

## Memory – a few thoughts (while I can remember)

- A strong memory is the best tool for success at Primary school. Baffling that it isn't on the timetable!
- Memory is not one skill. It is generally divided into three –
  - visual memory (recalling what you see)
  - verbal memory (what you read or hear)
  - working memory (retaining information while working with it)
- The multi-faceted nature of memory can be quite challenging for a young child to understand. I use the analogy of football. Football is a combination of different skills such as heading, passing, running. Quite often, in football, players are stronger at one skill than another. Memory is similar. Very few children have weak memories; there is normally a stronger memory skill (usually visual) and a weaker one (often verbal).
- Practising the three memory skills is best done in isolation. Often more fun that way. So if you are giving your child an instruction, keep it simple. Show don't tell. Tell don't show.
- Practising memory with a child will make a big difference to how 'easy' they will begin to find their work. For instance, a child with a strong working memory, when copying down instructions that the teacher has written up on the whiteboard, needs to look up at the board and down at their book *less often* because they can confidently hold more data as they write, i.e. a simple thing like copying in class becomes more efficient.
- Working memory is the aspect of memory that educational experts believe is most closely linked to self-confidence – in simple terms, if you become more adept at holding and identifying key data and implementing it at the right moment, then you begin to assume that you can repeat in different situations. Which boosts self-confidence.
- Home practice on working memory can take many forms. It's interesting to try out in both active and sedentary modes. Active might be swapping four (fairly obvious) items out of the four rooms that they usually appear in and then seeing if your child can identify them and return them back to the right place within a set time – keep clear of valuable vases! Sedentary exercises are usually more engaging for children if they involve a screen. There's plenty of good iApps or resources online like this at [cogmed](#).
- **Spatial awareness** – Why is this important? The answer is that it appears to have a direct link to reasoning. Assisting with logic, reading formulas, complex verbal questions, algebra etc. The idea is that if you have flexibility in your visual approach to problems (example: if you're not fixed on reading everything in the usual direction, left to right) then you will find processing in multiple steps much easier.