

PLANNING/PRIORITISING

The ability to decide what needs to be done and in what order

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Leaves large tasks until the last minute
- Focuses on minor details over key requirements
- Difficulty breaking assignments into steps
- Poor sequencing in written work

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Assignment timelines
- Planning templates
- Regular teacher check-ins
- Clear assessment expectations

Explicit Teaching

- Teach backward planning
- Practise prioritising tasks
- Teach how to manage multiple deadlines
- Reflect on planning effectiveness

ORGANISATION

The ability to keep materials, information, and spaces in order

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Disorganised notes or folders
- Misses or delivers late assignments
- Difficulty locating files
- Poor tracking of deadlines across subjects

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Consistent digital platforms
- Clear file-naming systems
- Subject-specific organisation tools
- Regular organisation checks

Explicit Teaching

- Teach how to organise notes and files
- Practise maintaining folders
- Teach systems for tracking work
- Reflect on organisation habits

TIME MANAGEMENT

The ability to understand time and use it effectively

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Underestimates how long tasks will take
- Late work despite good understanding
- Poor pacing in tests or exams
- Difficulty balancing workload

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Visible deadlines
- Chunked assignments
- In-class work time
- Predictable lesson pacing

Explicit Teaching

- Teach time estimation skills
- Practise using planners or calendars
- Teach exam pacing strategies
- Reflect on workload management

GOAL SETTING

The ability to set a target and work towards it

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Difficulty setting long-term goals
- Struggles to link daily work to future goals
- Gives up when progress feels slow
- Difficulty reflecting on progress

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Clear learning outcomes
- Short-term milestones
- Progress tracking tools
- Feedback linked to goals

Explicit Teaching

- Teach SMART goals
- Practise breaking goals into steps
- Teach self-monitoring
- Reflect on progress and next steps

AKO PANUKU
Inspiring Learning



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING Secondary



What is Executive Functioning?

Executive Functioning (EF) is the brain's management system. It helps students plan, organise, manage time, and finish tasks. These skills develop slowly and aren't fully in place until the mid-20s, so every student in your classroom is still learning how to manage themselves. Differences in EF are linked to how the prefrontal cortex and brain chemicals work, can be genetic or acquired, are often connected with ADHD, dyslexia, autism, injury, foetal alcohol exposure, anxiety, or trauma, and are not a sign of low intelligence. Most students with learning and thinking differences have average or above-average IQ.

RESPONSE INHIBITION

The ability to stop and think before acting or speaking

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Interrupts discussions or teachers
- Emotional overreactions to feedback or peers
- Difficulty ignoring distractions
- Impulsive comments or behaviour

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Clear expectations and boundaries
- Seating away from high distractions
- Predictable lesson structure
- Agreed classroom norms

Explicit Teaching

- Teach pause and self-regulation strategies
- Practise managing emotional responses
- Teach respectful discussion skills
- Reflect on behaviour impact

WORKING MEMORY

The ability to hold information in mind while using it

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Difficulty following multi-step instructions
- Forgets task requirements or success criteria
- Loses track during problem solving or writing
- Struggles to take notes while listening

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Written instructions provided
- Task steps clearly displayed
- Notes or slides available
- Reduced cognitive load

Explicit Teaching

- Teach note-taking strategies
- Practise chunking information
- Teach how to reread task requirements
- Teach use of planners or apps

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

The ability to shift thinking, adapt, and cope with change

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Resistant to feedback or new strategies
- Difficulty shifting between subjects or tasks
- Black-and-white thinking
- Struggles with unexpected changes to plans

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Advance notice of changes
- Choice in task format
- Clear success criteria
- Supportive feedback culture

Explicit Teaching

- Teach responding to feedback
- Practise flexible problem-solving
- Teach perspective-taking
- Reflect on learning strategies

TASK INITIATION

The ability to start a task without undue delay

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS

- Procrastinates or avoids tasks
- Confused despite clear instructions
- Long delays before starting work
- Reliance on last-minute effort

STRATEGIES

Proactive Support

- Clear task entry points
- Scaffolds for starting tasks
- Timers for task start
- Reduced task ambiguity

Explicit Teaching

- Teach how to break tasks down
- Practise starting with low-effort steps
- Teach anti-procrastination strategies
- Reflect on task avoidance