Teacher Handbook: SEND

Embedding inclusive practice

WholeSchool SEND

Introduction

One of the most impactful experiences for learners with SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities) is to have access to high quality, inclusive teaching. A significant proportion of the needs that teachers encounter in the mainstream classroom can be met through High Quality Teaching. This means removing barriers to learning, getting to know and understand individual learners, and ultimately bringing the graduated approach to life.

The Whole School SEND consortium, hosted by nasen, has published a range of resources, research, and review guides, which have been successful in supporting school-based professionals to improve inclusive practice and learning outcomes in their setting. The Teacher Handbook: SEND was commissioned to complement the existing resources and to answer a fundamental and recurring question: how can we, as teachers, meet the needs of our learners with SEND?

The practical reality of classroom teaching is that creating an inclusive classroom environment, implementing reasonable adjustments while planning to meet the needs of all learners is as much about a mindset as it is about a skillset.

The handbook provides a digest of inclusive pedagogy alongside practical approaches for specific curriculum areas, as well as understanding and removing barriers to learning that relate to specific areas of need or support for transition between phases. A useful section on Intersectionality discusses the experience and overlap of vulnerabilities.

When bringing an inclusive pedagogy to the classroom, the belief that optimising experiences and outcomes for all learners is the role of all teachers. By collating the practical examples, the underpinning pedagogy and legislative framework for SEND, the Teacher Handbook: SEND is an essential companion for all teachers.

Chief Executive Officer, nasen

Please take time to read the lead authors' foreword, as it will help you to maximise the impact of this Handbook.

nasen
Helping Everyone Achieve

Lead Authors' Foreword

The approach we have taken to writing this handbook reflects the approach that is needed to embed inclusive practice across schools - a shared vision and true collaboration, underpinned by professional challenge and respect for everyone's strengths and expertise.

This handbook has been developed as a resource for teachers to use over time as they embed inclusive practice in their classrooms: it is not intended that it is read cover-to-cover. It has been written for both primary, secondary and specialist colleagues: teaching assistants, teachers, senior leaders and headteachers. The handbook includes whole-school and whole-class approaches as well as subject-specific and condition-specific guidance.

We have aimed to bring together, in one cohesive document, the perspectives of children and young people and their families, teachers and support staff, subject specialists, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) and other senior leaders, Headteachers, Educational Psychologists and specialist external agencies, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, mental health workers, physiotherapists and specialist teachers.

The graduated approach is the golden thread of this handbook, and will support all school staff in noticing, and being curious about, the children and young people in their classes: their strengths and interests, times when they are successful and times when they experience challenges to engagement and curriculum accessibility. The graduated approach, the assess-plan-do-review learning cycle, enables teachers to create an environment where children and young people can maximise their potential and develop the skills needed to prepare for the next stage in education and beyond to adulthood.

Throughout the document we refer to children and young people as 'learners' rather than pupils or students; this reflects their place in the classroom as active participants and the commitment we take as teachers to ensure all children and young people have access to the adaptations they need to engage with and progress in the curriculum. We see the curriculum as more than subject-based learning, encompassing the lived experience of the children and young people in our schools, including supported access to wider opportunities that promote genuine personal, social, and intellectual inclusion.

We are grateful for the support of the steering group: Tina Harvey, Margaret Mulholland, Julie Greer, Andy Lole, Elizabeth Denton, Felicity Dewsbery and Vicky Shires, who shared their expertise throughout the development and writing of the handbook, ensuring all content included stayed true to the intended ethos. This intended ethos was only achieved through the generosity of many who both contributed their expertise and provided constructive feedback from concept to creation. Contributors are listed, however there are many others including families, young people and professionals who provided insight and challenge through the writing of this handbook – a heartfelt thank you from us both.

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Section 1

Understanding your role

In this section, we will cover:

1. **Your role as the teacher**
2. **Relevant legislation**
3. **Ofsted**
4. **Wider professional responsibilities**
5. **Intersectionality**
6. **Safeguarding**
7. **The language we use with colleagues**

Your role as the teacher

As the teacher of a learner with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), you have the opportunity to make a significant difference. Enabling all learners to do well within our inclusive school system is every teacher's responsibility.

Along with their family you will know your learners best. You will have noticed when they do well, and when they struggle. You will have a good idea of what challenges they face in order to achieve as well as they can. You will know when your teaching is most successful. Each learner with SEND is an individual, with a unique personality and profile as a learner. As you get to know them and how best to support them, your knowledge and skills as a teacher will be enhanced.

The relationships you develop with your learners are key. You will be their champion and advocate, the person who believes that barriers can be overcome, and that good progress is possible. You must value learners' views and opinions, and regularly check that they understand what your high expectations require of them. Your interactions should reinforce a positive view of high standards of behaviour and effort, whilst recognising the specific difficulties your learners face. You must show learners that you care about them, and that their feelings, wellbeing and progress are important to you. Proactive teaching of social codes or whole school approaches to teaching good learning behaviours as part of the curriculum, for example, could lead to more opportunities for learners to receive praise. This is much more likely to promote positive behaviour than criticism or reprimand.

Your knowledge about each learner and their needs will be built on regular ongoing assessments. This will include frequent checks on what learners have retained from recent and more distant learning. As a result, your teaching will be based on learners' current levels of understanding. Being an active part of your learners' support networks is important; networks that include their families, and sometimes a variety of professionals who work with the learner. This will help you understand and consider learners' holistic needs. Knowing what has happened to them outside of school, or earlier in their lives, may well help you better understand current difficulties they are facing. You need to use this information responsibly, being empathic and not judgemental.

When you plan your whole-class teaching, always use approaches that are effective for learners with SEND. This will provide all learners with opportunities to learn in small steps, carefully building upon their prior knowledge. Be explicit with the language you use, providing clear guidance about what learners are expected to do. Check that the words you use are understood. Demonstrate what you want learners to do, to show them what you mean. Consider using physical resources to help abstract concepts become more accessible and meaningful. Use real-life examples to which learners can relate. Make sure that you sequence learning, so that each new idea makes logical sense, based on what learners already know. Be careful to avoid overloading learners' working memories, by making sure that they have the prerequisite knowledge and skills, ready to apply to new learning. Give lots of opportunities to practise new learning, so that knowledge and skills are more likely to be stored in learners' long-term memories. Provide regular opportunities for learners to practise recalling what they have learnt, to help them easily access this information when it is needed. All of these will contribute to a good structure and support framework to your teaching, which will enable all learners to make good progress.

There will be times when some learners, including those with SEND, will not be able to comply with whole-school rules, or will find it hard to engage in learning. This may well be due to underlying difficulties they have, rather than to challenging behaviour. At these times you will need to adapt what is expected, including teaching strategies and learning activities, so that learners can be successful and continue to feel included in your class. It is often helpful to gather ideas and get support from colleagues, who can share their experiences and examples of what has worked for them. The SENCO, school leaders, and external professionals all have a role in supporting you in this work. It is helpful to recognise that you may hold strong feelings, which can be evoked by the learners you work with and the challenges they present you with. It is important to talk with colleagues about this when this happens, to help you reflect on where the feelings may have come from. There are times when you can gain insight about how learners might be feeling, by reflecting on the feelings you have.

Relevant legislation

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects the rights of groups of people who share 'protected characteristics.' For schools, the protected characteristics are: race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

In England and Wales, the Act applies to all maintained and independent schools, including academies, and maintained and non-maintained special schools. The schools' duties also apply to pupil referral units.

Schools must not discriminate and must publish information and equality objectives to show how they are complying with the 'public sector equality duty'. Schools can take positive action to address patterns of disadvantage - e.g., low participation in some school activities by particular pupil groups.

Further duties apply specifically to disabled pupils. Schools must:

- Publish an accessibility plan, covering the physical environment of the school, access to the curriculum and how information is being made more accessible for disabled pupils.
- Publish disability information in the school's SEN Information Report.
- Make reasonable adjustments so that disabled pupils are not put at a disadvantage.

Key points for teachers:

- The definition of disability in the Equality Act is quite broad and includes more pupils than many of us realise.
- We need to make reasonable adjustments in our classrooms to remove barriers to learning and to make sure disabled pupils aren't disadvantaged.
- We also have an important role in making reasonable adjustments to school policies and practices in every aspect of school life.
- The reasonable adjustments duty requires us to think ahead and plan adjustments for disabled pupils before they miss out.

This Handbook provides more information on how to put reasonable adjustments in place in a range of different teaching and learning contexts.

To note: there are duties in the Equality Act that apply to staff employed at the school and to parents and other users of the school, but these duties apply differently from the duties to pupils in education.

The Children and Families Act 2014

The Children and Families Act (CFA) provides the legal framework for special educational needs (SEN). The definition of SEN includes children and young people with a learning difficulty or a disability that means they need special educational provision; and special educational provision is something that is 'additional to or different from' what is normally provided. Pupils with medical conditions are also covered by the CFA.

Schools must:

- Use their 'best endeavours' to make sure that pupils have their needs identified and met.
- 'Have regard to' the SEN and disability Code of Practice which explains all the legal duties.
- Publish a wide range of information about the school's policies on SEN.
- Make sure that pupils with special educational needs engage in the activities of the school together with those who don't have special educational needs.
- Make sure that arrangements are in place to support pupils with medical needs.

Key points for teachers:

- There are significant overlaps between pupils with SEN, disabled pupils, and pupils with medical conditions.
- The more we can do through high quality teaching and inclusive classrooms, the less we need to intervene for individual pupils.
- When we make special educational provision for pupils with SEN, we need to follow the graduated approach.
- We need to make sure that the way we make provision for pupils with SEN keeps them involved in activities with their peers.

This Handbook provides more information on high quality teaching, inclusive classrooms, the graduated approach and different learner needs.

Children and Families Act, regulations and guidance:

- **The SEND Regulations 2014** set out the more detailed statutory requirements under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- **The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015** provides statutory guidance on the duties in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- **Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School (2017)** provides statutory guidance on schools' duties to pupils with medical conditions.

Working Together to Safeguard Children

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) explains how schools work with other partners to safeguard all children. In schools we should be alert to potential need for early help for a child who is disabled and has specific additional needs or who has special educational needs.

You need to understand how the inspection process works, and your role within this.

The Ofsted inspection handbook outlines how schools are inspected, and what criteria are used to make judgements.

At the beginning of the inspection school leaders will be asked to explain how the curriculum prepares learners with SEND for their future lives. Inspectors will check that the school is both ambitious and realistic in its aspirations. During visits to lessons, and in conversations with teachers and subject leaders, inspectors will see if planned learning in different subjects is sequenced so that teachers know the order in which to teach specific skills and knowledge. They will ask learners what you have taught them in recent lessons, how much of this they can remember, and how well this has prepared them for what they are currently learning on that day. They will look at examples of work to see if this correlates with what they have seen and heard about the curriculum.

Judgements are made about how well learners with SEND are progressing, drawing on a variety of evidence gathered during the inspection. Inspectors recognise that learners with SEND may have different starting points to their peers, and that progress will be measured from this point. It is important that you have accurate knowledge of what they can do, and what they need to work on next. Personal and academic development are equally important. Inspectors do not use information that teachers have gathered through school-based assessments when making their judgements. However, they will be interested in how you assess learning, and what you do with this information.

Inspectors will expect you to explain how learners' individual SEND needs are being planned for. They are likely to look at some examples of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), and how annual targets from these are incorporated into lessons. Be prepared to talk about how you are doing this: how you structure your lessons so that all learners understand what you are teaching and make progress. Give examples of what individual learners have learned over time. Use examples of individual work to illustrate this. Inspectors will be keen to know how well senior leaders, subject leaders and the SENCO support you in your work, and what impact this has on pupils' learning. Collate simple case studies over time for a few learners with SEND. This can be a useful professional talking and learning point within the school. Case studies should be brief and illustrative. They can support useful conversations during the inspection.

Pupil safety and wellbeing is always at the centre of an inspection. Be prepared to answer questions about the school's approach to safeguarding, and how this reduces the risks and protects learners with SEND in your class.

Wider professional responsibilities

A teacher's role is never in isolation. Our task at hand can be challenging at times. However, there is a wider community to support and encourage us as we learn and develop in the role. This wider community should not be seen as uniquely a top-down structure, in which highly experienced teachers share their expertise with teachers new to the classroom. It is a community for us all to share and participate in, where we engage with others to ask questions to support our practice and share our learning. Some of our most meaningful learning opportunities may not come from a CPD session, but are instead realised through informal professional dialogue, reflection and shared observations within our own classrooms.

Engagement within the wider community begins during our initial teacher training; our responsibility is documented within Teachers' Standard 8. It continues throughout all stages of our careers, outlined for Headteachers within Standard 9.

Our teaching community starts within our own school through the professional relationships we develop with colleagues in our department and/or phase and the support staff working within our classrooms. Effective collaboration across the whole school community is an essential component towards fulfilling our shared responsibility to support all learners to maximise their potential. Effective collaborative professionalism – through which we create stronger and better professional practice together[1] – involves recognising that our roles and responsibilities extend beyond our own classrooms. Through this we feel empowered to ask for help when needed, as well as share our own expertise and insight, as respected fellow professionals at whatever stage in our career.

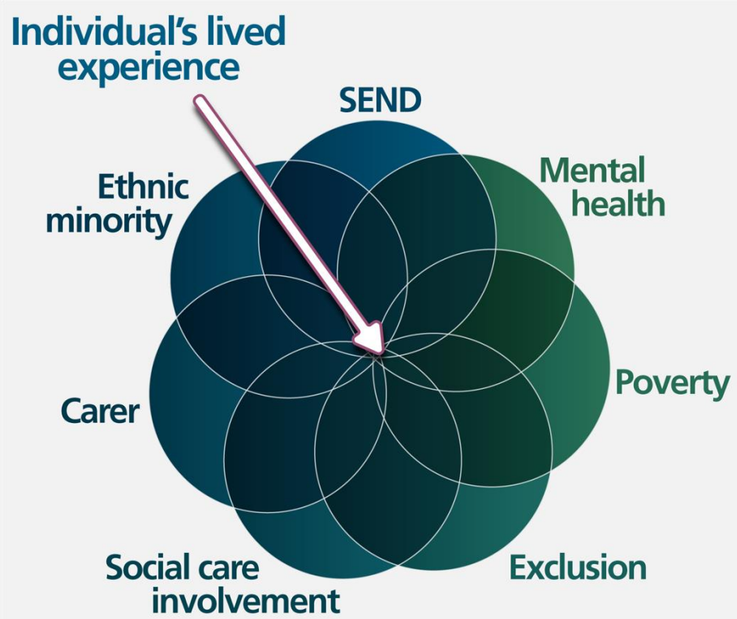
When a challenge or concern presents itself in our classroom, whether it be how to teach a new topic, or how to meaningfully include all learners, we can draw on the advice and support from those around us. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Help can come in a variety of ways. Sometimes something as simple as a conversation or observation (a colleague observing your teaching, or you observing a colleague) can enable us to think differently about a situation.

Actively engaging in the wider professional network is not just for support when we are faced with challenges but is integral to our continuing professional development. Teachers' Standard 8 sets out that we all *take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues.* This does not solely come from within our own schools/trusts. Organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation publish Guidance Reports for teachers with evidence-based recommendations to improve teaching and learning, amongst other resources including a podcast and blog. The Maths Hubs Programme, co-ordinated by the NCETM, brings together professionals in a collaborative national network of 40 hubs, each led locally by an outstanding school, to develop and spread excellent practice. The 34 English Hubs offer support to schools to improve the teaching of phonics, early language and reading in Reception and Year 1. The Whole School SEND Consortium develops resources and leads CPD to support teachers and school leaders in ensuring that every child and young person with SEND can maximise their potential. This is not an exhaustive list of organisations to support our practice. There are also local networks and hubs that we can engage in, and further organisations to support our practice are included in both Section 5 and Section 7 of this Handbook.

Intersectionality

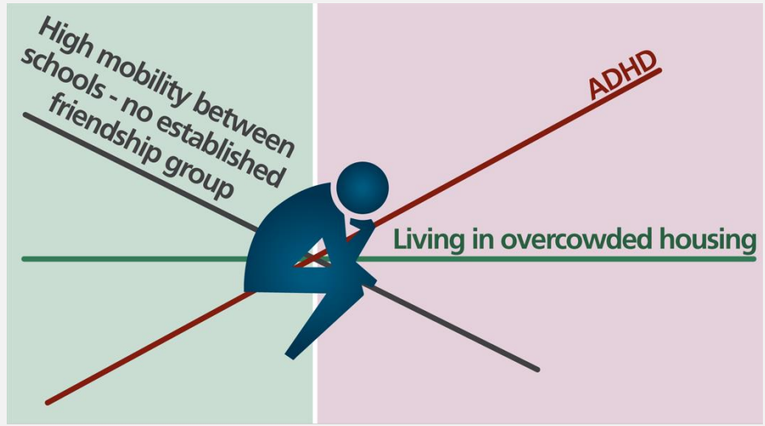
Intersectionality is the complex, dynamic way in which the effects of multiple vulnerabilities combine, overlap or intersect. This deeply impacts an individual's lived experience, including the specific barriers to access that they face.

Understanding intersectionality is not about knowing and 'listing' learners' multiple vulnerabilities, and then reflecting and responding to the impact of each. It is about understanding that **the experience of the overlap of those vulnerabilities** will shape the learner's identity, as well as their engagement and participation in education and as a member of their community.[2]



Complex, co-occurring needs or 'simultaneous intersections' increase the risk for individuals. We as teachers are in the best position to meet the needs of our learners both by using proactive approaches that prevent those who are at-risk from falling behind academically or maladapting behaviourally or socially, and in the present. We can support their journey towards adulthood, by understanding intersectionality as a multi-dimensional approach.

When reflecting on our knowledge of our learners and how to meet their needs, it is essential to consider how our learners are experiencing the intersectionality of their needs. For example, a learner with ADHD living in poverty, with little access to outdoor space and opportunities for regular physical exercise, will have a different lived experience to the learner with ADHD who was taken into care at the age of six, following significant neglect. By taking a one-dimensional approach to the learner with ADHD and only 'seeing' the ADHD, we risk compounding, rather than alleviating, barriers to their learning, engagement, participation and inclusion. In a similar vein, we might assume access to resources or protective factors that might not be available to the learner or, conversely, we might assume that perceived protective factors alleviate the risk of harm or disadvantage in a way that is not reflected in reality. Our relationships with - and our knowledge of - our learners is key to this process.



The lived experience of the overlapping needs will be complex, dynamic & individual to each learner

Each learner with a special educational need is an individual. The lived experience of the overlap of multiple vulnerabilities will be equally individual, complex and dynamic. Two of our greatest tools as teachers when meeting the needs of our learners are **curiosity and openness**. We move away from assumption and move towards aspiration and partnership in the learning journey, by engaging in a process of understanding, getting to know, and learning alongside our learners. However, this can only be done **in partnership with the learner and their families.** The **learner's voice and their views** are extremely important in determining the support they receive to ensure they can effectively engage with the curriculum and meet their goals.

As teachers, we have a legal duty to safeguard all learners in our care and to have an understanding of the statutory safeguarding guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

KCSIE is clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

We know that disabled children and those with SEN are more likely to experience bullying in school (Anti-Bullying Alliance). There is some evidence that disabled children may be more vulnerable to abuse than non-disabled children[3]. Part 2 of KCSIE sets out that children with SEN and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges and additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in children with SEN and disabilities. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood or injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration.
- Being more prone to peer group isolation than other children.
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

Contextual Safeguarding

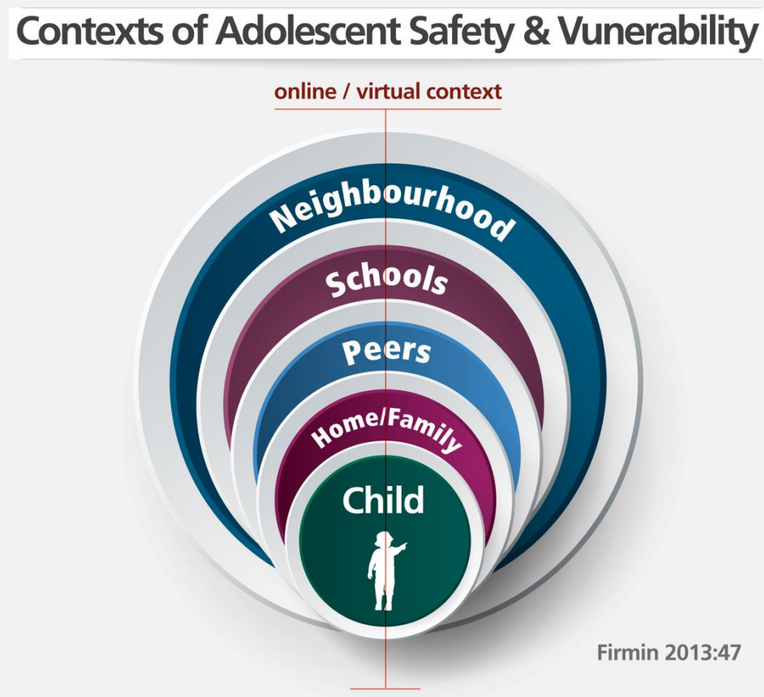
In a recent report, the Contextual Safeguarding Network stated: 'An extensive evidence base on extra-familial harm [harm that occurs to children or young people outside their family system] and adolescent development suggest that peer relationships, school and community contexts (both online and offline), as well as familial contexts, shape the welfare and safety of young people.'

For all our learners to experience safety, our safeguarding duty extends much further than sharing welfare concerns linked to the home/family context; it requires us to understand whether our learners are experiencing safety at school, in their interactions with their peers, and within their neighbourhoods and communities. This also requires us to reflect on the difference between vulnerability and risk: vulnerability suggests an increased exposure to the possibility of being harmed – this can be counterbalanced by a range of protective and safety factors; risk suggests an exposure to harm and is more immediate. Our response to vulnerability or to risk must be equally nuanced.

Taking a contextual approach to safeguarding and ensuring the voice of the child or young person is **heard** through any process is essential, especially when working with learners with SEND. This allows us to work with the child or young person to understand where the actual harm or risk of harm is situated and therefore how we can work with them and their environment to improve safety and wellbeing. Intervention is then about adjustments in the environment and not an attempt to 'fix the child'. It is important that, as teachers, we understand that adjustments or interventions focused on the environment can empower young people and their families. For example, if several young people reported feeling unsafe at lunchtime or in the playground, steps would be taken to understand why this is a particularly vulnerable time or place for young people and how we could increase safety for them: increased supervision, removal of any overgrown shrubs that impede/obstruct view, review of the timetable, the use of safe spaces, etc. A whole-school approach could be taken to promote the safety of all, for example through the teaching of playground games.

The Contextual Safeguarding Network's Beyond Referrals self-assessment toolkit and guidance provides a framework to support schools to self-assess the enablers and barriers to effective safeguarding responses as well as capture the views of young people, parents and staff.

Working in partnership with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and (where relevant) external professionals, as teachers, we need to be alert to possible increased risk or vulnerability for our learners with SEND. We need to actively work in our classes and schools to ensure that our learners are safe and are experiencing safety throughout their day. We need to facilitate opportunities and support to ensure that our learners feel that they can share concerns in a meaningful and accessible way.



The language we use with colleagues

The language of SEND can be tricky to navigate at times. Labels change and at times can appear politicised: for example, the use of ‘condition’ or ‘disorder’ in relation to autism can provide hours of debate. The truth is, we cannot and do not always get it right, but within education, we do have an obligation to use language that is respectful and clear within our school communities. It is also important to recognise when we do not get it right and to apologise when we get it wrong. Referring to a learner as challenging, when the learner struggles to comply in the same way as others in the class, is not okay. Recognising that the same learner has needs, which sometimes might challenge the way you feel about that learner’s behaviour, is okay. Articulating that you do not like that behaviour is also okay. Inferring that you do not like the learner through your language or tone is not okay.

Talking to colleagues about learners and their needs is an everyday part of the job. However, using language that is judgemental or devaluing to a learner should be checked and amended. Transpose your own name into the sentences used and see if that makes you uncomfortable. This can be a good barometer of whether the language being used is acceptable. ‘He just doesn’t try!’ negates the responsibility of the teacher, who would be upset if anyone were to say that they were not trying themselves.

Because meeting needs is hard and emotional work, it can be easy to have an emotive reaction to the frustrations that can arise. Avoid negative emotional reactions by understanding learners’ feelings and the reasons for those feelings at the time. Work with colleagues to agree checks and balances in your professional conversations. Consider circumstances that may drive conversations about what a learner (e.g. Noah) ‘cannot do’ in the classroom, reframing to identify if additional support is needed: such as, ‘Do you want me to look at Noah’s provision plan with you?’ or ‘Have you tried letting Noah look at a print-out of the slides?’. It may be appropriate to check on a colleague’s wellbeing, if you feel that their language or tone is a reflection that they are finding things hard at the moment, particularly when it is out of character.

Section 2

Knowledge of the Learner

In this section, we will cover:

1. **How we learn**
2. **Pupil voice**
3. **The language we use with families**
4. **Working with families**

How we learn

Both education and psychology research have established an evidence-based understanding of how people learn. As a teacher it is important to have a theoretical basis of how people learn, in order to reflect on your practice and monitor its effects when a child or young person's learning does not appear to be developing as expected. The theories described in this section are applicable to all learners and will help you to better understand the additional needs of a child or young person with SEND.

Child development theories focus on how children and young people change over time: intellectually, socially and emotionally. To understand how individuals are learning in class, teachers must consider the interaction and impact of several factors: opportunity to learn (curriculum, teaching input, assessment), the learner's personal characteristics (age, gender, disposition, genetics), time factors (growth, maturity, time spent on an activity) and environment (class, school, local area).[1]

The interaction of these wide-ranging factors will have different effects on an individual's learning and developmental outcomes over time. Across all the ages, including in the earliest years', teachers should consider whether lack of development is due to lack of one, some or all of the conditions mentioned in the second paragraph, rather than an inherent feature within the learner. Getting to know your learners' strengths and needs enables you, the teacher, to ensure all learners have access to the best quality teaching within the best learning environment.

Learning in its simplest terms is the developmental movement from not knowing to knowing and is applied to all areas of a human developmental life span. As we will see from the theories outlined, learning requires exposure to opportunities to learn, a safe environment in which to learn, and opportunities to practise and succeed so that learning can be applied to new situations with confidence and perseverance. Social interaction with families, friends and teachers is essential during all stages of learning.

In this section, we will cover how we learn:

- **In relationships with others**
- **In interactions with our environment**
- **Using cognitive and thinking skills**
  - **Schema**
  - **Working memory**
  - **Cognitive load theory**
  - **Attention**
  - **Shallow versus deep processing**
  - **Mastery learning**
- **To be learners**
  - **Metacognition**
  - **Mindset theory**

We learn in relationship with others

The pace of development is more rapid in the very early years of life than at any other time. Culture, family, home and community are a child's first teacher. They play an important role in childhood development, impacting on a child's experiences and opportunities. Differing values, priorities and practices in caring for children will influence individual development and the learning of skills and behaviours.[2]

Key considerations:

Children and young people learn when they feel safe, secure and have positive, trusting relationships with their teachers and peers.

The child or young person's relationship with their teachers and support staff, and the sense of belonging created in a whole school ethos, acts as a secure base. From here, the child or young person can explore their learning, knowing they can return to where they feel safe if something is challenging.

Close and supportive relationships with teachers have the potential to mitigate the risk of negative outcomes for children and young people who may otherwise have had difficulty succeeding in school.

Attachment theory

Developed by John Bowlby,[3] this theory tells us that a strong emotional and physical bond to a primary caregiver (parent, carer, sibling, grandparent) is critical to childhood development. If children have 'good enough' care (sensitive, attuned care which meets their physical and emotional needs), they feel safe to explore the world in the knowledge that they have a secure base to return to. With this secure attachment, children receive and develop a positive 'internal working model' of themselves, others and the world around them. These very early interactions (food when hungry, warmth when cold, comfort when distressed) teach the child about adults and whether they are helpful or not. Therefore, when a child starts school, they will already have an experience of what adults are like and will come with expectations of what you, the teacher, will be like. Attachment theory can be transposed onto the teacher-child relationship.

The diagram illustrates the impact of interrupted attachment cycles.

Teachers who are attuned to the social, emotional and cognitive needs of their individual learners create safe spaces to learn. In the classroom, securely attached children, through safe learning interactions with the teacher, build a view of themselves as someone who has potential and can learn. They will try out new ways of learning and are happy to answer questions because their prior experience of doing so has been positive. Secure attachment relationships correlate strongly with higher academic attainment, better self-regulation and social competence.[4]

This attachment cycle can be interrupted for many reasons (e.g. experiences of loss, socio-economic stressors, child health and disability, trauma) and children may develop insecure attachments that influence how they see themselves, others and the world around them. Children develop different coping strategies to manage these difficult experiences. For example, learners who are **insecure-avoidant** may find it difficult to trust a teacher, focus only on the task, and rarely ask for help because they have learnt that adults are not helpful to them. This affects their ability to seek and use feedback because they have learnt to trust only themselves. Learners who are **insecure-ambivalent** may be preoccupied by fears of separation and show attention-needing behaviours from adults because they have learnt that adults become anxious or cross when things go wrong. As teachers we know that 'getting things wrong' is part of learning something new and that children and adults need to tolerate the uncertainty we face in any new learning in order to persevere to the point of knowing.

You will be aware of learners in your classroom who have had very difficult starts to their lives. However, it is important to understand that research shows us that even if they have had a difficult early experience and formed insecure attachment patterns, the power of a good relationship is healing.[5] This means that children and young people can, when exposed to a consistently thoughtful and attuned adult, build a different and new internalised model of what adults can be (trusting, helpful, calm etc.) and also what they can be as a learner, for example through access to goals, hopes and aspirations coupled to an excellent curriculum delivered in an inclusive classroom.

We learn in interactions with our environment

Key considerations:

Children and young people observe behaviours that they see in their environment and try them out. Therefore, the behaviours that you value, display yourself or respond to in your class, will influence an individual's learning behaviour. How can you demonstrate to your class that it is okay to get things wrong when learning? How do you demonstrate good listening? Do you demonstrate how to tolerate uncertainty in knowledge when you do not know an answer immediately? How can you demonstrate perseverance with a task or building effective rapport?

Teachers who can create a learner-centred environment use teaching strategies to create a safe space to learn, where opportunities for all to succeed outweigh failure. Knowing your individual learner's prior knowledge, teaching the knowledge that the learner needs to be successful in the next stage of education, and setting tasks with appropriate challenge and scaffolding to enable success is skilful. This is the assess, plan, do, review cycle required for all learners.

Reflect on this statement: a child or young person who grows up to describe themself as an unsuccessful learner has experienced lessons without the appropriate pitch, scaffolding and challenge.

Social-cognitive theories

These theories view learning as an interaction between the child or young person and their environment. They tell us that children and young people learn in social relationships (with family, teacher, peers) and their physical environment (opportunities, language exposure) which both have a direct effect on learning and learning behaviour. A learner coming to your class will have observed many interactions and made connections between what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Learned behaviours happen constantly throughout our lifespan becoming more sophisticated over time as learners begin to observe that some behaviours are only appropriate in specific circumstances or within specific relationships. Research shows that adolescents are particularly susceptible to social influence and are more influenced by their peers than they are by adults.[6]

Social learning theory

Social learning theorist, Albert Bandura,[7] proposed that children learn through observation of others. However, it is not a given that a child or young person will learn just from observation, they need to give the behaviour attention, retain that behaviour in memory and then use it in a different circumstance. The key element to this learning is how the behaviour they are trying out is responded to. If it leads to a positive feeling, then the child is motivated to do it again, e.g., telling a toddler with a smile, 'Great sharing!' If it leads to a negative feeling, then the child is less motivated to do it again, e.g. telling a toddler with a frown, 'No, hot!' when they reach for your coffee cup. These positive and negative associated feelings are nuanced and need to be considered alongside what we know about attachment, therefore teach the learner what they need to be successful so that they come to understand the difference between wanted and unwanted behaviours. A child or young person who has had very little adult attention may well be motivated just as much by your negative consequence as your positive one, as for **this** child or young person, your attention is perceived as positive feedback.

Socio-cultural theory

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Learners can only develop their cognitive skills when interacting with **more knowledgeable others**. This forms a bridge between what they can do independently and what they can almost do, with the right help from others; we call this 'scaffolding'.

Scaffolding can be explained as the role that adults, peers and resources play in supporting the learner to achieve a new skill that is within their reach. The teacher, or more knowledgeable adult, is tasked with identifying what a learner can do independently and what they could almost do, with the support of others, through both formal and informal assessment as part of the graduated approach to learning. The teacher then uses their teaching skills to help the learner to stretch beyond it. The idea of scaffolding may sound simple, but it is a skill that requires teachers to carefully decide what kind of support is needed to lead to success. If a task is outside of what a learner is able to almost do, with the support of others, then no amount of scaffolding will get the learner to their goal, and they will experience failure. If a learner is repeatedly in this situation and can only reach the goal of completing the task with lots of adult support, they learn they can only do tasks with support and become overly dependent. If the task is set at the right level of difficulty and scaffolding supports the learner to achieve the goal as independently as possible, they will experience new learning and feelings of success as they associate their own effort with the success.

The ability to set tasks at the right difficulty level and provide the appropriate scaffolding in combination is '**differentiation'** and is the essence of Quality First Teaching. When we experience moments of success, we are motivated to engage again on future tasks. Success associated with personal effort and awareness of improving proficiency builds the child or young person's self-efficacy - their belief that they can learn. This is an important point and goes back to tasks being set that are too difficult; it is not real success in the child or young person's mind if the adult does the work for them. By thinking about task difficulty and the appropriate scaffolding required, the teacher shows that they are attuned to the individual needs of the learner and creates a safe environment for them to learn.

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills - Schema

So far in this section about learning theories we have seen how relationships and the environment into which a child and young person is placed can affect their learning. We now turn to think about what is happening in the mind during learning. One of the aims of learning is to give the child (and adult they will become) the knowledge and skills they need so that they can apply them to new situations. This places us in the realms of problem-solving. **Cognitive theories** help us as educators to understand what we need to ensure is in place to allow applied thinking to happen. As you read this section, keep in mind the importance of the teacher-learner relationship and the learning culture you create within your classroom and your lessons to maximise successful learning experiences.

Key considerations:

- *Children come to school with a great deal of knowledge.*
- *It is critical to interact with carers in order to share knowledge about each child.*
- *Children explore through patterns or schemas in order to 'fit' information together.*
- *New information can be added to existing schemas by a process of assimilation and accommodation.*

Chris Athey directed the Froebel Early Education Project over a five-year period during the early 1970s and published findings in her seminal text published in 1990.[8] Athey and her team were interested in what children 'can do' and made 5,000 observations for analysis. Athey demonstrated that, rather than 'flitting' from one activity to another, young children were 'fitting' ideas together through their repeated actions. Athey's definition of schema is: 'a pattern of repeatable behaviour into which experiences are assimilated and that are gradually co-ordinated. Co-ordinations lead to higher level and more powerful schemas' and are the basis for conceptual understanding.[9]

Schemas can be dynamic (moving as in the 'trajectory' of throwing) or figurative (static as in a 'line' of objects). Schemas are biological and some cannot be taught. Here are some commonly observed examples:

- Trajectory/line – moving in or representing straight lines, arcs or curves
- Transporting – moving objects or oneself from one place to another
- Enclosing – enclosing oneself, objects or space
- Enveloping – enveloping or covering oneself, objects or space
- Rotating – turning, twisting or rolling oneself or objects
- Ordering – placing objects, people or events in order
- Going through a boundary – causing oneself or material to go through a boundary and emerge at the other side
- Connecting – connecting oneself to objects and objects to each other
- One-to-one correspondence – placing objects in a one-to-one correspondence.[10]

Children need to become familiar with these patterns in order to understand concepts, for example we can teach children to 'count' in a rote fashion, but in order to fully understand 'counting', children need guided opportunities to explore, practise and co-ordinate 'lines', 'one to one correspondence', 'quantity', 'ordering' and 'seriation' (smallest to biggest).

Creating a line, which gets longer as each object is placed on it (addition in action as well as equivalence).

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills - Schema

Using ponies to place on cards making a 1:1 correspondence (as you do when counting).

Objects that can be sorted in size order (symbolic of increases in quantity when counting)

The ‘form’ and function of a ‘line’ is also a concept that underpins understanding of days of the week, the way that time progresses, the need to queue, and other more complex ideas.

As a teacher, you need to know about what children know and can do to offer them further resources and opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The wider the experiences we offer, the deeper the understanding.

Children’s schemas can be developed in different ways:

- Sensory motor (through actions)
- Functional dependency relationships (if I do this, then that happens)
- Symbolically (using one thing to stand for another, as in role play and language)
- Thinking as something spoken about in the absence of concrete reminders – however we now know that babies can demonstrate thinking although they cannot articulate their thoughts.

This is not a linear progression as we draw on our actions all of our lives to understand.[11] Schemas develop in a web-like fashion, as we make links between learning in school and interactions outside of school. Children with autism, for example, find familiar knowledge and experiences within their schemas to be a source of comfort.

With regard to SEND and, specifically, children with autism, schemas are quite obvious and are currently viewed as positive, providing comfort and learning for children.[12] There are also links within the emotional domain, which Athey, chose not to follow. However, in a longitudinal study of eight children, Arnold found that young children unconsciously symbolise using repeated actions ‘for comfort, to give form to and begin to understand complex changes and life events in the emotional domain’, for example, becoming interested in ‘connecting’ around the time of parents separating.[13]

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills – Working memory

Key considerations:

Working memory holds a limited amount of information for a short amount of time whilst mental effort is given to work on that information.

Information in working memory can be lost when a child or young person is distracted, or they are over-loaded with information to work on.

The working memory component, called the central executive, gives attention to and co-ordinates the visual and verbal short-term memory information.

To reduce cognitive load, ensure the child or young person has the right domain-specific knowledge before asking them to solve problems in that subject area.

Memory theory is useful for any teacher and could take a whole chapter for itself. Without going into the extensive literature here, we think it is important to note that there are different kinds of memory other than the most common ones that most of us are aware of: short-term, long-term and working memory. When thinking about the strengths and needs of a learner in your class, classifying a learner as having a good or weak memory may be too general and not be telling you the whole story. It is worth building your general knowledge by going to memory models today when assessing what memory capacity you are seeing in the learners in your class.

An understanding of **working memory** is essential to develop effectively differentiated lessons. Working memory refers to our ability to hold in our minds a limited amount of information for a short period of time, whilst carrying out effortful mental processing using the information in both working memory and drawing information stored in long-term memory. Working memory is made up of three components: **verbal short-term memory** (words and numbers), **visual-spatial short-term memory** (images, pictures and location information) and the **central executive** (attention control, co-ordination of information from the verbal and visuo-spatial short-term memory). Information that is held in working memory is temporary and can easily be disrupted and displaced by other information. When it is gone it cannot be retrieved, the learner must source the information again.

Working memory is like a mental page of a note pad on which we can make verbal and/or visual jottings. Research[14] shows that children's working memory capacity tends to increase over time. Working memory capacity is measured by a 'digit span test' which presents a series of numbers to be repeated back, increasing until the child or young person cannot recall them all. Typically, adults can recall up to 7 items in working memory, plus or minus two items. This and other tests are explained in a series of videos called 'How Working Memory Works' by psychologists at Bristol University. Research shows that the average 4-year-old can recall two digits whilst the average 15-year-old can recall four and sometimes up to five digits. These are averages, however, a rule of thumb. This is because research shows that there are large differences in the working memory capacity of children and young people. Despite large differences in working memory capacity, for all age groups it is important to remember that working memory is very limited. Further, it can be negatively impacted by extraneous information, such as noise and classroom disturbance. Teachers can help all children and young people, including those with SEND, by designing schemes of learning and rehearsal that make the most of long-term memory capacity.

Not all remembering relies on working memory; once knowledge and skills such as riding a bike, reading, following a familiar route home, are learned to automaticity, they can be accessed without much mental effort. This is because these 'items' of knowledge are stored in long-term memory. Long-term memory is distinct from working memory, but it is a vital resource that has the potential to protect and free-up working memory capacity. Long-term memories form part of the complex, web-like schemas that children and young people have been building over time. Teachers can help children and young people to make the most of their working memory capacity by helping them to learn, to automaticity, core knowledge and skills so that these 'items' are stored in long-term memory, rather than having to be included in limited working memory capacity.

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills – Cognitive load theory

This brings us onto Cognitive Load Theory proposed by John Sweller.[15] This theory is based on the limited capacity of working memory to work on **new** information and **existing** information at any one time (i.e., once the space has reached capacity, it cannot take in or hold anymore). In simple terms, if we ask learners to consider too many pieces of information at once to do a task, they will not be able to. Picture a learner given the task of tidying up all the PE equipment and putting it in the cupboard; they cannot hold all the balls and sticks and cones in their arms at once, and items will **fall off.** Sweller used cognitive load theory to illustrate how we can facilitate problem-solving in education by comparing the novice approach to the expert approach; the expert being someone who has domain-specific knowledge in the area to which the problem relates.

If a learner does not have the domain-specific knowledge in their long-term memory (schemata) to carry out a learning task, they will expend a lot of mental effort (working memory), and not necessarily reach a successful conclusion. Think back to what has already been said about creating lessons that are just challenging enough and scaffolded to support independence and success. Understanding how working memory operates and the limit to its capacity is key to creating a safe environment to learn.

Considerations for your classroom: Cognitive Load Theory and Deafness

Take some time to consider Cognitive Load Theory, specifically in relation to deaf learners. Will their access to language have an impact on the capacity of their working memory? Consider the process a learner with deafness may go through to understand spoken language:

***Listening:** The learner will listen using their residual hearing, hearing some sounds in words.*

***Lipreading:** The learner will watch the teacher's (or peer's) mouth closely to lipread, applying their knowledge of lip shape and movement to gather more information about the language being communicated. Whilst sounds may sound very different, there may be very little difference in the lip shape or movement, as shown in a video lesson by Lipreading Practice.*

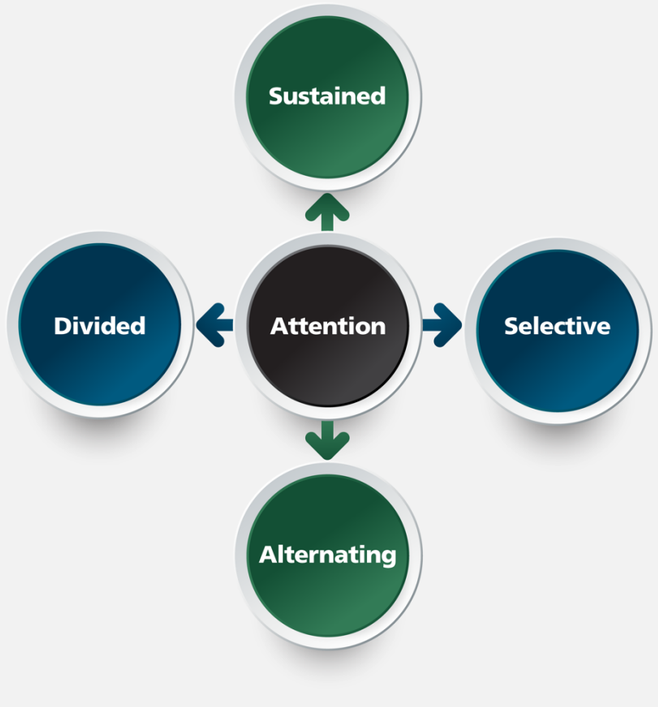
***Calculating:** The learner will try to sort out the lipreading shapes that look the same, e.g., m, b and p, and then apply common sense to fill in the gaps and correct misunderstandings, before finally putting everything together.*

Imagine now, that this process is needed to determine the learning objective for the lesson. Some phrases, used consistently, will become familiar and need less processing time, e.g. 'Today we will be…', however the second part of that sentence, where the teacher is introducing the learning of the lesson, will need time to be processed and understood. Multiple information channels can overwhelm cognitive load and can create a barrier to engagement and learning.

How can you make language in your classroom more accessible to deaf learners, so that their working memory capacity is focused on the content of the lesson, and not just understanding spoken language?

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills – Attention

As we have seen, classroom learning requires mental effort. A large part of this effort involves directing attention to the information necessary to learn and keeping it there. Attention is like shining a torch into a dark space; the torch can only light up a limited amount of that space. Our brains cannot focus on all the information coming to us through our senses. To understand attention, theorists have categorised different types: selective, sustained, alternating (switching), and divided (multi-tasking).



Key considerations:

There are different types of attention, many of which are still developing throughout childhood and into early adulthood.

How can we make learning relatable and meaningful for a learner to ensure their best attention?

How can distractions be limited in your classroom to help learners sustain their attention?

How can your lessons be structured so that learners are focussing solely on one aspect and not having to divide their attention between multiple tasks?

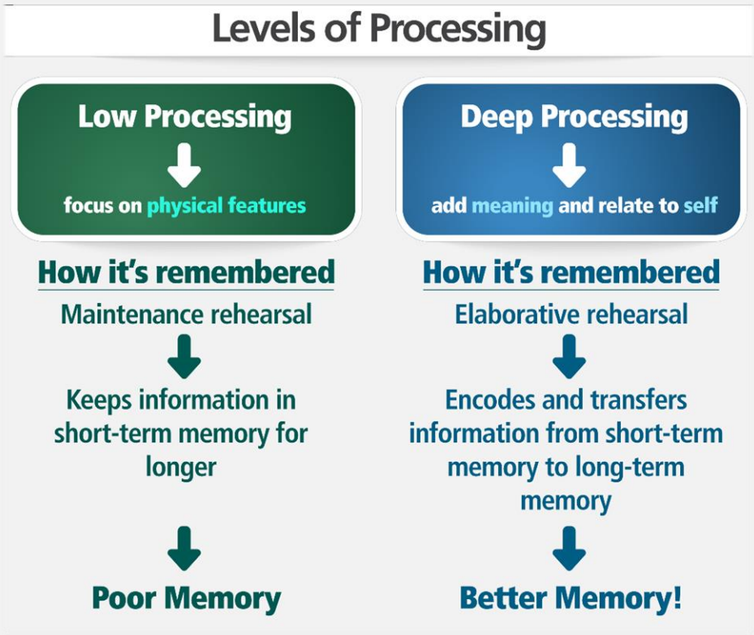
Divided attention is what people sometimes call *multi-tasking*. The Khan Academy's film on models of attention – Spotlight model of attention and our ability to multitask – provides an explanation of this. We know from studies that divided attention creates cognitive load. It is therefore important for you, the teacher, to understand what it is and when such situations exist in the classroom. When attention is divided the limited capacity that a learner must use is divided up into smaller and smaller amounts of attention. This means that the two tasks together will not be done as well as with single-focused attention.

In daily life and school lessons, children and young people are required to **alternate** or *switch* their attention between pieces of information. Think about the times when you have stopped independent work to explain a point. The learner moves their attention from the task in front of them, to what you are saying or demonstrating, and then back to their own work where they must apply it in some way.

Once the learner has selected the information they need to attend to, they have to **sustain** that attention long enough to process information and complete tasks. This relates to what we know about working memory and cognitive load. For all of us, we will find this easier for information that we find interesting, meaningful, that we feel capable of doing or that has importance to us. How might a learner's ability to sustain attention be affected if the lesson task is outside of what they can almost do with the support of others? Or if the scaffold is not sensitive enough to help them achieve successfully?

Selective attention is our ability to focus on the specific information we need whilst filtering out the sensory information that we are constantly being bombarded with. Classrooms are full of distractions: visual images on walls, sounds inside and outside of the classroom, the temperature of the classroom, how our bodies are feeling, etc. Theories of selective attention, by the Khan Academy, explains the current theories on how children and adults manage to filter out incoming stimuli and focus on specific information.

We learn using cognitive and thinking skills – Processing and Mastery Learning



Shallow versus Deep Processing

A question that teachers should ask themselves is, **'Why are some things learnt and retained better than others, and how can we maximise the former?'** Craik and Lockhart's influential work[16] proposed that what a learner retains is dependent on how deeply the information has been processed. Their 'depth of processing' model illustrates how perception of incoming stimuli happens at several levels (think back to what you now know about types of attention). Firstly, we analyse the physical and sensory features, such as lines, pitch, tone, brightness. Next, we match any new input with what is already known, searching our memory (schema). If we recognise something, the new information then undergoes some more processing called 'enrichment' or 'elaboration'[17] (when we assimilate or make accommodations to our schema). So, what the learner remembers depends on how deeply they have processed the information. When the learner has analysed only the physical features (for example, sounds in a word, or letters in a word, or the shape of the word), we call this **shallow processing** as it will lead to only short-term retention. However, if the word is encoded for its meaning, the meaning may trigger associations already known about that word and lead to **deep processing** and better retention.

The more techniques that a learner or teacher uses to stimulate deeper processing, the better the retention will be. One such technique is to use priming, when learners are reminded of what they already know about a subject before being presented with new information. In this way associations can be made, and existing knowledge found, on which to build.

Mastery Learning

Hopefully from the learning theories so far you have seen the importance of understanding the children and young people in your class as individual learners. Benjamin Bloom was an educator working in the 1960s and 1970s, thinking how best to teach children and young people so **mastery** is achieved in subjects by all learners. He had noticed that learners needed to be given the *time* they needed on learning concepts to be able to achieve to the level required. This meant that some learners needed longer than others. As well as being given more time to master topics, Bloom advocated for formative testing along the way to mastery, to ensure that gaps in knowledge were picked up and feedback was used to support learning to the next step. More detail can be found in the Education Endowment Foundation's Toolkit on Mastery Learning.

Key considerations:

Whether an individual retains information or not depends on how deeply they have processed the new information.

Selective and sustained attention are required to give time to processing information.

We all need to be able to switch our attention, but it can lead to more opportunity for distraction.

We learn to be learners

We know that learners interact with their environment all the time. The exploration of theories in this section has focused on the importance of the relationships between teacher and learner, and the creation of a safe learning environment that is built around a good understanding of the cognitive architecture that learners come to the classroom with (memory, attention, processing). We now turn our attention to thinking about the ways in which a learner's own thinking about how they learn can be enhanced so that they become successful learners. The Education Endowment Foundation has produced a useful guide: Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning Guidance Report.

Key considerations:

How do you demonstrate mindset thinking in your classroom?

How does feedback help children and young people manage their own learning?

How can children and young people develop different mindsets?

Metacognition

Metacognition – thinking about thinking – refers to a learner's understanding of their own abilities and their attitudes towards learning (myself as a learner); what strategies are available to them that they know to be effective (my knowledge of strategies); and their knowledge about specific kinds of tasks (my knowledge of this task). When confronted with a maths problem a learner will think: What is my approach to maths problems? What do I know about this kind of maths problem? What strategies can I use? The learner then needs to plan how to carry out the task by organising themselves, monitoring how they are doing it and evaluating their performance. This sounds sophisticated, and it is, but this is not only for older learners, as there is evidence that children as young as three years old are able to demonstrate metacognition in their approach to tasks.[18] Most learners will self-regulate by finding ways of persevering when they become stuck. This ability will mature over time and can support further motivation because of the success felt through learning.

Although all learners may well acquire metacognition to some level, it will not be spontaneous, and it will not be the same for all learners. Therefore, it is important that learners are explicitly taught the metacognitive strategies of planning, evaluating and monitoring which is best delivered through a combination of explicit teacher input, interactive questioning and feedback. An important theory to support the development of good metacognition and self-regulated learning in children and young people is Carol Dweck's mindset theory.

Mindset theory

Mindset theory was developed by Carol Dweck[19] who was interested in how children and young people coped with difficulty and challenge. She proposed a theory that learners can develop a 'growth mindset' or a 'fixed mindset' dependent on their response to challenge, which is in turn dependent on the feedback and response of others. Dweck observed in her studies that learners with a 'growth mindset' do not perceive difficulty or challenge as failure, that they believe that they are on a learning curve, and that their abilities will develop. Learners with a 'growth mindset' persevere with new challenges and show more engagement over time. As a result, they exert more effort and spend more time over tasks and therefore develop neural pathways and their skills. They also learn from criticism and see inspiration in the success of others. Learners with a 'fixed mindset', when presented with a challenge, may believe that their abilities are fixed and avoid feelings of failure by giving up easily. These learners will show less perseverance and are likely to experience a decline in performance over time.

We know from social learning theory that children and young people will behave in a certain way depending on what they observe and how people respond in their feedback to theirs and others' behaviours. Dweck suggests praising wisely, following episodes of teaching and rehearsal that give learners chances to become successful and proficient – praise for the process, effort, perseverance and strategies used, rather than 'intelligence', e.g. 'I like the way you tried out different ways of solving the problem'. Growth mindsets can also be promoted in the way new learning is presented, e.g. 'This may be difficult right now, but as you learn, you'll find it gets easier'. When learners are struggling, in your feedback, think about the power of saying '**not yet'**, e.g., in response to a learner saying, 'I can't do it!' you could reframe with 'You can't do it **yet'** or 'It's okay that you haven't quite got it **yet**, I expect you to make mistakes when you're learning new things'. The Education Endowment Foundation guide on feedback[20] shows that it can have a very powerful effect on learners, and more positively when it is linked to the process of the activity or the child or young person's management of their learning or self-regulation.

Pupil voice

What is pupil voice?

'Pupil participation is about developing a culture in schools where all children and young people have a voice and have the opportunity to play an active role in decisions that affect their learning and wellbeing'.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

We can use pupil voice to empower learners by providing appropriate ways of listening to their concerns, interests and needs in order to develop personalised educational experiences.

It is important to listen to all children and young people's voices regardless of their age or ability. You could consider working in partnership with learners with SEND and adapt learning and the support you give to incorporate strategies they say help them learn the best.

Pupil voice is not about learners demanding to be heard, nor about professionals abdicating their responsibility and authority. Feedback from learners can be used in partnership with, or alongside, teachers' expertise, intuition, skills, and experience (co-construction).

'Research increasingly suggests that when children and young people have more agency and are able to shape their own learning and education this can result in benefits for all learners, educators, the institution and the education system as a whole'.[1]

Consider your experiences as a learner:

Did you ever struggle with any aspects of your school work?

Did you ever feel frustrated, or disengaged with your learning?

Did staff ever ask you to give feedback about your learning?

How might you have felt if they had?

Benefits for learners with SEND

Listening to and acting on feedback from all learners, including learners with SEND, can:

- Build trust and relationships between learners and staff
- Help staff personalise learning and support based on what learners say most helps them learn
- Improve learner engagement and progress
- Empower learners by giving them opportunities to use their voice in positive ways
- Build confidence and self-esteem of learners.

Can pupil voice help challenge unconscious bias?

We can only genuinely commit to listening to feedback from learners if we check our own systems to ensure opportunities are meaningful and not tokenistic, and that every child and young person's voice is equally valued.

Consider using pupil voice as a tool to help us check our expectations of learners with SEND.

- *Can pupil voice give us insights about the way our learners view themselves and their learning?*
- *Can pupil voice help us challenge stereotypes about how learners with particular needs behave and learn?*

Supporting learners to give effective feedback

Planning authentic and meaningful opportunities for learners with SEND to give feedback may seem daunting. As teachers, we need to think creatively to overcome barriers such as language and communication. We would not expect learners to write without being taught how to first. Equally we need to teach learners to be able to express their views of their own learning.

Some techniques to encourage learners to give effective feedback:

Learning to give effective feedback is a skill that can develop over time. Below are some techniques you may wish to use to help children and young people develop this life-long skill.

- Encourage learners to ask questions in class and during interventions.
- Use puppets with young learners to model how they might speak about their learning.
- Show learners examples of high- and low-quality feedback from other learners and ask them to tell you why one might be more helpful for teachers than the others.
- Plan opportunities for learners to give feedback, and then ask them to evaluate what they share.
- Create opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning in class and through the interventions they have. Learners could be asked to consider what they think is going well, what areas they are struggling with, and where they feel they may need more support.
- Work collaboratively with learners to agree how to give feedback. Rules that could be included are: 'Be honest but not rude'; 'Ask for help if you don't understand the question'; or 'Say how you are feeling about your learning'.

Barrier	How I might overcome it
'I haven't done this before & I am fearful of getting it wrong'.	Ensure learners are clear that there are no right or wrong answers when giving feedback. Tell them that their feedback is really important to you, and you want them to speak honestly. This is particularly important with younger learners as they can sometimes change their answer if they feel it would please the adult. You can help build confidence by sharing questions in advance, allowing time for peer discussions and by empowering learners to decide how they want to share their feedback with you.
'I don't want to give feedback or I don't trust that you will act on what I say'.	Learners are more likely to engage with this task if they feel you really value what they say. Stress how important this task is and explain how you aim to act on the feedback that they share. However, take care not to over-promise as this can lead to a breakdown of trust and may result in further disengagement.
'I am unsure what words to use'.	There are numerous ways you can help learners overcome communication and language barriers when giving feedback. Some of these include: using an adult or peer as a scribe to record discussions; creating word banks; sentence starters or prompt cards; using film or photographs; asking learners to draw instead of writing their feedback; giving them sound buttons or voice recorders; using graphics for multiple choice responses; or marking themselves on a line of opposite statements (Salmon line), e.g. 'I work best when I am with my friends' at one end, to 'I cannot work at all when I am with my friends'.
'I don't understand, I don't know what you want from me'.	Spend time ensuring learners understand the purpose of the task you have set. If the feedback you receive does not reflect the questions that you posed, then you will need to change your approach and the questions that you ask. This may include re-thinking teaching sequences and/or giving assurance to the child that what is not known will be taught and rehearsed so that they can be successful in the future.

Turning theory into practice

How, when and where you might capture pupil voice:

Before a lesson

Ask learners about their existing areas of interest, as well as areas of interest that they would like to know more about, and use these, where appropriate, to personalise learning.

During a lesson

You may ask learners to choose which resource or strategy they use when tackling problems in class.

You could create a traffic light or other system where learners put either red, yellow or green cards on their table to demonstrate understanding. This is a quick way for you to clarify who needs support and can avoid the embarrassment some learners with SEND feel about asking for help.

If communication or language barriers make pupil voice difficult you may wish to consider observing learners during interventions with others. This approach may help you identify what support or resources they rely on or respond to the most.

At the end of a lesson

Ask learners to reflect on their learning at the end of a lesson: 'How did (strategy) help you learn about (topic)?' 'Do you feel confident about (topic) or do you need more time to learn this skill?'

After a lesson

Ask learners to consider how they approached problems or tasks to determine how confident they feel about tackling tasks independently.

Ask learners to take photos or order photos you have taken about their learning to show which resources or strategies most help them learn.

Interview with a secondary learner:

Adult: ***What lessons do you most enjoy in school and why?***

Learner: I like drama, P.E and music mostly because they are active, and I don't have to do much writing.

Adult: ***What do teachers do that most helps you learn in class?***

Learner: When they send me the PowerPoint ahead of the lesson or print it out, it means that I can take my time on things, and I don't have to go at the same speed as the rest of the class. I don't like asking for help because I feel embarrassed and people might judge me, especially if it's an easy question for them. My teachers have told me to leave my planner open on the red page if I want help but don't want to put my hand up.

Adult*: How do we support you with work out of the classroom?*

Learner: I go to an English intervention. We sometimes go through what we are going to do in the lesson in advance, and it helps me get prepared. Sometimes we go over things I have questions about or that I was stuck on. This really helps me as sometimes the teacher goes through (explains) things too fast or does not give enough explanation for me.

Adult*: How do teachers help you with home learning?*

Learner: It's helpful when teachers put my homework on Teams as if I forget to write it in my planner it helps me remember that it's been set. I also sometimes used to lose worksheets. Also, one of my teachers sends me an email reminding me to do my homework three days in advance as she knows I sometimes forget when work needs to be handed in.

Other times that you can capture pupil voice:

- Ask learners about the progress they think they are making in their classes and interventions. Consider setting targets together.
- Ask learners about their classroom environments to determine what impact it has on their learning.
- Ask learners to take you to the resources or places (walking tour) in and out of their classroom(s) that most help them learn.
- Ask learners to discuss the support they receive in school and at home. Can they explain what helps them the most?

Things to remember when asking for feedback:

- Are you clear why you are asking learners for feedback?
- Do learners understand what you are asking them to do?
- Have you considered the needs of learners you are seeking feedback from?
- How will you adapt your approach to ensure you can capture feedback in meaningful ways? What must you be mindful of?
- Have you shown learners your questions in advance?
- Have you thought about the appropriateness of requests for feedback, e.g., if learners are not confident?
- How will you use learner feedback to inform your planning of new learning?

The language we use with families

The language and tone used with families can have a positive impact on the learner and their family, as well as their teachers. Contacting a family with a cross tone of voice is unlikely to ever be productive, whatever the learner has done. Making a family feel responsible for the behaviour of the learner during the school day is rarely helpful. Describing the needs of the learner in a structured conversation with regard to the views of the learner and their family is a more useful platform for planning and implementing effective provision.

Compare the following scenarios where a teacher needs to give feedback to the family of a learner in Reception with a global delay. The teacher has observed that the learner may be expressing frustration that another learner won't play with her.

Scenario 1: The teacher calls the parent before the end of the day to suggest they pop in when the other parents have gone. The teacher starts the conversation with, 'I've noticed that Keri likes to sit really closely to one learner and this has made the other learner feel upset at times today.'

Scenario 2: The teacher sees the parent on the playground at the end of a school day, while dismissing the class, and calls across to her 'Can I have a quick word please?' When the parent comes across to collect their child, the teacher adds, 'Keri has really upset Trent today as she keeps going up to him, even though we have told her not to!'

The teacher's approaches in the two scenarios are very different and can directly impact the outcome of the conversation. In the first scenario, calling ahead gave the parent the chance to have the conversation with the teacher in a private manner, without feeling that they are being summoned in front of the other parents.

After a constructive start to the conversation, the teacher and parent may be able to think about the learner together. The teacher could continue 'I would like to encourage Keri to play with one or two other learners, to build her confidence that other learners are fun to be with too. Does she talk about other learners in the class at home that she likes? Are you happy for me to include Keri in some small group work on turn taking?'

Case Study: The impact of the language we use with families

My son was in Year 1 when the SENCO asked me if it would be OK to put him on the SEND register. She spoke to me in the playground at morning drop-off. Even though I already had a child with autism and my son had been seeing an Occupational Therapist, it still came as a shock. I had to work hard to hold back the tears. I think it's easy to underestimate just what a blow it can be to a parent to hear those words – even one already in the system. Knowing earlier that the school had developing concerns might have softened the way; being told privately with anticipation that this might be hard news to hear would also have helped.

Understanding the experiences of families: One parent's perspective

I often felt that I was carrying an invisible rucksack of emotions, memories and experiences that I had accumulated along the journey. This sometimes impacted on my interactions with professionals as past experiences coloured present moments. Where teachers interacted with me from a position of empathy and understanding rather than judgement, there was a stronger foundation for an effective partnership. Some of these emotions were:

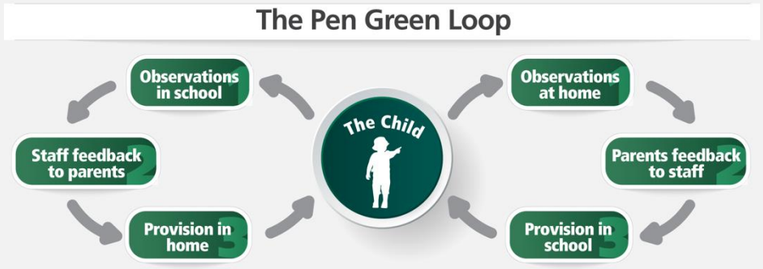
- ***Grief** of seeing my child not having the life I might have expected her to lead, or the life I think other people are leading.*
- *Experience of the **journey to diagnosis** – not always being believed or heard by professionals.*
- ***Trauma** of appointments and the responsibility of making medical decisions.*
- *Feeling overburdened by the **workload** involved in the management of the administration linked to all the appointments and other aspects of support.*
- ***Fear of the future** – will my child be able to manage independently?*
- *The **loneliness** of seeing that my child's developmental path is acutely different from that of her peers. Sometimes this has created a feeling of separation between my family and others.*

Meeting with families is not a transactional process; it is a dynamic process with the child at the centre - it is essential that everyone is empowered and genuinely heard and it is incumbent on us, as teachers, to ensure that we facilitate the appropriate conditions for genuine partnership-working. This is our professional duty. Working with families is a rich experience and essential in supporting the best possible progress for our learners. Teacher standards, the legislation that we work within and the institution itself set frameworks regarding our professional role and responsibilities. However, it is much more than this and it is essential that we consider our role in relationship with families. To do this effectively, we must reflect on what we bring to any dialogue - we must challenge our assumptions and our judgements, bring to light any unconscious bias and reflect on the emotions we might bring to the discussion.

*We are not immune to emotional responses - based on the day that we have had prior to the meeting, based on possible prior interactions and prior experiences, etc. It is, however, by being aware of our emotional response that we can ensure we take a strength-based approach – the foundation of partnership-working in the best interests of the child or young person. Any meeting with a parent is a meeting about **their** child(ren). It is our professional responsibility to listen and hear without judgement, with empathy and with a desire to learn from the child's family. To do this is to enrich our practice and the provision we have in place for our learners.*

Working with families

It is well known that family engagement in their children's learning and the quality of the home learning environment are associated with improved outcomes at all ages.[1] However, the importance of working with families goes far deeper than this. If we reflect on the importance of knowing our learners, then the importance of working in partnership with families is evident. The learner is at the centre of this process, and education cannot be achieved with the school or family acting in isolation.



The Pen Green Loop demonstrates how teachers can work alongside families to better understand a learner's individual needs.

NHS Ask, Listen, Do

'A guide to making conversations count for all families' is intended to help build a mutually respectful partnership built on trust between families and the school, college or other education settings.

See Ask Listen Do.

Case Study: Family Perspective

*For learners with complex additional needs, setting up effective, regular **home-school communication channels** is essential. This supports efficient information-sharing and can avoid situations escalating unnecessarily. Knowing from a parent that a learner has had a bad night's sleep can totally change the way that we interact with that child, and therefore the sort of day that everyone will have. A parent knowing that unkind words were directed at their child following a missed goal at breaktime can make the difference between an evening of dysregulated behaviour, stress and anxiety and an evening where feelings could be explored, named and worked through. A communication book can be a useful tool to support effective and efficient information-sharing. Through the communication book, you are providing a visual cue and a model to the child of an effective, trusting partnership between their school and their family. It is advisable to agree with parents and carers how it will be used, and what the expectations are in terms of its use. For example, would they like a short comment daily or only when something significant has happened? Are there particular situations when they would still prefer a phone call? Make sure to agree with families before making adjustments to the way communication books are set up, when changes are needed. Be flexible and open to responsive adaptations.*

Case Study: Family Perspective

Every parent I know who has a child with SEND feels the need to be their advocate when it comes to school. As a parent of three children with SEND and a school governor with responsibility for SEND, I see both sides. I see the enormous and ongoing commitment and hard work put in by staff. I see how children most in need are rightly prioritised. And I see how schools can't do everything – but can sometimes do more when parents are vocal. Even better would be a proactive approach from schools, encouraging feedback about their provision and having honest conversations about what is possible. The better the communication and collaboration, the better the relationships and outcomes for the children.

Sometimes I've only found out about changing provision for my child when I've sought feedback. For example, that my son was now on a blue fidget cushion or that my daughter was being allowed to doodle during carpet time to help her maintain focus. These may feel like small adjustments to teachers but to parents these are essential nuggets of information in understanding our children and their developing needs. To not share information is potentially damaging to the sense of partnership and trust we need between us. We want to support our children as best we can!

My son is now in Year 8 and I think that for every school report he's had there have always been comments along the lines of 'He needs to focus more' or 'He'd do even better if he paid more attention,' or, now that he's in secondary school, that he's not sufficiently organised. I know these comments are meant to be helpful but to a child with ADHD (and their families), they can be demoralising, as if the teacher doesn't understand the inherent challenges or their own role in supporting them. More constructive would be acknowledging the challenges by including information on how the teacher is working alongside my child to support their focus or their organisational skills.

Working with families

A relationship built on trust between the family and the school benefits everyone, but especially learners with SEND and/or other vulnerabilities. As teachers, we are the driving force in building these relationships. The time invested at the beginning of our journey alongside a learner lays the foundation for effective collaboration.

To achieve effective partnership when working with families, it is essential that families are respected and recognised as experts on their own children.[2]

Key considerations for effective partnership

- Be aware of your own unconscious bias and adjust your interactions if necessary. Avoid judgement and assumptions.
- Make contact before you 'have to', to ensure that you establish a positive relationship with the family. Do not wait until you have 'concerns' to share.
- Listen to and engage with the contributions of families. Be mindful that some children and young people present very differently at home to school.
- Be open, honest and transparent with families – parents and carers have a **right** to know. Be sensitive when sharing concerns and seek advice from the SENCO as appropriate. Respect professional boundaries – for example, we are not health professionals and do not have the expertise to diagnose!
- Be mindful of the imbalance between the institution of school and the family. You represent the institution, and to the family it can feel as if you hold the power, even if you do not feel that you do!
- Be mindful of any specialist language or jargon – establish a shared understanding of the language with the family.
- Always act and communicate in the best interests of the child or young person.

Co-production

Co-production is defined as a strong and equal partnership between the users and providers of public services to achieve a valued outcome[3].

Co-production should not just be reserved for certain processes, such as the EHCP assessment process or the annual review; it should be embedded into the fabric of our interactions. Co-production is a process in itself. If we are to be successful in co-production, learners and their families need to 'feel that they have participated fully in the process and have a sense of co-ownership'. [4]

Within a philosophy of co-production:

- Everyone has something to contribute.
- Reciprocity is important.
- Social relationships matter.
- Social contributions are encouraged.

Co-production at primary school – a parent's view

A good rapport is the key to my daughter being successful in class. She wants to please – even if that's not always obvious! When she and a teacher have struggled to click, a managed conversation where they've shared their perspectives has worked well. She struggled for a while with the PE team. They used the school traffic light system more liberally than class teachers and this, plus some shouting, would put my daughter on edge – even if it wasn't directed at her. It then made it harder for her to engage and manage herself and it became a downward spiral. The school provided more training for the PE staff and the SENCO facilitated a talk between my daughter and the PE teacher. They both came away with a much better understanding of what the other was experiencing in lessons and the softer interaction made my daughter feel less 'unliked' by the teacher. It made a positive difference.

Co-production – a young person's view

The PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) meetings are very helpful to me because they help me set out my goals for the future and they give me steps to follow to achieve the goals of what I want to become. The PATH meetings help plan steps like where I am going to live and what am I going to do after this course and what skills I need to do this. When in these meetings, I feel what I want to do in the future is my choice and that I have control of my ideas.

These are tough decisions like what I want to do next, however I am not alone and I have my Mum, Dad and staff who I work with to help me. The PATH is also a chance to celebrate all the achievements I have done throughout college and my school years.

There are also other reviews where I also get a chance to change my decision and adapt and contrast my plan as time goes on. It is flexible and it helps me to understand details of what I need to do to have greater opportunities for the future and to achieve the goals I need for my course and for life.

Co-production at secondary school – a parent's view

My son had the most fantastic transition to secondary school (having had a previous cataclysmic transition mid-way through primary school). As well as extra pre-visits, he met with all the significant adults, including a SEND TA who was going to be his 'go to' person. The first week she checked in on him every day and would text me updates. She'd speak to teachers in classes where he was struggling to self-regulate or was feeling lost. He's now in Year 8 and they meet weekly for lunch. She continues to support him (and his teachers) with good routines, working memory issues and any frustrations. He's had an incredibly successful start – in part down to him but a significant factor has been this pre-emptive support. It might look resource heavy (he doesn't have an EHCP) but it's effective and far less of a drain on school resources than the repeated involvement of senior leaders which we had in the past.

Section 3

Planning inclusive lessons

In this section, we will cover:

1. **Quality Inclusive Pedagogy**
   Inclusive teaching and learning approaches
   Unconscious and conscious barriers
2. **The language we use with learners**
3. **Working with Teaching Assistants**
4. **Remote education**

Quality First Teaching is referred to in the SEND Code of Practice as being the first step to responding to learners' needs. When considering Quality First Teaching, pedagogy does not exist without curriculum and vice versa - when pedagogy is disconnected from the curriculum and the subject, then learners might appear 'engaged' but may not actually be learning meaningfully. For our most vulnerable learners, careful curriculum choices are essential – a fine balance between ensuring that our learners have access to an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum as well as ensuring that our learners have sufficient opportunities to build key foundational skills to ensure wider access to a broader curriculum, including opportunities for over-learning and repetition. These curriculum choices have to be made against a clear model of progression in each of the disciplines.

In this section we will explore inclusive pedagogies to support our high-quality teaching of learners with SEND. When considering pedagogy – how we teach – it is essential to remember as the backdrop to any pedagogy, the curriculum – what we teach. The way we teach supports our learners' experience of the curriculum and how they access this and consequently make progress. Conversely, careful curriculum choices ensure that our efforts are focused on the key foundational skills in any given subject. This will have the biggest impact on our learner's ability to progress.

Later in this Handbook, we look at the graduated approach in more detail. The graduated approach (assess – plan – do – review) is central to all our teaching practices. It is crucial that it starts with 'assess'. When we are assessing our learners formatively, we are getting to know them as learners and how we can adjust our practice so that we can break down barriers to learning that they might be experiencing.

Central to teaching is also how the 'assess – plan – do – review' cycle informs curriculum choices. It is essential that we know our learners' starting points (through our assessments) and have a clear idea of the endpoint to our journey - the endpoint being considered might be a long-term outcome, at the end of a lesson sequence, or at the end of a lesson. By understanding our learners' 'goal', our learner and our learners' starting points, we can plan 'the what' and 'the how' that are intrinsically linked to each other. Adjustments and adaptations will be made continually as we go on this journey in partnership with our learners and the role of continual formative assessment is central to this.

The framework of a well-designed and well-sequenced curriculum to support the effective delivery of Quality First Teaching is a whole-school responsibility.

Collaboration to achieve this is essential. Seeking advice from colleagues, such as subject leaders and heads of department, to understand the curriculum design and model of progression will support your decision-making in delivering and adapting your curriculum to effectively meet the needs of all learners and prepare them for their next stage, be this in education or for adulthood. The subject-specific guidance also gives insight into key curriculum considerations when planning inclusive lessons.

Quality Inclusive Pedagogy

Everybody learning!

When we use the phrase 'Quality First Teaching', we refer to key principles that underpin best practice. In this section, we will focus on the principle of **inclusive pedagogy**, addressing the values, attitudes and approaches that ensure mainstream classrooms are geared towards supporting those who find learning difficult.

Inclusive pedagogy is an approach to whole-class teaching that is accessible to **all learners**. It should enable learners to keep up, feel included, progress and be successful. This approach should foster an open-ended view of each individual's potential to learn and recognises the difference between individuals as a given and a strength. It challenges deterministic approaches that exclude certain learners from a positive classroom experience because of adverse labelling by ability, or by diagnosis.

As teachers we can feel disempowered by the expectation to teach learners with such a variety of needs.

However, we do not need to become experts in every SEND diagnosis to succeed. We do need to seek to know each learner, to find out how they learn best, and then seek to create classroom strategies that maximise their learning. By thinking about quality in this way, mainstream classrooms can become environments where teachers can plan, teach and assess for **all** their learners with equal confidence.

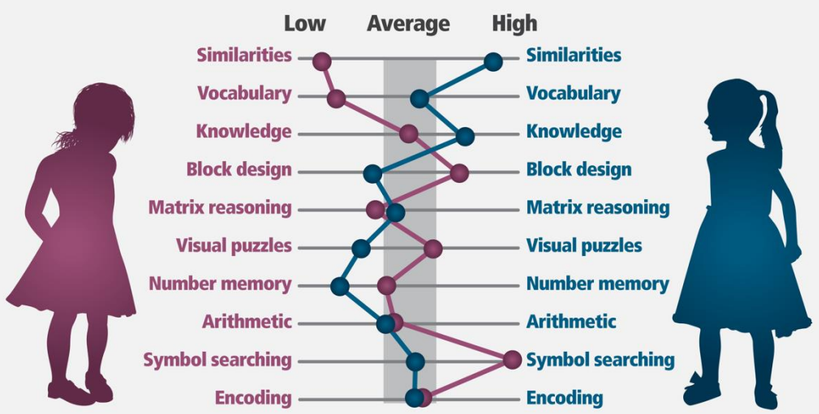
The notion of inclusive pedagogy is not a call for a return to a model of whole-class teaching where equality is notionally addressed by providing identical experiences for all. Instead, it advocates an approach whereby the teacher provides a range of options which are available to everybody. Human diversity is seen within the model of inclusive pedagogy as a strength, rather than a problem, as children work together, sharing ideas and learning from their interactions with each other. The inclusive pedagogical approach fosters an open-ended view of each child's potential to learn.[1]

Why Inclusive Pedagogy is prerequisite for Quality First Teaching

We are moving away from an approach that views learners with SEND as outliers that always need to be catered for and taught differently. Separating learners with SEND out for numerous interventions or over-relying on teaching assistants to deliver teaching to a group of learners with identified SEND, can in fact be detrimental. Evidence tells us the most important contribution to improved outcomes for learners with SEND is quality teaching.[2]

We are also seeing an increase in the co-occurrence of needs exhibited by children and young people. Research tells us there are increasing numbers of learners in mainstream who demonstrate complex SEND profiles due to a number of factors (e.g., better neonatal care and more complex conditions affecting neurodevelopment).[3] More and more learners have what might have been described as spiky or jagged learning profiles.

The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) reflects this shift too. It no longer looks at SEND as a department or additional provision within the school, but reviews teaching of learners with identified SEND within each subject area and every classroom. It requires evidence of SEND teaching that permeates curriculum delivery, 'built in' not bolted on.



There is a new generation of children with complex learning needs, who do not fit neatly into an understandable category.[4]

Professor Barry Carpenter

What do we need to change?

We need to focus on academic engagement for learners with SEND to achieve genuine inclusion and strengthen learner achievement. Learners with SEND need access to the best teachers and the strongest teaching. Currently, many mainstream school processes focus on the social and emotional aspects of inclusivity rather than zooming in on the teaching and learning process.

Inclusive pedagogy can improve this. Responsibility for effective teaching and assessment of learners with SEND should not be the isolated preserve of the SENCO. Teachers are the key to progress. Teachers are generally supportive of the principles of inclusion, yet anxious about working with an increasingly diverse range of learners. Adopting an inclusive pedagogy offers a way of thinking about effective whole class teaching and meeting the needs of individual learners. Research has helped highlight the reliance on planning and teaching for the majority of learners who learn typically, and then doing something slightly different for the outliers: those at the top or bottom of the distribution curve (who are sometimes described as lower or higher attainers). Inclusive pedagogy highlights the flaws in this teaching, that default thinking of planning for most of the class and then doing something additional or different for some. 'Most' and 'some' thinking risks limiting our belief in what young people can achieve. Inclusive pedagogies encourage us to build in, not bolt on.

Inclusive teaching and learning approaches

Let's move away from stereotyping and fixed-ability thinking about what learners with SEND can achieve. Where differentiated lesson planning leads to learners recognising, they are forever stuck on the red table for low prior attainers, or consistently given the bronze activities for in-class completion never the gold, (or the 'mild' never the 'spicy' or the 'hot') then we limit expectations of what these learners can achieve. Consideration of learners with SEND who find learning tricky must be core to planning and teaching, not peripheral.

It is tempting to talk about the challenge of SEND as a specific and distinct issue. Yet, far from creating new programmes, the evidence tells us that teachers should instead prioritise familiar but powerful strategies, like scaffolding and explicit instruction, to support their pupils with SEND. This means understanding the needs of individual pupils and weaving specific approaches into every-day, high-quality classroom teaching – being inclusive by design not as an after-thought.[5]

1. Ban the average

Banning the idea of 'average' is an important step towards adopting a more inclusive approach to teaching. Instead of quickly categorising learners with SEND as 'below average', the successfully inclusive teacher realises the notion of an average, above average or below average learner **is not helpful**. The inclusive teacher challenges that mindset that seeks to predetermine the capacity of each learner, replacing it instead with a **curiosity** about what the learner can achieve.

As teachers we should approach teaching with a sense of openness, looking to be surprised by our learners and what they can achieve. We cannot develop quality teaching unless (and until) we challenge this oversimplification.

2. Think about transforming learners' lives as the job

Reframe how you approach your role as teacher. It is one that transforms lives, rather than simply 'topping up' knowledge. Plan and teach based on the belief that futures are not predetermined by innate ability, and that every learner can make progress given the opportunity. Work with learners as co-agents in learning. Commit to nurturing trust between you as the teacher and your learners.

'Success for all …depends in large part on a belief that children learn to high levels'. [6]

3. Difficulties in pupil learning are a professional challenge

As teachers we can be influential change agents in transforming schools if we regularly reflect on our pedagogical practices. Look for improvements that will help all learners reach their full potential. Barriers to learning simply present an opportunity to develop new ways of working, rather than a 'problem with the learner'. A complex learner presents a professional opportunity to learn!

4. Learners are pilots, not passengers

A study of 4000 fighter pilots to identify the 'average size' for cockpit design discovered that on a ten-point criteria, not a single one was the same on every dimension. These 'jagged profiles' are applicable to learners in the classroom. Difficulty with maths does not mean a struggle in literacy; poor working memory might not mean poor articulation. When you recognise these spikey or jagged profiles, there is less risk of labelling and a greater opportunity to identify learner potential.

5. Less deficit labelling, more ability profiling

Good teaching requires adopting an individual, holistic view of each learner. Be wary of labelling learners with their diagnosis or behaviour trait, or by assumptions of what they cannot do, particularly learners with SEND. Such labels reinforce stereotypes and lower expectations of what they can achieve. Instead of describing learners with autism as having difficulties making friends, or dyslexic learners as reluctant writers, profile learners by what they **can achieve** and how they **can learn**.

Catch yourself quietly if you label or limit a learner by the language you use, but positively reinforce yourself and your colleagues when remarks are made about what a learner can do (rather than what they cannot).

6. Ask better questions (be a detective in classroom)

Adopt an inquiry mind-set. This is about asking investigative questions around the learner. What do I know about how this particular child or young person learns? What are their strengths in maths and how do they differ in geography? What are successful hooks to get them interested? What motivates them to learn? What aspects of their learning behaviours need to be developed? This helps break the cycle of starting with questions about what we know about a learner's diagnosis or condition.

7. Catch your learners doing the right thing

Notice a learner's strengths and build on these, however small.

8. Use co-operative learning

Adopt an approach to classroom management where learners can learn together in small heterogeneous teams. Learners encouraging each other to succeed is inclusive and highly motivational.

9. Design lessons that target the outliers

Rather than designing lessons with the majority of the class in mind (back to the difficulty with average), make your prime concern those learners who are most likely to struggle with what you are teaching. Focus first on **what** you want to teach (expectations) and then **who** to teach. Use knowledge of your learners' profiles to support planning.

'Adapt the mainstream to suit all pupils'.[7]

10. Use short-cycle formative assessment…

be a detective every day

Constantly adapt your teaching. Assessment for learning feeds you with the information needed to make small but meaningful adaptations to teaching. Teaching should be contingent on responses from learners. Use formative assessment to gather more evidence about what individual learners can do and how you can build on this.

The graduated approach is often applied in schools as a long cycle of formative assessment, but in fact it is used effectively to support inclusion as a micro-teaching tool to inform and adapt teaching in response to individual learners.

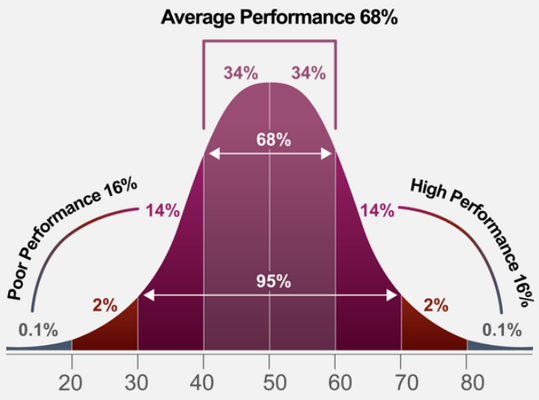
For further guidance please refer to Section 5, which contains subject specific guidance for the following subjects:

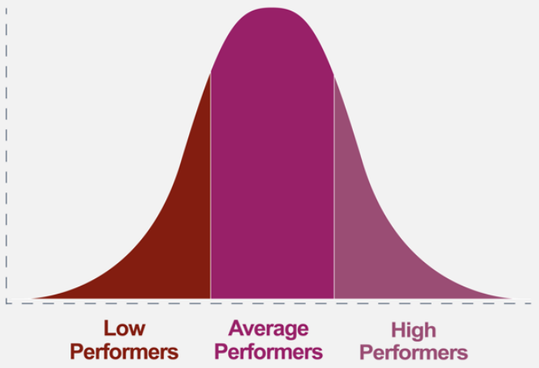
- **Maths**
  - **Primary Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **English**
  - **Phonics Guidance**
  - **Primary Reading Guidance**
  - **Primary Writing Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **Drama**
  - **Primary Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **Science**
  - **Primary Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **Music**
  - **Primary Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **Art and Design**
  - **Primary Guidance**
  - **Secondary Guidance**
- **Physical Education**
- **Computing**
- **Modern Foreign Languages**

Unconscious and conscious barriers

There are mindsets that we might need to change in order to establish more inclusive daily practices.

Avoid bell-curve thinking





The preoccupation with standardised assessments, league tables, and competition, reinforces school structures which are underpinned by 'bell-curve thinking' and notions of fixed ability.[8]

Who do we have in mind when we plan?

Schools often make the mistake of teaching to the perceived majority in each classroom, to the average learner whose attainment sits in the middle of the group, and then doing something different for those at either end of the bell curve. This has led to many learners being excluded from achieving their potential. The notion of typical or average learners is systemic. For many years, schools have used lesson plan templates that contain two very unhelpful boxes - one headed with SEND or Lower Prior Attainer, and the other with Gifted and Talented or High Prior Attainer. A good way to avoid this unhelpful thinking is to build the lesson around the outliers.

This system contributes to the legitimisation of ability grouping and the provision of additional support, which serves to reinforce marginalisation of learners with learning difficulties. [9]

The language we use defines us

When teachers use language such as, 'I have two dyslexics and three with autism in my class', it depersonalises these learners and suggests the teacher has limited expectations of them. It also indicates they have fallen into the trap of believing that every learner with these conditions is inherently identical. How we describe learners shapes our attitudes towards them. We vary our teaching and respond differently towards learners viewed as 'bright', 'average' or 'less able'. Fixed-ability thinking of this kind reduces the sense of our own power to promote learning and development using our expertise and professional judgement. Instead, seek to understand how each learner is different. Get to know their individual strengths, motivations, difficulties, barriers, and how they learn, especially for learners with SEND. This is an imperative quality skill that we must continually develop as teachers.

Grow teacher confidence

We develop valuable expertise about the learners we teach. Whether a new or experienced teacher, we can often feel overwhelmed by the challenge of teaching learners with SEND who struggle to learn. New teachers believe they lack knowledge of SEND, leaving teachers feeling deskilled.[10] Adopting an inclusive pedagogy can reaffirm our professionalism by recognising the development of expert knowledge in the context of our current classroom and knowledge of the learner. Working with learners, families and professionals to learn more and problem solve together provides us with deep expertise that is not dependent upon deep diagnostic knowledge.

Inclusive teachers do not assume that knowing more about a condition will automatically shape how we teach. We use assessment for learning strategies to build ever stronger evidence of how children and young people in our classrooms learn. The knowledge we value is that which increases our understanding of what works for a learner and supports us to adapt our teaching to secure better outcomes. SENCOs offer valuable support with this, but the teacher remains the member of staff most knowledgeable about the learner's development in lessons - pedagogic expertise that has great value and should be shared with other teachers, professionals and the family.

A starting point for change

The recommendations in this section are a non-exhaustive guide for thinking differently about how we support learners with SEND to maximise their potential. By strengthening teacher confidence to believe we can teach everyone and developing a mindset to see difference as a strength possessed by all learners, real change can be enacted.

Inclusive pedagogy supports us to draw upon context-independent knowledge, as well as to develop an inclusive mindset that celebrates differences in what teachers do through their everyday pedagogy, to increase the learning and engagement of all children and young people.

The language we use with learners

The language and tone we use in life is always important, but never more so than when we are in front of children and young people. We model to them in powerful ways through the words we say (and often the words we leave unsaid). ‘Why have you not started your task yet?!’ spoken with exasperation can add shame and humiliation to a learner who may already have struggled to comprehend the instruction given for any variety of reasons. ‘What do you need to start you off?’ or ‘Let’s start this task together’, spoken gently and with a smile, allows a learner to indicate if they require some help to start.

When planning a lesson, we decide how each task will be scaffolded, how to break down the task again for the learner, offer additional resources, show a model of what the intended outcome might look like, or include an incentive. For a learner with SEND, it may be that their processing makes it hard to comprehend more than one step of an instruction at a time. It may be that a learner with SEMH needs finds it hard to concentrate and focus their thoughts on verbal instruction, whilst maintaining a hypervigilance on the rest of the class. There will always be the occasional learner who we know to be capable, who is finding it hard to start the task. If the task is well structured and interesting, then this should be rare, or can be tackled with the ‘teacher look’ and a positive redirection. So, for the learner with SEND who is not focused, the first responsibility lies with **the teacher** to amend the language and the tone to engage that child or young person in their learning.

A good skill to learn early on is to put the **information-giving words** we need the learner to understand at the start of our sentence. As teachers, we often rely on talking, and can use a significant number of words over the course of a lesson. For some learners this may help to increase their vocabulary, but for other learners we will need to emphasise keywords at the start. ‘This is a thought bubble’ [draw one]. ‘Write the words the man is thinking’, will focus learners more effectively than, ‘You’ve all watched the little film clip and we’ve talked about how the elderly man at the piano might be feeling. What I want you to do now, is to get your English books out, find a sharp pencil, draw a thought bubble and write what you think would be in his head’. You can still use the second set of instructions, but practise focusing the instruction into short, clear, uncluttered sentences to share with the class first.

Being careful of the language we choose to use is not the same as lowering our expectations of language, or only using simple language with learners. Expanding a learner’s vocabulary is a key part of raising their social capital as well as their learning. We need to consistently remember to structure new words with explanation, context and practice, similar to any new learning. For example, ‘I like the way you used the word brown to describe the dog. I like the word ‘scratchy’ too. My dog scratches himself like this, behind his ears. Can you do that? [laughing together]. Shall we say the brown, scratchy dog together? Here’s a funny picture of a scratchy dog’. Having access to wonderful words should not be something a learner has to reach a ‘level’ before having access to. ‘Gargantuan’ can be made just as available to the learner with dyslexia as ‘large’. ‘Words to get your mouth around’ can create fun and laughter in a classroom too, helping to embed learning.

Working with Teaching Assistants

The SEND Code of Practice makes clear that teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the learners in their class, including where learners access support from teaching assistants and specialist staff. A core component in lesson planning is determining how teaching assistants (TAs) can support the teaching and learning of all learners, including learners with SEND. This section is going to focus on two key areas: the building of effective partnerships and the deployment of TAs in lessons.

Building a partnership with TAs

Developing an effective partnership with TAs is a priority for all teachers.

TAs bring a variety of experiences to the role, both personally and professionally. TAs may have a subject specialism, or a previous career, hobby or interest that complements the teaching and learning in a subject or a specific unit of study. Professionally, some TAs have wide-ranging experiences working in schools, including supporting individual learners and/or classes across different year groups and/or subjects. These experiences lead to an acquired knowledge, e.g., teaching strategies and resource adaptations that can be drawn on to support an individual or a group of learners.

The importance of an effective partnership between teachers and TAs is well established; research has demonstrated that the impact of TA support is linked to the quality of the TA's deployment and preparation. The Education Endowment Foundation's Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants Guidance Report draws on the recent research, including findings from the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants programme, and provides practical, evidence-based guidance to help all schools make the best use of TAs.

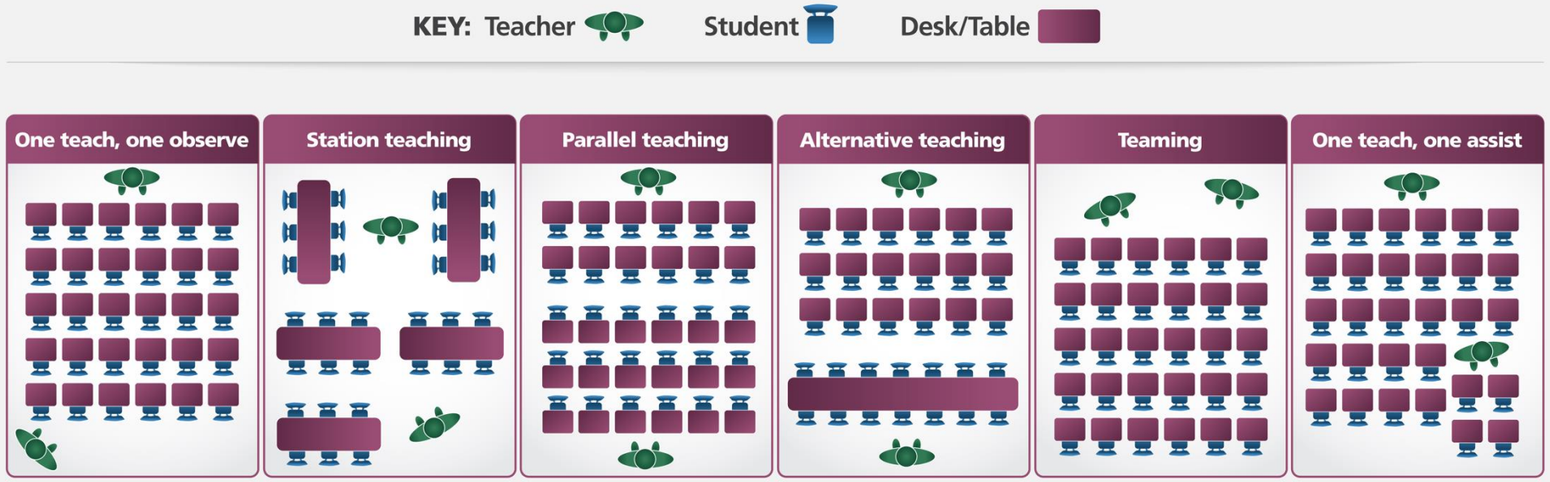
To build an effective partnership with TAs supporting their lessons, teachers should:

Develop a rapport with the TAs supporting lessons	• When receiving a timetable, teachers should ask their phase leader or head of department which lessons will have additional adult support and make a note of this. • Teachers need to begin to develop a working relationship with TAs supporting learners in their classes before the first lesson. It is important to take the time to introduce themselves to the TAs before the summer holidays, or if new to the school, on the first INSET day. • Teachers should organise a time to have an introductory conversation with the TA(s) they will be working with and find out if there is any support that the TA(s) need to support individual learners or certain subject specific lessons. • Teachers need to be mindful that most TAs are not on a salary like teachers, so their paid time is often only within school hours.
Initiate, and maintain, regular communication	• The teacher and the TA should decide together the best way to communicate. Regular communication will be needed over the course of the year – this could take place in a brief weekly meeting or emails may be the preferred mode of communication. • Teachers should ensure communication is not always teacher to TA. Encourage two-way conversations, where TAs can share questions, observations and concerns.
Share information in a timely manner	• Teachers need to provide TAs with information about key learners in the class, including but not limited to learning needs, recommended teaching strategies, behaviour approaches, and safeguarding concerns. It is important that any updates regarding learners are shared without delay. • Lesson plans, worked examples and schemes of work should always be shared in advance of lessons, with an opportunity for TAs to ask questions related to the content, teaching plans, scaffolding and success criteria.

Planning teaching and learning activities that support all learners

Guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation emphasises the importance of TAs adding value to the work of the teacher, not replacing them.[1] Quality First Teaching should be the first response in meeting the needs of all learners. When planning lessons, consider the strategic use of TAs to complement your teaching.

When planning TA deployment for learners with more complex needs, it is important not to over rely on a TA to support the learner. Excessive or unnecessary TA proximity can have inadvertent detrimental effects, including separation from classmates, unnecessary dependence, interference with peer interactions, insular relationships and the learner feeling stigmatised. Ineffective TA deployment can impede access to teacher engagement and high-quality instruction, and at times can provoke behaviour problems.



When planning TA support in lessons, teachers can consider implementing co-teaching approaches.[2]

The following approaches can be used within a lesson - a variety of these would be used across a series of lessons. When deploying the following approaches, it is important that teachers are clear on the responsibilities of each member of staff, particularly which adult will be teaching new content to learners and addressing misconceptions. These two responsibilities should always remain with the classroom teacher. This is crucial to effectively meeting the needs of all learners, as research has evidenced that increased TA support has a negative effect on an individual learner's progress.[3]

One teaches, one observes: One adult leads the lesson and the other gathers data on the learners. This could be an individual learner, a small group, or the whole class to better understand learning needs.

Station teaching*:* Learners are arranged in groups of six – two stations include facilitated instruction, with remaining stations focused on independent, partner or small group work. The two stations of learners receiving facilitated instruction are planned as part of a lesson sequence; these stations should be planned to meet the needs of individual learners in a lesson and should change throughout a series of lessons.

Parallel teaching*:* In this approach, all learners have double the opportunities to participate in class discussions, as the teacher and TA split the class into two groups. This approach can be used for part of a lesson; it is important that both groups have equal time with the teacher.

Alternative teaching*:* Sometimes, it can be beneficial for one adult to work with most of the class, while the other focusses attention on a small group. This approach can enable pre-teaching of new vocabulary to take place, provide time for misconceptions to be clarified with a small group of learners or for further support to learners who need extra time to understand previous teaching.

Teaming: The teacher and TA share leadership in the classroom; both are equally engaged in the instructional activities.

One teaches, one assists*:* The teacher leads the lesson while the TA supports individual learners quietly. The teacher provides guidance to the TA on which learners to support and the levels of scaffolding needed.

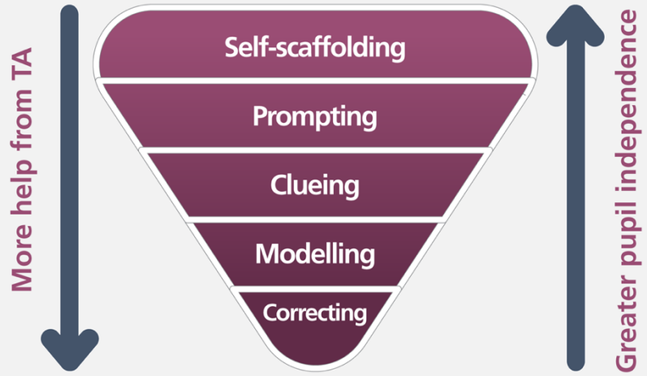
For TAs to effectively support teaching and learning in line with planned outcomes, it is essential that teachers provide specific guidance to TAs, including the lesson plan, names of learners to support, teaching strategies and success criteria, in advance of a lesson. The Education Endowment Foundation have adapted a Teacher-TA agreement template that can be used to communicate specific guidance to TAs.

There will be instances when a TA has a strong rapport with a learner in your class. This can be for a variety of reasons, such as the TA having worked with the learner in a previous year group, or through an increased time with the learner in 1:1 or small group interventions. As teachers, it is important we value the TA's knowledge of the learner in order to provide high-quality provision in the classroom setting. We need to take the time to discuss the learner with the TA, including any interventions the TA is leading on, to gain a better insight into how the learner is progressing academically or socially, and the learner's confidence in the subject we are teaching. To maximise the impact of any intervention, the learning that happens in the intervention needs to be generalised into the teaching of the class – this is true for both academic and social-emotional interventions.

An important consideration, particularly in primary and special schools, is the planning and organisation of a TA's timetable. Teachers need to plan for key points of both individual lessons and the school day, where learners need additional support (e.g., transition times). When overseeing a TA's timetable, it is important that the teacher and the TA talk through the timetable together, with the teacher highlighting both the key times and responsibilities at these times, with their TA. The class teacher and TA should also discuss and formally timetable when key interventions can take place for individuals or groups of learners within the class.

Scaffolding appropriate support for learners

When planning lessons, teachers should always provide guidance to TAs on how to support individual learners in lessons. TA support needs to scaffold a pupil's learning and encourage independence. The Scaffolding Framework for Teaching Assistant-Pupil Interactions[4] adapted by the Education Endowment Foundation as illustrated in the image below, is useful for both teachers and TAs; it is particularly beneficial when learners are answering questions independently, both during whole class teaching and whilst completing independent tasks. Teachers should model the use of the scaffolding framework to TAs in both circumstances.



In most situations, teachers should plan for the TA to first observe the learner, allowing the learner time to self-scaffold as they initiate and begin to engage with a question or task. If, after a few minutes, the learner has not started the task, or has initiated the task but then begins to struggle, the TA should use the framework to provide an appropriate level of support to the learner. TA support should always start with prompting, only moving on to other strategies if the learner, after an appropriate wait time, continues to struggle to engage with the learning. Both prompting and clueing encourage a learner to complete a task independently. If a learner requires further support after prompting, and then clueing, the TA can model a task.

It is crucial that after the model, the learner has the opportunity to complete the modelled task independently, with the TA solely observing the learner. Correcting should be used rarely, as it does not encourage independent thinking from the learner.

A common misconception within the framework is the difference between prompting and clueing. Prompts are generic and can be applied across tasks, as they do not include words specifically about a task (for example, 'What do you need to do first?'). 'Clueing' provides more specific support to a learner. Clue words contain a key piece of information to help learners work out how to move forward. For example, when adding a two-digit and one-digit number using an open number line, the TA may clue a learner and say, 'Which number should you start with?' The use of the word 'number' makes this question a clue, as it prompts the learner and reminds them of the method to complete the task.

Reflecting on TA deployment

There is no 'one-size-fits-all approach' to TA deployment, and different strategies may work better in different subjects, or with different groups of learners. You should continually reflect on your deployment of TAs in lessons, and the impact the TA support has regarding the learning of all learners, including those with SEND. This reflection should include both feedback from the TA and the voice of the learner(s) a TA is supporting.

A framework that you can use to reflect on the deployment of TAs is a survey within the Teaching Assistant Deployment Review Guide.[5] The survey has a series of questions that you can use for reflection; these questions can also serve as a useful framework for further discussion with senior leaders to ensure that TAs are prepared for their role and deployed effectively in both individual classrooms, departments and wider school life.

Remote education

This section will outline the steps you can take to ensure all learners can successfully engage with work set for completion at home without generating unacceptable additional workload.

1. Understand where each learner is within the curriculum

Before sending any work home we need to refresh our understanding of our learners' specific learning needs and learning gaps. Having identified specific areas of the curriculum where individual learners may have learning gaps, we then ensure that learning materials and teaching attend to these. To preserve successful strategies an open and honest discussion should take place between yourself and the learner to agree how these can be transferred into a period of remote learning. Demonstrating to the learner and their family that you understand their specific strengths and the individual's learning profile at this early point will help to maintain the essential relationship throughout a period away from school.

2. Understand the home learning context

The second step is to understand the specific home learning context for your learners. It is important to understand the physical space available, the technology and internet access, and the availability of adult support. This conversation will be crucial and must be conducted in a respectful and non-judgemental manner. It is important to be mindful that some families may feel vulnerable sharing private details about their home set-up. There will be many legitimate reasons for this, and humility and openness will be crucial to maintaining the vital family relationship. You should never make assumptions about the home context of your learners and should seek to plan lessons and create materials that will work in as many home environments as possible.

3. Ensure lessons and materials are inclusive by design

Using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 you should ensure that you are setting work that builds in as much support as possible. For example – use well designed document templates so that visual information is presented in a clean manner that supports learners with visual processing needs. Using a style guide may help ensure all materials are well designed. Consider recording a voice memo track to accompany written work, as well as writing explanatory content, to support learners.

4. Recreate high quality teaching in a remote context

Whilst the location of learning may have changed, the role of well-planned teaching to facilitate learning remains. Remember the features of high-quality teaching, e.g., Rosenshine's principles:[1]

- Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning
- Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step
- Ask many questions and check the responses of all students*
- Provide models
- Guide student practice*
- Check for student understanding*
- Obtain a high success rate
- Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks
- Require and monitor independent practice*
- Engage students in weekly and monthly review.

Some of these elements are easier to secure. Those marked with an asterisk will require innovative thinking. By utilising the range of remote tools available, many of these features can be replicated. Remote direct contact time should focus on checking understanding and guiding learners through activities and tasks, and not be limited to providing exposition.

5. Be flexible

Some learners have additional needs which include regulation and/or sensory stimulation. A home learning environment where environmental barriers are reduced may play to the strengths of some learners. As such it may be appropriate to take a flexible approach to prescribing specific time spent on work and the precise timing required. Consider how you communicate with individual learners – emails or recorded messages may be preferable to real time. Be mindful that some learners may enjoy working from home more than in school; supporting a strong and positive transition back into school will be necessary in these instances.

6. Maintain the teacher/learner relationship

The relationship between yourself, the learner and their family is a crucial element in successful teaching and learning. In a remote learning context this relationship must be nurtured and developed over time. Agree and keep to a contact schedule, utilising the preferred contact method and times for the family. When engaging with learners and their families it can be easy to fall into a pattern of either discussing academic progress or emotional wellbeing. You need to ensure that both are covered authentically and not rushed - focusing on the learning that is currently taking place, setting up future activities and supporting learners to reflect on how well they are doing within themselves. In a secondary context it may be harder if you have multiple classes to maintain regular contact with all your learners. The form tutor might take on a lead role with some, but in this instance, you might consider providing home room style drop-in sessions to all learners.

7. Seek feedback and refine

As part of catch-up discussions with learners and families ask about what is working well and what could be improved. Have the confidence to ask learners for feedback and refine your approaches over time. You might feel vulnerable asking these questions but should embrace constructive feedback as an opportunity to develop and improve the effectiveness of your teaching.

8. Hold on to responsibility

You are responsible for the learning and progress of all your learners. You should work with the SENCO and draw on your TAs to support your learners. You will know your curriculum sequence and subject domain, and therefore should lead the teaching for every learner.

You can successfully deliver remote education by understanding each learner's unique home learning context and how this will impact on the curriculum. By working in partnership with learners and their families and taking a problem-solving approach, the disruption caused by time out of school can be minimised.

9. Build on the parent/carer and child relationship

Remote learning can be a source of additional stress for families, but it can also be an enjoyable experience. Some learners with SEND can benefit from the reduced internal conflict of operating in two environments each day, with different sets of rules. Be respectful of parental approaches to managing remote learning for their child.

Case Study: Remote Education

Jamal has missed significant periods of education due to a range of medical conditions. Access to high-quality online resources support effective home education with a rigorous, individualised approach.

When unable to attend school, Jamal receives a weekly timetable on a Thursday for the week ahead. This date was agreed with his family. It allows them to view the material and come back to the teacher with any questions before the start of the week. The weekly timetable aligns with the weekly plan for the class, Jamal's own individual educational targets, and next steps identified through the teacher's feedback and assessment.

Jamal is working below his peers due to high levels of missed schooling, so accesses the appropriate learning objectives in maths and reading. He starts his day on a personalised spelling programme, on an app. He then completes his maths using the White Rose online resources. The reading activity is also set at his reading level, using online book-banded resources and physical books that are sent home. He accesses Oak National Academy online lessons that line up with the class's topic area - writing is based on this, and links to the broader curriculum, which Jamal focusses on directly in the afternoon.

There is an identified time each afternoon when the teacher can communicate 'live' with Jamal to give any specific teaching input around any misconceptions, identified in work he has submitted and/or in response to queries. This is also an opportunity to share news from the class to ensure that Jamal remains connected. At key identified times in the week, other learners from the class join the call to support and promote continued social contact; appropriate social games are facilitated at these times. He finishes the afternoon with a physical activity programme. Jamal also has access to weekly speech and language and music therapy provision as outlined in his Education Health Care Plan. To complement this direct (virtual) provision, additional support is identified through the Oak National specialist offer.

The teacher receives completed work and gives daily feedback in addition to the identified time to speak 'live'. The weekly timetable is adjusted based on the daily marking of the work.

Section 4

Creating an inclusive environment

In this section, we will cover:

1. **Barriers to learning and reasonable adjustments**
    a. Classroom environment
    b. Teaching routines and practice
    c. Resource implications for learners with SEND
2. **Supporting learners with sensory needs**
3. **The language learners use**
4. **Transition**

Barriers to learning and reasonable adjustments

Barriers to learning can be effectively addressed by thinking carefully about a learner's experience from the moment they enter the classroom (and the school), through each stage of a lesson and through their transition to the end of the lesson and out of the room. Although there are individual differences between all our young people, some basic approaches will help everyone, including staff. Primarily we are trying to create a feeling of safety, a holding environment, a secure base from which to learn. This feeling of safety is just as vital in secondary schools as it is in primary schools, special schools, alternative and Early Years provisions. Safety is felt through the physical design of the room, the nurturing of positive relationships, the availability and accessibility of resources, and the structures and routines for learning.

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment can have a huge impact on the senses and nervous system, and therefore on learning and progress. Research into what have become known as 'Clever Classrooms' gives interesting guidance on three particular areas: 'naturalness' (light, temperature, air quality), appropriate levels of stimulation (complexity, colour), and opportunity for individualisation (ownership, flexibility).

This section considers good practice in creating a classroom environment that enables all children and young people to learn. By 'classroom environment' we are referring to both the physical environment – the chairs and tables, the displays, the layout of the room – as well as the emotional containment of the space.

Room layout

The layout of the room needs careful thought: how learners are grouped, accessibility to resources and parts of the room (such as coat and bag hangers), and visibility of whiteboard and displays. It may be appropriate to set up areas according to learner needs – for example, a quiet corner, a help station, or an individual working area. It can be illuminating to ask learners themselves for input on these things.

The surrounding area beyond the classroom should also be considered. For example, consider the likely noise from nearby communal areas or sports grounds outside; smells from the canteen; unknown adults passing by from a visitors' or deliveries entrance. All these can be unsettling and become barriers to learning unless acknowledged or managed appropriately. If you notice something is impacting a learner in your class, you should raise your concern with school leaders.

Barriers to learning and reasonable adjustments

Displays

It is important to achieve the appropriate level of stimulation in the classroom – a range of colours that is neither bland nor overwhelming and displays which are useful and not excessive. It should be clear to anyone entering the room what purpose the areas and displays serve. Have a colleague or learner do a walk around your classroom, highlighting anything that might be obstructive or unclear.

Displays can be empowering and practical if they are genuinely functional for reference and scaffolding. It can be both supportive to learners and a great help to you and support staff if things like key language, speaking frames, and writing scaffolds are strategically placed, without being overwhelming in number. In some contexts, it might be beneficial to display the timetable or daily routine. 'Working walls' can be valuable in any setting in a number of ways: a support to learners, a useful record for staff, and an insight for visitors. It can also be extremely helpful to allocate certain areas to certain types of work - for example, a creative writing wall, or an academic writing corner, where displays, resources and relevant materials are easily accessible.

An area dedicated to emotional wellbeing is equally valuable in early years, primary and secondary settings. All age groups can find it helpful to see visual representations of feelings, with corresponding vocabulary, to help them express how they are feeling. Make acknowledgement of feelings part of the lesson routine; this will help to address emotional barriers to learning at different stages and enable learners and the supporting adults to identify what scaffolding is needed to move forward.

Groupings

When considering groupings and positions in the room for each learner, consider what their individual needs may be in terms of feeling safe and comfortable. For example, if a young person has become hypervigilant through difficult life experience, they will struggle to feel safe if they have their back to a door or have a restricted view of the room. Others will feel comfortable if they are tucked away in a space that has a restricted view, which perhaps feels more private and separated. It is imperative to know learners well enough to make these decisions safely and avoid triggers. Such information about individuals can usefully be gathered from families, staff who have worked with them before, and the learner themselves.

Closely Observed Interactions

I am observing three five-year-old children playing with modelling dough. An adult is sitting with them and is allocated to a disabled child who is one of the three. Paula uses a wheelchair but is supported in a specially constructed chair at the table, so that she is at the right height. In addition to her physical impairment, Paula has epilepsy and must be monitored carefully as it is proving difficult to balance her medication.

Two of the children are interacting quite a bit, leaning into each other, pointing, talking about their models constructively and, by invitation, adjusting each other's models. They talk to the adult and the adult talks to them. Paula addresses the adult, and the adult addresses her. Not once in the 30 minutes do the two children interact with Paula, not once does Paula address either of them.

Later that afternoon, Paula's mother tells me she is thrilled that Paula is included in the class: her daughter is happy, has friends, loves going to the school.

Reflection: Paula needs to be carefully monitored by an adult. However: Does this mean the adult has to sit beside her all the time? Could the adult move away from the table and still monitor her? Has anyone noticed the dynamics around the table? Has anyone reflected on the potential impact? How will this play out as Paula grows up? If the adult was aware of the dynamics, could she actively promote interaction between the children?

Emotional impact: relationships and belonging

It is also helpful to consider the classroom space in terms of attachment patterns of young people. (For further information, please refer to *Attachment Theory*). For example, some young people avoid asking for help because it makes them feel exposed and vulnerable. It can be very helpful to make resources accessible through displays or allocated areas where it is possible for these learners to be directed through a general instruction to the class, so that they can access what they need discreetly, or through a peer.

Behaviour systems, rewards and sanctions are another area needing careful thought, particularly with regard to possible emotional responses. The key here is to try to avoid any possible triggering of shame, which can lead to challenging behaviour or to shutdown, which in turn can become a barrier to learning. Shame can be triggered by both praise and admonishment, particularly if publicly expressed. Reducing shame does not mean removing rewards and sanctions. Rules and expectations should be clearly communicated, displayed, regularly referred to and discussed with young people, so that they are understood and agreed (or at least accepted).

Paramount is the focus on positive attuned relationships, in which learners are less likely to feel shame when they are praised or admonished. If adults are predictable, empathic, kind and nurturing, learners will usually recover more quickly from feelings of shame. We cannot be perfect and will make mistakes! However, openly normalising our emotional responses will help young people do the same.

It is also important to keep in mind that school systems often implicitly assume that positive attention automatically leads to better behaviour, when for some learners positive attention is suspicious, and they have learnt not to trust it. These learners can be much more comfortable with negative feedback. It can help to point out pragmatically why a particular aspect of their work is good or praise a characteristic indirectly or collectively.

The classroom needs to be a calm, safe place where trust is built through positive relationships, aiming to give vulnerable learners a different experience of the world – where mistakes are a reparable and normal part of life, and their teachers and peers can be trusted to accept and help them. This will not happen easily for all learners, but we can aim for it.

A fundamental part of this is making sure all learners in a class know that they are thought about and that they belong. Apart from inclusive curriculum content and involving all learners in lessons as much as possible, we can demonstrate this through how their work or pictures are displayed, or how personal interests or heritage are represented - when they are comfortable with this. For older learners or those uneasy about their photo on the wall, simply displaying everyone's name can be a powerful message of inclusion.

***Case Study: Olivia joined the school in Year 2 having been taken into long-term care due to significant neglect**. She joined a class where there were established friendship groups and a number of children who themselves struggled with change and found it difficult to welcome and accept a new child into the class. Olivia was keen to please and be accepted. Due to the significant neglect, she had experienced she had missed key developmental milestones and had a disorganised attachment style. She was keen to engage in play with the other children but was not confident and did not have the social skills to initiate play appropriately. Her early childhood experiences meant that she was happy to engage in any behaviours that would result in any attention and would therefore engage in activities that other children would laugh at. One child in the class, themselves also vulnerable linked to recent experiences of witnessing domestic abuse, quickly identified this, and regularly encouraged Olivia to engage in behaviours that others would laugh at and this child would create games for the whole class around this. Olivia became the target of daily 'playground games' that most of the class engaged in where Olivia was called names, singled out and that reinforced her negative sense of self. The child leading the bullying behaviours appeared to enjoy the feelings of control and to take pleasure from seeing Olivia upset.*

This developing situation was quickly identified by support staff in the playground. However, Olivia did not recognise immediately that she was being targeted and would seek out these games since it resulted in the attention she was craving. A meeting was called involving Olivia's social worker, foster carer, class teacher, key worker (identified member of support staff), designated teacher for LAC (SENCO) and link deputy headteacher. A multi-faceted plan was put in place:

- *Therapeutic support for Olivia to support her to develop a more positive sense of self*
- *Meeting organised with the child displaying bullying behaviour, their parent/carer and their domestic abuse support worker – the child was accessing family therapy externally and this support was further extended to address some of the concerns raised by the situation*
- *Small group intervention with a focus on developing social and play skills (initiating and engaging in positive play) in place both for Olivia and for the child leading the bullying behaviours*
- *Increased supervision in the playground so that identified key workers could facilitate structured positive play opportunities for Olivia and the children in the class during playtime*
- *Whole-class delivery of PSHEE exploring and teaching about positive, healthy friendships*
- *Initially daily monitoring check-ins, to support Olivia in identifying when inappropriate behaviour towards her was taking place*
- *Identified buddy for Olivia including key activities that they would engage in together, e.g., buddy reading in reception, to increase Olivia's experience of positive relationships and positive attention*

A holistic approach involving support for Olivia, the child(ren) engaged in the bullying behaviours and the whole class resulted in positive long-term outcomes. The bullying behaviours ceased quickly due to the targeted direct intervention in the playground. However, more importantly, in the long term all children involved accessed appropriate support and when the direct support in the playground was taken away, the children had all generalised positive play skills and social interaction skills. There have been no further incidents of bullying in this class to date.

Teaching routines and practice

Classroom routines and consistent pedagogical practice are integral to creating the optimum conditions and environment for learning. The beginning of term will be a crucial time to ensure rules and routines are clear and embedded into lesson time, but all transitions, including endings, are important times to ensure learners know what is happening and what is expected of them, so that the routine is as predictable as possible. This is fundamental for many learners with SEND, or attachment difficulties, or who have suffered trauma.

As teachers, we might consider a specific routine for each lesson, day or week to create further predictability, according to learners' needs. Primary settings may be more likely to do this, but it is equally helpful in secondary settings. For example, English lessons may start with reading together on Mondays, vocabulary work on Wednesdays, and story-writing on Friday; in science there might always be a practical activity on Fridays, and so on. Equally within lessons, routines such as starter, main task, then review are as important for emotional regulation as for cognitive scaffolding. Some learners may also benefit from a reduced number of different activity types to avoid anxiety. For example, two or three types of lesson starter or review could be regularly rotated.

Changes to routine are sometimes inevitable but recognising which learners will interpret this change as a disruption will help to reduce heightened reactions. An 'Unexpected' card can be useful, particularly towards end of term, or after a fire drill, for example. Learners who find change to routines difficult can rehearse some planned strategies for 'Unexpected' moments.

It can be helpful to consider our use of the room and any TAs who we work with; where to stand on learners' entry, or when giving instructions. It might include how to move around the room to support learners during lessons. A calm, positive voice and clear, non-threatening body language are vital in creating the nurturing, attuned relationships that are key to learning. Non-verbal signals might be established for regular instructions such as becoming quiet before listening or packing up at the end of a lesson. Many young people (and adults) are sensitive to noise and loud voices, so specific guidance about an appropriate volume of noise during different types of tasks can be helpful, as can varying the noise levels during a lesson - for example, planning in some quiet time to read, to think before discussion, or to reflect after a group task.

It is helpful to create predictability in the presentation of stimuli and reference material too. For example, there might be an area of the board or screen where key language is always displayed, particular colours associated with instructions, prompts and targets, or a specific way to organise different types of information.

Although individual teachers can make a difference in these areas, even more powerful is when there is a consistent approach across the school. For example, when effective strategies and approaches are shared, and therefore a learner can embed these in their daily learning.

Resource implications for learners with SEND

As with the layout of the classroom, both design and organisation of resources needs careful thought. Resources that are accessible, both in their position and in their comprehensibility, can empower learners to develop metacognition and autonomy. Minimising unnecessary workload and maximising time efficiency is also at the forefront of resourcing! Understanding learners' needs in different types of tasks, and then collaborating to design effective resources, will help everyone. It is always better to observe and discuss learners' needs with colleagues before expending time and energy in resources that are either already available or cannot be used again.

Reflecting on the curriculum - and across the curriculum - often highlights the similarities between tasks and types of thinking and can lead to useful whole-school approaches to resourcing, such as for literacy scaffolds or vocabulary learning. Where there is a familiar layout, format, or colour scheme across the school for scaffolds, learners are much more likely to feel contained, and to make links and embed the learning strategies we are teaching them. When creating or assembling resources for learners with very specific needs, it may be helpful to include their former teacher, family and the learner themselves.

As mentioned with regard to areas for learning and classroom displays, it can be helpful to share resources with other colleagues and with learners to test them out and make sure they are easy to follow. Similarly, it is helpful to test out organisation and labelling of resources on colleagues and learners to reflect on where they are best placed.

Regarding stationery, pens and so on, it can, again, be useful to consider possible emotional responses – for example, some learners might find it difficult to share, or might feel anxious about different items being mixed together. Others will benefit from being involved in ordering and tidying resources, as a way to emotionally regulate. Most learners (and teachers!) will feel more regulated if resources are organised and clearly labelled, and this will generally reduce anxiety, which is one of the most common barriers to learning.

Supporting learners with sensory needs

Sensory Systems

There are eight senses that we consider when thinking about sensory processing difficulties, but everyone responds to sensory information differently. There are five sensory systems that are more well-known:

1. **Touch/tactile** refers to light touch, such as a tickle, or a deep touch, such as a firm squeeze. Generally, light touch is more alerting and deep touch is more calming, but this is not the case in all circumstances or situations.
2. **Taste/gustation** refers to what we taste. We all have tastes that we like, and others we do not. Some people are more sensitive to taste, finding some stronger and/or others which are not strong enough to notice. Both can influence the experience of eating.
3. **Sight/vision** refers to the things that we see around us, including lights, colours and text. Some people can be overwhelmed when they have too much to look at, others may not notice visuals around them.
4. **Smell/olfaction** refers to what we smell. For some of us, some smells can be too strong, or not strong enough to notice.
5. **Hearing/auditory** refers to what we hear. We have all noticed some learners who cover their ears at the presence of sound – for some, sounds can be incredibly overwhelming.

Three other sensory systems are less familiar:

1. **Interoception** are the feelings we experience inside our body such as being hungry, thirsty, hot or cold.
2. **Proprioception** is what makes us aware of position and movement of the body, for example if your arm is behind your back you know it is there, not because you can see it but because you can feel it. The receptors are found in our skin, joints and muscles.
3. **Vestibular** is what tells us where our head is in space if we are upright or bent over. It is also what causes motion sickness. The receptors are located in our inner ear.

Sensory Processing

Sensory processing is the way that our bodies take in information through our senses, and how this information is organised in our central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) for us to be able to understand, react and interact appropriately with the world around us.

- **Sensory Modulation** is the ability to respond appropriately to sensory information and remain at an appropriate level of alertness for daily activities.
- **Self-regulation** is the ability to increase or decrease levels of alertness in response to different sensory information.

In learners with sensory processing needs, these predominantly smooth functioning pathways are interrupted due to learners being over-sensitive, under-sensitive or both to input from their senses. As a result, trouble managing this information affects the learner's behaviour and participation at school.

Winnie Dunn created a model to explain how this sensory processing could translate into observed behaviours.[1] The table on the next page gives a basic outline of how sensory processing affects a learner's level of alertness and what behaviours they may present with.

Supporting learners with sensory needs

Sensory processing profiles and possible associated behaviours...	Some strategies to try in the classroom...
Sensory Sensitive children and young people tend to be hyper-alert to sensory input but do not try to change their exposure actively. They may be: • Easily distracted by people walking around the classroom (staff and learners) • React badly to loud or sudden noises • Become easily upset by other people walking around/near or touching them	• Position the learner facing away from seeing people coming in and out of the class • Support the learner walking at the back of the line where possible • Reducing the amount of exposure to bright colours or lighting by positioning the learner further away from posters or lamps in class • Weighted vests or blankets can make the learner feel calm; this will often be identified in partnership with the Occupational Therapist • Fidget toys or stress balls can help calm learners • Sucking on a bottle or through a straw can promote deep breathing which is calming • Chewing on something tough/chewy can be calming • Ear defenders help learners who find auditory input difficult to process • Have a 'smelly' bag to provide a positive smell for those learners sensitive to smell • 'Calming' corner in the classroom (that can be accessed as and when needed)
Children and young people with **low registration** of sensory input may find it difficult to initiate tasks. They may: • Take longer to respond to requests or instructions • Be slower to start tasks given to them • Stay focused despite significant distractions	Everything needs to be bigger, bolder, brighter, louder for them to register, so: • Position the learner closer to bright colours and posters • Support the learner walking in the middle of the line where they can have input from their peers • Use sudden movement/sounds to attract the learner's attention • Active movement breaks such as jumping, pushing, pulling can help • Movin' sit cushions can give movement while remaining seated
Sensory Avoiding children and young people tend to be more sensitive to input too but tend to do something actively about it. They may: • Isolate themselves in class or avoid group work activities • Hear background noises and ask for explanation/ clarification thereon • Refuse to wear certain clothing/costumes	• Provide clear explanations on unexpected or background noises with reassurance • Allow for periods of lone working in class or in smaller groups • Position the learner at the back of the line • Gradual exposure can help a learner get used to the senses they are avoiding • Ear defenders help learners who find auditory input difficult to process • Have a 'smelly' bag to provide a positive smell for those learners sensitive to smell
Sensory Seeking children and young people tend to be under-sensitive to input and try to use their behaviour to actively increase their exposure. They may: • Stand too close to others in line • Walk with loud, heavy steps • Consistently touch people and objects • Chew on non-food items	• Provide frequent movement opportunities including helping to pass out resources and books • Movement breaks that are very specific such as 10 star jumps or 2 laps of the field to prevent over-stimulation • Provide exposure to bright colours and moving objects if appropriate in class • Position the learner in larger groups and the middle of walking lines • Movin' sit cushions allow for movement while seated • Theraband on the legs of chairs gives feedback while seated

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

Environment

A sensory smart classroom is where the classroom environment is set up to meet the needs of the learners. It is helpful to complete sensory observations in the classroom to understand how learners are experiencing the environment.

Things to consider when setting up a sensory smart classroom include:

- How bright the natural and artificial lighting is, can some of the lights be turned off for a more calming/soothing light?
- What is the sound like in each part of the room and how can you better control it, e.g., using a visual audio meter, such as the Too Noisy app or a light system to indicate the level of noise in the classroom?
- Playing music to the class can provide more consistent sounds and can be used to change the level of alertness.
- Having a 'calming' corner that is covered (low stimulation) that all can access can provide a safe space for learners who are feeling overwhelmed and may otherwise attempt to leave the room or display negative behaviour.
- Having resources readily available (such as fiddles/fidgets for learners who need more stimulation) to maintain attention.

Movement breaks are specific sensory activities that a whole class/ individual can engage in to help prompt regulation. It is recommended that learners participate in movement breaks frequently through their lessons to prompt better attention to tasks, and support sitting posture. If the correct activity is engaged in, it can help to regulate sensory needs. For some learners these breaks are vital for them to attend, but all learners will benefit from movement breaks. They could include star jumps, chair push-ups, deep breathing, touching thumbs to fingers. Visit GoNoodle.com for more ideas.

Resources

There are a range of resources and programmes that can support sensory input. Specific Sensory Programmes that could be helpful in a whole class setting or for individuals:

- **The ALERT Programme** supports the understanding of how an individual responds to different stimuli; and creates a language for learners to be able to express and explain their sensory needs. It uses the image of a car engine to describe three levels of arousal. Different sensory strategies are trialled and the learner notes 'how their engine feels' in response to each. At the end there is a clear list of resources that help the learner to regulate.
- **Zones of Regulation** is a systematic, cognitive behavioural approach used to teach learners to self-regulate their needs as well as emotions and impulses, in order to meet the demands of the environment and be successful socially.
- **Sensory Circuits** is a sensory motor skills programme that helps to set learners up for a school day by providing a range of sensory input.

The language learners use

It is important for us to take the time to reflect on the things that 'wind us up' the most. This is not a question to psychoanalyse ourselves, but simply to help us recognise our Achilles' heel. We can guarantee that a learner in our class with social emotional and mental health needs will intuitively hone in on this trait.

As Dreikurs[2] established, the behaviours of children and young people have an impact on the adults around them. Revenge-seeking behaviour can cause disgust or anger in those witnessing this; for example, withdrawal of a learner can result in frustration. Having the knowledge that these are common emotional reactions can enable us to find strategies to overcome our natural feelings, or at least be prepared for them. But, however skilled, trained and strong we are feeling, everyone has a weak spot, where the arrow can pierce the armour. For many of us in schools, it is the things learners say to provoke a reaction that really hits the spot.

Often, we can respond to and manage the thrown chair, the pinched or punched arm, or the torn page, but the language learners use in anger and frustration can be hard to defend against. Swearing, blaspheming, threatening and insulting language can all appear personal and hurtful. Homophobic and racist language also have the added dimension of being against the law. How can we respond to the communicative function of bad language when we know that the words being used are unacceptable in society? How do we protect other learners from the aggression in these words?

Bad language is communicating a need in the same way as a scream, or a book thrown across a table. The meaning is rarely the directive expressed in the words. Logically you know that the learner throws the book for other reasons; because they are frustrated, do not understand the task, are fearful they cannot do their best, are worried others are 'better', or perhaps have been upset by another learner's words or actions. The same thought process needs to be applied to bad language. Not easy, but possible.

Strategies to consider when responding to a heightened learner:

- *Present an external calm - if you don't feel it inside, you may need to just perform as calm.*
- *Be mindful not to be drawn into the situation as a willing participant in the drama that is being played out. Stop and reflect before responding – consider the outcome you want (de-escalation) and which approach is most likely to achieve this. Remember there will be time to reflect on the behaviour once everyone is regulated.*
- *Try to avoid emitting the emotional heat that the learner's actions are seeking. Make sure that you acknowledge what has been said, and in a non-judgemental way make it clear that you do not condone this type of language. You might say 'I have heard what you said. I understand that you are feeling upset. However, it is important we express our frustrations respectfully and appropriately'.*
- *De-escalate the behaviour of using bad language in the same way you would with other anti-social behaviours: try distracting, refocusing, engaging, or showing interest in something the learner is interested in, for example, 'I found a picture today of an amazing new dinosaur that scientists found, I'll print it off for you at breaktime.'*
- *Offer take-up time in an age-appropriate way, e.g. 'I can hear that you are letting us know you are not happy, let's go and sit in the corridor with the timer', or 'I understand that you are upset. Shall we take five minutes and come back together to work it through?'*
- *Try to redirect the learner, for example, 'Use your words to help me understand how to help you' (this could result in more expletives, but worth a try!), or 'I would like to help. Tell me how I can do that.'*

If these strategies do not work, ensure the impact of the language on other learners is reduced. This may mean moving the learner from the class, but it is important that the learner does not begin to seek removal by using bad language. Work with the learner to find a safe place within the class, too, where there could be some table tasks, or use some sensory materials to support calming. In a secondary school context, work with the learner to identify a safe space within the school where the learner will be able to access the support that they will need to be able to regulate before reflecting and repairing.

When the learner is not heightened, *work with them to find alternatives to upsetting language, like a code that you will both know still expresses the learner's anger but is not offensive to others. It also important to teach new vocabulary and the social code, ensuring systematic rehearsal and praise when the learner and other learners in the class achieve.*

The language learners use

It is important not to forget the other learners who are witness to the language and can be affected both by the learner's actions and the adult's reactions. Choose your moment and plan for it – reassure the learners that they know what language is acceptable and appropriate. In a secondary school context, together with the learner, reflect on their support network and rehearse how to use this network in providing support, for example, who might be able to help them notice their own triggers. Remind the learner about calming strategies that have been effective in the past, with examples, as this may give a memory to interrupt the next time the learner is emotionally heightened. In a primary school context, without the learner in the class, perhaps let them know that this bad language is a way in which this learner is asking for help and that the adults in the school will all support the learner to learn better ways to express themselves. Remind them they are all part of the support network. If it is appropriate to the learner's self-esteem (i.e., how does this learner respond to praise?), then you could encourage others to help notice positive language and nominate the learner for class rewards.

It may be appropriate to put proportionate sanctions in place. Racist and homophobic language will need to be recorded in line with school policy. However, for the learner who is constantly seeking the safety of adults, changing behaviours is the prime goal, rather than shaming or entrenching offensive language to gain adult attention. Spotting the positive language and praising that specifically (with lots of warmth) can help to refocus the child or young person over time.

Transition

The importance of successful transitions

Transitions in education, for most learners, coincide with major developmental changes. For some learners the timing is out of kilter, an event they are not quite ready for, perhaps leaving them feeling propelled into a system they find difficult to adapt to.

By adopting a more unified approach to transitions across educational settings we can sustain continuity of learners' experiences over time. This will significantly improve educational achievement and social and emotional development.[1]

Transition: Entry to Reception

Transitions from early childhood and education settings to reception class mark a very significant phase in the lives of young children. The experience of a child's transition can be critically important in terms of their future learning, education and life chances. This is more so the case for children with a special educational need and or disability, who live in families characterised by complexity, or who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation. Teachers can help to prepare their learners to be ready for a successful transition into reception by being proactive in their teaching and providing lots of opportunities for pupils to rehearse their learning.

Experiences of transition between educational levels can be a critical factor for future school success, while negative experiences can produce lasting difficulties leading to poorer educational performance.[2] Furthermore, it is well documented that paying particular attention to individual and meaningful transitions has a significant effect on the learner's ability to manage change.

Promoting the participation of early childhood, education and care practitioners, teachers and families in the transition process, and the exchanges they have, are considered to be key factors in ensuring successful transitions.[3] For further information and resources, see: A good start for all: sustaining transitions across the early years.

Case Study

A parent's view on the transition to Reception

Sammy is an adopted child who was removed at birth. She is summer-born and was born prematurely. She presents as very confident and sociable. When she is anxious, however, she busies herself so as to distract herself from the concern that she has. This can result in quite dysregulated behaviours that affect her attention and concentration. She learnt at an early age to rely on herself and does not like asking for help.

As she transitioned into primary school, the concern was that she would be anxious and would therefore find it hard to settle and concentrate. This might also be heightened through her refusal to accept help. It was recognised that change and the unknown adults would be the source of stress. ***Pre-visits to the school*** *were therefore arranged for Sammy to familiarise herself with the environment and get to know the members of staff better. This was focused very much on building a trusting relationship.* ***A transition book*** *was created that could be read with Sammy over the summer period.* ***Opportunities to feed back to her parents,*** *initially on a weekly basis and then fortnightly, were set up to support the transition. It was agreed that Sammy would* ***bring one transition object from home into school****.*

By the time Sammy started in reception, she had an established relationship with two members of staff. Her parent had also been able to explicitly model on the visits a positive relationship with and trust in the school staff. Within two weeks, Sammy was confident to ask for help and is now actively seeking it out if needed.

Transition: Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Case Study

A day in the life of a Year 6 learner

Year 6s enter the school each morning in a highly familiar setting. Many Year 6s have been attending the school for multiple years and they are familiar with the layout, the people, the sounds, the routines, the behaviour expectations, etc.

Year 6 learners will transition around the school together as a class – their teacher will bring them to the lunch hall, and when they finish eating will have an extended play time with peers (lunch and play are usually 60 minutes in total). In Year 6 learners also benefit from a morning play break – between their first two subjects they will have a 15-minute break to play.

Most lessons are taught in the same classroom, and learners have access to their form teacher throughout the school day. Classrooms will have visual timetables outlining the day that teachers will reference, and learners can refer back to at different points. Whilst Year 6 learners may have different teachers for specialist subjects, it is likely that they have had these teachers for multiple years, as primary schools will usually have one PE teacher and one music teacher who teach across all key stages. This consistency of staff, including form teachers delivering lessons across multiple subjects, enables teachers to gather a holistic understanding of each learner. This facilitates personalised learning targets, scaffolding, and a flexible approach to meet individual needs across the school day.

Case Study

A day in the life of a Year 7 learner

As the Year 7s arrive through the school gates with 1200 other learners, the first thing they must do is find their way to their tutor room for the start of the school day. Learners are checking planners and timetables to make sure they have the right equipment and books for the day. With 17 different subjects, learners have a two-week timetable with their lessons varying each day. During registration learners are checking the app on their phones to tick off completed homework and view how many positives they have received from teachers. The start of the day is important for Year 7s as they prepare for the school day, receive notices and attend a weekly assembly. On the bell the Year 7s then make their own way across the school to their individual classes.

Break and lunchtimes are busy around school. Learners may have been in different classes to some of their friends, and they arrange meeting points to catch up over break and lunch.

Year 7s have over 15 different subject specialist teachers. Some teachers they will see more frequently than others and it takes a longer time to build relationships and get to know all their teachers than it may have at primary school. When Year 7 learners first arrive at their lesson, they are given exercise books they are responsible for which they must remember to take home and bring back to each lesson.

The case studies highlight the differences in a school day between Year 6 and Year 7. Primary and secondary schools need to work together to facilitate successful transition for all learners.

Primary schools should consider:

- What habits and learning routines do we need to teach learners before the transition? Activities can be planned in a fun way – for instance rename the classrooms in the school and have Year 6 learners follow a timetable from lesson to lesson, as they would in secondary school.
- What information about individual learners will benefit their planned provision at secondary school? Over the course of primary school, a holistic understanding of learners is gained – academically, socially, behaviourally. How can this information be shared with the secondary school?
- Which learners will need a more personalised transition? Will some learners benefit from planned interventions, such as mentoring in Year 6, extra visits to the school, or a transition book they can refer to over the summer break?
- What information can support learners and their families to choose a secondary school? Many schools will have learners, and families of learners, come back to speak to Year 5 and Year 6 learners and families.
- Which learners are the only person from their school transitioning on to a specific secondary school? Feeder schools often have planned transition protocols, but how can you prioritise communication with unfamiliar schools to ensure a successful transition?

Transition: Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Secondary SENCOs will strive to find out everything they can about all incoming Year 7s – not just those on their primary school's SEN Register. Any information from primary schools can support the transition, and in some cases this information can also aid the initial graduated approach once the learners are attending the new secondary school.

To prepare for a successful transition, secondary schools should consider:

- What information can we provide to learners and their families to support their secondary school choice?
- Which staff attend transition open afternoons/evenings with learners and their families? Is there an opportunity for families to meet with, or hear about provision from, the SENCO and Head of Year 7?
- What information do learners and their families need to know about our school before the first day? How can this information be communicated in an accessible manner?
- What information do we need to know about incoming learners, and when do we need this information by to prepare for and implement a successful transition?
- What can we offer to support the successful transition of learners with additional needs? Which member of staff is best placed to visit individual learners at their primary school?
- How do we communicate information about incoming learners to all teaching and learning staff?
- How will we communicate with families of Year 7 learners – and how will we communicate this to them? Many parents and carers are used to seeing their child's teacher each day at drop-off and/or pick-up, which will not be the case at secondary school. It is important that communication opportunities and methods are communicated to families ahead of the transition to secondary school.

Mid-year transitions

Careful consideration needs to be given to supporting the transition of learners who begin at a new school part way through an academic year. Learners will have to learn a lot, quickly, in a time when they are likely to be feeling lonely and/or overwhelmed.

Whilst most schools, as standard practice, host a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team to welcome the learner and their family, it is also important for learners to meet key members of staff before they begin their first day. It could be that the transition meeting with a member of the senior leadership team is held before or after school so that the classroom teacher or form tutor is able to attend the meeting.

For all learners, it is important for a member of staff at the outgoing and incoming schools to have at minimum a phone conversation about the learner to gather information about their strengths, interests and challenges. For learners that you know will be attending in advance of their start date, the school can create a transition booklet, or offer the learner a tour of the school in advance of their start date.

On the first day itself, it will be important for the learner to have a peer buddy to show them around the school. At secondary school this may include a peer in their tutor group who has a similar timetable to them. It will also be important that the learner has an identified key adult that they are able to speak to if they have any questions or concerns.

Transition: Key Stage 4 – Key Stage 5 – Securing Good Transitions

Securing a strong transition into Key Stage 5 before a learner starts Year 12 is key. Teachers should start by understanding the interests and aspirations that a learner has for their future. The easiest way to do this is to ask them and take genuine interest in their goals. An authentic interest will build rapport between teacher and learner and help build a strong foundation for the partnership through Key Stage 4 and into Key Stage 5.

Key Stage 4 teachers can support a strong transition into Key Stage 5 through:

- *Asking their learners what they would like their new teachers to know about them and their learning before their new course starts.*
- *Proactively using this information by sharing successful approaches and strategies with Key Stage 5 teachers.*
- *Highlighting areas of the curriculum that may require additional consolidation or revisiting with Key Stage 5 teachers.*

Key stage 5 teachers can support a strong transition through:

- *Reaching out to the learner and having a 'kick-off' discussion before the course starts.*
- *If there is a SEN Support plan or EHCP in place, discussing with the SENCO, subject leader and learner how this will translate into a new course and key stage.*
- *Maintaining an open channel of communication with the learner, their family and other professionals.*
- *Adopting a problem-solving approach with the learner if new barriers to learning emerge, and swiftly addressing any issues.*
- *Avoiding making assumptions about labels or past attainment – offer a supported fresh start.*

Case Study

The Transition to Further Education

John is a young man with autism and selective mutism and has an EHCP. In Years 10 and 11, he spent all his lessons in the SEN department, as this was the only area where he would engage in learning. John expressed an interest to his carer about studying Football Coaching at college. The SENCO approached the Additional Support Team to discuss course options and what support John would be able to receive. In the January of year 11, members from the college Additional Support Team attended John's Annual Review and discussed transition and what that would look like. The transition package involved a member of Additional Support going to school to get to know John and act as a key person, prior to John attending college. This was followed by regular visits to the college to become familiar with the site, staff and areas of study. The first visit occurred during half-term, when the college was quieter, with follow-up visits occurring during normal operating hours with other learners present.

These visits continued until June, when John and his family were invited into college for a transition day. The PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) model was used to enable John to draw and visualise what he wanted to do without having to verbalise, followed by a discussion on the support accessible to John when he started in September.

John also attended the summer transition programme at the college, where he had the opportunity to meet other new learners and take part in activities and events such as football matches, arts and crafts and offsite visits to the beach and parks, facilitated by the Additional Support team.

This approach to transition enabled John to start in September with an awareness of where he could go when he became overwhelmed, who the staff working with him were and who his peers were. During his time at college, John attended all classes face-to-face, facilitated football coaching sessions at a local school and progressed from Level 1 to Level 3 qualifications in Sport.

Transitions within a school day

The SEND Reflection Framework identifies a range of transitions. This section focuses on the everyday transitions that we experience throughout the day.

There are a number of transitions in our day before our working day has even started – getting up out of bed, leaving the house, changing train... And this is before we even consider unexpected transitions – somebody coming into our classroom unexpectedly in the morning when we are quickly finishing our marking, an impromptu staff briefing being called, not being able to find our mug for our cup of coffee. Each transition is a disruption and also a source of sensory stimulus and possible overload. We manage these transitions most of the time since we are regulated or know how to regulate ourselves. However, imagine when you are late for work and then discover that someone has used up all your milk so you cannot have your cereal as you normally would. Suddenly this disruption becomes significant, a source of stress and a source of dysregulation. This, in turn, can result in us engaging in other behaviours – swearing loudly in our professional place of work, snapping at a colleague. We are dysregulated, we are no longer thinking rationally – the limbic system in our brain is no longer online and we are being driven by our amygdala. We soon switch our limbic system back on and recompose ourselves.

But what about the learner who…

- finds it difficult to regulate because they cannot filter all the sensory stimuli in the classroom?
- has experienced sensory overload or who has been threatened in the corridor or playground before your lesson?
- struggles with reading and therefore focused significantly more than other learners during the text-heavy whole-class input and is exhausted when the group task starts?

Let's imagine our capacity to regulate is a glass of water. These learners' glasses are full, and when presented with another transition or change – however small – the glass overflows. The cause is not the trigger; the cause is everything else they have been 'carrying in the glass' (setting events). Now imagine the learner who arrives at school with a full glass. How do they manage change?

In a school environment, many of these everyday transitions and changes are not in the learners' control. They are in the school's and the teacher's control. Yet they can be a source of significant stress and disruption. As teachers, it is our duty to support our children and young people to learn, and a key part of this is to reduce stress so that our learners are in the best possible position to learn and to attend to the learning. When transitions and change are a source of stress for our learners, we can work with the learner to identify the difficulties and make adjustments to reduce these. When a transition is expected, we can prepare our learners. When a transition is unexpected, e.g., a fire drill, we can work with the learner and support them to regulate. We do this in relationship with the learner, through our knowledge of the learner and with unconditional positive regard for the learner.

When we know that there is a certain period that is a trigger for learners around transition and change, we can prepare together with the learner for the storm ahead. Beacon House's Supporting Transitions is a free resource with tips on how to support your most vulnerable learners.

It is always important to focus on the outcome. If a source of stress is the transition to assembly, what is more important – their attendance in assembly or their access to the next lesson? Could the learner instead watch the assembly virtually in their classroom? If a source of stress is them changing places to participate in group work, do they need to move or can other learners be moved to their table? When needed, we can then take incremental steps to support the learner to manage these transitions over time.

Section 5

Subject-specific Guidance

In this section, we will cover:

Maths
- Primary Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

English
- Phonics Guidance
- Primary Reading Guidance
- Primary Writing Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

Drama
- Primary Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

Science
- Primary Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

Music
- Primary Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

Art and Design
- Primary Guidance
- Secondary Guidance

Physical Education

Computing

Modern Foreign Languages – Secondary Guidance

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Influenced by teaching methods seen across the world, maths planning has adopted a mastery approach, with the lesson objective planned to ensure all learners are able to engage in the learning, no matter their prior attainment levels. The overall objective of mastery is to ensure each learner is confident with a concept, before moving on to the next. Where previously maths lessons may have been differentiated across learning objectives and tasks, with the mastery approach, most learners will be working towards a common outcome, with teaching and learning tailored and scaffolded to meet individual needs. Some learners may require a more personalised approach, including specific learning outcomes and provision to develop foundational skills.

Where possible, the whole class should be working on the same material and tasks should not be differentiated, but instead increase in difficulty and depth. Learners will have increased self-esteem as they work on the same tasks as their peers, as well as a more secure understanding of a concept. The aim of the lesson becomes about all learners meeting the selected objectives, and opportunities for deepening the learning presented as and when learners are ready. This involves applying the taught knowledge in different contexts and developing a long-term understanding which can be adapted to answer a variety of problems.

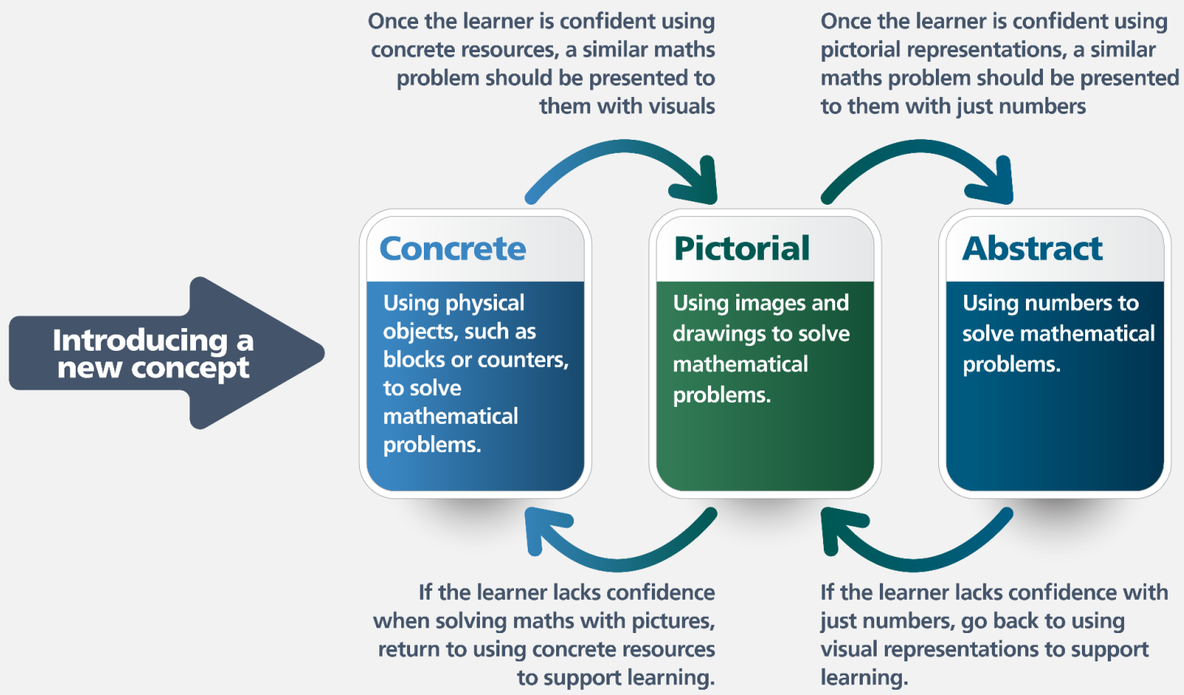
Instead of differentiating through task, those who require extra support should have additional input prior to the lesson, be part of more focused group work to go through an activity, and/or additional opportunities to practice. When planning lessons, it is important to consider a learner's prior attainment within the area of maths, as some learners will have strengths and learning gaps within the subject and should receive more focused support only when needed. In addition, it is beneficial to provide resources or visuals which could support these learners in meeting the same objectives as their peers.

Mastery includes the use of resources and representations to help learners see the structure of the maths; learners with SEND may require the support of these resources for a slightly longer period but should be scaffolded to develop independence in engaging with the mathematics without the resource.

Planning should be reactive to the needs of the class, and although it is beneficial to have an aim for the end of the week or unit, learners' progress should be reflected upon daily and the subsequent lesson should be adjusted to ensure the specific needs of the learners are being met. This in turn leads to more of the class being 'secure' with a concept, before teaching moves on.

Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract (CPA)

This method of teaching and learning uses objects and pictures to ensure a learner has understood an abstract mathematical concept. As maths is intangible, it is beneficial to introduce a concept with the use of concrete resources, e.g., blocks or counters. This helps to apply an abstract idea to practical resources, encouraging the learner to make connections between the two. Once confident with the concrete resources, the learner can then move to using pictures and diagrams to support their learning, before finally being encouraged to try the same maths questions without the scaffold. As the learner moves from concrete to pictorial to abstract, it is important they are given the opportunity to compare representations from each stage, to aid them in making connections and develop a secure understanding. Although some learners may not feel they need concrete resources or visual prompts, all learners should be encouraged to go through this process as a bridge to working in the abstract, to help them make connections and deepen their mathematical understanding.



Creating an Inclusive Environment

Maths lessons should not be silent. It is important learners feel able to work independently, but they should also work well alongside their peers. The best maths learning happens when learners can talk through their ideas with a teacher or a partner, and therefore it is good to encourage this productive discussion during lessons. When planning opportunities for talk, ensure that all learners have the support they need to access these discussions, which could include scaffolding such as sentence frames, visual support and/or peer partners.

It is also important all learners have had the opportunity to use concrete resources, such as bead strings or counters, to support their learning. Often this works best if a concept is introduced with concrete resources readily available for the entire class to use. Once learners have been shown how to use the equipment to support their learning, they can decide whether they wish to use it or not. Learners may need the support of the teacher in making this decision – some may cling to the resource for security, whilst others may feel embarrassed to use the resource if other learners are not.

As maths is a subject where often there is an 'objective' right or wrong answer, learners can lack resilience or confidence in their own ability if they feel as though they are consistently getting things wrong. Learners can also lack resilience and confidence due to having large gaps in their learning. It is important to ensure learners are given equal opportunities to learn core knowledge, so that they are less likely to make mistakes. Learners can also benefit from a culture where mistakes are embraced and viewed as a part of the learning process.

Linked to this, it is useful to point out, carefully, what a 'wrong answer' to a question could be, as this helps learners with lower confidence to demonstrate their understanding and develop their reasoning.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 1

- Learners should have 1 to 1 correspondence when counting.
- Learners should develop automaticity in addition and subtraction facts to and within 10.
- Ensure learners have a concept of 'more than' and 'less than' and can describe the relative sizing of number.
- Encourage learners to represent numbers in many different ways, in pictures, as a calculation, in words.
- Ensure learners can explain the place value of 10s and 1s.
- Use resources such as tens frames, Numicon and base 10 blocks confidently, to support learning where needed.

Key Stage 2

- Ensure learners are secure with all times tables (by end of Year 4), as this acts as a foundation for other maths concepts.
- Learners should have secure understanding of place value, up to 10,000 and beyond.
- Learners should begin to apply their knowledge of number and written methods to reasoning problems.

The Main Principles of Mastery

The core principle behind mastery is that learners should develop a secure and long-term knowledge of mathematical concepts through carefully planned lessons, which gradually and strategically build on prior learning. This teaching style should be constantly revisiting and building on prior learning, helping to make connections and develop depth of understanding.

NCETM have broken down the key principles of mastery into five strands: Coherence, Representation and Structure, Mathematical Thinking, Fluency and Variation. These are useful to consider when planning a unit, to ensure all elements of mastery are covered.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

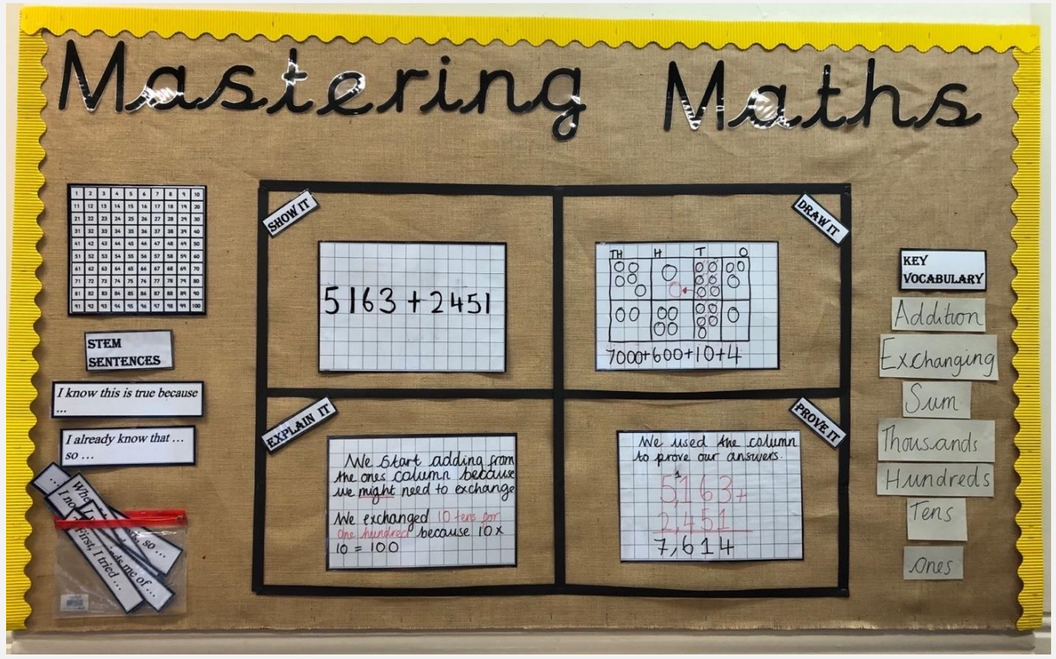
- Be conscious of the range of vocabulary learners are exposed to. There are often several different words for one mathematical concept (e.g., add, sum, total, plus). Learners will need these words to be defined each time a new one is introduced and may need questions to be rephrased to understand their meaning. Learning should be documented in the classroom and referred to within and across lessons, for example on a working wall.
- Before a concept is introduced to the whole class, take time to familiarise chosen learners with new vocabulary and its meaning. This will give those learners greater confidence, as they feel confident when this same idea is introduced to the whole class.
- Use of visuals and actions can help to remind learners of the meaning of a word, or how it links to a mathematical symbol.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- If solving word problems, consider deploying an adult or pairing a learner with a confident peer to read the questions aloud to relieve the pressure of decoding the language.
- Some learners may benefit from 'drawing' the word problem, so that after a question is read, the learner has an image to refer to. This can enable a learner to 'see' the information they are missing, and decide what they need to work out, so that they can solve the word problem.
- Use of concrete resources and visuals is extremely important in helping learners to access questions.
- Ensure worksheets are laid out clearly and learners are not overwhelmed with a page of questions. Some learners may require different resources, which could include plain paper or enlarged square paper, to access set work.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Use intervention time to play games that consolidate a new or tricky concept with an adult.
- Use pre-teaching to give some learners a head-start.
- Have clearly laid out worked examples for these learners to refer to when working independently.
- Ensure tasks are scaffolded so that the learner can focus on the planned objective, for example prewrite information which is non-essential to the learning (date, learning intention), so the learner can focus directly on the skill being taught.
- Use representations learners are familiar with to transfer and connect similar ideas. For example, in Year 1, they use a tens frame that shows ten ones is equal to one 10, and then in Years 4 and 5 a tens frame could be used to show ten tenths is equal to 1.



How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- When modelling, encourage learners to make jottings, or copy each step out, onto a whiteboard at the same time.
- Be flexible with how you deliver your input. It might not always be necessary to have all learners involved at once. Some learners could be completing an accessible activity independently at tables, whilst others are listening to the teaching input, and then they swap. This helps to keep inputs focused and short, maintaining the attention of those who struggle.
- Give learners a target number of questions to do – when working towards a goal, learners are more likely to be focused.
- Use behaviour-specific praise, where you specifically identify what the learner has done well, to motivate learners and encourage their sustained attention to the task.
- Incorporate some questions which appeal to a learner's interests, for example making questions about a particular character they like. This will help to maximise engagement and motivation.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Establish routines and expectations early in the year, ensuring certain transitions, activities and games are repeated regularly to increase familiarity.
- To inform assessment and planning, ask the learner how they found a concept or lesson, at the end of a session.
- Set a target amount of work to complete and prepare learners by giving a 5-minute warning before the end of the activity. Allow them to take a few extra minutes to finish off if they need it.

How can I support learners who lack confidence in their own mathematical ability?

- Send home photocopies of successful pieces of work to share with parents/carers.
- Pose open-ended questions to the class, which have multiple answers. Ensure all learners have equal opportunities to answer.
    - 'Odd One Out' is a great example of this kind of activity; Learners are presented with 3 different numbers on the board and are asked which is the odd one out and why. There is no 'right' answer to this question, and therefore it is accessible to all members of the class. Answers could include '10 is the odd one out because it's the only multiple of 5' or '8 if the odd one out because it's got two circles'. Being able to give an answer, no matter the complexity, helps to validate all learners.
- Mark learners' work in the moment, rather than at the end of the lesson. If the learner can see they are on track as they are completing a task, this will motivate them to keep going and will boost their confidence. Using this method also means you can correct and explain any mistakes as they happen, helping learners avoid embedding misconceptions.
- Ask learners to be a help in the lesson preparation process, e.g., selecting images which will be used in the maths lesson or asking to set up resources. This will help the learner to feel more comfortable as they begin the lesson.

The guidance in this document supports planning for learners with SEND by highlighting the most important concepts within the national curriculum so that teaching and targeted support can be weighted towards these. For further guidance, please refer to Teaching mathematics in primary school.

Case Study

A child in Year 1, who did not have secure number sense, struggled to access the curriculum as they could not order or compare numbers between 1 and 20.

An intervention was set up where the child spent five minutes a day with a suitably qualified adult, working on ordering numbers. Some of the tasks included rearranging number cards, counting objects around the school, and spotting the missing number on a number line. It was found that this short, sharp intervention and daily focus on this one skill helped to improve their fluency and in turn, their access to the curriculum.

Case Study

A child in Year 6 struggled to access lessons alongside the peers in his class; in maths, his individualised learning targets were aligned with the Year 3 curriculum.

At the beginning of a new topic, in line with a mastery approach, his teacher reflected on his individual targets and prior attainment while planning the whole-class lesson. This process demonstrated that the child did not yet have the foundational skills needed to access the planned work in line with his peers.

To plan learning activities for the learner, aligned to the topic, the teacher then used formative assessment to identify particular skills within the topic as areas for the child to develop, e.g., adding multiples of 10 to any given number. Planning for the child then followed a format where he had focussed input from the teacher early in the week. He then repeated a similar activity independently for the following few lessons, with a review at the end of the week. Alongside planned learning activities, the child had the opportunity to play maths games alongside an adult or peer to build on foundational maths skills.

Planning Inclusive Lessons

When learners begin studying maths at secondary school, we need to set them up for success. Getting to know the learners in your classes is key. It is equally important to have a thorough understanding of the Key Stage 2 maths curriculum, including the progression of skills, teaching methods and resources. Reading the primary maths guidance in this Handbook will give you a concise overview of the primary curriculum, including the mastery teaching approach. Many of the strategies and resources outlined will prove incredibly useful at secondary. Of particular importance is the Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract (CPA) method of teaching and learning, which will continue to benefit learners throughout secondary. With Teaching for Mastery, it is important that our teaching:

- Develops both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency so that learners do not have to remember isolated procedures and algorithms.
- Builds, and builds on, firm foundations, so that time is spent securing key mathematical knowledge before moving on to the next content.
- Draws attention to the structures within mathematics and the connections between different mathematical concepts as this ensures that cognitive load is reduced (for all learners).

A hurdle in teaching secondary maths is the need to dispel the myth for the learners who say, 'I can't do maths'. This self-view might have been reinforced over a number of years due to, for example, a frustration stemming from an insecure understanding of foundational skills, negative feedback (answers marked as either right or wrong) or a combination of both. Encourage learners' confidence by building regular opportunities where all learners experience success, e.g., starting a lesson with questions they mastered in a previous lesson. Plan regular opportunities to practise prior-learning – if we are not regularly practising a skill or concept that learners will be required to recall and apply, we can be setting them up to fail.

Make the learning engaging and memorable – incorporate a range of activities into lessons and provide opportunities for learners to apply their skills to different contexts, including opportunities to reason and solve problems. Ensure that sequences of questions and tasks start with familiar contexts so that learners build confidence before attempting increasingly challenging questions. Errorless learning is a teaching strategy that can support learners who lack confidence in their own mathematical ability - at the start of a task the teacher plans two-three questions that the learner is able to confidently answer, before they then move on to questions that gradually increase in challenge.

When planning, think carefully about the outcomes within single lessons and across a series of lessons. Review the prior attainment of learners within the specific area of maths; some learners may have strengths and learning gaps that require more focused support or, conversely, greater opportunities for challenge in certain areas of study. Consider if there are any misconceptions that may need to be addressed in the lesson: How will you clarify these? What scaffolding, including concrete resources, will learners benefit from? Be aware of exam concessions (e.g., extra time, reader, scribe) that learners are entitled to and ensure they are reflected in the classroom environment.

***Case Study** - To support a learner in Year 7 with dyslexia and dyscalculia, the teacher developed the following provision:*

- *Word mats associated with the topic being taught.*
- *Worksheets and homework included worked examples and scaffolding.*
- *Use of a reader pen in lessons.*
- *Slides were printed out ahead of each lesson so that she could take notes, without needing to copy all information*
- *The teacher asked questions directly, rather than in front of the class, to check for understanding.*
- *Pre-teaching of maths-specific vocabulary, with flash cards sent home for revision.*
- *Opportunities for over-learning.*

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Always greet learners at the door and welcome them into the classroom. Creating a calm and purposeful atmosphere starts with clear, consistent routines and expectations that learners are familiar with, e.g., a starter activity set up that they complete upon arrival into the classroom to help learners transition to maths.

Consider how the classroom looks and is organised. For learners, ensure everyone can participate in all elements of the lesson and access resources easily. For teachers and support staff, it is important to be able to move around the room to support learners without causing distraction. Displays should be relevant to the learning, with key words and supporting visuals clearly displayed. However, it is important to keep the area immediately around the board (or focal teaching area) uncluttered so that learners' attention is not distracted from the key teaching points.

Ensure that learners have access to the correct equipment and resources to complete tasks. Support learner confidence and resilience by modelling to all learners how to use resources effectively. Encourage all learners – and prompt specific learners where necessary – to access the resources they need, rather than only giving resources to certain learners. As an example, having an 'enable table', or area of the classroom which has a variety of resources for learners to access, including number lines, bead strings, dienes, numicon sets, concept maps etc. can be a creative way to give learners access to the resources they need without singling particular learners out. There can also be specialist equipment in this area, such as protractors, and compasses, and everyday resources (scientific calculators, pencils) for learners who forget to bring them. Finally, carefully consider the workbooks that learners use. Increasing the size of the squares can support learners in keeping their workings neat and accessible, e.g., 1cm instead of 5mm squares. For some learners, using blank paper rather than squared paper can give them the space to visualise, jot down their workings-out etc. in a less restricted way.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 3

Learners are expected to build on their Key Stage 2 knowledge and develop fluency, mathematical reasoning, and competence in solving increasingly sophisticated problems. Support learners' transition from primary to secondary by reviewing their learning from Year 6 and using resources and representations they are familiar with in lessons to continue to support the development of understanding of mathematical structure, introducing new models only when the previous one reaches its limit of applicability. Include frequent opportunities for learners to practise numeracy skills to continue developing these, as number underpins the rest of maths. Progression should be based on the security of learners' understanding so that they are ready to move to the next stage in their mathematical learning. Learners need to be able to select the skills and calculation strategies they need and use them accurately. These skills and strategies need to be transferable; learners need to apply their mathematical learning in other subjects, e.g., science and geography. Including examples from real-life and other subjects within maths lessons will help learners to do this.

The major shift in Key Stage 3 is from additive reasoning to multiplicative reasoning. By the end of Key Stage 3, learners need to have a strong understanding of calculations involving negative numbers, decimals, and fractions as well as basic algebra. In tandem with developing automaticity with facts and methods, all learners should be taught to utilise these strategies to solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar settings. Learners will build on skills developed at Key Stage 2 and develop greater confidence with multi-step questions and problems, encountering increasing complexity as they move towards Key Stage 4.

Key Stage 4

In Key Stage 4 learners consolidate and develop their knowledge from Key Stage 3. The Programme of Study covers the full range of material included in the GCSE Maths qualification. Progression is expected for the majority of learners through the six main topic areas – number; algebra; ratio; proportion; and rates of change; geometry and measures; probability; statistics.

The increased literacy demands need to be addressed so that the work continues to be accessible to all learners. Not only does there need to be a focus on subject-specific vocabulary, but also a focus on the language of exam-based questions. In lessons, take the time to decode the language: e.g., in quadratics, when we ask learners 'What are the roots of the quadratics', 'What are the solutions of the quadratic' or 'What is x when y equals zero', we are asking the same thing – but learners may not realise this due to the different vocabulary used. Some learners may benefit from the pre-teaching of vocabulary in advance of the lesson; all learners will benefit from learning how keywords link together, e.g., equation and equals, and regular revision of keywords.

It is important that learners understand that revision of taught content is best done through practising related questions. Short, regular tests which require learners to utilise not only mathematics that has been learned recently, but mathematics from previous units is helpful in ensuring that learning is transferred to long-term memory.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- When planning lessons, think about the literacy demands, including written instructions and word problems. Make a plan for how you will mitigate the impact: e.g. the use of visuals, breaking the learning down into more manageable chunks, supporting learners to create visualisation of the scenarios being presented, resources (e.g. reader pens), or support from an adult or peer, (e.g. small group work with a teacher or support staff, partner work, or a signal where the learner can let you know they need help).
- Be conscious of the range of vocabulary learners are exposed to – there are often several different words for one mathematical concept. Some learners may benefit from pre-teaching, or access to concept maps with visuals and/or concrete resources within a lesson. Use displays to reinforce key vocabulary and working walls to draw attention to the most important within the current series of lessons.
- Avoid having learners copy from the board. Print out slides ahead of the lesson that learners can have access to. This will encourage them to make notes, without needing to copy information from the board.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- When introducing new concepts, break the concept down into smaller, more manageable chunks, and give learners a chance to practise each small step before moving on to the next.
- Plan lessons using the Concrete, Pictorial, Abstract method: introduce a concept with the use of concrete resources so that learners gain an understanding of the structure of maths. Learners can then move to using pictures and diagrams to support their learning, before finally being encouraged to try the same maths questions without the scaffold. Consider resources used, as a limited set of resources and models effectively and across a range of contexts is more helpful than employing a diversity of resources and models.
- Intelligent variation of practice questions within lessons: when giving learners a set of questions, make small changes between questions (e.g., expanding brackets: 5(x + 2), then 5(x + 3), then 5(2x + 3) instead of 5(x + 2) then 3(3x – 7)).[1]

Intelligent practice and variation

Work through practice questions and answers with the class and draw attention to the key features of the questions. Ask about the connection between the questions, how learners might work out one answer from another question, or why two questions have the same answer, etc. This variation helps learners understand the structure of a concept through intelligent practice.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Plan 'brain breaks' or movement breaks throughout the lesson – this can support the focus of all learners. You can also use movement as part of your assessment for learning: standing or sitting; moving to the front or back of the room; etc.
- Set a target number of questions for learners to answer, so they have a set target to work towards. This can be further supported using a visual timer.
- Set questions that are linked to learners' interest or use real-life examples, e.g., cooking, sport, gaming, money. For some learners this can increase their motivation and engagement.
- Ensure task instructions are visible; learners that struggle with attention may require access to instructions throughout the task. Instructions can be broken down into a checklist that they can work through over the course of a lesson.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Greet learners at the door and welcome them to the classroom. A personal greeting from a familiar adult will support their transition to the lesson.
- Have a consistent structure to lessons, supported by a visual timetable. Refer to the visual timetable as you move through different parts of the lesson. Establish routines and expectations at the start of the school year, in partnership with the learners, and reinforce these as the year goes on. Some learners may need reminders of expectations after time away from school (e.g., school breaks) – this is something that will benefit all learners.

How can I support learners lack confidence in their own mathematical ability?

- Be aware of how learners respond to praise. Start small – e. g. positive comments in books, 1:1 feedback. Remember some learners may not like receiving praise in front of their peers as it draws attention to them. If unsure, talk to the learner, and come up with agreed ways that you can tell them they are doing well.
- Employ errorless learning strategies – start independent tasks with questions that you know the learner(s) has mastered. Early success will build their confidence and resilience in trying more challenging problems later in the lesson or task.
- Use intelligent variation of practice questions within lessons to build up the level of challenge slowly: make small changes between each question; ensure that there are explicit links between each of the questions so that the learner understands the skills they are applying to each question and how they are related.
- Be explicit in telling learners what they are doing right. So often, answers can be marked right or wrong. If a learner gets a problem wrong, review their workings and identify steps that they have done correctly. Build on this, showing them what to do next, instead of saying 'Try again'. As an example, 4.2 x 3.1 - there is only one right answer. The learner may work it out and say 130.2. In this instance, the learner has multiplied correctly (42 x 31); the misconception came when putting the decimal place back in – they confused the rules for multiplying decimals with adding decimals.
- Address the misconception, but also acknowledge the part of the problem the learner did correctly.

Phonics

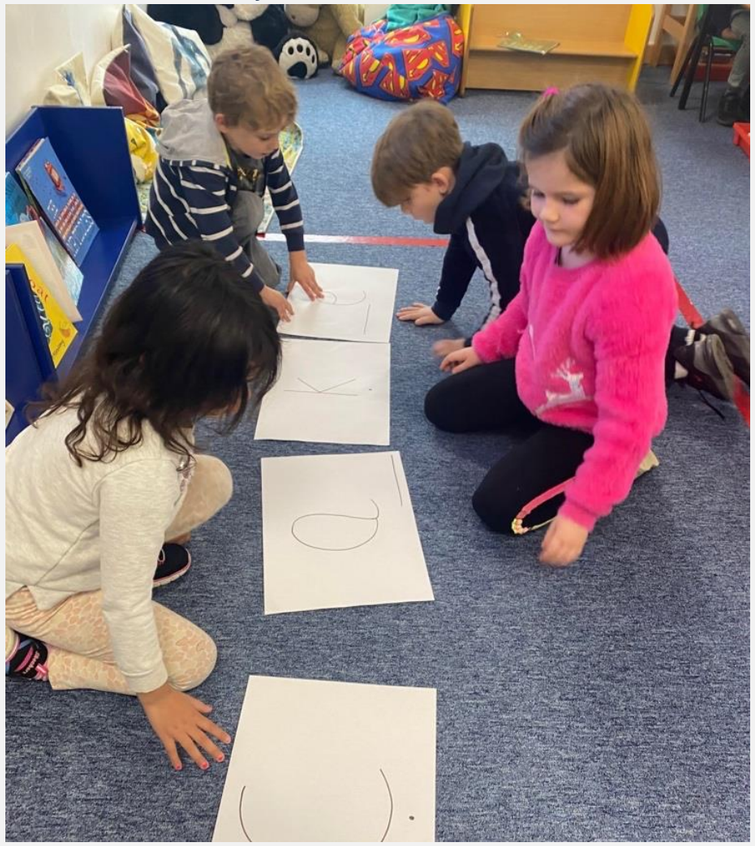
Phonics is key foundational knowledge. Phonics is one of the essential building blocks when teaching learners to read as well as spell. The study of phonics teaches learners that letters (graphemes) are a code for the sounds (phonemes) in spoken language. With the teaching of phonics, children are systematiclly taught:

- letter-sound correspondences (GPCs, or grapheme-phoneme correspondences)
- to read words by blending sounds from left to right
- to spell by identifying sounds in words (segmenting spoken words).

Phonics is taught from Reception to Year 2, providing an opportunity for learners to build on their skills and progress each year. It is vital that a school has a clear and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. A whole-school policy should clearly map out the teaching expectations and journey for each year group, allowing learners to build upon their knowledge each year. Changing the approach between teachers or year groups can lead to confusion and slow the learners' progress.

Throughout Reception and Key Stage 1, learners need consistent teaching of phonics through daily structured lessons, with additional opportunities across the school day to practise applying their learning in different curriculum areas so that their knowledge becomes secure and embedded. A learner's ability to independently apply their phonics knowledge facilitates independent reading and tasks across the curriculum. Phonics knowledge can also be applied to spelling. By hearing and segmenting the phonemes in a word, a learner can select the correct graphemes to write a desired word. In some instances, a phoneme will be represented by more than one grapheme. Over time, a learner's growing familiarity with language, reading and spelling will support them in selecting the correct grapheme.

There will be times that a learner incorrectly applies a previously taught grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC); this makes for a key teaching moment. The application of phonics knowledge should always be praised, however it is essential that we also reinforce the importance of accurate spelling. Take these opportunities to talk through the GPC selected with the learner and understand why they selected the particular GPC. Review the GPCs that the learner has been taught, and model to the learner how they can apply their phonics to accurately select the correct GPC in future opportunities. Be mindful of exception words that either contain an unusual GPC or one that has not been taught yet and be explicit in the teaching of these words. Learners should still use phonics to spell all of the known GPCs within the word but may refer to a word bank for the tricky GPC.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Phonics is a precise and structured lesson that is taught discretely each day from Reception to Year 2. Before Reception, learners should be immersed in stories, rhymes, songs and poems to support their understanding of language.

From Reception onwards, the consistency of the rigorous pattern of phonics lends itself to being a highly inclusive lesson. The structure, pace and repetitive nature of lessons enables learners to apprehend the next steps and work within the clear boundaries. In order to maximise the learning potential and outcomes for all learners, there are a number of things that a teacher should consider.

How should a phonics lesson be structured?

Phonics is a systematic and structured lesson. Following the 'revise - teach – practise – apply' process for teaching a new grapheme-phoneme correspondence provides consistency and rigour. Learners can anticipate the next steps, providing clear and safe boundaries for their engagement and focus.

How do I plan an interactive phonics lesson?

Plan lots of opportunities for speaking, spelling words, and reading. Phonics is a very interactive lesson. Learners need opportunities to listen to phonemes, say phonemes and apply them to reading and spelling. The lesson lends itself to learners responding as a whole class (e.g., saying sounds together,), working with partners (e.g., watching each other pronounce phonemes, or forming letters on each other's backs with a finger) or independent activities (e.g., letter formation in the air, reading captions etc.). Teachers should make efficient use of time so that all learners are involved for as much time as possible. Learners also need opportunities to test different strategies, in line with the school's chosen phonics programme.

Phonics

How do I teach learners to enunciate the sounds?

Be aware that some learners may find it difficult to enunciate phonemes accurately. Plan for plenty of opportunities to model and practise enunciation. Describe the mouth and tongue movement to say the sound and consider providing mirrors to allow learners to watch themselves saying the sound. Where possible, adults can support learners to say and then hear the sounds in words when segmenting and blending. Provide opportunities to decode words of differing length to meet the needs of all learners, as well as words that contain the new phoneme in different positions.

Which words should be read or written?

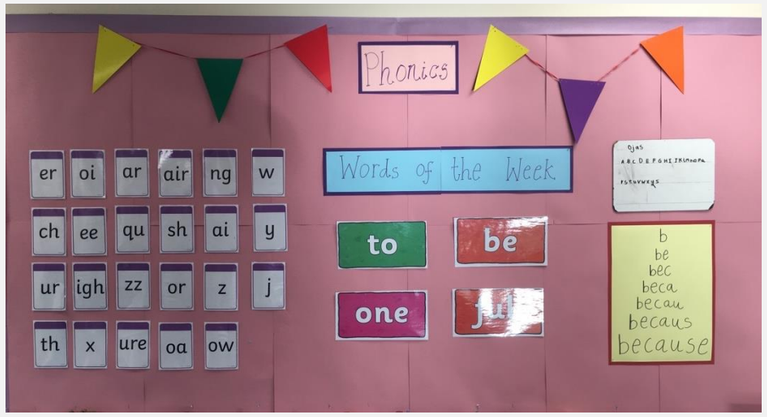
Planning the words for reading and writing in a phonics lesson needs careful consideration. Plan opportunities for learners to apply their new GPC knowledge in different positions within words, e.g., owl, prowl, cow, and to words of different lengths. Learners should read words and/or sentences which contain only the taught GPCs or common exception words which have been planned and introduced. Similarly, learners should only write words which contain the taught phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Phonics provides a golden opportunity for teaching new vocabulary. Teachers should plan to use vocabulary that enriches the class's current topic or particular interests, where possible. Some learners may benefit from pre-teaching of the new vocabulary to help prepare them for the lesson. Teachers should also plan to apply new vocabulary at a sentence level where possible. It is important to model the application of words in context. Any word cards with new vocabulary can be easily added to a working wall after the lesson.

When considering vocabulary, it is also important to be aware of the precise terminology in phonics. When planning, teachers must ensure they are aware of the GPCs, alternative graphemes and alternative phonemes in order to plan accurate lessons. The nuanced learning must be explained accurately and modelled carefully.

What physical and contextual information needs considering?

Carefully consider the seating arrangement for the lesson. Teachers must consider how well learners can see the flashcards/word cards/whiteboard that display the graphemes and words. Having a smaller set of resources for an individual to use can be supportive. Learners also need to be able to clearly see the teacher's mouth and hear their voice when they are enunciating. Phonics require lots of accurate modelling. This will support learners to say the sound correctly when they are practising and applying. Some learners may take part in only some of the lesson; ensure that these learners can leave the carpet safely for their next input.



How are phonics lessons resourced?

The right resources are important in making sure learners get the quality and quantity of practice needed to secure their learning. Phonics is a fast-paced and interactive lesson. Teachers must carefully plan the resources that will help learners with the intended learning, e.g., phoneme frames, word cards, phoneme fans, whiteboards and pens etc., and match them carefully to the learning.

- Phoneme fans are great for revising previously learned sounds and providing AfL opportunities for grapheme-phoneme correspondence.
- Phoneme frames support segmenting to spell.
- Sound buttons support blending to reading. Teachers must be mindful of overreliance on pens and letter formation. Learners can still build and read words without writing them.
- Magnetic letters, letter cards, phoneme cubes etc., can be supportive of learners who find pen grip and handwriting challenging. Alleviating the pressure of letter formation allows learners to focus on applying their phonics knowledge. For these learners, it is critical they have discrete opportunities to practise handwriting at other points in the school day.
- Teachers may also choose to print some whiteboard slides for individuals so that they have an exact replica of the input in front of them for their own use.
- Teachers should also plan to use concrete resources in their phonics lessons as they would in a maths lesson. Concrete resources can be more meaningful than pictures and allow learners to learn new vocabulary, thus giving the application of phonics more purpose.
- It is good practice to make the resources available to the learners after the lesson, so that they have continued opportunities to practise applying their skills. This is particularly true in play-based settings where learners have independent learning time.

Phonics

Creating an Inclusive Environment

An inclusive phonics environment will have plenty of opportunities for learners to practise their phonics skills and learn to apply them independently, both through play and adult-directed tasks. A working wall with the sounds and high-frequency words (HFW) being taught that week will support learners to recall and apply their new learning across the curriculum. There should also be a display of previously learned sounds to support learners in recalling and applying all the GPCs they have learned over time. These resources will need signposting to learners and regular modelling of how they can be used in reading and writing lessons and across the wider curriculum.

An inclusive phonics environment will be reading rich. There will be opportunities for learners to apply their decoding skills at a sentence level, phrase level, word level and initial sound level. Some of these opportunities will be in books, while others will be resources and games. Teachers will plan for learners to read specific texts that allow them to apply their new phonics learning. It is good practice to use a mixture of hand-written and typed resources so that learners are exposed to different types of fonts and text.

Learners need to be encouraged and supported to apply their phonics skills at every opportunity. As an example, when learning to segment sounds to spell in writing, the teacher can model and practise segmenting and blending skills with learners through daily routine activities, e.g., Spy Talk to get your c-oa-t.

Assessment

How do I use AfL in a phonics lesson?

Assessment for Learning is vital for giving targeted, on-the-spot support to help a learner achieve their next steps. During a phonics lesson, the teacher will have opportunities to hear learners say individual sounds, match phonemes to graphemes, read words and write/build words. These opportunities will be indicative of a learner's specific knowledge set and provide opportunities to correct misunderstandings. There will also be opportunities to assess their skills: blending, segmenting, and decoding accuracy and automaticity. However, when the whole class is interacting (saying a sound or blending to read) it can be difficult to hear individual voices. Where possible, get down to the learners' level to hear them more clearly, or build in opportunities for individuals to model to the class as part your practice. Support staff can also be used to identify any gaps or misconceptions. These assessment points will feed into the planning for the next whole-class lesson by indicating, for example, which GPCs need revising at the beginning of the lesson, or a need to practise reading 'sh' digraphs in final position etc. Any weaker aspects can also be addressed within the lesson or before the next one so that learners are ready to access the next lesson.

How do I use AfL in small groups or independent tasks?

Listening and observing will provide insight into a learner's knowledge and ability to apply their skills. When reading, listen to them match a phoneme to a letter and enunciate it clearly; ensure that they are saying one sound for every phoneme in the word and use these opportunities to correct any misconceptions, e.g., reading 'th' as two single phonemes rather than a digraph, or confusing 'b' and 'd'. Support learners to use the classroom resources to correct the mistake themselves.

Teaching Considerations

EYFS

- Provide plenty of phonics resources in the reading area and writing area to help make phonics links within literacy explicit.
- Be consistent with resources, i.e., the same sound mats used in carpet time as at tables, with the same pictures.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for learners to explore instruments and listening activities to develop phonological awareness.
- Encourage learners to listen in the outdoor area and explore the environmental sounds.
- Teach phonics through adult-led games and independent tasks.

Key Stage 1

- Phonics is taught discretely, daily. Further opportunities are provided every day for pupils to practices what they have been taught.
- A working wall that is used and updated daily, alongside lessons that includes HFWs, GPCs, key skills, and new vocabulary.
- Consistent use of resources, i.e., use of the same sound mats across all curriculum areas.
- Adults support phonetically plausible attempts and use the same vocabulary and questioning from phonics lessons to support in reading/writing tasks.
- Segmenting and blending skills are modelled throughout the curriculum.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Carefully consider the pace of the lesson. A fast-paced lesson will keep learners alert and active – but ensure they have the time and support needed to be accurate with enunciation or skills application.
- Interactive lessons provide opportunities for learners to engage in different ways. In phonics, learners will be vocal when practising saying sounds, decoding and reading. There will also be opportunities for letter formation and writing.
- Use specific, targeted questioning to challenge and support learners.

How can I support learners who are resistant to mark-making or who have poor fine motor skills?

Phonics is a tool for learning to read and spell. A reluctance to mark-make or form letters may not be indicative of difficulty with GPCs. Learners will be introduced to letters and mark-making opportunities. Opportunities to develop fine motor skills can be encouraged through play and targeted support:

- Include a finger gym or fine motor skills station in your classroom with activities such as pegging, threading, using tweezers to complete intricate objectives.
- Provide opportunities for mark-making on different scales and with different media.
- If a learner is reluctant to write, reduce the reliance on whiteboards and pens in phonics lessons and consider using magnetic letters or phoneme cubes to build words. However, learners will need to be taught how to form letters and use phonics for spelling.
- Provide specific targeted support with handwriting.
- Praise all attempts at mark-making and point out specific successes and next steps.

Case Study

A child in reception with ASD and vision impairment, who is largely non-verbal.

She worked with 1:2 support and benefitted from visuals, consistent routines, and repetition. To support phonics learning, the teacher developed provision that included:

- *Joining in with revision and teaching sections of lessons on the carpet with support, as she enjoyed listening to the sounds with peers.*
- *Having access to a quiet, distraction-free space - this enabled her to accurately recall grapheme-phoneme correspondences with increased consistency.*
- *Using concrete resources to match initial sounds to graphemes.*
- *Using magnetic letters to build and read CVC words to match concrete resources.*
- *Taking part in sound hunts in the outdoor area.*
- *A focus on fine motor skills with peers to develop her pen grip.*

Case Study

A child in Year 2 with ADHD.

He had excellent recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondence during specific phonics lessons and assessment but worked with such speed that errors were frequent when segmenting to spell and decoding to read. He became frustrated, distracted and even distressed by perceived inability to overcome a challenge.

To support him, his teacher ensured the following provision was in place:

- *Structured, interactive lessons to support his attention needs.*
- *Increased opportunities to come forward to the interactive whiteboard to model success to the class. This is something he enjoyed and was important to raise his confidence in the subject.*
- *Tone of voice: he was confident to apply his knowledge when correcting errors, but only when errors were highlighted in a calming, light-hearted manner by a familiar adult, e.g., reading the misapplication of a grapheme in a funny voice so that they could spot the error and 'own it'.*
- *Personalised grapheme-phoneme correspondence table taped on the desk with a GPC to focus on each week.*
- *Personalised learning targets, with a focus on one phoneme to apply accurately during writing lessons.*

Why is Reading so important?

The impact of being able to read extends beyond simply having a set of skills. The benefits of being able to read, and of being a reader (one who enjoys reading and chooses to do it) are far reaching, such as:

- ***Neurological:*** reading helps to develop the learner's brain and increases their memory function.
- ***Educational***: as well as giving the learner access to text-based learning across all subject areas and in all lessons, reading improves attention spans and leads to better concentration.
- ***Psychologically***: reading helps children to grow in self-confidence and independence. Reading offers a greater insight into human nature and decision-making; through the texts they read, learners develop a greater understanding of the world around them, and a better sense of self.
- ***Socially***: being a reader increases the learner's social status among their peers as well as their self-image and self-confidence. Reading also develops a better understanding of other cultures and can lead to better community participation.
- ***Linguistically***: learners develop richer vocabulary, correct grammar, improved writing, better spelling, and articulate verbal communication.

In their Literature Review, The Impact of Reading for Pleasure and Empowerment, The Reading Agency found that reading for pleasure can result in increased empathy, improved relationships with others, reductions in the symptoms of depression and dementia, and improved wellbeing.[1]

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Within the classroom, there should be a range of texts which meet the needs of all learners. These should also be well organised to support learners with browsing and making choices. Teach learners, especially those who find it more challenging and feel less confident, how to navigate book areas/corners and where to find the texts they will be able to and will want to read.

Consider using your most qualified adults to work with the learners with the greatest need. In addition, ensure that they have daily reading with adult support. It is essential that they are reading matched books and/or with an adult as much as, if not more than, their peers. Where learners are having additional intervention to support with phonics, these should be in addition to daily reading, not in place of it.

Make modelled, shared and peer talk core to your reading. Talking through any important background knowledge necessary to understand the text, for example the historical and geographical setting for a story can help learners' comprehension.

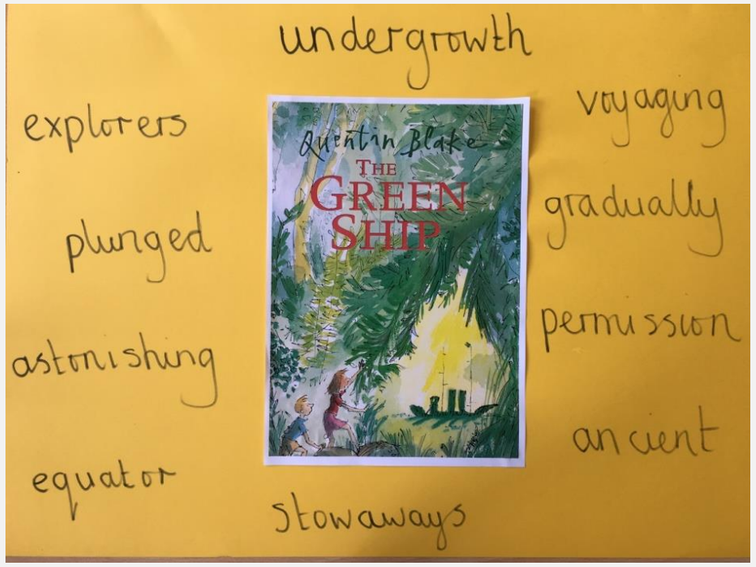
Consider the physical environment and making displayed print accessible to all learners. Ensure that print which forms part of classroom displays are words that learners have been taught to read or are words that will be taught. Print could be displayed through a key word wall which is built up as learners are explicitly taught new words. Topic-related vocabulary that has been taught displayed on a working wall will support learners with both reading and writing these words.

Ensure that print on display is decipherable by using dyslexia friendly fonts or handwriting, and by ensuring writing is appropriately sized. In addition, think about how words can be organised to support learners, for example using different colour backgrounds for different word classes, or organising words in alphabetical order.

Involve and give families regular feedback. Developing and extending independent practice at home is important to improving reading. Families may find it harder at home to support learners with additional needs; sharing information about strategies and approaches used in school will support them.

Teacher reading aloud

Plan for class 'read-alouds' and discussions that give learners with lower reading fluency access to age-appropriate texts. Hearing texts beyond their fluency level will also ensure that these learners are having opportunities to extend their vocabulary. Giving learners the opportunity to listen to a story without the printed text can support their engagement by freeing up their working memory.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

We read for a range of reasons: for fun, for excitement, for relaxation, for information, amongst many others. Enjoyment and purpose should be at the heart of learners' reading provision; we can achieve this through providing a range of reading activities which are fun, exciting, relaxing, informative experiences.

To become skilled readers, learners need to be explicitly taught the phonic code and practise applying it. Learners should develop all aspects of fluency, including the expression needed when reading aloud. In order to comprehend what they read, learners need to know about the content, i.e., the background knowledge, be familiar with any complex vocabulary and also know about the genre, e.g., if it is a mystery story. Learners also should be taught about the way different printed texts can be structured.

Throughout the primary phase, learners should be part of reading lessons which follow the sequence of 'teach, practise and then apply'. Teachers should share the learning objective or reading strategy. They should model this through reading out loud, but also through thinking out loud, explicitly modelling the reader's comprehension processes. Learners should have the opportunity to practise within a scaffolded and supported environment where they are able to receive feedback which supports them with achieving and progressing. Learners should then apply teaching through independent practice. Once learners have mastered the phonics code, allow them to frequently revisit texts that have been taught. Through the re-reading of familiar texts, learners will build sight vocabulary, develop reading fluency, and deepen their understanding.

These reading lessons should form part of a wide and varied reading diet which makes reading enjoyable and purposeful. This could include further activities such as listening to texts being read out loud, sharing texts with peers through paired or 'buddy' reading sessions, and opportunities for reading during other curriculum lessons.

Reading Motivation and Engagement

Learners will be motivated to read if they are successful in reading activities; reading texts which are too challenging is likely to result in reducing motivation. As such, it is essential that learners are accurately assessed and, during daily reading lessons, are reading texts which are closely matched to their phonic knowledge.

As well as reading books closely matched to their phonic knowledge, learners also need to have opportunities to self-select and be guided by a teacher to books that they are interested in or that will broaden their reading experience and expose them to different authors. These books can be read by an adult if they do not match with the learner's phonic knowledge. Ensure texts in the classroom will appeal to the learners' interests; a wish-list of topics, genres and authors could be created with the class.

Plan for activities which reinforce the content of reading and engage the learners: if learners have read a story about leaf-boats, consolidate this with an experience making leaf-boats; if they read an information book about making pasta, consolidate this with the experience of making pasta; if learners read a story about a panda, and want to know more about them, consolidate this by reading with them further information about pandas.

Paired or 'buddy' reading is an enjoyable experience and benefits both the least able (tutee) and the most able (tutor) within the pair. This strategy can be used to support learners with accessing whole class texts, such as during lessons in other areas of the curriculum. It can also be used to build confidence and deepen text understanding when the learner is able to take on the role of tutor within the group; this can be made possible through pairing learners with younger readers.

Research illustrates that it is not only children's cognitive skills (e.g., language, decoding skills) that are important for their reading attainment, children's motivation to read is additionally important... In other words, to become successful readers, children need the 'skill' and the 'will'.[2]

When struggling readers are not motivated to read, their opportunities to learn decrease significantly).[3]

Reading and Phonics

It is widely agreed that reading involves far more than decoding words on the page. Nevertheless, words must be decoded if readers are to make sense of the text. Phonic work is therefore a necessary but not sufficient part of the wider knowledge, skills and understanding which children need to become skilled readers and writers, capable of comprehending and composing text.[4]

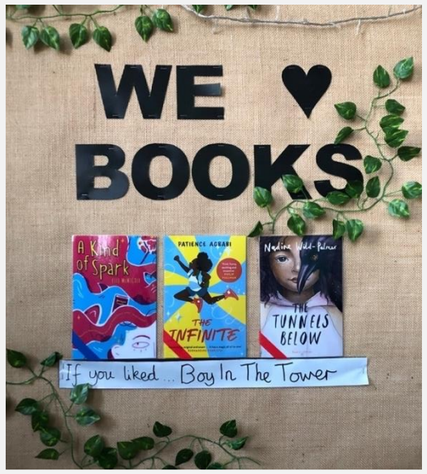
For learners in the early stages of reading, and not yet secure in their phonics knowledge, daily phonics teaching at their phonics level is essential. To become readers, learners need to know how the letters of the alphabet represent the sounds in words both individually and in combinations, and they need to acquire the skills which enable them to read words through blending these sounds together.

Guidance on teaching and supporting learners with developing phonics skills is within the Phonics section of this Handbook.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 1

- In Key Stage 1, learners should be part of daily reading lessons in which they are reading texts closely matched to their phonic knowledge.
- In addition to these daily reading lessons, in Year 1, and if appropriate, in Year 2, learners should be accessing daily phonics lessons, where teaching is matched to learners' individual phonics knowledge. Phonics groups may need to be streamed, and learners with a higher level of need may need small group focused teaching. During and outside of phonics teaching, learners should have opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge and skills to reading texts which are matched to their phonics level.
- Learners should also be hearing stories being read out loud, developing their knowledge of language patterns, text structures and broadening their vocabulary, in addition to developing their enjoyment. Re-read class favourites to help them learn the rhythms and tunes of language and to develop their knowledge of syntax which will support with reading skills. Becoming familiar with texts will also deepen their understanding.



Key Stage 2

- Once learners are secure with the alphabetic code, they should read books which are an age-appropriate level. For learners who have not cracked the phonics code, books should match their phonic knowledge until they can read familiar words speedily and unfamiliar words accurately.
- For learners in Key Stage 2 with gaps in their phonics knowledge, continuation of phonics lessons at their phonics level are key to enabling them to read new words and increase reading fluency.
- During daily reading lessons, explicitly teach individual reading comprehension skills, e.g., asking questions, drawing inferences, predicting, or summarising (refer to the National Curriculum for age-related-expectations for individual year groups). Explicitly teach these through defining each skill and modelling during reading aloud and thinking aloud. For learners to be able to effectively apply reading comprehension skills, they will need to have background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and grammatical knowledge, as well as knowledge about the structure, genre and form of a given text.
- Learners should listen to texts being read aloud by adults, continuing to develop their knowledge, and understanding of language and broadening their vocabulary.

Using assessment to identify barriers and target teaching and support

- Regular assessment is essential to ensure that learners are reading at the most appropriate level – a text which is too tricky can result in frustration and unwillingness, whilst one that is too easy means that learners are not developing through learning new words and concepts.
- Assessment should also be used as a tool to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. Running records can be used to assess fluency and decoding ability, and word reading strategies and comprehension can be assessed through verbal discussion around a text or using verbal or written questions during reading. Use assessment information to target teaching and focus support on the needs of the learner.
- If you are using other adults such as support staff or volunteers to extend learners' opportunities to read, ensure that they are made aware of the needs of the learners and are given training and specific strategies or lesson structures to use during interventions.

Case Study

At the end-of-year assessment point a Year 3 learner was assessed in reading at working significantly below age-related-expectations. The learner appeared to be 'reading' by memorising the words using the repetitive patterns in the books she was accessing. The pupil was also very reluctant to participate in any reading-related activities. She had previously received an intensive daily 1:1 reading intervention where some progress had been made but had not resulted in her internalising key reading skills to support her progression towards fluency.

The reading lead worked with the class teacher to ensure provision was carefully informed by an assess-plan-do-review cycle. This involved a phonics assessment and a benchmarking reading assessment. The learner was assessed as reading at blue book band level (end of autumn Year 1 level) with relatively good sight vocabulary and comprehension, but with poor decoding skills. The phonics assessment identified she required additional teaching in phonics at phase 3 level (Letters and Sounds).

During the following year her teacher implemented several strategies:

- *Access to a range of appropriate books matched to her level.*
- *Phonics intervention at her phonics level three times a week.*
- *Access to the teaching part of whole class reading lessons at her year group level so that the learner could listen to a skilled reader modelling and continue to develop her listening comprehension and extend her vocabulary.*
- *During the independent part of the whole-class lesson, access to texts at her instructional level, regularly reading 1:1 with an adult.*

In addition, her teacher created a box of 'special books' for her. These were books at her reading level, including many she had previously read. She accessed these during the independent reading part of whole-class lessons and during 'reading for pleasure' time. Through reading at her level and through revisiting texts, she was able to improve her fluency and experience reading success. She also showed greater enthusiasm when participating in reading activities.

By the spring term in Year 4, she had progressed to reading at purple book band level (Year 2 autumn term level). Whilst she was still reading below age-related-expectations, she had made significant progress in two terms.

When supporting learners in the early stages of reading, whatever their year group, it is essential to use strategies that are suitable to the learner's developmental stage to support them to make progress. Forensic assessment to understand the barriers to learning being experienced by a learner is the starting point of any provision. Working alongside colleagues with greater experience of strategies used to support early readers was empowering in the confident implementation of appropriate provision.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with developing fluency (including phonics knowledge and word recognition)?

- Where learners are not yet secure with phonics, their phonics knowledge must be assessed. Phonics teaching can then be correctly pitched for developing learners' knowledge of phonics and skills such as blending for word reading. Use the same scheme or approach which is used for whole-class teaching in EYFS and Year 1 – this will support learners with making links and building on prior phonics knowledge.
- Whilst phonics should be the first strategy for common exception words, if learners have difficulty retaining words consider using precision teaching interventions or flashcards. Games can be used to engage learners such as Bingo, Pelmanism (matching pairs) or Snap. Learners could also have further opportunities to consolidate through playing these games during break or playtimes. Consolidation can also come through learners being able to independently revisit through accessing word mats on their tables or accessing these words on display in the classroom.
- Re-reading taught or familiar texts is key to building learners' confidence; have a box of taught or familiar books for individual learners to independently revisit during reading lessons, reading for pleasure, paired reading or if reading with volunteers.
- Ensure that learners have sufficient practice in reading, and re-reading, books matched to their phonic knowledge so that they can build up their bank of words that can be read speedily.
- Identify and pre-teach tricky or new words – find them in the book and tell the learner to look at them carefully. Write them on a whiteboard or on a flashcard and practise reading them before reading the text.

How can I support learners who struggle with comprehending texts (including vocabulary, reasoning, and print-concepts)?

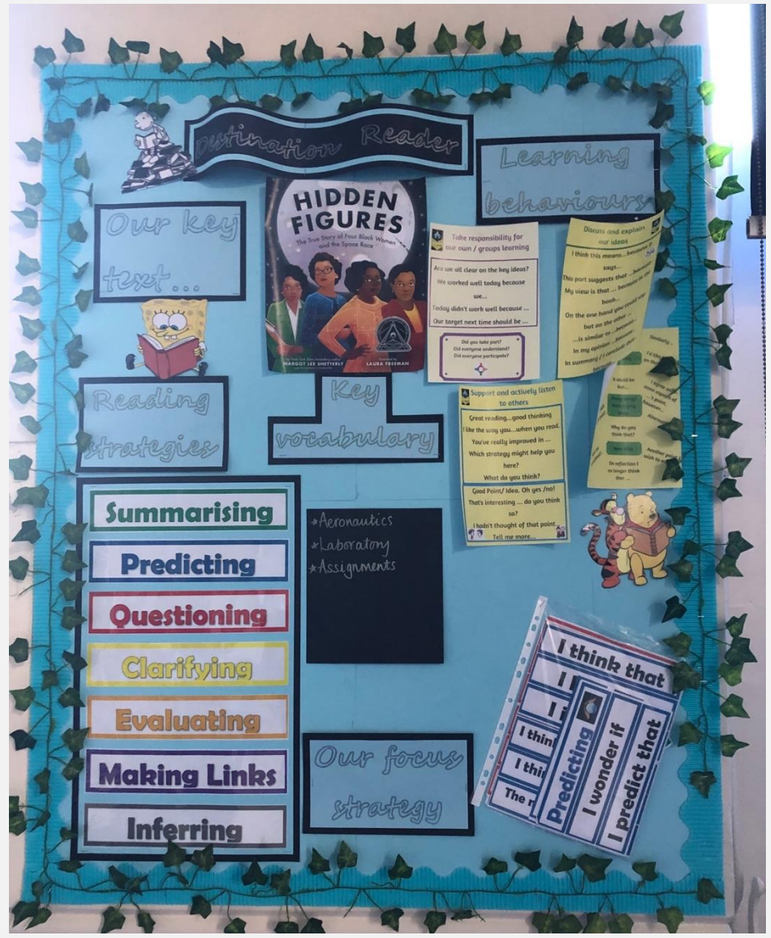
- Talk about the book before reading; make predictions and ignite prior knowledge by talking about what they may already know about the genre, the author, or other books they have read with a similar or the same setting. Making links with other books will support learners with understanding the text they are preparing to read, whilst making predictions will support with building enjoyment – they will want to read on to find out what happens next!
- Practise deepening comprehension of shorter extracts of the text, e.g., looking closely at small chunks such as sentences or paragraphs to discuss between reading. Discuss reading at smaller intervals, e.g., after each sentence or paragraph, rather than at the end of a chapter; looking for inferences and authorial word choices within sentences rather than inferences related to broader reading such as characters' motivations or themes.
- Giving learners opportunities for re-reading following book talk will deepen their understanding as they will be able to give greater attention to the meaning.
- Support readers with understanding and retaining new vocabulary by pre-teaching new words prior to tackling the text.
- Have class 'read-alouds' which gives all learners access to age-appropriate texts. Plan for discussions at key points which will deepen all learners' understanding. Listening to texts being read out loud will also extend learners' vocabulary.
- Use drama and role-play activities to enable learners to explore the meaning of text through first-hand experience thereby deepening their understanding. Drama and role-play also provide engaging activities which are accessible to all learners.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Wherever possible and practical, allow the learner choice in the reading material, e.g., choosing a text from a selection of texts.
- Use props or guides to support learners to focus on following the print in the text in front of them. This could be a lolly stick, cardboard pointing finger or a reading ruler.
- For younger learners, using story sacks or props representing characters or objects in the story can support with maintaining attention, as well as deepening understanding.
- Sharing the reading between the learner and the adult supporting, e.g., taking turns on alternate pages, will help if the learner has difficulties with reading stamina as well as maintaining focus.
- Timetable reading sessions so they are short and frequent; some learners may benefit from multiple shorter sessions each day.
- Where reading sessions are required to be longer, plan for regular movement breaks. This could be a palm press at the end of each page, a hand massage at the end of each double page, ten chair presses at the end of each chapter, etc.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- In advance of the lesson, show learners the book they will be reading; draw them in through reading the blurb, making real life connections or connections with texts they have already read.
- Always begin the lesson with a ‘safe’ activity – this could be listening to the teacher modelling reading, talking about a book together, or re-reading a familiar text that the learner feels confident with and can be successful with.
- Have a clear teach-practise-apply model to reading lessons and ensure that lessons always follow this structure; the learner will feel more confident if there is a familiar routine to lessons.
- With a fiction text, always finish the book, either within the lesson, or across a sequence of lessons. If the lesson is using an extract and the learners are engaged, make time to read the text outside of the lesson; it is frustrating for readers to not be able to complete a book, and find out what happens in the end. The reading for enjoyment is also lost if the text is not read completely.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Teaching writing is an opportunity to be playful – with language, with grammar, with ideas. Through the use of rich texts to stimulate writing, teaching new words and grammar in context and writing for purpose, learners become independent, creative writers and thinkers. Throughout the primary phase, language-rich classrooms are vital to this. In addition, learners need opportunities for oral rehearsal and to develop their thinking out loud – with a partner, in small groups and in whole-class teaching. Use this as an opportunity to model back the correct grammar or to up-level learners' language so that they are exposed to and have opportunities to explore high-level vocabulary and different sentence structures. Be playful with language – learners will make mistakes, but they will experiment and enjoy the effect words can have. Always write for purpose so that what learners are writing is rooted in context and meaning. In the EYFS, this could be writing a letter to the pirates who stole their construction toys to ask for them back; in Year 6 it may be from Charles Darwin recounting his travels and discoveries. Use pictures and actions to support oral rehearsal, embedding new learning and reinforcing new language. For example, use story maps to retell stories, with consistent symbols for story language. You can even draw them top to bottom, left to right and add punctuation to support early reading.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Language is critical to learning, but disparities are stark, as 5-year-olds with poor language skills are five times more likely to be unable to read well at age 11 (National Literacy Trust). Creating a vocabulary-rich classroom is vital to closing the gaps and enabling future attainment. Key questions and vocabulary linked to what you are currently learning should be displayed in your class. You can then refer to the vocabulary on your working walls when you are speaking and when you are modelling writing. This will encourage learners to use the vocabulary displayed to support their independent work. Adding visuals to key vocabulary ensures all learners can access it.

Work to create a culture where mistakes are part of the learning process and are even celebrated. For example, if learners have been using adjectives to describe a monster, as well as asking them to identify their most powerful one, ask them to share their worst (and model doing this too). If you do this sensitively and build acknowledging and sharing mistakes into your practice, learners will feel safe to experiment and try things out because they will see that trying, making mistakes and using them to move forward is part of learning.

Teaching Considerations

Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1 builds on the foundations of the EYFS, developing and embedding basic skills in writing.

- Ensure learners are secure with finger spaces, capital letters and full stops.
- Always model writing, then shared writing and then independent writing.
- When modelling, use actions for these basic skills (such as through kung-fu punctuation).
- Orally rehearse sentences, counting the words on your fingers, and encourage learners to do the same.
- Model your thinking process, including using phonics to segment words or referring to the working wall for ideas.
- To support with segmenting words, model drawing sound buttons and then sounding out the word, pointing to each one.
- For learners who need support to separate words in a sentence and write one at a time, say the sentence and draw a line for each word as you do. Repeat the sentence, pointing to each line as you go.

Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2, continue to model writing and embedding basic skills. This is a time also to model terminology and grammar, drip-feeding it into your modelled and shared writing.

- For example, when asking learners how to make their setting sound scary, repeat back the words or phrases they use and identify their word class: "You said the wind was whistling spookily. Spookily – the adverb describing your verb – makes the night sound very eery."
- As well as discussing terminology, share your thinking process and encourage learners to do the same, making choices about words and sentence structure, reflecting on choices, and editing to up-level or improve vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who are reading below age-related expectations?

- Securing the basics of pen grip, letter formation and spelling allow learners to be able to focus on composing a piece of writing.
- For learners not secure with phonics, this should be a priority. Learners should have plenty of practice writing using the phoneme-grapheme correspondences they know and using the letter formation they have been taught. This can be most easily provided through dictation activities.
- Use picture and word banks of key vocabulary. When learners are doing extended writing, make sure that they have word banks of key topic words with pictures to match. This will support them to find and use adventurous and topic-related language. Ideally, the words for these word banks will be the ones you have generated together in skills lessons and added to your working wall, so they will be the ones learners have already begun to use and explore.
- Use the school marking code or symbols to remind learners of key skills, e.g., if they need to remember spaces between words, you could draw a little hand symbol at the top of their page to remind them or give them a simple reminder sheet of what makes a good sentence.
- Use story maps with actions. Story maps are an excellent way to develop early reading skills and support learners with oral rehearsal. If you draw your story map from top to bottom, left to write, learners can point at each symbol as they retell it. Use the same symbols and gestures to match each time, e.g., → for next, so that learners develop their independence and confidence retelling stories and using story language

Case Study

A learner in Year 6 with dyslexia, a very imaginative and enthusiastic writer, whose writing could not be read without mediation and who could not always read it back herself because she missed words, blended them together and made multiple letter substitutions, struggling to hear and write the dominant sounds in words.

The learner was encouraged to:

- *Identify key words that she would need to spell and then look them up in her spelling dictionary, when sharing ideas with a peer or adult.*
- *Use the working wall (with word and picture banks) to identify key topic words or phrases.*
- *Box up her ideas to help organise her thoughts into a clear beginning, middle and end, when beginning to write.*
- *Look at the first section of her writing and orally rehearse the first sentence, counting the words on her fingers.*
- *Write one word at a time. Midway through and at the end of the sentence, pausing and reading back from the beginning of the sentence, pointing at each word.*

To begin with, the adult would model these strategies, but independence increased over time.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Identify new, interesting or useful words in a text or topic together (e.g., in the plenary of the first lesson looking at a new text) and add them to the working wall together. Refer to these words and model using them in your teaching and encourage learners to use the working wall in their independent writing.
- Rehearse new words. Practise saying them together in a high voice, a low voice, a fast voice, and a slow voice. Come up with an action together (or use a Makaton action), then say the word and show the action to reinforce.
- New vocabulary should be planned for and taught in context. Model using new words in a sentence and give learners time to practise them in context. For example, give them time to answer a question and share their answer.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Pre-teach. For example, if you are starting a new text on a Monday and know a learner will need more time to process it, find time for them to read it (ideally with a peer or an adult) on the Friday before. This allows them to explore it in their own time, ask any questions they may have and then be the expert when the class reads it on Monday.
- Create links in learning in different areas. For example, if you are learning about the Antarctic in geography, read related texts, learn about a penguin's life cycle in science, write an explanation text about it in literacy, represent its life cycle through dance in PE. Also, make links to what learners have previously learnt – did they learn about the life cycle of a frog the previous year? This helps to embed learning.
- Make learning multi-sensory, e.g., if you are learning a new concept or piece of vocabulary, read it, draw it, write it, act it out.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Break the learning into chunks. Ensure you mix teacher talk with partner talk, opportunities to write ideas on a whiteboard, and feedback through gesture (e.g., show me on your thumbs if you agree or disagree; wiggle your fingers if you could up-level my adjective).
- Give learners movement breaks. You can build this into your class routine; they help everyone to concentrate, e.g., before starting a teaching session, choose two or three short OT warm-ups to do together (such as rolling your shoulders 5 times, chair presses, piano fingers). Add these into independent learning when learners are writing for an extended period. For learners who need additional movement breaks, build in opportunities to the lesson. Could they hand out exercise books? Sharpen their pencil?
- Build in opportunities to develop attention and listening skills with your whole class. For example, when feeding back an answer, tell learners that you will ask them to share their partner's answer. To start with, practise this with simple questions (such as, what's your favourite colour?). Increase the complexity of questions over time. When asking learners to retell a story in pairs, play 'story whoosh': one partner begins retelling and, when you give a signal, the other person takes over and continues. You will need to model this first.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Have a clear routine and use visuals to support. For example, share the visual timetable at the start of each day. Refer back to it throughout the day: 'Now we have literacy, next handwriting and after that it is lunch'. If changes occur, share this with learners and change the timetable with them.
- Give learners warning. For example, if they will need to tidy up for lunch, give them a five-minute warning. Then, count them down. This means they know how long they have to finish and are prepared to stop. For some learners, it will be helpful to give them a five-minute sand timer so they can visualise this.
- Allow learners time to complete work. They may really want to finish what they are doing – it can be very frustrating if your story is missing its ending! Find time later in the day or soon after (e.g., for early morning work the next day) where they can finish. Keep their book open and any notes they've made on a whiteboard, so they know that it's in your mind.

Key takeaways to support learners with SEND in writing

The following strategies scaffold learning for all ages and stages:

Communication-friendly strategies:

- *Use gestures*
- *Make it visual: add pictures to word banks to help all children access them*
- *Allow thinking time: always allow thinking time when you ask a question, even before children talk to their partner (think, pair, share)*
- *For those who need it, keep language simple and short*
- *When children need further support, offer forced choices, or use gap fills to scaffold them.*

***Model your thinking process**: as teachers, we often ask questions. While these are important, it is also important to model your thinking process, and to model wondering or imagining. This removes the pressure of a question for a child while still allowing them to develop their thinking.*

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Share the bigger picture

Sometimes the skills that are learnt in English can seem abstract to learners, so sharing where the learning is heading can help learners to understand why they are learning a specific skill at a specific time. The most common time to do this is at the start of a lesson, where you can not only share what you will be learning in that lesson, but also why you are learning this. This may link to specific exam papers, an assessment, wider life skills or current news and events. You can also share the bigger picture at other points, for example before a specific task, or at the start of a term or academic year.

Modelling

Modelling how to write an answer can help learners understand how to approach their own answers. Use sentence starters in your own example that learners can then use in their answers. It is important to not only model how to complete a specific task, but also your own thought process. Speak your thoughts aloud as you are writing, e.g., explaining why you have chosen a specific adjective or explaining how you are searching for the best quotation. This can help learners understand the metacognitive process behind answering a question, as well as how to write an answer.

Reviewing Learning

A review activity which revisits the previous lesson can be a helpful way to remind learners of their previous learning, particularly if you are looking at a text that will span over numerous lessons.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Resources

Think carefully about the design of any resources that you use and ensure it meets the individual needs of learners with SEND, such as an increased text size or an accessible font. Ensure that resources are designed with the end goal in mind; if you are asking learners to annotate a text, have you left a wide margin to give room for this? Can you double space the text to allow for room to write annotations?

Guided groups

Guided group work can be an effective way to help learners with SEND access the learning. Set the whole class off on a task, then gather a small group of learners to work with you. You can then support and guide them in their work, addressing any issues or misconceptions.

Vocabulary

Dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary can be a particular barrier in English. Before you teach a text, identify vocabulary that may be challenging to learners. Depending on the needs of your learners, you could then pre-teach these words or provide a glossary for learners to use as you are reading. As a longer-term strategy, it can be useful to spend some time teaching the etymology of words, particularly looking at Greek and Latin root words. If learners understand that the Greet root ‘hydr’ means water, they can then make an educated guess that hydrate means to take on more water.

Curriculum Consideration

Spiral Curriculum

It can be helpful to think of the English curriculum as an upwards spiral; learners will be covering similar skills in each year group; however, the challenge level needs to increase as learners move through the years. Plan the component knowledge that learners need to master in order to perform a complex composite, like writing an introduction to a Gothic story. Make sure the curriculum introduces it sequentially and learners get the chance to practise it and revisit it. Also ensure there are opportunities to apply this knowledge in more complex contexts.

Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

It is worth familiarising yourself with the Key Stage 2 curriculum to understand what prior knowledge Year 7 learners will have and where there may be gaps to address. The Key Stage 2 curriculum has a strong emphasis on reading comprehension but less on analysis of language. There is also a focus on drafting and editing, which is not as much of a focus at Key Stage 3. When you have identified these differences, you can then ensure that your curriculum spends some time building upon and retaining prior learning whilst addressing the gaps.

Marking and Feedback

Marking work is an important element of English; it allows learners to get individual feedback on their work and understand how to improve. However, it doesn't have to be too time-consuming! Live marking in lessons can be very useful; target a few key learners each lesson and as you look at their work, write comments and next steps.

When marking the work of a whole class, think about how you want learners to respond to your feedback. It might be that whole-class feedback is appropriate, in which case you may not need to write many individual comments on each piece. Or you may divide learners into groups depending on their next steps. This strategy also enables you to do focused guided work with particular learners.

Finally, use clear language in your feedback that learners will understand; if you are using Tier 2 vocabulary, make sure you have explored this previously with learners, so they understand what you want them to do in terms of next steps.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Sentence starters can be used to guide learners through independent writing tasks. Use the same sentence starters for the same activities and/or question types, then you can gradually remove these to promote independence.
- Some learners will benefit from verbally rehearsing answers before writing them on paper.
- Pre-reading a text before the lesson can help learners to access the work. Familiar adults, e.g., families or support staff, may be able to pre-read a specific chapter with a learner to check their understanding, which will help them access the work in your lesson.
- Abridged texts, and in some instances graphic texts, can support learners to access more challenging texts. There are some fantastic examples available that can either be read in a learner's own time, or extracts could be used in lessons.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Revisit Tier 2 vocabulary often to remind learners what it means in English (e.g., analyse, describe, evaluate).
- Teach etymology. Learning the Greek and Latin root words, as well as prefixes and suffixes, can help learners to decode unfamiliar Tier 1 vocabulary and support with spelling.
- Identify key Tier 1 vocabulary from a text and pre-teach this before reading.
- Identify key Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary for a term/topic and create a glossary for learners to refer to if they get stuck.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- When looking at writing, encourage learners to base their work on real-life experiences. Using a specific memory/event can be a good starting point.
- Use the pre-teaching of vocabulary to help develop conceptual understanding. Explore new words by considering real life experiences/previous learning.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Think about how you can chunk your lessons into manageable sections. If you are reading a long text, pause at certain points and complete a quick review activity. If you are writing an extended piece, add in review points.
- Provide learners with an overview for the lesson and identify clear, manageable goals throughout the time of the lesson.
- When you really need learners' attention, for example during task explanations, explain how long you will talk for and what you are expecting, e.g. 'I am going to talk for two minutes to explain the context of the text, so I need you looking at me for the next two minutes'.

Secondary English

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Start each lesson with a review activity based on previous learning. This can help learners to change their mindset from the previous subject to English.
- Share the bigger picture so learners know where they are heading.
- Keep familiarity by using the same language and sentence structures for answers.

How can I support learners to develop independence?

- Model not only how to write an answer, but also the thought processes behind writing that answer. This will help learners understand the metacognitive approach behind writing their own answer.
- Consider how in the term/year/key stage you will gradually remove scaffolding and support for learners.
- Instead of giving learners an immediate answer when they get stuck, teach them the skills needed to allow them to answer the question themselves. It can be helpful to model what you would do, e.g., use a dictionary, look in your glossary for the term, look back at previous work.

Case Study

Molly is a learner with a diagnosis of autism. *She has an EHCP, and whilst she had TA support in English lessons in Key Stage 4, she was often reluctant to accept help. Molly struggles with cognitive overload and would sometimes hide under the table in lessons as a coping mechanism. Molly often misinterprets Tier 2 words in a question, and in lessons would write pages of an answer that was not relevant to the question asked. She also struggled with the transition between lessons.*

To support Molly, various strategies were put in place:

- *At the start of each term, a bigger picture was shared with the class, helping Molly to understand what she could expect in lessons.*
- *Reviews were in place at the start of each lesson to support the transition into the English environment.*
- *Resources were designed considering cognitive load, with tasks being broken down into manageable steps.*
- *Clear guidance was given to Molly for each question type for the English GCSE - initially this consisted of sentence starters, but these were gradually removed to develop independence.*
- *Whole-class modelling.*
- *Vocabulary was explicitly taught in the context of English, especially Tier 2 vocabulary.*

Molly was able to sit her English Language and Literature GCSEs and was awarded her target grade in both.

Drama education varies substantially from school to school, due in large part to the subject being present only as part of the English programme of study, rather than a subject in its own right. The primary National Curriculum refers to the study of drama in relation to a learner's development of spoken language and identifies that learner oracy greatly impacts reading and writing attainment. Yet, the impact that the study of drama can have on any given learner is vast, as it arms them with an array of transferrable academic and social/emotional skills that will follow them well into adulthood.

Drama has the potential to greatly impact learners with SEND in the primary school environment, but care must be taken to not assume automatic accessibility because of the inclusive nature of the subject. Teachers, as with all subjects, must consider the specific needs of the pupils and make adaptations to address these.

How can drama benefit learners with literacy difficulties?

Inference Development

The primary National Curriculum expects learners to be able to draw inferences such as 'inferring characters' feelings, thoughts, and motives from their actions', and to justify these inferences with evidence from the text. For many learners this is not a simple ask, and for learners who struggle with literacy, this can feel insurmountable – some learners will be trying to juggle the range of reading skills whilst simultaneously trying to decode the words in text.

At its core, drama focuses on the exploration of characters and the situations that they find themselves in. Utilising drama strategies such as role-play, thought tracking or hot seating, enables learners to put themselves in the metaphorical shoes of a character and consider how they themselves may feel or respond in given scenarios. For many this can be a transformative experience, that allows them to gain a deeper understanding of a text, that others may gain through reading, thereby supporting the development of inference skills.

The flexible nature of drama as a tool for exploration also means that it can benefit learners at any stage in the reading process. Consider how powerful it could be, if used prior to reading a text, rather than after. If learners can explore a character's situation through imaginative play in advance, teachers are provided with a tangible reference point to use in discussion with those that struggle with literacy. The focus then shifts from solely using the language to comprehend the 'why', to learners using their experiences as a basis. They are then, with careful support, able to make the important links between the 'experience in the space' and the 'language on the page'.

Justifying Opinions

A key aspect of drama study is the evaluation and analysis of performance work. Through this, learners develop their capacity for explanation and providing justifications to support their conclusions, as well as their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This might begin in Key Stage 1 with a simple identification of what they enjoyed, but as learners progress through the key stages, this can slowly move towards a deeper analysis of performance skills or directorial decisions, such as the use of space and levels to convey meaning. This process greatly benefits learners who have difficulties with literacy, as the discussion-based approach allows them to hear model responses from peers, as well as feedback from the teacher, which they can use as a basis for constructing their own responses. The verbal nature of this can remove the initial barrier that some learners face when they put pen to paper, but over time, it can contribute to a growth in confidence and self-esteem.

As they become more confident in this skill, teachers are afforded the opportunity to weave in more challenging vocabulary or sentence structures, thus supporting learners with literacy difficulties to make progress. Furthermore, as the evaluation of performance work can be subjective, it provides the opportunity for discussion and debate. The ability to articulate and justify arguments or opinions developed through these activities will hold learners in good stead not just in reading or writing, where pupils are expected to edit their work for improvement, but throughout their lives.

Standard vs. Non-Standard English

By exploring a range of characters from different contexts, learners are given the opportunity to experiment with language and vary the 'quality and variety of language' that they are exposed to. For example, consider how the protagonist of Berlie Doherty's Street Child, Jim Jarvis, speaks in contrast to other characters within the text or perhaps to those in other texts the learners may have explored.

To ask learners who struggle with literacy what vocabulary is considered formal or informal, standard or non-standard can be very difficult, as some will require a great deal of support to identify meaning in the first instance, let alone the specific context within which certain words should be used. But, through an opportunity to play with language in a 'safe' and 'supportive' low-stakes environment, learners can be guided towards a consideration of how these can be appropriately applied to given situations and thus how to modify their own speech to meet the needs of varying contexts and for different audiences/purposes.

How can drama benefit learners who struggle to participate in social situations?

Drama is a natural part of life. Many learners engage in fictional/make-believe scenarios during play even before formalised schooling. This process provides learners with a way to explore their own sense of self in relation to others. Even when assuming a role different to themselves, learners consider morality, looking at what is wrong and what is right, as well as how to solve the 'problem' within their play. It is therefore important to consider how drama in school can be used to support learners in exploring difficult issues, express their emotions and develop lifelong skills such as self-reflection or empathy, in a structured and supportive environment.

Emotional Intelligence

Social stories and comic strip conversations are common tools utilised to support learners with SEND. Explorative strategies, such as the conscience corridor or forum theatre, can also be valuable methods for exploring situations in response to the social and emotional needs of learners who struggle to engage in social situations. Establishing a fictional scenario where learners have to consider how a character might be feeling and having them vocalise this in the conscience corridor can be a powerful tool for building empathy and/or understanding of how people behave or respond in a social situation, particularly as each child will find different ways to verbalise these emotions. Hearing these responses can have a positive impact on learners, as they may be able to associate these with their own experiences, or in some instances, the way it is phrased by a peer may resonate with them more than a conversation with an adult.

Alternatively, having learners act out the scenario in a forum theatre style, allowing them to pause the action, make adaptations to how characters react within the situation and see the impact these changes have, is an engaging way for teachers to address the concept of choice and consequence. As the scenario develops, the learners can see cause and effect and again make links with their own behaviours outside of the drama bubble.

Following up either of these models with a discussion allows the learners to support their choices with reasoning, whilst carefully considered questioning from the teacher will help them to see how this learning might be applied to their own lives. As well as developing social/emotional skills, activities such as these support the development of key skills such as listening, collaboration and mutual respect.

Confidence Building

The charity Scope identifies that learners with SEND can struggle to stay motivated in school for a variety of reasons, including frustration at their own progress or a lack of confidence and self-esteem. The study of drama can greatly support learners to combat these feelings and have positive experiences across their primary education. The development of skills such as diaphragmic breathing, vocal projection and enunciation supports learners in communicating clearly, but for some learners with SEND, this can lead to a feeling of self-assuredness as their opinions are heard, understood, and counted. In addition, the study of drama supports learners to consider their physicality and the way they hold themselves. Through a deeper understanding of this, e.g., posture and gait, learners can be encouraged to stand or sit taller which studies have shown can have a subliminal impact on a person's confidence.

Strategies provided in the secondary drama guidance can also be applied in the primary classroom to ensure learning is scaffolded to promote effective learning for all.

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Learners gain a great deal from the study of Drama. It is an opportunity for them to explore the world around them, develop a critical eye and learn to adapt their voices and bodies to varying situations, thus holding them in good stead for a wide range of future experiences. Inclusive teaching of the subject therefore is essential in ensuring that all learners can achieve and benefit from the skillset that the subject has to offer.

Reflect the Learners

The drama curriculum, and therefore lessons planned by the teachers, should be relevant to the learners in the school, particularly in Key Stage 3 where the initial foundations of the subject are established. The use of rich and engaging stimuli, including written texts, music, images, and current affairs, should represent the learners in terms of interest, culture, ethnicity, and experience. By doing this, learners are reflected in their studies and are more responsive and open, which may lead to higher quality outcomes. As this engagement is established, teachers can then incorporate other stimuli which reflect different communities, supporting a deeper understanding of the world.

Modelling

Occasionally, despite understanding a set task, some learners are not sure how to actualise it which can lead to feelings of inferiority or apathy. This can be overcome by planning time dedicated to modelling activities to the learners, either by the teacher or a peer, so that concrete examples are given and can be used as a basis to develop work.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Responding to the environmental needs of the learners is pivotal in ensuring that all can access the learning. Unlike many other subjects, drama utilises a fluid classroom layout, where tables and chairs are used either as props, or in written work lessons. This poses some difficulty for learners that require routines and structure. To support these learners, teachers should establish clear routines, seating plans and classroom management strategies and, importantly, maintain these. In addition, classroom displays or media that create sensory experiences (such as lighting or music) can be a source of distraction for some learners. These, however, are essential in the study of drama and so getting to know learners' potential triggers and adapting teaching to these is vital.

For some learners, they may enjoy drama, but the mere idea of performing in front of others is exposing and creates a sense of anxiety which can manifest in refusal to work or poor focus. For vulnerable learners, this concept requires them to make themselves even more vulnerable to their peers, particularly where performance work may mirror their own experiences. As a teacher, identifying this and putting into place strategies such as all learners performing at the same time, encouraging mistakes and/or acknowledging one's own vulnerabilities can, over time, support learners in developing their confidence to perform in front of others.

Literacy skills are essential for the study of drama, from the deconstruction of plays using inference to explore character motivation, to evaluations of directorial intent and audience impact. Therefore, learners who struggle because of literacy difficulties may require a range of strategies to support them in overcoming this barrier. Classrooms should be language rich with regular opportunities for learners to explore new vocabulary and apply this contextually, thereby diminishing differences between groups of learners. For many, it would be beneficial to develop these skills orally overtime before expecting it to be committed to paper.

It is essential that teachers consider learners with physical disabilities as well as cognitive ones. The study of drama focuses on the use of body and voice to convey meaning but teachers should ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to enable all learners to access the learning and be able to perform. For example, a learner with dyspraxia may require support with gross and fine motor skills prior to a rehearsal of a movement piece performed in unison.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 3

Drama is in the unique position of not having a National Curriculum framework to follow in Key Stage 3. This, therefore, affords schools, departments, and teachers the opportunity to be responsive practitioners that adapt the learning to the varying needs within the student body, both academically and socially. For some learners, drama experiences in primary education will have formed a solid foundation for study of the subject, whilst for others their experiences may be limited to performance opportunities such as assemblies or a leavers' production. This poses an interesting challenge for drama teachers when developing a curriculum that considers the varying levels of experience within a cohort, the educational needs of the learners, as well as the requirements of their school's selected Key Stage 4 specification.

For many, Key Stage 3 will introduce learners to a wide range of dramatic styles and genres such as mime, commedia dell'arte and/or naturalism, as a foundation for the use of body and voice in performance. This supports learners in developing the necessary control to adapt to the needs of the piece, in preparation for Key Stage 4 study and beyond. Learners will need regular opportunity to perform and receive peer and teacher feedback to make progress in this area, but with this comes the need to build a positive relationship with the learners whereby they feel safe to experiment and make mistakes, as mentioned above.

Learners should begin to develop their use of explorative strategies to support them in the investigation of social situations or examination of play texts, as well as how drama media impact the audience. Learners should be given the opportunity to embed this learning through devising performance pieces and the opportunity to evaluate their work and that of others, analysing the application of drama techniques and media. In relation to this, learners that struggle with literacy, such as structuring arguments or inference will require a range of strategies some examples of which are outlined later.

Key Stage 4

Drama at GCSE varies across exam boards, but the principal focus is building upon the learning undertaken in Key Stage 3 and applying this to specification requirements. With regards to performance skills, learners will focus on developing further control and being able to make choices independently in conveying their character(s).

Additionally, there should be a greater focus placed on the analysis of performance work both professional and peer, exploring the directorial intent within these. Learners should consider concepts such as symbolism in the use of stage properties, costume, lighting, and sound as well as the actor's use of body and voice to convey meaning to the audience. Where in Key Stage 3 this may have been mostly verbal, there should now be a focus on this in written form.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Where a text may be used as a stimulus for the development of performance work, providing this in advance for learners who may require time to process it, allows them the opportunity to explore this in preparation for the lesson. Therefore, lesson time is devoted to the intended learning objective, rather than the understanding of the text.
- Developing inference skills through short games and activities (particularly in Key Stage 3) supports the development of deductive skills. These literacy skills can then be applied in the exploration of a text, such as character relationships, and eventually lead to exploring more complex concepts such as symbolism and directorial intent.
- Providing speaking frames scaffolds verbal evaluations of performance work and allows learners to structure clear and accurate sentences that use subject-specific terminology. If this is repeated regularly, learners will, over time, be able to apply the sentence structures independently.
- For extended written work, learners may require lessons dedicated to 'slow writing'. This strategy involves teachers modelling a paragraph sentence by sentence, using input from the learners and demonstrating their thought process as a writer, such as how to apply key vocabulary or how to link sentences back to the initial point. Learners are then given the opportunity to develop their own version of this piece, with a slightly different focus, applying their learning with the support from a worked example on the board, key vocabulary word banks and other relevant resources. By its nature, this strategy takes time, but the benefit to learners who struggle with literacy can be extensive, as they are shown the process of writing.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- For subject-specific terminology it is important to physically demonstrate these through modelling and allow learners to put them into action, thus providing concrete experiences to contribute to understanding.
- Regularly model the use of key vocabulary in sentences so that learners can hear them being used in the correct context.
- Use questioning to recap the meaning of key terminology on a regular basis and actively encourage learners to apply terms in class discussion and written work, so that they become part of the learner's everyday language.
- Display key vocabulary on a working wall for learners to access each lesson or display terms that will be used in the lesson on the board for learners to refer to.
- Provide rewards for the correct use of key vocabulary in context, taking into consideration your knowledge of how learners respond to public praise. For some, the praise may need to be in private.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- All learners benefit from clear expectations and routines. Establish routines as early as possible with classes and maintain these. For example, when learners arrive, where do they sit? Will there be a task/question for them to consider at the start? How will you get their attention during practical work? Having these in place allows learners to feel secure in their learning environment and know what is expected of them, particularly where these may not be established outside of school.

- Share changes to routine in advance with learners who struggle with these. Drama lessons can vary in nature, for example one lesson may begin with a short recap discussion whilst the next will begin with teacher in role, using music and lighting to set a particular atmosphere in exploration of a character or to create awe around a new topic. Where lessons, particularly the start of lessons, deviate from the usual routine, it is important to provide notice to some learners, thus supporting them in managing feelings of anxiety and to self-regulate.
- For each task, provide clear timings with resources to support such as music, countdowns and/or visual timers on the board. This allows learners to expect the transition to the next stage of the lesson or task.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Depending on the objectives of the lesson, learners are often required to focus on an activity for a prolonged period. This is particularly true when rehearsing for assessed performances, which requires frequent repetition or watching others, or when completing written assessment pieces under controlled conditions. For many learners this can be difficult, but for those who struggle with attention can lead to significantly reduced productivity, distraction of others or in the case of some, complete shutdown.
- Provide all learners with planned movement breaks in lesson routines. These can be a quick drama game or physical warm-ups that allow learners to expel built-up energy and refocus on the task.
- Ensure task instructions are visible. Learners who struggle with attention may require access to these throughout the task to check that they are on track/meeting expectations. These could be displayed in a simple and clear format on the board, so that they are easy to follow and learners know where to find them. Additionally, it may be useful to have these printed out for all learners to refer to, particularly if working in an area of the classroom that may not have clear sight of the board.
- Ask learners to repeat back what they have heard to ensure learners are listening and have understood tasks/feedback. Pre-warn learners that this will take place so that they are expecting this strategy. It is, however, important that teachers use their knowledge of individual learners to ascertain if this is suitable. For some learners this may act as a trigger for becoming withdrawn and exacerbate an already established barrier to learning rather than supporting them to overcome it.
- Break learning into smaller 'chunked' tasks. The structure of lessons could move between teacher talk, practical activities and peer discussion ensuring that each activity has a clear and manageable intention.
- Consider your learning environment. Using your knowledge of the individuals in your class, you may note that there are points of distraction in your classroom which may need to be minimised/removed.
- Often in drama, particularly with exploration of a text, there may be a number of explorative strategies to be employed. In instances such as these, a practical activity can be layered over time. For example, starting with the addition of a still image to mark a particular moment in the scene, then, once this has been achieved, adding thought tracks to explore different characters' perspectives. This provides learners with a structure to their exploration and, similar to chunking, each layer builds on to the last to form the desired final product.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop a conceptual understanding?

- Model, model, model. It is important to use modelling when teaching a new concept, so that learners can see concrete examples. For instance, learners can often struggle with thought-tracking when first introduced, so demonstrating several good examples in context and having learners critique poor examples (again modelled by the teacher) scaffolds the learning and provides examples that can be used as a basis for their own. Equally important is for learners to physically see/hear the thought process of the person modelling, so that they can apply similar thought processes in the future.
- Explorations of text or preparation for performance can often focus on characters' feelings/emotions. Some learners will find this difficult as they are unable to relate to certain situations or may struggle with understanding people's emotions. To support learners with this, visual representations of emotions coupled with various synonyms for these can be displayed in the classroom and referred to in teaching. In addition, making comparisons between the situation being explored and more relatable experiences may help learners to empathise with the character.
- Repetition is key. The delivery of a lesson where a new concept is taught is the first step to developing conceptual understanding. Learners will benefit from revisiting and repeating ideas over a series of lessons and putting these into various contexts to strengthen their grasp.
- Much of drama is group work and the use of heterogenous grouping (mixed attainment) allows learners to learn from each other and, for those who struggle to develop conceptual understanding, the opportunity to explore these with peers through modelling, discussion etc. can be more impactful than teacher talk.

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Learning in science involves children and young people building their knowledge of important concepts and procedures. When learning new content, learners must connect this to what they already know. This means that it is important that learners develop secure understanding of previously taught concepts and procedures.

When planning lessons, it is important to consider learners with SEND. Carefully consider the objective of each individual lesson; what specifically do you want pupils to learn? How can you present new information in a way that all learners can access? How can complex ideas be broken down into simpler parts for pupils to learn and practice? How can you focus learner's attention on the new content? For example, learners could observe and explore a stimulus to hook them into the new learning. This could be an object, a model, or an image. You should encourage learners to ask questions about their learning and build in opportunities for small group and whole-class discussions. Oracy-led sessions, with visuals to support the access of all learners, can enable you to build on and extend your learners' scientific thinking. If you have an additional adult in the lesson, plan their role and share their responsibilities with them in advance. Further guidance on how you can deploy additional adults is provided here.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Carefully consider the classroom – can all learners access the environment? Consider learners with sensory impairments and physical disabilities.

In creating a conducive learning environment, it is important for each lesson to follow on from prior learning, this can be both from the lesson before, or the academic year before. The curriculum can enable this by making sure that key concepts and procedures are systematically developed over time. Identify possible misconceptions that learners may have, and plan for how you will address these in the lesson. It is also important that curriculum plans try to pre-empt misconceptions by making sure content is taught in a logical order. Create opportunities to pre-teach, providing some learners with the opportunity to learn new vocabulary and concepts in advance of a lesson in a small group setting. Pre-teaching opportunities can also support learners who struggle with transitions or engaging in whole class teaching sessions, as it can prepare them for the learning and practical elements, they are likely to experience in a lesson.

Meticulously plan, and always test practical experiments before the lesson. Use your practice to create step-by-step instructions, which you can then modify with visuals and/or more precise steps for learners needing additional guidance. Make sure learners understand the purpose of each step and that they can link scientific content to what they are doing. The instructions can also be useful for additional adults supporting the lesson, giving them increased confidence when supporting the learning.

Curriculum Considerations

Working scientifically is an important goal of science education. It improves a learner's cognitive, social and linguistic development whilst becoming more inquisitive and interested in the world around them. Skills that are underpinned by scientific knowledge range from making predictions and asking scientific questions, to drawing conclusions and interpreting data or information collected.

As learners progress through each key stage, their knowledge of the methods, processes and nature of science is developed and deepened.

Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1 learners should regularly experience first-hand practical activities to explore and spark their interest for the topic Scientific enquiry weaves throughout the whole of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, so practical activities should be considered which support and develop their understanding of scientific ideas. Secondary sources such as books, photos, videos and simulations should be used to help children and young people learn and make sense of the scientific content.

Key Stage 2

In lower Key Stage 2, learners should now be encouraged to broaden their scientific view of the world around them through exploration, discussion, testing and developing ideas.

In upper Key Stage 2, learners begin to learn about more abstract concepts which support learners in comprehending and predicting how the world around them works. Learners should continue to build on the foundational skills of exploration and talking about their ideas; asking their own questions; analysing functions, becoming methodical when identifying relationships and interactions.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Provide topical word banks and picture cards that the learner can point or refer to when explaining scientific processes.
- Ask teaching assistants to collate word/picture banks on a mini whiteboard/paper with the learner during the teaching input to support their independent learning activity.
- Scaffold learning to make it accessible for all, e.g., if writing up the method for their experiment, a learner with writing difficulties could verbally explain for you or a teaching assistant to scribe, note-take or film explaining their answers.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of numeracy difficulties?

- Scaffold learning to make it accessible for all, e.g., when creating data tables for an experiment, learners with numeracy difficulties could create a pictogram.
- Employ manipulatives and resources used in maths lessons to support learning in science.
- Bring abstract concepts to life through concrete resources and comparisons.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Begin each lesson with a review of the vocabulary learnt in the previous lesson.
- Provide word banks that are accessible throughout the science topic. Encourage learners to tick the words they feel confident with to help target language that still needs support, e.g., when learners can independently use a word in a sentence. This could also encourage and motivate the learner to use language they have yet to use.
- Refer to language regularly during lessons and, where applicable, throughout the school day, as this will embed the vocabulary and build stronger links and associations.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Provide pre-teaching opportunities for learners to hear vocabulary prior to the lesson, to support their access and engagement in whole-class teaching.
- Plan small group teaching opportunities, for example whilst learners who have already met an objective are doing enrichment activities independently, dedicate time to conference with and/or provide additional learning opportunities for learners working towards the learning objective.
- Provide learners with worked examples to use as a model whilst completing independent work.

Progression of scientific knowledge across Key Stages: Electricity

Early Learning Goal:

Children know about similarities and differences in relation to pictures, objects, materials and living things.

Year 4:

Recognise some common conductors and insulators, and associate metals with being good conductors.

Year 6:

Compare and give reasons for variations in how components function including the brightness of bulbs, the loudness of buzzers and the on/off position of switches.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Create a working classroom environment that is calming and simple, e.g., clear routines, organised workspaces.
- Use preferential seating and proximity to engage all learners – have learners who struggle to concentrate at the front of the class, or plan for a teaching assistant to encourage the learner to participate and maintain focus.
- Pre-expose learners to the equipment and nature of the lesson (especially for experiments and practical lessons) to spark engagement and interest in the upcoming lesson.
- Plan movement breaks and classroom jobs (e.g., handing out materials) for individual learners.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Science doesn't always follow the same lesson format and structure, so prepare learners in advance by explaining how the lesson will run.
- Use visuals (e.g., now, next, then boards or visual timetables) to segment the lesson into manageable chunks that are achievable for the learner.
- Think about the individual learner – some learners may be highly motivated if they know something in advance of a lesson. Show them an object, or picture about the lesson, as detailed in the case study.

Case Study

Supporting a learner with autism in mainstream Year 1 science lessons

One of the learner's targets was to initiate and sustain attention to a given task. Following discussions with the SENCO, a Now, Next, Then board (NNT) was created and implemented across all areas of the school day to help structure lessons and support the learner's engagement in modified tasks aligned to the Year 1 curriculum. The NNT had three images for tasks and activities – with some being 'demands' (tasks that had to be completed), and some preferred, motivational activities which served as a reward for completed curricular tasks.

Planning: For science lessons, the teacher and teaching assistant (TA) talked through the expectations and planned outcomes for the lesson, and how these would be communicated to the learner. Some visuals were consistent, though sometimes the teacher and TA agreed language and visuals for more specialised tasks (e.g., when the class went on a learning walk in the local area to observe the changing of the seasons). Tasks were developed in line with the learner's individual needs, and most were planned to take about five minutes to complete. When the NNT was first implemented, the 'next' task was a preferred activity; as the learner made progress towards his target and was consistently able to complete the five-minute task, the 'then' task on the NNT became the preferred activity, so that the learner was extending his attention to curriculum tasks, completing two five-minute tasks before the preferred activity.

Implementation: At transition, when the learner came in from morning play, the teacher greeted the learner and walked with him to the back of the classroom to quietly discuss the lesson 1:1 whilst the TA settled the rest of the class on the carpet. The language staff used was familiar to the learner, and consistent across all adults in the classroom: 'Now you are sorting the animals into groups, next you will draw the animals into your chart, then you can have five minutes free time to create your favourite animal with the Lego' – the teacher pointed to pictures on the NNT board whilst reviewing the parts of the lesson. The teacher would then prompt, 'What are you going to do now?'. Once the learner was set up with his task, the teacher would work with other learners, checking in with the learner regularly. As each task was finished, the learner enjoyed taking the picture off the board – it provided both a sense of achievement and motivation, as he knew he was moving closer to his desired activity. The teacher or TA would prompt the learner, 'You have finished sorting the animals, well done! Let's move the pictures – what is happening next?'

Creating an Inclusive Environment

In science, all learners should be given the knowledge they need to develop their understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science and be able to carry out different types of enquiries to answer scientific questions. Teachers should prioritise getting to know the learners in their classes by observing learning behaviour and speaking with them about their subject and ways in which teaching staff can support their learning.

The classroom environment should be one where learners feel safe to make mistakes; more than most subjects, science lends itself to allowing learners opportunities to learn through guided scientific enquiry. Learners should be guided to develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through working scientifically and the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics. As scientific learning is a process, it is critical for teachers to ensure the set-up of the classroom enables all learners to engage in the lesson. All learners need to be able to see the teacher comfortably (e.g., consider the direction learners face and chair and table height) and have a clear space to complete individual work.

In creating an inclusive environment, consider not only the physical space, but also the structure of your lessons. Greeting learners at the door of each lesson is the beginning of the development of your classroom environment. This is a key strategy for teachers to employ and is of particular benefit for learners who struggle with confidence in the subject. Providing structure enables all learners to engage effectively – tell learners what will happen in the lesson at the start – this can be as simple as talking through a slide identifying key parts of the lesson, and the approximate length of each. At the start of each lesson, a teacher should ensure key vocabulary is reviewed, bringing learners back to where the learning left off at the end of the previous lesson. Throughout each lesson, ensure that key information and resources learners need to apply and understand the matters, skills and processes are available and presented in an accessible manner.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 3

The principal focus is the understanding and application of new scientific content. By the end of Key Stage 3, learners are expected to know, apply, and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study. Working scientifically is of particular importance and should be incorporated throughout the course.

Learners should ask questions and develop a line of enquiry based on observations of the real world, alongside prior knowledge, and experience. Learners should have opportunities to select, plan and carry out the most appropriate types of scientific enquiries relating to the material they study, paying attention to objectivity and concern for accuracy, precision, repeatability and reproducibility.

Key Stage 4

The principal focus is to build upon and deepen scientific knowledge and the understanding of ideas developed previously in the subject disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics.

The sciences should be taught in ways that ensure learners have the knowledge to enable them to develop curiosity about the natural world, insight into working scientifically, and appreciation of the relevance of science to their everyday lives.

Learners should be taught essential aspects of the knowledge, methods, processes and uses of science with aspects of 'working scientifically' incorporated throughout and clearly related to substantive science content in the programme of study.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of numeracy difficulties?

- Model: 'think aloud' when demonstrating solve problems, e.g., balancing equations.
- Provide pre-teaching opportunities for mathematical processes.
- Provide learners with worked examples in relevant lessons.
- Numeracy learning mats: outline common calculations and processes for learners to use as a reference.
- In Key Stage 4, learners could be provided with cue cards or a poster outlining the key physics equations, for reference and frequent practice at home so that they can be learned. Inclusion of visual cues to aid equation recall has shown to be very effective for some learners.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- One-to-one input: for learners who struggle with transition between lessons, develop a routine for entering the classroom with the learner. This could be a brief 1:1 check-in with the teacher or a learning support assistant. Alternatively, there could be a familiar task for the learner to engage with, as all learners enter the classroom.
- Concise language: clear learning objectives should be written in a way that enables tangible achievement, e.g., in physics 'to understand that energy can be transferred from one store to another' should instead be written as 'to describe energy transfers across energy stores'.
- Supportive transitions: provide clear instructions at transition points, both orally and in writing, e.g., on an interactive whiteboard slide, including information about equipment and timings, to support learners.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Model scientific explanations: learners can be given sentence starters for written explanations, or to bring in more challenge, teachers can provide learners with lists of key terminology to include in their responses.
- Deploy additional adults effectively: some learners will need to be taught explicitly how to decode the language used in scientific texts. This could be delivered by the teacher or a specialist TA as part of small group work within the classroom setting during a comprehension task.
- Plan questions, and effective answers, in advance of lessons: teachers and TAs should demonstrate the level of scientific detail required in verbal and written responses, prompting learners with open questions such as 'Why?' or 'What effect would this have?' when learners state facts. Some learners will benefit from having access to planned questions in advance or having an opportunity to answer in a 1:1 or small group environment.

Command Words

Describe

Write facts, events or processes in an accurate way. If it is describing a graph trend, add numbers to your answer.

i.e. looking at a trend in a set of data, an experiment you carried out, the process involved in the reflex arc.

Explain

State the scientific reasons for something happening.

The points must be clearly linked in a logical and coherent order.

Will normally include the word...
Because/ Due/ Therefore

Evaluate

You must **Compare** a number of things just as in a **Compare** question. You must use your own knowledge as well as information in the question.

You must give a balanced answer for both sides of the argument.

Suggest

You must apply your knowledge to a new situation.

Make sure keywords from related topics are use appropriately

There is often more than one correct answer

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Personal experiences and interests: engage learners through relevant examples, or work linked to their interests e.g. in physics, use a video of Usain Bolt's races to calculate average speed.
- Learning checklists: provide learners with checklists for tasks.
- Behaviour Specific Praise: provide acknowledgment and encouragement to learners, at a rate of four positives to every constructive comment.
- Movement breaks through classroom responsibilities: give tasks within the classroom to provide movement opportunities during lessons, e.g., handing out glassware during practical activities.
- Minimise distractions: eliminate distractions wherever possible, thinking carefully about the individual learner, including what distracts them, and adjust seating plans accordingly.

Challenging misconceptions

Learner: Respiration happens in the lungs.

Teacher: What do you mean by 'it happens in the lungs?'

Learner: It happens when we breathe in oxygen, we need oxygen to respire.

Teacher: What is the function of respiration?

Learner: To release energy.

Teacher: Do only lung cells need energy?

Learner: No, all cells do.

Teacher: So, where does respiration take place?

Learner: In all cells.

Teacher: Okay so let's go back to your original statement of 'respiration happens in the lungs' what happens in the lungs?

Learner: Well, the lung cells will respire…but the lungs also take in oxygen for other cells to respire.

Teacher: And what is the process of taking in air which contains oxygen into the lungs called?

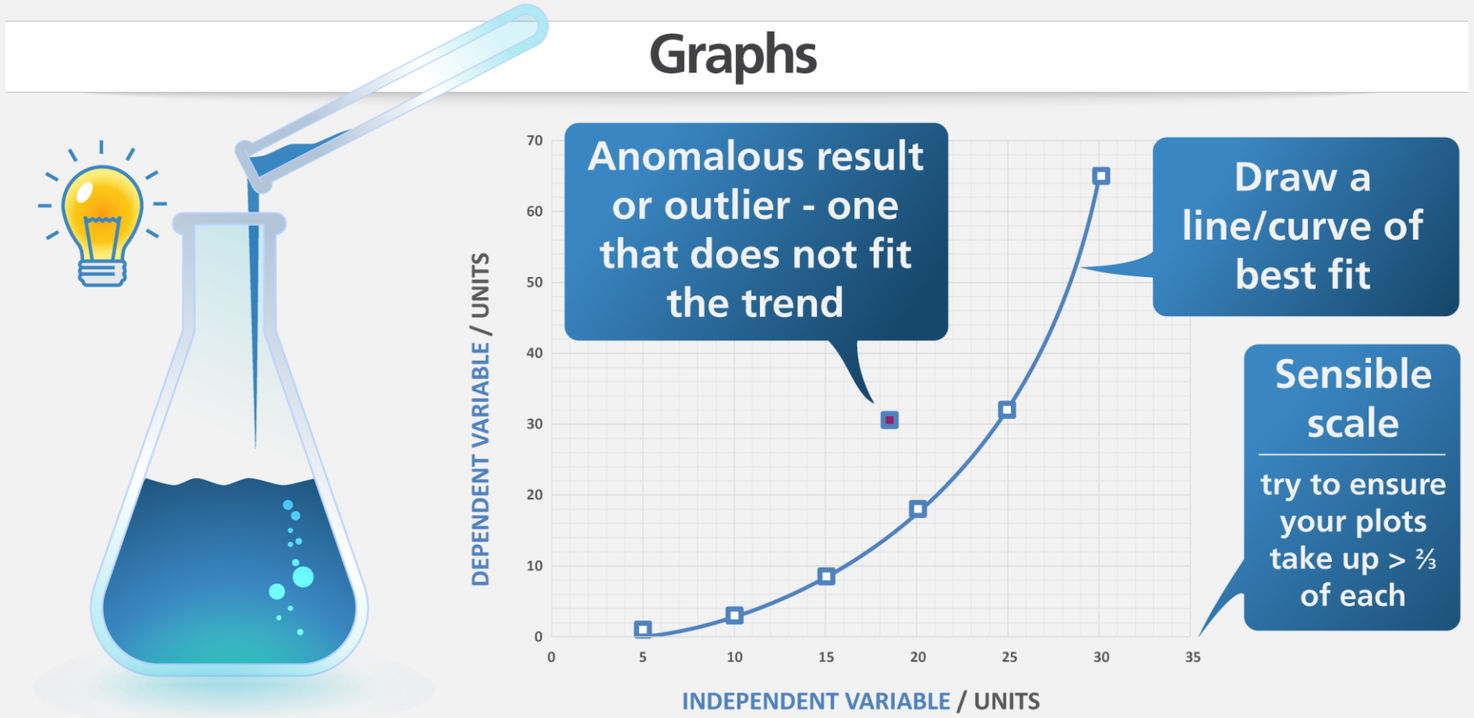
Learner: Breathing.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Develop understanding: when teaching new vocabulary, explain meaning through breaking down the word to help learners see its etymology.
- Repetition: regularly expose learners to complex terminology.
- Use of word banks: give learners key words as standard in every lesson. Ensure learners understand the meaning of each word.
- Effective use of learning walls: create posters for display in the classroom that outline terms and definitions that are used when working scientifically, e.g., reproducibility vs repeatability. Refer regularly to learning walls while teaching and answering questions, e.g., 'Look again at the meaning of independent variable, and think about the variables in this investigation'.

How can I support learners who struggle to develop conceptual understanding?

- Concrete examples: use models of scientific concepts and examples – some learners require concrete tangible examples used wherever possible for the abstract concepts, where these are not possible computer animations can be employed to support learning.
- Real-life experience: consider ways to enable learners to observe the scientific concept taking place.
- Challenging misconceptions: ensure that colloquial phrases are challenged and clarified each time they are used both in class discussions and written work, e.g., 'respiration happens in the lungs'. During class discussions this needs to be done sensitively, however it is important that all learners hear the misconception and understand why it is inaccurate. In planning lessons, teachers should pre-emptively clarify misconceptions, through displaying common examples and exploring them through class discussions.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Music is a unique and powerful form of communication that can change the way people feel, think and act. It combines creativity with emotion, enabling personal expression, reflection and development. As well as creating a sense of group identity and togetherness, music enables personal expression, encourages emotional development, and can foster links with the wider world.

Through the primary phase, music teaching and learning should offer a progression of skills and include opportunities to appraise, compose and perform. In order for music education to be accessible and inclusive for all, teachers need to anticipate potential barriers for individual learners and consider ways of minimising these to ensure participation.

For some learners, music can be a medium to break down barriers that may exist in other curriculum subjects. The nature of the subject allows freedom and flexibility in musical expression, preferences and performance. This is beneficial, not only for musical development, but for the growth of self-confidence and for the fostering of creative flair in all learners.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Where possible, music should form part of the culture of a learner's primary school experience. Beyond discrete music lessons, assemblies, performances, and other curriculum areas can provide opportunities for exposure to a wealth of musical experiences.

Considering this, ensuring that all aspects of learners' involvement in music education is as inclusive as possible, is paramount. Music can form an effective method of communication, so including it as part of repetitive routines such as the attendance register, number and phonics learning, as well as other daily routines, can provide predictable, reassuring and memorable experiences for learners.

At times, music can create challenges for learners with sensory issues. This needs to be considered when creating an effective learning environment. Consider the practical layout of the room and the position of the learners. Will they be working with a large class or a smaller group? Although music-making opportunities, such as playing instruments together or singing, lend themselves to groups, some learners may benefit from working individually, with or without the support of an adult and/or ICT.

Consider the physical layout of the workspace. Will all learners, especially those with physical disabilities, be able to access resources and have the space to play an active part in the lesson? If there is the opportunity to alter visual and/or auditory stimuli to respond to individual needs, then this should be considered.

Music and ICT

- *Chrome Music Lab*
- *BBC – Bring the Noise – free interactive musical games to support learners*
- *BBC Ten Pieces*
- *Soundbeam – software for learners with physical disabilities*
- *AudioMulch and Garage Band – interactive composition tools*

Curriculum Considerations

Across both key stages, learners should be encouraged to perform, listen to, review, and evaluate a wide range of music from different genres. This is a key part of their primary experience as it supports the development of personal preferences, respect for the opinions of others and appreciation of the impact that music can have on mood.

All learners should have the opportunity to sing, to learn an instrument and compose their own music with or without the use of ICT.[1] Understanding and exploring how music is created, considering inter-related dimensions, is something that can be achievable and is adaptable to all learners, regardless of individual needs.

Key Stage 1

Singing, chanting and rhyming form significant parts of the Key Stage 1 curriculum, as does the playing of tuned and untuned instruments, musically. Carefully selecting instruments ensures that all learners can access this element of the curriculum and be successful at it. They will begin to develop the foundational knowledge and skills to enable them to explore sound. Correct terminology can be used, but there are ways of simplifying this, using pictorial or visual aids to support understanding. Learners should be regularly listening to and appreciating a range of live and recorded music, e.g., Classical 100. This can be incorporated into other areas of school life, including assemblies.

Key Stage 2

The skills previously acquired in Key Stage 1 will be developed further to encourage singing and playing musically with increased confidence and control. There is a greater emphasis on composition, including improvisation, for a range of purposes. Although the National Curriculum mentions using and understanding musical notation, this can be represented in different ways to meet the needs of all learners. Regular exposure to a range of high-quality live and recorded music will help to build a familiar and recognisable repertoire for learners.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Carefully consider the layout of the learning environment to engage all learners and maximise access to resources, bearing in mind that circles and grouped tables can be a barrier to attention on learning.
- Pre-expose learners to the content of the lesson, e.g., show them particular instruments and how they are played, share snippets of music and pre-teach musical elements and terminology.
- Consider potential unhelpful sources of distraction, such as over-frequent changes of task or unstructured group work.
- Give learners a particular role in the lesson to keep them engaged and promote active participation.
- Arrange movement breaks or short 'time out' breaks away from the learning environment when and if necessary.

How can I support learners who have sensory issues?

- Consider the size of the group and allow for the fact that learners may benefit from smaller groups or individual work.
- Music lessons can be challenging for learners with auditory sensitivity. Pre-exposure to music and/or instruments can help to prepare learners, as can the use of a neighbouring room, if space allows. Ear defenders can enable learners to partake in lessons with more confidence.
- Create opportunities for physical contact with instruments and/or sound sources if learners cannot hear sounds clearly. Percussion, stringed, wind and brass instruments all lend themselves well to this.
- Consider the lighting in the learning environment and if learners would benefit from reduced glare on interactive whiteboards and computer screens.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Provide visual aids to enable learners to identify instruments and musical dimensions, such as pitch and tempo.
- Use strategies such as modelling, demonstrating and imitating to help learners understand musical concepts.
- Create a graphic score or pictorial representations of a composition to provide a form of non-verbal communication.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Begin each lesson with a recap of key vocabulary learned to date.
- Provide visual word banks that are accessible throughout, as necessary. For support in identifying different instruments photographs of those learners playing the instruments, can help with retention. For support with the meanings of musical dimensions, pictorial word banks can be effective.
- Drip-feed key vocabulary throughout the school day, rather than limiting references to specific music lessons. Discussions around music listened to during assemblies or in other curriculum areas can help to embed this language.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Break down content into small steps and allow time for guided practice of each step to build up conceptual understanding.
- If resources allow, create a small group opportunity to enable learners to develop understanding with closer adult intervention.
- Maximise opportunities to model, demonstrate and imitate in to encourage active participation through a scaffolded experience.

Case Study

A learner in Year 3 has a range of learning difficulties including gross and fine motor skills delay, low muscle tone, hypermobility and auditory sensitivity. She finds loud noises challenging at times, especially if they are unexpected.

It has taken several years to build her confidence enough to partake in whole school assemblies, especially when large groups are singing, cheering or clapping together. She loves to sing, has gradually built up the confidence to join the school choir and has played a small role in choir performances, with careful and gradual confidence building.

Historically, music lessons have been challenging, at times due to her sensitivity to noise. With an EHCP in place, she has an adult working alongside her and this has enabled flexibility with her involvement in lessons. Pre-exposure to learning environments and instruments has been crucial in Child A's development in music education. Having the opportunity to test out instruments and listen to the sounds they make in advance of lessons, often alongside a trusted friend, has helped with familiarisation, enabling her to take part with more confidence. At times, this has enabled her to be 'the expert' who shows the rest of the class what to do.

On occasions, such as during whole-class lessons using African drums, Child A has used ear defenders to reduce the sound and this has been a successful intervention leading towards full participation in the lesson.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Music is a unique subject in many ways, not least because of the part it plays in nearly every learner's life outside of school. Many learners feel that music forms part of their identity – and, as such, it has huge meaning for them – but that music in school fails to connect with this. Sometimes, the perceived gap between learners' musical experiences in school and their out-of-school musical lives is a gaping chasm.

One of the ways to create an inclusive environment is to build learners' own musical experiences and tastes into what happens in school. This does not mean to say that the curriculum should only include the music that learners already know and like, but that it is worthwhile spending time getting to know the learners, their tastes and abilities. Interests can be nurtured, hidden skills celebrated, and links made between new material and that which is already familiar.

An environment which is inclusive and broad in its appreciation of different musical interests and skills should also be a place where there is freedom to take risks and make mistakes. By modelling creative processes and creating an atmosphere which celebrates participation over perfection, you can help learners of all abilities to understand that musical endeavour of all sorts should be appreciated and supported. The most important step you can take is to be a learner alongside your learners, and do whatever you expect them to do, even if it is not your speciality. It is more important to show the process of having a go than to be perfect.

Curriculum Considerations

Key Stage 3

The content of any Key Stage 3 music curriculum needs to work for the individual school, its learners and its ethos, and as such it is impossible to be too prescriptive. However, to be inclusive, it should cover not just a wide range of musical styles, but a wide range of 'ways in' to acquiring different musical skills. For example, ensure that conventional notation is not the sole starting point for performance, and that chord diagrams, guitar tab, and playing by ear are used frequently as well.

Plan for resources which give learners all the information that they need in a range of formats: conventional notation where appropriate, but with the possible addition of colour coding or note names; guitar tab, chord diagrams, diagrammatic representation, grid notation (for rhythms), note names on their own with an indication of up and down.

When planning for group work, you will need to think carefully about the needs of everyone. Some learners with SEND may work best with a particular individual or a supportive group, but others may prefer to work on their own, and it is important to find ways to enable them to achieve in whichever way works best.

Key Stage 4

In Key Stage 4, there is more of an emphasis on individual work with performing and composing, and on specific types of listening questions. Ensure that information on new topics is provided in a variety of formats; particularly that music itself is used as one of the key communicators. Aural experience of a musical feature or device is often a more effective path to understanding than words.

Ensure that learners are performing music that is suitable for their skills, and negotiate with them (and, where appropriate, their instrumental teachers) the best pieces to choose for assessment. Keep assessed performances private, rather than with an audience, if this will suit learners best, and allow plenty of time in case things go wrong the first time.

Finding the right medium for composition is the key to inclusivity in this area. There is no 'one size fits all' solution and it is very likely that there will need to be different working methods happening in the same class. Some learners will be happiest using a computer for composing – in which case choice of program is paramount – but others will thrive when working on their own instrument. Be prepared to be creative with a combination of a recorded 'live' part and an accompaniment that has been created on a computer, if this is something that will suit the learner. Learners may need to develop the components of compositional styles. This chunks the task into smaller, achievable steps and helps to avoid 'blank page syndrome'.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

The mantra of 'sound before symbol' is a great place to start – whether the 'symbols' in question are notation or words. Plan to introduce every new topic or concept through aural experience of the music itself, using the power of music as a non-verbal language.

Another is 'Show me'. Learners often struggle to verbalise what they mean when they want to tell you about a problem with their work or ask a question. Go straight to asking them to show you what they are doing. You will be able to respond to this much more effectively, as there is less chance of meaning being lost in inaccurate words – on both sides. You may even be able to respond musically yourself, through modelling the correct approach, or with a simple adjustment to what the learner is doing.

It is of crucial importance to model musical skills, so that learners can see and hear what they should look and sound like. The difference between modelling and demonstrating is that modelling involves breaking down the skill into steps, deconstructing each part, and talking through thought processes, decisions, and possible pitfalls as you go. If it is an instrumental skill that you are modelling, ensure that learners can see the relevant details, by using a visualiser or by making a short video in advance. Video content can also be used as a 'help desk' for learners to refer to later in the lesson if they want a repeat of the modelling.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

There are two parts to learning musical vocabulary: being able to recognise and name a musical feature when it is heard in music and being able to put what it means into words. In every case, it is essential for the teacher to determine which of these is necessary for the learning taking place.

In either case, repetition is key. For key words, choral speaking can be a very useful tactic. For example, to teach that a chord is two or more notes played at the same time, ask the class 'What is a chord?' and have them respond together 'Two or more notes played at the same time.' Then reverse this and ask, 'What is two or more notes played at the same time?', to which they respond, 'A chord.' Repeat this frequently to reinforce the definition, but also back this up with reference to the **sound** of a chord, by playing a simple 'note or chord?' aural identification game. To take this a stage further, you could set simple 'show me' tasks where you ask learners to demonstrate musical concepts such as chord, sequence, dotted rhythms etc. using their instruments or voices.

Think about whether it would be appropriate to give learners lists of the key words which will be used in the lesson, or whether these could be pre-taught to learners. You could also make use of key word displays (including definitions or not, as appropriate), perhaps organised by element, so that a choice of appropriate terminology is easily referenced at any point in a lesson.

How can I support learners who struggle to develop conceptual understanding?

If possible, introduce a musical concept through a playing/singing activity before any talking about it is done. Link any subsequent explanation back to the initial activity and build on the concept in a musical, rather than verbal, way where possible.

Be aware of the threshold concepts involved in what you are teaching. Threshold concepts are 'gateway' ideas: they are necessary for further understanding, and their absence will be a barrier to learning. For example, basic musical threshold concepts include knowing that there are seven basic pitches A-G that repeat in each octave; the idea that each C is equivalent to, but different from, every other C; and that melody is a combination of pitch and rhythm. Ensuring that gaps in threshold knowledge are identified and rectified can be a crucial part of developing conceptual understanding.

Plan carefully for what graphics might be helpful in developing conceptual understanding. Some musical concepts, for example texture, work extremely well when represented using simple graphics. Concepts are best learnt by examples and so the provision of musical examples which best demonstrate the concept and its boundaries is important.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

Focus on what learners need to do right now to get started on a task. Once the very first step has been taken, break down subsequent activities into short chunks with a specific end point. Support the maintenance of attention by avoiding unnecessary changes in task. Make it easy for the pupils to attend to learning due to the clarity of the instruction. If learners have been still and focussed for a while, get them doing something more physical.

Some learners will respond positively to being given tasks that have some relation to a favourite style or artist. For example, if learners are working on performing skills on a particular instrument, being given the chance to play a favourite song will be highly motivating and engaging. If possible, have a range of options available, from which learners can choose.

Simple checklists can be provided for learners, so that they can keep track of what they need to do, and tick off each step on the way to completing the task.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

A music lesson can be a noisy and potentially chaotic place, with transitions that may seem dramatic and perhaps disturbing for some learners. Many will feel reassured by knowing in advance what will happen in the lesson, so they have some warning of what to expect. As well as telling learners verbally at the start of the lesson, you could also have visual cues on the board for each type of activity, to act as a prompt. The setting up of regular, predictable routines at the start of the lesson will further support learners.

Give warnings in advance of major changes, which might be noisy or involve a lot of movement, for example by saying ‘in a minute you will get out your instruments and start practising’, or ‘we will be listening to your performances in 10 minutes.’ For transitions involving learners moving around the room, consider a phased approach where small numbers move at any one time, to avoid any kind of free-for-all.

One way in which you can help to manage learners’ approaches to change is to be specific about the characteristics they need to exhibit. Translating musical knowledge into performing or composing can present challenges that are daunting. Being explicit about the knowledge that is required, what needs to be done, and how you should **be** while you’re doing it, demystifies the process and adds a tangible personal dimension to a checklist of tasks.

For further information and support, Music Education Hubs are groups of organisations working together to create joined-up music education provision, respond to local need and fulfil the objectives of the Hub as set out in the National Plan for Music Education.

Primary Art and Design

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Art and design is an essential means of creative expression that can boost self-esteem and give learners the agency needed to develop and communicate their personal ideas, observations, and creations. It lends learners opportunities to develop both individually and collaboratively, the latter highlighting the importance of working together for a common purpose to demonstrate to learners that their contribution is important. Thereby art and design connects learners to the wider world in ways that other subject areas cannot.

When planning schemes of work, teachers need to consider how to make the curricular goals in art and design accessible and inclusive for all learners. Potential barriers to learning for individuals should be anticipated alongside a pathway to ensure these learners can actively participate in the best possible way. Planning should clearly identify what children and young people will learn. Teachers should consider factors that support each learner's needs, and factors that may inhibit or prevent learning such as use of equipment, environmental sensitivity risks, gaps in knowledge of vocabulary or processes. Teachers should also be mindful of how to balance adult support alongside opportunities for independent learning, ensuring that tasks are broken down and build incrementally.

The range of pedagogical approaches that art and design can offer, is useful for many learners to overcome some of the barriers that may present themselves in other curriculum areas. Indeed, some learners may thrive, enjoying the prospect to express their ideas in a way that is unique to them.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

The benefits of art and design can have a profound effect on learners, not only through developing knowledge of art and its associated practices but, in addition, the cultivation of self-confidence that the nurturing of creativity can bring. In this sense, it is vital to carefully consider the classroom spaces and the learning environment to ensure all learners can fully access this curriculum area. There can be challenges for learners with physical and sensory issues, as well as for those with self-regulating behaviours.

Consider the practical layout of the room and seating. Do learners with a physical disability have the appropriate space to work? Do learners who struggle with fine motor skills have a broader resource base? Do learners with more sensory needs have access to adapted visual or auditory aids? Some learners' needs can lead them to struggle to work as part of a group and they may benefit from working more individually. Build in plenty of discussion time where all learners feel safe to voice their ideas. Explain how experimentation is an opportunity to develop ideas and that there is not one correct way to do this. Provide a variety of model examples to support learners and develop their skills and confidence. As a further part of planning, always test a practical task before a lesson, as this can pinpoint techniques that may need to be adapted. Sharing these findings as part of modelling a task to learners will be a valuable learning opportunity for them.

There may be circumstances when pre-teaching can be planned to ensure a learner or group has access to new vocabulary, information or resources before the lesson takes place. This will help those who may struggle to engage, in that they are prepared for the lesson experience.

Curriculum Considerations

Art and design teaching and learning should offer a progression of knowledge and through a range of pedagogical approaches, access a wide range of processes, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, collage, textile and digital art. Learners should have the opportunity to learn about a range of artists, craft makers, designers and architects from across the genres, as well as across the wider historical and contemporary cultural world. Learners should be given opportunities to develop ideas, experiment with techniques and processes, and present their findings through evaluating their own work and that of others. Sketchbooks are paramount opportunities for capturing these learning journeys. Another consideration is the cross-curricular opportunities that art can bring.

Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1 builds upon what was learnt in EYFS with further opportunities given to develop fine motor skills, experiment with a broader range of media and become more independent artists. There should be regular opportunities for learners to practise their fine motor skills through making using a variety of media, as well as regular opportunities to experiment, for example mixing primary colours. Practical activities should be accompanied by visual resources including videos, photos or examples of artwork. Additionally, any new vocabulary should be introduced, displayed and used in context by adults regularly. Equipment should be broad-based, so that all can access the lesson. Independence should be nurtured. Although sketchbooks are not mandatory until Key Stage 2, they are beneficial to use throughout the primary phase and all learners will enjoy using them.

Key Stage 2

Key Stage 2 builds upon and expands learners' knowledge of art and design, providing them further opportunities to learn the subject. Sketchbooks are used to record observations and experiment with ideas; all learners benefit from being taught and modelled how to use a sketchbook, including annotations, sketches, collages, mock-up and final outcomes. The contextual side of art is expanded upon to include architects in the range of artists and designers. Learners will start to develop an appreciation of artists and designers as they look at similar and different ways artists have worked across time and contexts. Learners will continue to experiment and revisit art and design techniques and methods to improve their mastery allowing them to be confident with their experimentation and expression of ideas.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Provide visual aids to enable learners to identify artists and their work, as well as to identify equipment and media.
- Provide a word and/or picture bank for the learner to refer to during guided and independent activities.
- Use strategies such as modelling, demonstrating and imitating to support learners in understanding the step-by-step processes.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Learners will hear and use a range of specific vocabulary including pattern, colour, tone, texture, line, shape, form and space. Discuss and display any key vocabulary together with its meaning. Practise saying them together.
- Provide visual word banks that are accessible to the learners.
- Ensure that the vocabulary becomes embedded by referring to it regularly during lessons and whilst modelling.

How can I support learners who struggle with fine motor skills?

- Consider using frames or adhesives (e.g., masking tape) that hold down learners' work to surfaces in cases where learners may struggle to hold a resource in place. Provide learners with larger scale materials to work on and gradually decrease the scale as they acquire greater control.
- Encourage learners to experiment with different media, for example when drawing offer chunkier graphite sticks as well as soft 'B' range pencils. Similarly, offer a range of painting application media – some learners may prefer a sponge to a brush or may even use their fingers at times.
- Plan each lesson well in advance, to consider points where learners may struggle and allow for adult guidance accordingly. Use of scissors can be a source of frustration for some learners and wider-handled or easy grip scissors can be a useful aid.
- Engaging in art and design activity is great for helping build fine motor skills for all children. Learners will enjoy and benefit from using malleable media such as clay or air dough.

Case Study

A learner in Year 3 has a range of complex learning needs, including a language disorder associated with social communication difficulties. His speech was late to develop and he struggles with expressive language. He finds using fine motor skills challenging and can react to loud noises. Despite his communication difficulties, a safe and nurturing learning environment has enabled him to take part in discussions and offer his thoughts.

The learner has previously found art lessons challenging due to his struggles with fine motor control. He has an EHCP and therefore has an adult working alongside him to familiarise him with processes through pre-teaching. This pre-exposure has allowed him to explore any new media in a safe and sensory way, and the discussions stimulated have been instrumental in giving him confidence to fully participate in lessons. The adults that support him have worked on removing any pressures and ensuring he is comfortable; these actions have enabled him to grow in confidence and to see art as an enjoyable activity.

Nurturing a learning environment in which Child A can feel comfortable is at the root of his participation. This is alongside ensuring he has the practical means to do so – the correct choice of equipment, the right space and any extra sensory resources to support him. For example, when undertaking a lesson on portraits in the style of Picasso, Child A benefitted from having a selection of 2D shapes to hand so that he could feel and visualise the properties before drawing them. These supports are all the more crucial, given his propensity to prefer to work alone. Art gives him the opportunities to express himself and develop his own ideas.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Reflect on the positioning of learners within the classroom to maximise their engagement. Some learners will benefit from working and interacting with selected others. A calm environment will help minimise distractions.
- Consider adapting the lesson to break it into chunks that permit time for paired or group talk and allow tasks to be completed across manageable stages.
- Pre-expose learners to the content of the lesson by sharing with them any resources to be used as well as the content of the lesson, perhaps the work of an artist they are learning about or an example of the kind of outcomes they will produce. This will support learners to engage in the processes.
- Giving time for learners to look back through their sketchbook to make connections to what they already know, which in turn can help nurture motivation.
- Allow movement breaks if and when necessary and give learners classroom jobs such as handing out a resource. This will support learners who struggle with self-regulation.
- All learners should routinely clean and tidy away the equipment they have used and time for this needs to be built into lessons, as it is a useful tool for encouraging independence as well as managing transitions.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Provide opportunities for small group learning either before (pre-teach) or during the lesson. This will support learners and allow time to ask questions or explore resources alongside adult intervention. These opportunities are part of the repetition process needed to maximise capacity to build up conceptual understanding.
- Take time to model and demonstrate each element of a process, allowing learners to develop their understanding through a step-by-step approach. This will benefit all learners as it allows for an active participatory approach.
- Showing outcomes from the previous lesson's work can be a useful memory aid.
- Have visual aids in the form of worked examples that the learners can have to hand when completing independent tasks.

These strategies scaffold learning across all year groups for practical art lessons:

- *Share information visually as well as through discussion.*
- *Allow sufficient talk time to encourage thinking and idea sharing.*
- *Key vocabulary should be clearly displayed and used repetitively throughout lessons.*
- *Introduce each piece of equipment – name it, explain what it does, model how it can be used or applied.*
- *Model processes on a step-by-step basis, allowing learners time to do practical tasks alongside the teacher. It is important the teachers' thought processes are shared aloud.*
- *Ensure any equipment to be used is fully accessible to all and adapted for individuals as necessary to ensure all can fully participate.*
- *Support learners to develop their fine motor skills through regular opportunities.*

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Art and design naturally encourages learners to problem solve, to be self-critical, to make decisions and to take risks within their learning. The encouragement of self-expression and exploration supports learners to embrace ‘the happy accident’ and ‘learn through their mistakes’.

As a subject area, art and design can so easily be inclusive, it encourages every learner to explore ideas visually, encouraging learners to investigate, record and test their ideas through a creative journey.

Art and design asks learners to observe the world around them, to slow down and to experience. Each learner has an entitlement to create their observations through a range of media, materials and processes. To ensure that every learner in our classroom shares this entitlement, the needs of everyone must be thoughtfully considered, ensuring any barriers to learning are mitigated.

An inclusive art and design lesson will be thoughtfully planned to ensure that learning is appropriately ‘chunked’ with additional scaffolding or challenge provided for all. Text, visual aids and instructions won’t be onerous, but direct and succinct. Every effort will be made to ensure each learner has the appropriate toolkit to succeed in the art and design classroom.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

The art and design classroom is notoriously one of the most exciting and visually engaging rooms in the school building. It should be a place where learners feel safe to learn yet supported to be creative; a place where learners acquire knowledge and theory through practical pedagogical approaches. Caution should be taken, however, around the concept of cognitive overload. One easy way to do this is to ensure that learners are not being asked to think about or remember too many things at once. For example, a learner is introduced to a process, which contains a number of steps, and reminders of how to manipulate or handle the material, without this knowledge being secure. This means the learner is trying to hold all this new information in their working memory, as a result become overwhelmed by this new information, struggling to remember it in the long-term; limiting their capacity to be creative and develop mastery. Instead, teachers should be mindful to chunk new information and connect it to prior learning, gradually increasing its demand or complexity.

The art and design classroom needs to be a functional space for all to learn in. Keeping an organised and tidy classroom will encourage learners to take pride in their art room and the work they produce in it. A well-organised classroom will also maintain the safety of those within it. As a practical subject, learners need to navigate their way around the room with ease. Consideration for those with both physical disabilities and sensory impairments must be regularly reviewed to ensure that all learners can access the space.

Throughout their school careers learners will be asked to engage with a large and varying range of subject-specific equipment. Materials and processes should be risk assessed as per school guidelines, ensuring equipment is safe to use with everyone in the classroom. An individual risk assessment may be required for specific learners when using certain equipment. This should be discussed with the SENCO and the Health and Safety lead within the school. To maintain a fully inclusive art and design classroom, adaptations to materials and equipment may be required. If this is not appropriate, alternatives should be sought in their place. For example, this could take the form of a grip on a 2b pencil or wide handled ink roller for a learner with mobility issues.

Environment not only refers to the physical space within the art classroom, but also the learning environment and working atmosphere that is created when learners are present. The art and design rooms are unlike many other classrooms in the school building in terms of how they operate; this can pose challenges for those who struggle to maintain attention, prefer working in silence or have a range of sensory needs. The teacher can drive the mood of the room, aiming for a balance of calm, thoughtful learning and enthusiastic creative energy. It is, however, important to monitor learners who can be affected by noise, disruption, movement etc. Adopting a growth mindset within the art and design classroom can hugely improve learner confidence. As a predominantly visual subject, it is increasingly easy for them to compare their work with each other. This can often lead to low engagement with those who feel their work 'is not as good' as the person sat next to them. Using simple techniques such as praising effort and progress, not outcome can help foster strong self-esteem. Teachers should provide learners with precise praise for their efforts and specific feedback and guidance to improve, based on on-going assessments.

Curriculum Considerations

An inclusive art and design curriculum ensures that each learner can benefit from and achieve. As a result, careful consideration needs to be given to the building blocks that allow learners to perform the curricular goals. Teachers need to think carefully about adapting teaching to help learners achieve, addressing their specific needs. The National Curriculum for art and design encourages pupils to acquire practical, theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the subject. It encourages opportunity to make, create and acquire knowledge of materials and processes by exploring cultures and history to inform creative endeavours as its curricular goals

Key Stage 3

The National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 art and design outlines the type of practical skills a learner should become proficient in, suggesting that they should learn and develop skills in recording observations through a number of different media. As well as practical-based skills, learners should develop personal skills throughout their study of art, including critical thinking, self-reflection, creative development and the ability to appraise the work of others. It is, however, deliberately lacking guidance in how these skills should be delivered by the teacher or obtained by the learner. In doing so, a significant degree of autonomy is afforded to the art teacher. The openness of the art and design curriculum gives the teacher the opportunity to thoughtfully plan and deliver a wholly inclusive programme of study, bespoke to the learners within their classroom. A Key Stage 3 art and design curriculum should be knowledge rich, exposing learners to a wide variety of skills, media, ideas and processes. The content that is delivered in the early stages of a learner's Key Stage 3 life is incredibly important in shaping them as future artists. They need to be equipped with the skills, knowledge and material know-how to be able to make informed and creative decisions later in their artistic journey. They need to be able to apply their understanding of a material or process to their own creative outcomes, which is only possible if they have a strong foundation of knowledge, experimentation and understanding to draw upon in the first instance. The Key Stage 3 curriculum should also build on the basic skills and processes that learners have been exposed to in Key Stage 2. It should be noted however, this can vary from primary school to primary school, and it is always worth finding out where learners are in their journey, before delivering subject content.

Key Stage 4

GCSE art and design encourages learners to build on and develop their knowledge from Key Stage 3 and perform it visually through their making. Although different exam boards have different specifications, the overarching themes are the same. It requires learners to develop personal ideas informed by the world around them, to experiment with media, materials and processes, to record and observe and to produce a personal and meaningful response to a stimulus. This same ethos is outlined in the National Curriculum for Key Stage 4 art and design studies. Like Key Stage 3, the way in which this curriculum is delivered is unspecified and therefore unique to each individual teacher. This, by nature, fosters an inclusive curriculum, one in which every learner can succeed. Learners should focus on developing their own creativity at GCSE through the application of the skills and knowledge they have gained in Key Stage 3. A cyclical process of revisiting and extending knowledge should be applied to ensure they are given ample opportunities to practise and experiment. It is important to get to know a learner's strengths and areas of improvement at GCSE, to help support their decision-making and offer informed guidance on their work. Learners should be encouraged to produce work that they find interesting or that is of personal interest to them. The inclusive nature of the subject allows them to follow an infinite number of creative paths in their artistic journey and it is the role of the teacher to help them realise these intentions.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I ensure access for learners with a physical disability?

- Know your learner's needs: know what their physical impairment is in advance of meeting them for the first time and have arrangements in place. For example, removing the stool where a learner in a wheelchair will sit in the class, mitigates any unnecessary attention being brought upon them when they arrive to your room.
- Adapt your plans: consider how your lesson plan can anticipate a wide range of learners – rather than making changes to existing planning, teachers should aim to anticipate diverse body/minds in the art room. Avoid giving learners something completely different to do from the rest of the class, as this will single them out. For example, learners should have access to a range of drawing materials and equipment to respond to naturally occurring variations in fine and gross motor skills.
- Communicate: talk to the learner about what they feel comfortable doing, most will 'want to give it a go' along with their peers, make sure they have the opportunity to do this.
- Allow rest breaks.
- Accessing equipment: consider how the learner will access equipment and demonstrations. Could you deliver your demonstration at their table and then leave your equipment for them to use afterwards? This would reduce any potential risks associated in navigating a busy art room. Resource equipment beforehand. Ask yourself: would the learner benefit from a modified apron, pencil or paintbrush etc.?
- Introduce a diverse range of artists: referencing a wide range of artists as stimuli can promote diversity and equality in the classroom. For example, looking at Frida Kahlo's self-portrait work that depicts her experience and expression of her identity as a disabled woman.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Disciplinary literacy: when planning a scheme of work consider the Tier 2 and Tier 3 words that learners will encounter and note these down. Tier 2 words are the high-frequency academic words that are found across different subjects and the Tier 3 words are those that appear in specific fields or studies.
- Introducing new vocabulary: consider how new vocabulary will be built into your lessons, in particular Tier 3 words that are very specific to the art curriculum.
    - High-frequency words: focusing on high-frequency words that the learners will not learn on their own.
    - etymology: teaching the etymology of a word or different parts of a complex word, for example Monochromatic = one + colour.
    - review: plan a schedule to review vocabulary that you have taught.
    - identify key words in a text: choose which words you will teach before asking learners to read a text. Discuss the word and give it context and meaning.
    - talk around a word: take time to discuss a new word using the headings: word, examples, definition and non-examples.
- Common misconceptions: identify common misconceptions within a topic and address these in the lesson. What are the key words/vocabulary/content a learner needs to understand to be successful?
- Discussion: build in opportunities for 'high-quality chat' that frames learners ideas using key terms and vocabulary. Remember, vocabulary can be learnt in different ways, not just by reading or writing it.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy or numeracy difficulties?

- Mediation: do not fall into the trap of simply giving learners an 'easier' text to read. There is a large amount of evidence that says this does not necessarily improve progress, instead provide mediation between the teacher, the learner and the text.[1]
- Visual clarity: when presenting text consider the following: Cut, Chunk, Align and Restrain
    - cut: take away any written information that is not needed or necessary.
    - chunk: break down large sections of written information into smaller, more manageable chunks.
    - align: align text and imagery, avoiding scattering information across the screen/slide/document.
    - restrain: keep presentation simple, do not overcomplicate.[2]
- Dyslexia Friendly Classroom: familiarise yourself with the 'Dyslexia Friendly Classroom' approach, this will benefit **all** learners. This can include:
    - separating text on a PowerPoint by different colours.
    - utilising strategies such as mind mapping and story boarding to record ideas.
    - presenting information using more than one method of communication.
    - chunked tasks with appropriate 'take-up time'.
- Model and scaffold potentially problematic techniques.
- Reactive teaching: don't be afraid to stop and revisit a concept, skill or technique if learners haven't 'quite got it yet', even if this deviates from the lesson plan!
- Reading age: know the reading age of the learners in your class, this will help you select text that is appropriate and accessible for all.
- Deliver maths content the same way the maths department do when teaching skills that require cross-curricular links with maths such as gridding up, enlarging, measuring and shape tessellation, approach the maths department in your school to ask how they teach this skill and utilise this in your lesson. Explain to learners that they will be 'Using a skill they have practised in their maths lesson, today'. This will potentially reduce the risk of ambiguity when applying similar skills and knowledge gained in the maths classroom in the art room.
- Model and scaffold potentially problematic techniques.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Retrieval practice: build retrieval practice into each lesson, for example, practice retrieving and applying techniques or analyse key concepts in similar and different examples of art.
- Low-stakes quizzing: low-stakes quizzing will reduce anxiety about 'getting it right'. Try including a question from a topic/theme/skill covered last lesson, last week and last term to strengthen long-term memory connections.
- Spaced learning: spread out knowledge and skill throughout a topic but remember to loop back. Aim to revisit previous learning to strengthen understanding.
- Gradual release of responsibility: utilise the 'I Do, We Do, You Do' approach to delivering new content.
- Reducing cognitive load: utilise Connie Malamed's 6 top tips to reduce cognitive load.[3]
    - maximise the signal-to-noise ratio: remove anything extraneous to the task, such as cluttered presentation or overly complicated instructions.
    - promote generative strategies: allow learners to stop and think about a concept in their own words and through their own ideas.
    - write concisely: consider how you can convey instructions or ideas in as few words as possible.
    - provide scaffolding: identify specific areas that learners are finding most challenging and provide a 'temporary support' for this. Aim to apply hints and tips rather than explicit support.
    - create opportunity for collaborative learning: allow complicated ideas to be explored collectively rather than in isolation to strengthen understanding.
    - provide cognitive aids: provide aids to support cognition, such as a lesson recipe, check list or concept map.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Dual coding: represent information in two ways, for example words and visuals. The visual information could for example, take the form of a diagram, graph, illustration or sketch note. Cognition could be improved by presenting information in this way.
- Archive excellence: create a library of exemplar work to share with learners, having a visual model of what they are aiming for will aid understanding.[4]
- Model: utilise live demonstrations, videos, photographs and step-by-step visual examples to model outcomes. Aim to model individual stages of a process or technique to help visualise the process learners are being asked to undertake.
- Consider cognitive load: chunk tasks and keep instructions pithy.
- Spark interest straight away: an intriguing image on the board, set of equipment on the side or still life set up in the room will capture learner interest as soon as they enter the room.
- Relate topics, themes and ideas to learner interest, for example a discussion about surface pattern could be related to a costume used in the latest superhero film.
- Link to industry: give the skills and techniques you are delivering 'real world value' by relating them to industry. For example, a designer who creates concept designs for a car manufacturer would need to employ drawing, observing, measuring and rendering skills in their work.
- Commercial value of art: find examples of where artists have used their art within a commercial setting other than just in an art gallery, e.g., Jon Burgerman's can designs for a soft drinks company or his trainer designs for a sports brand.
- Keep it topical: relate themes, ideas and concepts to things happening in the world today.
- Occupy hands: allow learners a 'fiddle toy' to occupy their hands while they are listening to instructions.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Consistency: have consistent classroom expectations and routines.
- Give notice of change: if you are aware of a learner who struggles with change, pre-warn them before the lesson. For example, if you are going to remove all the tables and set out easels, let them know beforehand and agree where they will sit when they come in next lesson.
- Share overviews: give an overview of ideas, materials and processes that are coming up in a topic so that learners know what to expect. This will allow them to ask questions beforehand if they want to and will reduce the feeling of them being 'put on the spot'.
- Build relationships: aim to build a strong relationship with learners so that you can 'read' when they might need some extra support. Try introducing some simple techniques of how a learner could communicate that they need some 'time out' or support, such as a card on their desk with a red square to indicate they are struggling or a green square to indicate everything is going well; this provides an opportunity to share their feelings with you without verbalisation.
- Seating plan: the art room can be a busy and vibrant environment. Check information provided to see if they have a preference to where they are sat. Some prefer to be by the door, or at the back of the room so they can see everything going on, whereas some prefer to be right at the front with nothing between them and the board/teacher.

Case Study

A learner with a vision impairment has opted to take GCSE Fine Art. They are generally quite quiet in the classroom and do not like to be singled out by the TA assigned to support them or by the teacher. They have enjoyed art in Key Stage 3 and have a strong network of friends within the art class. The learner is registered blind but has some limited vision; they are also colour blind.

The teacher embedded the following strategies to support the learner:

- *Strategic seating plan that grouped the learner with their peers but allowed space for the Teaching Assistant to support if needed. Knowing who they felt comfortable asking for support from allowed them to feel more confident and less 'exposed' in the learning environment.*
- *Consideration for what the learner 'could do', not what they couldn't. For example, they could utilise mark making, pattern and line to interpret tonal range in preference to pencil shading.*
- *Adjustments made to ensure they could access the curriculum in the same way as their peers, e.g., a set of labelled coloured pencils and a modified image with colour codes allowed them to fully engage in a coloured pencil lesson along with their peers.*
- *Avoiding presumptions that because the learner had a vision impairment they only want to work in sculpture, this isn't always the case. Discussions were had between learner and teacher about different material, skills and processes they wanted to use within their work.*
- *Given options (subtly) e.g., not handing out large A3 copies in front of peers. They weren't always needed or wanted but having them on hand was important. Consideration for how adapted resources were given out to the learner in a subtle manner were made. For example, having them already tucked into their sketchbook or on a specific spot on the side each week for them to collect. Efforts were made to build up a good working relationship with the learner where they felt confident discussing material and ideas options together with the teacher.*

Planning Inclusive Lessons

A valuable tool to help us plan and deliver accessible, inclusive and aspirational PE lessons for all learners is the C-STEP Principle. C-STEP prompts us to consider how we communicate, use space and adapt the task, equipment and support learners to ensure they participate and thrive in PE lessons regardless of their physical and learning needs.

Communication

Use the learner's preferred communication methods be that verbal, Makaton, symbols or a combination of them all to ensure that lessons and activities are accessible. When teaching new skills in PE it is easy to be quite 'wordy' and technical in our delivery so using key words/signs/symbols/simple language in our instructions can be a huge support to learners with poor receptive language and processing delays. Clear and precise names for strategies and techniques can support learners to acquire the knowledge they need to participate in the activity, e.g., clear names for rules.

An example of symbols/key words being used to support a learner participate in a gymnastics lesson warm up.

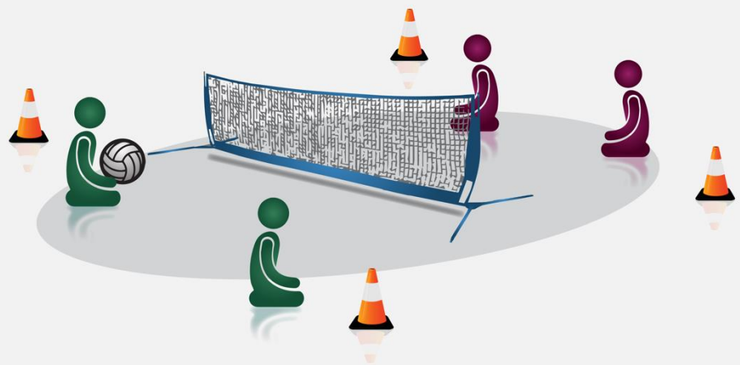
Space

Carefully consider the environment to ensure all learners can access PE lessons and sporting activities. By making adaptations to the physical environment and space, we can make all PE lessons inclusive for wheelchair users and learners with a range of physical needs.

Increasing the space and ensuring there is room for wheelchairs to easily manoeuvre can help make a PE lesson fully inclusive and accessible for all.

Task

Changes and adaptations can be made to activities and specific tasks to ensure all learners are able to participate fully. Adaptations can range from small, subtle changes when performing a skill through to larger modifications to the activity or sport itself.



Adapting a volleyball lesson by playing a match of seated volleyball is a great way to practise key skills and make the activity accessible to all learners.

Equipment

The equipment we use can make a big difference as to whether a lesson is inclusive and accessible or not. By making modifications to, and sometimes changing, the equipment we use, we can ensure that all learners are able to participate, enjoy and experience success in our lessons.

- Using balloons with rice in to support visually impaired learners in a tennis session.
- Large, bright, shiny, tactile resources to engage more sensory learners, e.g., a ball wrapped in tin foil/bubble wrap.
- Making adaptations to the size, weight and grip of PE equipment can have a positive impact on learners with a range of physical needs.
- Using assistive resources to support learners in target sports, e.g., ramps to play boccia, cricket and ten pin bowling.

People

The support learners receive from key people throughout a PE lesson can make arguably the biggest impact on their skills, attitudes and progress. A key adult can model skills, break down activities into smaller steps and support with the repetition and over-learning of skills that can be so important for SEND learners. Peers can be a huge support in helping to motivate and model skills whilst ensuring a learner maintains their independence and doesn't become over-reliant on the support of a key adult. Learners working in mixed ability groups can provide aspirational role models and opportunities for the most able to develop their skills further through demonstrating and coaching. As learners' competence and confidence develops, the support being provided can be slowly reduced to enable the learner to participate more independently.

Curriculum Considerations

An inclusive physical education curriculum should both engage and inspire young people to lead healthy and active lifestyles and broaden their experience of sport and fitness activities. Physical education and sport should be accessible regardless of a young person's disability or needs. Basing a curriculum and activities around a broad variety of sports and physical activities helps provide new, exciting experiences that will spark an interest and motivate learners to be more physically active and enjoy the associated health and social benefits this can bring.

Active, Healthy Lifestyles & Long-Term Outcomes

The Institute of Health Equity outlines some very bleak statistics for people with learning disabilities (significantly lower life expectancy and 1 in 2 to suffer from chronic loneliness). In addition to this Sport England (2018) share that disabled adults are twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled adults whilst Activity Alliance (2020) discovered that 70% of disabled people believe that sport is not for somebody like them.

The above statistics show us how important it is to provide positive experiences in physical education, that support learners with SEND to develop a love of exercise and the skills needed to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. A key role for teachers is to help 'flip the narrative' and support learners in having positive experiences and high aspirations in sport and exercise. An awareness and engagement with groups such as Activity Alliance, IMAS and The Special Olympics can support and inform our practice helping to connect our learners with opportunities to participate and compete in sport outside of school.

Key Stage 1

Learners develop the fundamental movement skills of running, jumping, throwing, co-ordination, balance and agility and begin to develop patterns of movement. As learners develop their confidence and competence these movements can become more complex and linked together. The aim is for all learners to develop their accuracy and fluency of movement execution over time. A big focus is being able to co-operate with others, share and develop strong communication skills. Learners will be taught the basic conventions of games and different activities that have rules and boundaries. This is a particularly important stage for learners with SEND as they build core movement skills that support and shape their physical development.

Key Stage 2

As learners progress, they begin to develop a broader range of skills and start to put sequences of movement together. Some of these movements become more specialised and related to particular sports or physical activities. Competition between oneself and others and rules are introduced with learners beginning to demonstrate more refined technique and improvement in their performance. Learners begin to display a greater control of their skills/movements and start to develop a greater strength and flexibility as they approach the end of Key Stage 2. Skills and more complex movements may need to be broken down into smaller steps for learners with SEND and teachers should make adaptations to activities and sports to ensure they are accessible.

Key Stages 3 and 4

Learners begin to develop a greater appreciation for tactics and strategies for success and start to generalise their skills across a range of sports with participation and performance becoming a greater focus at this stage. Opportunities to experience outdoor and adventurous activities can form a more significant part of the curriculum as learners extend their knowledge of physical activities and sports to more complex situations. Learners build on their earlier knowledge of healthy participation and safe practice and really begin to develop a greater understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and why this is so important. This is a particularly crucial period for learners with SEND as in many cases it will help form their attitude to sport and exercise and indicate how likely they are to lead active, healthy lifestyles into the future.

GCSE PE

As teachers, it is essential that we hold the highest aspirations for learners with SEND and provide them with the opportunities and support to achieve and excel in physical education. This will look very different for each learner, e.g., for a learner with physical needs making progress with their physio programme might be a great outcome whilst for others participating and competing in inter-school competition is an achievement to be celebrated. Learners showing an interest and ability in physical education should be offered and encouraged to take the option of GCSE PE regardless of their needs. With the right support, learners with SEND can flourish in GCSE PE, and their engagement in study will add to the experience of their peers, too.

The physical education GCSE is an inclusive course; by adapting our practice and using reasonable adjustments we can ensure that the course is accessible for all learners. Learners with SEND may find the theory aspects of PE challenging and require support with certain aspects of the course. For learners with literacy and/or language and communication difficulties, teachers should consider:

- Providing visual supports
- Carefully choosing, and at times reducing, language so that key words and learning points are emphasised
- Providing additional support with reading and written work

Depending on the individual needs of a learner, access arrangements can be applied for and implemented both in written exams and as part of standard classroom practice. Access arrangements may include:

- Additional time
- Use of rest/sensory breaks
- Sitting the exam in a different space/separate room
- Use of assistive technology
- Access to a reader
- Access to a scribe

The practical element including participating in a number of sports (team and individual) and evaluating performance form a significant part of the GCSE course. Adaptations to activities and drills (including the use of specialist equipment) should be used to support learners with SEND in reaching their full potential and gaining maximum marks in this aspect of the course.

Teachers should also be aware of the specialist individual and team activities that learners can use for their practical assessment and be confident in teaching the skills and drills in these sports, e.g., goal ball, boccia and wheelchair rugby.

Learners at St Martins School, Derby designed their own inclusive sports event, the SHOUTaboutSEND 5K, in which everybody competed as equals. They have provided training for sports clubs and coaches across the city to help them be more inclusive.

'Sport has the power to change the world' - Nelson Mandela

It is our hope that through high-quality, inclusive and accessible physical education, that all learners regardless of their needs are able to lead active, healthy lifestyles and fully embrace the power of sport and exercise.

Sharing stories of inspiring role models such as Ella Beaumont (GB wheelchair basketball player and personal trainer) can help raise aspirations in PE and sport for learners with SEND.

Planning Inclusive Lessons

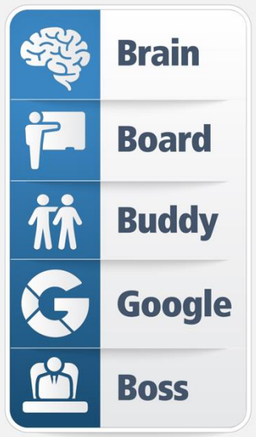
Tasks

Incorporate learning materials that are accessible for learners of all abilities. For learners with special educational needs and disabilities, specific resources or approaches may be required to enable them to access the curriculum. Ensure you have considered what barriers learners may have within a lesson and embed support strategies to help them overcome these.

Scaffold learning so that learners benefit from support during initial phases of learning. Adapt tasks to make the curriculum accessible to all. For example, tools such as *CodeJumper* and *Blocks4All* can be used for learners who are visually impaired.

Problem Solving

In computer science, there can be multiple solutions to a problem. Focus your instruction and encouragement on solving problems and the problem-solving process, rather than finding a single right answer. Emphasize guided inquiry, designing learning opportunities where learners can ask questions, explore, try different approaches and challenge their own and each other's ideas.

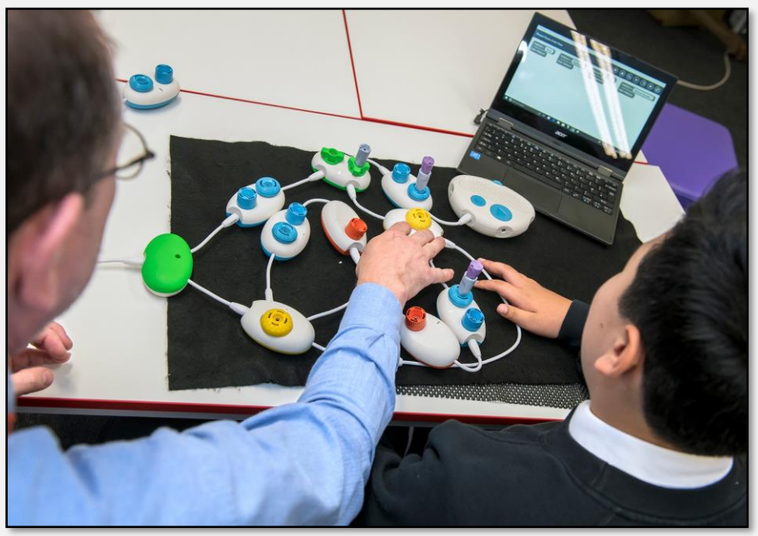


Encourage learners to take ownership over their learning, strategies such as the 'BBBGBs' (Brain, Board, Buddy, Google, Boss) and expert learners are effective ways to embed this into lessons. If a learner struggles with complex, multi-step problem-solving, give them additional support in the beginning, then slowly remove the support once learners build their skills and confidence.

High Expectations

One of the largest subject barriers we face is learners' own belief systems about who can succeed in computer science. If a teacher holds lower expectations of a learner, it can have a negative impact on a learner's achievement in the subject.

Encourage learners to reflect on their perspectives and potential biases and challenge yourself to do the same. Build relationships with learners to identify opportunities to connect learning to their personal experience. Look for stories and experiences about using computer science that will be meaningful and relatable to your learners.



Creating an Inclusive Environment

Vocabulary

Whilst you model the skills and understanding required to develop a rich vocabulary knowledge, consider your use of words within a lesson. Familiarise learners with Tier 2 words by embedding them into classroom displays and lesson activities. It's important that you find ways for learners to encounter these terms, as this will empower them to access a higher level of language with which they can communicate and understand ideas across the curriculum.

Vision Impairment

At Key Stage 1 and 2, coding is primarily taught using block-based programming languages such as Scratch. Carefully consider what inclusive practices are appropriate. For example, embedding the use of braille, allowing learners to orient themselves to the classroom space, careful selection of colours within resources, installing a screen reader and magnifier aids. Together these approaches support learners in solving complex challenges.

Space

The learning environment is important in making learners feel included. Incorporate visuals that will appeal to a wide range of learner interests and backgrounds. Include examples of learners and professionals with disabilities, the representation of a diverse range of figures in computing can send a powerful message to your learners.

Arrange the learning space to promote collaboration and hands-on activities, whilst also being mindful of how learners will access their workstations. Arrange aisles and workstations so that learners with mobility aids can get to all the areas they need to access to participate fully.

Consider what assistive technology devices could be embedded into practice to give opportunities for all learners to fully access lesson content.

Curriculum Considerations

Computing equips learners to use computational thinking and creativity to understand the digital world we live in. Computing has deep links with mathematics, science and design and technology, and ensures that learners become digitally literate, offering the opportunity to learn in different ways.

Key Stage 1

At this stage, learning should be focused on the concept of computational thinking and equipping learners with the skills to tackle challenging problems using logical reasoning. Practical activities that encourage them to get hands-on with problems can help them visualise solutions. Giving learners the opportunity to predict behaviour of simple programs can also develop their problem-solving skills. It's important to use and to teach learners the correct technical terminology within lessons, to ensure that misconceptions are not embedded early into their computing education.

Key Stage 2

At this stage, learners begin to apply and build upon the skills learnt at Key Stage 1 through designing and writing programs that accomplish specific goals. Learners should be able to detect and correct errors in algorithms. When teaching learners to solve various problems, encourage them to be resilient and think outside the box.

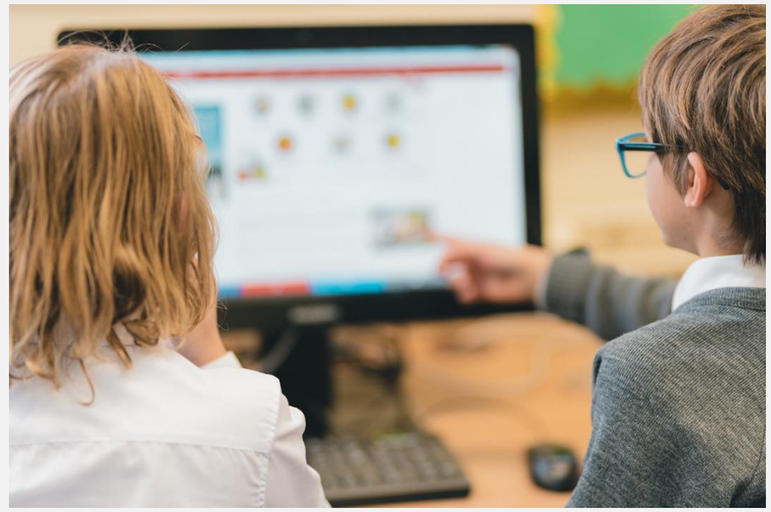
Learners should also be shown how to use technology safely, respectfully and responsibly. Learners need to be able to identify unacceptable behaviour and know how to report concerns.

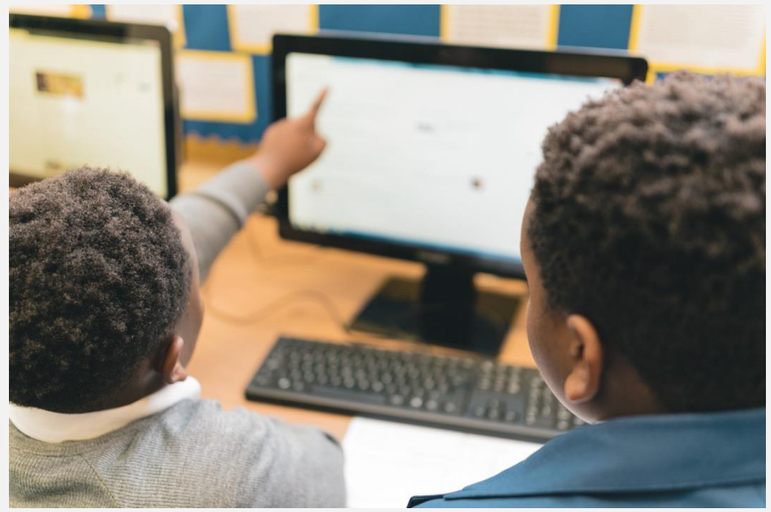
Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, learners are required to design, use and evaluate algorithms that model the state and behaviour of real-world problems. Expand learners' understanding of computational thinking through modelling and explore the different tools which can be used to efficiently solve more challenging problems. Learners will explore both block-based and text-based programming languages and will develop the difficulty of the program through using a wider variety of programming techniques. The ability to highlight and correct errors will be challenged further as learners are introduced to a wider range of errors. They will explore various software applications to undertake creative projects and practise selecting, using and combing multiple tools.

Key Stage 4

In Key Stage 4, learners will begin to develop their capability, creativity and knowledge in computer science, digital media and information technology. Learners need to focus on developing and applying their analytical, problem-solving, design and computational thinking skills. They should be able to use a wide range of technical vocabulary and be aware of how technology evolves in the world around them.





Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Model the correct use of vocabulary. Show examples of common errors/misconceptions and work with learners to improve literacy within given text.
- For those with appropriate access arrangements, encourage the use of a reader to support learners in reading and interpreting large sections of text.
- Chunk key information and create clear, easy-to-follow checklists. This can help your learner focus on one section at a time and have a clear set of goals.
- During classroom discussions, listen to the answers given and when re-iterating points, rephrase sentences to include key vocabulary.
- Consider your classroom display and how you can promote the definitions and use of Tier 2 words.
- Provide learners with a glossary of key terms which they can refer to during the lesson.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Embed opportunities to recall key terms within lessons. Memorisation techniques such as tracked retrieval practice can give learners the opportunity to revisit topics across the curriculum.
- Provides learners with a glossary of key terms which they can refer to during the lesson.
- Use rephrasing techniques to strengthen learner answers with correct vocabulary.
- Introduce new terms slowly and rehearse news words. Get learners to interact with the key terms in various ways such as writing, speaking, mini games, questioning and more.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Model answers and get learners to look at and discuss completed examples.
- Assess and use learners' prior knowledge to create links between old and new content.
- Walk through examples together, giving learners the opportunity to ask questions.
- Address misconceptions early.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Learn what hobbies or topics the learners are interested in. Find ways to incorporate this into lessons and questions. Use learners' names in written questions to further engage them in text.
- Give clear instructions within the form of a checklist. This will break down the task into more manageable chunks.
- Praise learners on their contributions and for targets met, encourage them to continue and to have a growth mindset.
- Consider the learning environment and potential distractions and make appropriate arrangements to remove these barriers.
- Ensure instructions are clear and signposted.
- Be concise in teacher-led delivery. Chunk material in larger topics so learners can complete a range of engaging activities.
- Check in with the learners throughout the activity, initially to check they have understood the task, to praise work completed and to challenge them further.

Case Study

A learner in Year 9 with ASD, articulate and passionate about computing, was anxious about change and new environments.

Transitioning into a new year, class or seating plan were changes they found particularly difficult. The learner did not like group work, sitting next to others, sharing or learning new content. The teacher embedded the following strategies into lessons to support this learner:

- *Spoke with the learner to discuss their interests and friendships. Worked with them in structuring a seating plan in advance. The learner often wanted to sit on their own and at times when this wasn't possible, the teacher spoke with them about what other options were available and gave them ownership of the appropriate solution.*
- *Pre-warned the learner about any assessments, topic changes, teacher/room changes. Pre-warned the learner about group activity, discussed with them alternative ways they could get involved.*
- *Gave the learner time out when needed.*
- *Incorporated learner's hobbies and interests into lesson content.*
- *Used praise to motivate and support the learner.*
- *Allowed the learner to work independently.*
- *Built strong positive relationships with the learner, which had the biggest impact on their engagement and willingness to try something new.*
- *Provided the learner with a topic list, glossary and revision slides in advance of each term.*

Planning Inclusive Lessons

Learning a modern foreign language, with the right support and approaches in place, has the potential to be a liberating experience for learners with SEND. For some learners (who might speak a different language at home) this can be an opportunity to shine. For other pupils, this can be an opportunity to explore a different world and to engage with a new language in a structured and scaffolded way.

When planning inclusive MFL lessons, understanding and getting to know our learners is key. It is important that we challenge assumptions linked to a learner's labels and understand how to build on each learner's strengths.

In a languages classroom, teaching strategies that benefit learners with SEND will benefit all learners. In fact, effective MFL teaching for all learners necessitates a combination of strategies that can support learners with SEND: systematic use of visuals; identifying a core set of words or phrases that you would like learners to acquire with regular opportunities for repetition and over-learning; the careful sequencing of language input to reduce working memory; a multi-sensory approach to practising language through song, speech, listening and reading tasks; simple, lean resources that direct attention rather than detract attention; chunking both language and tasks where appropriate to reduce cognitive demand and the need for complicated instruction; use of non-verbal cues and simple language to elicit understanding of the foreign language, etc. Formal instruction of phonics in the language can also help all learners, especially those who experience literacy difficulties – this can also be an opportunity to reinforce key strategies for those learners by making explicit links where appropriate.

However, it is also important to be aware that learning a foreign language can place high demands on working memory and it is therefore essential that opportunities for over-learning, repetition and application are embedded into every lesson. Many of the activities required to learn a foreign language effectively, e.g., speaking out loud, risk-taking, making mistakes etc. can feel worrying for some learners. Building in opportunities through low-stakes activities, such as paired work, games in small groups, whole-class call-out, playfulness and drama can support learners to develop their confidence alongside opportunities to commit acquired knowledge to their long-term memory.

Creating an Inclusive Environment

In order to succeed in the language classroom, learners must feel safe enough to take risks and to make mistakes. Focusing on the learning behaviours, including those around mutual respect and support and the celebration of learning through mistakes and misconceptions, when establishing your classroom routines will be essential.

Model and encourage the creativity and enjoyment around playing with language and communicating with others. Take opportunities to value diversity that other countries and cultures represent. Provide plenty of opportunities in the classroom to focus on communication rather than accuracy of language. Build a supportive environment in which speaking the language is emphasised through, for example:

- Plenty of group and pair speaking tasks, in which learners often feel more comfortable speaking and a positive collaborative environment is created.
- Game-orientated speaking tasks, which can help some learners forget their anxiety and focus attention.

A well-managed classroom environment is essential. With a focus on oracy, language classrooms can become noisy environments, but it is essential that this is always controlled and focused. Clear routines to ensure that learners re-focus on whole class teaching when required, regulate their own interactions and volume, and work respectfully in all interactions, must be set, explained and adhered to from the start. It can be helpful to identify key signals (non-verbal) for each of your expectations so that your interactions with the learners are focused on the content. Of course, adjustments and adaptations will need to be further made with classes where there might be learners who experience sensory issues.

Curriculum Considerations

Ensure departmental consistency from one teacher to another to help learners with transitions. Sequence the input of new language concepts carefully in a way which reduces cognitive demands. Provide plenty of opportunity for repetition and revisiting of language and structures so that vocabulary and structures become automated, freeing up working memory in the classroom. Ensure a cumulative approach to introducing new language structures. Integrate a structured programme of phonetic instruction into the curriculum, especially in those languages which are phonetically more challenging. Build confidence in speaking, which is often synonymous with learners' enjoyment and achievement in languages. But also allow for all learners to play to their strengths, which could be in any of the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Use 'real-life' resources, e.g., videos of French children speaking French, physical euro notes and coins, to reinforce real world implications of language learning. Be mindful of the heavy cognitive demands of listening tasks. Allow for low-stakes assessments which are accessible and planned with all learners in mind, so that all can experience success. Champion a 'little and often approach' to curriculum time, which recognises the importance of frequent practice and retrieval and the high cognitive demand of language learning.

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Provide consistency in the department, so learners know what to expect.
- Provide lesson recipes (visual timetables) at the start of the lesson.
- Ensure positive, calm starts to the lesson.
- Give learners space and time at the start of the lesson.

How can I support learners who struggle to access lessons because of literacy difficulties?

- Embed structured phonetic instruction into lessons.
- Make vocabulary lists available for every lesson which learners can easily refer to.
- Use multi-sensory approaches to learning new language – through song, actions with words, picture stimuli and so on.
- Create and use simple, lean resources that reduce demands on working memory.
- Provide physical handouts of resources to learners where possible to reduce the burden of processing information from the board.
- Share spelling and vocabulary strategies with learners.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Provide vocabulary lists for each lesson which learners can refer to for all activities.
- Carefully plan for the repetition of vocabulary – recycle and revisit common words in texts and listening activities and from topic to topic.
- Space out vocabulary learning and encourage a little and often approach to vocabulary retrieval.
- Explicitly model and discuss vocabulary learning strategies.
- Enable structured and well-resourced vocabulary learning at home which guides learners through the stages involved in vocabulary learning and also supports parents and carers to support their child.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Ensure that grammatical concepts are recycled in the curriculum regularly and are well sequenced to build knowledge of language effectively.
- Adapt a cumulative approach to introducing new language structures.
- Ensure enough practice of language structures both within a lesson and across topics.
- Model and scaffold the practice of more complex language features.
- Focus on the essential and be selective.
- Refer to concrete examples, especially for more abstract ideas.
- Where possible, make explicit links to structures within their home languages and where appropriate support them to identify and make links.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Use visual stimuli, such as pictures, to complement auditory work and as a stimulus for the production of speech.
- Find out the interests of your learners and incorporate this into reading texts and spoken tasks.
- Take opportunities to use song and music.
- Use competition and games as a springboard for speaking in the target language.
- Explicitly link language learning to its practical use in the world to give it purpose and real-life application.
- Praise learners for their contributions to oral activities.
- Provide lesson recipes to give structure and predictability.

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Section 6

Graduated Approach

In this section, we will cover:

1. **The graduated approach**
2. **A teacher's role in identification**
3. **Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner**
    a. Primary
    b. Secondary
4. **Working with the SENCO**
5. **Working with external agencies and specialist teachers**
6. **The engagement model**

The graduated approach

The majority of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities will not have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

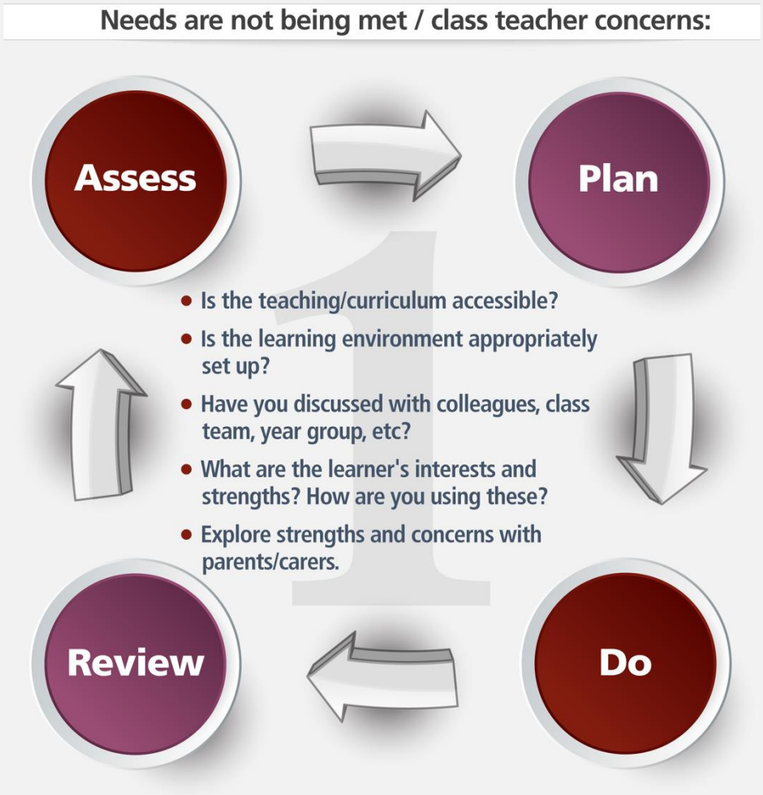
Special educational needs can often go undetected – or only become apparent during certain points in schooling when the cognitive requirements change or become more challenging.

It is important to remember that, after the learner's family and the learner themselves, we are the experts when it comes to the learners in our class, and we have the most power to initiate change for that learner in a positive way. We can sometimes believe that what is needed to support a learner is a diagnosis or input from a specialist, and whilst this can be at times useful, observations and changes made by the classroom teacher can often be all a learner needs to achieve. Remember as well that specialists will be relying on information from the person who spends the most time with the learner and knows them the best – their families and you, the teacher. It is important that the information provided gives as broad a picture as possible (a holistic understanding) to ensure any outside help appropriately meets a learner's needs.

In your role as expert remember to be a behaviour detective. Any behaviour may be a sign of a learning need, but some behaviours are perhaps easier to identify as a learning need than others.

A learner who struggles to read or write common words will likely be easily detected as needing some kind of reading support; a learner who continually disturbs the class may also be masking a reading difficulty, but the focus becomes on the behaviour rather than the underlying need.

We must be curious about all forms of behaviour and try to discover the need underneath it. The Timpson Review of School Exclusion[1] found 'Children with some types of SEN, boys, those who have been supported by social care or are disadvantaged are all consistently more likely to be excluded from school than those without these characteristics'. Unmet special educational needs (SEN) can often bring a great deal of pressure on the learner and at times lead to a lack of confidence, and cause learners to avoid situations that can lead to these feelings. Remember to be curious about **any** behaviour that seems unusual or conspicuous.



Why is my role as classroom teacher important?

Most learners with special educational needs will receive the majority of their support in the classroom. The aim of this support is to ensure that they access the curriculum and maximise their potential. Your contact with them is crucial since you are the expert on the learner. You know how they interact with the curriculum and within the classroom. You will be formatively assessing them through every interaction. This perspective, alongside the learner themselves and their families, is central to being able to work successfully with SENCOs and other specialists to unlock their potential.

Signs that might indicate an unmet SEN

- Work refusal
- Constant disturbance (calling out, talking to peers, distracting others)
- Sensory seeking behaviours (rocking back and forth on chair, putting things in mouth, inability to stay in seat, constant fiddling, needing to touch others, making noises)
- Rude or disrespectful language
- Attention-needing behaviours (constantly seeking reassurance, repeating or asking questions they know the answer to, calling out, being the class clown)
- Difficulty with sharing or paired work
- Often have angry or emotional outbursts, seemingly over nothing
- Poor attendance
- School-related anxiety
- Difficulties in the playground or when socialising
- Difficulty with paying attention (often not knowing the answer to a question or what was asked, only able to work for short periods of time, easily digresses from a topic)
- Poor organisational skills (not being able to start work, never remembering the correct equipment, forgetting homework, continually missing deadlines)
- Inability to follow instructions or know what to do

A teacher's role in identification

Gathering information

Once you have observed a potential barrier to learning, gather as much information as possible. When identifying special educational needs, we can often overly focus on the things the learner is not able to do but it is just as important to notice all the things the learner can do. Knowing a learner's strengths and interests is how teachers can start developing provision to help the learner improve and achieve.

Ensure you talk to the learner's family. The family is best placed to give information about the learner, as well as highlight any changes that may have happened for them or difficulties that they may have observed at home. They will also be best placed to talk about the learner's strengths and interests.

Speak to other adults who work with the learner – was this something apparent last year or is it a new behaviour? Have any changes happened that the learner might need time and support to process? Is this behaviour just seen in your class or does it occur in other classes as well? Is this only apparent in particular subjects? Observe the learner in their social interactions. How do they act? What do they like to do? Who do they play or socialise with?

An Antecedent Behaviour Consequence Communication chart (ABCC) is a useful tool to explore potential triggers to a learner's behaviour. An ABCC is a chart that enables you to record:

- The date and time of the behaviour
- The antecedent – what happened precisely before the behaviour
- The consequence – the result of the behaviour as the learner experienced it, not the 'consequence' that was given to them
- The communication – what we think the pupil was communicating through their behaviour

An analysis of the ABCC can highlight a time of day or task that the learner struggles with. We can then use this information to think about the provision we can put in place to reduce the behaviour, e.g., if a learner is calling out in maths every day, you could try implementing a movement break before the lesson.

In addition to identifying patterns of behaviour, noticing when a learner was able to succeed with a task that they normally would find difficult will provide further insights to support their provision.

Finally, it is important to talk to the learner themselves, no matter their age. Their opinion and insight will be invaluable for ensuring they get the best support. Some young people may struggle to communicate verbally but it is still important that we find ways of gathering information from these learners.

Using an Antecedent Behaviour Consequence Communication (ABCC) chart to understand a learner's need and inform provision

Emile has a diagnosis of autism and is in Year 1. He has strong attachments with a number of key members of staff and responds effectively to clear structures, routines and instructions. He is keen to interact with staff members who he feels safe with and also shows a strong desire to interact and play alongside his peers. However, Emile experiences regular sensory overload. This can result either in behaviours where he can put himself in danger by absconding, or where he puts others in danger by lashing out at those around him. When he lashes out, he is immediately removed from the classroom. Using an ABCC chart, it has been established that in both scenarios Emile is communicating that he needs to escape from the situation – when he lashes out it is when he cannot see a clear path to/leave the classroom and he knows that he will be removed if he hits other children.

Although the function of Emile's behaviour is to escape, lashing out may in some contexts put him at risk of exclusion. By tracking what was happening in his environment prior to an incident of lashing out, we were able to identify key triggers. This included any transition or any hint that transition was about to take place, for example, 'tidy up time' indicating the end of the day. It was clear that these points included a lot of movement and noise from his classmates. It was also clear from careful observations that there were several clues that Emile would show through his behaviours that he was experiencing sensory overload before escalating his behaviours.

As the result of the use of an ABCC chart, three key actions were taken:

- *Transitions were reduced – this was for both Emile and the whole class. For example, music no longer took place in the music room, but the music teacher would come up to the classroom. The class teacher also worked with the whole class to improve the organisation of transition points to ensure that they had a clearer structure and routine. This created a greater sense of certainty and safety around these times.*
- *Proactive support was put in place to build Emile's resilience to managing the transitions within the school day. A meet and greet was put in place at the start of each day to support Emilie in managing the transition from home to school, supporting him to arrive to the classroom in a calm state.*
- *A detailed behaviour plan identifying the behavioural 'clues' prior to any escalation, as well positive, proactive strategies to respond to these 'clues', was put in place and shared with all staff working within the year group. This plan was written in partnership with Emile's family and effective language and strategies used in the home were mirrored whenever possible in school to support consistency. This plan also included giving Emile choices to leave the classroom in a positive, proactive way if he was experiencing sensory overload.*

As a result of the above, Emile has started spending increasing time in class, engaging with the curriculum, making progress and accessing increased opportunities to succeed within the classroom, both academically and socially.

A teacher's role in identification

What can you try if you feel a learner you teach has a special educational need?

Once you have identified and gathered information, take time to reflect what adjustments or support you could put in place for the learner and observe what differences it may make. The adjustments you make will depend on the age, area of concern and information you gained. Before considering whether a learner has a special educational need, it is important to check that you have tried a range of high-quality inclusive teaching strategies from your toolbox, as well as early intervention strategies. Have strategies been used consistently and has enough time been given for them to work? Have the learner's needs and necessary adjustments been considered and implemented when planning learning activities for the learner?

Below are some areas you could consider, and further information is given in Section 7: Strategies to Scaffold Learning.

Be self-reflective

Be honest with yourself. How does working with the learner make you feel? When we do not know how to support a learner it can often lead to feelings of frustration. We may be quick to react to certain behaviours or find we are sub-consciously choosing to spend less time with or focus less on the learner. For example, we may stop asking a learner a question who always takes a long time to formulate an answer or be quick to send a learner who struggles with paired work to complete their task on their own. It is completely normal to feel frustrated or even de-skilled, and this is okay. However, it is important that we recognise our feelings and make changes accordingly.

The physical environment

A change to the physical environment may be all some learners need, e.g., changing their seating place so that they feel in a less vulnerable place, or are away from certain learners or distractions. It is important to ensure the classroom feels calm and secure for all learners.

Use of language

Think about your use of language. Be careful to repeat instructions and make sure you do not overload your learners with too much information at once. Try using the learner's name when giving specific instructions. Check their understanding in a neutral manner. Ensure that you explain any possible unknown vocabulary.

Lesson content

Small changes to how we plan and deliver lessons can often have a big impact. As an example, breaking down learning activities into smaller, more manageable tasks and referring to these throughout the lesson can help lessen anxieties and assist learners with organisational or attention difficulties. Consider trying different types of tasks at the start and end of each lesson.

Target Setting

When monitoring a learner's progress, personalised SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) targets should be set. Targets should relate to the skill being taught, not the provision. Setting SMART targets helps you to measure whether the target has been achieved and enables you to evidence and celebrate small steps of progress. This can include the extent to which a target is supported and how often a learner would be expected to demonstrate the new skill.

Targets should be referred to when planning lessons and used to monitor the progress of a learner. Targets, and progress towards each target, should always be shared with the learner and their family.

Strengthening relationships

Taking time to build and strengthen relationships with the learner can be incredibly beneficial. Children and young people need to feel safe and secure to learn. Building trust will encourage the learner to share with you. Greater knowledge of the learner will allow you to make more informed decisions about what may support or hinder their learning.

Examples of Smart Targets

Given a hundreds square, Lara will be able to subtract ten from a given number with 80% accuracy.

Tyrone will be able to orally blend Phase 2 CVC words with 90% accuracy in 3 consecutive sessions.

With adult support, Lily will be able to sustain shared attention for five minutes in a group activity, commenting at least one word relevant to the activity once per session.

Given emotions cards (worried, sad, angry), Seth will be able to self-select how he is feeling when he is upset in 3/5 instances.

With faded adult support, Fatma will respond consistently to her name at morning register in 80% of opportunities in a 2-week period.

Given a checklist and faded adult prompting, Lukas will be able to transition from one activity to the next in 9/10 opportunities.

Given a 1:1 check in, Andrew will initiate a starter task within two minutes of entering the classroom in 8/10 opportunities.

Given a planning template and 25% extra time, Ahmed will be able to improve essays in English, history and RS so that they are well-structured, with grades in line with FFT.

Given a task card with step-by-step instructions, Taylor will be able to use a calculator to work out percentages in maths, science and geography lessons with 90% accuracy.

Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner

Learners are not at risk of underachievement because of any particular label, such as 'Pupil Premium', 'Looked After' or 'EAL'. Rather, it is the impact of the barrier to learning over time, and the complexities of multiple barriers to learning, that can stifle a learner's progress and attainment. We need to gather a holistic understanding of individual learners – widening our lens – where we develop a thorough understanding of their strengths, motivations, interests, challenges and previous life experiences, to be able to develop and then implement provision that is tailored to the learner's needs and as a result enables the planned and desired impact to occur.

Evidence of need should be based on diagnostic assessment (pastoral and academic), teacher voice, pupil voice, classroom observations of specific learners (e.g., who is talking in our classrooms, who is on the margins), discussions with families, and an understanding of the community and the challenges that learners face. It should also be rooted in a robust evaluation of the quality of classroom experiences for our learners.

Where a learner is underachieving, it is essential that we understand what the barriers to learning are and how these impact on the child or young person's learning. There can be an overlap between how a learner impacted by socioeconomic disadvantage presents compared to how a learner impacted by a special educational need presents – for example two learners might present with a low language baseline when they arrive at school in reception – one learner might have a Developmental Language Disorder whereas another might have had limited exposure to rich linguistic experiences. Understanding what the barrier is ensures that any approach undertaken to support the learner is underpinned by evidence and targets the actual area of need. Assessment, not assumptions should drive our strategies; needs, not labels should inform our activities. Every learner is an individual in their own right!

The following case studies highlight the importance of gathering a holistic understanding of a learner before identifying a special educational need. Consider each situation – in each instance, it is the understanding of the learner that the staff developed that enabled effective provision to be developed and implemented. The use of the graduated approach, where you observe the learner and talk with the learner and their families at the earliest point, is critical to developing provision that meets the needs of the learner. The addition of a further label without developing this holistic understanding does not add impact.

As you read the following case studies, consider the following:

- *What is the role of the teacher in each of the case studies?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each pupil?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Some key strategies permeate all case studies – noticing, observation, listening, partnership working – what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Consistency and structure are critical to success for any disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils, but this needs to be balanced with teacher autonomy and subject-specific pedagogy. The consistency should be about positive relationships, a shared understanding of high expectations and ensuring all pupils have the support to achieve those high expectations. Consistency is about the fidelity of implementation of approaches and principles across the curriculum, not everyone doing exactly the same.

Intervention

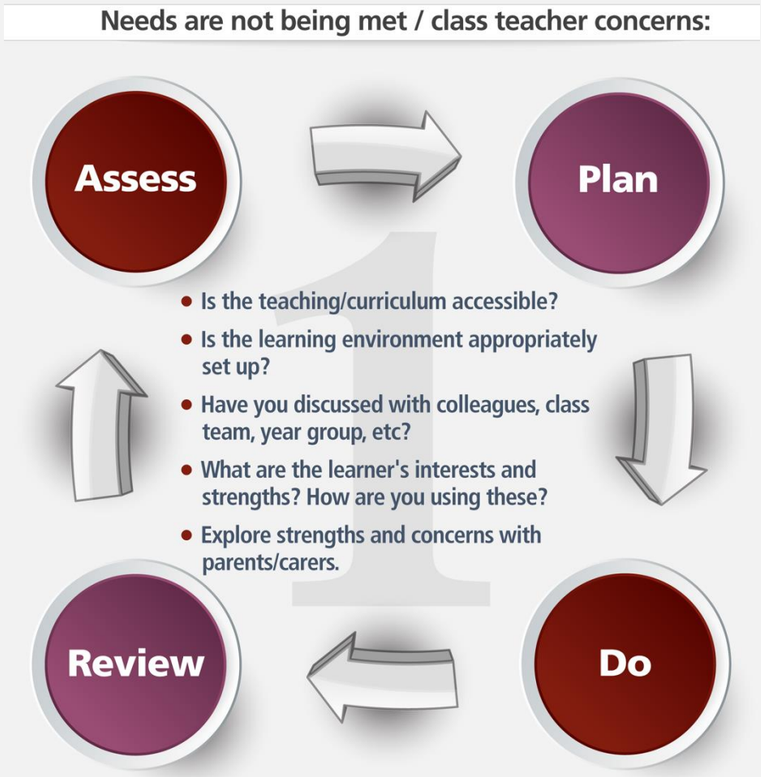
Interventions can take place within or outside the mainstream classroom. Micro-interventions that occur within the classroom can include: changing in seating, proximity, buddy support, visual timetables, focused group work, targeted questioning, independent tasks modified for accessibility. These interventions are often highly effective; however, their implementation needs consistency (across teachers/support staff and curriculum areas) for intended impact to be realised. Micro-interventions require engagement in the reflective process around the learner – widening our lens – and having a flexible mindset to enable the process of inclusivity. As an example, with behaviour specific praise, to engage in the reflective process teachers first need to gather an understanding of how the learner responds to praise. Does spoken praise in front of peers motivate or disengage the learner? Praise then needs to be given consistently, at a rate of 4-5 positives for each constructive comment, throughout the day. It is only then, after a period, that desired impact will be observed.

Intervention outside the mainstream classroom, where appropriate, should be supplementary to high-quality teaching. It should be structured, evidence-informed and time-limited, with clear success criteria that are sustained back in the classroom. Teachers should be involved in the development of the intervention and retain responsibility for the learner's progress, even when the learner is involved in interventions. The teacher plays an important role in helping the learner apply learning from interventions across different contexts.

When planning interventions, it is important that the most disadvantaged learners retain access to the most effective teaching. Interventions should be informed by diagnostic assessment that identifies gaps in learning, with teacher expertise used to determine how to best address these gaps. Interventions need clear outcomes that are measurable.

It is important for schools to have a joined-up approach towards pastoral and academic interventions, recognising that the best way to raise self-esteem is success in the classroom.

Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner - Primary



Primary Case Study 1

A learner with EAL

Adam joined the school in Year 4, having moved from Poland. Adam had attended school in Poland. Throughout the first half-term at school, Adam presented as very withdrawn, unwilling to engage with peers or adults alike. Adam appeared to enjoy creative activities and PE activities but would engage in these independently from the other children in the class. He even appeared to be reluctant to engage with a buddy from an older class, who also spoke Polish.

During the admissions meeting his parents had shared with his teacher that Adam had a good level of language in Polish, had enjoyed school and had engaged well in school in Poland. However, he had never been exposed to any English. Observing closely during the admissions visit, it was clear to his teacher that Adam was an effective communicator with his parents – engaging in lively and varied conversation throughout the visit.

On the first day, his teacher had taken care to model classroom routines explicitly and had worked with children in the class to label key areas around the classroom with pictures and Polish words. Visuals and lots of opportunities for oracy and repetition as well as access to concrete resources were built into lessons across the curriculum. Adam responded well to non-verbal cues and visual support. He also demonstrated good understanding and skill in number in maths. Adam demonstrated increasing confidence in maths lessons and key learning activities were shared with parents so that his parents could continue to support him at home to consolidate his learning. Parents were also encouraged to continue speaking Polish with him at home, including shared reading in Polish.

After the first month, Adam was using greetings in English and was able to make requests around the school. He sometimes joined in choral responses during whole-class input. However, there were still concerns regarding his reluctance to engage with peers and adults.

A meeting was set up with his parents and an interpreter to explore this further. Adam attended for part of the meeting. His parents had not been aware that there had been any concerns in school; Adam had also been reluctant to share with them that he had been feeling very homesick since he knew that they had had to move for work and didn't want to worry them. Adam's parents and his class teacher put together a plan to support him emotionally through this transition.

The plan included increased opportunities for contact with his family and friends in Poland, identified 'special time' at home, a keyworker identified to support structured play activities during playtimes to build more meaningful connections between Adam and his peers, and Adam suggested that he would like to teach his peers some Polish and share some Polish traditions, which his teacher agreed to build into the weekly timetable. Adam responded well to this support and started to establish meaningful friendships. This further accelerated his language development and supported his wider access to the whole curriculum. It is believed that by the end of Year 6 he will be meeting age related expectations in all areas.

Adam's progress with his oral language, his fluency with classroom routines and his early confidence in areas of the curriculum not directly involving language were all indications to Adam's class teacher that the challenges he faced in the classroom were related to English acquisition and his move to a new country rather than being indicative of a special educational need. Strong communication with his parents and partnership working to provide emotional support, encouraging Adam to continue speaking Polish at home, consistent classroom routines and a focus on oracy, visuals and concrete resources for all children supported Adam to feel secure in school, to access the learning opportunities available to him and to make accelerated progress.

- *What is the role of the teacher?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each learner?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Noticing, observation, listening, partnership working – what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Primary Case Study 2

A learner with medical needs

Ryan is a 6-year-old boy currently in Year 2. Since birth, Ryan has experienced severe constipation. He has received numerous treatments, including medication and several surgeries involving extended stays in Great Ormond Street Hospital. He has missed several weeks of school as a result and is currently working just below age related expectations.

Ryan tries incredibly hard in school. He is eager to please his teachers and when he is well, enjoys learning. He is motivated to be fully involved in school life.

As he becomes older, he is, however, becoming increasingly aware of the learning gap between him and his peers and this is causing some frustration. Due to long periods of absence and illness, he has struggled to establish friendships and finds the 'rough and tumble' of the playground difficult to manage. This is beginning to impact his mood in school. Ryan can be lethargic at school and occasionally struggles to engage in learning opportunities – this is believed to be because of his bowel condition and treatment. There are times when Ryan needs to wear pull-ups or incontinence pads following treatments, which he can find uncomfortable and embarrassing. He doesn't like asking the teacher for permission to go to the toilet since he needs to use the accessible toilet for changing rather than the toilets adjacent to this classroom. He therefore tries to avoid school on these days.

It was clear to the class teacher that intervention to address the above needed to be put in place early to reduce the impact of these vulnerabilities. She requested a meeting with Ryan's parents, together with the SENCO. As a result of this meeting the following was put in place:

- It was agreed his teacher would ask him to 'deliver a message to the office' when he gave her a signal that he needed to change.
- It was agreed that Ryan would access targeted group work at least three times weekly from the class teacher, focused on the key foundational skills that he had missed during his periods of absence to support him to better access the curriculum in line with his peers. This was informed by a detailed gaps analysis. It was agreed that his home learning would also be focused on these areas.
- It was agreed that Ryan would access lunchtime clubs with identified friends rather than spend his lunchtime in the playground.
- With regard to the lethargy he would sometimes experience, it was agreed that further medical advice would be sought by parents to support the school to better manage this, e.g., was a more flexible approach needed to the start of the day? Would it be beneficial to build in rest times? Were there particular sensory activities that could support Ryan's level of alertness?

A meeting to review the impact of the above was set for the following half-term. At the review meeting, it was noted that the signal for needing to change had positively impacted Ryan's attendance and that the targeted additional intervention had resulted in significant progress. The class teacher felt that with continued targeted support that Ryan would be on track to meet age related expectations by the end of the year. The lunchtime clubs had been effective but had created some tension since his friends sometimes wanted to be outside. It was therefore agreed that this would be negotiated by the class teacher more fluidly and a keyworker in the playground would be identified to facilitate play opportunities if needed. Finally, his parents shared that the medical team had advised that they would contact an Occupational Therapist to carry out an assessment to establish whether additional sensory support would be beneficial to promote alertness.

- *What is the role of the teacher?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each learner?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Noticing, observation, listening, partnership working - what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Primary Case Study 3

A learner looked after by the Local Authority (CLA)

Fiona joined reception at the age of 4 years and 7 months. During the summer holidays prior to her starting school, her parents were struggling to cope, and she was placed by social services as a child looked after in the care of her aunt.

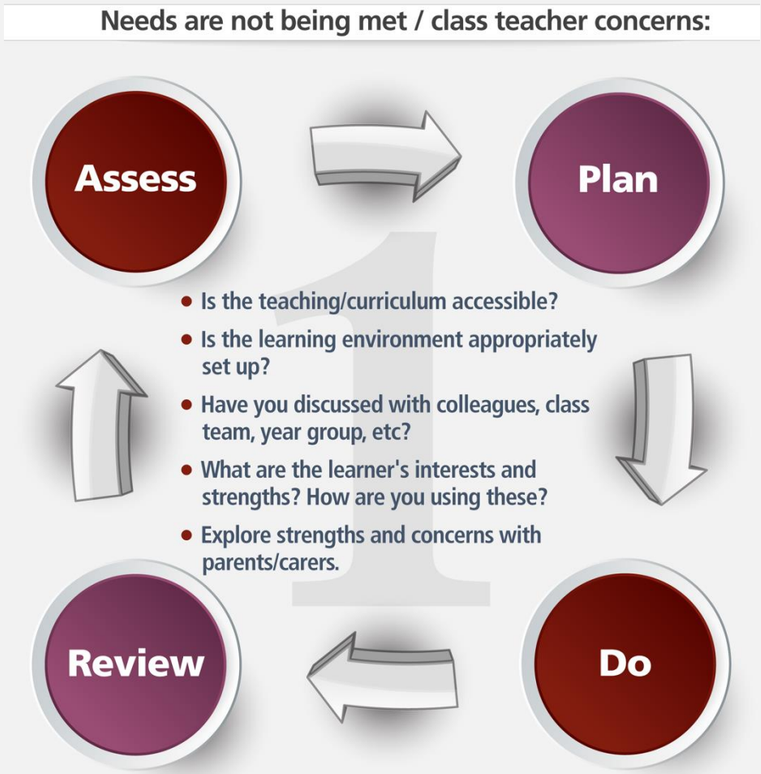
During her first week in school, Fiona presented distressed behaviours – she would walk around with her hands up in claws and would scratch at other children. She hit her head with her closed fists when she was frustrated and told children in her class that she wanted them to die. Fiona found it difficult to sustain attention, was easily distracted and did not engage in learning activities.

A meeting was set up initially with the aunt, the aunt's social worker, Fiona's social worker, the class teacher and the phase leader. It was agreed that the first step was to reflect on how to support Fiona to be and feel safe and act safely around others in school. To establish positive relationships, a keyworker and a Year 5 mentor were identified to support structured, positive play opportunities. An ABCC chart was completed to identify key trigger points in the day (mealtimes) to ensure additional support was provided at this time. Consistent explicit routines were reinforced using visuals and the aunt was also provided with similar visuals for home. The aunt's social worker supported the aunt to engage with Fiona in therapeutic play activities to support Fiona to feel more contained and heard at home.

By half-term, Fiona was much more settled but continued to struggle to sustain attention in class and was not making any progress. She had not accessed any previous early years setting and therefore a small group intervention focused on school readiness skills was implemented. This focused on turn-taking, attention and listening skills, and functional classroom language (e.g., requesting help). The impact of this intervention was significant – Fiona started to successfully engage in learning activities and started to make significant progress across a number of areas of learning.

- *What is the role of the teacher?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each learner?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Noticing, observation, listening, partnership working – what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner - Secondary



Secondary Case Study 1

A learner with barriers to attendance

After two weeks at his new secondary school, Raihan had an emotional outburst at the start of a science test, left the classroom and seemed inconsolable until the end of the day. Assuming the test had been too challenging, his teacher and the head of year discussed a more scaffolded approach. Raihan's mother was informed and she confirmed that he had been very upset when he returned home but that he hadn't shared anything more than the fact he didn't want to come back to school. He did return two days later but had a similar outburst in a maths lesson. He refused to come back to school.

How to support Raihan was discussed at a pastoral meeting – they saw that his prior attainment had been excellent and felt something was missing. His form tutor remembered Raihan mentioning that his mother had recently recovered from an illness. A meeting with his mother and his former primary school was set up, together with his form tutor and head of year. In this meeting, it was shared that a year previously, Raihan's father had left and shortly afterwards, his mother had collapsed in the bathroom. Raihan had called the ambulance himself and she had to spend a significant period in hospital. Although she recovered, Raihan had become unsettled and withdrawn at school. His mother also shared that whilst she was unwell and even once she had recovered, Raihan had often expressed that he wanted to stay with her since there was no one else to look after her. Support had been offered at his primary school but Raihan had expressed that he didn't want to be taken out of class. Holistic whole-class support had therefore been implemented.

Raihan was invited to join the meeting and it was agreed that he would benefit from more targeted support to manage his anxieties. He agreed to speak with the school counsellor and to attend a family group with his mother for parents and children with similar experiences. A phased return to school was also agreed to build his confidence.

As a result, Raihan started to be able to talk about his fears, and recognise that when he found learning difficult, his anxieties about his mother were triggered and he would feel overwhelmed. Now that his teachers were in regular contact with his mother, and he saw that other children and families in the group had similar fears, he realised there was support around him and his mother. He was able to feel safer coming to school and stay with the frustration that can come with learning.

- *What is the role of the teacher?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each learner?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Noticing, observation, listening, partnership working – what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner - Secondary

Secondary Case Study 2

A learner with medical needs

During Year 9 Dillon's Head of Year noticed his attendance was deteriorating. After contacting Dillon's mother, she shared a paediatric report that Dillon had just been diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). Recommendations from the medical team were that Dillon should follow an adapted timetable with a reduction in hours spent in school. The SENCO shared a copy of Dillon's proposed timetable for Year 10 with the family. In consultation together it was agreed which days Dillon would have a later start/earlier finish. Dillon was concerned about keeping up with the workload of all his subjects, especially with his CFS and less time in school each day. Dillon's timetable was adapted further and he was disapplied from one of his GCSE options and received timetabled sessions with a Learning Mentor.

The Learning Mentor had weekly sessions with Dillon and kept his class teachers updated. Over the following weeks class teachers shared concerns that there was inconsistency in the completion of pieces of work. In discussion with Dillon's physiotherapist and the Educational Psychologist a traffic light system was created to indicate to Dillon which pieces of work were 'essential', 'nice to have', 'complete if energy levels allow'. Over the following term Dillon's energy levels improved and in discussion with his family and medical professionals his timetable was further adapted and time in school increased.

Secondary Case Study 3

A learner looked after by the Local Authority (CLA)

In Year 10, Mya had missed several months of school before being taken into care. Her home life had been chaotic and she had witnessed some distressing physical abuse between her parents. She was then expelled when she lashed out at a teacher in frustration at being asked to read aloud. She was referred to an alternative provision school and eventually agreed to attend when her social worker and tutor worked out a plan with her, and after she was introduced to her teachers. Although she was open to some members of staff, she found transitions between lessons very difficult and was soon refusing to go into lessons at all, instead going out to the playground and playing basketball alone. Teachers said she didn't seem to retain anything and would become verbally abusive when asked to read or write, either saying it was below her or that there was no point. When the nurture teacher joined her one day on the basketball court, they began to talk. Mya eventually recounted that she'd always done well at school and was 'smart' but that everyone thought she was 'stupid' because she had missed so much school, and that she found it hard to concentrate because of all that she had on her mind. She said some people helped her, but others seemed to talk down to her and then she would just shut down. The nurture teacher suggested they start some reading together in the mornings and do some catching up without the pressure of lessons. This went well and the nurture teacher was able to share strategies with the class teachers. Their difference in approach – ensuring they didn't take her reactions personally and were patient and non-judgemental – helped her to feel safe again, and she was able to progress and access the curriculum in line with her peers.

Secondary Case Study 4

A learner with EAL

Ahmet joined the school at the start of Year 10. During the induction meeting with his Head of Year and family it was explained that he had not learnt English previously. Ahmet's timetable was adjusted to add in some EAL support sessions and a Turkish-English dictionary was purchased for him. After a couple of weeks, class teachers contacted the Head of Year and SENCO as they were concerned Ahmet was struggling with basic concepts, even when these were translated, and explained he was unable to use a calculator. A subject teacher whose first language was Turkish set up some 1:1 sessions during form time to support Ahmet and show him how to use a calculator. In these sessions Ahmet told his teacher he was finding it so difficult as he had not gone to school for the last 3 years as he had been helping on the family farm. Following this Ahmet was given additional support in core lessons and 1:1 support lessons focused on developing basic concepts and vocabulary that underpin key parts of the curriculum.

- *What is the role of the teacher?*
- *How does the teacher's expertise support effective and appropriate provision in response to the barriers being faced by each learner?*
- *What might have been the impact had a holistic understanding of these learners' needs not been considered?*
- *Noticing, observation, listening, partnership working – what is their role in assuring the appropriate provision?*
- *How is the appropriate provision determined? What are the key factors in determining this provision?*

Working with the SENCO

The Role of the SENCO

The SEND Code of Practice defines the role of the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCOs) in schools. All mainstream schools in England must have a SENCO: a qualified teacher who has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEND policy and co-ordinates the provision for learners with SEND. The SENCO is also a school's key point of contact for external agencies, including the local authority and its support services on matters related to SEND.

Teachers are accountable for the progress and development of the learners in their class and remain responsible for working with all learners daily.

As part of the role, SENCOs undertake additional qualifications and training to be able to effectively support and provide guidance to teachers and teaching assistants working with learners with SEND in their classes. A SENCO's guidance and support is tailored to meet the needs of the school and its learners: it often will include whole-school CPD, classroom observations and consultations with teachers and teaching assistants as part of the graduated approach.

Learning is not linear, and individual learners may require additional support at different times in their school life. A recent analysis from the Education Policy Institute highlighted that 39% of learners are identified as having SEND at some point during their time at school.[1] It is important to remember that when assessing learners, progress can be linear, lateral as well as spikey. As the teacher, you bring expertise on the individual learner through the graduated approach. Your observations and formative assessments of a learner, including their engagement in learning activities, interactions with peers and progress within the curriculum, are fundamental to the development of a holistic understanding of a learner.

Using the graduated approach to identify SEND

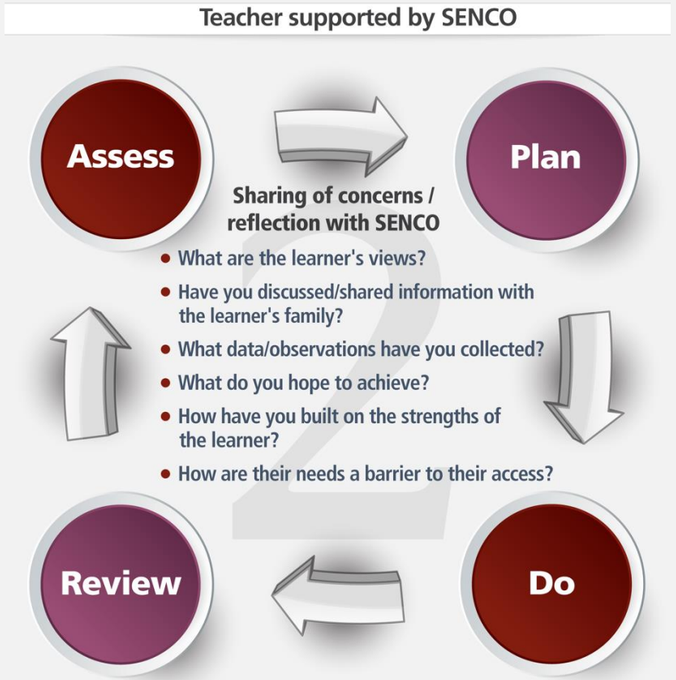
When a learner is making less than expected progress – academically or socially – your first response is to employ quality first teaching strategies targeting the learner's area of weakness. As a part of the graduated approach, you should speak with the learner and liaise directly with key adults, including their families, and middle or senior leaders with responsibility for pastoral and academic progress (for example, phase leader, head of year or head of department).

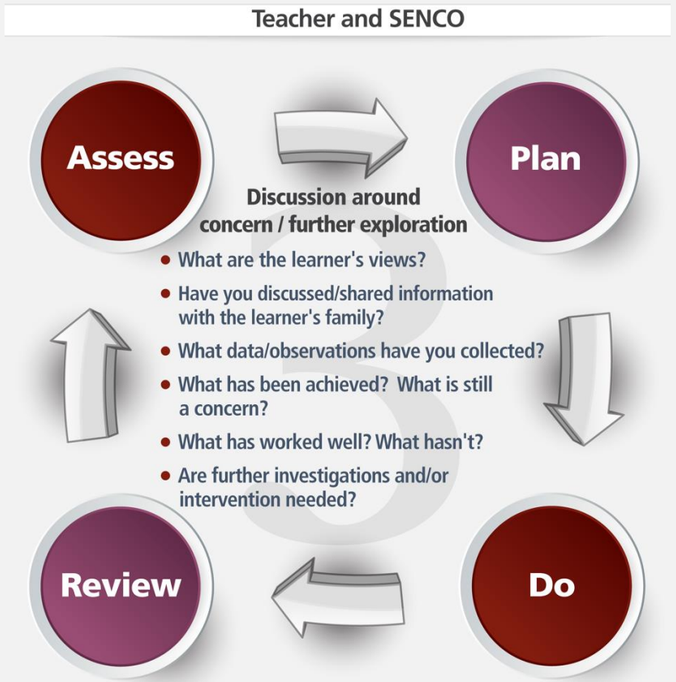
If a learner is continuing to make less than expected progress, despite consistent provision that supports the identified area(s) of weakness, you and the SENCO will work together to review the learner's progress and explore additional support and/or guidance that may be needed to support them.

The SENCO will support you in the further assessment of a learner's particular strengths and weaknesses, and as part of this process the SENCO may need to complete additional observations and/or assessments to better understand a learner's needs. The SENCO can also support you to develop additional provision to meet a learner's individual needs and provide guidance on the effective implementation of provision. In some cases, the SENCO may determine there is also a need to seek specialist input and support, in agreement with the learner's parents or carers.

Before seeking advice from the SENCO, check that you have:

- *Observed the learner and noted any patterns or triggers*
- *Know the learner's strengths, interests, and difficulties*
- *Spoken with the learner's family*
- *Spoken with the learner*
- *Put adjustments and/or additional support in place, and recorded the impact*
- *Trialled incremental changes*
- *Reviewed the learner's progress*
- *Adopted a test and learn approach*





Working with the SENCO, external agencies and specialist teachers

SEN Support

When a learner is accessing special educational provision in school, they are placed on a school's SEND Register as SEN Support. For learners with a special educational need or disability, schools need to take action to remove barriers to learning and provide effective provision that supports their access to and progress in the curriculum.

The role of the SENCO is to plan and oversee this provision, working alongside class and subject teachers to determine appropriate provision through the graduated approach. You remain responsible and accountable for learners receiving SEN Support; the SENCO will support teachers by providing advice on teaching strategies and resource adaptations to meet the needs of the learner. At times, this guidance may include strategies and approaches to effectively deploy teaching assistants.

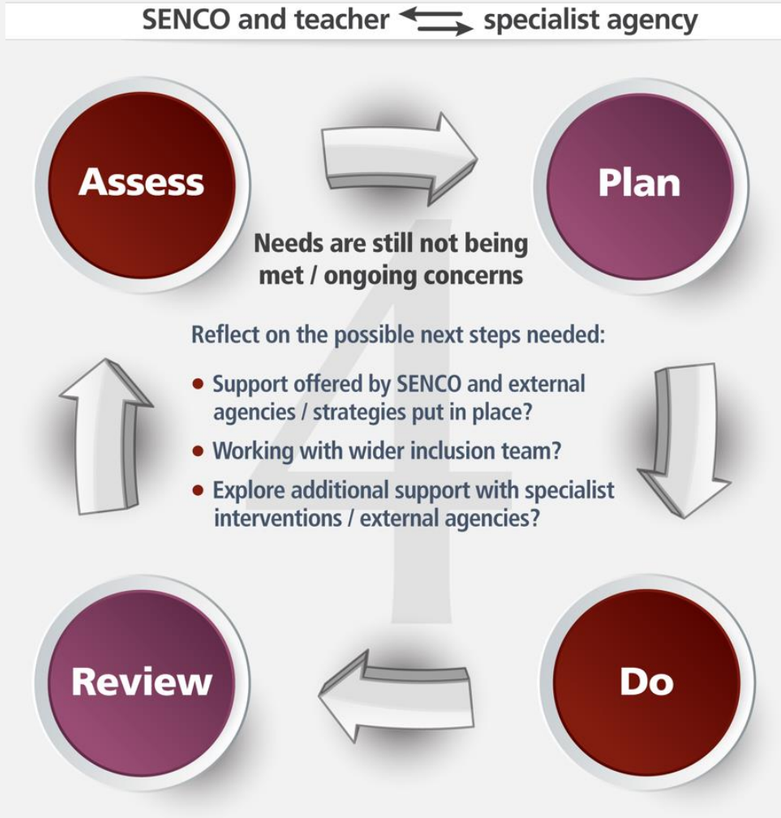
A school's SEND register is not fixed. There will be times when some learners may no longer need additional support because their needs are being effectively met through quality first teaching. There will also be times when a learner on SEN Support will need provision in addition to what the school ordinarily has on offer. The SENCO, together with yourself and the family may determine additional specialist support is needed, and/or the need for an Education, Health and Care Assessment to take place. If at any time you have questions or concerns about the progress of a learner on SEN Support, you should contact the SENCO directly.

Education Health and Care Plans

Learners with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have learning needs that require provision in addition to that which is available through SEN Support. EHCPs are legally binding documents that specify the educational, health and social provision that must be in place to meet a learner's needs.

At least once every twelve months, a learner's EHCP is reviewed in an Annual Review meeting. Your voice is integral to this process. In the lead up to the Annual Review, the SENCO will contact you directly for your input on how the learner is progressing, both academically and socially in relation to their outcomes in their EHCP. You will have unique insights into the learner, which are important to be documented and considered when reviewing and updating outcomes and changes to provision.

It is important that the progress of learners with an EHCP is reviewed continually, in addition to the Annual Review process. If you have concerns about a learner with an EHCP at any point, you should contact your SENCO directly for advice and support.



Working with external agencies and specialist teachers

External agencies and specialist teachers

In some instances, a SENCO may refer a child to an external agency or specialist teacher for assessment. This referral is completed in partnership with the learner and their family. Once submitted, a multi-disciplinary team will consider the information provided in the referral and determine if further investigation is needed. A referral to an external agency or specialist teacher may result in:

- Feedback to the school on further strategies to try in the classroom prior to re-submitting a referral if needed later
- Further investigation, which will typically include:
  - an observation of the learner in the school and/or at home
  - conversations with the learner, their family, and school-based staff working with the learner
  - Standardised assessments, e.g., clinical assessments, questionnaires, rating scales

If further investigation is agreed, a comprehensive report will be shared with the family, and with the family's consent, the school. The report will outline the learner's strengths and barrier(s) to learning, with recommendations of teaching strategies and interventions to implement at home and in the classroom. The report may also:

- Confirm, or rule out, a suspected diagnosis
- Include direct support from the external agency/specialist. This support may include the modelling of strategies or intervention – this provision will then need to be implemented by a member of school staff.

Case Study: A Parent's View on Managing Relationships with External Professionals

When May was younger, I very strongly felt the pressure of balancing all the relationships with professionals, processing and putting into action the therapeutic interventions recommended by many of them and dealing with changes in relationship when they moved on (sometimes very suddenly). Relationships had to be formed and worked on. May tended to be less affected by those dynamics and changes than myself and my husband – we held the pressure. There were times when the image of us three at the centre of a wheel would come to me, with loads of spokes coming off representing all the different professionals. I no longer feel the weight of the wheel so intensely because the balance and dynamics of things has been completely different since May now attends a school where there is a focus on continuity and equitable partnership working. How the school works with professionals alongside parents makes a significant difference to May's educational experiences.

Families will be working to put in practice interventions and recommendations from the full range of professionals.

The Role of a Speech and Language Therapist

Speech and Language Therapists are allied health professionals who assess and treat children and adults with specific speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) to help them communicate to the best of their ability. They also work with swallowing difficulties (known as dysphagia). They work closely with families and other professionals, including teachers, support staff, nurses and occupational therapists.

Speech and language skills play a crucial role in a learner's school readiness and ability to achieve their educational potential. Evidence shows SLCN impact on literacy, educational attainment, social, emotional and mental health, life chances and employment. The core role of a Speech and Language Therapist working in education settings is to support and enable learners to reach their full communicative and educational potential, removing or reducing the barriers that their SLCN present to their learning.

A Speech and Language Therapist will consider all of the learner's strengths and needs in the following areas:

- Attention and listening
- Understanding of language
- Expression or use of language
- Speech sounds
- Voice and fluency (stammering)
- Social interaction
- Swallowing

In a school setting, input will be in the form of universal, targeted and specialist approaches, including (but not restricted to):

Universal:

- INSET training
- Use of communication-friendly strategies in the classroom
- Advice on communication-enhancing resources available to schools

Targeted:

- Designing and monitoring programmes for individual learners or small groups to be delivered by a trained member of support staff
- Classroom observations
- Parent workshops and drop-ins

Specialist:

- Screening and detailed assessments and reporting
- Delivering 1:1 therapy
- Coaching adults in strategies for learners with SLCN

The Role of an Occupational Therapist

Occupational Therapists are allied health professionals who provide practical support for children and young people who are restricted in participating in activities that are important to them. These barriers can be physical, cognitive, or sensory.

'Occupation' refers to every-day, functional tasks such as self-care (getting dressed, eating a meal, using the toilet), participating in school tasks (documenting learning, cutting with scissors, playing football in PE) and leisure (riding a bike or crossing the road to meet a friend).

An Occupational Therapist will consider all of the learner's strengths and needs – physical, psychological, social and environmental. They work together with teaching staff, the family and the learner to problem solve and agree on a solution that will allow the learner to increase their independence, and sense of success in their chosen functional task.

Occupational Therapy input could look like the following:

- Assisting in identifying the area of difficulty and how to scaffold tasks to meet the just-right challenge
- Supporting adaptations to be made in environments such as moving desks to allow wheelchair access, or pulling down blinds to decrease visual stimuli
- Recommending equipment, materials or tools such as adapted scissors or hand-splints
- Assisting in setting up motor skills or task-specific groups
- Providing advice or recommending strategies for sensory needs

Case Study: Occupational Therapy Support

The Occupational Therapist (OT) and the class teacher together developed a learning group that would meet the learning objectives of individual learners. The OT modelled the intervention to the class teacher and TA; following this the TA ran the intervention during lunch times, feeding back to the teacher how the learners did in each session. The OT met with the classroom teacher and TA every six weeks to review the intervention as part of the graduated approach.

The lunch group was set up in a reception class for two reasons. One learner (named T) with an EHCP was selective in his diet, limiting his nutritional intake and preventing him from having school lunch. A second learner (named M) was sensitive to noise, finding it difficult to eat in the lunch hall; she also found it difficult to engage with a classmate who was excitable and made unexpected, loud noises resulting in her avoiding environments he was in.

The lunch group consisted of these two learners, a supporting adult and two additional learners without SEND who the classroom teacher wanted to build additional language opportunities for. The intervention took place in the classroom during lunch time, where it was quieter and less busy than the lunch hall. Three of the learners ate school lunch, with T having his packed lunch. The learners and the TA sat at the same table to engage in a family-style meal. The principles of the learning group included:

- *All food explored without the expectation to eat it. Using vision, touch, smell, taste, a learning plate (a separate plate where unfamiliar foods are placed) was used to help with exploration.*
- *All learners encouraged to participate in discussions about the food they are eating using positive language to describe food such as 'strong smell' rather than a 'bad smell'.*
- *Sharing and passing of food or resources to allow for social engagement.*
- *Adults demonstrated different ways of exploring food.*

After six weeks of eating lunch this way, M was happy to be around the child she had previously avoided. T was accepting two new foods and was exploring a range of others he had previously avoided. After reviewing the progress of the group, the lunchtime learning group continued for another cycle, supporting T with his exploration of foods and continuing to build language and social engagement opportunities for the other learners.

Occupational Therapy input can be in the form of (but is not restricted to):

- Classroom observations
- Joint working with teaching staff
- Family workshops or coffee mornings
- 'Lunch and learns' or in-service training for teaching staff

Case Study: Lunch and Learn CPD

In the staff room, the Occupational Therapist delivers a 15-minute session while teaching staff have lunch. This is an opportunity to share specific, to-the-point information within the context of a busy timetable for teachers.

Working with external agencies and specialist teachers

The Role of a Physiotherapist

A children's physiotherapist is a qualified physiotherapist with extensive experience working with children. Physiotherapists work with children and young people with a varied range of conditions from co-ordination/balance issues to complex neurological needs. In mainstream schools, physiotherapists work closely with the class staff, the child or young person and families to understand their needs and set goals. They provide tailored therapy input to help the child or young person achieve these goals and help the child or young person to integrate in the school to his/her fullest potential. For example, a physiotherapist could work with a PE teacher to adapt the PE curriculum for a child or young person with co-ordination issues or a child or young person who uses a walker, or they might work with the LSA to improve a child or young person's head control so that they can focus and participate better during lessons. The physiotherapist would demonstrate and train school staff on how to help the child or young person to participate to their best ability. The physiotherapist can also provide training in activities that are appropriate for the child or young person and help achieve their set goals. If the child or young person needs or uses any special equipment such as a standing frame or walker, the physiotherapist will provide advice and training in how to use this equipment safely and effectively.

The Role of a Mental Health Worker

Good mental health is crucial for a learner's ability to learn, play, and sustain satisfying interpersonal relationships. Cultivating and maintaining good mental health is essential for good educational outcomes, and for the learner's ability to get the most from school.

There are many different types of mental health professionals that work with learners in schools, such as child psychotherapists, child counsellors, play therapists, creative arts therapists, music therapists, art therapists, drama therapists, and dance movement psychotherapists.

Although there are many different types of mental health professionals that work in schools with many varied ways of working and intervention techniques, they all support children and young people in the following areas:

- Relationships: the learner's ability to make and sustain nurturing and positive relationships with others. The learner might need support around attachment with their primary caregivers, parental separation, or bullying as victim or for displaying bullying behaviour.
- Emotional Wellbeing: the learner's ability to be at ease and congruent in feelings and the way they are expressed. The learner might need support with anxiety, phobias, self-esteem, depression, anger, conduct disorders, school-related anxiety, obsessions, and compulsions, eating disorders, substance abuse, self-harm, and suicidal behaviour, soiling and wetting. The learner might need to explore feelings around their gender, sexuality, or difference.
- Communication: the learner's ability to express needs verbally and non-verbally. The learner might need support in making their needs known in a positive way, has selective mutism or has communication challenges associated with autism spectrum.
- Attention and Hyperactivity: the learner's ability to enjoy and focus on sustained activities. The learner might need strategies and support to help with self-regulation, over-arousal, and impetuous actions that put themselves or others at risk.
- Trauma: the learner's exposure to trauma either as a witness, instigator, or victim. The learner might have experienced some adverse events such as abuse, a difficult bereavement, homelessness, or domestic or gang violence.
- Play: the learner's ability to play creatively, independently and with others.
- Resilience: the learner's ability to weather adverse circumstances.

Therapists tend to do this through a carefully managed therapeutic relationship characterised by empathy and acceptance and often involving a mixture of talking, play, and creative activity such as art, movement, or music. Therapy sessions tend to be held at the same time and place at regular intervals. They work closely with families, teachers, the school's safeguarding lead, other school professionals, and with some external agencies such as social workers.

The therapist can provide different forms of input in a school setting. The core of the work is a specialist one-to-one or group therapy service including regular sessions, and the writing of assessments and reports. Targeted approaches in the school community might include family workshops on a specific topic such as play, anxiety, anger, attachment, or trauma; or a classroom intervention dealing with a specific issue such as bullying. Universal approaches might include INSET training, the implementation of mental health approaches and strategies in the classroom, and advice on social, emotional, and mental health resources available to schools.

Working with external agencies and specialist teachers

The Role of an Educational Psychologist

Educational Psychology is the application of psychological theory, research and approaches to support children, young people, their families and schools to promote learning, social and emotional wellbeing and psychological development.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are trained to Doctorate level, and work with children and young people between 0-25 years of age where there are concerns about the child or young person's learning, development and progress. EPs can assess and diagnose specific learning difficulties and provide a statutory contribution to Education, Health and Care assessments. Their role is also to support the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people, families and teachers. The role of an EP incorporates intervention and prevention work. EPs work within schools and other educational settings and can be commissioned to work in a variety of ways, including:

- Initial consultations
- Providing training for teachers, learners and/or families
- Providing advice and support for teachers and families following:
    - an observation of the learner in the school and/or at home
    - conversations with the learner, their family, and school-based staff working with the learner
    - Standardised assessments, e.g., clinical assessments, questionnaires, rating scales

As a teacher, it is important to implement the recommendations of the EP as part of the graduated approach.

Qualified Teacher of the Deaf

A Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) is a qualified teacher, with the skills and knowledge required to provide quality teaching to mainstream learners. They have undertaken additional training to complete a mandatory qualification and acquire expertise in teaching learners with a hearing impairment (HI). Teachers of the Deaf work collaboratively with classroom teachers to develop a conducive learning environment, providing guidance to teachers on high-quality teaching strategies to support a HI learner's access to the teaching and learning. They can support classroom teachers in understanding a learner's hearing impairment and their amplification system, providing both small group and/or whole-school CPD on strategies to support learners with hearing impairment in the mainstream setting. Learners with hearing impairment can receive varying levels of support from a Teacher of the Deaf. Some learners will only have monitoring visits, whilst others may have direct teaching intervention.

Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment

A Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVI) is a qualified and experienced teacher, with the skills and knowledge required to provide quality teaching to mainstream learners. They have undertaken additional training to complete a mandatory qualification and acquire expertise in teaching learners with vision impairment (VI). QTVIs work collaboratively with classroom teachers to develop a conducive learning environment, providing guidance to teachers on high-quality teaching strategies to support a VI learner's access to the teaching and learning. They can support classroom teachers in understanding a learner's vision impairment and its implications for their access to learning and wider development. Learners with VI can receive varying levels of support from a QTVI. Some learners will only have monitoring visits, whilst others may have direct teaching intervention.

Dyslexia Specialist Teacher

The Dyslexia Specialist Teacher is specifically trained and qualified to carry out formal and informal assessments to enable provision to be developed to meet the individual needs of learners experiencing difficulties with literacy. They will have an in depth understanding of all elements of literacy learning including reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, oral language development and general personal organisation. Support from a dyslexia specialist teacher can be provided through personalised interventions with small groups or individually. They may also work collaboratively to support literacy within the whole class setting. Some learners receiving support will have a diagnosis of dyslexia while others will be having difficulties with literacy learning but may not be dyslexic. Dyslexia Specialist Teachers will interact with teachers and parents to advise on any further appropriate support.

The Role of the Virtual School Headteacher

Children and young people looked after by a local authority may be educated across many schools. The Virtual School Headteacher has oversight of all children and young people looked after to support the educational progress and promote the educational achievement of these children and young people. Virtual School Headteachers will work with the Designated Teacher to develop Personal Education Plans for learners looked after to ensure they maximise their potential. Targeted, additional support can be identified and implemented through these plans and the pupil premium plus funding. Where a child or young person looked after also has a special educational need, the school will work in partnership with the Virtual School Headteacher to ensure that the child or young person has access to the appropriate support. Virtual School Headteachers can also provide additional advice, guidance and support.

The engagement model

The Engagement Model

The Engagement Model Guidance was published in January 2020. It will become statutory from September 2021. It applies to maintained schools, maintained special schools, academies (including free schools), pupil referral units, hospital schools and Ministry of Defence schools. It is not mandatory for non-maintained or independent schools.

Historically, learners working below national curriculum levels were assessed using P-levels.

These have now been replaced. Learners assessed as working at Pre-Key stage standard level (Pre-Key Stage 1 and Pre-Key Stage 2) are expected to engage in subject-specific study. Learners performing below Pre-Key Stage Level 1 are expected to access a personalised curriculum that is appropriately rich and challenging, with their progress towards each of the five areas of the Engagement Model captured by the teacher. The Engagement Model does not prescribe how this is done. Teachers are expected to report on learner progress to families. Primary schools and special schools must submit the number of learners working towards engagement skills during their end of Key Stage 1 and 2 data returns to the DfE but are not expected to report any other data about learner progress. The Engagement Model can add value to learners in all Key Stages, to support engagement for those working below at or above Pre-Key Stage standards.

The five areas of the Engagement Model are exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence and initiation. Broadly speaking, the five areas represent what is necessary for learners to interpret what is happening around them and to become independent in developing a new skill or concept. They are not hierarchical; a learner may have learning objectives under one, several or all of the five areas. The order in which these skills may be taught will be entirely dependent upon the needs of each individual learner.

Exploration: The learner builds on an initial reaction to a stimulus, showing signs of interest and curiosity beyond 'startled'. The learner continues to be responsive when the same stimulus or activity is presented in different contexts and environments. Knowledge is developed about which stimuli and activities interest and motivate the learner, and how this is communicated.

Realisation: The learner displays behaviours indicating they want more control of the stimulus or activity, for example by stopping it or trying to make changes to it. The learner will often show what familiar adults consider to be surprise, excitement, delight, amazement or even fear. The learner continues to demonstrate this with the stimulus or activity in new ways, and in different contexts or environments.

Anticipation: The learner interprets cues or prompts in order to predict or expect a familiar stimulus or activity. This continues even when prompting is reduced. Knowledge of the learner is crucial, particularly their affective communication (for example, gaze, facial expression, body language, hand movements), as well as knowledge of the time it takes for the learner to process cues or prompts.

Persistence: The learner sustains their attention for long enough to try and actively find out more about the stimulus or activity. They make a determined effort, such as showing intentional changes in gaze, hand or body movements. The adult strategically withdraws help, prompting, encouragement or even praise in order to allow the learner time and opportunity to persist.

Initiation: The learner investigates a stimulus or activity to get a desired outcome. They act spontaneously and independently during familiar activities, demonstrating they understand how to create an impact on their environment to achieve a desired outcome.

Classroom systems should capture high-quality observational information about the learner to:

- Predict and recognise patterns of behaviour
- Plan necessary changes to increase engagement, e.g., positioning, resourcing, refining the curriculum or pedagogy
- Plan appropriate levels and timing of support, e.g., re-promptings to engage, initiate
- Narrate progress using the language of the five areas of the Engagement Model

Additional information:

A Celebratory Approach to SEND Assessment in Early Years **-** Pen Green Centre for Children and Families & Charnwood Nursery School (2018)

Characteristics of Effective Learning: play and exploration in action - The Foundation Stage Forum (2015)

Section 7

Strategies to scaffold learning

In this section, we will cover:

1. **Cognition and learning**
2. **Communication and interaction**
3. **Sensory and/or physical needs**
4. **Social, emotional and mental health difficulties**
5. **Neurodiversity and co-occurrence of need**

Cognition and learning

Within the SEND Code of Practice, Cognition and Learning needs are defined as support for learning difficulties when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with adapted support. Learners with SEND may have greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring literacy and numeracy skills, or in understanding concepts, even with appropriate differentiation. They may also have other difficulties such as speech and language delay or difficulties interacting socially. Developmental delays in another area of need, such as Communication and Interaction, may impact on a learner's ability to consolidate skills and progress through to the next cognitive and learning developmental stage. Whilst some learners with SEND may have difficulties with one or more cognition and learning skill, often referred to as a specific learning difficulty, others may have difficulties across a broad range of cognition and learning skills which can have a moderate, severe or profound impact on a learner's overall learning and development.

We all change, develop skills, adapt and grow at all stages throughout our lives. Difficulties which are present in the early years and require additional support throughout primary school may not need on-going support in secondary school. Conversely, cognitive and learning difficulties may require additional support only in secondary school or beyond as a young person matures. This section will cover the cognitive and learning needs that you may observe in your classroom under the umbrella of 'executive functions'. It will also give strategies for adapting the environment and resources as part of the assess – plan – do – review cycle. You may have learners in your class who have been identified as having a learning need by an education or health professional, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia or ADHD. These learners will have different profiles of strengths and difficulties. The most effective way of identifying any difficulties, informing interventions and determining the rate of progress is by assessing over time and monitoring the learner's response to teaching.

Executive functions

Cognition and learning

Executive Function is a term used to describe a set of mental processes that help us to connect experience to present action. These functions enable us to plan, organise, strategise, pay attention to and remember details.[1] They develop across childhood and into early adulthood.

In their guide to executive function and self-regulation [2], The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University compares executive functions to the job of an air traffic control system managing arrivals and departures at multiple runways at a busy airport. Executive functions are highly inter-related and need to operate together to work efficiently.

Executive functioning skills have been linked to key developmental outcomes, such as reading, maths and even mental and physical health and wellbeing, as well as employability[3]. The most effective way to support executive function in the classroom is to explicitly model and teach metacognitive strategies.

When modelling and teaching metacognitive strategies, it is important to keep these principles in mind:[4]

- Strategies being taught should directly link with the curriculum subject area.
- Metacognitive strategies should be taught explicitly e.g., 'this is a strategy for memory' or 'this is a strategy for planning'.
- Strategies should be taught in a structured and systematic way using scaffolding, modelling and giving time to practise.
- Learners' motivation and self-understanding need to be addressed to ensure strategies are generalised. For example, if a learner is experiencing repeated failure on **too hard** tasks, then adaptations will be needed so that this learner can experience success.

We will now look at each of the nine areas of executive function to understand its function in the learning child or young person, what we might see if there are difficulties in this area, and how we need to respond with support. Understanding executive function skills underpins our response to learners in our class(es) with identified conditions, such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dyspraxia.

The areas we will cover in this section are:

- *Working memory – retaining and working with information in our brains*
- *Attention – controlling our attention*
- *Inhibitory control – filtering distractions*
- *Cognitive flexibility – switching mental gears*
- *Organisation and planning – resourcing and setting steps towards a goal*
- *Self-monitoring – checking and reviewing*
- *Emotional self-regulation – managing our emotions*
- *Initiation – getting started on a task or project*[5]

In Section 2, you learned about theories of memory and how children and young people's working memory capacity can differ widely, even for learners of the same age in a classroom. Working memory is the system which allows us to hold on to information and manipulate it in our minds for a short period of time.[6] It can include both verbal working memory and visual-spatial working memory. Efficient working memory is needed for a wide range of skills, such as reading comprehension, writing tasks, mental arithmetic, sequencing tasks, following discussions and remembering verbal instructions amongst many other everyday tasks.

Working memory is a core mechanism in literacy and numeracy learning[7] – learners are required to hold multiple pieces of verbal and visual information in mind and apply them. The below examples of working memory in action in the classroom illustrate its role.

If a learner is reading the word 'c,a,t', they must be able to identify the sound linked to each letter (phonological skills or knowledge), hold these in mind to blend them, and form the word. They may also be retrieving the meaning of the word, cat, from long-term memory, and applying it to the context of a story or a piece of writing. If a learner is still developing their literacy skills and does not yet have automatic recall of letter-sound knowledge for reading or spelling, then time should be taken to build more automatic recall of each letter-sound correspondence so that the learner can blend without excessive demand on working memory.

In mental arithmetic, to solve a number problem using addition, a learner will need to hold the numbers in mind, use their long-term memory to recall knowledge of addition, and calculate the answer.

Unfortunately, distraction, trying to hold too much information, and the demands of a task are all ways in which working memory can fail us. Learners with poor working memory often struggle to meet the heavy demands on their working memory of many everyday classroom activities. They may forget instructions, be easily distracted or abandon tasks before their completion.

Relationships

Children and young people who easily forget instructions or information are likely to feel anxious in the classroom. Some learners may try to hide their difficulties by not initiating work or abandoning tasks. As the teacher, you will need to look out for when a learner is struggling with working memory. Notice how the learner interacts with the set task, was the lesson content and/or related activities accessible? Were appropriate adaptations in place, e.g., chunked learning, concrete resources, visual aids? Factors such as anxiety, stress and tiredness can also negatively affect working memory from day-to-day.

Environment

Evaluate the 'cognitive load' of your lessons – can instructions be broken down into small steps? Can instructions be repeated or set out visually for learners to return to if information has been forgotten? Can transcribing from the board be avoided?

Strategies

Diaries, calculators, planners – we all use memory aids in our daily lives. There is little evidence that working memory capacity can be increased and therefore approaches which focus on compensatory strategies are recommended. This does not mean you need to have low expectations, but rather use compensatory strategies to ensure the information can move to the long-term memory. Be mindful that to move information into long-term memory it must be worked on i.e., rehearsed and practised. Time and space need to be given to this. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction[8] explains how effective planned time to rehearse, and practise can be. Making information relevant and interesting to the learner, where it enhances the learning experience, can be a useful strategy – it is important that additional detail does not distract from the key content of the lesson. Furthermore, use of memory strategies reduce the amount of information to be held in the learner's mind at any one time (cognitive load) allowing them to process information without losing it. In school, these may be concrete resources e.g., number lines, word banks, reminders of rules. There are many sites online with suggested strategies, e.g., Education Corner's Effective Memory Strategies.

Assessment

As a teacher, actively look out for working memory vulnerabilities in your class. Do you have learners who struggle to get started? Do they seem to give up and abandon a task before completion? Do they miss out words, letters, or parts of a task? Re-read Section 2, particularly the content about different types of memory. Observe the learner, consider and trial strategies that can support their access to the curriculum. Your subject leader/HoD can support you in further scaffolding the curriculum.

We know that children, young people and adults use different types of attention for different tasks. Selective attention helps us to focus on the information that we need to know, whilst filtering out all the incoming sensory information that we do not need for the task at hand. We use sustained attention to ensure we spend enough time to process all the information we need deeply enough to recall it. In and outside of the classroom we need to be able to switch our attention to different pieces of information and back again. Although divided attention creates cognitive load and is not as efficient as having a single focus, it is necessary to help us to do some tasks in life like cross an icy road without slipping over, whilst being aware of any oncoming traffic that might require us to speed up. To be able to use our attention effectively we need to have **inhibitory control.**

Inhibitory control develops over time, in response to interactions with the environment and people. Younger children have less control than older children, young people and adults. Inhibitory control allows a learner to control their attention, behaviour, thoughts and/or emotions to override the urge to do something else that their body wants, or their mind is attracted to and instead do what is more appropriate or needed. Without inhibitory control we would be at the mercy of impulses, habits and stimuli in the environment that pull us this way or that. Inhibitory control makes it possible for us to change and for us to **choose how we react and behave.** What do we see in the learner who has inhibitory control difficulties? These learners in class, like all children and young people, are bombarded with sensory information, but unlike other learners they find it hard, or for some, impossible, to filter out the information that is not currently relevant. This learner can present as a **daydreamer** i.e., they are quiet, might look attentive, but their mind is elsewhere. Or they may present more physically or verbally, changing subjects, looking around, and up and down from their seat. The need to constantly pull their attention back to the area of focus is effortful and, combining this with what we know about working memory, will lead to repeated loss of information. This can be very frustrating for you trying to support the learner, and it is very difficult for the learner who struggles to attend because they can easily pick up on this frustration.

Relationship

Children and young people with attentional difficulties can come to your class already having been exposed to adults being frustrated with them. This can result in an 'internal model of themselves' that they are **irritating** (see *Attachment Theory* in Section 2). The first thing that any adult working with learners with attentional difficulties needs to do is to understand that learners **may not be choosing** to react and behave as they are. Some children may not be able to control their selective attention and they may struggle to keep sustained attention. It is important to hold high expectations for all learners – some children and young people will need reasonable adjustments in place to support their access and success in meeting these expectations. Consider how you can support all learners to build internal views of themselves as valuable members of the classroom – monitor their interactions with adults and peers, ensure that learners with attention difficulties are understood and supported in their social relationships. Prepare any supply teachers with helpful learner profile information to ensure they are understood. Do not underestimate the patience required by families and teachers to support learners with attention and concentration difficulties. However, do recognise that the relationship is very important and a highly protective factor in helping these learners.

Environment

Learners with attentional difficulties can become cognitively fatigued with the effort needed to keep pulling their attention back repeatedly and re-finding lost information. Classrooms are naturally stimulating and so thought is needed to manage this for the learner, e.g., sit them with their back to the door to minimise seeing people coming in and out, not in front of a window that they can see out of. Inclusive classrooms should be calm and focused, with well-established routines and expectations.

Consider what happens when you fill a bucket –
you can keep putting things in, but at some point, it will overflow.

Learners can continue to take in information –
but at some point, they will no longer be able to retain the information.

Strategies

Post-it notes, numbered or ordered (1st/2nd etc.), big paperclips and highlighter pens are all good ways of marking a page so that the learner can find their place again independently once reminded. It is important to develop and teach strategies that are increasingly less dependent on adults, and instead orchestrate reminders to return to focus from a distance. This, established in primary school, is essential for secondary school where learners start to resist wanting to be different from their classmates (even if they still need adult support to regain their focus) and where independence becomes increasingly important.

Checklists that are domain-specific (e.g., for packing a school bag, working through a science experiment) are helpful for all learners and can be developed age-appropriately across the phases. This can lead into older children and young people learning to create their own checklists to support their independent planning and organisation.

Assessment

Learners with attention difficulties will take longer to complete tasks, are vulnerable to adults and other children over-helping to get a task completed and will have more difficulties created by their working memory being overloaded. It is therefore essential to use formative assessment to get a granular understanding of what is missing from their knowledge base and to use mastery approaches to secure the knowledge before moving on.

Educational Psychologists can assess for the type of attention difficulty being demonstrated, which can help with strategy building. Some learners you teach may have had an assessment by a health professional of their attention needs and have met the criteria for an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnosis, which includes behaviours such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsivity.

This Attention Difficulties Resource Pack has been designed for class teachers to use online to support ideas on how to select and implement strategies.

Cognitive flexibility builds on inhibitory control and working memory and develops later. Cognitive flexibility is being able to change perspectives spatially (imagining something from a different perspective) or interpersonally (thinking from someone else's point of view). To change perspectives, we need to have knowledge of other perspectives. It then becomes possible to inhibit our previous perspective and load into working memory a different perspective. It is in this way that cognitive flexibility becomes possible through inhibitory control and recall of other perspectives.

Another aspect of cognitive flexibility involves applying learned strategies that can prompt us to change how we think about something (thinking outside the box). So, if one way of solving a problem isn't working, we know that we should try to come up with a new way of thinking about the problem.

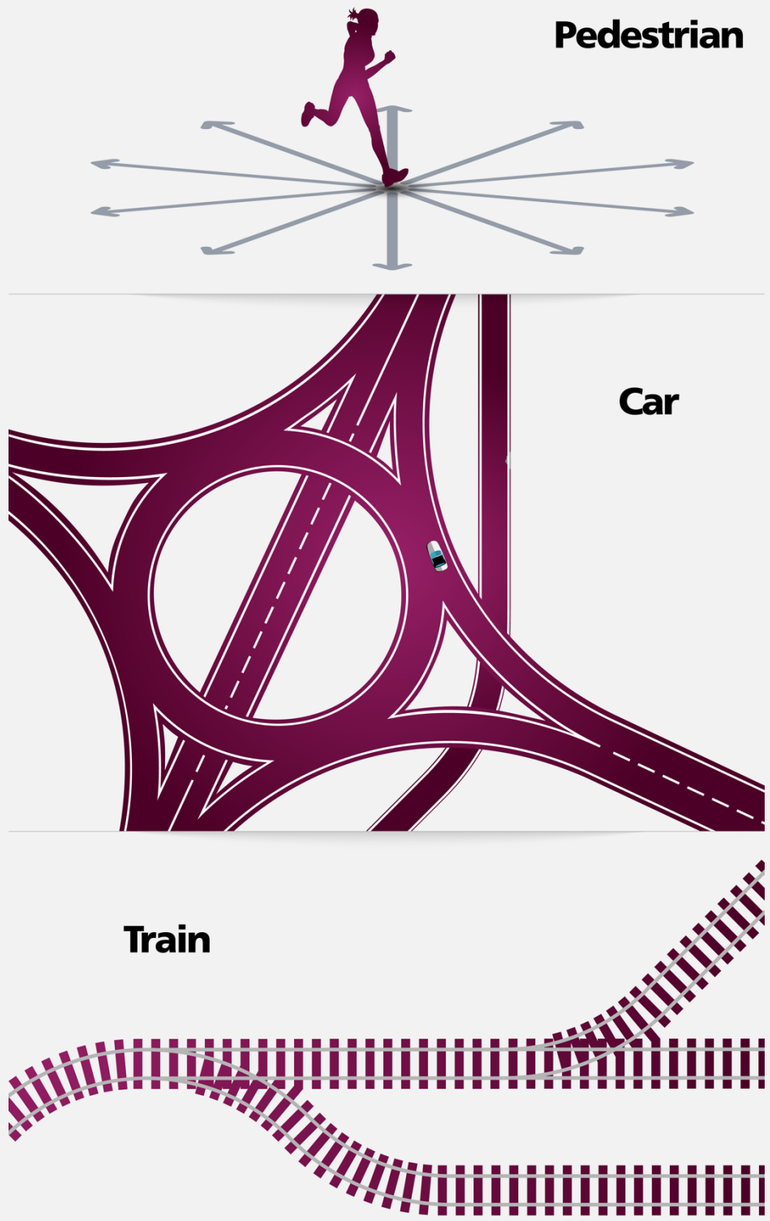
Cognitive flexibility also involves being flexible enough to adjust to changed demands or priorities, to admit you were wrong, and to take advantage of sudden, unexpected opportunities. For example, you were planning to do one activity, but then a great opportunity comes up to do something else, are you able to take advantage of that opportunity? Cognitive flexibility overlaps with creativity, task switching, and set shifting. Cognitive flexibility is the opposite of rigidity.

With this understanding in mind, what might we see in a learner who is struggling to be cognitively flexible? This is an aspect of autism but can also be seen in some learners without this diagnosis, who may have high levels of anxiety and manage their anxiety by controlling what happens in their environment. These learners may find a change in timetable or change in teacher distressing as opposed to the normal levels of discomfort we all feel with change. Socially, and in learning, they may find it hard to accept other people's explanation of events which can lead to arguments with peers and adults, e.g., they can only 'see' their interpretation of events - they may experience feelings of injustice when their view is not accepted. Conceptually they may require concrete resources to support their imagination of shape and space for longer than their same-age peers.

When planning lessons, consider adaptations to lessons that can enable some learners to have a range in opportunities to experience strategies and develop their knowledge in **domain-specific areas** before applying new learning to more complex tasks.

'Why can't they just go with the flow?'

Consider the image to the right. The pedestrian can change his/her direction at any time. The car driver can usually change direction quite quickly. A train driver, however, is on a fixed track and cannot change route until they get to 'points' where preparation has been made for them to change. 'Going with the flow' can be a challenge for some learners in our classrooms.



Cognition and learning – Cognitive flexibility

Relationship

Children and young people who have difficulties with cognitive flexibility or are cognitively rigid will struggle with all the inevitable changes that can happen in the school day and it will create an emotional response that can be fatiguing. Recognising what kind of thinking is happening in your learners and being curious and patient is the first step in helping you, the teacher, to think what the best strategy will be. Talking through or justifying unexpected changes may be time-consuming, but some learners will need this opportunity to be able to move on and be open to learning again. If you have a learner with autism or anxiety in your class, it is important that you understand how cognitive flexibility is affecting them and how it manifests itself in class and at home. Your relationship with the parent is highly important for learners who are rigid in their thinking to ensure that the classroom environment is understood and that you can take advantage of what the parent has learnt to do in managing their child's rigidity. It will be important to inform parents of any changes that have occurred or will occur in the future so that they can help with preparing their child for this change. Adults providing a bridge between the rigid-thinking learner and their classmates may be needed to support with friendships, which is an important resilience factor for children and young people's emotional wellbeing.

Environment

In the classroom, it is inevitable that there will be change. Therefore, it is important that you create a structure for change to happen and provide opportunities to learn strategies to respond to unstructured, unplanned change. Also be mindful that the playground environment can be more challenging to the learner who struggles with cognitive flexibility than the classroom. Playtimes are often unstructured and changes in the rules of play and social interaction can happen frequently. Inclusive schools will reflect on environmental factors and provide support and structures to ensure all learners can access playtimes safely. This may include access to a different kind of breaktime environment to achieve a physical and mental break.

Strategies

As mentioned in **relationship**, close work between families and the teacher is helpful to understand what works best with learners struggling with cognitive rigidity or inflexibility. Use of visual timetables that have an established symbol for change can help to prepare learners that this is probable, and they will be informed if it is going to happen. Using social stories to explain different perspectives can be a resource that learners can return to and build a knowledge base of difference upon. In some subjects, using concrete resources for longer may be necessary to ensure mastery or consolidation of knowledge, and continue to be necessary throughout their learning. It is important that strategies are not seen as 'childish' because of how they are presented in class. Further strategies can be found in Section 7.

Assessment

Rigid thinking may prevent a learner from processing information as deeply as they need to. They may have decided they 'know' something and don't need to do anything further. There may be other areas of interest that they know in great depth, but not broadly. Your formative assessments will be helpful in identifying any gaps in knowledge. Other professionals can help with assessments to understand how it might be supported in class.

Planning is the organisation of details ahead of time to achieve a goal.[9] The executive function of planning for a goal helps the learner to understand what the objective of the task is, to visualise the steps required to do the task, to think about the time required for each step and to decide which resources they will need to complete the task. Learners of any age can be taught to plan to complete a goal, e.g., by showing them how to use daily timetables, or to follow recipes and simple visual and written instructions. Being explicitly taught how to plan for a goal becomes increasingly important through the learner's school career, as they are expected to become more independent in their learning, e.g., completing homework tasks, projects and revision.

Organisation is the synthesising and sorting of information that underpins all learning. Learners with difficulties with planning and organisation will begin tasks impulsively with no plan of action, often getting stuck and unable to visualise what the next step is. These learners can become 'off-task' quickly and what they do produce can be disorganised and incoherent. This becomes an increasingly significant problem as the learner progresses through year groups. The learner cannot achieve the success in learning that is needed to motivate when learning is challenging, requires perseverance and needs emotional self-regulation. These learners can be the ones who become disengaged with learning and seek out other ways of stimulating themselves in the classroom. It is therefore important to always understand what these behaviours are communicating and assess a learner's planning and organisational skills.

Relationship

Teachers need to be curious about a child or young person's learning behaviour. It is important to be attuned to your learners' needs by asking yourself why a learner is constantly off task, going through your own checklist of executive functions to identify possible solutions.

Environment

Direct teaching of planning and organisation explicitly throughout a learner's school career is part of quality first teaching. The move to Year 7 significantly increases the demand on learners to plan and organise themselves, both in and out of school. Secondary schools are aware of this and make accommodations to up-skill their new learners. However, new Year 7 learners who have executive function difficulties find this demand very challenging, and this can lead to great difficulties in the transition from primary school to secondary school. Executive function difficulties that may have been more easily supported in smaller primary schools can emerge across Year 7. Form tutors need to be particularly vigilant in spotting this and play a central role in sharing information between subject teachers to ensure support and understanding.

Strategies

Strategies fall into these categories:

- teaching how to organise materials
- teaching how to organise ideas and information
- teaching how to organise writing
- teaching organisational strategies for note-taking
- teaching organisational strategies for studying and test-taking

The work by Lynn Meltzer in this area is helpful for teachers. She provides a wealth of suggested strategies for across the age ranges.[10] Another useful source of strategies for supporting organisation and executive functioning needs is Understood.org's 4 Ways Kids Use Organisation Skills to Learn.

Assessment

What do the learners in your class know explicitly about planning and organising tasks? Assessing your class at the beginning of the year (or any time) will help you to understand who is going to need additional and explicit teaching in this area to ensure that the independence you want for your learners has the extra component of the learner's metacognitive understanding. Assess by observing how the learner approaches a task, e.g. using an Executive Function Checklist to help to identify additional needs and inform your understanding of which area needs support.

Cognition and learning – Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is a learner's ability to reflect on their own performance towards a goal and to identify any errors. This can be challenging for a learner who has attention and concentration difficulties as they need to monitor and reflect on the connection between effort, strategy use and performance. This learner needs to know **how** to check their work and **what** kind of error they are looking for in a structured way.

Relationship

Teachers should think about learners as individuals rather than groups when thinking about self-monitoring. A generic checklist for how to review or edit work, that may be good for most in your class, will probably contain distractors for the learner with a need in this area. For example, too many areas to monitor at once may overwhelm the learner. Knowing your learner and planning accordingly will ensure the learner feels success and can see there is a reason for doing this element of learning.

Environment

Create a classroom environment that normalises this reflective process. Acknowledge and model it as a skill that everyone needs: to check, review and edit their work. Explain that we all can capture our missed errors in this way. Demonstrate to the learner the tangible benefits of putting the effort in to self-monitoring, to improve writing or thinking about potential solutions to problems. For a learner with cognition and learning needs, the message of **why** this is important needs to be communicated through the teacher-learner relationship. It is also important that this stage in learning is not missed out, because the learner naturally takes longer to complete tasks or struggles to attend to reflection tasks. You need to value this element of developing independent learners and work out how much the learner with additional needs can manage.

Learners who have difficulties with executive function will need to be guided on how to stop and think about their work. Some of the conversations you will have had with your class about metacognition (and by other teachers over time) may or may not have been heard and understood. It is important to know what your starting point is with a learner. Refer to questions in the Education Endowment Foundation's Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning Guidance Report (knowledge of task, knowledge of self, knowledge of strategies) as this will help you relate to your learner's starting point.

Strategies

- Self-monitoring and metacognitive strategies need to be taught in a systematic way to the whole class, but they will need to be broken down into smaller personalised steps for learners with cognition and learning needs.
- Make explicit and subject-domain-specific the key questions from the EEF Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning Guidance Report. What does the learner know about the task? What do they know about themselves? What strategies do they know? Answers to these questions could be recorded and kept at the beginning of subject-specific exercise books in ways that are helpful to the learner, for example, a list, a grid, or a visual representation.
- Procedural facilitators such as planning frameworks, writing frames, or checklists may be needed, but the higher order thinking needs to be given **equal focus** to ensure a move to independence (i.e., the learner being asked questions about their learning, and support to ask these questions of themselves as they become more practised).

Assessment

Metacognitive strategies or self-monitoring may be a difficulty across all learning areas, or there may be strengths in some areas over others. You can create a helpful subject specific baseline using the EEF Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning Guidance Report areas to question learners. Over time this can lead to information that can be used in a learner passport, to support transition to new year groups and teachers.

This is the learner's ability to manage their emotions by creating enough emotion to learn (moderate arousal) and to reduce the kind of emotion that will disrupt attention and shift flexibly (high arousal, for example, anger, anxiety). Moderate arousal has a positive effect on working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibition. High arousal has a detrimental effect on these areas. Learners need to learn how to regulate their emotions, and this is related to their age and maturation levels. Learners with attachment needs, anxiety needs, poor self-concept needs, and autism or ADHD needs may exhibit difficulties in this area.

Relationship

We have explored the importance of relationships for learning under attachment theory in Section 2. There are many reasons why a learner might struggle to emotionally self-regulate. For example, there can be significant attachment reasons (not feeling safe to learn), physiological reasons (hungry, tired, bored, sensory) and anxiety reasons related to cognitive inflexibility (struggle to change, adapt in the moment). Seek to understand what is leading to the emotional dysregulation, through the teacher-learner relationship, so that the right kind of support can be used to help the learner back into a good thinking position.

Environment

Emotional regulation is one of the executive functions that is most supported by the environment that you create – both the emotional environment, and the physical environment. Learners who have executive functioning needs can develop over time a view of themselves as failures. This can become embedded as a personal trait, e.g. 'I'm no good at maths'. This is increasingly difficult to overcome in the face of challenging work. As a teacher, you should create safe learning spaces by setting tasks that are at a reachable level for all learners by creating an environment where success is planned for all, and by normalising mistakes as part of the learning process. This allows learners to take risks without fear of failure, knowing that errors are expected and that tasks will be achievable.

The physical environment is also important for emotional regulation. An organised classroom with clearly labelled areas (words and images) can help with anxiety and promote independence. You cannot always guarantee spaciousness in a classroom, but it is important to think about how the area is used to create quiet areas, messy areas, or low sensory areas depending on your classroom mix. Lighting sounds or busy displays can be stimulating and over-stimulating. Consider the advice in Section 4, including on supporting learners with sensory needs, when thinking about the impact of your classroom on your learners with SEND.

Strategies

The most effective strategy for learners who struggle with emotional regulation will be having a mentally healthy school. This involves a whole-school ethos, and usually a policy of how the school practises emotional wellbeing in all parts of the school community, from the highest level of your organisation all the way through to each individual relationship in the school. Whole-staff training in emotion coaching[11] or trauma-informed practice can give the foundational understanding that all staff teams need. Whole school training on attention and concentration needs, (possibly specific to conditions like autism) will also increase your ability to identify the possible reasons behind emotional regulation and help everyone choose successful interventions and approaches earlier. Proactive teaching is more beneficial to children and young people than post-event intervention.

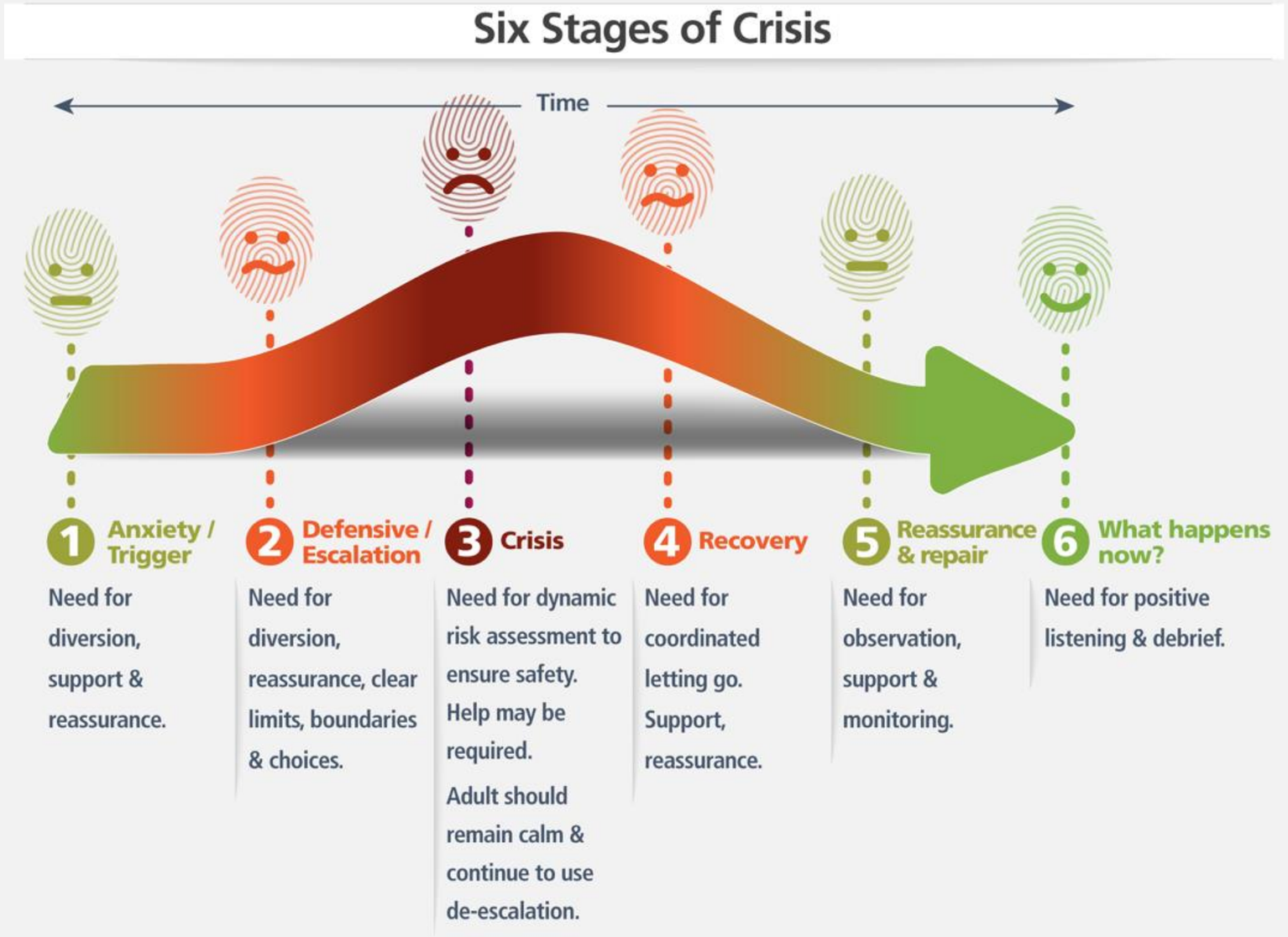
Learners who are displaying very visible emotional dysregulation will attract your attention. However, be aware of the hidden emotional dysregulation that is also happening for some learners. It is important to be curious, listen to the family and consider if a learner is masking their emotional distress or presenting as 'numb' during the school day, if families are reporting to you that their child is coming home distressed. They may seem fine in the classroom, only to let all of their emotion pour out once they get home. Families often refer to these as 'melt-downs'. Group and individual strategies need to build on this ethos of teacher knowledge and curiosity about emotions and behaviours. In a situation where reports demonstrate a learner is presenting differently at home and at school, it can be beneficial to seek support from the SENCO.

Assessment

Initial assessment always comes from you as the teacher. Continuous professional development is important for teachers and an essential part of maintaining a whole-school ethos. The first assessment you make stems from being curious about each learner's emotional level: Is this age appropriate? What is going on in this learner's life outside of school? What is going on in our classroom? Is the work being set appropriate? Ask this last question of yourself again. Sometimes learners who like to talk about their work can be masking underlying executive functioning needs but are described as 'able'. Sometimes they are given work that is too hard for them to achieve **because** of how it has been presented.

If you have considered the learning environment and made reasonable adjustments, but still do not see progress, then it is time to seek additional support in line with the graduated approach. This may be speaking to the Mental Health Lead (MHL) or the SENCO in the first instance. They will be able to provide guidance and advice. For example, have you put adjustments in place with consistency? Are you working with all the information needed, or do you need to speak to the family some more? Have you asked the learner?

An Educational Psychologist (EP) would be the next external professional who could support you with an assessment of what might be causing the emotional dysregulation. They can work alongside you and provide further recommendations. The EP will also be able to advise if the need is significant enough to require more bespoke intervention, for example, access to direct interventions by an EP, a child and wellbeing practitioner (CWP), an education mental health practitioner (EMHP), or in-school therapist. They may also suggest a referral to CAMHS, which is the mental health equivalent of triage.



Adapted from Kaplan and Wheeler (1983)[12]. The Six Stages of Crisis are explained further in Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties.

Specific learning difficulties

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

'Specific learning difficulties' is an umbrella term used to refer to several commonly occurring difficulties:

- *Dyslexia or literacy difficulties*
- *Dyscalculia or numeracy difficulties*
- *Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)*
- *Dysgraphia*
- *and increasingly ADHD*

This section is intended to provide advice for learners with SpLD diagnoses.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia or literacy difficulties is a learning difference that primarily affects reading and writing information. Learners who present with dyslexia or literacy difficulties may have an underlying phonological deficit which can cause difficulties which primarily affect phonological skills, verbal working memory and verbal information processing. The British Dyslexia Association have made a helpful film: What is dyslexia?

Relationship

Dyslexia and difficulties with the acquisition of literacy skills can have far-reaching impact on a learner's life, beyond difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. This is because so much of what we do relies on literacy. It is important to take time to find out what your learner with dyslexia or literacy difficulties struggles with, keeping in mind the executive functions above that can help you to consider what their experience in your classroom is like.

Environment

It is important to think about how you produce resources for learners identified with dyslexia or who present with significant difficulties acquiring literacy skills. Ensure they are included and have easy access to the information you are trying to communicate, not just in the classroom but across school. Ideas for creating a dyslexia friendly classroom can be found here.

Strategies

Literacy interventions and evidence for them can be found in the Education Endowment Foundation' s Toolkit: Language and Literacy

Learners with dyslexia or literacy difficulties require formative assessment to understand the specific areas of needs that they require support with. A planned literacy programme can then be put in place, delivered consistently by someone who is trained in the literacy programme and supported by others who are knowledgeable about the intervention being given.

Assessment

Dyslexia or literacy difficulties are not the same in all learners (or adults) and can range from being mild to severe. To assess the severity depends on how well learners respond to evidence-based interventions, which should be delivered consistently and effectively over time. Educational Psychologists or specialist teachers will recommend such interventions, and it is usually expected that a period of implementation, assessment and review occurs to ensure the intervention best fits the learner's needs.

Dyslexia can occur alongside other needs, and is not linked to intellectual abilities (i.e., a learner can have general learning difficulties and dyslexia or have a more able cognitive profile and have dyslexia). Some learners with dyslexia and adults can have specific strengths often thought to be associated with their dyslexia, e.g., oral skills or problem-solving.

Dyscalculia

Developmental Dyscalculia is a condition that affects how children and young people learn and remember arithmetic facts – the branch of mathematics that deals with calculations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Learners with dyscalculia have difficulty in executing calculation procedures, immature problem-solving strategies, take longer to solve problems and have higher error rates.[13] This is despite regular attendance and teaching opportunities.

These are the common behaviours that can be seen in learners with dyscalculia:[14]

- Difficulty when counting backwards
- A poor sense of number and estimation
- Difficulty in remembering basic facts despite many hours of practice and rote learning
- The only strategy to compensate for lack of recall is to count in ones
- Difficulty in understanding place value
- No sense of whether an obtained answer is right or nearly right
- Slow to perform calculations
- Forgets mathematical procedures, especially when complex, for example, long division
- Addition is often the default operation
- Avoids tasks that are perceived or predicted as likely to result in a wrong answer
- Weak mental arithmetic skills
- High levels of mathematical anxiety

Relationship

You need to bring empathy to the relationship when working with a learner who is having difficulty acquiring basic maths skills. You will need to understand the learner's strengths and weaknesses in the area (and more generally as a learner). Learners can often know more than they realise but have not been able to generalise or organise their knowledge (i.e., see the developmental structure of mathematics or see how it inter-relates). Understanding your learners, both their prior knowledge and confidence in maths, can enable more effective teaching and scaffolding. It is important that you teach and ensure systematic rehearsal of core facts, methods and strategies that learners are missing.

Environment

Remember that mathematics is hierarchical when you go about planning lessons and resourcing your classroom. Ensure that the learner is always building on existing knowledge, creating an increasingly secure base, rather than teaching a lesson at a level because that is what the chronological age of the learner is (for example, teaching Year 5 level lessons when the learner is working at Year 3). It is important for inclusion and the emotional wellbeing of the learner that concrete resources are not derided in your class but normalised as a strategy that we all use when needed. For example, in secondary settings you can demonstrate and value use of concrete materials such as number lines on rulers, calculators, or problem-solving frameworks.

Strategies

It is important for you to know what knowledge the learner has. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction highlights effective teaching approaches to ensure that all learners have frequent opportunity to rehearse small steps to mastery.

Explain to the learner why you are teaching a method and the idea behind it. This can help with motivation to achieve understanding and then the skill of the method. Be flexible with your methods for calculation. Whilst some learners may develop understanding through use, for some learners certain calculation methods may not make sense. Be mindful that multiple methods for the same outcomes may not be helpful, and impact detrimentally on cognitive load.

Use a structured maths approach and be aware of different levels of maths skills when providing practice opportunities in small steps.

Assessment

It will be essential to use assessment to inform your teaching and, where appropriate, evidence-based interventions, which should be delivered consistently and effectively over time. Educational Psychologists or specialist teachers will recommend such interventions, and it is usually expected that a period of implementation, assessment and review occurs to ensure the intervention best fits the learner's needs.

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD), commonly known as dyspraxia, is a condition where an individual finds learning/completing everyday tasks challenging. This is due to poor co-ordination of their motor skills which cannot be explained by physical, sensory or intellectual impairment. More information can be found through the Dyspraxia Foundation or the NHS.

Relationship

Learners with DCD generally find many skills that we take for granted challenging. They frequently become despondent, avoidant or show negative behaviour as coping mechanisms. There are also studies showing that learners with DCD are at increased risk of presenting with symptoms of anxiety and/or depression. It is important that this is considered when teaching a learner who generally feels unsuccessful in tasks that they observe their peers to find easy. Patience and encouragement are needed to foster an attitude where they are willing to continue trying.

Environment

DCD is observed to affect learners in all environments throughout their day. This includes writing and cutting in the classroom, doing up the zips or buttons on their school uniform before going out to play, throwing/catching in the playground, using cutlery to cut their food during lunch, changing into their clothing/ tying their laces for PE, balancing and sequencing the gymnastic movements etc. An environment where value is put on attempting/participating rather than success/outcomes will help learners with DCD who may need several attempts to execute simple tasks.

Strategies

Learners with DCD can be successful in tasks with the right level of support and the correct strategies in place. They may find it harder to learn through demonstration or verbal prompting and might be more successful when problem-solving and finding solutions for themselves. Frequently their method is atypical but functional. A strategy taught by therapists that would be helpful within the school setting is Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP). More information can be found through the International Cognitive Approaches Network (ICAN).

Assessment

A diagnosis of DCD is usually made by a paediatrician, often in collaboration with an Occupational Therapist and/or physiotherapist from 5 years of age. If considering a DCD diagnosis, it is important to rule out learning difficulties and other reasons for motor deficits such as a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. A free online screening can be completed jointly with the child's parents to establish if further assessment is required. This is called the Developmental Co-ordination Disorder Questionnaire (DCDQ).

Specific learning difficulties

Dysgraphia

'...dysgraphia is the term associated with specific learning disabilities in writing. It is used to capture both the physical act of writing and the quality of written expression.'

This is the definition found in the 2013 revision of DSM-5, under 'specific learning disabilities'. The term does not appear in its own right in either of the major international classification systems (DSM-52 or ICD-103) to describe specifically a handwriting difficulty.

More information can be found at www.nha-handwriting.org.uk,

Dysgraphia describes handwriting that is generally illegible. It is characterized as a learning disability specific to writing skills being below age expectancy and intelligence. It includes handwriting difficulties associated with the impaired mechanics of handwriting; the storing process of words and processing the letters in those words; and fine motor skills required to control a pen/pencil. Generally speaking: the ability to express oneself in writing, including language ability and the organisation and planning of text. It often overlaps with other learning disabilities such as speech impairment, attention deficit disorder (ADD), or DCD.

Indicators of dysgraphia may include:

A mixture of upper and lower case letters; irregular letter size and shape; incomplete letters; struggling to use writing as a communication tool; odd writing grip; considerable spelling mistakes; occasional pain when writing; decreased or increased speed of writing and copying; talking to self while writing; general illegibility and reluctance or refusal to complete writing tasks.

However, it is important to remember that these indicators are also shared with other difficulties including, but not limited to, dyspraxia, dyslexia, hypermobility and DCD.

Relationship

It may appear that a learner who is able to demonstrate extremely good understanding and has strong verbal skills, produces untidy and poorly structured work. It is important to consider dysgraphia rather than presuming this being a result of little effort or attention.

Environment

To support learners with dysgraphia in the classroom, the following could be considered/trialled:

- Accommodations – this could include touch-typing and using voice recognition software such as Dragon.
- Making tasks more accessible through giving them less to write, printing resources that they can stick in rather than copy from the board or work in pairs where someone else can scribe.
- Write short messages/comments, using post-it notes, pictures and photos to make the task simple and more fun.

Further resources and ideas can be found at Understood.org.

Strategies

Adaptive materials, including sloping boards, lined paper and pencil grips, may be supportive in a variety of combinations for learners struggling with dysgraphia. However, handwriting assessments may also be of help in identifying the component difficulties for remediation or professional therapeutic input, including hand strength, arm and body positioning and fine motor co-ordination.

Assessment

When looking at a learner's handwriting, it is important to break it down into the components of writing to see where the difficulties lie (an Occupational Therapist can assist with this). This includes: letter formation, line placement, spacing between words, correct joins, correct sizing of tall and short letters, entry and exit strokes. Other things to consider include pencil grasp and sitting posture.

Some Educational Psychologists would describe handwriting as being dysgraphic if more than 25% of the handwriting sample is hard to read or illegible when the sample is read from the bottom backwards but there are no formal assessments or diagnostic criteria.

SEND Code of Practice Definition

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every student with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives.

Children and young people with conditions such as ASD, including Asperger's Syndrome and Autism, are likely to have particular difficulties with social interaction. They may also experience difficulties with language, communication, and imagination, which can impact on how they relate to others.

Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Understanding the learning need(s)

Learners may present with difficulties in one or more areas of speech, language, communication, and interaction skills. Broadly, the skills a Speech and Language Therapist will assess are:

- Attention and listening skills
- Understanding of spoken language and expression of language
- Speech
- Pragmatic skills
- Eating and drinking skills

Difficulties in these areas can impact on the following: ***attention, organisation, working memory, time management, listening skills, sensory perception, speed of processing and confidence as a learner***. The risk of failing to address and support difficulties is that the learner disengages with their learning, fails to build positive relationships with adults and peers and experiences reduced opportunities for activity and participation.

Developmental Language Disorder

I Can has developed the DLD Guide for teachers supporting learners with DLD in mainstream classrooms. The guide provides detailed information about what DLD is, and how to identify and support DLD in a mainstream classroom.

Attention and listening skills, including:

- Attending to whole class, small group and 1:1 activities
- Switching attention between preferred and non-preferred activities
- Following multi-step or complex instructions
- Learning and remembering new information

Understanding of (spoken) language and expression of language, including:

- Understanding, learning, and using vocabulary and concepts
- Understanding, learning, and using accurate sentence structure, tense, and prepositional language
- Following or giving multi-step or complex instructions
- Word finding difficulties
- Difficulties following or sequencing ideas

Speech, including:

- Clarity and accuracy
- Fluency (stammering/stuttering)
- Voice quality

Pragmatic skills, including:

- Use of intonation, facial expression, and gesture
- Turn-taking skills in conversation
- The ability to maintain topic
- The ability to interpret non-literal language

Eating and drinking skills:

Especially for learners with complex needs, which may require a modified diet and/or specialist equipment.

Speech, language and communication needs

It is important for supporting adults to understand the differences between:

- *Learners with **language delay**, where with input their skills are likely to catch up with age-related peers.*
- *Learners **acquiring English as an Additional Language**, where language acquisition skills are unimpaired, and, with time and appropriate differentiation, they are likely to acquire English language skills in line with typically developing monolingual English speakers.*
- *Learners with **Developmental Language Disorder**, a lifelong condition characterised by difficulties with understanding and/or using spoken language, for which ongoing therapy can be effective.*

Relationship

No two learners with SLCN will be exactly alike and it is crucial to understand the individual learner's profile, in order to best support them and help them fulfil their potential in the classroom, the wider school environment and outside school too. When evaluating a learner's profile, information will be gathered from families as well as school to better understand the nature and impact of their difficulties. There may be similarities at school and at home, for example, short attention span or good focus on preferred topics. There may be differences, for example, when the learner is more reluctant to engage and interact in the school environment but is talkative at home. This will inform the nature of effective support. The aim is to ensure consistency of support both at home and in school, and good communication between the two environments is essential.

Learners with SLCN are often more adept at learning using visual aids, rather than drawn from auditory information. They often benefit from a structured approach to tasks, repeated practice and specific, positive and constructive feedback on their attempts.

Teachers and families using the successful communication-enhancing strategies with the learner, are also likely to see increased engagement and progress in learning and greater confidence in communication and interaction skills.

Environment

- Optimise listening conditions, using appropriate volume, pacing and animation.
- Consider seating position and orientation.
- Reduce visual, auditory and other sensory distractions.
- Explicitly teach active listening skills – for example, how to be aware of how one's body feels when fully focussed, how to listen to the entire speech stream, how to make links between the known and unknown to support understanding, how to support recall, how to use the new learning.
- Build movement breaks into lessons to provide optimal state for learning.
- Consider working partnerships – both adult-to-learner and peer-to-peer.
- Provide positive, specific feedback:
    - especially when the learner's behaviour meets minimal expectations, e.g. 'You demonstrated strong listening skills, as you stayed in your seat and I could see you focussing on me as I was speaking'.
    - especially when correction is necessary, e.g. 'I can see you thought hard about your answer as you took your time and used (…). However, the correct answer is (…) because (…).
- Reinforce positive aspects of engagement, e.g. 'I could see that you were taking notes there to help you recall that word/definition and that will really help you complete the work.'

Strategies

- Increase use of visual support, such as sand timers and whiteboards, to maintain attention and support understanding.
- Increase use of gesture to maintain attention and support understanding.
- Introduce real objects and kinaesthetic means of teaching to maintain attention and support understanding. You could provide learners with task lists, word banks and narrative frameworks to engage with and complete work with increasing independence.
- Simplify language – use positive instruction and reduce the number of words used.
- Allow time for repetition (using the same language).
- Allow additional time for processing, recapping and checking understanding.
- Check understanding by asking the learner to explain what they have to do, to provide an explanation in their own words, or to demonstrate their understanding using alternative means (drawing, gesture, action).
- Use forced choices to support understanding and expression. For example, 'When enslaved people were taken via the Middle Passage, did they cross the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean?'
- Use gap fills to support understanding and expression. For example, 'Two similar poles will repel each other, two different poles will….'
- Provide accurate language models, recasting the learner's attempts when appropriate.
- Underline or emphasise accuracy by repeating or modelling correct answers.
- Prompt the learner to ask for help by exploring the aspect which is difficult for them.

Speech, language and communication needs

Resources

- Mini whiteboards – failing this, use a scrap of paper with a simple task list or checklist for reference.
- Visual timetables.
- Visuals, post-it notes, displays and working walls.
- Reward charts – to be effective the reward system must be consistent, fair, motivating, easy to understand and actively used.

Assessment

Attention and listening skills

Does the learner find it hard to concentrate during a whole-class lesson or carpet time? Do they focus for longer on independent activities?

Consider the impact of the classroom environment, sensory sensitivities, or difficulty with understanding, that leads to inattention and disengagement.

Understanding of language

Does the learner have difficulties responding to questions in class or following or remembering instructions? Do they give tangential answers that are vaguely related to the topic under discussion?

Consider the learner's prior knowledge in the subject area. Would they benefit from pre-teaching of key content and vocabulary? Could increasing the visual and gestural input, simplifying language and chunking information benefit the learner? Consider the pacing of the lesson and consistency of the language used. Provide opportunities for additional thinking time by posing the question that you wish the learner to consider and explaining that you will return to them in x minutes for their answer. Cloze procedure (gap fills) and forced choices can support expressive language.

Expression of language

Does the learner have difficulty learning and using new vocabulary, forming sentences, telling stories or participating in class discussion?

Consider increasing the visual and kinaesthetic input and allowing alternative means of communication, e.g., writing, drawing or gesturing. Consider partnering the learner with a sensitive classmate, with whom they can rehearse their answer.

Speech

Does the learner say words clearly, and can you understand their speech? Is voice quality or fluency a concern?

Accept the content of the learner's expressive language rather than focussing on the clarity, voice quality or fluency. A referral to a Speech and Language Therapist is necessary to assess the difficulty, identify the cause(s) and provide a programme of support.

Pragmatic skills

Does the learner experience difficulty when working with others? Will they initiate conversations? Have they formed friendships?

Consider the environment, peer working arrangements, how you assign specific roles to individuals, and whether there are skills that can be explicitly taught and practised to be generalised to the wider environment.

Autism spectrum disorder

What is the autism spectrum?

'Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects how people perceive, communicate and interact with the world. Autism is referred to as a spectrum because while there are similar core areas affected, each child or person diagnosed will experience them differently'.[1]

The term 'ASD' is a medical diagnosis. The diagnostic process usually involves a multi-disciplinary diagnostic team which often includes a psychologist, speech and language therapist, paediatrician or psychiatrist.[2] There needs to be evidence of differences in certain core areas of development compared with that of a 'typical' child or young person for a diagnosis of autism to be given. This evidence should indicate that everyday life is affected by these differences in an ongoing manner. These core areas are:

1. Social communication and interaction
2. Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities
3. Sensory perception and responses.

In education, this leads to four areas of difference that can impact on learning:

- Interacting, playing and developing relationships with others
- Processing information
- Taking in and perceiving sensory information

Definitions of autism have changed as understanding of the condition has developed. Some people, including many adults with autism, use the term Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) rather than ASD. This reflects autism being understood in terms of difference in the core areas rather than disorder.

Social communication

Autistic learners often have difficulties with interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures, facial expression and tone of voice. Some learners with autism are unable to speak or have limited speech. Others may have some very good communication skills but will need explicit teaching to understand pragmatic language (for example, tone of voice, body language). Other challenges can include:

- Taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts
- Processing information or answering questions at speed
- Applying learnt language in appropriate contexts.

Some autistic learners will repeat back learnt phrases without knowledge of the meaning. This is called echolalia and is something teachers should be aware of in both social situations and in academic work.

Social interaction

Every autistic learner has a unique profile of strengths and challenges. When interacting with those around them, in both structured and unstructured situations, learners with autism may have difficulty with:

- Recognising and/or understanding the feelings of others.
- Understanding how they are feeling in a given situation and how to regulate their emotions.

Autistic learners can have difficulty expressing their emotions both verbally and non-verbally. They may:

- Not understand social norms, such as those associated with friendship or authority. Social norms should be explicitly taught.
- React in unexpected ways, e.g., a direct demand may trigger anxiety or distress.
- Prefer to be on their own. This can be a preference, a reaction to being overloaded by too many people, or a lack of understanding of how to interact with peers.

Social stories can support autistic learners with their social communication and social interaction. Social stories can be created for both routine situations in the classroom/school and for contexts more specific to the learner, e.g., transitioning from English to maths lessons, using safe hands at playtimes. Social stories will also greatly benefit autistic learners at transition – both mid-year transitions and end of year transitions. These can be used for reinforcing messaging around new routines, new classrooms, new teachers, and/or new schools.

There may be times when an autistic learner behaves in an unexpected manner. As teachers, it is our responsibility to work alongside the family and the learner to understand the triggers that may lead to the behaviour, and so to better support the learner. For further information, please refer to Section 4: Creating an inclusive environment.

Many autistic learners have emotional and wellbeing needs. Provision plans should identify adjustments which pre-empt contexts and triggers for anxiety. It is also important that autistic learners are taught to recognise what leads to and then triggers their anxiety. This can help them and others to find ways to cope and manage these.

Difficulties with self-awareness mean that many autistic learners have difficulty recognising and regulating their emotions. Learners have difficulty communicating emotions through words; emotions may instead be communicated through behaviour. This may include 'melt-downs' when learners are distressed and overwhelmed.

The Autism Resource Suite has been developed by Autism Education Trust, along with the Autism Centre for Education and Research (University of Birmingham), the National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism to provide the latest guidelines, resources and practical strategies to teachers and school leaders working with autistic learners.

Restrictive and/or repetitive patterns of behaviour

Thinking flexibly is a challenge for most autistic learners. Learners can present with restrictive interests, which may be highly preferred and motivating. At times, these interests may present in a perseverative manner. These interests can be an asset and open a way of engaging with the learner, both academically and socially. For example, foundational maths concepts can be taught through Mario characters, and sentence structure can be taught through talking about an image of a preferred movie.

Restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour can also be in response to high levels of anxiety. Strict adherence to these individual preferences can directly impact a learner's ability to manage change and transition. These difficulties can be further impacted by the social context and/or perceived social pressures. Overstimulation can also intensify a learner's experience.

Sensory perception and responses

Autistic learners may experience sensory information differently to their peers. They may be under- or over-sensitive to sounds, touch, light, colours, tastes, smells, temperatures and pain. This can impact their experience in a variety of contexts and range from minor to severe. It is important that you notice the behaviours of an autistic learner and work with the learner, their family and colleagues to develop a thorough understanding of the learner's sensory profile. Autistic learners may be able to explain the challenges they experience, or they may respond to challenges with unexpected behaviours. When these behaviours arise, take note, and work with key stakeholders to understand the form and function of the behaviour. This shared understanding can lead to the development of a proactive approach, in which you identify tailored provision and/or modifications to the environment and routines that can mitigate the learner experiencing overstimulation, distress and/or high levels of anxiety.

Autism and potential co-occurrence of need

Autistic learners vary in their profile of strengths and needs, life experiences and the presence of other conditions (for example, learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] or epilepsy). No two individuals on the autism spectrum are the same. Autistic learners need to be understood as individuals first and foremost.

Autistic learners can be socially naïve and vulnerable. Play, and other unstructured times, can be particularly difficult and may lead to high levels of anxiety. In some instances, the behaviours autistic learners display may lead to misunderstandings. These may create upset. Autistic learners are at an increased risk of bullying, exclusion from school, safeguarding concerns and mental health difficulties. For further information, please refer to *The Language Learners Use*.

Primary Case Study

Jack was 5 years old when diagnosed with ASD. *In nursery he spent most of his time in a quiet corner, playing happily with the garage and cars. He would sit at carpet time and fiddle with the wheels of a favourite car but did not join in the activities. He enjoyed running around outside and playing on the trikes. He was referred to the paediatrician by his GP as his Mum thought something was not quite right compared to her other children.*

When he began in reception his behaviour changed. Initially he just refused to follow adult instructions. He would not line up in the playground at the beginning of the day. When eventually cajoled into the classroom, he would settle under a table in the back corner of the room and only come out when the other children had left to go out to play. He was becoming increasingly difficult to get through the door, clung to his mother, screamed and hit out. He stopped attending school.

The SENCO called a meeting with the class teacher, parent and the school EP. They all contributed and listened to each other's understanding of when this behaviour occurred and 'why?' All perspectives were noted and considered. The EP and SENCO were able to contribute their knowledge and understanding of autism and how this could explain Jack's behaviour and his perspective of school. The EP and SENCO used the SPELL framework to support their involvement and planning. The main hypotheses which emerged were around managing change, transition and sensory overload. They drafted a SEN support plan. Jack's mum and class teacher discussed this with Jack and got his ideas about what would help.

The outcomes decided at the meeting prioritised Jack's emotional wellbeing, reducing his anxiety and promoting inclusion in the school. The class teacher made some adjustments to the classroom environment, including increasing the use of visual prompts. A symbol and word were added to the class timetable at the end of the day for 'home time'. Changes were made to the classroom routine; these included Jack coming in 10 minutes before the other children and giving him an allocated place to sit at the back of the room in the corner. This meant people did not crowd or walk past him and knock his chair (his Mum had explained that he became overloaded when there were crowds of people milling around). During the 10 minutes before school a consistent specified adult went through the class and individual visual timetables with him. The individual timetable was developed in consultation with Jack, Mum, SENCO and EP. Jack was given a short task to complete at his table while the other children arrived and settled. This was included on his visual timetable and was always something he enjoyed and was achievable, e.g., a visual search puzzle from a workbook or a task such as sorting out coloured pencils for the class teacher. The plan was reviewed after six weeks.

Supporting learning and inclusion

A proactive approach that encompasses quality first teaching, reasonable adjustments and tailored interventions will support most autistic learners in a mainstream environment. Provision plans are an important tool to ensure consistency of provision, which will encourage progress towards agreed, measurable outcomes.

For quality first teaching to be realised, Autism Education Trust have identified four principles:

- Understanding the individual with autism
- Positive relationships
- Learning and development
- Enabling environments

SPELL, the NAS model, can help class and subject teachers understand and plan provision for autistic learners.

Structure, **P**ositivity, **E**mpathy, **L**ow arousal, **L**inks.

Structure: Playtime and other unstructured contexts

Unstructured times such as break, lunch, tidying up, or moving between lessons can be difficult and anxiety-provoking for autistic learners. These contexts are often overwhelming in a sensory way, as there is a lot of movement and noise. They are also complex socially. These unstructured times are often a priority area for support and adjustments.

Structure and routine reduce uncertainty and make the world, the classroom and break times more predictable and safer. Creating structured environments, using routine, simple language and visual information usually supports autistic learners. These approaches include class and individual timetables, reducing and eliminating clutter and irrelevant materials from the class, labelling classroom and school areas using appropriate symbols or words, and visual prompts such as a spot or cushion to indicate where to sit or stand. Structure can also increase independence.

Breaks can also be structured by providing organised activities and clubs. It is important that autistic learners can make their preferences known. Peer partners at unstructured times can support some autistic learners. It is important for adults supporting autistic learners to monitor peer interactions, as learners can be at an increased risk of bullying and/or exploitation.

Positive approaches and expectations

When working with autistic learners it is important to identify, respect, and build on natural strengths, interests and abilities. Preferences and interests motivate and engage learners in the curriculum. Autistic learners may avoid new experiences and want to only engage in their preferred interests. Structure and positive, sensitive support can reduce their level of anxiety and help them learn to tolerate and accept such experiences and develop new interests.

Expectations should be high but realistic and based on careful assessment. Assessments should be made from as wide a perspective as possible and include the learner and family voice. It is important to identify barriers in accessing educational, social and community experiences. This can present in different ways. Some autistic learners may have difficulty with verbal communication, leading to underestimation of their ability and potential. Other learners may have a good grasp of speech and text, whilst masking other difficulties.

Empathy

The quality of the relationship between autistic learners and those who work with them is of vital importance. Effective professionals are calm, predictable, empathetic and analytical. When working with autistic learners we must try to understand the world from the learner's perspective, knowing what motivates and interests them.

It is also essential to understand what frightens, preoccupies or otherwise distresses them. We should model empathy to the school community and develop high expectations of respect and tolerance from learners and adults for differences in thinking and behaviour.

Low arousal

Many autistic learners benefit most in a setting where sensory and other stimulation is managed and reduced. Approaches and social and physical environments generally need to be calm and ordered to reduce anxiety and help with concentration. There should be as few distractions as possible when the learner is expected to focus on activities chosen by others. Noise levels, colour schemes, smells and lighting are examples of elements in the environment that should be considered.

Clear information should be given in the way best suited to the learner, with care taken not to overload. A break-down sheet can help when writing instructions for a task. Some learners may need more time to process information, especially speech. It is often helpful to gain the learner's attention by saying their name before giving instructions, speaking slowly and keeping sentences short and direct.

Some learners may seek out and need sensory experiences. This needs to be managed in a sensitive and structured way. Relaxation and arousal reduction provision may also be helpful in promoting calm and general wellbeing, and in reducing anxiety.

Links

Clear and open communication will reduce the risk of misunderstanding, confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal or inappropriate approaches. Legislation requires all professionals to work with the learner and their families through the graduated approach. This may include professionals from external agencies involved with the learner. Information which helps staff understand and provide for the learner can be shared through a provision plan.

SEND Code of Practice Definition

Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. Many children and young people with vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habilitation support. Some children and young people with a physical disability (PD) require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.

Hearing impairment

The term hearing impairment includes all types of hearing loss and deafness, and is a term used within a medical model of disability. Within this section, we have used the term 'deafness' as part of the social model of disability, with an intention to focus on an individual's strengths, as well as needs. As teachers, we need to ensure the language we use when speaking about learners does not imply a learner is 'impaired' and therefore 'broken'. When planning lessons, it is important to remember that being deaf or having a hearing loss is not a barrier to learning or acquiring information, but communicating information that is not accessible, is.[1]

Understanding the learning need

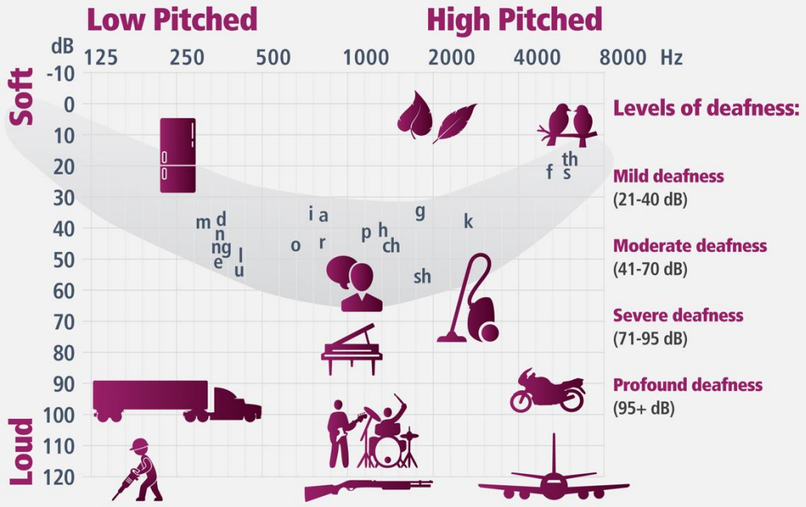
Deafness can be present from birth (congenital deafness) or acquired later in life. As the classroom teacher, it is crucial that you understand your learner's deafness, how this impacts on their access to language and strategies and resources (including amplification systems and assistive technology) that support their access to learning in the classroom environment. Some deaf learners communicate using British Sign Language (BSL), or a combination of BSL and English – this is called a total communication approach.

There are two main types of deafness:

- Sensorineural hearing loss/deafness: this is caused by damage to the structures in the inner ear or the auditory nerve. A sensorineural hearing impairment is permanent.
- Conductive hearing loss/deafness: this is where sounds are unable to pass efficiently through the outer and middle ear into the inner ear. This can be caused by blockages, such as wax in the outer ear, or fluid in the middle ear (glue ear). A conductive hearing impairment is usually temporary, but in some cases it can be permanent.

Some learners will have a combination of sensorineural and conductive deafness. Both sensorineural and conductive deafness can:

- Occur in one ear (unilateral deafness), or both ears (bilateral deafness).
- Vary in severity, from mild to profound, as detailed in the 'speech banana' diagram'.



A 'speech banana', as shown in the diagram above, is a useful tool that can help you understand the impact of a learner's deafness. This diagram is adapted from NDCS[2] and based on British Society of Audiology definitions of hearing loss. It demonstrates what a learner can hear without amplification (explained further later in this section).

If you have a deaf learner in your class, but do not have access to further information about the learner's hearing levels, you should speak to the learner, their family and/or the Qualified Teacher of the Deaf for more information. As the classroom teacher, it is essential for you to understand a learner's hearing with, and without, amplification [hearing aid(s) and/or cochlear implant(s)]. As the diagram shows, a learner with 'mild deafness' is likely to not hear sounds including /k/, /f/, /th/, and /s/, which can cause difficulty with articulation and language acquisition. Even mild deafness can have a significant impact on a learner's access to classroom teaching**.** A learner with 'moderate deafness' is likely to not hear a substantial number of speech sounds; this will significantly impact their access to language and learning in the classroom environment. Phonak's hearing impairment simulations are a useful source to hear examples of the effects of mild and severe deafness.

Amplification Systems

Amplification systems, including hearing aids, cochlear implants, and bone conduction aids enable a learner to access sounds more effectively. However, these devices do not replicate normal hearing, nor replace it.

- A cochlear implant is a device with two parts: an external sound processor and an internal implant which contains an electrode array that is inserted into the cochlea. A cochlear implant replaces the function of damaged sensory hair cells inside the inner ear. The University of Southampton has shared useful examples of how different sounds may be heard with a cochlear implant, in their resource: What does a cochlear implant sound like?
- A hearing aid is a device that makes sounds louder and clearer, reducing the impact on deafness. There are different types of hearing aids, with the most common being the 'behind the ear' (BTE) hearing aid.
- A bone conduction aid is an alternative to a regular hearing aid for those with problems in their outer or middle ears. It transfers sound by bone vibration directly to the cochlea, bypassing the outer and middle ear.
- A bone conduction implant is used permanently following a surgical procedure to fit the device, for example, for damage to the outer/middle ear but where the cochlea is functioning normally.

Assistive Technology

Background noise can greatly impact a learner's ability to hear. The National Deaf Children's Society resource What does hearing loss sound like?, enables you to hear what a deaf learner may hear in the classroom. To support learners in a classroom environment, they may have access to FM systems, streamers and soundfields.

- A personal radio aid system consists of two parts. The Transmitter is worn by the speaker and the Receivers by the learner. It enables the learner to hear the speaker over distance and some background noise.
- A soundfield system allows all learners to hear wherever they are seated in the classroom and whichever direction their teacher faces. It provides an even spread of sound around the classroom.

As the classroom teacher it is your responsibility to ensure that a learner's technology is used correctly and consistently and is working. Consider these two situations, which emphasise the importance of the appropriate use of a personal radio aid.

- For a learner with a hearing aid, which amplifies all sounds – if a learner is tapping their pen on the table, the hearing aid is likely to amplify the tapping over the voice of the teacher. The correct use of an FM system will help to mitigate this, bringing the voice of the teacher directly to the learner.
- For a learner with a hearing aid or cochlear implant completing independent work – if the teacher does not mute the radio aid whilst working with a different group of learners or speaking with the teaching assistant, the learner will hear these conversations, which will be a distraction to the work that they are meant to be completing.

There may be times that you suspect a learner's hearing aid or cochlear implant is not working. It is important to have an ongoing dialogue with the learner, their family and specialist teacher about both their learning and their amplification systems to make troubleshooting easier. Sometimes, it can be that a battery has run out, and a new battery will get the equipment working again! Some deaf learners will not be able to tell you that their hearing aid or cochlear implant is not working. In these times, knowledge of the Ling 6 sounds can prove useful for you to check a learner's hearing. For further information on the Ling 6 sounds, and how you can use them to check a learner's hearing, please refer to Jane Madell's summary.

Specialist Advice

A key resource in planning effective provision for a deaf learner is the Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD). A QToD is often a part of a local authority's specialist sensory services. A QToD is a qualified teacher, with the skills and knowledge required to provide quality teaching to mainstream learners and has undertaken additional training to complete a mandatory qualification and acquire expertise in teaching learners with deafness. A QToD will work collaboratively with you to develop a conducive learning environment, providing you with guidance on high quality teaching strategies to support a learner's access to teaching and learning. They can support you in understanding a learner's deafness and their amplification system, providing both small group and/or whole school CPD on strategies to support deaf learners in the mainstream setting.

Deaf learners can receive varying levels of support from a QToD. Some learners will only have monitoring visits, whilst others may have direct teaching intervention.

Some deaf learners will have access to support from a Speech and Language Therapist. Speech and Language Therapists provide individualised support to deaf learners in areas such as articulation, attention and listening skills, communication (receptive and expressive language) and comprehension.

Case Study

W moved to England aged 12 years old from Afghanistan. He had a bilateral moderate-severe hearing impairment and did not have access to hearing aids before moving to England.

W attended a mainstream secondary school with a Hearing Support Centre. It was a significant change for W, and the secondary school environment was different from his experience of schooling in Afghanistan. While adjusting to a new country, he also had to adjust to using hearing aids - sometimes he would turn his hearing aids off in lessons. He knew some English, but his vocabulary was limited.

The Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToDs) who worked as part of the Hearing Support Centre collaborated with his subject teachers to ensure W was able to access learning in mainstream classrooms with his peers. Together with the SENCO, a personalised timetable was created for W. In his first year, he had small group English lessons with a QToD in the Hearing Resource Centre and three hours per week intervention time in the Hearing Support Centre. He attended all other lessons with his peers; the QToD worked collaboratively with the subject specialists to plan appropriate support so that W could access these lessons.

As an example, for science, W's science teacher and QToD met in advance of all units of study. The science teacher reviewed upcoming content with the QToD, and together they identified the learning objectives for W to work towards. The QToD, during W's intervention time, pre-taught vocabulary so that he was prepared to engage in lessons in the mainstream lesson. In the mainstream lesson, W engaged in the learning alongside his peers, with the QToD supporting directly in one science lesson per week. This support was planned in advance and took a variety of forms, including the QToD and science teacher co-teaching parts of a lesson, the QToD providing 1:1 support, or the QToD working with a group of learners.

When the QToD was not supporting W in the lesson, the classroom teacher employed the following strategies:

- *The classroom teacher always checked-in with W during the starter activity, asking a question about football (or other preferred topic) to build a rapport over time and ensure his hearing aids were on and working.*
- *W had preferential seating, with proximity to the classroom teacher.*
- *IWB slides were simple and organised, with content presented clearly. All slides were printed for W so that he did not have to listen and take notes at the same time. The printed slides were in his book for the start of each lesson, and the teacher also provided slides to other learners in the class (e.g., learners with dyslexia); this was in line with the learners' individual needs and ensured W was not singled out.*
- *W's name was always called before asking a question (open questions check the learner's understanding of the task).*
- *The classroom teacher always used the FM system during whole class input.*
- *Instructions were presented orally and in writing, as a checklist.*

The teacher checked in frequently and often provided additional support during independent work. This additional support was planned for each lesson and took different forms depending on the lesson, including small group teaching sessions for additional instruction or over-learning opportunities; resources to support his learning such as sentence starters, word banks, numeracy mats; modified assignments to meet his individualised learning objectives, and personalised secondary sources to support his access to language.

Environment and Teaching Strategies

The classroom can be a great benefit, or detriment, for a deaf learner. You should work with the Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) to develop a conducive learning environment. Some factors to consider when developing the environment:

- **Background noise** – When the classroom is empty, listen carefully to the sounds in the classroom. Is there noise coming from the computers, or a projector?
- **Noise outside the classroom** – When learners are outside (on the playground, or in the lunch hall), does the noise carry to your classroom? Is the music room near to your classroom? Consider if noise from outside the classroom may impact the learner.
- **Noise within the classroom** – Consider other sounds in the classroom that a learner's amplification system may amplify. For example, when a learner goes to stand up from their chair, do the feet of the chair scratch loudly against the floor? There are solutions for noises like this, such as felt furniture pads.
- **Seating arrangements** – It is important that deaf learners can see the teacher, without having to turn their body, for classroom instruction. It is crucial that you face learners when teaching and delivering new content, so that the learner can see your facial expressions and, for some learners, lipread. It can be challenging for deaf learners to locate where sound is coming from – this is important for class discussions. Talk to the learner, and the QToD, about the most conducive location for the learner to sit. Where possible arrange seating in an arc/semi-circle. This enables the learner to see you as well as some of their peers.
- **Lighting** – Consider the fall and direction of natural and artificial light. Standing with light behind you, either from a window or interactive whiteboard, makes it very hard for a learner to see lip pattern and facial expression.

Access to language:

- Always face learners when presenting new information. Do not talk with your back to learners, e.g., whilst writing on the IWB.
- Present new information orally and in writing together at the same time so that the learner can hear the word and see how it is written. Opportunities for pre-teaching in a small group setting will greatly benefit deaf learners during follow-up whole-class teaching.
- Provide visuals and word banks during whole class learning activities, small group and independent work.
- Always turn on closed captions.
- Repeat contributions from other learners, so that deaf learners are not missing information from classroom discussions. This includes social situations – if something funny happens on the other side of the room, take the time to explain what happened so that the learner does not feel they are missing out because of their deafness.
- Choose your language carefully – figurative language, such as idioms and alliteration, can be confusing or easily misunderstood. Always pre-teach this language, or if a phrase spontaneously comes up in a lesson, explain the meaning behind it.
- Be mindful of your facial expressions – deaf learners will use other sensory systems to better understand language. Be aware that deaf learners may not be able to detect the information from the tone of your voice.
- Some learners may use British Sign Language (BSL), or a total communication approach (a combination of BSL and English). Ensure learners can access language through their preferred communication approach in all parts of the lesson.

Accessibility of the classroom environment *ensuring:*

- Speech is clear – adults and other learners need to speak clearly, where words are enunciated at a normal pace, and not overenunciated.
- Staff check daily that the learner's technology is working.
- Amplification systems are consistently used to support a learner's access to teaching.
- Adults always call a learner's name to gain their attention, before asking a question.
- A visual system is in place for the class, e.g., a traffic light system, to support all learners to work within appropriate 'noise' levels.
- Always check that deaf learners have understood classroom instructions. In 1:1 conversation, it is best to avoid yes/no questions. Encourage the learner to repeat back what they have heard if you are checking they understood an instruction or new information.

Hearing impairment

Assessment

Many deaf learners in mainstream settings have the potential to attain and achieve at age-related-expectations when effective provision is in place that supports their access to learning. It is integral that access arrangements are in place when assessing learners with deafness, during both formative and summative assessments. Access arrangements are individual to the learner, but may include:

- Access to technology, including:
  - personal and classroom amplification systems
  - laptops/tablets used as part of a learner's normal way of working
- 25% extra time
- Readers
- Reading Aloud
- Scribes
- Language Modifier
- Communication Professional (e.g., Communication Support Worker or BSL interpreter)

Resources

- NatSIP (National Sensory Impairment Partnership) has developed A Place to Start – Working with a child or young person with a sensory impairment to support mainstream or special school staff who are working with learners with a sensory impairment. It is important to note that the advice provided in this resource does not replace the advice and support a local sensory support team provides.
- If you are concerned a learner in your class may have an undiagnosed hearing loss, the National Deaf Children's Society has produced a useful document to support teachers in recognising the signs of hearing loss.

Vision impairment

Understanding the learning need

Vision impairment (VI) includes any form of visual difficulty which cannot be corrected by wearing glasses or contact lenses. It is important to be aware that even if a learner with VI wears glasses, this does not mean that they will see ‘normally’. There are many different causes of VI in children and young people, and many learners have more than one sight condition. Disorders in the eye, the retina or the optic nerve, affect the way that visual information is transmitted from the eye to the brain. Damage to the visual pathways in the brain, known as cerebral vision impairment (CVI), affects the way that visual information is processed.

Most learners are born with their visual difficulty, although some develop it later in their lives. A small number of learners have never seen and the implications for their learning can be very different from learners who have some vision. A small number of learners will learn braille. The effects of VI vary; some learners have no central vision or no peripheral vision, some have patchy vision with a mixture of clear and blank areas, while others may see everything as a blur. Examples of the effects of CVI in the classroom include being unable to recognise faces or familiar objects, to perceive moving people or objects, or to discriminate between several items in a cluttered space.

It is important to have the same high expectations of learners with VI, as you would with their peers. There are many factors that influence a learner’s development; however, it is important to consider learners with VI do not have access to the same opportunities for incidental learning through accessing visual information in their environment, including social modelling (i.e., copying the behaviour of others). Consequently, their understanding of certain concepts and norms of social interaction may be delayed and/or different to that of their age peers. Speed of reading and working is also likely to be affected – most vision impaired learners will take longer to complete a task, but this should not be seen as reflecting on their ability and potential.

If you have a learner in your class with a VI, you should speak to the learner, their family and/or the Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI) for more information. As the classroom teacher, it is essential for you to understand the practical implications of a learner’s visual difficulties on their access to learning. Depending on the nature of their visual loss, any assistive technology they use and any other support they receive in your lessons, you may need to adjust your teaching style to make sure they are fully included in your lessons.

Social relationships

Vision impairment can have a significant impact on learners’ social development, limiting their capacity to explore the world around them and to learn the skills of social interaction through play. Learners with VI may, in the early years, behave in a different way from other learners as they learn to explore their environment. Many learners will find it hard to recognise non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expression.

Depending on the extent of their visual difficulties, learners may find it difficult to forge strong social links with their classmates unless you create structured opportunities for them to do so in a sensitive and understanding manner. Strategies to promote their social inclusion may be needed in the playground as well as the classroom.

Local VI services are central to supporting learners and their family and advising schools and families about appropriate strategies to ensure the best learning and life outcomes for the learner with VI. Others in the multi-agency team should include the teacher and teaching assistant, SENCO and Educational Psychologist from the school; the Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairment (QTVI), habilitation worker, ophthalmologist and other health professionals.

Assistive technology

Assistive technology plays a central role in enabling learners with VI across the age and ability range to access the curriculum independently, avoiding the danger of over-reliance on adult support. This is known as 'learning to access', in contrast to being given 'access to learning'. Laptops and tablets enable learners to read and record by enlarging text and other items of curriculum content while braille devices provide much of the same functionality for blind learners. Most learners who use braille also learn to touch-type and use laptops with screen readers in lessons. Assistive technology also provides learners with access to the many internet-based resources that form an essential part of all teaching and learning. For learners with severe VI and particularly those learning through braille, many learning resources may require modification to make them useful and meaningful. This is a time-consuming and skilled task which is often carried out by specialist TAs under the guidance of a QTVI. You need to communicate effectively with TAs and QTVIs to make sure these resources are available for learners in time for the lessons when they need them. Because changes in technology take place so rapidly it is important to seek up-to-date specialist advice from a QTVI. Information on Technology and Independent Learning from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is a useful source.

Case Study

M was born with Oculocutaneous Albinism, with poor near and distance visual acuity. He also has nystagmus (which causes constant movement of the eyes) and photophobia (extreme sensitivity to light).

M can read print no smaller than 36 point. He attends his local secondary school and having chosen his GCSE options in Year 8, he has started his chosen subjects in Year 9, leading to exams over the course of the next 3 years. He has had ongoing input from a Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI) from the local Sensory VI Service since he started at his local nursery.

M receives modified learning materials in hard copy and electronic formats. They are provided by a TA who works with him regularly throughout the week, planning ahead with his QTVI and class teachers. The TA only gives M direct support in practical lessons where there are safety implications, or where there is a high level of visual content. This is part of a planned approach with M's QTVI, SENCO and class teachers to promote his 'learning to access' skills. M uses a range of equipment to access the curriculum and needs time to learn and practise with different devices. He is studying one less GCSE subject to free up time for these sessions. M uses a laptop with magnification software, an electronic handheld magnifier and an iPad with specialist apps.

Although over the years M has been well-supported by the VI team, GCSEs are the first external exams he has sat since the SATs in Year 6. His teachers are keen to make sure that they teach him appropriately so that his normal way of working matches the access arrangements he will receive in his GCSE exams.

Following discussions between the QTVI, SENCO and classroom teachers the following strategies have been agreed:

- *Class teachers to read the functional vision assessment carried out by the QTVI so that they understand M's visual preferences.*
- *M to be seated away from direct sunlight to minimise the effects of his photophobia. Blinds to be drawn where appropriate.*
- *Teachers to use learners' names when leading class discussion so that M knows who is being spoken to.*
- *Class teachers to speak aloud anything they write on the IWB.*
- *Any class demonstrations to be supported by clear verbal description (for example, not 'if you watch, you'll see that this is what happens when I do that').*
- *All IWB presentation materials to be made available to M via his laptop/tablet.*
- *All curriculum resources shared with M's TA three days in advance of lessons to allow time for them to be modified where appropriate.*
- *Half termly planning session to be held with each teacher to discuss future teaching plans and curriculum resources, to provide time for specialist resources to be created or obtained externally.*
- *All proposed support arrangements to be checked for compliance with GCSE access arrangements.*

Vision impairment

Environment

An accessible physical environment can do a great deal to reduce barriers to participation and learning for learners with VI, and it will also benefit all other learners. There is a balance to be struck between providing an environment that is safe and accessible for learners with VI and preparing them to take an independent role in a society that is not always designed to meet their needs.

You should ensure that the environment is suitable and safe for learners with VI. This should include an access audit in your classroom and across the school, inside and out, in line with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure a good learning environment.

Key factors to consider include:

- Clear, well positioned and easily visible signage.
- Steps, edges and other transition points highlighted with yellow paint.
- A distinction between quiet and active areas in the playground, and shaded areas for learners with light sensitivity.
- Corridors, cloakrooms and classrooms kept free of obstructions.
- Classrooms kept with a consistent layout with any changes explained.

It is particularly important to consider the lighting in a classroom where a learner with VI is going to work. Consider:

- Is there good ambient lighting in the classroom?
- Does the light fall directly onto the learner's work areas?
- Do the windows have blinds to reduce glare?
- Are reflective surfaces covered to reduce glare?

Teaching Strategies

- Avoid standing in front of windows - this can reduce you to a silhouette and make it difficult for all learners to see you properly.
- Speak clearly and use learners' names at all times.
- Verbalise anything you write or read out from the IWB.
- Make sure you use a contrasting pen/font for writing on the IWB.
- Consult your QTVI/VI TA about the curriculum materials you plan to use well in advance of the lesson, to allow time for these to be sourced from an external provider such as RNIB Bookshare or modified into an accessible format locally as required.
- Learners with VI should sit in the best position to see you and the whiteboard, but not separately from the other learners.
- If using assistive technology, learners may need to sit close to a power source.

The challenges presented by a vision impairment suggest that, for many learners, their plan is likely to include targets and/or support strategies in the following areas:

- The development of literacy and communication skills.
- The development of habilitation skills (for example, mobility and independence).
- The provision and maintenance of assistive technology and training.
- The provision of support for the timely adaptation of resources.
- Low vision assessments and prescription of low vision aids/magnifiers.
- Measures to ensure teaching and learning takes place in rooms which provide a good listening environment and have good acoustics.
- Regular input from specialist staff such as QTVI and habilitation worker, both for direct teaching of specialist skills (such as learning to read and write through braille) and for advisory work.
- Specific teaching strategies and resources to ensure access to teaching.
- Appropriate access arrangements for internal and external assessments.
- Any support required to improve self-esteem and social skills
- Measures to develop independence skills including working unsupported in the classroom, the ability to use and maintain equipment and self-advocacy/self-determination skills.

Vision impairment

Resources

A key resource in planning effective provision for a learner with VI is a Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairment (QTVI). QTVIs are qualified and experienced teachers, with the skills and knowledge required to provide quality teaching to mainstream learners and have undertaken additional training to complete a mandatory qualification and acquire expertise in teaching learners with VI. QTVIs work collaboratively with classroom teachers to develop a conducive learning environment, providing guidance to teachers on high-quality teaching strategies to support a VI learner's access to the teaching and learning. They can support classroom teachers in understanding a learner's vision impairment and its implications for their access to learning and wider development. Learners with VI can receive varying levels of support from a QTVI. Some learners will only have monitoring visits, whilst others may have direct teaching intervention.

Many learners with VI will also receive support from a habilitation officer. Habilitation officers are qualified specialists in supporting children and young people with VI to develop mobility and living skills, designed to promote their independence, inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. Habilitation officers work closely with QTVIs, SENCOs and families to ensure that between them they provide holistic support to meet the learner's agreed outcomes.

Assessment

As teachers, it is our responsibility to see that all learners maximise their potential through effective provision that meets their learning needs. It is essential that appropriate access arrangements are in place when assessing learners with VI, during both internal and external assessments. Cognitive ability tests present particular challenges to learners with VI because of the highly visual nature of many of the test questions. You should therefore consult your local QTVI and/or EP before using CATs or similar tests.

Appropriate exam access arrangements are individual to a learner, but may include:

- Assistive technology
- Extra time between 25%-100%, according to individual need
- Modified papers in large print or braille
- Readers
- Scribes
- Supervised rest breaks

All of these arrangements must be evidenced as a learner's normal way of working in exams.

Further Reading

Understanding your Learner's Vision Impairment is a useful resource from the RNIB to support teachers in understanding individual learners' needs.

Cerebral Visual Impairment, also from the RNIB, explores the impact of CVI on learning.

Specific organisations that can offer support and advice:

- The National Sensory Impairment Partnership
- The Royal National Institute of Blind People
- VIEW
- Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Thomas Pocklington Trust

Multi-sensory impairment

Understanding the learning need

Learners with multi-sensory impairment (MSI) have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties which can arise from a wide range of causes. Children and young people may be born with MSI or acquire it following illness or injury. Some learners may have MSI as the result of a progressive condition. Whilst learners with MSI have shared challenges, including independent mobility, communication and access to information, there is a huge variability of need between individuals from mild to profound. The effects of MSI on development are not simply those of hearing impairment plus those of vision impairment. Learners with MSI are acutely deprived of sensory information, because it is much harder to use sensory information that is partial or distorted. Some learners will identify as deafblind, whilst others will identify as a deaf or sight impaired person who cannot see or hear very well.

With MSI, there can be co-occurrence of need across other areas of the four broad areas of need. As the classroom teacher, it is important you get to know the learner. Find out their strengths and interests, their worries, and things they find challenging. Speak to the learner's family, previous teachers, and specialist teachers to better understand their learning needs, which will enable you to develop an inclusive classroom environment that supports the learner's access to language, both academically and socially.

For further information on supporting learners with MSI, we recommend referring to the Hearing Impairment, Vision Impairment and Co-occurrence of Needs sections.

'Children and young people with MSI need to get as much information as possible from any useful sight and hearing they have and from their other senses. For many children and young people, touch can provide a means of learning about the world and a means of communicating. Some children and young people with MSI become very skilled in using the sense of smell, for example, and use it to identify people and places. Some recognise movement around them because of something as subtle as changes in air pressure on their skin.'

CDC Early Support

NatSIP have developed A place to start – Top 10 Tips to support teachers who are new to working with a learner with sensory impairment.

Key considerations

In addition to the scaffolding recommendations detailed in the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment sections:

- Every learner is an individual – speak to the learner, their families, previous teachers, specialist teacher(s) and external agencies, to develop an understanding of the learner's individual needs and strategies and interventions that can support their access to learning.
- Plan individual lessons, and the wider school day, with routine and consistency.
- Consider the needs of the learner when creating the classroom environment, ensuring:
    - the learner is seated in a place that best supports any useful sight and hearing,
    - the classroom is organised in a way that provides safe movement pathways, and is kept tidy and organised,
    - the learner has access to assistive technology and tactile resources to support their learning.
- Provide opportunities for both pre-learning and over-learning.
- Break tasks into manageable chunks with sensory breaks as needed.
- Allow extra time for transitioning around the classroom and school.

Specialist Advice

As learners with an MSI have more complex learning needs, a number of specialists will support you in developing provision to meet the needs of the individual. This can include:

- Specialist teachers: Qualified Teachers of learners with MSI (QTMSI), Vision Impairments (QTVI) and Hearing Impairments (QTOD)
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Educational Psychologists

Physical disability

Understanding the learning need

Physical disability (PD) is an umbrella term covering a range of conditions and impairments; each individual will have unique needs arising from their disability. The impact may range from mild to severe and affect their ability to take part in activities in the same way as others.

Not all learners with PD have cognitive needs. However, the impact on learning may be complex and can affect one or more of the following areas:

- Mobility and gross motor skills
- Hand function and fine motor skills
- Sensory processing
- Vision and hearing
- Speech, language and communication
- Friendships and relationships
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Health and personal care needs
- Independence
- Attention
- Engagement owing to fatigue or pain

Collaborative working to meet individual needs

In planning provision, the learner's health and safety is the absolute priority – before learning can take place, an individual's physical needs must be met. This requires flexibility and careful planning on how to include a learner's equipment and other requirements into the lessons. Some things to consider:

- Can the learner engage with the teaching input from their specialist seating system or standing frame?
- Which adjustments will enable the learner to access partner and group work?
- How will the learner transfer between activities and/or equipment?
- As the teacher, how are you maximising the use of assistive technology and equipment to ensure equal access to all parts of the curriculum?

A key principle of The Equality Act (2010) is that schools must take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantaging pupils. Schools are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so by making reasonable adjustments to put disabled learners on a more level footing with learners without disabilities.

To determine and implement reasonable adjustments, you will need to work closely with the multi-agency team supporting the learner to ensure:

- The safe and effective use of a learner's specialist equipment.
- Integration of therapeutic programmes into the timetable to maximise learning time.
- A solutions-focused, holistic approach to remove environmental and social barriers.

As the teacher, if you notice something is not working, it is your responsibility, in partnership with the learner and their family, to work alongside colleagues and the multi-agency team to identify and trial additional modifications and provision. Sometimes the smallest modifications can have the greatest impact.

Environment

To create a conducive environment, it is crucial that reasonable adjustments are put in place discreetly and professionally, without drawing unnecessary attention to the learner. In addition to considerations covered in collaborative working to meet individual needs, reflect on the following from the learner's perspective:

- **How have you determined preferential seating?** With all planned seating, review sight lines. Are key learning tools visible?
- **Have you considered the language you use?** For example, 'move to' rather than 'stand and line up'?
- **How will you manage group and activity changes within a lesson?**
- **Are you aware of what to do in an emergency** (as outlined on the learner's 'personal emergency evacuation plan' (PEEP)?

Physical disability

Building Resilience

Physical disability may impact on every aspect of an individual's life, including how they socialise, develop relationships and feel about themselves.

Learners with PD may have additional worries, questions and concerns about themselves that their peers do not. They may have anxiety about a different body shape and how their body works. They may worry about being different and what others may think. They may have a degenerative or progressive condition which means they lose skills.

Regardless of the degree of physical disability, learners with PD are at risk of higher levels of anxiety, social isolation, lower academic achievement and diagnosis of mental illness than their peers. Their teachers play an important role in reducing these risks through inclusive practice which both empowers the learner and supports them to build resilience. Consider these strategies, which can make a big impact to a learner with PD:

- *Learn about the learner's strengths as well as their challenges, and what helps them feel safe in your lessons.*
- *Carefully plan seating arrangements, so that social contact is maximised and unnecessary transfers between equipment is minimised.*
- *Sensitively showcase what the learner can do well with others.*
- *Structure activities to develop specific social skills they need to develop.*
- *Always communicate directly with the learner, never their teaching assistant.*
- *Consider the language you use, e.g., 'wheelchair user' rather than 'wheelchair bound', 'move' rather than 'walk'.*

Regardless of the degree of physical disability, an empowered and resilient learner with PD is capable of achieving academically and making positive choices about their life and learning pathway.

Assessment

Learners with PD may need flexibilities and specific adjustments to homework, assignments and summative assessment tasks, including public examinations. Depending on the individual needs of the learner, adjustments may include:

- Altering assessment arrangements, for example taking a test in another room.
- Adapting materials used in an assessment, for example enlarged or electronic papers.
- Providing assistance during assessment, for example for practical tasks.
- Facilitating the use of assistive technologies.
- Alternative methods of recording, for example a scribe, laptop, or voice to text technology.
- Extra time or rest breaks.

Resources

- Specialist organisations, for example SHINE or SCOPE.
- The Physical Disability Network (pdnet), a free network supporting those who work with learners with PD.

Case Study:

J has achondroplasia, a genetic condition which causes dwarfism. The following provision has been put in place to support his access:

- *A rise and fall chair in each classroom, enabling him to work collaboratively with peers.*
- *Adaptations to classrooms and communal spaces (for example classroom sinks and toilets).*
- *Adaptive equipment (for example, cutlery and hockey sticks)*
- *Early transitions with a peer between lessons to ensure safety in corridors.*

In lessons, teachers support J by:

- *Working with him to identify parts of the lesson he can find challenging and determining provision to support his access to these activities.*
- *Applying their understanding of his needs in planning lesson activities, for example additional time on all assignments due to increased fatigue.*
- *Reviewing plans for classroom outings to ensure full participation.*
- *Maintaining and modelling high expectations - academically, socially and behaviourally.*

Social, emotional and mental health difficulties

SEND Code of Practice Definition

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties, which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour.

These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

Environment

Although learners with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) may present themselves as forthright or controlling, they are often highly anxious and insecure. They do best in a classroom environment which is calm and orderly, where routines are well established, and behaviour is consistently well managed. Routines can include the way that you deliver your lessons in a particular way, how learners are expected to have the correct equipment ready for each lesson, the way that transitions are managed, or how learners let you know if they need your attention. By carefully and consistently applying the school's behaviour policy in a calm and measured way, learners are likely to see you as being firm and fair to everyone in the class. This will help create a predictable environment, which will reduce learners' anxieties, and help them feel safe.

It can be helpful to have a part of the classroom set up as a 'safe space' where learners can take themselves when they are feeling particularly anxious or vulnerable. Where possible this should be a cosy and comfortable space, with some resources that learners can engage with to help them regulate their emotions. This could be drawing or reading materials, or for younger learners some toys.

Relationships

It is very important that you build a positive relationship with the young person. They may have little or no experience of building healthy, meaningful relationships. Get to know them, be interested in them. Little things that you do (acknowledging them, making positive eye contact, letting them know you have noticed them, finding out their likes and dislikes) show that you are thinking about them and **holding them in mind**. You are modelling being relationally present, and relationally respectful. When learners feel connected, they feel safer and more regulated. What you notice about them will help you to see what their challenges are, what triggers anxiety, escalates stress and dysregulation, which can result in behaviour that is challenging.

Expectations

It is important that you have high expectations for any learner with SEMH in your class. What this is likely to mean in practice is that you will need to provide tailored support and guidance to your learners so that they can achieve as much as they possibly can. This applies to their learning and their behaviour. You must avoid thinking that because of the difficulties they have you should not expect much of them. It is vital to communicate your expectations in a way that encourages and supports learners, rather than leaving them feeling that they can't achieve what you are asking of them.

Planning

Good planning is essential to enable all staff to consistently respond to a learner's social, emotional and mental health needs. An Individual Behaviour Management Plan (IBMP) allows staff to avoid known triggers, consider a co-ordinated response to behaviours, and focus on teaching new skills to enable the child or young person to access learning.

Curriculum

Curriculum time needs to be allocated to support learners with their emotional literacy and understanding of the social code. This will allow time to develop learners' understanding of social interactions and expectations, and their own emotional experiences. A circle time model can be used, or personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons. Agreeing ground rules for this type of activity can help participants feel safe. It is helpful to create a regular space where learners can talk openly about their experiences of home and school. Games or role-play can be used to explore issues. A focus on building vocabulary which describes emotions is helpful, as learners with SEMH needs may not feel confident to match the correct language to their emotions, when talking about how they feel.

Assessment

Assessments such as the Boxall Profile, Thrive or the Social and Emotional Adjustment (SEA) Scale can be used to help assess and track learners' social and emotional development. The outcomes from assessments can be used to inform curriculum planning. For example, if 'showing a negativism towards self' is identified, work can be planned to help understanding of where these feelings may come from and highlight strengths and abilities. Any form of assessment only works well within a whole school strategic approach to meeting need and managing behaviour. For measures to better understand and plan for children's mental health, where this impacts on their learning, see Public Health England's Index of Instruments on page 45 of 'Measuring and monitoring children and young people's mental wellbeing: A toolkit for schools and colleges', supported by the Anna Freud Centre.

Social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Case Study

Sam struggled in school. He found it hard to pay attention and to listen, and he was unable to concentrate or focus for very long. *Rebecca (his teacher) said that usually he wouldn't let her, or the teaching assistant help him, even though she knew he became frustrated and gave up on tasks, particularly writing. She worried that he was getting further behind with his learning, and she felt deskilled, hopeless, rejected and frequently irritated by him. Sam could flare up for no apparent reason, and staff described him as 'often controlling and manipulative' and 'sometimes aggressive'. Many of his behaviours were hard to like as he made staff feel on edge and this impacted on how staff felt about him. His off-task behaviour frequently disrupted other children; some became annoyed with him, but some joined in and even encouraged him. He found break and playtimes difficult as he tried to join in games but most often ended by spoiling them. He then took a long time to calm down.*

Sam did not experience reliability and consistency of care. His earliest years lacked nurture and warmth, and he grew up feeling unsafe. Things happened that made him feel frightened, and he witnessed events that left him traumatised. He therefore had no experience of healthy, attuned and reliable relationships with adults. He developed an internal model (an unconscious view) of himself as unlovable and of others (particularly adults) as unreliable and untrustworthy – he lacked a crucial basis for self-esteem and resilience. He had few experiences of adults helping him to regulate his powerful and overwhelming emotions and had to find ways to cope with these on his own. When he started school, he was wary and suspicious of adults; he did not see them as people to turn to at times of stress and did not necessarily expect they would be kind to him. He could not say any of this to anyone, nor was he able to think about it; they were his feelings. What Rebecca and her colleagues felt when working with Sam were the emotional responses to this wariness and suspicion, this uncertainty and unpredictability that he displayed through his behaviour.

Barriers to learning

Learners with SEMH needs can have significant barriers to engaging in everyday classroom learning. The underlying reason for this is likely to be their lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, which may relate to prior experiences of not doing well in classrooms. It might also be that they have significant gaps in their knowledge or skills, due to their SEMH needs, or other difficulties that affect their learning. These feelings may trigger disruptive or challenging behaviour. When you see behaviour that disrupts and actively avoids learning tasks it is worth asking yourself the question, 'Is this something the learner will not do, or is it something they cannot do?' For a learner with SEMH needs it is likely that they cannot do what you are asking of them and will need scaffolding and support. Changing your language changes how you think about the learner's behaviour.

Understanding behaviour as communication

It is helpful to recognise that all behaviour is a form of communication. The behaviours of learners with SEMH are most often manifestations of underlying, unmet needs. For example, these unmet needs may be emotional (frustration, sadness, fear) or physical (hungry, thirsty, aches) or educational (learning gaps, difficulty in knowing which knowledge to apply). These learners will almost certainly not have the capacity to express with words, or the emotional development or self-awareness to think about and process, feelings and thoughts which can be overwhelming. They can only show these in non-verbal ways. **You need to understand that, and to act on that understanding**. Additionally, be aware that your behaviour – verbal and non-verbal – is a communication that will affect all the learners you teach. Always pay attention to how 'challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour' makes you feel, how you process that, and what those feelings may tell you about what the learners may be feeling.

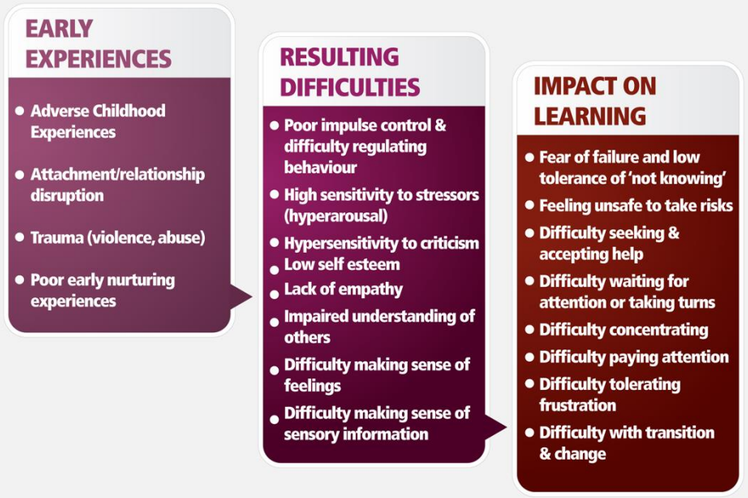
Teaching strategies

- Find out all you can about the learner's background to help you understand how you might better understand what they are communicating to you through their behaviour.
- Pay attention to small social or learning behaviours and praise it immediately – 'It's lovely to see that you are looking at me, and are ready to start your maths' or 'Thank you for being so kind when you picked up that pencil and put it back in the correct place'. It is likely you will get more positive behaviour as a result.
- Engineer success by teaching and rehearsing the social code.
- Avoid learners becoming ashamed or embarrassed by what you say. This may trigger a negative behaviour response.
- When responding to behaviour difficulties try to stay calm and not raise your voice. This will let learners know that you are managing your own emotions and are not losing control.
- Be confident to notice small misdemeanours and quietly comment on these. This will reduce the likelihood of situations escalating.
- In a secondary school when learners are finding it hard to engage in lessons, arrange a 45-minute meeting with other subject teachers. Talk together about the learner, what is going well and what difficulties there are in different lessons. Agree some shared approaches that all teachers will use. Arrange another meeting after 4 weeks to review the impact of these approaches, and to modify the plan if needed.
- Plan ways to help learners manage unstructured times, such as transitions between lessons, and break times. Giving a learner something to look after for you, can help them feel that you are thinking about them even when you are not with them. Providing an alternative space from the playground or dining area might make break times easier for them to manage.

Experiences affect development

Early experiences are vital to healthy emotional and physical development. Infants and young children are completely dependent on adult care. Secure attachment relationships with a reliable, consistent and attuned primary parent or carer are essential to children's development from an early age and continued nurturing of those relationships is vital for good emotional and psychological health. A child looks to their parent or carer to keep them safe and secure. Where this does not happen easily, or when a child feels they have to be the one to keep a parent safe and secure (for example, where there is domestic abuse in the household) then a child may have difficulties forming attachments, which can impact on other aspects of the child's mental health and wellbeing. The child in the case study above was not able to make a positive attachment; his mother had been unable to bond with him from when he was born (due to her own postnatal depression) and as a family they were isolated from other adults who may have been able to provide consistency of care and attention.

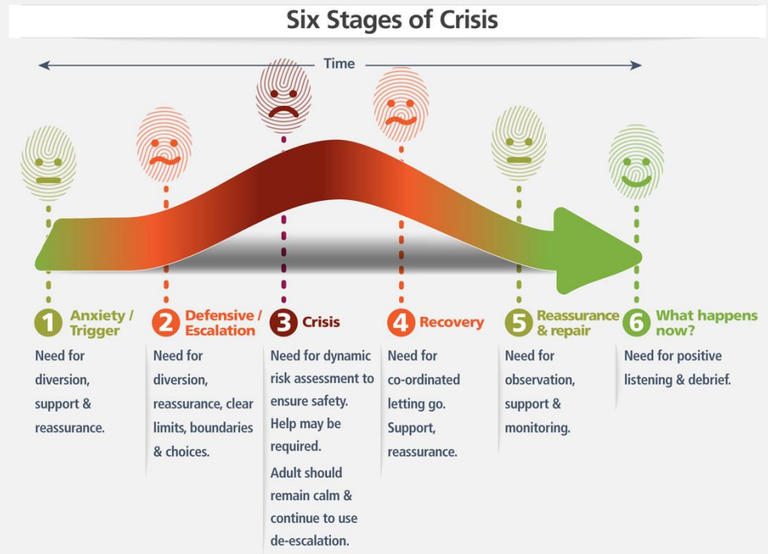
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a range of early experiences, which, particularly if they occur in clusters, may result in childhood trauma. They include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect and domestic abuse, or living in a household where there is a parent who suffers from substance misuse. They include situations when a parent is in prison, or where parents are separated or divorced. Individual circumstances and contexts will of course be very different for children, and outcomes can vary depending on the supportive environment the child has – protective factors will support children to cope with Adverse Childhood Experiences and can be as important as the ACEs themselves in influencing outcomes. Emotionally available and attuned adults in school are a significant protective factor and our role as teachers can therefore be transformational for some of our most vulnerable learners.



Living with ongoing, repeated and complex trauma (even if experiences are pre-verbal) can result in children growing up with continual stress. This results in high levels of cortisol, which creates a neural system on permanent hyper-alert. Neuroscience demonstrates that brain development can be impaired or delayed in crucial areas such as emotional regulation, impulse control and executive functioning (reasoning, reflection, making connections and learning). The graphic above shows the possible outcomes for learning when children have had difficult early experiences and resultant SEMH needs.

The Six Stages of Crisis

The Six Stages of Crisis shows the stages of escalating stress and distress to a point when the learner is least able to self-regulate, from early triggers, through crisis and on to eventual recovery of a calm, more regulated state. It is important to identify what triggers result in escalating behaviour, as that helps you to make sense of what is often puzzling. Identifying triggers through careful observation means that you can think about pre-empting those situations that cause changes in behaviour and understand why they give rise to the reactions you see. This will help you plan for, predict and de-escalate problematic times (for example, changes and transitions, certain subjects and groupings, proximity to adults). You can then target support to where it is needed most. You will often feel you are **managing behaviour**, but by carefully **managing situations that give rise to behaviour**, you can lessen or remove the trigger, reducing the need for the behaviour. Viewing behaviour as a symptom and the trigger as the cause of the symptom is a helpful approach.



Neurodiversity and co-occurrence of need

The neurodiversity paradigm

The term ‘neurodiversity’ does not feature in the Equality Act (2010) or the SEN legislation including the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

The neurodiversity paradigm has been proposed as an effective approach to understanding and including learners with special educational needs and disabilities.[1] It is a relatively new term and there are some differences in the use and definitions of this emerging concept. It has some commonalities with the special educational needs paradigm. Both are based on social justice concepts of equality and diversity. Both intend there to be a focus on an individual’s strengths as well as needs and have moved away from a ‘within person’ medical model of difficulties to an interactive perspective. In both paradigms of neurodiversity and special educational needs the focus of intervention is to remove barriers and make adjustments in the environment to enable the learner to access social and educational opportunities. This contrasts with the medical model of diagnosis where treating or fixing the learner is the focus. The neurodiversity paradigm acknowledges the need for a more proactive and inclusive way of planning for an individual learner’s needs rather than a reactive approach where adjustments for differences or diagnoses are made after planning for a neurotypical population. ‘Neurotypical’ means having a ‘majority brain’ where the neurocognitive style fits within the dominant societal norms.[2]

Neurodiversity and the role of teachers

Awareness of the term ‘neurodiversity’ is growing within the education sector. The Teachers’ Standards and SEND Code of Practice set out the roles of teachers in relation to all learners. The legislation reflects an interactive view of learners’ needs and progress, including the understanding that a learner’s environment and the teaching they receive make a difference to their experiences and outcomes. Identifying and valuing the strengths, interests, difficulties and differences of individual learners is pivotal and enables them to feel valued for who they are.

What does neurodiversity mean?

Neurodiversity is a term that applies to everyone. We are all cognitively different. Neurodevelopmental differences including dyslexia, ADHD or autism, or indeed those who have a number of overlapping or co-occurring differences are part of universal neurodiversity. This paradigm of neurodiversity is being used more commonly to nurture the idea that these differences are a valuable variation, an important part of human diversity, something to be celebrated rather than cured. It recognises that everyone with a neurodevelopmental difference is an individual, not part of a labelled group who will all behave, react or learn in the same way. It focusses on celebrating what people with additional needs can do rather than what they struggle with, to fully realise their potential in school, employment and life.

Neurodiversity means there are many ways for brains to be ‘wired’. Differences in wiring are a natural part of human variation. They are evident in the infinite diversity of neurocognitive functioning. The neurodiversity paradigm view is there is no one right or normal type of neurocognitive functioning. Each mind and cognitive style are unique and equally valid.[3]

The term neurodiversity encompasses all types of cognitive functioning, including learning differences. Such neurodevelopmental conditions may overlap and in the medical model lead to more than one diagnosis. The neurodiversity paradigm, however, considers that people’s minds and brains cannot be split into discrete pieces. They need to be understood as a whole. This contrasts with people’s differences in cognitive style being defined in terms of multiple labels, diagnoses and disabilities.[4] Strengths and difficulties associated with a particular cognitive profile depend on context as well as the brain’s ‘wiring’. Some cognitive (in other words thinking) capacities and approaches are adaptive in certain environmental contexts but are disabling in others. Each of these is understood as equally valid.

What are learning needs in relation to neurodiversity?

Quality Teaching: Understanding learners as individuals

The neurodiversity paradigm values diversity and the focus on a learner’s strengths. For you this emphasises the need to:

- Understand the world from the individual learner’s point of view.
- Ensure that all learners are understood as individuals and valued for who they are.
- Understand that all learners are different in the way they think and learn; accept and value neurodevelopmental differences.
- Anticipate neurodiversity in our class population and plan proactively for this.[5]

The Teachers’ Standards are consistent with the above, including but not limited to:

- Having a clear understanding of the needs of all learners.
- Adapting teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all learners.
- Using approaches which enable learners to be taught effectively, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Building an emotionally safe environment. This would include providing learners with different needs opportunities to experience higher levels of success so they can develop confidence and take risks with their learning.
- Being able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support all learners.

Neurodiversity and co-occurrence of need – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Most diagnoses of ADHD are given during the school age phase of education. The behaviours associated with ADHD are high activity levels, poor inhibitory control and short attention spans. Hyperactivity is more common in younger learners and evidence shows that it tends to decrease as learners get older, whereas the inattentive type (less movement, but obvious concentration absences) is seen less in pre-schoolers and tends to emerge over the school age period.

During the school age period, learners are usually identified and referred for ADHD assessments because of classroom disruptiveness and academic underachievement. The symptoms of inattention increase, and the levels of hyperactivity start to decrease. The fidgety behaviours calm but the brain is **cognitively hyperactive,** increasingly in need of satiation, jumping from one thing to another.

In adolescence these symptoms of inattention persist for longer and have a slower decline rate than hyperactivity and impulsivity. Learners with ADHD are at risk of underachievement if they are not supported with these needs. It is essential that needs are understood and supported throughout a learner's school career. Understanding ADHD means understanding **Executive Functioning** and all the information above will be helpful and **relevant** to adults working with children and young people who have this condition.

Clear guidance on what constitutes ADHD can be found in the ADHD Diagnosis area of the NHS website.

Relationship

Learners with ADHD will surprise you with the rapidity of their thinking and the connections they can make, and frustrate you with the repetition and patience that is required to ensure they keep on track and stay organised. We need to work harder to make sure that we communicate the positives about the work, effort, enthusiasm and energy of these learners, and do not solely focus on what they have not been able to complete. Actively work to list the strengths of learners with ADHD and share these with them. Recognise this difference through role-modelling your inclusive ethos. ADHD is a difference in functioning. As educators, we need to understand this, and then identify and support the executive function difficulties that are blocking their progress.

Environment

Wherever possible, with the knowledge that learners with ADHD are highly distracted, create spaces in your classroom environment that will minimise visual or auditory interruptions. Well-organised classrooms are very supportive. Learners with ADHD struggle to organise themselves effectively, but if their regular classroom has clear routines and labelled spaces for resources, once learnt, these are set and become one less thing for them to try to hold in mind.

Strategies

Do not put unrealistic restrictions on their freedom to move; get comfortable with allowing a learner with a diagnosis of ADHD to be treated differently, help your class to understand that we all come in different packages, and that equality and equity does not mean we all get treated the same, but that we all get the same treatment: inclusion in the lesson.

Learners with ADHD are drawn to intense stimuli. Involve them in jobs that require movement whenever you can. It can also help to add a layer of physical challenge to routine tasks, for example, ask the learner with ADHD to write or type their responses to prevent them from blurting out answers. Ask them to balance on one leg when asked to proof read their work. The physical challenge would need to fit with the age of the learner and the classroom environment to ensure it does not create more distraction than help.

Extended time on tasks and briefer tasks are also helpful strategies to apply. Learners with ADHD are frequently at risk of not completing tasks due to distraction affecting working memory and organisation needs. They can therefore lose out on feeling the satisfaction of finishing and getting feedback on the whole piece of work. Accommodate this need by breaking down longer tasks into smaller sections and give each section deadlines or time-boundaries for completion. This can lead to the learner feeling satisfaction of completing a task.

Further information can be found at Understood.org.

Assessment

ADHD is a diagnosis that can only be given by a specialist professional following a formal assessment. The type of professional that carries out this assessment can be dependent on the area you live in, but in most cases these assessments are carried out by paediatricians, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and specialist occupational therapists.

Supporting Learning and Inclusion

It is important we do not feel overwhelmed by the diagnoses and range of needs of learners in a typical classroom. An inclusive, neurodiverse-friendly classroom enables us as teachers to meet the needs of all learners. Key components of creating this inclusive classroom are:

- Celebrating neurodiversity
- Making reasonable adjustments
- Recognising and addressing vulnerabilities

Celebrate Neurodiversity

- Understand the world from the point of view of the learner. Be sensitive to those in your class who may have a particular need or diagnosis and discuss how neurodiversity might be addressed with families as well as key professionals and your SENCO.
- Work within careful professional boundaries and ensure that diagnoses are made only by the appropriate professional. Consider how each individual learner is celebrated and respected by the class community for being who they are.
- Consider making neurodiversity awareness a whole-class or whole-school focus by teaching all learners about it. Celebrate successful individuals who are neurodivergent. Have resources (posters, books) that positively reflect neurodiversity.
- Enable a growth mindset for all learners. A growth mindset means that we learn through our experiences, including our mistakes, and believe that we can improve our thinking, abilities and qualities through our efforts.[6]
- Provide opportunities for learners who have differences to demonstrate their individual strengths.
- Carefully consider the way in which you build trusting relationships with the learners in your class. Some learners need their relationships with adults to be more consistent, with communication adjusted to meet their individual needs.

Reasonable adjustments and additional support to improve outcomes

Individual needs of some learners may not be immediately visible, or only become apparent in certain contexts. These contexts may include demands within a lesson, e.g., accessing learning through print, or at different points of the school day, e.g., unstructured social situations.

Reasonable adjustments and additional support can include:

- A calm and safe environment.
- Attuned use of voice and gesture.
- Increased waiting time.
- Speaking at an appropriate pace, using facial expression to support the messaging.
- A considered approach to your use of language when teaching: vocabulary, short sentences, pauses, checking understanding, personalisation in questioning, avoidance of ambiguity.
- Use of visual supports to structure and organise the learning environment, for example labels, lists, task break-down prompts, and timetables.
- Use of concrete resources to support abstract concepts.
- Use of timetabled motor breaks to support attention.
- Mitigate sensory overload.

Recognise and address vulnerabilities including emotional wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding

Neurodivergent learners are likely to experience increased vulnerability. Understanding the implications of multiple vulnerabilities requires a carefully considered response to ensure that the approaches are appropriately integrated and provide a synthesised, holistic response for the individual learner. Effective collaboration as part of a multi-agency team will enable you to effectively support the learners. The multi-agency team will support the learner, their family and relevant colleagues. In certain instances, the team may include the Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENCO, Health Professionals and wider external agencies.

Multiple diagnoses and the teacher's role

Some learners may have involvement with outside professionals which can help to provide some background and diagnoses. They and their reports can help with understanding individual needs and inform teacher assessment. Reports and conversations with other professionals are of course confidential. Some children in every class may have more than one diagnosis, such as autism and ADHD and/or Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). The class teacher's role is to work with families, read outside professional reports and integrate information from these into the SEN support plan. Teachers have specific training in and professional understanding of the educational context, pedagogy and the curriculum. This is essential and pivotal in this planning. Teachers continue to have the professional responsibility for day-to-day teaching and inclusion of all children in their class, including those with SEND. The SENCO can support other teachers with this process and may on some occasions request input from external agencies and professionals such as the speech and language therapy service, specialist teachers or an educational psychologist.

Section 8

Teacher wellbeing

In this section, we will cover:

1. **How can teacher wellbeing be enhanced within the workplace?**
2. **How can distributive leadership of SEND in your school help your wellbeing?**
3. **Case Study: The teacher with SEND**
4. **How can your environment support you?**
5. **How can supervision support you?**
6. **What SEND resources are helpful to your wellbeing?**

Remember, you're valuable!

You probably have a reasonable idea of what wellbeing means for you; perhaps the things that make you feel happy, or a strong sense of comfort and safety. For some people, their wellbeing will be associated with independence or personal achievements. For others it may be strong family ties or friendships. The idea of 'teacher wellbeing' suggests that measures of positive emotion, or the impact of negative emotions, might only be relevant if they relate to the workplace (the school or college) or to aspects of a teacher's role. But your wellbeing is affected by many aspects of your life, work, leisure and relationships.

> *Wellbeing encompasses the environmental factors that affect us, and the experiences we have throughout our lives. These can fall into traditional policy areas of economy, health, education and so on. But wellbeing also recognises the aspects of our lives that we determine ourselves: through our own capabilities as individuals; how we feel about ourselves; the quality of the relationships that we have with other people; and our sense of purpose.*
>
> *WhatWorksWellbeing*

On the plus side, it means that even if you are finding your job tough for a period, this can be balanced by pleasurable feelings from other aspects of your life, but there is no doubt that a strong belief in your teacher identity and a positive attitude to your teaching role will generate a better sense of wellbeing overall.

Ofsted's 2019 report Teacher Well-being at Work in Schools and Further Education Providers noted the link between workload and wellbeing. As well as the volume of administrative tasks and frequent changes to government policy, the report highlighted teachers' views that a cause of heavy workload was also 'lack of support from external specialist agencies (such as for special educational needs and disabilities [SEND], or behaviour), challenging behaviour of pupils… and in some cases, lack of skills or training'.

It is important to acknowledge that teachers can feel negatively about their experience of supporting children and young people with SEND in the classroom. Teachers can also feel challenged emotionally by, for example, power-seeking behaviours from learners. Unfortunately, this can impact on poor mental health and periods of absence from teaching. If you are feeling very low or anxious because of issues relating to your workplace, then take some professional advice from your GP or from organisations such as Education Support.

However, it can be affirming to realise that you have the potential to better understand the origins of your own feelings and responses; to develop your strategies to respond to need rather than react to behaviour, to recognise your responsibilities for all learners in your class and to embrace the changes needed to make a difference to a child or young person's learning and to your own wellbeing. You are not alone, and your skills as a teacher are valued and valuable.

How can teacher wellbeing be enhanced within the workplace?

- Intrinsic motivation – doing things because you want to, rather than others telling you to
- Strong sense of teacher identity – why you do what you do.
- A growing knowledge of effective pedagogy – why you do it the way that you do
- A good probability of success – that you can achieve, often built on prior achievements
- Strategies for self-regulation – people often control others when they feel out of control of themselves
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities – and how this affects others in your organisation
- Positive feedback from learners and families
- Permission to test and learn alongside the use of evidence-based programmes
- Extending your capabilities – feeling stretched in a good way
- Specific praise and encouragement from colleagues that aligns to areas you have identified for your own development
- Having access to expertise and resources where needed
- A sense of fun and enjoyment – children and young people can be such a great source of vitality and fun, if you are laughing with them and not about them
- A lexicon for your own emotions – appropriate words for what you are feeling and how and when to express them
- Agency – having a say in decisions which affect you, taking ownership of your teaching decisions

How can distributive leadership of SEND in your school help your wellbeing?

The leadership and management systems within a school can make a big difference to whether or not the factors above can be achieved. A distributed leader empowers the members of the team to be involved in discussions and problem solving. An effective SENCO will enable you to contribute and be involved in making the best provision for each learner in your class, working alongside learning support assistance. Good, distributed leadership does not make you the leader, rather, the leadership enables you to maintain responsibility and ownership for your teaching role, whilst supporting you to connect with others whose responsibilities and roles interconnect with your own.

You may be in a school that has more hierarchical systems of leadership and accountability. You can still find ways to be an ethical leader of your own classroom and to perform your role with integrity, being true to your own principles. Children and adults respond to being liked and to things being fair. If you are not feeling this from above, then generate it from below. You can make a difference, and it will impact positively on your wellbeing. Information on ethical leadership can be found through the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

Who's on your team?

Good teamwork is reliant on flexible spheres of support, providing links to colleagues that can be strong when needed and more elastic, or put into storage, when you do not need them. For example, a new learner in your class who is new to English, and who is not making any verbal or non-verbal communication following a settling-in period, is going to require some problem-solving. Can they communicate in their home language? Have they experienced trauma? Do they have a special educational need, such as autism?

If you do not have personal expertise in these areas and you do not feel you have others on your team, you may quickly feel frustrated, inadequate, angry and overwhelmed. Learning to trust others, and becoming skilled at drawing on their strengths, will support your own wellbeing and resilience as you build a holistic understanding of the learner.

Who might you need to have strong ties with, to better support the needs of this learner?

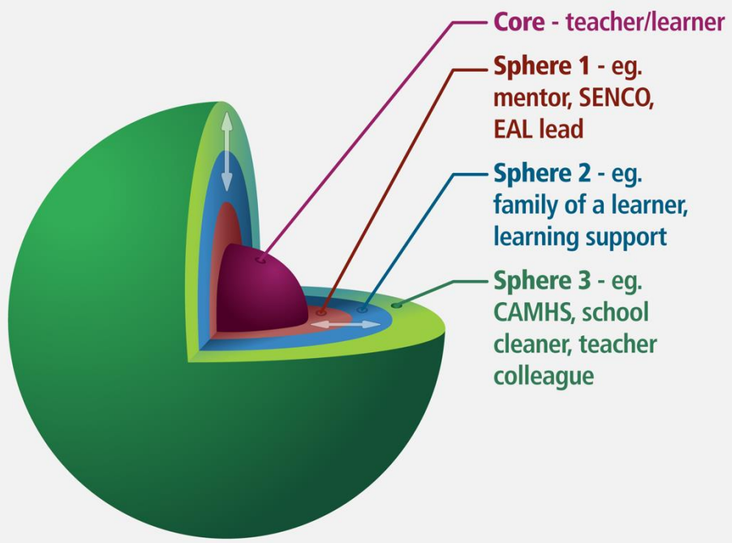
- Family
- SENCO
- EAL lead
- A colleague who has made effective provision for a learner with similar needs

Who else could be on your team? For example, a member of cleaning staff may live near the learner and have made a connection with them when they walk their dog each day. The learner may smile when they see their neighbour in the school setting. It may be a strength on which to draw, in a planned and appropriate way.

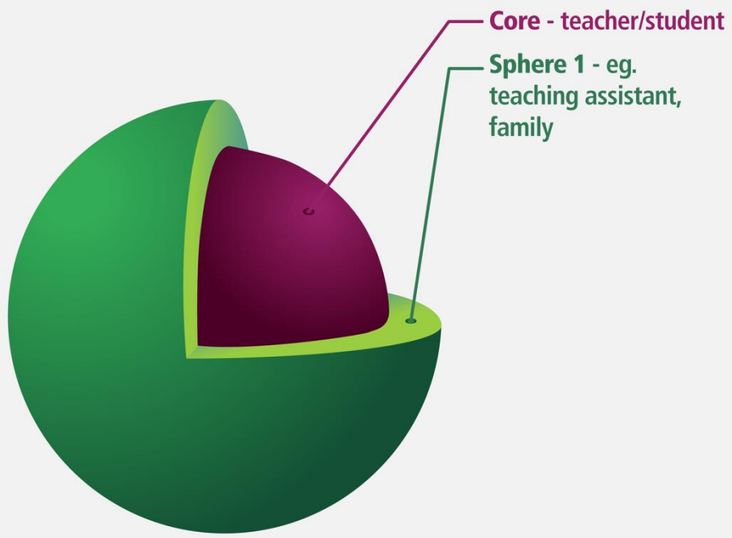
Your school SENCO may need to reach out for expertise beyond the school, for a short-term link, e.g., local refugee charity; early help; local area ethnic minority achievement service; educational psychologist; CAMHS? This connection may strengthen your link to the SENCO for this period.

It may take a long time, but as you begin to better understand the learner's special educational needs alongside, or in spite of, their language needs, then you will build strategies to meet those needs and become the expert for that learner over time. At transition, you will be the important sphere of support for the next teacher, to pass on what you know and what works well.

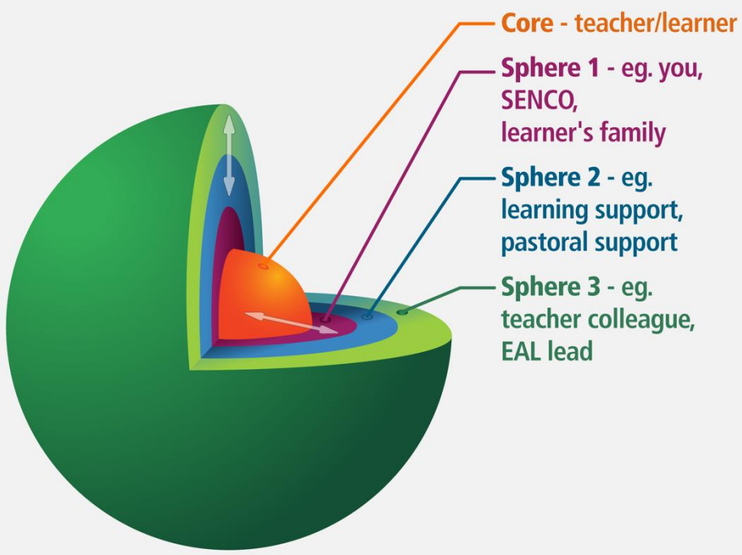
Example of spheres of support when a learner starts in your class with autism and EAL



Examples of spheres of support once you have an effective plan to meet the needs of a learner



Examples of spheres of support when the learner transitions to the next class



There will still be times when you feel you are not 'teaching' the learner. There will be evenings when you go home stumped as to what to try next, but knowing you have a team around you will be important. Good supervision or professional conversations with senior colleagues can be an important sphere of support at this time. A good supervisor or mentor does not need to be expert in the field you are exploring (i.e., SEND assessment and strategies for a non-verbal learner with EAL). Instead, they can be expert at enabling you to find solutions and stay open and positive to this professional challenge.

Remember, the important part of supportive spheres is understanding that you can be a member of multiple teams at the same time for different reasons. At different times the relationships you have within the teams will be strong and effective. At other times, you may not need to draw on colleagues and enjoy the independence. When you come across something that requires a bit of help again, you will recognise the need to strengthen links. Some situations may require a team around a learner, which includes family members, the learner and other colleagues, as in the example above. You may be part of a whole class team, the whole staff team, an after-school club team – each team will provide you with different or overlapping support, and you will be supportive of each team in your own way too.

How can your feelings/actions impact others?

You are responsible for how you are within any professional relationship. If you are feeling anxious or tense, you are likely to have an impact on those around you. If you are super-excited because you have just had a small success with a learner in your class, this is also likely to have an impact on others. Being empathetic is important, but it is also important not to assume you know how others are feeling. Stating how you are feeling can be a good way to flag up to others that you need some understanding, but it is not okay to use negative emotions as an excuse for poor behaviour. We see it in children and young people, but we do not always recognise it in ourselves.

Case study from a colleague

Graham is funny and lovely, we all really like him, but he can be so difficult to work with. I know he has times when he is very low and he does tell us when he feels like this, but he will often say he's low and then follow it up with a horrible remark about a colleague, which makes me uncomfortable. I don't like to say anything because I'm worried it will affect his mental health. What would you do?

Graham would benefit from a mentor, or regular professional supervision to build on his skills and to help him recognise when he is crossing professional boundaries inappropriately. The skills of mentoring are helpful for all teaching professionals, as they help you to develop stronger professional relationships, which supports your wellbeing.

Effective relationships for a teacher need to be built on:

- ***T**rust – knowing that you can speak with a colleague in confidence about your practice.*
- ***R**espect – having faith in the validity of a colleague's advice, as you respect their teaching.*
- ***U**nderstanding – having and receiving empathy for each other's circumstances and feelings.*
- ***S**afeguarding – noticing when a colleague's behaviour is potentially harmful to themselves or others and knowing how to speak with them, or who to speak to about this.*
- ***T**ruthfulness – being honest with a colleague does not mean you have to be hurtful in your comments. Effective mentors learn skills to give professional feedback constructively.*

What other relationships can impact on your wellbeing?

'Poor behaviour is a considerable source of low occupational well-being, and teachers do not always feel supported by senior leaders and parents with managing it.'

'Relationships with parents can be a negative factor and a source of stress'.[1]

Whilst it is important to recognise the reality of both of these statements, accumulated from teacher interviews, if you feel either of these statements applies to you, you may be able to reframe your approach. All behaviour communicates a meaning (including your own). Rather than reacting to 'bad behaviour' in your class, consider what needs are being communicated and make a plan to respond to those needs more effectively. If poor behaviour or parental conduct are impacting your wellbeing, seek support from a senior colleague – this should be addressed as part of a whole-school approach.

Next time you are feeling anxious about speaking with a parent, consider how they may be feeling before the meeting. What are their priorities? How can you be respectful of their concerns, and draw on their knowledge about their child to help you find solutions you can both agree on? Remember your own non-verbal language and how this can help you communicate more effectively – folded arms and a tense mouth can communicate negatively, whereas open hands and a warm smile demonstrate a more positive approach. How would you rather be greeted by your GP, for example? Showing kindness to others unsurprisingly results in kindness usually being returned. If you do not receive kindness in return, you can still be kind in not requiring a reciprocal arrangement. Sometimes it can take many acts of kindness before someone can trust another.

The Teacher with SEND

A case study from a practising teacher

Since the early 1970s, I have bludgeoned my way through my education. For over four decades, I ignored my own significant hearing loss, mild vision impairment and chronic dyslexia. Five years into my teaching career the workload, a catalogue of unintentional mistakes in administrative and data handling, and the expectation of high-level lesson planning across a year group, led me to question whether I could continue to teach. Despite my apparent relaxed nonchalance, and the copious hours of hard work, I was drowning.

I sought support from my union. At the suggestion of the head of my current school, I began with an Access to Work assessment, a full hearing test and a self-funded, full SpLD Assessment for Dyslexia. Access to Work coaching taught me methodologies and strategies with which to cope with my workload. The significant hearing loss in both my right and left ears required hearing aids. The SpLD Assessment revealed that I had little or no short-term memory recall. Testing also revealed that I was not even a mildly competent reader.

I had known that over the years I had developed a pseudo-language for the phonemes and diagraphs I could not pronounce, but now I knew that I had in fact been unable to hear their pronunciation since I had been a child. I had learnt to assign the correct meanings to words, and whilst I was able to understand uncommon words I was at a loss as to how to pronounce them. For example, I was in my late twenties before I could say the word 'alpha' correctly.

I had been lucky enough to have supportive parents in the first instance and a wife, later, who helped translate and edit the streams of consciousness that constituted my written work. Over the years I had gained several degrees, completed a Masters, and passed the PGCE. Although, after the SpLD Assessment results my personal narrative that I was intellectually secure became apocryphal. This was not a bad thing.

Firstly, I realised quickly there were some things that I was never going to get right, no matter how hard I tried, and that was okay.

I knew that difference, conflict, challenge and differentiation are the engineers of progress. Those who have to struggle build systems and patterns of resilience that they can apply to a myriad of adverse situations.

I learnt that spelling, grammar, time-management, organisational skills, structure, patterns and repetition do not matter as much as caring about the children's wellbeing and being passionate about the importance of knowledge and education. But without spelling, grammar, timekeeping, organisational skills, structure, patterns and repetition, you will not be able to do the important stuff.

I accepted it would take me twice or three times as long to complete the same tasks as other teachers, but the work would need to be done and I had to get used to this. I learnt to be humble. To ask for help. To face realities and to never, never underplay my needs – because I could be making things more difficult for colleagues.

I learnt there is strength in weakness. I discovered that knowing what you cannot do leads to an understanding of what you can achieve. I learnt that I had to be willing to change because the obligation of the teacher is first and foremost to the learners. Good organisational skills support learners with diverse needs to follow structures, use patterns and evoke repetition.

For every child or young person who sees just a single black dot on a piece of paper, most will know it is a full stop. There will be one who says it is a far-away star, another will mention a sunflower seed, and there will be one who will never put the full stop in at all.

In 2020, 12.1% of all learners in England required SEN support, with a further 3.3% having an Education, Health and Care Plan. More often than not, their learning traits are part of a familial pattern imbued into a complex social economic story. Till the day he died, my own grandfather could barely write his name. The behaviours and needs of so many adults can often impact on their own children in schools today. Luckily, the surprising number of staff in my present school who have learning needs, and who require adaptations, provide and offer a bridge; a degree of understanding and an empathetic nod to the challenges these parents faced and the challenges that their children may continue to face.

As teachers with learning needs, we still struggle through the miasma of our own limitations. But by our presence we advocate for the value of learning and the opportunities that an education can provide for everyone.

I have been surprised at the number of staff in my school alone, who have learning needs which require adaptations, including dyslexia. My journey to acknowledge and meet my own needs has enabled me to be a more effective teacher and a role model for those learners in my class for whom text has the texture of shimmering water.

How can your environment support you?

In the same way that you may often look at what environmental changes can be made to better support a child or young person whose behaviour is communicating unmet needs, you may need to look to changes in your environment to better support your own wellbeing.

Things that can be changed include:

The layout of your classroom – How does the layout of tables and chairs help you to meet the needs of the learners in your class? Do the changes meet your needs too? Do you feel less anxious if you can generally see the door? Do you prefer to have no desk, but to 'hot desk' each day, moving yourself around the classroom, giving learners the message that position within the classroom is not fixed? However, beware of conflict between meeting your needs and those of your learners. For example, a learner with autism may find it difficult to not know where you will be based each day – letting them know at the end of the day where you will be based the next day, could help to reduce their anxieties (and probably several other learners, too).

Clutter – It can be quite therapeutic to have a clear-out of resources you have not used for years, or that have no evidence-based benefit.

Prompts – For example, stars you have placed strategically on the walls to remind you to 'spot the positive'. These can also prompt you towards other behaviours, such as specific praise for a learner ('I really like the way you used emotion in your voice to bring meaning to the text'). Alternatively, you may want to use prompts like this to remind yourself of positives in your own practice (e.g., noticing that Skye has stayed in her seat throughout the input, because you had deliberately chosen a subject you knew would engage her).

Comforts – Is there space to keep touchstones that remind you of positive or happy feelings, for example a stone from a beach from a favourite holiday, a poem or a painting that holds meaning for you?

N.B. Care needs to be taken in engaging learners in aspects of your out-of-school life, in line with school policies. Professional boundaries are paramount in safeguarding learners. For example, having a photo of your family on your wall for your own wellbeing may be appropriate (you probably spend more time in your class than you do in your living room). However, using your family members as constant examples in your narratives to illustrate your teaching content may not be appropriate.

Quote from a parent

Ms Jana did so much for my child. She went over and beyond. We knew there was a problem with Harrie's behaviour but couldn't work out why. Harrie would get so angry and frustrated all the time in her Reception class and I used to be really embarrassed when I picked her up at the end of the day. One day Ms Jana was close to tears, I wanted the ground to swallow me up. We kept telling Harrie off and taking away her games, but she didn't seem to care. Ms Jana was off for a few days and Harrie was even worse and got excluded. When she came back, Ms Jana called us in and we met with her and the school's SENCO and behaviour manager. Ms Jana was honest about Harrie's behaviour getting her down because she felt she hadn't been able to support Harrie. I thought she just didn't like her! She said she had noticed Harrie often looked like she wasn't listening and she'd asked her colleagues for their advice. They suggested that we get her hearing checked and I felt terrible when, several months after the school nurse referral, the audiologist said Harrie would benefit from hearing aids. It's made such a difference and we're so grateful for all the things Ms Jana and the team put in place, such as visual resources and timetable and headphones to reduce external sound, as well as to enhance her hearing. Some of Harrie's behaviours can still be challenging, but her reading has come on so well in the last few months, she is starting to feel she is a learner.

How can supervision support you?

Supervision can come in a variety of formats. It can come from peers or be formalised.

Working with children and young people can evoke numerous responses from the adults working with them, some of which can be difficult to manage. Klein's concept of 'projective identification'[2] relates to the feelings other humans evoke in you. For example, some people may make you feel intellectual and others make you feel intellectually challenged. The concept of 'projective identification' relates to Freud's notion of 'projection'[3] whereby the ego is defending itself against unconscious impulses and desires, and attributes them to others. For example, someone may feel angry and not want to acknowledge anger towards themselves, so externalise their anger on to others, seeing them as angry.

We can 'defend' ourselves against the feelings that others evoke within us. 'Defences' are defined by Armstrong et al as a way of coping with anxiety. Their research emphasises that you as a teacher can feel overly anxious about children failing to learn, which can lead to a vulnerability around 'not knowing' and as **a defence the educator can become mechanistic or didactic, losing your ability to be reflective and creative**.[4]

Bion developed his theory of containment from observations of himself and the feelings evoked by his schizophrenic patients.[5] Douglas and Bion explain that containment should begin within our early relationships however the concept is relevant across our life span.

> *When one person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it, processes it and then communicates understanding and recognition back to the other person. This process can restore the capacity to think in the other person.*[6]

In disciplines such as social work, supervision provides an opportunity to explore the emotions and defences occurring between people. There are as many models of supervision as there are supervisors. There are different supervision needs depending on the teacher's role, experience and areas for development. There is no 'best way' of learning and no 'best way' of supervising.

Supervision is a dynamic process and should address the needs of a particular supervisee at a particular time with a particular issue. In 2012 the DfE made supervision a requirement within all early years settings and schools following the EYFS. Elfer[7] states that many settings and schools misunderstand the function of supervision and use it to audit staff. Reframing supervision to consider the unconscious dynamics between adults and learners would provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on learners' learning and behaviour, to interpret some of the learner's inner world, and consider how teachers' defences could get in the way of some interactions. If these emotions were contained through regular supervision, teachers would not feel persecuted by the emotions being pushed into them as they explore their defences against them.

What SEND resources are helpful to your wellbeing?

Online learning – You cannot expect to know everything there is to know about every type of need every learner may have in your school, but you can be prepared to learn about a new need as it arises for a learner in **your** class. There are now many great online training resources, including those highlighted in this Handbook. An acknowledgment of what you do not know, a willingness to learn more and a commitment to improve your knowledge and understanding in this area will enhance your professionalism and your self-esteem. It will also give you agency, which is important for your wellbeing. Rather than someone telling you to find out about the potential learning impact for a learner coming into your class with Williamson's Syndrome, **you take the initiative to prepare your own understanding**. Rather than feeling helpless that you cannot meet the learner's needs, recognise your own potential to be a problem solver and try out small, evidence-based strategies, one at a time. It may feel like you are pressured to 'get it right' straight away, but small successes should be celebrated. However, getting stuck with one small success is not okay. Too often learners with SEND are taught outside the classroom, because 'it works for the learner'. Challenge this! Progress should be measured and tracked across all areas of a child or young person's learning and wellbeing.

Evidence-based interventions – You cannot know about all programmes, but there are good resources available which have compiled lists of effective support, such as:

- SEN support: research evidence on effective approaches and examples of current practice in good and outstanding schools and colleges
- Wellbeing Measurement Framework for Schools

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