SCIL Team



Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching and Support Service

How to support memory and processing in the classroom.

Behaviours you might see:



In general, pupils with memory and processing difficulties are likely to struggle to access the curriculum, keep up with pace, take part in class discussions (forget what they were going to say) and follow spoken or written instructions (particularly multi-step). These difficulties can also impact upon a pupil's ability to maintain attention, plan and organise themselves and sequence (days of the week, times tables, spelling etc). Pupils will reach cognitive overload sooner than their peers, this will vary depending upon the individual - some can appear to shut down, others display increased movement and some may get frustrated which can lead to behaviours that challenge. Difficulties with working memory particularly impacts maths and writing where higher demands are placed on it.

How?

- Break information down into smaller "chunks" and reduce complexity keep instructions short and frequently check understanding.
- Provide step-by-step guides, visual task plans and timetables.
- Use visuals / dual code throughout to support the processing of information.





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- Build in additional time throughout the curriculum, including extra time to answer questions (10 second rule).
- Provide opportunities for repetition (overlearning) and retrieval practice (quizzes, flashcards etc).
- Apply spaced learning (little and often) and interleaving (mixing up activities) to support retrieval and retention.
- Pre-teach to introduce new learning to provide pupils with the opportunity to learn new information, initially at a slower pace.
- Carry out a post-teach check of understanding to recap and address any misconceptions.
- Ensure the pupil can link to prior learning by making connections explicit, through showing the big picture, concept mapping and knowledge organisers etc. Make ideas sticky by connecting them to real-life experiences that they are already familiar with.
- Provide scaffolding and memory aids (maths rule cards, number lines, word mats, key fact cards, sentence starters etc). IMPORTANT - teach pupils how to use any scaffolding or memory aids and ensure they can read the content.
- Use speech buttons/talking postcards to record instructions and their ideas.
- Model activities and provide examples of what they are aiming for e.g. WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like).
- Consider the classroom environment think about the pupil's seating position in the room. Interactive displays can also be used to support learning.

Things to note:

 Think carefully and be selective when using visuals, providing interactive displays, knowledge organisers etc. as too much content can contribute to cognitive overload. How much information an individual can manage will depend upon their prior knowledge and understanding.

Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

Cognitive science approaches in the classroom | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)