No. 6

Figure Photograph showing an Alexa Echo Dot

February 2023

Reaching out

**NCW Outreach Termly Bulletin — Supporting V.I. Education**

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## **Fine Motor Skills (CFVI area 2 – Sensory Development**

Advice from Angela Blount Occupational Therapist, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

* Fine motor skills involve controlling and coordinating movements of the small muscles in our hands, wrists and fingers to perform precise movements. Fine motor skills are needed for activities such as writing, picking up small objects and fastening clothing. Fine motor tasks are essential for performing everyday activities, including self-care, leisure and work tasks.
* When a child has fine motor difficulties, this can impact on their self-esteem, academic performance and their ability to develop independent life skills. They may become frustrated and avoid or refuse to take part in activities which require efficient fine motor skills.
* Flexible Joints (hypermobility or increased joint ranges) will make **fine motor tasks,** both the fiddly things and those requiring strength and power, **more difficult**. Postural Stability is our ability to assume and maintain an upright position against gravity. Large muscles close to the body need to be strong, in order to provide a stable base for accurate movement at the muscles further away from the body, such as the hand and fingers. It is much harder to develop fine motor skills without this stability. The development of fine motor skills is therefore likely to be more successful if the child has established sound gross motor skills.
* For our students to progress in their fine motor skills they need to be able to process information from tactile (Touch), Proprioception (body awareness) *and Vestibular (balance) input.* It is important for your child to be able to move their hands and fingers in lots of different ways and adapt when they need to complete the different activities that they take part in each day. Without developed refined movement everyday tasks will be more difficult.

Some Suggestions:

* For seated tasks the ideal position is using 90/90/90 rule. This means when seated, students should have a 90-degree angle at their hips, knees and ankles with their feet flat on the floor. If the student isn’t able to achieve this, it is likely the chair is too big or small. Fine motor activities do not always take place within structured table top activities; therefore, you may need to be creative in how to support a child’s position. For example, when putting on shoes with a student you can still ensure that the posture is supported for example by sitting on a chair or sitting them on the floor in a corner where both walls give added support.
* **It is through intense repetition and the participation of activities within real-live contexts that has the biggest gains for improving motor and functional outcomes for children and young people.**
* The environment - Make sure the environment is suitable to maximise the student’s attention and focus on the activity. This could mean moving the student to a quieter, less busy part of the room/house or moving to a place where the lighting better suits their visual needs. It is important to consider using colour contrast for example placing a piece of white paper behind a black zip may help the visual appearance of what the hand is doing and where the target is (in this case the zipper enclosure)
* Allowing the amount of time needed. Not rushing so the student does not become anxious or frustrated, helping with guided tactile exploration of a garment to find the label and to ensure it is the right way around.
* Communication: Using communication so that the student understands both the orientation of an item/object and has a narrative of how they may best complete the activity. Deliver advice in brief steps; 1 at a time.
* Motivation: Make the activity motivating can support the child’s participation. Activities that are themed around the student’s interest can make a big difference to the enthusiasm, e.g. “if you can learn to tie your laces just imagine the different styles of shoes you could wear.”
* To phase out physical support, you might want to try chanining strategies. Chaining is a structured way to teach a new skill and consists of breaking the task down into smaller steps.
* Backward chaining is a structured way to teach a new skill which consists of breaking down a particular task into smaller steps. Backward chaining gradually increases the number of steps that you teach a student backwards. This means that the student is taught the last step first. This method supports students who have low self-esteem and low frustration tolerance as they are able to get the immediate satisfaction of completing the task.
* All programmes begin with ‘Warm Up ‘activities. It is important to complete these (it’s a bit like stretching your muscles by walking before you start jogging). It also improves the quality of the movement produced.
* Encourage participation in other activities such as modelling with fymo clay, tissue art or dough making and baking.
* Think about the adjustments you can make so that the activity is accessible to them, e.g., if they are struggling with small shirt buttons start practising with larger buttons first. It is important to keep a record of what adjustments you have made and how successful these have been.

## **Upcoming Courses**

Twilight: Living Skills for Students with a Vision Impairment – Wednesday 1st March 2023

A **FREE** online session via Google Meet providing useful tips and advice on teaching a young person with a VI learn skills for independent living

GCSE Residential Revision Course (including the specialist VI curriculum) Wednesday 29th to Friday 31st March 2023

This residential course supports students who are blind or vision impaired in Years 9, 10 and 11 with preparations for GCSEs.

Study sessions focus on Maths, English and Science and on study skills and exam technique. Evening activities are provided so that students have the opportunity to socialise, relax and have fun too!

Participants on the course will be offered accommodation in the residential houses on site and meals will be taken in the college dining room.

In the evenings the students can enjoy a range of activities, such as tandem riding and ten pin bowling, making new friends and sharing experiences.

Family Day – 1st May 2023

Family Day is a fun and exciting day for any family who has a child with a vision impairment. The day offers a range of activities for all ages – parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters are all welcome!

You will have the chance to meet and chat with our staff, students and other parents attending, in an informal and friendly environment.

**Activities include:**

* Tour of the College if requested
* Pre-booked Appointments for funding advice
* Youth Club
* VI Sports (Tennis, rugby, baseball and football)
* Water Zorbing
* Bouncy Castle
* Karate
* Petting Zoo

Family Day is a relaxed way to find out more about NCW or simply have a fun day out with the family enjoying activities that are accessible to children who have a vision impairment.
The day is totally free of charge and includes lunch and refreshments.

For more information on these courses please follow the link: <https://www.ncw.co.uk/event-directory/>

## **NCW Outreach Team Profile 6**

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| Jane’s teaching career started as a teacher of Physical Education in the secondary mainstream setting in rural New Zealand, before crossing the globe to Worcestershire. She has now been teaching PE at NCW for the last 14 years, which includes both practical PE, swimming; and examinable PE such as BTECs, GSCE and A Level. Providing extra-curricular opportunities is also a part of her daily schedule and there is nothing she likes better than to then extend these opportunities to experiences beyond NCW. As a result, Jane can be found with NCW students at GoalballUK tournaments, the BBS swimming gala, the Metro athletics and Worcester VI Old Elizabethans cricket matches. Jane is passionate about the need for every child to have access to physical activity from early childhood, so at the worse they recognise the benefits of regular physical activity; and at the best finding friends and an innate joy from being physically active. |