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Homework Considerations

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Let’s face it, which students really like homework anyway?! Part of the specific learning profile of students with Down syndrome, however, is that they have short term working memory problems and a shorter concentration span. So remembering homework, and explaining what they have to do to their parents, can be particularly hard for them, especially if it relates to a lesson earlier on in the day or week. They can find, too, that it takes them much longer to complete homework set than their typically developing peers. Many students like to keep school and home separate, and resent having to bring school work home. This can cause tension and confrontation at home.

Of course, the student with Down syndrome has to do homework – after all, it is a reasonable expectation of secondary school life, it gets the student used to meeting deadlines, and everyone else has to do it – but it is unreasonable to expect the student to do homework that is not differentiated or explained clearly. So, if homework is given, it needs to match the ability of the student, have strong visual reminders such as diagrams, symbols and pictures, and take into account the greater effort required on the part of the student with Down syndrome to complete it.

Where the student has a problem mixing school and home, then schools have got round this by giving the student access to homework clubs, where there are teachers or TAs at hand to help and explain – these adults can often have a clearer idea of what is expected than parents. It must be emphasised here, though, that the student should **not** attend homework clubs if they take place over lunchtime. Lunchtimes are an opportunity for social inclusion, not for more work.

Thanks

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