing and be tempted to focus immediately on all the spelling errors. Please don't! Here's some guidance for helping develop spelling within the home.

- Make sure that comments on spelling errors are kept entirely separate from the *content* of writing. This doesn't mean you ignore errors as if they don't matter (they do), but when you read a piece of writing, make sure your first response is on the content and the ideas – not the spelling.

- Remember that any approach to spelling instruction should be multi-sensory and provide lots of opportunities for overlearning and consolidation (practise).

  Don't make students look up a word they've misspelled in a dictionary; they have to be able to spell the word to look it up.

  Be careful about making children 'sound out' words they're trying to spell. If they're busy in a writing task and they ask for a spelling, don't interrupt the flow of their thoughts by telling them to 'sound out' a spelling – just give the spelling to them and let them carry on writing.

  Again, be careful about making children 'sound out' words. At a more complex spelling stage, letter-sound correspondences are often not straightforward. Letters can make more than one sound…or lots of different combinations of letters can make the exact same sound (-ai-, -ay, a-e, a, -ey).

  A good approach is to use one of the strategies below to target a single error from a child's own work (or a word the child really wants to be able to spell correctly – like

Arsenal, or Lacazette – it doesn't matter what word the child chooses…the point is the child learning the strategy, so that they can use the strategy themselves independently throughout life).

Another good approach is to use any key word lists provided by subjects. For example, when studying 'Lord of the Flies' it's useful to be able to spell 'dystopia.' In Science, it's useful to spell 'photosynthesis.'

Be careful not to overload children with spellings to learn. If you *do* want to use lists, choose lists of words that are visually similar, or lists of words to which the same rule applies: r<u>ai</u>n, ag<u>ai</u>n, m<u>ai</u>n, abst<u>ai</u>n, refr<u>ai</u>n, pl<u>ai</u>n…if you aren't comfortable teaching spelling rules – don't!

Excuse the repetition: don't overload children with lists of spellings to learn. Target perhaps one or two key words a week and use a card (like the vocabulary card above) so that the meaning of the word is retained alongside the spelling. Then use 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check' (below)

Don't allow yourself to be frustrated if you work on a spelling one day and the 'progress' is lost the next. Repeat the strategy, using the same word, daily at first – and then leave increasing space between practise.

LSCWC – Look Say Cover Write Check. These are the 5 steps:

LOOK: Study the word

SAY: Say it aloud a few times

COVER: Cover it up with a piece of paper or their hand

WRITE: Write the spelling next to the original word

CHECK: Check the spelling is correct.

When using 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check,' it's really important to ensure that *every* step is completed (the word *must* be said aloud. Not sounded out – said aloud).

 Repeat every step six times on each practise.

Mind Mapping

Often recommended…rarely taught!

Mind-mapping *can* be a great way for some students with SpLD to connect ideas and information. It's a real skill – and it requires development. As with all strategies, it also doesn't work for everybody. As students get older, they will need to develop their own note-taking and revision strategies. These can include the use of bullet-point lists, charts, diagrams and graphs. Some children like to make use of revision cards; some like to make use of post-it notes.

Mind Mapping can be a really nice, colourful, visual way to present information. The best guidance comes from Tony Buzan – and there is plenty of information available online.

Two examples of Mind Mapping are provided below. In the first, the student is aiming to recall factual information about Kings of the Middle Ages. The use of colour helps to cement connections in memory, as does the use of images.

The second example is where a student is exploring ideas in relation to a topic.

Where a student with SpLD might struggle to complete an essay, for example, *it would be perfectly acceptable for them to produce a Mind Map as an alternative.*
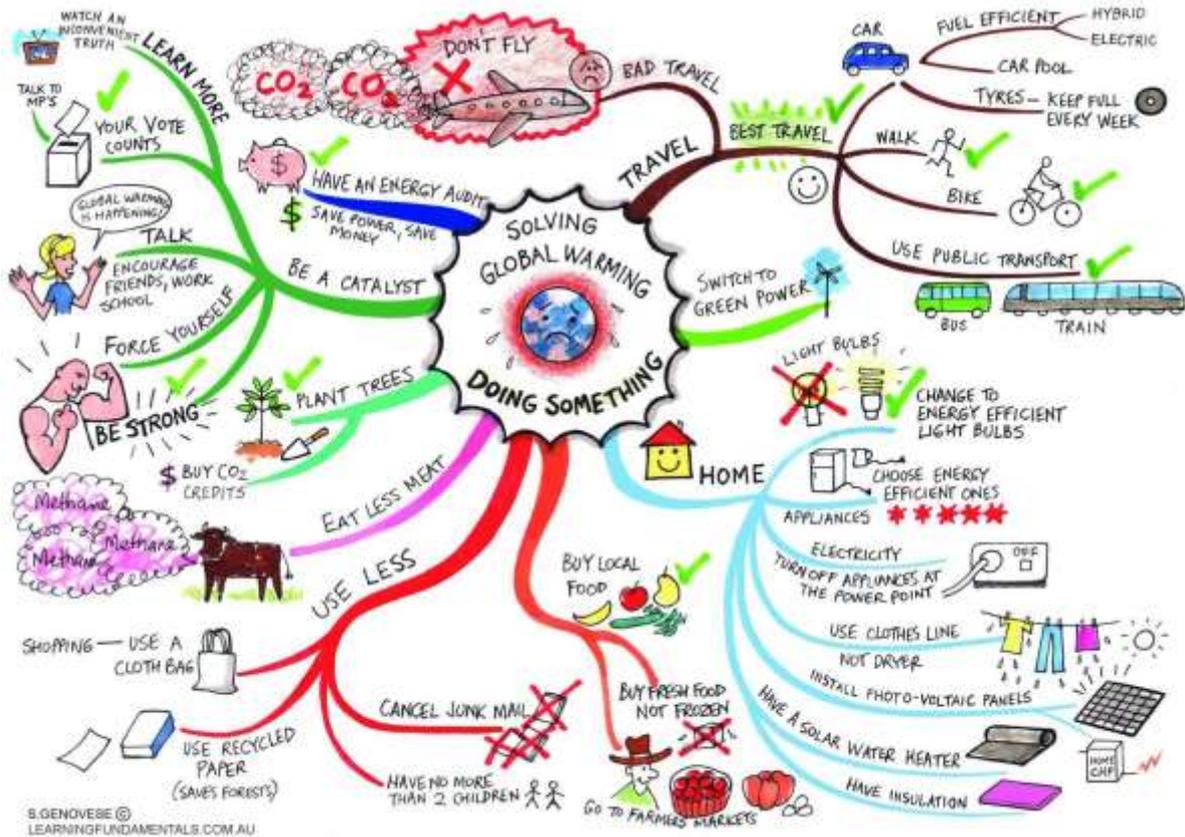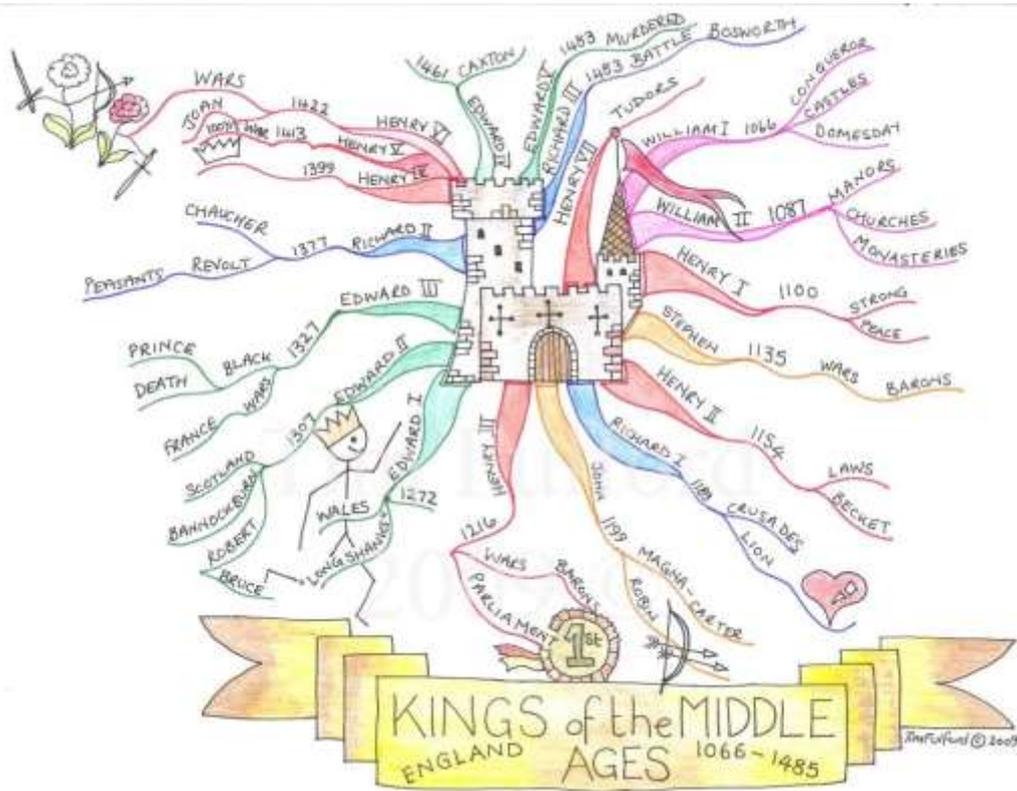
Finally...

We wish you and your families all the very best and

look forward to seeing you again as soon as possible.