An Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council for Special Education

# Helping Your Child at Home

### 1. Helping with Homework

**Establish a Daily Routine at Home**.

- Homework should be done at the same time and in the same place.
- Make a timetable with your child.
- Decide together when homework will start and how long he or she will work until taking the first break.
- Keep work periods as short as is necessary.
- Breaks should be short but frequent.

**Provide a Quiet, Warm, Well-lit, Comfortable Place for Your Child to Work**.

- Use a table or a desk rather than on the floor or a bed.

**Find Out What Exactly is to be Done**

- Check with your child beforehand on what exactly is to be done and how it is to be presented. This can eliminate a lot of later frustration. Ensure that your child has a journal or notebook to record homework.

**Supervision and Help**

- Sit with your child to keep him/her working and to provide help as needed.
- Be there when your child needs your help. Make it easy to ask for help.
- If your child can work on his or her own, you should still try to stay nearby. For example, he or she might work at the kitchen table while you are ironing or preparing dinner or reading the newspaper.

**Control the Amount of Time and Energy Spent on Each Activity**

- Be aware of the amount of time and energy spent on each activity
- Ask the teacher how long it should take to do the homework and tell the teacher how long it actually takes
- Discuss with the teacher if you feel that too much time was spent on any one task, or you feel it was too hard for your child;

- Negotiate the length and amount of homework with the teacher by suggesting things such learning five spellings rather than ten or allowing the child to just write the answers and not having to copy out the questions.
- Try to negotiate a compromise so that your child can get all the homework done within a reasonable time for her/his age and class.

**2. Working with Your Child**

While it is not advised that parents teach their children, parents have a role to play in supporting their child's learning and can be of great assistance in practising and reinforcing what has been taught at school.

- Talk regularly with the class teacher and any specialist teachers on what you could do and how to do it. This may simply be playing a game together, reading together, reviewing some word cards or doing a page of a workbook.
- Talk to your child about working together. It will not work if the child is unwilling to work with you. Suggest trying it even for as little as five minutes daily. If you can keep it enjoyable for both of you, it will work. Do not try to work with your child, if your child is unwilling to do so. This activity should not cause arguments or tears. If it does, don't do it.
- Set aside specific times during the day to work with your child. Let these times be for you and your child alone. Find a time and place when and where you will not be disturbed.
- Start with short work periods and gradually increase them if it is going well. A good rule is to stop when your child is at the peak of success. Don't push to the point of failure.
- Be as objective and as patient as you can. Speak to your child in a quiet and firm voice. Make commands or directions short and simple.
- If a task is too difficult for your child, move on to something easier. Then go back to the first task after changing it so that your child can succeed. Never introduce a task by saying or implying that it is easy.
- When your child is capable of doing a task, gently insist that he or she finish it.
- Be aware of your child's abilities as well as his or her weaknesses. Don't continue using activities that are too easy for your child. There should be some challenge to hold your child's attention.
- Praise your child for even the smallest success. Don't emphasise failure.
- Really listen to your child. He or she can often tell you the best ways to help.
- Relax with your child. Both of you should enjoy your time together.

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