



Executive Function



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Attention	Memory & Recall	Predicting and Coping with Change	Prioritising	Knowing how to start	Organisation & Independence	Self-monitoring	Understanding others' viewpoints	Motivation and Self-esteem
Some students have difficulties 'Tuning in' to the teacher (particularly if there are sensory issues), looking at the teacher at the same time as listening and transferring attention.	Some autistic students find it difficult to organise and recall things in their memory. Autistic students often struggle to make links between pieces of information and are often unable to apply and generalise what they have learnt in other contexts.	Many autistic pupils are unable to identify and retrieve the relevant information to plan how to complete a new task or to predict a likely outcome. Difficulties in predicting what something will be like, can mean an autistic student is resistant to and anxious about change.	Students may have difficulty in identifying the important parts of information. They may not be able to see the 'big picture', instead becoming overwhelmed with irrelevant details.	Poor executive functioning can also affect the ability to start a piece of work independently; the brain cannot move on to the next task without some kind of prompt or support to get started.	Many autistic students find it difficult to organise themselves, which impacts on their ability to prepare for lessons, complete homework, locate appropriate resources and carry out sequential activities (such as changing for PE or following a recipe). Difficulties in understanding duration of time can also impact how a student is able to organise themselves and complete tasks within a given timeframe.	Autistic students may not be able to identify their own emotional state, behaviours and thoughts. As a result, they are unable to identify and use strategies to overcome difficulties with these.	Rigidity of thinking impacts on students' ability to access the curriculum. Inflexible thinking can mean that they are reluctant to change their mind or adapt their methods. They may only see one version of events and be unable to use skills of inference.	Autistic students may show poor motivation when faced with subjects and activities they are not interested in, don't understand or think they may fail at. Some may refuse to do the work – they may feel so anxious that refusing to do the work seems more logical than trying to do it. Special interests bring feelings of pleasure and success. These interests can be used to build self-esteem and success in areas of difficulty.
Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies
Use student's name Pre-warn when a change of focus is needed Allow time to process new instruction Have an agreed signal for important listening Use a checklist to maintain attention Make sure student is clear when the task will end Use pupil's interests to engage	Use of mind maps / visuals to recall and link information Make explicit links to previous knowledge Recapping exercises- eg one minute to retell Talk partners Regularly check recall & understanding	Visual planners and decision makers (red and green choices) Warning and preparation for change Involving pupil in decision making where possible Social stories and social scripts Daily transitions Ensure a calm entry into the classroom, allowing time for pupils to orientate themselves. Have a seating plan, taking into account sensory and social needs- allow student to contribute where possible. Share pupil passport to understand pupil's needs. Pre-warn students of the end of the lesson and provide clear expectations Consider sensory issues arising from busy corridors, bells and alarms.	Highlight important pieces of information and key words Use visual planners to support prioritising Timelines Peer support	Support to start (adult, peer, starting sentence) Clear instructions supported with visual prompts Structured and chunked work Well organised, labelled environment	Visual prompts such as task ladders or 'steps to success' Reminder strips for sequential activities Well organised and labelled resources Homework clubs Personal organisers	Clear rules for expected behaviours Modelling Routines Checklists	Perspective taking interventions	Use pupil's interests to engage interests Build self-esteem through highly achievable tasks, before gradually moving to more challenging tasks. Provide a clear time frame, so students know how long they have to work for, then allow time to explore own interests Support pupils in 'big picture thinking' what do pupils want to do in the future, how do lessons in school benefit this?