

Autumn Term 1 - October 2023

Welcome to the first Inclusion Newsletter of the academic year. I hope that it provides you with some useful information, and also gives you an insight into how we support SEN at West Borough. If you have any questions, please contact the school office on 01622-726391 or email me at gjury-sofi@west-borough.kent.sch.uk (Mrs Jury-Sofi)

Nurture UK

This academic year, we are working towards gaining the Nurture UK Award as part of the National Nurturing Schools Programme. In order for us to achieve this, we must demonstrate how we embed the nurture principles into our everyday practice.

The [National Nurturing Schools Programme](#) is based on the **Six Principles of Nurture** that have successfully underpinned nurturing approaches for over 50 years.

1. **Children's learning is understood developmentally** – the social and emotional needs of pupils are assessed and tracked, and all staff provide support for development at the appropriate level.
2. **The classroom offers a safe base** – ensuring that each environment is welcoming, with predictable routines and positive relationships.
3. **The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing** – provision promotes welfare and wellbeing, in an environment where achievements are celebrated and everyone feels valued.
4. **Language is a vital means of communication** – children are supported to understand and express their feelings, in an environment where language is used positively by all.
5. **All behaviour is communication** – a consistent approach to behaviour, where staff understand that children may communicate their feelings in different ways, and where children are supported to reflect on their choices.
6. **The importance of transition in children's lives** – transitions are prepared for and managed with understanding. There is a focus on preparing children for transitions in life, not just in school.

It has been proven that children need to feel emotionally secure in order to learn effectively. Some children at school will be part of a nurture group. The sessions will usually be twice weekly and will last for up to 12 weeks. You will be notified if your child is part of a nurture group.

Through Nurture, we aim to develop positive social experiences and relationships with peers and adults, as well as opportunities to understand emotions and develop children's self-worth, confidence, trust and adaptability. We will support children to understand their emotions and behaviours and develop strategies to self-regulate these emotions and anxieties.

Do you know about Kent's Local Offer?

There is lots of helpful information on this website which can signpost you to local services that can offer support for families.

Scan the QR code with your camera app on your mobile device to find out more about Kent's Local Offer.



The Mainstream Core Standards

In Kent, schools are expected to meet the needs of all children and young people with SEND. The Mainstream Core Standards sets out how we can provide for all children. For example, the classroom approaches suggested are part of how teachers usually work to make sure they meet the needs of all the children in their classrooms. Schools must put provision (the right curriculum and support) in place for children and young people with SEND and they must take account of their individual needs. Children and young people don't need a formal diagnosis for this support to be put into place. You can access the document on the link below.

<https://www.kelsi.org.uk/--data/assets/pdf-file/0005/117257/Special-educational-needs-mainstream-core-standards-guide-for-parents.pdf>



Does your child find it difficult to remember instructions?



Working Memory is the ability to act on past memories, manipulating the information in a new situation. Working memory [allows us to learn](#). For example, by using our working memory skills, we can use past information in reading to read sight words. We can remember maths facts, mnemonics, phone numbers, addresses, and friends' names. We can then use that information to answer questions based on what we know and apply that information in new situations.

For working memory to be used in daily tasks, we need a few key items. We can think of our brain as a memory soup. The key ingredients to working memory are **attention**, **focus**, **auditory memory** and **visual-spatial memory**. If we mix all of the ingredients together, we end up with a working memory that can be used to problem solve any given situation. Children who struggle with the underlying "ingredients" of attention, concentration, auditory processing, and visual processing will be challenged to pull that information into an unrelated event. Children with a sensory processing disorder who are also struggling with social emotional issues might end up by not being able to cope at all (*a meltdown*) and children who cannot generalise facts to a new environment might withdraw altogether.

- Encourage your child to make notes, write a list, or draw a picture of the task.
- Try using a now and next board, so that your child can see what is happening.
- Use a timer.
- Break tasks down into smaller chunks.



There are more ideas on the following pages.

Supporting a Child with Working Memory Difficulties

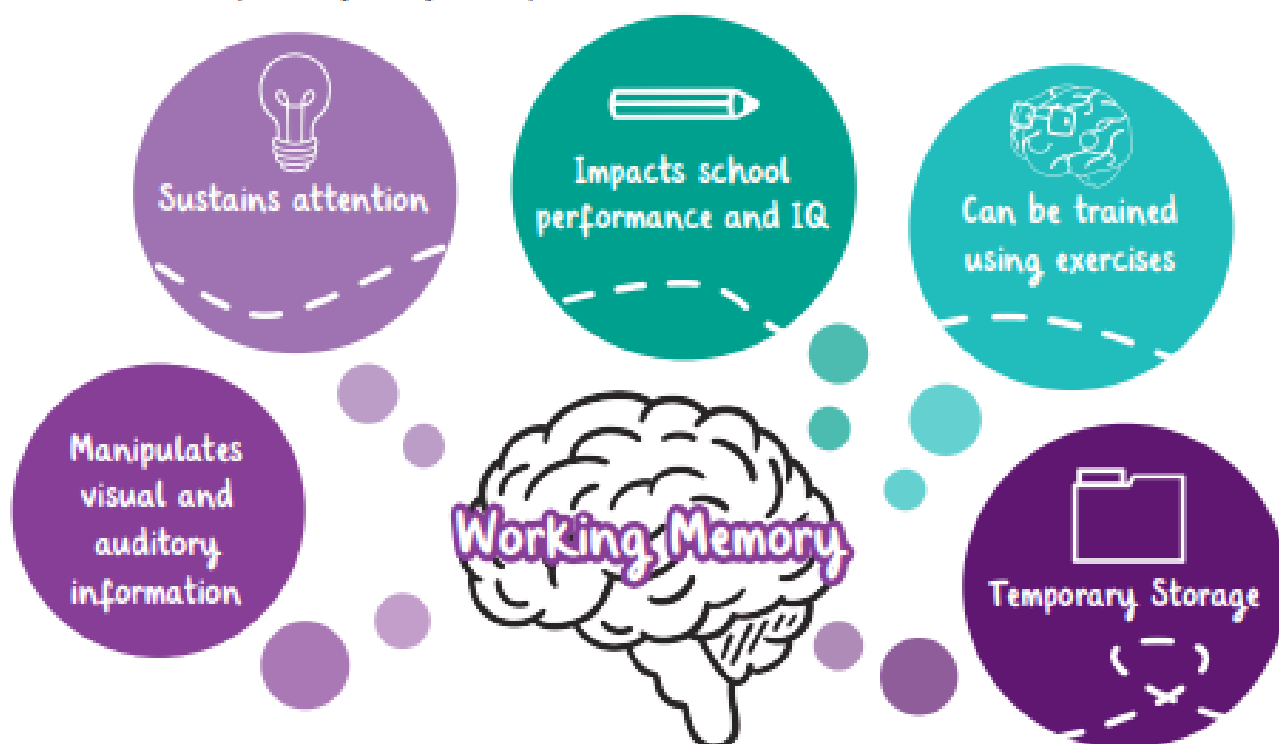
If you find that your child needs support with seemingly simple tasks such as following instructions, retaining information and staying focused, they may be experiencing working memory difficulties. Our guide is here to help you learn more about what working memory is and how to support your child to improve their working memory skills.

What Is Working Memory?

Working memory is one of the brain's executive functions. Executive functions are the core mental skills that allow us to focus, plan and switch between tasks. Working memory can be compared to a sort of mental notepad. It is the skill of holding onto new information while working on another task. For example, when learning a new fact in class, working memory allows the child to 'hold on' to that new fact while they process how to connect it to what they are currently working on. Even if they forget this new fact later on, the working memory notepad has successfully helped them to use that fact at the time. A strong working memory is also necessary for correctly storing information in the long term memory.

There are a few components of working memory:

- Verbal (remembering information they have heard or read)
- Visual-Spatial (remembering where things are, e.g. where they put their pencil)
- Central Executive (the ability to stay on task)



What Are the Signs of Working Memory Difficulties?

You may have noticed signs of working memory difficulties at home or your child's class teacher may have identified some barriers to learning. Your child may need extra support with:



Retaining information (for example, when reading a book they are unable to tell you what just happened).

Following instructions, especially without missing steps.

Starting tasks.

Maintaining focus on a task.



Tackling multi-step problems.

Applying past learning to current situations.

Multitasking.

Following routines.



Planning and organising.

Time management.

Children who need support with these processes may find that their self-esteem is affected or may appear to be lacking in attention or easily distracted.



What Can Affect Working Memory?

Everyday issues such as tiredness, mood and distractions all affect working memory.

However, neurodivergent children and those with specific learning needs (such as those listed below) often find it more difficult to utilise their working memory effectively.



Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

ADHD

Autism

Auditory processing difficulties

Speech and language difficulties

Genetic disorders

Childhood trauma



Fortunately, there are lots of ways that you can support your child to build on their working memory skills.



What Can I Do to Support My Child?

Lighten the Load

Both at home and in the classroom, your child could benefit from extra support with things that they would normally be expected to remember, such as the daily timetable or routines. Here are a few ideas of things you or your child's class teacher could do to lighten the load on your child's working memory and decrease the amount of information your child is having to keep in mind.

Display a **visual timetable** or a **now/next board**.

Have all materials set up ready and easily accessible, e.g. pencil, ruler, etc.

Key vocabulary set up at eye level.

Instructions displayed on the board.

Don't be afraid to adapt exactly how much you lighten the load. Some days, your child may be able to recall their routines without looking at the visual timetable at all, whilst other days they may completely forget that they always get ready for break time at 10.30am!

Break It Down

Most people find tasks more manageable and less daunting when they are broken down into smaller chunks. Children who need support developing their working memory may find it easier to tackle a task if it is stripped down for them. A task here could be something as simple as, "Go and clean your teeth". That seemingly simple request can actually be broken into lots of smaller steps. Think about how many times you have walked into a room and forgotten why you are in there! A child with working memory difficulties may do step one and head up the stairs and then completely forget the rest of the task. Start with a single step such as, "Go to the bathroom." When that is completed, move on to the next step, "Grab toothbrush and toothpaste."

Break a task into separate chunks.

Allow the child to complete one step at a time.

Do not overwhelm your child with information about what the next step is.

Again, the amount that you may need to break down tasks depends on your child's needs and these can fluctuate day-to-day depending on lots of different factors, such as energy levels and mood.

What Can I Do to Support My Child?

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Children are more likely to be able to recall a routine if it is repeated consistently. Having a solid routine in place so that the child knows that's one less thing to worry about remembering will help them be able to concentrate that energy on the task at hand. You could try:

Repeating routines at the same time each day.

Asking your child to repeat instructions or information back to you.

Repeating key instructions or information.

Asking your child to visualise what they are going to do first.

This works at home too. You can tell your child that you are going out for dinner this evening and continue to give them reminders throughout the day. You could even try prompting them to tell you what you are doing this evening, although this may be tricky for a child with low self-esteem as they may fear getting it wrong or forgetting.

Help Them to Help Themselves

Alongside lightening the load with visual aids, breaking down tasks into smaller chunks and repeating routines, one of the most powerful tools you can give your child is the ability to help themselves. You can encourage and support your child to trial and error a variety of ways to manage their working memory difficulties until they find something that works for them. You could:

Go shopping for a nice notepad and pen that they can use to jot down information that they need to remember.

Make funny mnemonic devices or acronyms to remember information.

Demonstrate the correct use of the visual aids you are already using.

Model strategies for dealing with anxiety around forgetfulness.

Work with your child to find a way of organising their belongings in a way that makes sense to them.

Exercises to Improve Working Memory

It is possible to boost your memory skills with practice. You can help your child to give their brain a workout with some simple exercises, which can then be incorporated as a small part of your daily routine.

Games to Improve Working Memory

You can make memory building a little more engaging by adding a competitive element. [Twinkl Parents Hub](#) has lots of fun memory games and a variety of activities that your child will love. There are lots of interactive games you can find online too, such as games where you need to follow the flashing light patterns.

Remember, everyone is different and everyone, no matter what their age or ability level, has difficulties with their memory at some time. These strategies could benefit anyone who wants to improve their working memory skills and, although working memory difficulties can affect a child's self-esteem and performance in school, it is important to remember that it is not linked to their ability.



Disclaimers: We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.

Here are some websites that you might find useful.

Kent School Health (including School Nursing Team)	https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/school-health/ A team of school nurses and practitioners to support children aged 4-19 with general health and emotional health. Parents can apply directly for support via the online referral form.
Early Help	https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs/integrated-childrens-services/early-help-contacts Services that can be accessed at a time and place that suits families to help them to do well, stay safe and resolve problems at the earliest possible opportunity before they become more serious.
Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk A mental health charity for children, young people and their parents, making sure all young people can get the mental health support they need.
NELFT (CYPMHS/CAMHS)	https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-kent-medway/ NELFT provides an extensive range of integrated community and mental health services. Parents can request support via the online SPA (single point of access) form.
Kent Resilience Hub	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/ Resources that help young people, parents and carers, staff and practitioners to understand emotional wellbeing and resilience.
Young Carers	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/being-a-young-carer-your-rights/ Kent Young Carers is the countrywide service for Young Carers aged 5-18 across Kent. Young Carers are taking on caring responsibilities for a family member with a long-term illness, disability, mental health or substance misuse issue.
Mind	https://www.maidstonemind.org/mid-kent-mind-home/ Mid Kent Mind offer a range of services- all intended to encourage positive well-being, and help people to better manage their mental health.
MindEd	https://www.minded.org.uk/ A free educational resource on children, young people, adults and older people's mental health.
West Kent/Live Well Kent	https://livewellkent.org.uk/ Provides free mental health support for younger people and adults.
Slide Away	https://www.slideaway.org/ Slide Away offers support to children and young people in West Kent who have been bereaved of a family member or friend. They also support children and young people who have a parent or sibling with a life limiting illness.
Holding on letting go	https://holdingonlettinggo.org.uk/ A Kent-based charity that helps children to cope with the death of someone close to them.
CHUMS	https://chums.uk.com/kent-bereavement-service/ CHUMS offer specialist bereavement support to children and young people from 3 and a half up until their 26 th birthday in Kent and Medway.
Home Start	https://www.home-start.org.uk/ This is a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through challenging times.
IASK	https://www.iask.org.uk/ Information, advice and support, Kent, gives free, impartial and confidential advice and support about special education needs and disabilities (SEND), for children, young people up to the age of 25, parents and carers.
Space to be me	https://space2beme.org.uk/ A West Kent charity providing support for disabled children and young people with additional needs from birth to age 25 and their families.

