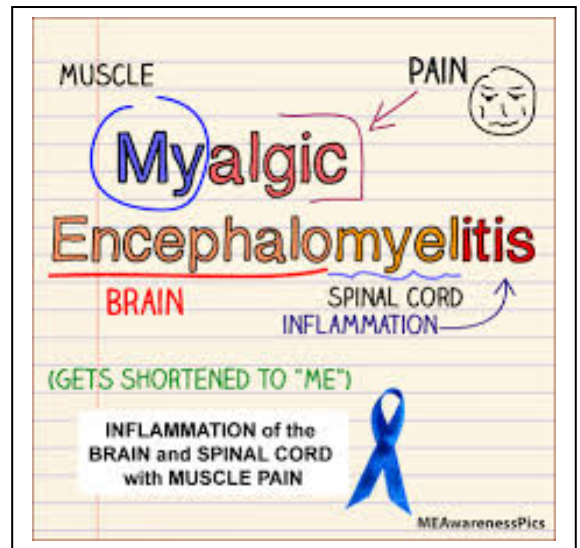# SEND Bulletin NO.11

ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis or encephalopathy or chronic fatigue syndrome)

ME is a chronic disabling illness of the immune and central nervous system that affects children as well as adults. It is also known as chronic fatigue syndrome or post-viral fatigue syndrome. The cause is unclear but, in many cases, ME starts after a viral illness or after severe stress. The main symptom is fatigue following minimal physical or mental exertion. ME can last for up to three years.

Key characteristics

A child with ME may:

• have severe muscle or joint pain and headaches that don't respond to painkillers

• have erratic sleep patterns (sometimes sleeping all the time or hardly at all)

• have a sore throat and/or enlarged lymph glands

• suffer with skin rashes or numbness

• feel sensitivity to noise, bright light and hot or cold temperatures

• lose his appetite and have some bowel problems

• suffer loss of concentration and short-term memory and word-finding difficulties

• become irritable and frustrated

• have problems coping with physical activities, such as walking, writing, speaking, singing.

Support strategies

ME sufferers who are severely affected will often need home tuition until they improve sufficiently to make a phased return to school.

You may need to:

• offer part-time attendance at school

• facilitate regular rest periods in a quiet place

• provide an adult mentor to listen to the child's anxieties

• use circle time to talk about issues surrounding ME

• ensure that classroom tasks are short and clearly defined

• make flexible arrangements for PE lessons and for breaktimes if necessary.

Support agencies

• Action for ME (AfME): www.afme.org.uk

• Association of Young People with ME (AYME): www.ayme.org.uk

• ME Association: www.meassociation.org.uk

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin, please e-mail them to me:

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Many thanks

Anne