SEE WHAT I MEAN

Creating a visually structured preschool learning environment

| turn tap on | wash hands | turn tap off | dry hands |

A training topic linked to the Inclusion Development Programme (2009-10)

Supporting children on the autism spectrum

Area SENCO team
How well do you as a practitioner ...

• use appropriate visual support materials to support the child’s learning?
• consider possible visual distractions and address these as necessary?
• create clearly defined areas to help the children to know what happens where?
• try to keep the structure and routines of the day the same, while at the same time sensitively introducing new activities and experiences as appropriate?

Enabling Environments, page 40
Making sense of the environment

“Fancy throwing away a perfectly good squirrel”
We all use ... visual communication tools
Follow the routine

- To provide feelings of stability/security
- To understand what is going to happen next
- To establish a structure or order to the day
- To set expectations

All children need routines
Children with autism need them more than others
Visual presentation helps children understand and follow routines
How do we tell children ...

• What to do …
• Where to do it …
• How to do it …
• Who to do it with …
• How long to do it for …
• What to do next …
Say and show

Would you like a drink?

Would you like a drink?

Objects
Photos
Pictures
Symbols
What to do

• Everyday routines

- colour
- cut
- stick

• Desired behaviours

- toilet
- wash hands
- dry hands

If you choose to wash your hands with the soap, I'll be happy. If you choose to play in the sink, I'll be sad.
Where to do it

• Defining areas

• Specifying work area
“Play on a tray”
How to do it ...

- Presentation of activities
- Sequencing routines

Dig a small hole in the ground
Open the bag of seeds
Pour the seeds in the hole
Cover up the seeds with dirt
Water the seeds
- Materials define the task
- Limiting materials

- Organisation
- Visual information
Who to do it with …

- Clarify the people who are involved in particular activities.

- This helps the child understand who is sharing the space, materials, or adult attention.

- If the child is likely to resist any adult intervention, show him who is helping today.
How long to do it for …

Timers
• Sand timers, kitchen timers or clocks can show the passage of time – so that the child knows when the activity is finished

Count down
• Use ‘count down’ routines to cue a child into the ending or beginning of an activity

Finished
• Say ‘finished’ to signal the end of an activity
• Show ‘finished’ visually by removing picture or object from timetable/choosing board, and by putting materials away

• Staying on task
• Moving on
What to do next …

• Making choices

• First … then …

• Timetables
Objects ... photos ... pictures ... symbols

• Bags of materials can be presented in order for the child to take to the corresponding play area
• The objects are used as part of the activity

• An object of reference can be used alongside the symbol
• By presenting on card, the child is getting used to the style of a more typical visual timetable
Using a visual timetable

Questions:
- Who will use it?
  - The whole group
  - Individual children
- How should it be presented?
  - Size and location
  - Objects/pictures
- Do the staff know how to use it?
- Do the children know how to use it?
Low distraction areas

- Decrease anxiety
- Decrease distraction
- Increase attention to task
- Increase opportunities to succeed
A work-station approach shows the child …

- Where to work
- Where to find the work
- What to do now

- Where to put the finished work
- What to do next
Reducing distractions

• Avoid exits and entrances

• Avoid high traffic areas

• Choose area away from windows or busy wall displays