# Supportive ideas to enable success

Simply defined, Executive Function is a set of skills that are used for planning and doing tasks, organising, memory and paying attention. It also includes impulse control and regulation of personal behaviour. The combination of these skills makes it possible for an individual to set priorities and make a plan to accomplish a task, recognising issues of timing and retaining information when distracted by other things. It involves awareness and analysis of how things are progressing.

Along with these skills, it is important for the individual to plan next steps and persevere to completion even when losing interest or being bored. Initiative is important, as are tackling a job when it is evidently needed and recognising that changes that occur require flexibility. You have probably picked up that many of these skills and characteristics are difficult for many of us but more challenging for many of your pupils on the autism spectrum.

There are a number of strategies that support children – they really are based on the principles of good teaching and benefit all children:

* gathering equipment before beginning work
* equipment stored in an accessible location
* assignments written down
* written order of process
* breaking tasks into small steps
* checklists
* annotated calendars
* timers to manage time on task and breaks
* picture/symbol/written schedules
* highlighting and colour coding key information
* seating position – away from distraction? Closer to teacher?
* spacing the time when homework is due to avoid overwhelming

**Do not expect every child to have the ability to be well organised and the skill to stay on task without distraction. By using some of the above supports and helping the child to begin to take responsibility for referring to written information, schedules and lists, you will be enabling them to improve self-management and be better equipped for secondary school and beyond.**