

Using Visual Timetables

Visual Timetables are not just to let the child know what's going on and in what order but it's an important teaching tool too. Here are two of the main teaching opportunities:

- Developing memory and recall skills. Seeing the structure of the day can help with memory skills for children who think better in pictures than in verbal language. The symbols can be retrieved from the 'finished' pocket to review the day and put things in time order.
- Teaching organisation and independence skills. The child should be managing their own timetable. That means self-checking what they should be doing and where they should be, managing the taking off of the symbols and putting them in the finished pocket themselves.

Visual timetables grow with the child. They should be age and developmentally appropriate. Diaries and lists provide similar visual aids to adult life and how it is organised (or not!). If we want our pupils to be able to develop good organisation skills, a visual timetable can be a great start. And whether you use photos, symbols or for older children, written lists, the format can develop as the child does. Sometimes teachers think a child doesn't need it anymore and take it away. Then the child's behaviour and independence can begin to deteriorate. It is often the case that what they needed was an updated timetable rather than taking it away. It can surprise us how much the child was relying on their visual timetable. It is ok to have one all their lives - as they get older we teach them to self-manage their timetable more and develop their own formats if necessary. Like we do as adults with our diaries and lists.

IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER IT IS HORIZONTAL OR VERTICAL! Use whatever fits into your space and what the pupil can easily use. It is more important that it is frequently used and referred to.



A visual timetable shows a child the lessons, 'calm or choice times', sensory breaks and, most importantly, when home time is, which can (along with other strategies) make a huge impact in helping the child navigate the day, reduce stress and anxiety and therefore reduce challenging behaviours.

A visual timetable can also let the child know when their sensory breaks are or unexpected events or changes are happening.

You can access some free visual timetable symbols using this link:

<http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/visual-timetables>