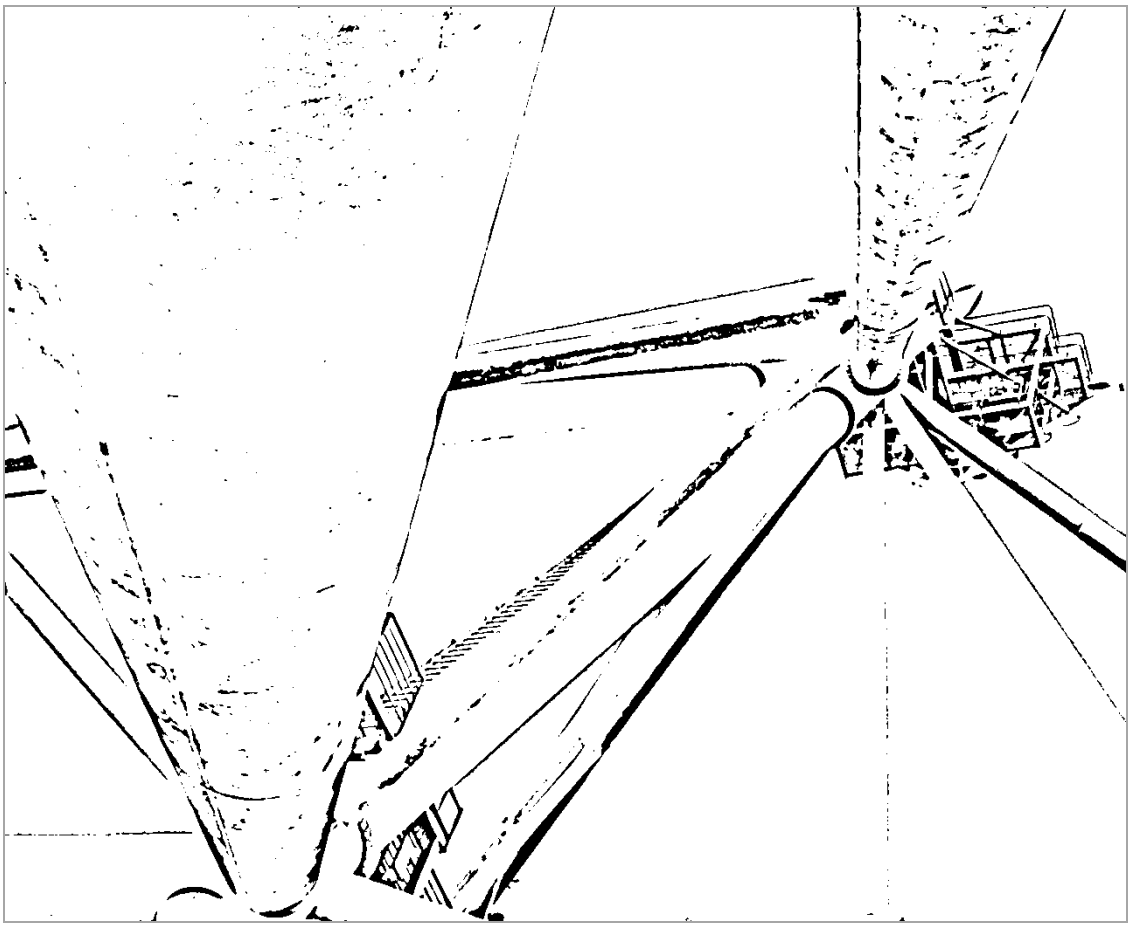
Supportive Classrooms



Support for Learning

Matt Grant, March 2011

For further info: www.HumansNotRobots.co.uk

This booklet has been produced in response to significantly more students with additional needs now attending mainstream secondary schools.

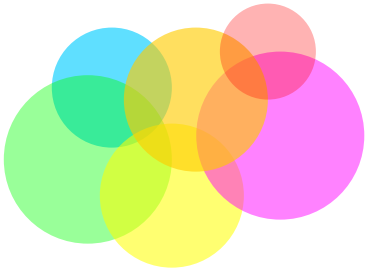
This booklet is designed to help school staff in:

- ✓ reducing their barriers to learning
- ✓ providing strategies that help them to cope, progress and succeed
- ✓ raising their learning outcomes above those achieved at present

Within this booklet you will find:

- **Pages 3 – 5:** Background information on why additional needs occur.
- **Pages 6 – 9:** Identifying additional needs in your classroom.
- **Pages 10 – 11:** Planning for differentiation.
- **Pages 12 – 17:** Supporting written tasks.
- **Page 18 - 19:** Supporting handwriting.
- **Page 20:** Supporting vocabulary.
- **Pages 21 - 24:** Supporting reading.
- **Page 25:** Supporting numeracy.
- **Page 26:** Supporting homework.

Why some students can't…
Why some students won't…



1. Biology – "It's who they are."

There has been a steady rise in the identification of biologically-based learning difficulties amongst children. This is not simply the conjuring up of labels but a result of hard science involving MRI scans of brains to highlight differences in structure (often determined by genetics) and psychological processes.

Research suggests…

8% of children have some form of Dyslexia

⟶this means around 2 out of every 20 students in school may have inherent difficulties with written language, in terms of reading texts and expressing themselves in writing. They will also likely have poor working memory and organisational skills.

5% of children have some form of ADD/ADHD (Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder)

⟶this means 1 out of every 20 students in school may have inherent difficulties with concentration - struggling to focus for 20mins without support. They will also have poor working memory, poor organisational skills and poor sleep patterns.

6% of children have some form of Dyspraxia

⟶ this means 1 out of every 20 students in school may have inherent difficulties with the acquisition and use of spoken language and fine motor skills (seen mainly in handwriting). They may also struggle with everyday adult language, understanding abstract concepts, interpreting different opinions, taking part in group work.

7% of children have some form of SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs)

⟶this means 1 out of every 20 students in school may have inherent difficulties with the continued acquisition, understanding and expression of spoken language.

12% of children have some form of Scotopic Sensitivity (Irlen Syndrome)

⟶this means 2 out of every 20 students in school will have inherent difficulties with processing certain types of visual information – particularly when there is glare, high contrast, complex patterns (including text) and colours.

1% of children have some form of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

⟶this means 1 out of 3 – 4 classes in school will have a student with substantial, inherent difficulties with the understanding of abstract concepts, empathy, interpretation of different opinions, group work and imaginative writing.

This is not necessarily a question of general intelligence but a question of differences in how students learn. These types of learners will be found throughout school – some will have developed coping strategies and have progressed to the higher sets. However, research highlights that students with such difficulties typically find themselves in lower ability sets.

2. Home Environment – "It's where they come from."

With the rise in identifiable conditions, some researchers / writers have (controversially) argued that the difficulties presented by many students are actually a result of environment rather than biology – this has led to the term 'toxic childhood'.[1]

This school of thought argues that child development have been impacted by rapid changes in culture:

- There is a higher prevalence of children coming from fragmented homes and working homes. This has led to **fundamental stages of a child's early language and social development being overlooked** including the singing of nursery rhymes, the reading of stories, playing of family games, 'sit-down' meals etc.

- The tendency for 'protective parenting' which results in children "playing" solitarily on computer games, watching DVDs alone etc. Fewer children now play outdoors with others children. This has led to children having **slower development in independence, risk-taking and problem-solving**, as well as social skills.

- Changes in everyday technology – particularly the internet– have resulted in the nature of literacy changing. Children now adopt from an early age the habit of 'skimming' between a variety of information sources (often visual and audio) rather than focusing on a written source (such as a book) for pleasure and learning. This has led to many benefits but it has arguably **reduced opportunities to practise sustained, reflective reading and related skills such as inference, deduction, and imagination.**

They argue that four key areas of normal child to adult development have been impacted:

distractibility, fleeting interest	→	attention to immediate points of interest	→	focused concentration, attention to and recall of detail
impulsivity, inconsequentiality	→	basic self-control, sometimes limited under stress	→	foresight, resilience to typical stress, deferred gratification
self-centredness	→	empathy for other people and situations	→	active consideration of others, service of others before self
basic concrete vocab, non-grammatical expression	→	extended concrete vocab, grammatical expression	→	abstract / conceptual vocab, grammatical expression

Again, this is not necessarily a question of general intelligence, but how our classroom practice can adapt to this 'new reality' and continue to contribute to the development of the whole child. In short, how can our classroom practices nurture students?

[1] See 'Toxic Childhood' by Sue Palmer.

3. School Environment – "It's what we do and don't do."

A third issue to consider is the barriers we unwittingly put up through our own practice. Sometimes we make incorrect assumptions about what our students can and can't do.

We need to recognise that not all secondary students…

- have attained functional / independent reading skills (10:06+ age equivalent) by the time they reach Y7, or even by the time they reach Y9
- have attained functional / independent spelling skills (10:06+ age equivalent) by the time they reach Y7, or even by the time they reach Y9
- will be able learn to read, comprehend and spell unfamiliar words without being explicitly taught them
- can comprehend and retain subject-specific words after hearing them once or twice
- can verbalise their ideas and opinions in a coherent way
- will retain learning about spelling patterns taught to them in primary school without continued teaching and practise
- have developed a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and easy to produce
- know how to construct a sentence of more than one part, for a variety of purposes
- will retain learning about punctuation taught to them in primary school without continued teaching and practice
- will be able to write expressively without planning out their ideas
- will be able to write expressively without having a bank of openers, connectives and subject-specific vocabulary they can draw upon
- will retain information about different text types and purposes of writing without continued teaching and practice
- can access large amounts of writing displayed on the board
- can follow more than one or two part instructions at the first time of asking
- can concentrate on one task for over 20 minutes
- have a sound concept of time – both in terms of managing time in the present (days, hours, minutes) and dealing with time in the past (centuries, decades)
- will retain learning about timetables and other basic numeracy skills without continued teaching and practise
- will be able to independently manage a secondary school timetable, homework schedule and buildings
- will be able to immediately focus having changed room, changed subject – readily switching gears from the demands and disciplines of Art, to Maths, to English etc.

Spotting the strugglers…

A first step towards a supportive classroom is looking at the needs of your cohort and deciding what level / type of supportive response is required. There are a number of indicators to look out for:

★ **Are there any students on the Additional Needs Register?** A register of students with additional needs is available from the SEN Coordinator.

The Additional Needs Register records a student's action status and outlines the nature of their needs.

The school works primarily with the following categories of additional need:

1. Concentration: Staying on task, ignoring distractions, focusing on the teacher, remembering instructions etc.	
2. Organisational Skills: Physical organisation of self and equipment, planning ahead with work, thinking about consequences before actions etc.	
3. Speech and Language: Understanding their first spoken language, acquiring new vocabulary, ability to express themselves clearly in sentences etc.	
English / Literacy	**4. Reading:** Ability to read a paragraph or more with ease and fluency.
	5. Spelling: Ability to consistently spell common words and make a good attempt at unfamiliar words.
	6. Extended Writing: Ability to write a correctly punctuated paragraph or more with ease and fluency.
	7. Handwriting: Ability to write legibly, with ease and at a pace equivalent to peers.
8. English as Additional Language: Understanding English as a second language, acquiring new vocab etc.	
9. Numeracy/Maths: Demonstrating a basic grasp of number, algebra, data, shape / space and measure etc.	
10. Physical/Hearing/Visual: Ability to access all activities despite physical, hearing or visual difficulty etc.	
11. Social: Forming and maintaining positive relationships, conforming to social norms etc.	
12. Emotional: Showing awareness of own feelings and that of others, managing feelings, confidence etc.	
13. Homework/Coursework: Ability to study independently, to produce work to deadlines etc.	
14. Exams: Ability to prepare for and sit an exam without close adult support.	

These are all factors to consider in your planning and delivery.

★ **Are there any students with an IEP?** Students on the Additional Needs Register will often be assigned an IEP – an IEP is a personalised plan and record of action being undertaken to ensure that students with additional needs are included and make progress.

An IEP will generally include details on a student's action status and categories of additional need, a profile description of the student's individual strengths & difficulties followed by strategies for use by the teacher in the classroom. Below is an example.

For more info on IEPs: www.HumansNotRobots.co.uk

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN (IEP)

Name:	Joe Bloggs	**Form:**	7R

Area of Need/s:	Hearing Impairment, Literacy	**ANR Status:**	School Action

Intended Outcome/s of the IEP:
To ensure Joe has full access to spoken / sound aspects and reading input in lessons.

Monitored by:	Monitoring Forms, IEP Meetings, Attainment, Behaviour Watch.

Strengths & Difficulties:

- Joe has hearing loss in his right ear.
- Joe has a history of dyslexic-tendencies – observations of him in lesson suggest he has low concentration / working memory and spelling difficulties.
- Joe is a functional reader but is reported to experience visual difficulties when reading – he will find black text / white background combinations difficult to read.

Support Strategies:

- ✓ Joe should sit in a place that locates him near to the teacher - with his left ear nearest when spoken input / instructions are being given.
- ✓ Coloured backgrounds / overlays are recommended.
- ✓ Encourage Joe in practising spelling strategies – i) breaking words down into syllables and/or ii) look, write, cover, check – reinforce this every time he asks for a spelling. Praise when he spells words correctly.
- ✓ If Joe chooses to read aloud – the teacher should move near to him to provide discreet support.

School Interventions:	Spelling Revisited
Access Arrangements:	n/a

Why the student has an IEP...

What the student can do well, what the student struggles with...

Strategies for the teacher and support staff to use when working with the student...

Additional support provided by school to address the student's needs...

★Are there students with a below average reading age? The Learning Support Team screens cohorts of students using standardised reading and spelling tests – a test measured against established norms / averages for that age group.

A standardised test will provide an age equivalent score which gives an indicator of ability / skill – as a rule of thumb, the following is accepted: [2]

10:06+ *'functional readers'*	Students working at 10:06+ in their reading are generally viewed as 'functional readers'. • They will typically be able to read fluently, decoding new words with ease and quickly understanding their meaning with teaching. • They will be able to access most secondary school text books • However, they will continue to require practise and enrichment in the classroom – with a focus on inference, deduction and other more analytical skills.
9:06 → 10:06 *'slightly below average'* *'moving towards functionality'*	Students are 'moving towards functionality' and should do so without specialist intervention. • With concentration, they will able to decode and understand high-frequency / common words in a sustained way, with relative ease. • They may require occasional support in the classroom with reading subject-specific texts in the form of adapted texts, active teaching of new / unfamiliar vocabulary, encouragement etc. • However, they will require continued practise of reading on a daily basis in the classroom, at home or during other social times.
8:00 → 9:06 *'slightly below average'* *'breakthrough stage'*	Students are 'moving towards functionality' but require further teaching of reading. • With concentration, they will able to decode and understand high-frequency / common words. They may tire easily and be unable to sustain performance. • They will often 'surface level read' – decoding but not comprehending. • They will require continuous support in the classroom with reading subject-specific texts in the form of adapted texts, active teaching of new / unfamiliar vocabulary, encouragement etc. • However, they will require continued practise of reading on a daily basis delivered through a 'catch up' scheme of work / intervention.
7:00 → 8:00 *'well below average'* *'limited functionality'*	Students have foundational gaps in their reading skills that will require intervention in the form of reading programmes. • Reading of typical secondary texts will be laboured, hesitant and tiring. Reading will be stressful. • With encouragement and non-critical / supportive prompting, they will be able to decode most monosyllabic and some polysyllabic high-frequency / common words. • They will often be reliant on 'sight vocabulary' – by this we mean familiarity with how a word looks (shape, starting sound) rather than familiarity with patterns / decoding skills. • They will sometimes miscue words – seeing the starting sound and shape then jumping for a best guess. i.e. "shrimp" may be read as "ship". • They will struggle to read and retain subject-specific vocabulary even with active teaching.
6:11 and below *'building blocks stage'* *'no functionality in reading'*	Students will have large foundational gaps, generally at this age (11+) due to a specific learning difficulty – usually identified but sometimes not. They will require intervention from specialist programmes that 're-teach' skills through a different approach to those tried previously. • Reading of standard secondary texts will be almost impossible. • Reading skills are often limited to CVCs. • Some vowel and consonant blends will be known – often through a reliance on 'sight vocabulary' rather than transferable understanding of how letters can blend to make new sounds. • Other underlying issues may be present such as inconsistent knowledge of the alphabet, limited rhyming skills, limited sequencing skills, poor working memory, speech and language needs etc.

**It is worth noting that reading ages are generally higher than spelling ages. An increase in reading age is typically followed by an increase in spelling age.*

[2] Acknowledgment – Trish Austin, Ladywood Outreach

★**Are there students with a below average spelling age?** The Learning Support Team screens cohorts of students using standardised reading and spelling tests – a test measured against established norms / averages for that age group.

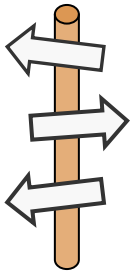
A standardised test will provide an age equivalent score which gives an indicator of ability / skill – as a rule of thumb, the following is accepted: [3]

10:06+ *'functional spellers'*	Students working at 10:06+ in their spelling are generally viewed as 'functional spellers'. • They will be able to consistently spell high-frequency / common words with automaticity. • They will be able to spell unfamiliar polysyllabic words with regular patterns. • With encouragement, they will attempt to use more adventurous choices of words that they don't necessarily know the spelling of. • However, they will continue to require some input – especially on subject-specific words with irregular spelling patterns. • They will also continue to require input on constructing sentences / writing organisation.
9:00 →10:06 *'slightly below average'* *'moving towards functionality'*	Students are 'moving towards functionality' and should do so without specialist intervention. • They will be able to spell common words with occasional reminders on 'peculiarities' such as homophones, silent letters etc. • They will be able to spell familiar polysyllabic words with regular patterns. • They will require support in the classroom with spelling subject-specific words in the form of key word lists. • They will continue to require periodic input / consolidation on spelling patterns and strategies – possibly through starter activities.
8:00 → 9:00 *'slightly below average'* *'breakthrough stage'*	Students are at a 'breakthrough stage', competent in sounding out words and familiar with some frequently-used patterns, but ultimately limited in their range of skills. • They will be able to spell many simple, monosyllabic words and some high-frequency / common polysyllabic words. • They will be able to make phonetically-plausible attempts at unfamiliar polysyllabic words spelt incorrectly. Their weakness will emerge with 'peculiarities', exceptions, prefixes, suffixes etc. • They will require support in the classroom with word lists covering more complex high-frequency / common words and subject-specific words. • They will continue to require weekly input on spelling patterns and strategies – through whole-group spelling sessions and intervention programmes.
7:00 → 8:00 *'well below average'* *'limited functionality'*	Students have foundational gaps in their spelling skills that will require sustained teaching in the form of phonetics / spelling programmes. • They will be able to spell some simple, monosyllabic words with phonetically plausible attempts at those spelt incorrectly. • A small proportion of high-frequency polysyllabic words will be spelt correctly with reminders from the teacher. • They may sometimes attempt to spell unfamiliar words but will typically be dependent on the teacher for spellings. • They will require support in the classroom with word lists covering more complex high-frequency / common words and subject-specific words. • They will continue to require weekly input on spelling patterns and strategies – through whole-group spelling sessions and intervention programmes.
6:11 and below *'building blocks stage'* *'no functionality in spelling'*	Students will have large foundational gaps, generally at this age (11+) due to a specific learning difficulty – usually identified but sometimes not. They will require intervention from specialist programmes that 're-teach' skills through a different approach to those tried previously. • They will have basic awareness of phonic strategies for spelling. They will rely on a mix of phonic strategies and sight vocabulary to spell some high-frequency / common monosyllabic words. • Their written vocabulary will be limited. They often have a higher spoken vocabulary. • They may scribe / copy written work well which in turn disguises their difficulties. • Other underlying issues may be present such as inconsistent knowledge of the alphabet, limited rhyming skills, limited sequencing skills, poor working memory, speech and language needs etc.

[3] Acknowledgment – PIVATS, Lancashire County Council

Planning for Differentiation

aka "Courses for horses…"



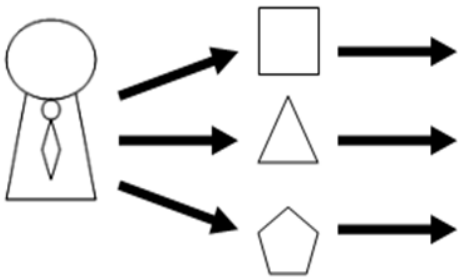
To create and maintain a supportive classroom, we – together as curriculum teams – need to look at the big picture in terms of what our schemes of work and day-to-day planning offer. National and local policy states that every student is entitled to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which is differentiated to meet their individual needs. Planning for differentiation enables this.

Differentiation is a process which acknowledges that all learners are different. Differentiation involves balancing the requirements of the curriculum with the needs of the individual student.

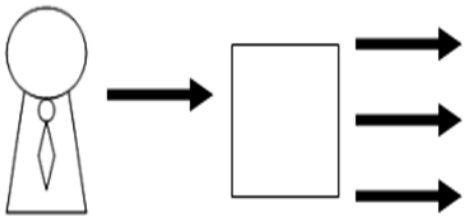
Differentiation aims to remove barriers to learning that perpetuate a cycle of failure for some students, whilst also catering for the needs of the more able.

There are many different forms of differentiation:

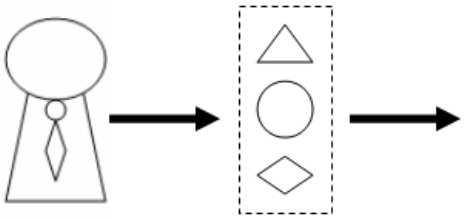
By different study routes…



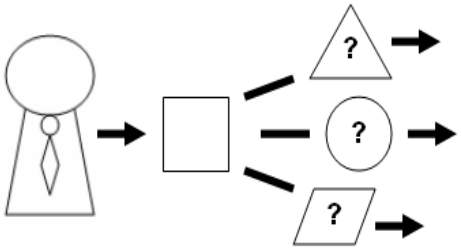
By outcome…



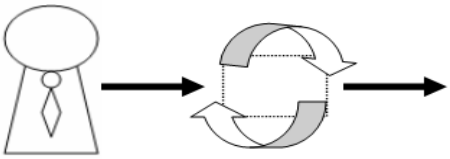
By different activities and resources…



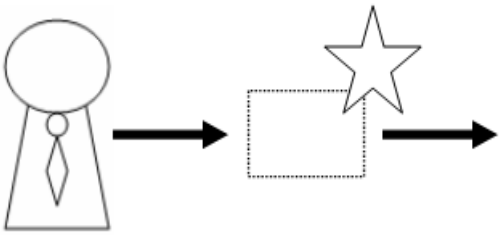
By different assessments…



By providing opportunities for recap and consolidation…



By providing opportunities for enrichment and extension…



Trigger Questions for a Differentiated Curriculum

1. **Profiling your cohort** – What size group/s are they learning in? How have they engaged and progressed so far? What do they need to learn at this stage? What do they want to learn at this stage? What are their difficulties? What are their strengths?

2. **Selecting a study topic** – How relevant is it to their interests? How does it meet their needs? How does it contrast with and compliment the rest of the subject's curriculum?

3. **Defining the key objectives** – What facts do we want them to know? What big ideas do we want them to understand? What do we want them to actually be able to do?

4. **Establishing key outcomes** – What will the end product look like? How will the students have changed? Will they have something tangible to show for their efforts?

5. **Main classroom activities and resources** – Are the students mainly visual, auditory or kinaesthetic? What are the readability levels of the texts? Do the activities / resources follow a sequence of steps towards a clear goal?

6. **Recap and consolidation activities** – Is there time set aside for 'over learning' activities? Are back-up plans in place for when not enough progress has been made?

7. **Extension and enrichment activities** – Is there time set aside for 'further challenge'? Are back-up plans in place for when students make above expected progress?

8. **Homework activities** – What is the purpose of the homework – to recap / consolidate or enrich / extend? Will the students be able to easily understand the instructions? Will the students be able to complete this at home without adult supervision? Is there time set aside in lesson for 'homework support'?

9. **Assessment procedures** – What is the assessment looking for? What is the assessment not looking for? How many assessments are needed to reflect learning across the whole scheme? Can the assessments be completed in a non-literacy based way? Is there opportunity for self-assessment?

10. **Celebrating achievement** – Can students clearly see their own progress and reflect on it? Do the students have opportunity for 'proud moments'? Do the students know where they need to go next?

Supporting Written Tasks

There are students within school who cannot demonstrate their full ability because they are too often confined to written responses – particularly 'free writing' activities where students are greeted with a blank page and asked to fill it.

In the supportive classroom, there should be readily available alternatives to these kinds of written responses – planned as an integral part of a scheme of work.

These include:

- Spider diagrams
- Mind-maps
- Flow diagrams
- Bullet pointed lists
- Writing frames / cloze procedure
- Ticking or circling the correct response
- Ordering or prioritising events with letters or numbers
- Recording information on a pre-prepared grid, chart, graph, diagram, timeline etc.
- Crosswords, crack the code, anagrams, wordsearches, hangman etc. to demonstrate understanding of new vocabulary
- Correct the errors
- Spot the odd one out
- Voice recording
- Photos
- Video footage
- PowerPoint presentations
- Prepare quiz questions for the class
- Peer interviews
- Hot-seating
- Create a computer game
- Create a cartoon / picture-board
- Drama or role-play
- Look at the answer, guess the question
- Colour-coding key facts, events etc.
- Create a class poster
- Create a pod-cast
- Create a webpage
- Twitter Q&A

Students will need pro-actively coaching in these skills and therefore it is often more effective to pick 2 – 3 and work on them repeatedly through a scheme of work rather than 'toe dipping' into as many as possible.

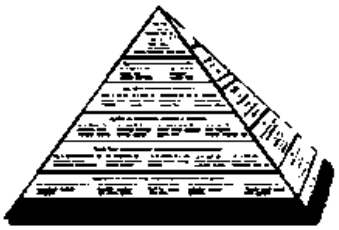
VCOP – A Tool for Free Writing

When a less structured written response is required, a strategy proven at primary level and easily transferable to secondary is the VCOP grid.[4]

Here is an example using World War 1 as the topic.

Vocab. *What subject-specific words do we need to know?* trench strategy attrition artillery casualties	**Connectives** *What words will help us construct longer sentences?* and so because as well as but
Openers *What phrases can help us start our sentences and paragraphs?* 1. Point: From the source, we can see that… 2. Evidence: This is seen in (image, text) 3. Explain: This highlights…	**Punctuation** *What punctuation should we be using?* **CAP** Capital letter – used at the beginning of a sentence and names • Full stop – used at the end of a sentence “ ” Speech marks – put around quotations

For the more creative teacher, VCOP grids can be turned into placemats or cardboard pyramids that can sit on each desk.



[4] Acknowledgement - Ros Wilson, ‘Write on Target’ and ‘Strategies for Immediate Impact on Writing Standards’

Supporting Spelling

With the onset of computer-based spell-checkers, spelling has perhaps become less of an obstacle to writing. However, a poor speller will tend to demonstrate less fluency, confidence and independence in their writing – particularly handwritten work. They may also avoid applying new vocabulary simply because they cannot spell a word and don't have the self-belief or strategies to make a reasonable attempt.

There are two key strategies (or 'tricks' as students may prefer to call them) for spelling – one primarily auditory and kinaesthetic, the other visual.

Spelling Trick 1

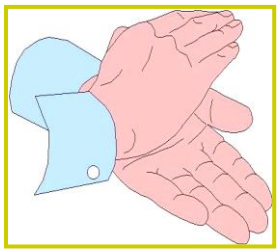
Break it down!

Step 1:

Say the word to yourself.

Step 2:

Count the syllables.



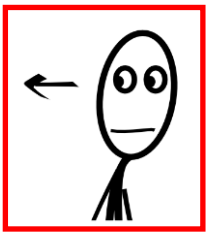
Step 3:

Try to spell out each syllable.

Spelling Trick 2

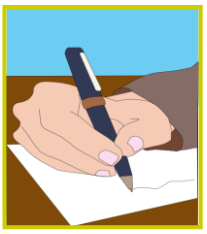
Look and cover…
…Write and check

Step 1:
Look at the word and say it to yourself. Try to spot patterns you know.



Step 2:
Cover the word. Try to picture it in your head.

Step 3:
Write the word.



Step 4:
Check the spelling by asking a teacher or by using a dictionary.

For students who frequently struggle to spell, these can be printed, cut out and stuck in the back or front of their exercise books.

Common Words

For those students with significant difficulties in their spelling, it may also be useful to place a bank of common / high-frequency words used frequently in your subject area. This will help increase independence and boost confidence amongst the most vulnerable learners.

Common Words A - M

A a	after again always another any away about afternoon anything
B b	back been before because boy bye buy by
C c	can come could can't came compare
D d	down don't didn't design different difference diagram discuss decide
E e	enough excited explain example experiment
F f	for fast father first from find four found forward fruit
G g	go gone get gave girl give going got green good
H h	here hand have head help home house how
I i	into instead I'm it's investigate
J j	just jump
K k	know knew keep
L l	last left live look little
M m	more make made much must mother many morning

Common Words N - Z

N n	new now next name night nothing
O o	off old only our other out over once open own one
P p	perhaps probably people
Q q	quite quiet quickly
R r	right read round research
S s	some school should soon stop sorry sometimes something somewhere
T t	their there these too to two table turn think
U u	under underneath understand
V v	very vegetable
W w	would where which when were who whether wrong write written
X x **Y y** **Z z**	year your yesterday

For more information on common words / high frequency words, visit:

www.duboislc.org/EducationWatch/First100Words.html

Supporting Handwriting

Handwriting continues to play a fundamental part of learning. Handwriting provides a student with a range of abilities including recording information, transmitting ideas, expressing thoughts and feelings, as a tool for remembering and ultimately as the primary medium through which attainment is assessed.

Handwriting is not a skill that will develop naturally like spoken language - only one fifth of the world's languages have a written aspect. Handwriting is entirely a taught skill drawing on a child's cognitive, linguistic, visual-perceptual and motor abilities. Its teaching relies heavily on memory. Therefore, if a student has a difficulty in any of these areas, handwriting is likely to be impacted.

When asking lower-ability students what the main thing they hope to achieve from literacy support is, the answer is frequently an improvement in handwriting. Students tend to view their handwriting as an indicator of their academic performance. As a result, handwriting difficulties can lead to low self-esteem.

At secondary level, handwriting has different roles – the two main ones being note taking and presentation, requiring different handwriting standards:

- **Note-taking** should be legible yet written with ease and speed. There should be less emphasis on 'neatness'.
- **Presentation work** should be legible and neat, with time allowed for students to take good care of their handwriting – printed, semi-joined handwriting is often more suitable for this.

By secondary level, students will have developed their own style, often with their own particular quirks and habits. Therefore attempts to 're-train' their handwriting - no matter how intensive and creative – will often prove fruitless and stressful for the student. Instead whole-class strategies and individual checks should be used:

Whole-Class Strategies:

1. On asking students with slow handwriting to copy from the board or any other source, ask them to write only the important points. Students may need simply instructing on this at first but with coaching, will start to identify the important points themselves.

> Sheffield Wednesday was originally a cricket club when they formed in 1820 as The Wednesday Cricket Club (named after the day of the week when they played their matches).
>
> A meeting on the evening of Wednesday 4th September 1867 at the Adelphi Hotel established a footballing side to keep the team together and fit during the winter months.
>
> They played their first match against The Mechanics on 19 October the same year.

2. Number each line either side (in different colours to the main writing) of any text students have to write out so that they don't become over-faced with the writing.

> 1 The club was almost relegated in the 1927–28 season, but with 17 points in the last 10 matches 1
> 2 they pulled off a great escape, rising from bottom to 14th Wednesday went on to win the 2
> 3 League title the following season (1928–29), which started a run that saw the team finishing 3
> 4 lower than third only once until 1936. The period was topped off with the team winning the FA 4
> 5 Cup for the third time in the club's history in 1935. 5

Strategies 1 & 2 will also support below average readers.

3. For students with particularly poor handwriting, allow them to print across two lines, using the middle line as a guide on the size of parts of letters.

Nathan's dog ate his homework!

4. Use ICT to give students with handwriting difficulties some 'time out' from the constant pressures of handwriting. This will prevent a student's handwriting problems clouding their entire learning in a lesson and help foster a more positive, confident attitude to lessons.

5. If students have reached Y9 and are showing no progress in handwriting then it is advised that they should be taught to touch type and be provided with regular access to a PC/Laptop. Learning Support can assess handwriting speed / legibility and provide touch-type courses to individual students to assist this.

6. Teacher feedback on handwriting is often generic, such as 'please write neater'. If you decide to provide a comment on handwriting, use specific targets like:

- *Try to write on the lines.*
- *Try to keep your letters in between the lines.*
- *Try to leave a finger space between each word.*

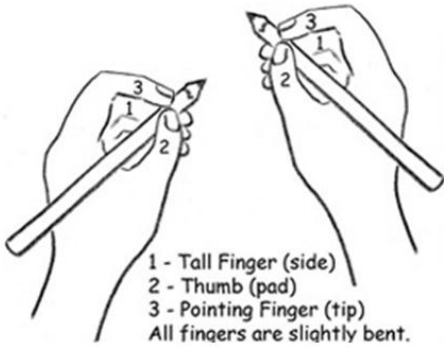
Checks:

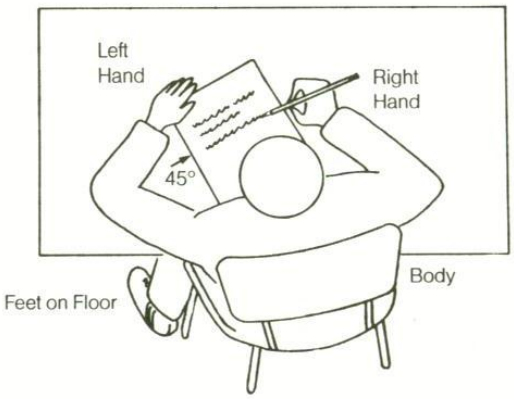
1. **Pen -** Regularly check with students who struggle with handwriting what type of pen they're using. Biro pens often require more effort to write with whereas ink cartridge pens can be easier to write with but messy - Berol handwriting pens are often a good middle ground option. Some students will prefer a thicker pen and some will make notes easier in pencil.

2. **Grip -** Check their pen grip – most students use a 'tripod' grip where the pen is held loosely between the thumb and first finger and supported by the second finger – this is viewed to be the most comfortable and conducive to fluency, speed and ease. However, unconventional pen grips that are well-established are difficult to alter by secondary level regardless of their negative impact. If handwriting does noticeably deteriorate then ask the student if they are holding their pen differently.

3. **Posture -** Check if students are sitting in a strange posture – the best posture is to be sat up straight at right angles, facing the desk in a relaxed position. It will help if students lean slightly forward with their feet on the ground. Consider if seating and writing surfaces are too far apart. Discourage slouching unless an IEP advises otherwise.

4. **Paper -** Check the angle of the paper when they write – ask students to adjust it and see if they find it easier to write. The usual angle is for the paper to be slightly angled towards their non-writing arm.





**Left-handers should position themselves the opposite way.*

Supporting Vocabulary

Checking understanding of, introducing, consolidating and extending vocabulary is often an over-looked part of the learning process – particularly for students with difficulties in speech & language and literacy. Vocabulary is often used as a pointer to general intelligence during psychological testing which highlights its importance in a student's development. The theory goes that if we progress a student's vocabulary, much of the rest will follow.

Two strategies that can be used to develop vocabulary – and get students enthused about new words - are 'wow words' and 'magpieing'. These are well-established at primary level and transferable to secondary.

Wow Words is a strategy where a recording grid (shown below) is stuck in the students' exercise books. Students can then record the following:

- Subject-specific vocabulary recounted following introduction in a previous lesson
- Other impact words that students independently contribute to discussion or writing

Students can then earn points based on the word's 'wow factor' with prizes to those who remember / think of the most.

R.E Wow Words

Word	Meaning	Wow Factor 1 - 10
atmosphere	*The feeling of a place.*	*7*
perspective	*How someone sees things.*	*8*
liturgy	*How people worship in a church.*	*10*
religious convictions	*When someone believes something strongly.*	*9*
theology	*A collection of ideas about God.*	*10*
meditation	*When people sit quietly to concentrate on an idea.*	*8*

Magpieing is based on the idea of the magpie stealing shiny objects whilst leaving the dull ones behind. In the classroom, students are encouraged to 'steal' words from texts and from each other that they think are interesting and useful – and might in turn 'up-level' their work.
They can do this by:

- Swapping work and highlighting words used by a partner.
- Through discussion of a text, speech etc. whilst keeping a running record on the board.
- By collectively creating a word-bank.
- By encouraging students to use a print or online thesaurus.

Supporting Reading

Even with the growth of the multi-media internet, we continue to live in a culture that relies on written information. Therefore, it is important that texts are continued to be used as a fundamental part of learning – even for those students with reading difficulties. DARTS (Direct Activities Relating to Texts)[5] can assist in engaging struggling readers with texts beyond simply decoding / functional reading.

Reconstruction Activities

The students work with a text modified by the teacher. Students aim to reconstruct the meaning of the text by completing or re-sequencing text or diagrams.

1. Text Completion

- Students complete the text by re-adding deleted words or phrases.
- Students 'up-level' the text by replacing simple words with more powerful words of similar meaning i.e. shouted → roared

2. Sequencing

- Segments of text are rearranged into a logical sequence of events.
- Segments of text are classified by the student. Headings need not always be given.

3. Prediction

- Students predict the next event or stage after reading a series of segments of text.
- Students write next part or the end of the text.
- Students could come up with a rational prediction and an absurd prediction.

4. Table Completion

- Students complete the cells of a table. All headings are provided.
- Students are given a blank matrix and data and have to devise the row and column headings.

5. Diagram Completion

- Students have to complete the diagram with a choice of labels / text provided.

Deconstruction Activities

Students investigate a text by locating information within the text and labelling it.

1. Text Marking

Students locate and underline parts of the text. This usually involves identifying text with the same meaning or collecting information about a character.

[5] Acknowledgement – G. Price, Tameside Metropolitan Borough

2. Labelling

- Students use the labels provided by the teacher to label parts of the text.

3. Segmenting

- Students break text into meaning or information units and label / annotate segments of text.

4. Table Construction

- Students produce columns and row headings for tables and fill in cells using data/text provided.

5. Diagram Construction

- Students construct flow diagrams to describe a process or branching trees to describe a hierarchical classification having been provided with text.

6. Student-generated Questions

- Students create questions about the text and swap with other students.

7. Summary

- Students produce headings and summarise information.

Spider diagrams

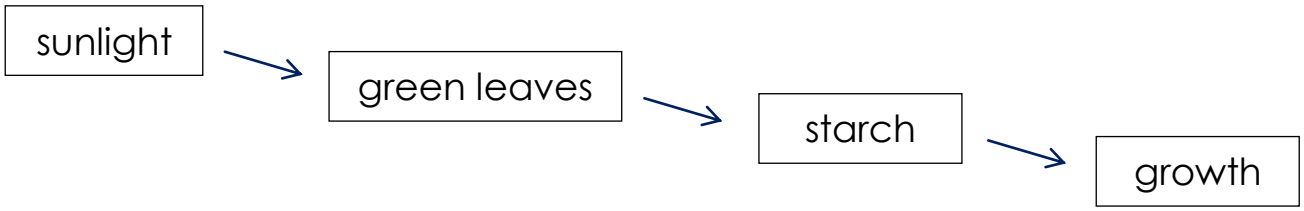
These can be used by students to get their ideas down as quickly as possible when no particular sequence is needed. A number of spider diagrams can be used to group ideas around different headings. i.e. settings, characters, events

Flow diagrams

These are particularly useful when the student needs to sequence events or stages. They can help students describe the steps in practical work or plan the events of a story.

Concept Mapping

This term describes a method of ordering events by time or listing ideas by importance. It is most often used by students to summarise what they know about a topic or event.
e.g.



For further information on mind-mapping and aspects of reading, books / resources from Tony Buzan are well-respected and available from online bookstores.

Checking Readability

When teaching students with reading difficulties, it is worth considering the *readability* of all aspects of written material – particularly worksheets, websites, textbooks etc. Readability is about matching a text with someone's ability to decode text and comprehend its meaning. All readability tests rely on a very rough gauge of reading ability and are not an exact science.

The SMOG Readability Formula estimates the years of education a person needs to understand a piece of writing. This is known as a *SMOG grade* - which can then also point to an *Age Equivalent Estimate*.

Calculating the SMOG Grade:

Step 1: Take the entire text to be assessed.

Step 2: Count 10 sentences in a row near the beginning, 10 in the middle, and 10 in the end for a total of 30 sentences.

Step 3: Count every word with three or more syllables in each group of sentences, even if the same word appears more than once.

Step 4: Calculate the square root of the number arrived at in Step 3 and round it off to nearest 10.

Step 5: Add 3 to the figure arrived at in Step 4 to know the SMOG Grade, i.e., the years of education that a person must have reached if he is to understand fully the text assessed.

Step 6: To get an Age Equivalent Estimate, add 5 (the number of years before someone enters education) to the SMOG Grade.

Step 1	Text:		
Step 2	Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:
Step 3			Total =
Step 4			Square root =
Step 5		**Smog Grade**	+3 =
Step 6		**Age Equivalent Estimate**	+ 5 =

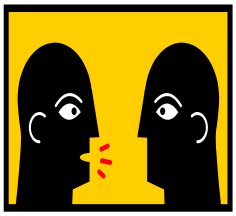
To perform a quick test of the readability of a website, visit: www.read-able.com

Textbooks, Worksheets, Websites and PowerPoint Slides

Textbooks, worksheets, websites and PowerPoint slides tend to be used as the primary sources of information-input required for learning. Therefore it is important before presenting them to students – particularly those with below average reading skills – that the following is considered:

1. Check the readability and the reading level of the material.
2. Aim for a minimum size of 12 - 14 and 1.5 line spacing.
3. Pick a font with an alphabet that mirrors a handwritten alphabet – **Comic Sans** is recommended for younger students, **Century Gothic** is recommended for older students.
4. Highlight (**bold**, colour) or underline key words or instructions.
5. Remove instructions that can be given orally.
6. Divide the resource into sections using headers, boxes, divider lines, different coloured fonts / backgrounds.
7. Avoid poor quality photocopies, enlarging etc.
8. Use icons / symbols / pictures to aid the student's understanding of the task required.

Think carefully about your answer.



Talk about it with a partner.

This is a listening task.

9. Use cartoons, diagrams, pictures to illustrate key points and aid comprehension.
10. Give lists of useful / key words in a box at the foot of the page.
11. Provide a numbering / lettering system or coloured bullet points / arrows so students can find their way around the page.
12. Avoid using too many styles including italics, outline, shadow, bold etc. in any one document.
13. Repeat key concepts to provide opportunity for over-learning.
14. Where possible, avoid using black / white text combinations - use a pastel blue or green coloured background.
15. Where answers are to be recorded on the worksheet, provide sufficient space and guidelines. Make use of both open-ended and close questions.

**Resources for visually-impaired students should be adapted with advice / support from the Learning Support Team. Simply enlarging these resources on a photocopier will not be enough.*

Supporting Numeracy

For some students – particularly those with identifiable specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia – grasping basic numeracy can be as inherently difficult as learning to read and write. This is sometimes referred to as 'Dyscalculia' - although recognition, research and assessment & teaching resources are limited in this area compared to other specific learning difficulties. With students who have specific learning difficulties in other areas, it will be beneficial to use the following strategies[6] when supporting with numeracy.

1. Link maths to relevant and practical contexts – shopping, eating out etc.

2. Use a 'scaffolding' approach – avoid rushing students through a task. Break it down into a sequence of gradual steps. Provide time for recap & consolidation at each stage and revisit the basic skills often.

3. Allow students as much thinking time as they need to complete a task or calculation, including oral / mental work.

4. Use a variety of visual and kinaesthetic resources – objects, images and models. Allow the students to manipulate the resources.

5. Use a variety of methods and try to adapt teaching to the student's natural way of working out rather than simply imposing the method you have learnt / use frequently etc.

6. Provide number squares and prepared formats for recording calculations / answers – with shaded alternate rows.

7. Provide a list of maths symbols – as you would with punctuation – to remind students.

8. Provide help/cue cards for different operations – colour code for categories i.e. blue for subtraction, red for addition. Vary the vocabulary, for example, colour code blue 'minus', take away' etc.

9. Minimise the number of facts that students have to know by heart.

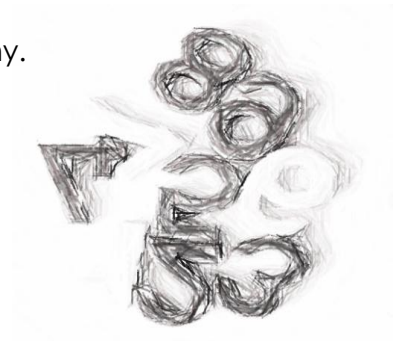
10. Use small numbers when introducing new concepts.

11. Take time to explain /recap on maths vocabulary. Check for understanding.

12. Play games with students to teach the points you want the students to learn.

13. Ask lots of questions, rephrasing your sentences and varying your vocabulary.

14. Encourage students to talk about what they are doing and why.



[6] Acknowledgement – N. Thornley

Supporting Homework

Students who experience difficulties in learning are entitled to differentiated homework as well as differentiated classroom work. This will ensure that students are successful and that the homework does not add frustration to what can already be a difficult road to progress.

1. If possible, display / provide homework instructions at the start of lesson so students can record them at a suitable pace.

2. Physically check students have noted down homework instructions. If students have difficulties with writing, then write the instructions for them.

3. Identify those students who struggle most with homework and ask them to repeat the instructions back to you in their own words to check for understanding.

4. Check the readability and do-ability of reading & writing tasks being sent home - operate on the assumption that students will not always receive adult support with the task.

5. Keep homework tasks structured by providing passages with words deleted, diagrams to be labelled, maps to be labelled, partially drawn bar / pie charts, sequencing exercises or making lists.

6. Where possible, explore alternative methods for recording information / testing understanding through pictures, video recording, online quizzes, online discussion, making objects and posters etc.

7. Provide opportunity for research – such as reading / watching the news, using the internet, interviewing a family member, using the library or museum, taking photos etc.

8. Provide opportunity for independent ICT skills – ask students to word process homework, produce a table and graph, produce a PowerPoint presentation, produce a podcast etc. Establish a routine of students emailing ICT homework directly to the teacher.

9. Provide homework tasks that relate to the students' own experiences or extend their life skills. For example: interpreting a household bill, planning an escape route for your home in case of a fire, planning how to monitor sales at the local shop or traffic on your road.

10. Try to encourage students to find out more about their own community, for example: How many shops or fire stations do we have? Where are they? What entertainment is nearby? What are the transport links?

11. Try to encourage students to discuss an issue with a parent or other family member by setting homework that requires their participation: What are your parent's views on young people gambling? What is your parent's favourite book? How was life different when your grandparent was your age?

12. Provide slots in the lesson, whilst other students are working, to provide extra support on homework. Try to set deadlines to allow for this opportunity.