Support for pupils completing exams

Exam season is a difficult and stressful time for all pupils but for autistic pupils or those presenting with communication and interaction difficulties this is magnified. The change to routine, heightened expectations and the lack of their usual support are some of the changes that can cause confusion and uncertainty. Here are some ideas to consider in order to support autistic pupils.

Discuss the outcome of exams to reduce pressure and reassure them that if they don’t go well it is not a catastrophe. Provide an example of a good outcome for a student who previously didn’t get the results they wanted.

Support students by providing/suggesting strategies to counteract increased anxiety. Make sure that movement breaks are available if required and appropriate sensory input.

Display exam rules visually. If appropriate create a social story to explain what it will be like during the actual exams.

Be mindful of sensory factors within the exam environment which may impact on their ability to concentrate.

Show student different ways to record revision – webs, flow charts, recording themselves, flash cards.

If possible, give time in school for revision. Some autistic young people can be rigid about not doing school work at home.

Support pupils to develop revision timetables. Make timetables very clear and precise e.g. Monday 3.30-4.30 – Maths – Quadratic Equations

Give practice at being in exam situations/conditions. Regular exam questions in silence in class time.

Regularly share exam questions in a non-threatening way – look at it with them

Pre-teaching of key subject specific vocabulary to help decode exam papers. Use visuals, photographs, film clips and flash cards to support this.

Ensure that pupils are familiar with key language that will be used during the exam.