

## Key Stage Two Lesson/ Project on RAS and Syncope

**Curriculum Areas:** There are many curricula areas across which an understanding of RAS and SYNCOPE could be positively developed. The following plan is just one idea; some teachers may prefer to adapt suggested lesson plans for other key stages.

**Literacy:** - Y3, T3 - write a first person account.

- Y4, T3 - writing a story about a dilemma and the issues it raises for the character.

- Y5, T3 - writing on in style of an author to resolve a conflict.

**Focus:** Understanding and sensitively interpreting factual information.

Increase understanding of a class mates medical condition.

**Vocab:** special, different, help, care for, close eyes, curl up, faint, special sleep, dizzy, friend, syncope, black out, seizure, pale, pallor, scared, different, excluded, lonely, dilemma.

### **Possible Starting Points:**

#### 1. CASE STUDY OF A SYNCOPES SUFFERER AGED 10

'My name is Hannah. I have a type of syncope called reflex anoxic seizures, which means your arms and legs jerk when you blackout. These usually start when I suddenly bang myself hard, especially if I am tired and hungry. There are a few moments before I actually blackout (sometimes I realise it is about to happen and sometimes I don't- if I have some warning time I manage to lie down first so I don't hurt myself falling over). First, everything goes black and I am told I suddenly stop what I am doing and crash to the ground. I have been told it isn't a crumple type of fall when I faint; my body goes stiff.

All I can hear is a buzz like a bee is stuck in my ear. I would say I feel 'dreamy' when I am unconscious and I've no idea how long I am unconscious for. Everyone says that my face goes really white.

When I start to come round, voices sound like an echo, far away, but they get closer and then really loud.

Once I am awake I feel vulnerable, scared and weak. Most of all I want to keep lying down and cuddle something. The only way people can help me is to let me lie down for a few minutes and not try to move me because sometimes I feel dizzy and scared to get up.

I need to have some space and have the chance to recover, but it is nice to have a friend to stay with me. My friend Sophie is really calm and ok about my syncope. She's cool about it and knows how to help me.

Most of the time I don't let having syncope worry me. It only does if I have recently had a reflex anoxic seizure. When I am at school I am always wary of getting banged. All the same, I love Judo, netball, swimming and hockey, although with hockey I do get scared that the ball might hit me and I might blackout.

It is fine for everyone to forget about my syncope and just treat me like everyone else, as long as they know how to help me if I blackout. I am the same as everyone else, and I want to have a go at anything!!'

OR

## 2. **ROLE PLAYS ON SYNCOPE**

**Read these scenarios and follow the instructions. You will have to use the information that you have learnt from the other activities to help you to put yourselves into each situation. You will learn about how it feels to have syncope and how you can help someone with the condition.**

Living with syncope in school is sometimes difficult. Not many people know about it apart from my close friends and I can't be with them all the time. Some people at school treat my condition as a joke and think it is funny that I have blackouts. This makes me feel unhappy and different from everybody else. Explain to someone why you feel this way.

You have a friend who has syncope. She is going to be moving schools soon and will be coming into your class. How can you get your classmates to understand her condition so that they are not scared when she has a blackout? How can you help your friend to feel comfortable in her new school? Explain to your friends and tell them how you can help and support your new classmate.

You have syncope and can blackout without warning. You have been invited to a friend's birthday party and sleepover. You want to go and do not want to feel left out, but are worried that you might blackout and there would not be anyone around to help you if you did. What should you do? Should you avoid the party and stay at home? Tell someone your concerns.

### **Aim:**

1. To develop persuasive/factual writing styles.
2. To understand more about a child with RAS or Syncope.

### **Activity:**

1. Teacher (using the fact sheets on blackouts), tells the class in simple terms what a 'blackout' is.
2. Read one of the above suggested starting points which introduce information and dilemmas from the point of view of the sufferer.
3. As a class, make a list of important words - checking everyone understands their meaning.
4. Together compile a second list of the possible dilemmas.



Working together with individuals, families and medical professionals to offer support and information on Syncope and Reflex Anoxic Seizures

**Group Activity:** (depending on starting point used),

Either:

1. In pairs or small groups, children act out the role play scenarios; show to whole class.

Or

2. In small groups, children debate how school could welcome and include Hannah, and what information might have to be shared - and with whom, in order to allow Hannah to have full involvement in school life. Each group could have a scribe who can feed back to the class at the end.

**Individual/ Paired Activity:**

Either (linked to year group objectives):

1. Write a diary as if you are the child with RAS/Syncope which recalls her first week at school -include the dilemmas and fears she faced and perhaps overcame, the attitudes of others in the school towards her and how friendships shown by her new class mates helped her cope.

Or

2. Is Hannah Welcomed Here?

Write a story from either a RAS/ syncope sufferer's point of view, or that of her/his new school mates. Include in it the fears and misunderstandings that her/his new friends may initially have shown, and how together they managed to overcome these.

## Teacher Resources:

### FACTSHEET 1: BLACKOUTS

We are learning about blackouts and a medical condition called syncope so that we can understand what happens to some people.

#### What is a blackout?

'Blackout' is another word for 'faint'. When this happens to someone, they usually fall over, everything around them goes dark and they do not know what is going on around them. In other words, they become unconscious\*.

#### Why does this happen?

There are 2 main reasons why some people blackout:

In some people, their heart slows down or stops and there isn't enough pressure to pump blood around the body. When this happens, the amount of blood, which carries oxygen to the brain, slows down. This is what causes the blackout.

For some people, the electricians in their brain do not work very well which can make them blackout.

#### Do blackouts happen to lots of people?

Yes, blackouts happen to lots of people, of all ages, all over the world- some people may only blackout once in their whole life, but others blackout many times every day!

### FACTSHEET 2- What to do if someone has a blackout

- 1- Don't be frightened. It is very scary to watch someone fall over and become unconscious and even more scary to see someone jerk and go very white. Remember that they will be OK.
- 2- Tell a friend to run for a teacher
- 3- Put them in the recovery position (teacher to demonstrate in class)
- 4- Make sure there are no dangerous objects lying near to them that could hurt them
- 5- Stay quiet and calm and let the teacher take over