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VOL4 ISSUE1

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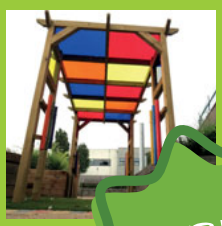
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Welcome...



During a visit to the Centre Academy East Anglia special school for a feature this issue (p16), the school's CEO and principal shared with me his thoughts on what leaders of mainstream schools should be asking themselves regarding their pupils with SEN: "What do they leave with? Where they go? What do they do?"

Indeed, what is the country's system of SEND support ultimately for? There are all manner of differences and complexities involved in addressing one pupil's needs compared with another, of course – but when you get down to it, most would surely agree that we want the children and young people the system's set up to help to enter adulthood having acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes they'll need to make their way through life with dignity and independence. You know, like pretty much everyone else their age.

It does help, however, if the system in question is stable and consistent in what it's able to provide – which, as special school headteacher Paul Silvester writes on p50, isn't the case as things currently stand. It's not as if SEN provision receives no money at all – children and families minister Nadhim Zahawi recently announced an injection of just over £25m for new services to assist children and young people with additional needs – but it's going into a system that's struggling with fragmentation, rising levels of demand and increasing pressures on front-line staff.

Just ask the experienced SENCos who tell us this issue about the parts of the role they've found most challenging (p65). If we're to have a system that works as it's supposed to and delivers the outcomes we want to see, it will require funding – but also a thorough appraisal of what we expect the system to do and what we ask of the staff running it.

Callum

Callum Fauser, Editor

@teachwire

POWERED BY...



JARLATH O'BRIEN describes the process involved in developing a behaviour plan that can have a positive effect on pupils' progress

"Behaviour plans and their reports are tools for learning, not tools of retribution."

p22



JULES DAULBY explains how schools can go about ensuring that pupils who find reading a challenge don't fall into a cycle of failure

"We must let children with unexplained literacy difficulties identify with success."

p54



PAUL SILVESTER argues that the system currently used to match SEND funding to areas of need is badly broken

"Our children aren't 'a diagnosis'; they're not just points on a spreadsheet."

p50

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Assistant Head,
The Gates Primary School



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As schools and policymakers try to reduce pupil exclusions, our notions of 'specialist' and 'alternative' provision are starting to overlap

Rona Tutt



Exclusions have once again risen to the fore, partly because numbers are on the rise, and partly due to concerns that some groups of children are disproportionally represented in exclusion figures – notably children in need, looked after children (LAC), and those who have SEND. Also of concern is the current 'patchwork quilt' of alternative provision (AP), which ranges from the decidedly dubious to the breathtakingly brilliant, with most lying somewhere between the two extremes.

According to the most recent figures, excluded pupils are twice as likely to be in care, seven times more likely to have SEND and ten times more likely to have a recognised mental health problem.

In March this year, the DfE published 'Creating Opportunity for All: Our Vision for Alternative Provision' (**tinyurl.com/dfe-ap-18**), which set out the government's plans for improving the quality of alternative provision and making it a more integral part of the education system. At the same time, education secretary Damian Hinds announced a review to be led by former children's minister Edward Timpson, which will look at how exclusions are used by different schools and why some pupil groups are more likely to be excluded than others.

While the majority of pupils in AP are there because they've been excluded, some are there for health reasons while others may be waiting for a school place to become available. AP is typically provided by AP academies and free schools and pupil referral units (PRUs), though a number of other registered and unregistered providers are also used.

Currently, there's a DfE-led drive for more AP academies, AP free schools and special free schools to meet the demand for both AP and specialist provision (SP). Most pupils outside mainstream education will be placed correctly, but the overlap between AP and SP seems to be growing, to the extent that the high percentage of pupils with SEND in some AP settings mean they are comparable to a special school in terms of their pupil population. Why is this, and does it matter?

Some pupils may be excluded before their special needs have been identified. Others will be known to have SEND, but the curriculum in a local AP is seen as more appropriate than a local special school. Some will be there due to a lack of SP places, while others will have been excluded from a special school and there's nowhere else they can go. Whether it matters or not depends on whether the AP in question can meet their needs, which will vary depending on the nature of those needs and the skills of the staff.

So how can exclusions be reduced and pupils matched more closely to the correct provision? Some schools operate a system where children remain on site, but are educated separately from their peers. Some groups of schools work together to arrange 'managed moves', or have one or more AP settings they work with, where they remain in close contact with their pupils' progress and wellbeing. All these should be encouraged as ways of reducing the need to exclude and providing a tried and trusted alternative, should exclusion become necessary.

Before a pupil is excluded, every effort should be made to determine if they have special needs and to try and give them the support they require. If they already have an EHCP, careful consideration should be given as to which provision will best meet their needs.

The government has made it plain that it wishes to see AP recognised as a key part of the education service. Working in closer partnership would help to reduce exclusions through AP-supporting schools – as many do now – and hold out the possibility of alternative and specialist provision working together to meet pupils' needs between them, wherever they're placed.

***Dr Rona Tutt** OBE is a former chair of the NAHT Special Education Needs Committee*



"The TEACHERS panicked about whether I could COPE"

Athlete and presenter **Ade Adepitan** contracted polio as a baby but soon learnt to keep up with his classmates in mainstream school

My parents were teachers back in Nigeria. For them, education was the be-all and end-all. Coming from Africa, they had that immigrant mentality of education being the one way to better your life and improve your social circumstances. My dad would often say, "You are black, you are disabled, you have to work twice as hard as everybody in this country." My parents would stress to me how important it was that I got a good education. In Africa, to be educated increases your social status and gives you an air of respectability.

I missed about a year of schooling because the education authority was arguing with my parents about whether I'd be able to go to a mainstream school. It took a while for my parents to find one that would accept me. During that year I was home tutored by my parents, so when I did join a school I was probably ahead of the other kids – but I was easily distracted.

I had a really active brain and was always daydreaming. Some teachers just saw me as mischievous and a chatterbox. I got in trouble for talking in class and having a laugh with my friends. It developed into me being a little bit more rebellious, and the knock-on effect of that was that I probably didn't learn as much as I should have. It led to me thinking I was less intelligent than I actually am.

My parents weren't really that keen on me playing sport because their main focus was education. They wanted me to be a doctor or a scientist. When I told them I wanted to be a basketball player they thought I was absolutely nuts and banned me from playing. I used to sneak off to tournaments.

The transition to secondary school was tough physically because I was walking on calipers and it was a longer walk to get there. I remember in one of the first transitions between

"I wanted to play trumpet in the school band but the teacher said, my lips were too big"

lessons getting knocked down the stairs in the rush. The teachers panicked about whether I was going to be able to cope, but I got over it and it toughened me up. I learnt to keep up with the pace of the other kids and if I did get tired my mates would sometimes carry me.

My English teacher, Tim Kerin, made me realise that I could write. He made it interesting and was very funny. He would also ask me how I was and what was going on in my life. He was really cool – apart from the fact that he was a Tottenham fan!

I wanted to play trumpet in the school band. We had a visiting music teacher and when I asked him if I could, he said my lips were too big. At the time I didn't know about all the great trumpet players who were black and looked like me. I thought it was unfair. I really wanted to do it, but he obviously didn't want me to.

The gang in my new book is an amalgamation of friends from school and my neighbourhood. I was this African kid with a strong Nigerian accent. I walked and talked differently but because I loved football and was quite quick-witted I made friends quite easily. We got bullied by the other kids but we always backed each other up. That was our bond – that's what kept us together.

We're living in a world which is becoming more and more complicated and confusing for the younger generation. You've got Instagram – which is great – but it's all about how many likes you can get. The world has suddenly become this massive popularity contest and if you're not getting the attention you feel you deserve, it can seem like the world is against you. I want my book to send out the message that you can be different. With good friends and determination, you can make something successful out of your life.



Ade Adepitan's new book, Ade's Amazing Ade-ventures: Battle of the Cyborg Cat (£5.99, Studio Press), is on sale now



©Kelly Hill

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Ade Adepitan contracted poliomyelitis when he was 15 months old, resulting in him being unable to use his left leg, and retaining only partial use of his right leg. At the age of 3, his family moved to the UK, settling in Plaistow, East London.

He was first introduced to wheelchair basketball at the age of 12, and went on to play professionally for the Spanish team CAI CDM Zaragoza, before competing in the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Paralympics, the latter of which saw the GB team win bronze. Adepitan's media career has included presenting Channel 4's Paralympics coverage and fronting a number of documentaries for the channel, as well as various acting and presenting roles for the BBC.

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OT for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	Dr Sidney Chu FRCOT, PhD, MSc, OTR	8th - 10th October 2018	Derby	£330
LSVT LOUD	LSVT GLOBAL	21st—22nd March 2019	Durham	£520
OT for Children with Handwriting Difficulties	Dr Sidney Chu FRCOT, PhD, MSc, OTR	4th - 6th December 2018	Derby	£330
Sensory Intelligence Training	Ph.D. graduate and adult sensory processing expert, Dr. Annemarie Lombard	24th - 26th October 2018	Derby	£420

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BOLD BEGINNINGS, BAD ENDINGS?

Talit Khan takes issue with the conclusions of Ofsted's recent examination of the Reception year, and suggestion that the profession can learn from what 'good' schools are doing...

@Talat1703 advantagesend.com

In November last year Ofsted published a much-discussed report titled 'Bold Beginnings' (see tinyurl.com/ofsted-bb), which set out to analyse the Reception year in successful primary schools. Her Majesty's Inspectors wanted to examine how prepared 4- and 5-year olds currently are for 'Their years of schooling and life ahead.' If, like me, you read the report and the many critical articles that followed in its wake, then you might well be wondering what effect the report is likely to have on foundation stage coordinators and early years staff, as well as the impact on SEND pupils.

Let's also not forget the Phase 1 leaders, many of whom will feel compelled to act upon the report's findings in relation to closing the gaps that exist within the EYFS framework.

The report did pick up on some valid concerns, such as the lack of good maths teaching and the need for more emphasis on using practical scenarios and equipment to support number learning. This isn't an issue confined to the foundation stage, but one that extends right throughout the teaching of numeracy at primary – particularly the need for linking to visual, subjective experiences to help consolidate and develop understanding of numerical operations.

The report also touches on the highly significant issue of teacher training – notably the need to adequately prepare NQTs, and the continuing shortage of CPD for TAs working within foundation education and across Key Stage 1. If many NQTs lack essential understanding of the SEND Code of Practice – including the requirements for effective teaching and learning in EYFS – then we must acknowledge the consequences this will have on *all* pupils throughout their primary education.

Alarm bells

According to the 'Bold Beginnings' report, "Two thirds of the staff inspectors spoke to confused what they were teaching (the curriculum) with how they were supposed to teach it." If that's the case in successful primary schools, then alarm bells shouldn't just be ringing at Ofsted, but also at ITT providers and the DfE! We have a serious issue here. Many teachers are using elements of the early learning goals (ELGs) to measure and assess students, almost as a 'tick box exercise' – but meeting those ELGs doesn't necessarily mean that a child has achieved adequate learning, since the curriculum at this stage is so ambiguous.

We need to see more emphasis on interventions that specifically target literacy and numeracy issues encountered by SEND pupils, while also paying particular attention to these children's social, emotional and communicative skills – and yet the report barely mentions children with SEND and their requirements during the first year of schooling.

There's no reference to evidence-based intervention, or provision devised on the basis of research. There is an acknowledgement of instruction-led 'systematic synthetic phonics' – but otherwise, all through the report there's a sense of methodological vagueness. There appears to be a lack of deep understanding of how children learn and the manner in which pedagogy can be applied at this stage of growth, and little attempt at connecting the EYFS profile to what's actually taking place in schools.

I would argue that ELGs have virtually no relevance when it comes to recognising the progress SEND pupils make in the Reception year. In some cases, they're little more than a tiresome exercise that forces EYFS practitioners into showing how children with SEND have achieved this or that 'tick box' element.

Aside from the aforementioned points regarding maths teaching and the need for EYFS staff CPD, the report's overall language comes across as less a series of recommendations than a list of commands, which won't sit well with most teachers. It's also hard to look past the fact that the report's authors only explored what was happening in primary schools deemed 'successful'. Given the oversights highlighted here, what's the situation at Reception across the wider primary sector?

Talit Khan is an independent SEND consultant

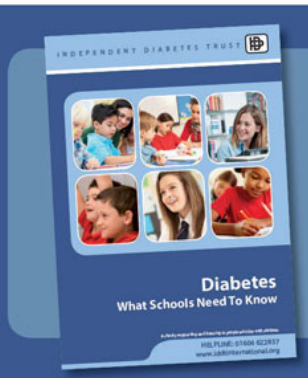
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8 WAYS to support children with type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes can be daunting, but the following tips will help schools support children with the condition more confidently, says **Libby Dowling**...

1 | EDUCATE YOURSELF

If a person has Type 1 diabetes, their body doesn't produce the hormone insulin. Children with the condition must either inject insulin several times a day or wear an insulin pump, check their blood glucose regularly and plan carefully around meals and physical activity. School staff can prepare for supervising a child with Type 1 with the aid of some supporting resources available via tinyurl.com/t1d-schools

2 | LISTEN TO THE CHILD AND THEIR FAMILY

Since every child's experience with Type 1 is different, it's important to ask the child and their family what managing their diabetes involves day to day, making careful note of what they say – even if you've looked after other children with the condition before.

3 | CHECK THE CHILD'S INDIVIDUAL HEALTHCARE PLAN

All children with Type 1 diabetes should have an IHP that's updated at least every year, and more regularly if their diabetes management changes. Parents/carers, the child (where appropriate), a diabetes nurse specialist and school staff should all be involved in drawing up the IHP, which will detail what the child can do for themselves, what help they need, who will help them and when.

4 | BE INCLUSIVE

Children with Type 1 have the right to be included in the same activities as their classmates, including overnight stays – but you will need to plan well in advance of any school trips and ensure that sufficient staff with appropriate expertise will be on hand to look after them. Further guidance on this can be found via tinyurl.com/t1d-school-trips.



LIBBY DOWNLING
is a senior clinical advisor at Diabetes UK

5 | THINK ABOUT FOOD AND ACTIVITY

Type 1 diabetes doesn't mean a child needs a special diet. No food is forbidden – they can eat just the same as any other child – but they will probably need help checking their blood sugar level, working out the dose and taking their insulin. Likewise, they can enjoy PE along with everyone else, but will likely need a snack or change in insulin dose beforehand, and perhaps extra food during or after the activity too.

6 | BE ALERT FOR EMERGENCIES

There will be times when the blood glucose of children with Type 1 is higher or lower than it should be. If spotted early, both situations can usually be quickly remedied; if left untreated, a child can become seriously unwell. Early signs of low blood sugar include feeling shaky, tired, going pale or losing concentration. Early signs of a high level include needing to pass urine, acute thirst and tiredness.

7 | BE FLEXIBLE AND SENSITIVE

Sometimes a child's diabetes management might not fit in to the standard school day. They might need to eat or inject at certain times, or take time out to treat a low or high blood sugar level. Be flexible in accommodating the individual child's needs, and be aware that many children don't like to be singled out or treated differently. Any conversations about their diabetes should be handled sensitively.

8 | BE AWARE OF OF EARLY TYPE 1 SIGNS

As a member of school staff, you could be the first to spot the early signs of Type 1. These are easily remembered as the 4Ts – 'toilet' (needing to pass urine frequently), 'thirsty', 'tired' and 'thinner' (losing weight). If you spot any of these signs, let the child's parent/carer know immediately and advise them to visit a doctor straight away.

diabetes.org.uk

HOLD YOUR OWN 'LEARNING OLYMPICS'

Organising a friendly competition where learning tasks take the place of sporting events can do much to boost your pupils' confidence, says **Nikky Smedley...**

The idea for the 'Learning Olympics' project originally came about during the lead-up to the London 2012 games, but any equivalent major international sporting occasion could act as inspiration and stimulus. I was working as a creative consultant in a rural infant school at the time, and the staff and I were acutely aware of the broad variance in ability and level of motivation we had with a particular Y2 cohort, along with quite a high incidence of SEND pupils.

We wanted the students to recognise their own learning; to provide opportunities for all to be seen by their peers as successful, and to challenge them in formulating their own ideas into a student-led celebration of achievement.

Our starting point was to suggest to them that we could hold our own Olympics – but rather than sport, our events would be based around learning. We were expecting to have to work hard to encourage them, but as soon as the seed of the idea was planted, the children seized on the notion with astounding levels of enthusiasm.

A major step

Immediately, many brilliant and creative ideas were forthcoming, driven by instinct. Our role quickly became that of facilitators, trying to provide as many opportunities for involvement and recording as many suggestions as we could.

The maturity with which the children applied themselves to the task in hand was astounding. Perhaps because they'd been exposed to the real life sporting competition, and had seen how much import was placed on it, they felt a real sense of responsibility and commitment to their own Olympic project.

The events that made it to the final list included some surprises:

- Storytelling
- Phonics
- Painting
- Numeracy
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Tidying Up Nicely

There were only a handful of entrants for the storytelling event, who were willing to stand in front of the whole class (and a judging panel of six of their peers) and tell a tale of their own invention, lasting two to three minutes. Once it got underway, however, we found that we had to extend the allotted timeslot because something interesting happened. Other children began asking if they could also compete in the storytelling contest.

These other children hadn't prepared, but they'd seen something they wanted to be part of, and were willing to take the risk of making up a story on the spot, performing it and being judged on it. What was extraordinary was that these were the children who would never normally put themselves up in front of the class, including some low achievers and SEND students. In this environment, on the day itself, they suddenly wanted to join in. We couldn't deny them, as it was such a major step for them – and they were brilliant.

Shared responsibility

The tidying up event was invented by a boy on the autistic spectrum. He had very little intervention in either creating it, or in communicating what was required to the other children.

The 'sporting arena' was a shelving unit upon which lived baskets for keeping pencils, crayons, rulers, erasers, Sellotape and the other normal accoutrements of everyday classroom life. Each competitor was given a basket containing a set selection of these items and instructed to put them in their correct places – perfectly neatly and against the clock.



"The project gave them the ability to see worth in one another, regardless of their differences"

It was the most popular event of the day. Everyone could take part, and the swelling of pride in the chest of the inventor was a joy to behold. He managed to share the responsibility for timing each attempt on the stopwatch, and supervised the accurate recording of each turn. He also awarded the medal.

All the children involved took their obligations seriously, and perhaps surprisingly, there was virtually no squabbling. All the children took part in at least two events, all were judged at least one event, and all equally enjoyed being part of the audience.

Impact on integration

We could point to a broad range of curriculum delivery, covering specifics as well as the wider – what could be labelled 'softer' – skill-set, but the greatest impact was on integration. The children looked at each other in a new way.

The project gave them the ability to see worth in one another, regardless of their differences, and helped every member of the class to see that they had an important role to fulfil; a role of value to the whole class community.

Here's what the phase leader wrote: "The range of ideas were surprising to the staff and made us realise how differently the students' way of thinking was compared to ours, affecting their choice of events. They were proud of what they achieved, diplomatic when the judges chose their winners and noble in defeat. Most of all, there was an incredible recognition of the effort put in by their peers to have a go at challenges they wouldn't normally have attempted."



TRY IT YOURSELF

- The whole class discusses their ideas and produces a 'long list' of potential events.
- In groups (or some cases individually, with support) these ideas ideas are then talked up into actual events, and the practicalities are considered. A shortlist is drawn up.
- Each group of children takes responsibility for a specific event (some ideas may fall by the wayside here, but that's fine) and agrees on the criteria by which judgement will be made.
- Up to this point, things have been quite conceptual; now's the time to get practical and start sourcing or making any props, score sheets and so forth that might be needed.
- The whole class needs to address the event in its entirety. How should people sign up to compete? Who will judge each event? What will be the order of proceedings on the day itself?
- Once everyone knows what's required to make the day successful, set a date so that there's a deadline to work to. Help the children draw up a schedule to ensure everything is completed in time.
- During the run-up and on the day itself, allow the children to take as much responsibility as possible for the running of the events. Your role should be that of a support team, rather than a dominant organiser.



Nikky Smedley is a writer, storyteller, educator, public speaker, passionate advocate for the child and heads up the How to Speak Child initiative; her book Create, Perform, Teach! is due for publication by Jessica Kingsley Publishers on July 18th

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“Exams don’t reflect our kids’ abilities”

Callum Fauser journeys to the East Anglian countryside and sees how a special school with an unbroken record of university entries for its leavers goes about things a little differently…

Located in Brettenham, a small village just outside Ipswich, Centre Academy East Anglia is every inch a rural school. Surrounded on all sides by fields, and situated adjacent to the small parish church of St Mary’s, it’s a quiet, peaceful location that looks positively idyllic on the sunny spring day of my visit.

It’s one of two schools run by Centre Academy, the other being a none-more-urban site in the London borough of Battersea. Both are through schools, admitting pupils between the ages of 8 to 19 with a range of learning challenges that include dyslexia, ADHD and speech and language needs. The East Anglia site additionally has a pre-prep programme for pupils aged four to seven.



Three distinctions

According to Centre Academy’s principal and CEO, Dr Duncan Rollo, the school is unique in three fundamental ways, beginning with the age range of its pupils. “We’ve always taken children from a very young age – we’re licensed to go as low as age 4 and as high as 19,” he explains. “That’s because one of the most difficult things these children face is anxiety – and one of the things that commonly prompts the greatest amount of anxiety in a SEN child is changing schools.”

The second point of difference is that Centre Academy doesn’t ‘specialise’ in a particular learning challenge or need in the traditional sense. Instead, it embraces the modern trend in SEN provision towards identifying a primary concern and potentially one or two secondary concerns, but goes further by building as detailed a picture as possible of each child’s particular combination of challenges and needs.

“If you have the ability to deal with a child who’s on the autistic spectrum, but you’re not able to deal with an autistic child who also has dyslexia, then you’re not going to be doing the job that’s needed.” says Dr Rollo. “A lot of teachers at other schools might think our staff are fortunate, in that they have only four or five kids within a class. That assumes those kids will be marching in lockstep, but they’re not. Our teachers are expected to do a lot of juggling and individualising.”

The final, and perhaps most significant difference is the school’s divergence from the rest of country in terms of its further education provision. Instead of studying A Levels, Centre Academy students take a two-year version of the American High School Diploma.

When the school first opened at its London site in the early 2000s (the East Anglia site was opened in 2010), it adopted the High School Diploma to give its students a post-GCSE means of studying for an FE qualification recognised by UK universities without having to sit examinations. Based around a system of continual assessment, students earn credit for completing various forms of coursework across a mix of subjects, from writing essays to carrying out research and completing art projects, and must exceed a certain grade point average in order to pass.

There’s typically a primary focus on English, maths, humanities, science and foreign languages (with the latter requirement occasionally waived for some students), after which students are free to choose from a selection of other additional subjects, such as



art, law, psychology, ICT and PE. "Exams don't reflect our kids' abilities because of the aforementioned anxiety," Dr Rollo observes. "It's not fair on our kids, because it's the one area where they have real difficulty competing." Moreover, he notes, it's an approach that's been vindicated thus far: "There's never been a student who's earned their American diploma from us who hasn't gone directly to university."

Community engagement

In common with many special schools, Centre Point East Anglia has a small pupil intake that usually hovers around 45 to 50, with a 13-strong teaching staff overseeing classes of between four and six. The school also retains a team of in-house therapists providing SLT, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and yoga instruction, who liaise closely with the teaching staff to the point of occasional team teaching.

Embarking on a tour of the grounds with Kim Salthouse, Centre Academy's head of school, we move from the rabbit warren of the main administrative building – a one-time rectory, all narrow, winding corridors, connecting passageways and exposed beams – outside and towards the school's modular classrooms, along a pathway that runs past sun-dappled trees and a large pond.

As we pass groups of pupils enjoying an unseasonably warm lunch break, Mrs Salthouse explains how the school's managed to form close links with the local community in Brettenham. Each week, one of the school's daily meetings takes place in the church next door. Centre Academy pupils have participated in art shows organised by the villagers and sometimes helped them with gardening and other tasks. More unusually, the local Fire Service assists the school with the climactic set piece of its annual prize day each summer, whereby a dilapidated caravan is detonated in a controlled explosion and pupils put out the smouldering remains, working as a team to operate firefighting equipment.

Arriving at one of the classrooms, we poke our heads round the door and find a lively biology class in full swing, about to embark on a lesson exploring some of the ways in which the process of conception and pregnancy can result in complications. The pupils represent a mix of lower secondary age groups, illustrating a point Mrs Salthouse had made to me earlier: "We don't group according to age. Instead of having year groups, we group according to ability and level of preparation, with the result that the kids are able to work with peers at the same level."



What we do

Head of school, Kim Salthouse, describes Centre Academy's approach to classroom practice

"We encourage the idea of the 'reflective practitioner'. Even more than in mainstream schools, our teachers must be able to look back on their lessons with regards to what went well, what went badly and how they can improve.

With our children, you never know if something's going to work or not. One of the best things I'll see is when a teacher turns round to a class and says, 'This isn't working – we're going to do something else.' Because if something's not working on any given day, you'll lose the children immediately. We have to be flexible.

We previously had one young man who wasn't able to sit down and work. Elsewhere, he would have been in trouble immediately. Here, our response was 'Okay – sit down when you're ready to.' In five minutes he'd be sat down, completing his tasks. Time had to be allowed for him to process the teacher's request, think about it and calm down."

Honest assessment

Back in the main building, I ask Dr Rollo what advice he would give to mainstream settings for supporting their own pupils with SEN. "They need to start looking at exactly what they're doing, and assessing honestly whether it's successful," he replies. "To me, the big question is what do children with SEN in mainstream schools leave with? Where they go? What do they do? We need to come up with a better, fairer system of assessing these kids. What many assume is that they're stupid – and they're not."

Much of what Dr Rollo describes, and much of what the school does, is only possible due to its limited size, which he readily acknowledges, before pointing out that broader changes in the education system haven't helped. "I think a big problem is that we've done away with middle schools. Children go from these little schools straight into these big senior settings. In many cases, later therapies and interventions could have been conducted much more efficiently in a smaller setting, but that's no longer the case.

"In any good school, children shouldn't just be getting an education, but also coping skills. How do you cope with your dyslexia? Your ASD? We can't cure those things, but we can show a child how to successfully live with them."

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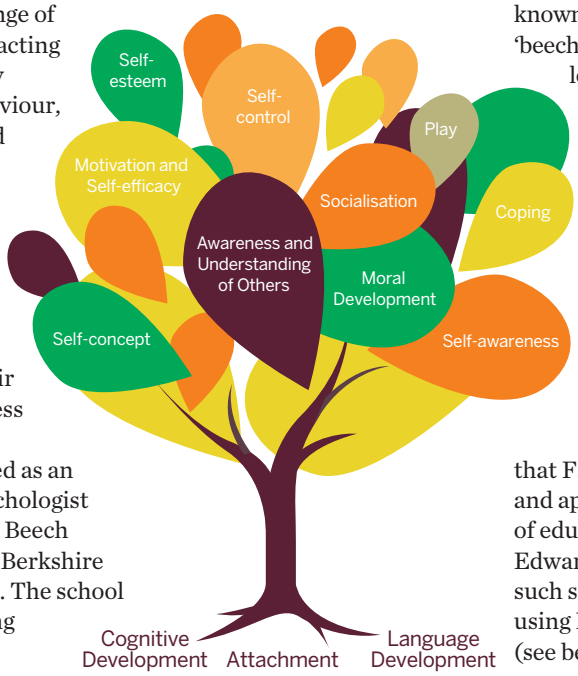
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What can behaviour tell us *about children's development?*

We learn about a pioneering approach to supporting pupils' social and emotional development that's made a big difference at one school in Windsor...

Social and emotional difficulties are often linked to adverse childhood experiences, such as developmental trauma. These difficulties present at school in a range of ways, including acting out or extremely withdrawn behaviour, oppositional and controlling responses, and heightened vigilance. Children's self-concept is adversely affected and their academic progress held back.

I have worked as an educational psychologist with the team at Beech Lodge School in Berkshire for several years. The school offers a nurturing environment to develop both academic and social/emotional competence. We created a framework to support our work, because we wanted to get more information to understand the pupils' social and emotional development and progress, but there's an additional benefit in that the materials also help staff understand child development more generally.



This framework became known as Fagus – Latin for 'beech tree', AKA the tree of learning. It describes children's typical development in 13 separate areas (see illustration) and includes online tools to efficiently identify a child's progress in the form of Developmental Checklists and Developmental Profiles.

We soon discovered that Fagus had a wider appeal and application in a range of educational settings. St Edward's First School is one such school, and has been using Fagus for over a year (see below).

At Beech Lodge, we find it helpful to understand behaviour as communication. Children's behaviour tells us about their mood, level of understanding and experiences, as well as informing us about their development. Education practitioners can use the Fagus toolkit to help them understand the children they work with in relation to typical social and emotional development, and in turn use this to help them achieve the aspirations we have for all children.



Alastair Lidster is an educational psychologist

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fagus.org.uk

HOW FAGUS IS USED

Fagus was initially used on a group of children who were already receiving emotional literacy support for behaviours associated with emotional and social development challenges. The classroom teacher assessed each child's current level of social and emotional functioning using the online checklist tool.

The completed Developmental Checklists enabled the teaching team to generate an individual Developmental Profile for each pupil's emotional and social functioning, on which areas are marked in red or yellow to indicate a degree of developmental delay. Those marked in green show that a child is functioning emotionally and socially as expected, given their chronological age.

These combined results enable the team to drill down to the 'nitty-gritty' of what might be causing a particular behaviour in a child. For example, they had felt 'coping' was probably the biggest challenge for one child, but the Developmental Profile showed that their 'self-awareness' was also a concern.

As well as checking the Developmental Profile, the team also looked at accompanying Developmental Checklist responses and Developmental Guides in those domains where the child was experiencing their biggest delays. They then used the output to set three goals to enable the child to move towards appropriate social and emotional functioning matching their chronological age.

Fagus was able to generate hard data that could be used to deliver clear evidence of what was happening with each child, explain some underlying aspects of the pupils' behaviour, inform next steps and evidence the impact of interventions.

As well as offering a method of monitoring social and emotional progress, Fagus enables data sharing with stakeholders and can examine whether an intervention has been value for money.

Emma Turver is deputy headteacher at St Edward's First School, Windsor

The robots standing in for ABSENT PUPILS

John Galloway finds out how a Norwegian startup is giving children with long-term medical conditions a much-needed pair of eyes and ears in the classroom

The possibility that robots could take over our jobs is becoming increasingly likely, with tasks ranging from building cars to writing news reports and brain surgery now capable of being performed by machines. But could they also take the place of learners in schools? That's what the AV1 from Norwegian company No Isolation (**noisolation.com/uk**) does – not to displace human children from the classroom, but to act as a stand-in when they can't get there themselves.

The idea originated when Karen Dolva, one of No Isolation's co-founders, met Anne Fi Troye, a mother who had lost her teenage daughter to cancer. Anne told her that the worst aspect of the condition had been the social isolation that accompanied her daughter's hospital stays and deteriorating health. Karen resolved to do something about it, and thus AV1 was conceived.

First developed in Norway in 2016, the machine reached the UK in autumn last year. Intended to provide a link to the classroom for children and young people who can't be there in person, it's about the size of a kitchen blender, made from tough, translucent white plastic and weighs less than a bag of flour. Two front-facing lights resemble a pair of eyes, and users are encouraged to decorate their AV1, to personalise it and give it a name. After all, it's effectively their avatar, a kind of proxy when they can't get to school.

Ripple effect

AV1 is designed to sit on the desk where the student normally sits. It's equipped with a two-way audio and one-way video feed that both operate over a 4G connection or via the school's wifi network. An app on the user's tablet or smartphone allows them to see and hear whatever is going on in the classroom and join in, either talking to the whole class – perhaps when answering the teacher's questions – or just the person sitting beside them using a low-volume 'whisper' mode. Built-in motors allow the AV1 to turn through 360° and raise/lower the head up and down through 40° in order to follow what's going on. Other features include a rippling effect on the head that signifies the user putting their hand up, and a blue light to show that although the learner is connected, they don't feel up to joining in that day.

(The idea behind the one-way video, incidentally, is that the user can't be seen, but still has full access to the classroom. That way, they can be in bed wearing their pyjamas or wherever happens to be best for them, without having to share any discomfort, their physical appearance or other issues relating to their treatment with the rest of the class.)

Understandably, some staff have raised concerns about the AV1 making them feel is if they're under scrutiny. All teachers are sensitive to observation, and conscious of the judgments it can lead to, which is why the AV1 includes a number of features intended to allay such concerns. Recording of its audiovisual feeds is disabled, and if anyone tries grabbing a screenshot, the device will immediately shut down and the user will be required to obtain a new 'sign in' keyword from No Isolation tech support. Just like the lesson itself, everything happens in real-time only.

Another key feature is the banking industry-level of security. Each AV1 user has a unique keyword that gets





changed every time the device is passed on, as it likely will be. No Isolation estimate that there are over 70,000 children and young people in the United Kingdom with long-term medical conditions, eight out of 10 of whom will fully recover. The AV1 is therefore largely intended to play its role for a limited time before moving on.

Distance socialising

The company calculates that every school in the country is likely to have use for an AV1 at some point, particularly among pupils with intermittent illnesses whose absences will be unpredictable and challenging to plan around. When schools know how long learners will be away for, it's easier to plan work for them, organise home visits and load the school's learning platform with appropriate activities. Unexpected absences can be particularly disruptive.

If a parent phones in of a morning to report an absence and an AV1 is available, it can be promptly unplugged from its charger and put to use. A TA may then proceed to move it from room to room depending on the learner's agreed timetable – often one specifically planned around what they can cope with – but it could just as easily be stewarded by a classmate who'll also be able to take it outside at lunch, allowing the user to remotely socialise with friends and keep up with the latest gossip. After all, that's one of the key intentions behind the whole initiative – preventing social isolation.

The number of AV1 users is steadily growing, ranging from a five-year-old in Scotland to first-time mothers researching the human genome in Cambridge. The system isn't particularly cheap, though, costing £280 per month to rent or around £2,200 to buy, plus an additional £55 monthly service charge. That does include insurance to cover up to two replacements, however, and a 4G connection that can be online at all times, representing a hefty chunk of data.

Long-term illness can often disrupt relationships. If you don't get to talk face-to-face with a particular person for weeks on end, your sense of that person may gradually fade. With this device standing in, not only is it easier to bear an absent pupil in mind, it's also easier for them to settle back into the classroom once they're able to attend again – since really, they'll have never fully left.



"She's not falling behind any more"

Makayla's AV1 is called Robbie, as named by the school. At the age of eight Makayla was diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and hypermobility, which can leave her feeling extremely tired with flu-like symptoms. Now in year 8, she attends a community school in Weston-Super Mare, having been on a reduced timetable in the intervening years. With Robbie in place, however, she can keep up her attendance, and extend her hours whenever she feels able to.

"I'm more confident about Makayla's education," explains her mum. "When she's struggling, she gets frustrated and upset because she feels as though she's behind. Being able to do more, but with her in control, is a massive boost for her – she's not falling behind any more. She's primarily using her AV1 for English, so that she's now in every timetabled English class for the first time in seven years."

To help Makayla secure an AV1 of her own, her mum recently started a GoFundMe campaign – if you want to help, visit tinyurl.com/av1-makayla

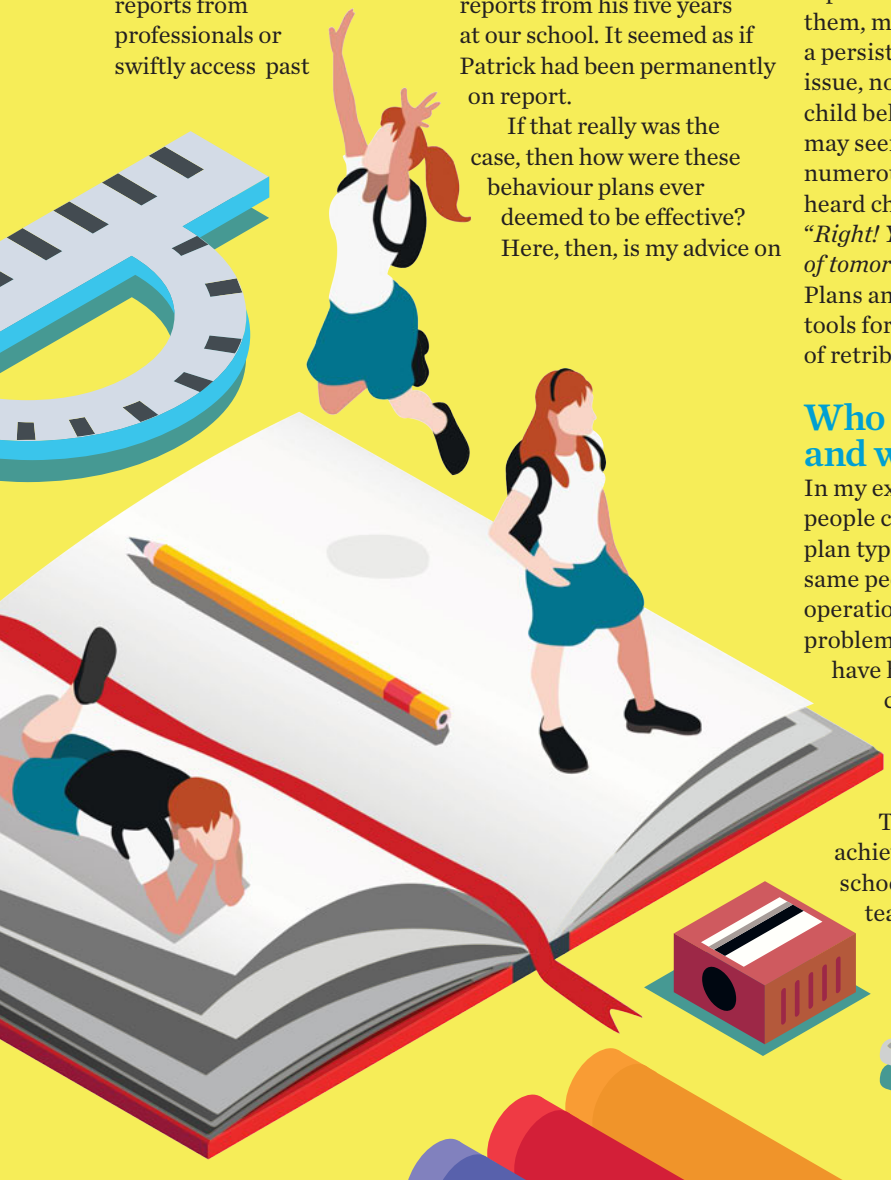
***John Galloway** is a consultant and writer, specialising in the use of technology for the educational inclusion of learners with SEND in schools*

How to write a BEHAVIOUR PLAN

Do your pupils' behaviour reports actually serve a practical and constructive purpose? **Jarlath O'Brien** looks at where schools might be getting them wrong...

When chairing annual reviews as a headteacher, I would be helpfully provided with a child's entire school file in case I needed to retrieve reports from professionals or swiftly access past paperwork. In my first year I remember being handed Patrick's file just before his Year 11 review. Well, I say file – it was more like a bundle of files. They were stuffed with daily and weekly behaviour reports from his five years at our school. It seemed as if Patrick had been permanently on report.

If that really was the case, then how were these behaviour plans ever deemed to be effective? Here, then, is my advice on what a positive behaviour plan ought to include.



Why does the child need a plan?

The need for a plan, and the reports that often accompany them, must be dictated by a persistent behavioural issue, not as a sanction for a child behaving poorly. That may seem obvious, but on numerous occasions I've heard children being told "*Right! You're on report as of tomorrow morning*!" Plans and their reports are tools for learning; not tools of retribution.

Who writes it – and who needs it?

In my experience, the people constructing the plan typically aren't the same people putting it into operation, which can be problematic. If teachers have had no say in its construction, it can feel like a strategy is being imposed on them. This is far harder to achieve in a secondary school, but the views of teachers must at least be sought at the planning stage.

I myself have made this mistake a number of times in the past, out of an attempt to protect colleagues from extra work – cutting them out entirely wasn't the best way to go about it.

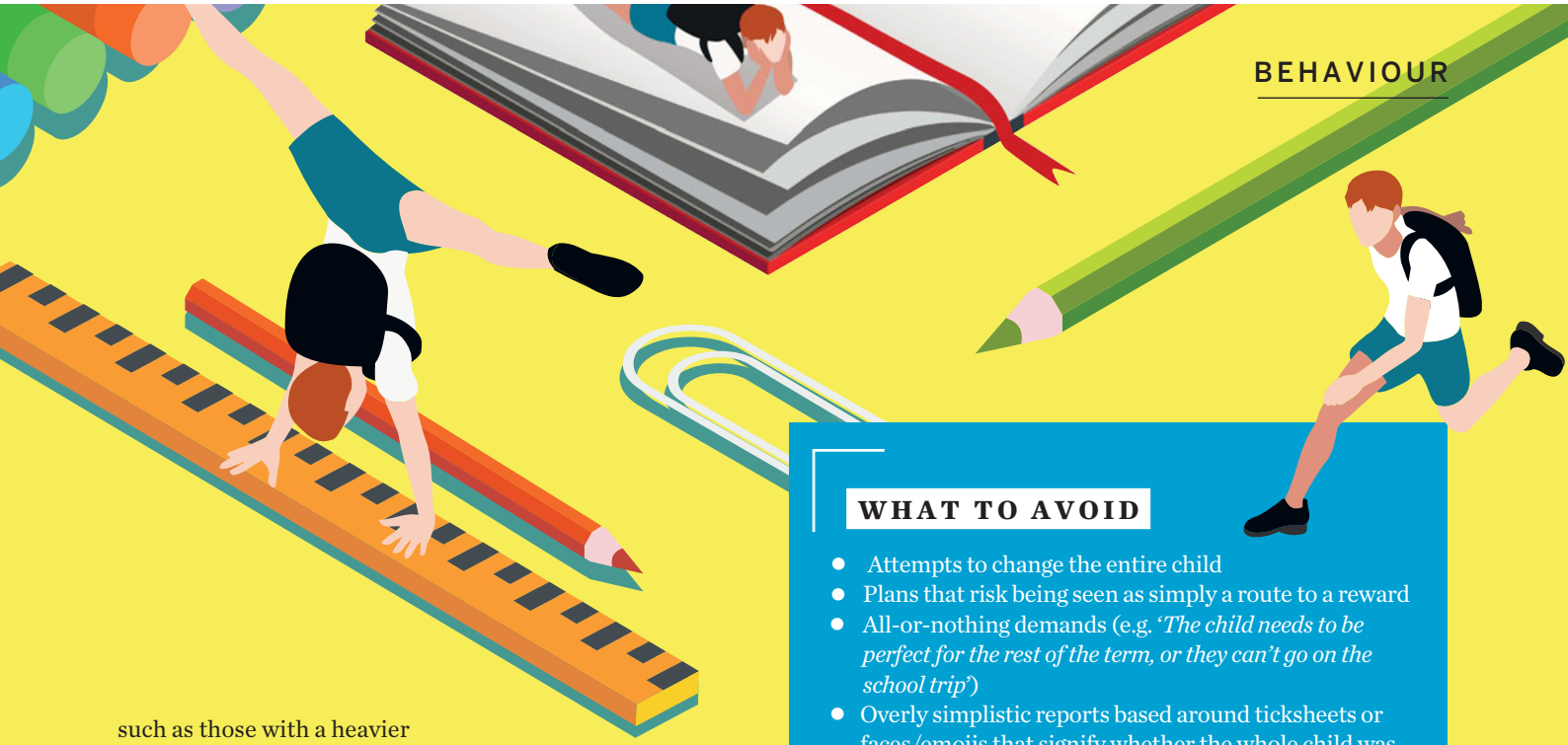
What problem are you trying to solve?

You're not trying to improve the entire child, so it's vital to be explicit and specific as to what it is you and the team are trying to address. It's also worth keeping at the front of your mind the fact that there are two problems to be solved – the improvement in behaviour you're seeking, but also the problem from the child's perspective.

Your problem will be easier to solve. You may simply want the child to stop ripping up their work and running out of class, but their problem – the unmet need(s) that are influencing the behaviour – will persist if not addressed.

Where are you trying to solve it?

Just as you're not trying to improve the entire child, it's also unlikely that the behavioural issues you're seeking to address are present the entire time the child is in school. There may be specific times of day when things are worse, such as break/lunch times, and certain subjects,



such as those with a heavier demand on literacy. Here is where you'll need to apply your best efforts first.

What does your information tell you?

In my experience, information held on children during this part of the process is usually thin or entirely absent. Without a baseline of information you'll be at the mercy of opinion ranging from 'Her behaviour has never been worse!' to 'I never had a problem when they were in *my class*.' Decide what information you need to gather. It may include the number of incidents per day or week, the nature of those incidents, positive incidents and where/when things have happened.

What's working?

By acknowledging that you're not trying to improve the entire child, you can be clear about what is currently working well. It's vital that this happens and is used to help challenge the culture of negativity that can creep in when a child's behaviours are presenting a school with challenges. Give some consideration as to what can be learned and taken away from those things that are going well.

How are the child and parents involved?

Involving both parents and the child will increase the likelihood of a behaviour plan actually leading to improvements over time. What does the child understand about the process, and how will a report help them keep on track? How can the parents support the process? A report that goes home each day, or which can be viewed online can be really helpful, both in terms of managing the workload of teachers who may otherwise have had to call home each day, and in terms of helping the parents understand how successful school has been.

Should you offer rewards?

A common tactic with behaviour plans and their reports is to include a reward after a period of improvement, in order to offer an incentive or sweetener. I generally advise against this, since rewards can foster self-interest, a '*What's in for me?*' attitude. This may appeal to the behaviourist principle of 'Do this, get that', as opposed to 'do this, learn that', but the major downside of rewards for me is that the behaviours you wish to see have no value for the child; they're simply a route to a reward. At best, a reward might buy you some short-term compliance. What you won't get is any lasting change in behaviour.

How long should the review last?

If, like Patrick above, a child is placed on report for a significant length of time, it's likely that the report in question is ineffective. This can sometimes happen when the aim of a report is to move the child from 'Naughty' to 'Good' and this is never achieved. No-one's perfect – if the problems you're trying to solve (see above) are well written, then a regular review will help to celebrate successes along the way. Everyone wants this, and it can really help to build institutional confidence, as well as the confidence of the parents and child, if you can all see that the child is doing well. It's also possible to amend and tweak the plan as you go along.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Attempts to change the entire child
- Plans that risk being seen as simply a route to a reward
- All-or-nothing demands (e.g. '*The child needs to be perfect for the rest of the term, or they can't go on the school trip*')
- Overly simplistic reports based around ticksheets or faces/emojis that signify whether the whole child was good for the entire day ('Smily Face!') or less than good ('Frowny Face!')
- Holding children on a behaviour plan to a higher standards than their peers





Jarlath O'Brien is Director for Schools for the Eden Academy Trust of special schools in London; his latest book, Better Behaviour – A Guide for Teachers is available now, published by SAGE

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"ADHD is massively misunderstood"

A child with ADHD is derailing your carefully prepared plan for the lesson – so how should you respond?

You know the feeling. You're standing in front of a class ready to deliver a lesson having had a flash of pedagogical inspiration that woke you up at 3am. You're pretty sure that this is going to be one of the greatest lessons that world has ever witnessed. The printed out plan is laid neatly on your desk. The resources are ready. The children are sat in silent anticipation.

And then you hear it. The tapping of a pencil, maybe a whisper. It quickly grows to a crescendo of inflammatory comments aimed not at you, but perhaps even worse, at your precious lesson. Your TA scrambles to restore order, but it's too late.

You look on in horror as the children's heads begin to oscillate, switching between you and the source of the disruption. Everyone's wondering the same thing – how are you going to respond?

How could you not have foreseen this? So excited were you by the thought of the lesson that you overlooked the one factor which could bring the whole operation crashing down. The child with ADHD.

Breaking it down

Admittedly, I'm being a tad facetious, but I think it's fair to say that the vast majority of us have at one time experienced significant disruption to lessons which, at least on paper, seemed destined to deliver outstanding learning. I'd go a step further and ask – while accepting that this may sound controversial – who hasn't felt that visceral pang of reservation upon seeing those four little letters, 'ADHD', on the statement or EHCP of a child they're due to teach?

Let's begin by stressing that ADHD is massively misunderstood, even in its conception as a single diagnosis. The term 'attention deficit hyperactivity disorder' is actually an umbrella term that can be better understood when broken down into three categories.

'Primarily-inattentive' (ADHD I) is where the child has difficulty with engagement, but isn't significantly affected by impulsivity or hyperactivity. Then there's 'Hyperactive-impulsive' (ADHD H/I), wherein the child shows significant signs of hyperactivity, such as struggling to sit still, and impulsivity, such as failing to self-regulate inappropriate or dangerous behaviours. The third category, 'Combined presentation' (ADHD C), is a combination of the preceding two.

As with any type of special educational need, the more informed you are as an educator as to how ADHD affects individual children, the better. It's not good enough to simply approach the issue with an attitude of "I've worked with ADHD in the past and therefore know what I am doing," when the same diagnosis can present in different ways. What we *can* do, however, is consider some practical strategies recognised as being effective in supporting pupils with ADHD and build a strategy bank.

Social considerations

Your first consideration when working with a child who has ADHD should be seating. Find a space in the room that doesn't offer the pupil an audience (perhaps near the front or to one side, where other pupils won't be facing them) and sit them near to pupils who offer positive role-modelling.



The child may further benefit from being seated in an area that other pupils won't need to walk through during the lesson, thus limiting distractions and opportunities for them to draw reactions from their peers.

Now, I've been guilty in the past of taking what seems like the obvious step of simply sitting a child with ADHD next to a member of support staff. "Any disruption," I would instruct my TA, "and just take them for a walk." On reflection, that now makes me shudder. If the 2013 Blatchford report has taught us anything, it's that annexing off an individual pupil with support staff will likely have an adverse effect on their social and academic attainment. No one's denying that some pupils will require one-to-one support to engage in learning, but simply sitting the ADHD pupil beside a TA in order to minimise disruption could do more harm than good.

Why is that? The answer involves considering the wide range of social factors that soon come into play, due to the disrupted social and emotional development experienced by children with ADHD. Significantly, pupils with ADHD are far more likely to develop an atypical attachment style than their peers. With that in mind, think about how sitting that child next to an adult and cutting them off from the perceived safety of their peer group might affect their engagement.

Other considerations might involve the increased likelihood of the child with ADHD having a sensory processing disorder. As such, I recommend using visual learning aids, including gestural language, as part of the lesson, in addition to resources specifically crafted as behaviour strategies.

Visual behaviour charts with a small number of individual targets, sand timers and visual 'now and next' boards can be used to keep pupils with ADHD on task for increasing amounts of time by offering rewards for meeting certain criteria. You'll want to keep these learning tasks short to begin with, before extending them across the year.

Consequences without conflict

A phrase I often use with my team is 'consequences without conflict' – the child needs to know that any disruptions to a lesson won't be tolerated, and that as such, there'll be consequences. These consequences, however, shouldn't involve the pupil being challenged. After all, you could be dealing with an attachment issue and/or a child who perceives any challenge, academic or otherwise, as a direct threat to their emotional or physical wellbeing.

Instead, I employ the very simple tactic of keeping a small red box beside my whiteboard. In the event of any disruption, I simply make sure the child sees me adding their name to that box. That's the warning. For every disruption thereafter, a line is added to the child's name, representing a sanction of some kind, be it minutes taken off their break time or limits on their time at the computer. There's no direct conflict or challenge; just consequence.

This should allow you to keep your language positive at all times and help facilitate using the language of choice, whereby the pupil is reminded that once they've completed task X they'll receive reward Y.

Ultimately, where children with ADHD are being challenged to develop, one can never eradicate disruptions from lessons completely. An understanding of how the disorder manifests in individual children, and the ability to plan appropriately around the potential for disruption, will be your most effective tools for maximising learning potential for all the students in your class. And the next time you see those four little letters, you'll be prepared to meet whatever challenges might arise.

SUPPORTING ADHD – 5 POINTERS

1 SEATING IS KEY
Ensure that the pupil doesn't have immediate access to an audience.

2 SET SHORT, ACCESSIBLE LEARNING TASKS WITH REWARDS
If the pupil perceives that a task might be too difficult, they may be disruptive as a way of defending their own self-imposed learner identity against the prospect of failure.

3 USE VISUAL LEARNING RESOURCES
With the increased risk of the ADHD pupil processing auditory language atypically, offering the opportunity to access learning through visual means will likely increase accessibility, comprehension and engagement.

4 CREATE A FIDGET BOX
I fill mine with pipe-cleaners, Blu-Tac, straws and coloured lolly-sticks. By allowing the pupil to choose a fiddle-toy, you may be helping them to better engage whilst reducing disruption at the same time.

5 CONSEQUENCES WITHOUT CONFLICT
This is key. Directly challenging pupils with ADHD, especially in front of peers, will most likely lead to escalation. Keep language positive and consistent, alongside a visual reward and/or sanction paradigm.



Dane Norris is a primary teacher specialising in SEN

"SHAME ON YOU!"

Nicole Dempsey looks at how certain classroom strategies can be more humiliating than initially thought, with regretful long-term consequences...

Picture the scene. You and your colleagues are seated, waiting for your regular in-house CPD session to start. The whiteboard flickers to life. *Great*, you think, *the sooner we can get started, the better*.

On the board are displayed two lists of teachers names – including yours – grouped under a happy face and a sad face. You then read the slide title: *'This term's good/outstanding (or not) lesson observations'*...

An unlikely scenario, I think. I hope! But hypothetically, how would that make you feel? What would it feel like to be publicly identified as belonging on the 'sad face' list? How would you feel if you were on the 'happy face' list? Would it impact on the relationship you have with your colleagues? And perhaps most importantly – what purpose would it serve to make such information public in this way?

Public humiliation

The start of 2018 has seen professionals from across the education sector speak out on the growing prevalence of 'zero tolerance' and 'no excuses' behaviour management approaches, and how they discriminate against students with SEND, mental health needs and other vulnerable groups (such as looked after children and those eligible for Pupil Premium). Some have further observed that such policies might be at the root of recent rises in both fixed term and permanent exclusions for the second year running, in which SEND, mental health and Pupil Premium pupils are all over-represented.

Many others have cited the above 'names on the board' scenario, though it's one that's arguably more prevalent in primary schools than secondary. A scenario more applicable to secondary settings would involve the public verbal reprimand – being put on the spot and asked to account for your behaviour. In our earlier example, imagine each 'sad face' teacher having to stand and explain why their particular lesson didn't match the criteria.

However you try to illustrate them, certain types of behaviour policy result in poor choices, errors of judgement, genuine mistakes, misunderstandings and other things a child can't help being made very public.

I'm of the view that we shouldn't be using public humiliation or shaming as a behaviour management tactic – but not because it discriminates against vulnerable students, and not because I don't agree with 'zero tolerance' or 'no excuses'



"No one benefits from making the next generation of adults angry, resentful and lacking in trust"

cultures (which can mean different things in different schools). Nor am I opposed to them because I think it 'names and fames', rather 'names and shames' students (as suggested in Paul Dix in his book *When The Adults Change Everything Changes)*. Public reprimands may outwardly seem to result in a display of bravado, but I really don't believe that any child revels in being humiliated in front of their peers.

They may, however, become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It may be easier for children, emotionally, to go with the process than actively resist it. In a relationship with such a power disparity, what other option do they actually have? No, I disagree with public humiliation as a behaviour management tactic for a different reason.

You see, all children are 'vulnerable' simply by virtue of being children. In a teacher/student relationship there's inevitably an imbalance of power. You're an adult, in a position of authority who's chosen to be there, and you absolutely have the upper hand.

Repurcussions

With a young person who has additional learning needs, mental health needs, challenges in their home and other specific vulnerabilities, you may see repercussions as a result of their embarrassment. They may become angry, upset or withdrawn. Or maybe you'll feel remorse when you remember which of those lists they're on.

There may be no such repercussions if you use the same approach with one of your more resilient learners, but this doesn't mean it's okay to emotionally abuse them. The care, kindness, consideration and individualisation we afford our most vulnerable students is the right of every student. By the same token, the high expectations, quality and accountability we provide to our most able students is the entitlement of every other student too.

It may not always feel like it, but you have all the power in the classroom. You're the adult, you get to set the rules, so you need to use that power wisely. You need to not abuse it. In your relationships with your students you need to be conscious of the position of power you're in and be the bigger person. Winning an argument with an angry and upset child isn't winning. Backing a child into a corner, be it literally or metaphorically, isn't winning. Using your status to embarrass a child in front of peers they have to spend nearly all of every day with isn't winning. If you do any of those things and receive a backlash, you deserve it.

As well as teaching our students the curriculum, the schemes, the 'We Are Learning To...' the 'What I'm Looking For...' and whatever else, we're also teaching them how to function in a community, how to behave in society and how to be a good citizen.

How we respond to them shows them how to respond to others, and like everything else we're teaching them, this needs to be considered and controlled. Give them the response that teaches them how their actions can make those around them feel and react. Are you angry? Are you disappointed, annoyed, inconvenienced or hurt?

GAIN WITHOUT SHAME

1. Be clear
Lead with pupils' names – say what you mean and mean what you say. Don't say 'please' unless it's a plea, and avoid sarcasm, idiom or rhetoric. Say why you're doing something. If you can't explain why, don't do it.

2. Never back a child into a corner
No matter what's happened or how far a situation's gone, there should always be a positive choice the child can make for themselves. This doesn't mean they've 'got away with it'; it means that they can learn from it.

3. Winning an argument isn't winning
Approach even the most challenging situation with compassion and kindness. They aren't going to learn whatever you want them to be learning when in such an aroused state. They could, however, learn that you are fair and understanding. Deal with whatever the behaviour issue was when they (and you!) are calmer.

4. Unconditional positive regard
The student who challenges you most is the student that needs you the most. Be their champion.

Society has nothing to gain from teaching our children that those in positions of power will publicly humiliate you when you get it wrong. No one benefits from making the next generation of adults angry, resentful and lacking in trust.

If you wouldn't be comfortable explaining your actions or remarks to a parent, or if you wouldn't be happy hearing a similar explanation from a teacher who'd done the same to your child, then you probably shouldn't be doing or saying those things in the first place.



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Michael Tidd wants your feedback – but not if it's based solely on data...

Discussion



You can't measure wisdom with tests and scores, argues Debra Kidd

Advice



Julie Price Grimshaw recalls what she learnt from mentoring trainees

Resources



Head to Teachwire to download six of the best KS1 SATs resources for the maths reasoning paper.

What's trending

1. *Ideas to engage reluctant writers*
2. *Teaching the selfie generation*
3. *Are you ready to be head?*
4. *Stop eating your shoes!*
5. *Can we still afford glue sticks?*

EDU Q&A

New study finds 98% of struggling readers have VISION PROBLEMS

Dyslexia Gold tells us about these startling new findings



Tell us about the problem struggling readers have.

Our study found 98% of struggling readers have difficulty sustaining convergence. Convergence is the ability to focus both eyes on the same point. We need to sustain convergence the entire time we read to see the print clearly.

That's incredible. Why has this gone unnoticed?

Because this is actually the first study measuring children's ability to sustain convergence. Other studies have measured if children can converge their eyes, but not if they can sustain it. Opticians don't test for this, so unless you know about it, it can go undetected.

Does this mean struggling readers can't focus their eyes?

Not exactly. When children with poor convergence read, each eye looks at a different letter. This makes words look blurry, or gives the impression that letters are moving, as the brain alternates which image it uses.

It also creates tracking problems because their eyes wobble when they read. A good reader looks at around 150 points per minute when reading, but these struggling readers look at around 1,000 points per minute. Even worse, most of the time they're looking at the wrong word.

How would I know if a pupil has a convergence problem?

As well as finding reading hard they might reverse 'b's and 'd's, and skip words and lines when they read. Reading might make them tired or give them sore eyes. They will probably read slowly as they try to make sense of what they are reading.

They might also refuse to read out loud to cover up their problems.

That's interesting. Is there anything else I would notice?

Yes. Pupils with poor convergence will find spelling hard. They don't see every letter clearly when they read, so they won't be able to visualise the word later to remember the order of letters.

Comprehension is also difficult. Their brain spends so much energy deciphering what they've seen, there's very little processing power left to remember or understand it.

You may also notice they have difficulty copying from the board or catching a ball.

What can be done to help?

We've developed the only vision training intervention specifically to address this issue. Our Engaging Eyes program uses 3D computer games to train children's eyes to easily sustain convergence and track across the page.

Each pupil plays for 10 minutes per day, and the beauty of Engaging Eyes is how easy it is to use in school. Pupils can work independently or a teaching assistant can supervise a large group.

How much progress do pupils make?

It varies, but the results can be amazing, as the following testimonials show:

"Reading age improved by an average of 13 months after playing Engaging Eyes for one term - and reading speed improved by 45%" – SENCo, Pixmore Junior School, Herts

"Reading improved significantly after playing Engaging Eyes. Even better, our weakest pupils made the most progress." – SENCo, St Ninian's Primary School, Edinburgh

What's most impressive about these results is that all pupils made progress. At St Ninian's, a 10-year-old with a reading age of 5y 6m made 17 months' progress.

DYSLEXIA GOLD
Beyond Phonics

To find out more, call 01895 546 254, email info@dyslexiagold.co.uk or visit dyslexiagold.co.uk

BREAK BAD NEWS IN A GOOD WAY

If you have to share the details of a child's bad day at school with his or her parents, tailor your words and approach carefully, advises **Debby Elley...**

No one likes bad news, but sometimes it's important that a parent knows all hasn't been well at school today. On good days, you can hardly wait for a parent to show up so that you can share that fabulous breakthrough – bring it on, you've struck gold!

Then there are the *not* so good days. You can't exactly lie, but you're not looking forward to passing on this unwelcome information about their child that that a parent needs to hear. Truth is, you're probably going to need a glass of wine to recover from it later. Still, the child's carer will know exactly how it is. They'll sympathise, right?

Well no, they won't. They're far too involved to sympathise, but quite a few parents and carers will *empathise*, to the point where they'll absorb the news and actually take the blame for it themselves. If the news is broken badly, what they'll actually hear (whether you say it or not) is *'This is all your fault.'* The response will depend on the parent, but it can range from defensive to depressed, which is the last thing you want. Not exactly constructive, is it?

Other parents – perhaps those who are at tipping point and beyond – will simply block out the information as unwanted and coming from 'your corner'. They get this quite enough at home, so why would they want to hear it from you as well?

Information exchange

Any communication is a contract in which information is exchanged, so before making that exchange, it's worth asking yourself how you want that information to be received by the other person. For instance, if you're about to say 'He's been a bit aggressive today', are you warning of a difficult evening ahead, or are you suggesting that help is needed in tackling some tricky behaviour? What do you hope the parent will gain from the exchange?

Ask yourself what you hope to gain from the parent. Some parents might respond by bracing themselves for what could be a difficult evening, while others – especially those who haven't experienced autism for long – may well go home feeling upset that even a teacher seems to have 'given up' on their kid. Of course, you haven't given up on the child at all. But when you say 'We haven't had a good day' with nothing to support that information, that's how it can feel.

The trouble with passing on bad news without backup is that there's nothing a parent can actually *do* with the information they've received. They can't tell their child off, because it's too late after the event. It may simply have the effect of making them feel downcast, all because of one lousy sentence communicated badly.



Openness and honesty

At this point, a member of school staff might protest, 'That's all very well, but I'm in a hurry when the parent comes along; I haven't got time to think about tact, diplomacy, strategies and so on.' Well, if you haven't got any time at all, *don't say it*. Write your comment down in the child's record book, email it to the parent or invite them in for a catch up.

When broaching the topic, keep your information neutral. Use words that focus on how the child was feeling and why, then talk about how that was translated into behaviour. To use an example involving my own son: "*Alec was upset and angry today, because we had to leave the park and he didn't want to.*"

Show the parent that you've understood and acknowledged the child's feelings, even if they were expressed in a less than perfect way. This will give them confidence that you've acknowledged the child's distress, rather than purely seeking to punish them. Then go on to explain how you tackled the situation and whether you thought the strategy was successful or not.

"By talking about a difficult 'situation', rather than difficult 'behaviour', you take the emotion and worry out of the exchange"

For instance, if your response was successful, say "We found it really helps if..." If it wasn't, "We don't think this approach really worked this time, and we want to try some different strategies. Do you have any suggestions for how you tackle this at home? Would you like to have a chat about it?"

If you need more information and support from the parent to get to the bottom of something, then ask for it. Contrary to popular belief, parents don't expect teachers to have all the answers. What we do appreciate is openness and honesty, and being asked for our views as the experts in our own children. Confident teachers will appreciate that it isn't a sign of weakness to ask for a parent's view – if anything, it's quite the opposite.



Be specific

It helps to make specific requests, rather than throwing negative information into the air and hoping it'll land in the right way. Central to this approach is making it clear that you're in this together and expecting teamwork. By talking about a difficult 'situation', rather than difficult 'behaviour', you take the emotion and worry out of the exchange and allow a parent the perspective they need in order to see clearly.

Your news then becomes practical and useful, rather than just baggage. You're either going to work together to tackle something, or you've got a great idea that they'd do well to use themselves, which is ultimately the point of the information you're looking to convey.

When reporting bad news, there's also the risk that a parent will interpret it as you being at the end of your tether, or not liking their child. Believe me when I say that even the faintest hint of this is all it takes. If the news isn't good, there's no need to bash them around the head to get it across. We're finely attuned to reading between the lines, so '*Not the best day for Alec,*' is far better than a judgemental phrase such as '*Alec attacked another student,*' or '*We've been disappointed with Alec's behaviour today.*' He didn't 'lash out' (highly emotive). He 'felt angry'.

The very worst way to broach a difficult subject – and you'd be surprised at how often it's used – is with the phrase 'There was an incident at lunchtime.' Call the police! Cordon off the area! Teachers are used to logging incidents, so this kind of phrase trips off the tongue quite easily. For most parents, it's a word formulation they're only ever likely to hear on the *10 O'clock News*.

My son's school is great at broaching bad news. One of the nicest things his teacher says is 'We're trying to help Alec so that he has some control when he feels angry'. Because that's what we're all really trying to do, isn't it? An out of control child doesn't want to feel this way. They simply don't have a better strategy for coping with their feelings. The school's job is to help such pupils find better ways of doing that than through physical means.

You don't have to hide bad news from a parent. But broaching it sensitively will be your best route to finding a good solution.

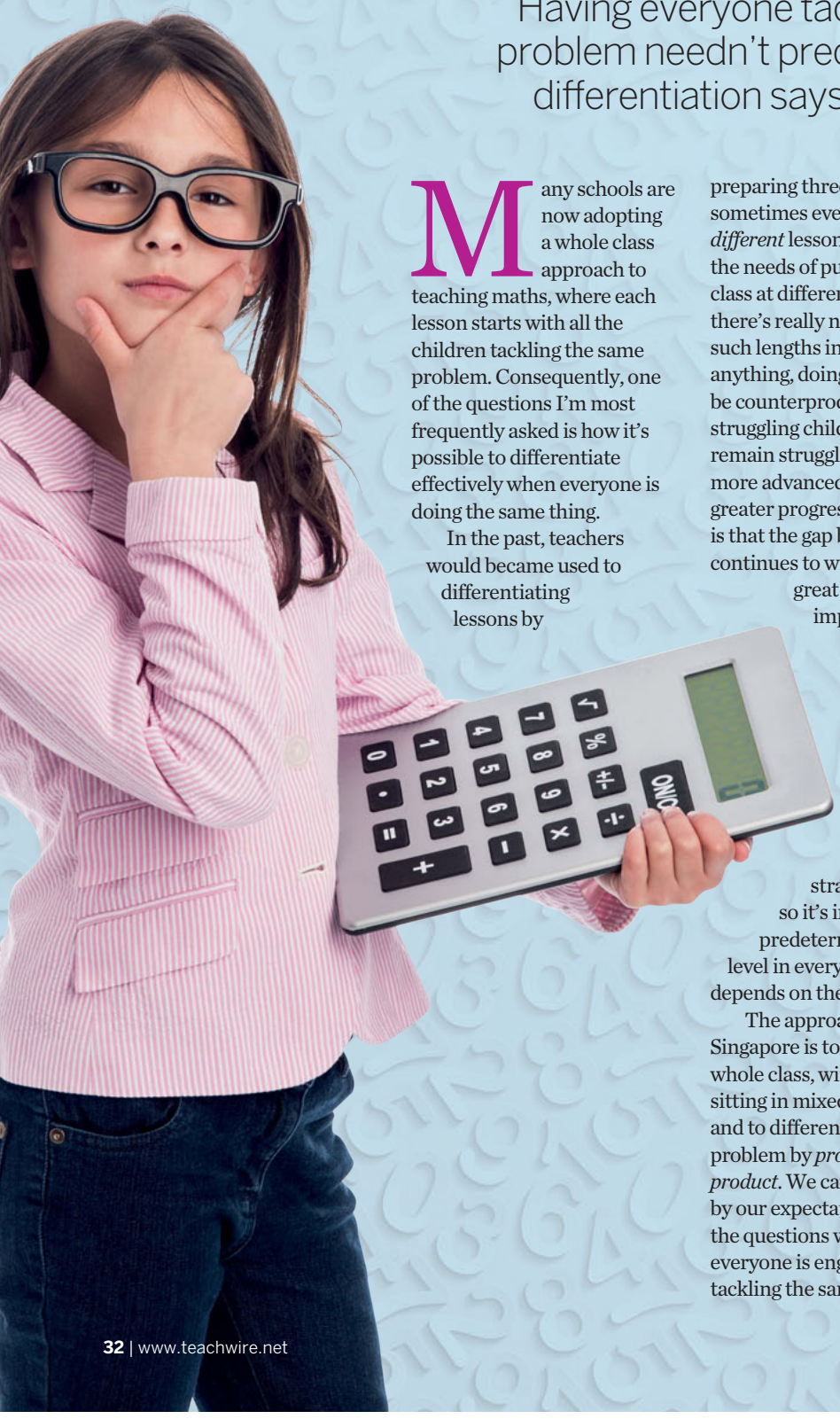


Debby Elley is the co-editor of AuKids – an award-winning positive parenting magazine for children with autism. She has 14-year-old twin boys on the spectrum, one in mainstream provision and one in a specialist setting. Her book, 15 Things They Forgot to Tell You About Autism, is available now, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

@aukids **aukids.co.uk**

Set one MATHS PROBLEM for different abilities

Having everyone tackle the same maths problem needn't preclude the possibility of differentiation says **Judy Hornigold**...



Many schools are now adopting a whole class approach to teaching maths, where each lesson starts with all the children tackling the same problem. Consequently, one of the questions I'm most frequently asked is how it's possible to differentiate effectively when everyone is doing the same thing.

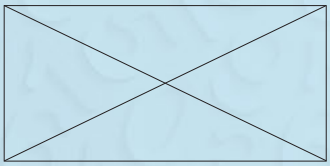
In the past, teachers would became used to differentiating lessons by preparing three, four or sometimes even five entirely *different* lessons to meet the needs of pupils in their class at different levels, but there's really no need to go to such lengths in planning. If anything, doing so can often be counterproductive. The struggling children tend to remain struggling, while the more advanced children make greater progress. The end result is that the gap between the two continues to widen, until it's so great as to be almost impossible to close.

Mathematics is a strange beast. There are areas of it that some children find very challenging, and others they find very straightforward, so it's impossible to predetermine a child's level in every lesson – it really depends on the lesson content.

The approach used in Singapore is to teach the whole class, with the children sitting in mixed ability groups, and to differentiate the same problem by *process*, *content* or *product*. We can differentiate by our expectations and the questions we ask whilst everyone is engaged in tackling the same problem.

What are you asking?

By way of an illustration, consider the following problem:

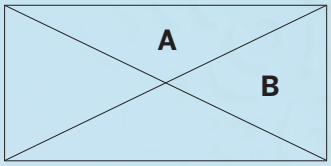


In this mind workout, the children have been asked to discover if these triangles are all quarters of the rectangle. At first sight, it seems to some children (and some adults!) that the triangles aren't the same. The triangles with the longer sides appear larger.

This problem can be differentiated in many ways. If the children are given paper and scissors, they can replicate the problem by cutting out the triangles and folding them in half to see that they are all, in fact, equal and therefore all quarters. This is harder to do without any paper and scissors to hand, as it requires more visualisation skills.

The problem can then be differentiated further by altering the way which the question is asked. If we now name the triangles 'A' and

'B' we can differentiate by asking 'Do A and B have the same area?'

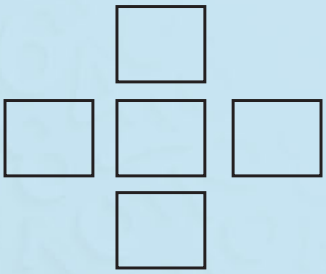


We might even ask, 'What is the ratio of the areas of A and B?'

We have thus taken a question aimed at year 1 children and differentiated it to a much higher level that demands an understanding of area and ratio.

Scaling up

Another example of how we can differentiate with the same problem is shown below:



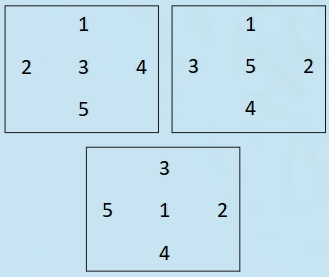
Can you arrange five numbers so that the vertical total is the same as the horizontal total?

The expectation here is that the children will be able to find such an arrangement and quickly realise that if the top and bottom numbers add up to the same as the left and right numbers, then it doesn't really matter what's in the middle. We can change the middle number and the vertical and horizontal totals will still be equal.

The next level for the children may be to set a target. Can they find all the solutions that total 15? Can they do this using only odd numbers? Do they always need to have a mix of odd and even numbers?

For some children that will be enough of a challenge, but we can take this activity much further. Thinking like a mathematician, we may propose a hypothesis that the middle number is irrelevant, as it's common to both calculations. But is this always the case? What if we have consecutive numbers?

Now we can ask the children to repeat the activity, but this time they can only use the numbers 1,2,3,4 and 5. They'll soon discover that now it really *does* matter what's in the middle. For this set of numbers, there are only three numbers that can be the middle number.



There' s no solution with 2 or 4 as the middle number. Why not?

The challenge here is to not only identify that 2 and 4 can't be the middle number, but also to explain why. When 2 or 4 are in the middle, the remaining numbers add up to an odd number. We can't make two equal pairs from an odd number. The numbers at the top, bottom, left and right must therefore all add up to an even number.

We can then extend this further still, by asking the children to predict what could be the middle numbers if we were using only 2,3,4,5 and 6. In this case, only the even numbers will work in the middle.

Finally, we can apply this by giving the children much larger numbers. We don't want them to carry out the calculations; we want them to generalise and apply what they've already learnt. We could therefore give them 373, 374, 375, 376, 377 and see if they can explain which numbers will work in the middle and which won't. This activity is also a great introduction to a project on magic squares.

The mysterious envelope

Last year I had the great pleasure of attending a three-day training course delivered by Juliana Loh, a master teacher of maths from Singapore. She suggested a way of differentiating an activity by content using 'The Mysterious Envelope.'

This strategy consists of preparing three or four envelopes with different contents. Each group of children is given an envelope, the contents of which are tailored to the teacher's assessment of what support that group will need to complete the task, or what questions they'll need to extend and deepen their understanding.

The idea really appealed to me, as it enables teachers to support struggling children while at the same time extending more able children in a very subtle way. Everyone has an envelope, so there's no obvious difference between who the struggling and advanced learners are. There's also the excitement involved in opening a mysterious envelope to see what's inside – a clear motivator for the children.

In conclusion, there are many ways to differentiate when working with one problem. There's no need to spend hours planning different activities and producing multiple worksheets. The differentiating comes in the questioning; in the depth of the pupils' exploration, the support we give and our expectations in terms of outcome.

Differentiating in this way will allow all children in the class to work at the limit of their capabilities, and ensure that they're being sufficiently challenged.

"It's impossible to predetermine a child's level in every lesson – it really depends on the lesson content"



Judy Hornigold is an independent educational consultant specialising in helping children with dyscalculia, and delivers training for the British Dyslexia Association and Edge Hill University

How to teach a VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPIL



With some preparation and imaginative thinking, your lessons can be as engaging for visually impaired pupils as they are for everyone else, says **Juno Hollyhock**

Should all teaching and learning be inclusive? I'd be very surprised if anyone reading this would answer 'no'. However, inclusive teaching in a class where all students have broadly equal access to all of their senses is one thing. Inclusive teaching in a class where one or more children are without a critical sense, such as sight, is quite another.

If we're to provide children who are visually impaired with an inclusive learning experience that doesn't entail being parked with an LSA at the back of the classroom, then we need to plan carefully.

Preparations

Before the child's first visit to your school, ensure that you know what you're dealing with.

1 What is the extent of the visual impairment?
Total lack of sight is different to tunnel vision, which is different again to being able to perceive light and darkness. Talk to the parents/carers of the child and find out as much as you can about the child's experience of visual impairment.

2 Is the visual impairment acquired or present since birth?
This is important, as a child confident with moving around in a sighted world since birth will have different experiences and expectations to one coming to terms with an acquired condition.

3 What techniques are already in use at home and in other settings?
Ideally it's best to initially follow existing tools and forms of communication, rather than introduce a whole new raft of things to learn just for school. This will help the child settle in faster and access the curriculum more easily.

4 Will full vision return, or is this a lifelong condition?
If the visual impairment has been acquired recently and is unlikely to improve, school will be a key place in which to set targets around communication skills, confidence and aspirations going forward, in addition to their education targets. These extra targets should all be agreed with the family and the child.

5 What additional support is being put in place?
For example, check whether there will be a dedicated LSA who can help the child with integrating.

You can then begin preparing your staff and pupils. It may be that you decide to give them some lived experience of the visually impaired child's 'view' on the world. This might involve spending an hour with some form of blindfold that mirrors as closely as possible the nature of the child's visual impairment (such as a full blindfold, netting, old spectacle frames dressed up with cardboard 'lenses' that have pinholes, etc) and can be a great way of identifying some of the challenges he or she might face.

You can then build on this by devising scenarios with particular aims in mind, such as the following:

- Helping children and staff to understand what it's like to be pulled around a space, rather than guided with a hand on the arm
- Experiencing the distraction of non-relevant noises when trying to listen to a lesson – particularly one delivered from the front of the class only
- Finding out how difficult it can be to tell voices apart when people don't give their names

- Appreciating the importance of tactile resources in giving depth and texture to a learning resource

Impress upon staff and pupils the importance of not making sudden or unannounced changes to the classroom layout, such as moving tables and chairs or leaving bags to be tripped over. Are there any 'clues' around the walls or floor surfaces that might help a child with a visual impairment navigate from their desk to the door, from the door to the whiteboard and the whiteboard to the drawers?

Start a 'buddy' scheme among your pupils where the person appointed buddy changes each week, so that the child is interacting with a wide range of peers and getting to know new friends.

The child's first day

Once they've arrived, spend some time in the classroom with the child and their Buddy to help them map certain routes and identify non-visual features. Make sure that you've planned routes to areas such the toilets and the playground. Whilst the Buddy is there to help, the child must be able to develop their confidence and sense of independence.

Talk about the child's seating plan, who they'll be sitting with and explain if and how that seating plan may change.

Teaching and learning

High quality teaching and learning for a child with a visual impairment looks very similar to high quality teaching and learning across the board:

- Targets are shared and understood
- Behaviour management is strong
- Questioning is used effectively to test learning outcomes
- Resources are creative, of a high quality and where possible, multi-sensory

As always, behaviour management should be fair and equitable across the board. However, care should be taken with sanctions or restorative measures to ensure that they're achievable and fair for the visually impaired child.

All learners will enjoy using resources that are multi-sensory. There's a wide range of such resources on the market, and with a little ingenuity you can convert a visually based lesson to one that uses sounds, touch and taste and even smell to help communicate messages and learning points.

Musical notes or sounds are a great way to communicate with a class. Sound can be used to describe many things, from running water to farm animals, and even colours, with a little imagination. Combining sounds and words together will stretch children's imagination at story time and in creative writing endeavours.

Pictures can be enhanced with use of texture and loose parts. Stories can be told by preparing a bag of materials illustrating certain parts of the story and pouring them into the hand at the right time. The biblical parable of the sowing of the seeds is excellent for this, with stones, seeds, earth, water and warmth all able to play a sensory part.

Movement is another good way of embedding learning for the whole class. Different movements for different numbers in maths, for example, can create a fun method of learning that embeds numeracy confidence whether you're sighted or not.



Juno Hollyhock *is CEO of The Rose Road Association – a registered charity that provides support services for children and adults with complex and multiple disabilities and health needs*

@rose_road

roseroad.org.uk

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

All children benefit from feedback to parents and carers, but this is especially important for a visually impaired child if they're to thrive within the classroom and successfully complete homework tasks.

- Share any learning or communication techniques you've found to be particularly helpful
- Share homework tasks and ensure that parents/carers understand how they can provide support with these without over-supporting
- Provide any additional tactile resources that might be needed for homework
- Establish contact with any other settings the child attends to ensure that progress is matched across all aspects of their life, where possible
- Make space for regular contact with the family, even if from your point of view there's nothing specific to discuss



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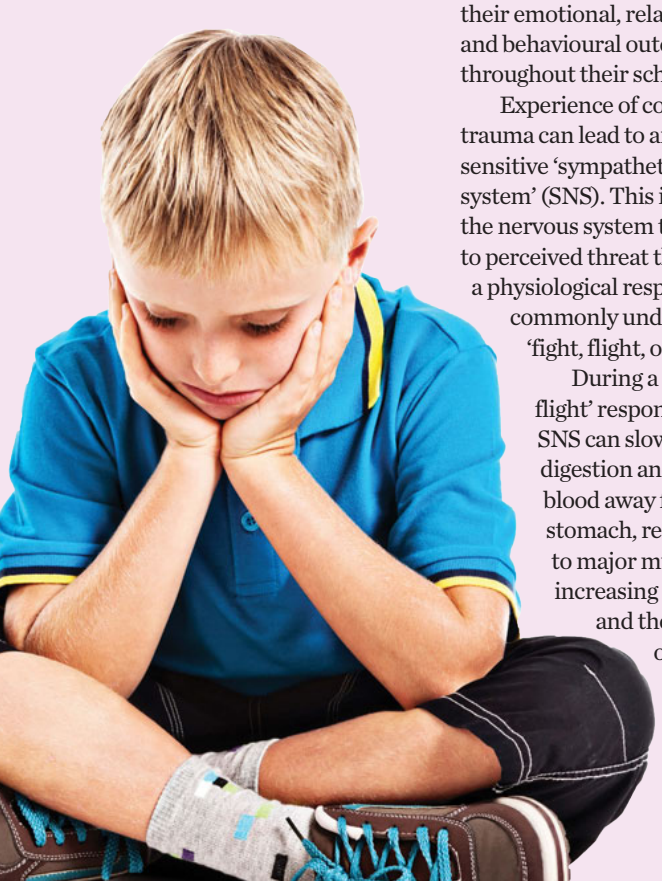
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Could you help a CHILD TRAUMA SURVIVOR?

Dr Judith Howard explains how, with the right training, schools are well-placed to support children with experience of trauma...

There are two aspects to complex childhood trauma. The first involves exposure to repeated traumatic experience, such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse, significant neglect or family violence. Sadly, this will tend to occur early in life, with the instigators of said harm often those people whom children depend on most for nurture and protection.

The second aspect of complex trauma presents ongoing challenges for pupils and schools. Neuroscientific research has shown that complex trauma can impact on the developing nervous system, leading to long-term impacts on children's learning, emotional self-regulation and capacity to relate to others in a safe and adaptive way.



Of course, if a pupil is struggling with learning and managing their emotions and relationships, he or she is going to struggle at school. It's therefore vital that school leaders, teachers and specialists are informed about, and respond well to, the concerns that trauma-surviving pupils bring with them into the classroom.

Infants and young children who experience complex trauma can miss out on the repeated environmental and relational activity necessary to stimulate adaptive neural development. Unfortunately, if their neural growth suffers at this vital and rapid stage of development, there are likely be concerns regarding their emotional, relational and behavioural outcomes throughout their school years.

Experience of complex trauma can lead to an overly sensitive 'sympathetic nervous system' (SNS). This is the part of the nervous system that reacts to perceived threat through a physiological response commonly understood as 'fight, flight, or freeze'.

During a 'fight or flight' response, the SNS can slow down digestion and divert blood away from the stomach, redirecting it to major muscles while increasing heart rate and the secretion of stress hormones. This type of response causes school pupils to become more adept at addressing perceived threats, via behaviours that typically involve physical or verbal attacks or running away.

During a 'freeze' response the SNS can slow heart rate and respiration, while releasing chemicals that lead to 'dissociation' – a state that reduces susceptibility to pain and produces psychological distance from perceived threat.

Trauma-aware training

This 'fight, flight or freeze' response can occur regularly, with little warning, and as a reaction to threats that don't actually exist. Feelings of being unsafe and surges of overwhelming anxiety can occur suddenly and dramatically in reaction to what would otherwise be considered as benign school conditions or relationships. The resulting behavioural outbursts and repeated relational sabotage can cause much frustration for teachers.

However, the message from neuroscience is that a child's school years can provide an opportunity to remedy the harm done, due to the malleable and changeable nature of the child and adolescent brain. The brain typically develops in a use-dependent manner, with the result that adaptive interactions between pupils and their physical and relational school environments can stimulate neural repair.

When schools become places that students perceive as safe and inclusive, and when educators understand the neuroscience of trauma and incorporate trauma-aware approaches, schools can provide a different template of possibility. Educators who have received training in this area are more likely to have an empathetic and differentiated response towards students who have suffered complex trauma, and feel empowered to explore other behaviour management options.

These students need to be given opportunities to try again without being excluded from learning environments and relationships, and schools must accept that every trauma-surviving student is an individual deserving of their own individualised support. If education professionals want fewer behaviour concerns and better outcomes for trauma-surviving pupils, then they should prioritise trauma-aware workforce training and support for all schools.



Dr Judith Howard is a senior lecturer specialising in trauma at the Queensland University of Technology; and the author of the book Distressed or Deliberately Defiant? Managing challenging student behaviour due to trauma and disorganised attachment

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Lesson PLANS

Broaden your pupils' learning horizons with these four ready-to-go lesson plans from this issue's expert contributors

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DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

Help your pupils engage in deep and rewarding philosophical discussion about the nature of happiness

p42



SOFT TOYS AND SOFTWARE

Give your pupils a useful grounding in the skills needed to operate computers and retrieve information

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GOING THROUGH CHANGES

Lynn McCann presents a multi-part guide to teaching pupils with autism about puberty, sex and relationships

p46



THE LANGUAGE OF LIFE EXPERIENCE

Expand your pupils' emotional vocabulary and ability to describe life-changing experiences with Sarah Helton's English lesson plan

Find more online! Visit **teachprimary.com/50-more-lessons**

Even more ideas...

Money talks



NatWest has partnered with nasen to make its MoneySense financial education initiative for schools more accessible for children with SEND. Two new MoneySense lessons, aimed at teaching 8- to 12-year-olds how to pay for things and 12 to 16-year-olds how to keep their finances secure, can be tailored by teachers to suit different needs and embed key concepts. For more details, visit **mymoneysense.com**

What does 'dyslexia' mean?



To help raise awareness of what it means to be dyslexic, the British Dyslexia Association, with funding from the DfE, has developed an animation aimed at primary schools titled 'See Dyslexia Differently'. The animation is available to view, alongside a supporting resource pack, via **tinyurl.com/bda-sdd**. A further suite of dyslexia support resources developed by Twinkl can be found at **tinyurl.com/ tw-dys-support**

Order, order!



Available from the Houses of Parliament Education Service is a SEND-accessible version of its 'Find out about Parliament' resource series, designed to introduce ages 5 to 8 to what the British Parliament does via different activities, stories and imagery. The SEND-accessible resources include an accessible teachers' resource, accessible worksheets and a question prompts/vocabulary document. Find out more via **tinyurl.com/parl-lr-sen**

Don't worry, be happy



Dr Helen Lewis shows how getting your pupils started with philosophy can soon lead to some valuable classroom discussion…

@HEL71_



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To encourage and develop speaking, listening and turn-taking skills
- To explore other people's ideas and opinions
- How to explain and justify their ideas
- How to explore their own feelings and emotions, and how to read and interpret similar feelings in others

Philosophical enquiry involves thinking deeply about issues such as truth, life, death, love and friendship, which can fascinate children of all ages and stages of development. This lesson plan explores happiness, encouraging children to think about what might make different people feel happy.

By creating a 'community of enquiry', children will feel safe enough to discuss their own ideas and feelings while considering the views of others. The adult (facilitator's) role isn't about guiding the discussion towards a prescribed end-point, but rather presenting issues for discussion and supporting and guiding a dialogue, while showing genuine interest and enthusiasm for the ideas the children put forward.

START HERE

This lesson is designed for a group or class of children. The session starts with the children gathered in a circle. Establish some ground rules at the start, such as

- 'We all look and listen to the speaker'
- 'We show we would like to speak by giving a signal' (perhaps turning their hand over so that their palm is raised)
- 'We give reasons for our views'
- 'We are kind to others'
- 'Only one person speaks at a time'



MAIN LESSON

Use a concrete example to start the discussion. Source several photos of children looking happy from the internet. Enlarge and place them on the IWB, but hide the full image to start with – you could print them out and cover portions of them with plain card cut into jigsaw pieces that can be individually removed. 'Zoom into' each photograph by slowly removing the pieces while asking the children what they can see. Begin by talking about simple facts, such as any colours and shapes they can see, before allowing some individual thinking time.

Then ask some questions, such as:

- Can the children make a prediction about what the photograph might be of? Encourage them to explain their reasoning and ask what makes them say that.
- What clues can they see?
- Who agrees or disagrees, and why?

Gradually reveal more and more of each photograph and see whether the children's ideas change as more information comes to light.

Once all the photographs are revealed in their entirety, allow the children to work with a talk partner. Questions they can ask each other might include:



- Do the photographs have anything in common?
- How are the children in the photographs feeling?
- What might have happened to the children in the photos to make them feel like this?

Gather the children's ideas together and start looking for similarities and differences between them. Begin a class conversation about whether everyone has the same ideas about being happy, and whether the same things are able to make everyone feel happy.

Copy a page from Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharrat's book *You Choose* (Puffin, 2018) – such as 'Who would you like as a friend?' – onto A3 paper. Give each pair a copy of the page to look at and talk about. Then give the pairs magnifying glasses so that they can look very closely at the detail contained in the images. Ask some questions to help their thinking, such as:

- Would you feel happy having any of these as a friend?
- Are there any that you would not feel happy being friends with?
- Why do you say that?
- What does a good friend do that makes you feel happy?

Allow time for each child to contribute if they wish to. Talk about whether listening to their friends has meant that they've changed their ideas.

At the end of the session thank all of the children for their contributions and allow a few moments for quiet individual reflection before the session ends.

As children become more confident with this type of session they can be encouraged to start making a list of questions for discussion, and then vote for which ones they'd like to talk about. The lesson described above eventually led to a deeper discussion around questions of happiness and sadness. The children were particularly interested in thinking about how people are not always happy at the same time as one another.

The children identified some times when one person might be happy but another is sad – for example, when someone laughs at another person who has fallen over. Taking that on board, the children proceeded to discuss the question 'Is it ever good for us to be sad, and bad for us to be happy?'

Finally, there are a number of videos online in which children talk about what makes them happy that can be interesting to watch and talk about. One example, produced by the nonprofit Committee for Children (see **tinyurl.com/s-lp-happy**) has children talking about 'happiness posters' they've made that show the kinds of things that make them happy. Set your children the task of creating their own 'happiness posters', or film a class 'happy film'. The poster could be used as a home or school activity, and the film could be shown at parent's evening.

***Dr Helen Lewis** is the Primary PGCE lead at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, as well as a teacher, consultant and researcher with a particular interest in the development of young children's thinking*

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Place some photographs of people showing different emotions on a table and lay out some hand-held mirrors. Encourage the children to see if they can copy the same expressions on their own faces and check them in the mirror. Model this for them if necessary. How do they think the people are feeling? Can they sort the pictures into groups, such as 'happy people', 'sad people' or even 'scared people'? Take photos of the children modelling different emotions and create personalised 'Feelings books' for them.
- Try laying out a collection of old magazines, scissors and glue on the table, and allow the children to look for people showing a range of different emotions. Cut out their faces and stick them on posters labelled 'happy', 'sad' etc. Download some songs about feeling happy and set up a listening station on the table.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Can you give an example of a time when you were happy?
- What did it feel like, and what caused it?
- Can we help other people become happy?
- Are people happy about the same things or different things?
- Can we be happy all of the time?

Soft toys and software



With the aid of tech-assisted switches, sounds and signs, your learners can get started on making associations and retrieving information, as **Kate Bradley** explains...

@Kate_Brads



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- 'Cause and effect' skills from working with technology
- How to develop keyboard and typing skills
- How to go about retrieving different types of information

Technology can be highly motivating for many pupils with SEND. It's often very predictable, allowing children to work at their own pace, and can help to remove some of the fine motor and stamina skill demands that other activities, such as handwriting, might place on them.

The ideas and material in this article are drawn from *101 Inclusive and SEN Science and Computing Lessons* – a book I recently co-authored with Claire Brewer.

START HERE



Remember that technology doesn't just mean computers and tablets! You may already have access to Big Mack switches, walkie talkies, CD Players, MP3 Players, digital cameras, remote control cars and other such items within your school. All of those items will require a cause and effect action to a varying degree, and can help build the skills needed to successfully operate computer equipment over time.

Presented here are three 'mini lessons' that will help to build those skills. You may want to use them as a starter, main and plenary, or extend them so that they're completed over a series of classes or a longer period of time. Play to the children's strengths and adapt the stimulus to meet their interests where possible.

MAIN LESSON

1 EMERGING

(For children working below National Curriculum levels, around P Scale 4/5)

Learning objective
Pupils make connections between control devices and information on screen.

Resources:
Computer and IWB. Presentation of animal pictures and noises. Familiar story about animals. Basket. Soft toy animals from the story.

Before the lesson, create a PowerPoint slide that consists of animal pictures, each accompanied by a sound sample of the noise the animal makes that activates on a mouseclick. Place the basket of animals in front of the children in the group and begin reading a story about the animals.

As the adult names an animal, ask one child to locate it in the basket, and ask another child to press the matching animal on the screen. Can everyone make the same noise as the animal? Continue reading the story, allowing children to find the animals and make the corresponding sounds.

Ask the children to place their animals back in the basket when they're done, and allow them to press the picture so that it makes a noise as it goes back in.



2 | DEVELOPING

(For children working below National Curriculum Levels, around P Scale 5/6)

Learning objective
Pupils use a keyboard to select letters for their own names.

Resources:
Computer and IWB, laminated name cards, bag.

Create name cards for all of the children, put them into a bag and place the bag at the front of the class, with everyone sitting in a semicircle around the IWB. Sing your 'Hello' or 'Good morning' song, then ask the children 'Who is at school today?'

Take the bag to one of the children and ask them to find their name card. The child then takes their name card to the computer, which is displaying a table with two columns. Have an adult ensure that the cursor is positioned beneath the 'In school today' column, then get the child to type the letters of their name. At the same time, the rest of the class sing the 'Hello' or 'Good Morning' song again while another child takes their turn to look for their name. If anyone is not in school that day, the adult writes the child's name in the 'Not at school today' column.

Once everyone's names have been typed out, the class together counts how many children are at school and how many are not. After placing the totals beneath each column, the adult then models saving the document and pressing 'print'. One child is chosen to go to the printer and retrieve the newly created register, which is then placed on the classroom's daily board.

3 | SECURING

(For children working below National Curriculum Levels, around P Scale 7/8)

Learning objective
Pupils find similar information in different formats.

Resources:
Tablet with parental controls turned on; a selection of comics or magazines.
Place a range of comics and/or cartoon magazines in the centre of the group and allow the children some time to explore them. Ask questions about the characters portrayed and what's happening in the pictures. Then ask each child to choose their favourite character and find a page with 'their' character on it.

Tell everyone that they will now use the internet to find the same character using a search engine. Issue a tablet device to each child, have an adult in the room provide verbal instruction and model the process of opening the relevant application (or web browser, if appropriate). Give the children time to see how much they can do for themselves. If the children might need help with the characters' names, either point to how they're spelt in the relevant comic or write them on the whiteboard. Once everyone has found a picture, share them as a group and ask each child to tell the rest of the class why they chose that particular character.

Kate Bradley is head of autism and inclusion at Netley Primary School and Centre for Autism; 101 Inclusive and SEN Science and Computing Lessons is available now, published Jessica Kingsley Publishers

CONSOLIDATING THE LESSON

- In the book corner, create an animal-themed section with a range of appropriate books, the basket of animals, some masks and other props. Use switches, such as a Big Mack, to record animal noises and place appropriate pictures on each one. Encourage the children to engage with the switch(es) as they read.

- Encourage the children to view other forms of media as much as possible, so that they can make connections. This might involve seeing an article in a newspaper and looking up more details online, or researching a trip online and matching the details found to the information printed in a physical leaflet or flier.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What stimulus is motivating for the child?
- How can I scaffold this activity to maximise how much they do independently?
- If a task doesn't relate to handwriting, can the child use a computer to type?

Going through changes



Lynn McCann shares a four-part lesson programme for teaching puberty, sex and relationships education to Y6 pupils with autism

@reachoutASC reachoutasc.com



Most teachers will have had a pupil with autism in their class. Autism is a different way of thinking and perceiving the world, which can sometimes make understanding notions of growing up, body image and dealing with the changes they bring a confusing and overwhelming process.

At Reachout ASC we've developed a structured approach over four lessons to support the understanding of puberty and growing up for autistic primary pupils, which we share with you here.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- That the body changes over time, with not all changes happening at once
- The concepts of public and private – in speech, actions and places
- Consideration of personal hygiene, taking into account their sensory needs

START HERE



Speak with parents and discuss what the pupil's needs are. They may have fears and anxieties, sensory issues and ways of communicating and thinking that are unique to them. You'll need to develop your lessons around this, and the support of parents will be important.

You need a basic toolkit of resources and a structured plan that's flexible enough to be changed, if something more important comes up in your discussions with the child. *Sexuality and Relationship Education for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders* by Davida Hartman is both an essential read and a useful bank of lesson plans.

MAIN STAGES

1 LESSON 1

We start with exploring the concept of growing up. Using pictures cut out from magazines, begin by sorting people into different groups – male and female, children and adults. Then start sorting them into a wider human cycle – babies, children, teenagers, adults and elderly people. This gives the child a chance to notice things about people and start making judgements about how old a person might be. We can help them identify those clues that might tell us such things, while also acknowledging that you can't necessarily always tell someone's age every time.

2 LESSON 2

This leads on to looking at male and female differences in development, concentrating on the physical gender of the child (though if there is some evidence of gender dysphoria it may be useful to consult a specialist professional) and using pictures to explain how a body grows and changes. As well as visual pictures to sequence, other supports you could use might include a timeline of their lives, labelling body parts and anatomy models. We use the *What's happening to Tom / Ellie?* books by Kate E. Reynolds, due to their autism-friendly wording and explanations of puberty to girls and boys.



We will also use Social Stories (see carolgraysocialstories.com) to explain anything the child may find difficult to comprehend or is worried about. We would use direct and literal language thoughout, in order to ensure that autistic pupils are able to understand the lesson accurately.

3 LESSON 3

At this point we'll introduce the concepts of 'public' and 'private' and start to sort words, actions and places into these two categories. At the heart of this is the child's safety. Vulnerability to sexual exploitation is higher for autistic children, making this is a vital lesson that needs reinforcing regularly as they grow up.

We need to explain what the concepts of public and private mean and use Social Stories to help convey this (examples of which can be found in Davida Hartman's aforementioned book). 'Places', 'words' and 'actions' are the three areas we'd start with, by sorting pictures for each under the headings 'public' and 'private'.

We also use the NSPCC's' 'PANTS rule' (see tinyurl.com/nscpcc-pants-rule) to explain the importance of keeping private body parts covered up and of consent. This can be tricky, as autistic children can be rigid rule followers, while in society there tends to be much more ambiguity – but we have to work to keep them safe.

4 LESSON 4

Now we begin to help them become more aware of personal hygiene and looking after themselves – which is an area where we really need to be aware of the autistic child's sensory differences. They need to have some body awareness, so we will ask parents to provide them with access to a full length mirror and encourage them to spend time looking at the front and back of their bodies. We will discuss with pupils the science of sweat and dirt in a simple way, along with the benefits of keeping clean, using visuals to help us.

Autistic children often like routine, so building a keeping clean routine can help. More difficult to overcome will be any sensory defensiveness to stimuli such as the smell and feel of hygiene products, the texture of clothes, the feel of water on skin and the pain of a hairbrush or toothbrush, all of which can be overwhelming for an autistic child.

For girls, menstruation may need a visual timetable and a 'pack to go' that's kept in their bag or at school. Find out what sanitary products they feel comfortable wearing, and include a visual reminder of how to change the pad and keep themselves clean during menstruation. The same goes for boys' erections and wet dreams. A simple visual support to remind them to keep that area clean can help. There are some excellent Social Stories about this in *Taking Care of Myself: A Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism* by Mary Wrobel.

5 FINALLY

There may be issues around using sexualized language, children's curisoity about their own and others' body parts, touching others and not knowing social boundaries. However, it may be that we make more of what is otherwise normal exploratory behaviour in children when focusing on a child with SEND – masturbation being a case in point. What's normal behaviour for many human beings can be labelled as sexually deviant in a SEND pupil, purely because they don't realise other people shouldn't be able to see them doing it. Stay calm and teach them appropriate safety rules, support them as they learn and help them feel confident in their own body.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Autistic pupils will all have their own questions and reactions to these topics. To extend their understanding, we will often develop further lessons about relationships and how people interact with each other in different ways as they mature. These might include changing notions of personal space, body language and the need to be a 'social detective' – searching for clues that tell us what people's intentions might be.

- At primary, these lessons can support their transition to secondary school in making new friends and understanding that sexual talk can be part of what children say to each other. We teach that talking to a trusted adult is a way to keep learning about what's appropriate and what isn't.

Lynn McCann has been an autism specialist teacher for over 12 years, is a teacher trainer, and author of the books How to Support Children with ASC in Primary School, How to Support Students with ASC in Secondary School and Stories that Explain, all published by LDA

The language of life experience



Sarah Helton offers up an English lesson that explores the vocabulary used – and the emotions felt – during key life experiences

@backpocketteach backpocketteacher.co.uk



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- The vocabulary of emotions
- How these emotions are expressed in written form (eg. in cards and newspapers)
- The different emotions experienced during different key life experiences
- How we look after ourselves at difficult times in our lives

This exciting KS1 English lesson has been written by Sarah Helton of BackPocketTeacher. Sarah has over 20 years' experience in the field of education, currently works as a SEND trainer, consultant and author, and is an assistant head teacher.

This lesson develops children's reading and writing skills, while teaching them about the emotions experienced during key points in our lives – birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, births and deaths. This lesson will also help teach children how to achieve positive wellbeing and maintain a good level of personal, mental and emotional health.

START HERE



This lesson develops children's reading skills through examining the messages contained in greetings cards and the births and death announcements found in newspapers.

Before the lesson, take a trip to your local newsagents to buy some newspapers (checking first that they include birth announcements and obituaries) and a range of birthday, wedding, anniversary, new baby and condolence cards.

Write the cards for and from fictitious people, and place them in their accompanying envelopes so that they're sealed and ready for the children to open during the lesson.

MAIN LESSON

1 INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

Start the lesson by sitting all the children in a circle. Choose five children to, one at a time, open and read a greetings card from each of the five different types – birthday, wedding, anniversary, new baby and condolence. Ask each of the five children to read their card aloud, including any printed messages on the front of the card, text inside the card and any personal message you might have added.

After each card has been read aloud, discuss with the class whether they think the words used in the cards will help someone undergoing that particular life experience. Are some of the words vague? Do the words and phrases really get to the point of what the life experience is? Perhaps some do and others don't – if so, why is that?

Support the children in getting to the understanding that some people struggle to talk about death in an open manner, and encourage the children to think about whether it would actually be better if everyone was more open about death, since it's a part of all of our lives.

Ask two children with a higher reading ability to read the birth announcement and obituary. With the class, talk



about the language used in the birth announcement and new baby card. Does it differ? Then do the same with obituary and condolence card.

2 GROUP WORK

Divide the children into seven groups. Give five of the groups a different set of cards each (birthday, wedding, anniversary, new baby and condolence) and give the top two ability groups in the class a newspaper announcement (birth or death). Each group then writes down the emotions expressed in their set of cards or newspaper announcement, and continues to add to the list with their own ideas of the type of emotions associated with that life experience.

Each group then thinks about whether the words they'd say to a person, face-to-face, about that particular life experience would be different to the words written in the cards or newspaper announcement. If they think they would be, can they explain why?

Once the groups have had enough time to complete the tasks above, bring the class back together to share their findings. Each group presents their emotions vocabulary list, followed by the words they would use when verbally speaking to a person about that specific life experience.



Ask the children if they'd prefer the writing in the cards and newspaper announcements to be more like the words they'd use in person.

Next, get two children from each group to role play the life experience they were given. For example, the group that had the 'new baby cards' chooses one member of the group to be a person meeting a mum (a second pupil in that group) who's recently had a baby.

3 CONCLUSION

To conclude the lesson, ask the children what they think they would need to get them through a difficult time in their life, such as a death. Encourage the children to think about the importance of talking and sharing how we're feeling with others – and how, if our friends and family are struggling to help us, we can also talk to someone else that we trust, such as a teacher or doctor.

Finally, ask the children what they would like others to do to help them celebrate a special event in their life, like a birthday or wedding. The children will probably talk about celebrations and parties – use this as a way to talk about the importance of sharing happy times with others and all of the emotions that surround a joyous celebration.

Sarah Helton of BackPocketTeacher is an assistant headteacher at a special school and a consultant specialising in child bereavement, grief and loss

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Write a birth announcement for a baby they know, or perhaps for a royal baby.
- Write an obituary for someone who's special to them and has died. Get the children to research them and use a mix of facts and their own personal anecdotes to tell their reader all about this special person. The text could be presented in the style of a newspaper obituary.
- How many euphemisms are there for death? Research this using the internet and by asking children and adults around the school. Do these different words and phrases help us to cope with death? What do they think are the best words to use when telling someone that a person has died?

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- How did you feel on your birthday?
- What emotions do you think new parents feel when they have a baby?
- Have you experienced someone special dying (including pets)? How did you feel?
- How can we best support someone when they are bereaved?

Are you using your TAs properly?



With research painting a mixed picture of how effective TAs are in the classroom, schools need to be clear as to what their role should be, says **Kate Sarginson**...

Teaching Assistants have been a staple in classrooms up and down the country for decades. An extra adult in the classroom, for a fraction of the price of a teacher; a go-to person for helping with displays, trips, exam invigilation, photocopying, lunchtime clubs, playground duty, fetcher of wet paper towels – the list goes on.

The prevailing view in schools seems to be that we've become heavily reliant on TAs, without being sure as to how and why. We feel they make a difference, we can't imagine our schools without them, and they're probably really nice people to boot, but how certain are we that their presence in the classroom makes a real impact on educational outcomes?

TAs are commonly assigned to support pupils with SEN. Our most complex and vulnerable children and young people are often entrusted to the care of people in this role, with money (chiefly from the Pupil Premium) increasingly being spent on deploying additional TAs, to the point where this spend accounted for around 18% of primary schools' budgets in 2016/17. It's therefore not surprising that at a time of increasing financial constraints, questions are being asked about how effective that spending has actually been.

Regularly reviewing your TA provision and making informed decisions about what it involves is essential for ensuring accountability and checking that your resources are being spent responsibly. SENCos should engage with the limited, but growing amount of available research on TA effectiveness, and be brave enough to stop automatically repeating the same TA support arrangements from one academic year to the next. SENCos might have to start thinking differently about the role, challenging assumptions, and being categorically clear when justifying the required spend.

Managing expectations

Digging into a summary of existing research into TA effectiveness by the Education Endowment Foundation (see **tinyurl.com/eef-ta-18**), it seems the ways in which TAs are developed and deployed makes a significant difference to how effective they are. Time therefore needs to be put into unpacking why some TAs are ineffective, and identifying ways of maximising their impact in the classroom.

Individual personalities and competencies aside, there are some contributing factors that could be seen as setting TAs up to fail. TAs are meant to be led and guided by teachers. So why are trainee teachers not specifically taught in depth about the TA role, and how to utilise and direct TAs during their training? How a TA is deployed should be a crucial element of lesson planning and reflection. The structure of the school day, combined with the hierarchical nature of education settings, means that pre-lesson communication between teachers and TAs is limited at best, and more likely non-existent. Without clear knowledge of the teacher's expectations, many TAs will enter classrooms not knowing what's going to happen in the lesson, or what the teacher even wants them to do.

TAs will have countless insights, suggestions and questions about the lesson and the pupils they're working with, yet bizarrely, this level of reflective professional dialogue rarely takes place after lessons. That's a huge loss to the teaching and learning process; that it isn't a staple of both roles seems nonsensical.

Teachers first

SENCos should be encouraged by the 2014 SEND Code of Practice, which clearly emphasises the need for quality first teaching and that teachers are responsible for the development and progress of all the students in their class. Pupils with SEN aren't, and have never been, solely the domain of the TA.

Thought could perhaps be given to an alternative model of in-class support, where TAs can be directed to work with children of a wider range of abilities so that the teacher – the more highly trained specialist – can focus on those children with SEN. Some parents might benefit from a conversation that reframes the notion of what classroom support for their child should look like. Be careful that parents don't get the



TA TIPS

- Understand that TAs are highly valued by parents, and that any change to provision must be broached sensitively.
- Educate and reassure parents of pupils with SEND that not having a TA constantly at their child's side can actually be a positive measure.
- Bear in mind that working with TAs isn't a key part of ITT, and that NQTs might therefore need structured support to maximise their use.
- Stress that teachers are responsible for pupils of all ability levels in the classroom – TAs should support learning, not supplement their teaching.
- Time should be set aside for teachers and TAs to engage in joint planning and evaluation, and go about the process of building a professional working relationship.

impression that the teacher isn't able or responsible for meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, and that the TA should be their first port of call. Parents need to understand that TAs work from the direction of the teacher; it's the teacher who will ultimately oversee their child's educational progress, development and well-being.

Research has shown that TAs who are trained to deliver specific programmes and interventions on a one-to-one or small group basis can have a positive impact on pupil achievement. Yet how often are TAs able to access opportunities for CPD so they can up-skill, learn and diversify? Programme delivery results equate to measurable outcomes that are quantitative, and which can complement the *qualitative* difference TAs often bring to the table from the close working relationships they have with pupils. If a wage is being paid, then we need to see positive outcomes. That's what we expect from teachers – why should it be any different for those in a support role?



Where TAs are deemed to have been ineffective, a number of questions arise. Do TAs feature in the school development plan? Is their role carefully considered as part of a broader strategy, or treated as more of an afterthought by school leaders? TAs should have competency standards to adhere to, and be recognised as professionals by their colleagues. Is there a formal appraisal structure, where TAs are set targets, and are challenged and supported in their role? Is there any accountability or do they simply turn up, wing it and go home?

Making a difference

There is, however, a complication in that the EEF's findings seem to contradict LA recommendations. EHCPs often state that TA support is essential for specific pupils, putting SENCOs in something of a quandary – legally obliged to provide TA support, whilst becoming increasingly aware that it may not actually work.

The EEF's aforementioned Teaching & Learning Toolkit states that TAs are 'Low impact for high cost, based on limited evidence.' As a long-serving SENCo, I find this hard to digest. I've previously had the pleasure of working with many TAs over the years, and have seen first-hand the pastoral difference they can make – but it's not hard to do the maths. The EEF's conclusions evidently challenge the long-held assumption that TAs are a necessity.

With funding becoming ever more precious, we have an obligation to carefully examine how funds can be allocated to ensure pupils with SEN make progress. Consider the term 'Teaching Assistant' – it's a post whose holders are supposed to *assist* with the process of *teaching*. If the business of teaching is learning, pupils have to learn better as the result of a TA's presence. In turn, schools have to be certain that the individuals employed in these roles are providing value for money and making a tangible difference to pupil outcomes.



Kate Sarginson is assistant headteacher at Berwick Middle School, Northumberland and a former SENCo

"The High Needs Block isn't fit for purpose"

Paul Silvester makes the case for why the country's recently overhauled system of SEND funding is failing those it's supposed to help...



The unseen crisis in SEND isn't just about money. It's about leadership. When announcing recently that £25 million will be spent on government contracts to provide SEND-related parental information, participation and partnering services, Nadhim Zahawi, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families said that he wanted, "Every child to have the support they need to unlock their potential." That sentiment is welcome, but what many children and families need concerns appropriate funding, a suitable placement or even just a means of holding others to account. As such, this support seems to be something of a sticking plaster – in many LA areas, the deficit in the High Needs Block amounts to half as much as the cost of the announcements made. It's a deflection.

The new national funding formula for schools, high needs and the central school services block was introduced in April this year, and I believe it's already failed. There's no grasp of the structural problems with funding special needs education. The system seems designed to encourage all parties to fight with each other, there's no role for the regional school commissioners and no leadership from government.

As schools, LAs and parents square up to each other, the root causes of the problems we're facing – lack of central direction and control, inadequate funding – go ignored. We want to ensure that the most vulnerable children in our communities have opportunities to thrive, rather than simply exist; to contribute to society instead of relying on benefits.

Before being appointed headteacher of a 2-19 special school, I used to work at a local authority. While there, I once came across a demand to continue with provision for a child in the independent sector that cost £245,000 a year. The child in question was a 9-year-old with complex needs who had just been placed in residential provision by another LA many miles away. The mother was newly arrived in the area, and we were now responsible for picking up the tab.

I had spent the previous 12 months working flat out with parents and providers to reduce the out of area budget, so that the needs of mainstream pupils could be met through appropriate funding. Just two weeks before the aforementioned parent contacted our LA, I'd been able to inform the Director of Children's Services that I'd managed to save the £1 million required for additional funds to be transferred to the mainstream primary budget.

It's cases like this that make me wonder how central government can expect the High Needs Block, where funds are so precarious, to be used for expensive placement. In this instance, viable alternatives weren't even considered. We had a situation where the arrival of one additional pupil represented 10% of a special school's annual budget.

Tough nut to crack

In May this year, a survey from the County Councils Network found that just under £200m was overspent by county councils on the High Needs Block over three years. It's long been evident that what we require is a High Needs Block controlled by a partnership (with a role for central

government) to ensure that it's able to actually meet local needs.

As it is, we have a national system of high needs funding that's struggling to adequately meet the needs of a rising pupil population, and attracting anger from parents and schools because of those unmet needs.



Given how much energy we've seen central government put into reducing regional discrepancies in mainstream education, it's unfortunate that fair funding for the most vulnerable has proved a tougher nut to crack. Between neighbouring LAs, funding for mainstream, special or alternative SEND provision for equivalent ages and types of need can vary by as much as 50%, and sometimes even more.

If working out needs is so difficult, then perhaps 'expected outcomes' might be a better metric to use as a basis for funding. Outcomes speak universally and positively, while the word 'needs' tends to have depressing or negative connotations. If outcomes can be defined and measured in some way, then so too can the support and funding necessary to achieve them.

That way, we can start to reach agreement on those areas where it's possible to have a common format for supporting outcomes and defining, however loosely, an agreed funding framework to support young people in achieving them. From Penrith to Portsmouth, from Southampton to South Shields, our children aren't 'a diagnosis'. They're not just points on a spreadsheet. We need to change the focus of the conversation to their future. And we can do that by ensuring that funding is awarded fairly, for delivery of agreed outcomes, while holding professionals properly accountable for their successes or failures in doing so.

To the moon and back

Historically, much of the SEND support schools would receive was based at the LA, which would dispatch specialist support teams out to schools, but the cuts we've seen in recent years have scaled back the support available from LAs dramatically.

Despite that, most primary schools I've worked with will go to the moon and back to support pupils with special needs. The chief issue many mainstream providers face is that the roll-out of high needs funding has coincided with the adoption of a new high stakes accountability system driven by exam results, which seen has seen a greater focus on child protection, but also a failure of budgets to keep pace. The culture across both primary and secondary can be seen to have shifted as a result, with many schools now looking to place their most vulnerable pupils somewhere else, instead of being able to provide specialist support and resources themselves. Consequently, yet more pressure is placed onto already strained special schools.

The growth of the academies system has further reduced the workforce available to each LA. Many LA SEND specialists are employed on short-term contracts and dependent on yearly awards of funding from central government. We've lost a great deal of expertise at the local level, and with it, years of accumulated knowledge concerning schools, pupils and parents built up over time.

Given a changing population, the reluctance of some academy chains to provide extra resources and out of area provision no longer seen as being desirable, the High Needs Block has necessarily been refreshed, but not properly reviewed. In essence, the High Needs Block as it currently stands is equivalent to planning a holiday based on a decade-old map, years-old TripAdvisor reviews and a budget based on 2008 prices.

A better system

For schools, LAs, parents and both current and future pupils, the High Needs Block isn't fit for purpose. I believe it's unfair to expect LAs alone to fund placements in the case of specialised and costly residential provision, but LAs are often up against it where those kind of negotiations are concerned. The numbers involved are small and the pressure to find placements high, often under considerable time pressures.

We need a better system. There must be scope for LAs to work alongside parents and providers when commissioning new provision, and funding should be based on delivering quality outcomes, rather than a postcode lottery. Central government could set out a framework of funding, as they're currently doing for the mainstream sector. We can make it so that a pupil's funding isn't dependent on the rhetorical skills of their parents.

If Ofsted can keep a close eye on the impact of Pupil Premium, then it can surely examine the outcomes set out in EHCPs. This would give schools a powerful incentive to track the successes of their most vulnerable pupils. Above all, we need leadership from central government and faith in the wider SEND system. What we need aren't times tables, but times of fairness. We can do better than this.

WHAT CAN I DO?

As practitioners, we need to advocate, but above all the system needs to work together. Here's how we can do that:

- If you're in a mainstream school, link up with your nearest special school or alternative provision setting. Try and facilitate meet ups between pupils of different settings and foster an inclusive culture.
- Find out what's in your LA's Local Offer and check to see what's missing. Is there anything you can provide, or some local initiative you can be part of? If so, do it!
- Attend some local events alongside parents groups; try to break down the barriers and view things from a range of perspectives.
- See if there are any links for pupils with SEND you can establish with local businesses, fundraising events or community initiatives and share them with others.



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- are developmental in nature and open to personalisation - they start at the beginning of the individual pupil's learning journey and aim for the highest level of independence possible
- cover all stages of education from 2 to 25 (and beyond) but are not directly related to either age or key stage. Learners fit into them where they will according to their individual abilities, interests and learning journey
- are not related to the National Curriculum, though the common language of the P Scales is occasionally used for ease of understanding.

What should we expect a MODERN SENCO TO DO?

Michelle Haywood reflects on how strategic decision-making has become an increasingly important part of the SENCo's role



Back in 1978, a publication entitled 'Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people' was presented to the government. More commonly known as 'The Warnock Report', its publication followed a detailed enquiry commissioned three years earlier to consider the needs of 'handicapped' learners.

40 years on, it's hard to appreciate just how revolutionary The Warnock Report was in changing the narrative around SEN and its influence on subsequent government legislation. It did much to popularise terminology now firmly established around our educational narrative, such as replacing medical classifications with 'special educational needs' for the first time and removing categorisations such as 'handicapped' and 'educationally subnormal'. The 'statement of special educational needs' it proposed would continue to be used by LAs for decades to come.

The Warnock Report didn't use the term 'SENCo', but it did suggest that headteachers in 'ordinary' schools "Delegate responsibility for special needs to a designated specialist teacher" with an understanding of SEN, who would work with pupils in small groups or one-to-one to support pupils' individual needs. From these early beginnings, the SEND co-ordination we now recognise was born.

Seven specialisms?

The 1994 SEN Code of Practice subsequently formalised this 'Special Educational Needs Coordinator' role, recognising it as a position within its own right. Many TAs who had shown expertise in supporting learners with SEND were initially assigned the role, but after a change to the law in 2008, all SENCos were required to be qualified teachers.

In 2014, the SEND Code of Practice identified four broad areas of need (communication and interaction; cognition and learning; SEMH difficulties; sensory and/or physical needs) operating within mainstream schools, specialist schools and at LA level. Depending on the context, that means there could be up to seven areas of specialism to manage across a school. It's unlikely that a sole SENCo will specialise in all of them, yet there's often an expectation among school staff that they do.

Slowly, however, a different picture of the SENCo is emerging. There's now a growing number of 'hybrid positions', whereby deputy and assistant headteachers are increasingly taking on SENCo duties. In MATs, a SEND Director may now be appointed to lead on SEND strategy across several schools.

An online search of current school SENCo vacancies suggests the role as we understand it is steadily morphing into a more strategic one. It's not uncommon to see adverts describing SENCos as 'specialists working with the most challenging pupils in the school', while stating that the duties involved will be undertaken as part of the SLT.

While the overarching principles of The Warnock Report continue to shape how SEND is coordinated across a school, what we see now is far more focus on leadership. With every class teacher is expected to be a 'teacher of SEND', the SENCo role itself has become a hybrid of the traditional and the new, sitting somewhere between a middle and senior leadership role.



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LET'S BREAK THE CYCLE OF FAILURE

Pupils with dyslexia can and will thrive if schools can properly identify and build on their strengths, says **Jules Daulby...**

The cycle of failure can begin young. I once assessed a child in KS2, a clever young boy who did well on many of the standardised tests until we got to reading. Bursting into tears, it was clear this pupil was seriously affected by his inability to read. The suggestion of a walk meant we were able to chat informally, and it was clear this boy was frustrated. He knew he was the same as his peers – he was gifted and talented in many areas – but he just couldn't read and couldn't understand why. Not being like his friends made him feel different and ashamed.

As a SEN Support Services advisory teacher I've met many children with unexplained reading difficulties, some with dyslexia. This affects people across the intellectual range, not just bright children with a discrepancy between their verbal ability and reading. In my experience, they can be the pupil who, unless handled carefully, can present behaviour difficulties when trapped in a text-based system that they struggle to access.

The aforementioned boy had many talents. Explaining to him that he was the first child of his age I'd met to complete one of my assessments made his eyes light up. Outlining why he wasn't like his friends regarding reading, and giving this pupil something he did superbly, made the difficult journey of coping in school a little easier. For some children, their skill might be the ability to do a backflip, change sparkplugs or draw something exquisitely. Every child – and I do mean *every* child – has strengths. We must draw these out and let children with unexplained literacy difficulties identify with success.

The following week I met with the boy's mum and explained my findings. Under the then new guidance that followed the 2009 Rose Review, this boy wasn't dyslexic, despite the extensive gap between his cognitive ability and reading. Dyslexia generally requires a pattern of three areas, which if scores are low in standardised tests, would create a profile to warrant the term. Difficulties in the three components of phonological awareness, verbal memory and speed of processing are why children might struggle with literacy.

This child was in the average range for the latter two, but had low scores in the first. The mother was relieved. Someone had assessed her child, and she knew what the likely reason was for his reading difficulty. She told me that there were reading difficulties in the family (she was a scientist, and had learned to read late in school) but nothing affecting the later years. A similar pattern would likely emerge for her son, since there are known genetic links to literacy difficulties such as dyslexia. But what to do in the meantime?

Focusing on strengths

The first thing was to concentrate on his strengths, to ensure he knew that he wasn't stupid or lazy, and that he'd just take a bit longer to learn to read. I talked to the school about multi-sensory phonics teaching, and how this needed to be intensive, acute and precise. There was no need to work on comprehension or oral language, as this was a boy who had a vocabulary as wide as someone twice his age, and appeared to have a similarly advanced understanding of language.

While the school worked on phonics and decoding I recommended that at home the family read aloud, and that if he was on his own, he use audiobooks to give him access



to complex texts that matched his verbal ability, without the need to decode. Using text to speech on phones, iPads and laptops would further enable him to let technology decode for him.

In the accessibility settings of most smartphones and tablets there's an option to activate a device's 'speak' function. Enabling learners to decode while the gap closes can reduce frustration and alleviate a negative behaviour cycle. It's also worth remembering how tiring things can be for a child who's not yet at automaticity. Things take longer, and when combined with anxiety, can manifest as misbehaviour, when they could simply need a break.

In school, I'd written a programme for the specialist reading TA to run which used precision teaching on where the boy was regarding his letters and sound knowledge. This was for booster sessions – as I was working in the school each week, I knew that he would get half an hour a day on this, so what to do for the rest of the day? His teacher, who was very responsive to the needs of her pupils, wouldn't make him read aloud in front of the class (which was why he'd cried with me when I'd asked him to). She would instead ensure he accessed text via a reader, be they teaching staff or peers, and allow him extra time as part of a 'less is more' approach.

Reading to learn

The above is an outline of great practice, identification, assessment, planning for a child with a wide vocabulary and good verbal understanding – ensuring they're able to access text and record their knowledge in class, alongside providing excellent one-to-one phonics outside the class for the shortest time possible with a highly qualified member of staff.

For children, having a reading difficulty isn't easy. While the early years and KS1 are generally where children will be taught to read, it's soon time for them to begin *reading to learn*. If, for whatever reason, this hasn't happened, then a negative cycle of failure can ensue and sometimes be exacerbated by increased anxiety and feelings of worthlessness.

Unless a school is careful to communicate with a child that they're not, the belief can take hold that they're stupid. If the child then increasingly refuses to even attempt to read and write, they might form the impression from others that they're lazy.

The wrong group

Sarah and Mark Driver's son Archie is dyslexic. While extremely articulate and talented, he still can't read and write. Now aged 19, Archie still remembers being kept in at lunchtimes during Y1 because he refused to write, and how it felt to be punished from an early age for something he couldn't do.

Looking back, it's likely that the behaviour around his refusal lay behind those classroom lunchtimes: *'Can't read' – 'Do more reading' – 'Don't understand why I can't read' – 'It's my fault' – 'Refuse to read' – 'Punished' – 'Can't read...'* Unless dealt with very sensitively, this is what the cycle of failure can look like.

Another area which can often cause difficulties is being put in the same intervention alongside children who don't have similar needs. There may be other children who have poor comprehension, a narrow vocabulary and also can't read. It's likely that they'll require intensive language work, and that phonics isn't an isolated issue.

For the dyslexic child who needs pure phonics, this is the wrong group for them. At worst, it could further embed behaviour problems. The dyslexic child may feel embarrassed at being included in the group, and their superior language skills can potentially intimidate other children in the same intervention who might need slower and quieter working spaces.

Groupings and interventions must be bespoke to the child – otherwise, it's equivalent to teaching a visually impaired learner to hear. The Simple View of Reading is a good place to start for deciding which children should be in which type of intervention, or 'booster' as I prefer to call it.

In early years, having knowledge of the child in front of you is vital. If their needs are met outside the classroom in the form of rigorous boosters, and if an understanding is reached of how they can work in class, then there's no reason for that child to fail. Instead, they can flourish.

READING SUPPORT – HABITS THAT HELP

- **Be time sensitive**
  A child not reading with automaticity will take longer, and there may also be other pupils in the class who process language more slowly. Responsive teaching should be able to differentiate between these pupils and adapt accordingly.
- **Avoid too much language**
  Use short, concise instructions and wait for a response. A child's difficulties might not be related to vocabulary (so don't simplify), but pupils with short-term memory difficulties won't remember a long list of instructions. They might *understand* complex instructions, but not be able to retain them.
- **Less is more**
  Let pupils create a quality piece of writing with bullet points for sections of work, or a storyboard to accompany a single paragraph written really well.
- **Seek out alternative assessments.**
  Could a TA scribe? Will video or photo evidence be appropriate for certain activities?



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THE MEMORY-LIGHT CLASSROOM

Neil MacKay explains why the issues experienced by dyslexic learners in the classroom can often stem from their working memory – and what teachers can do to support them...

Pupils on the dyslexia spectrum are easy to spot. They tend to think faster than they can read, write, spell and get their ideas down on paper – which resonates well with the Scottish HMIE's description of dyslexia as "Marked differences in terms of competencies in certain areas, especially with regard to oral versus text-based skills."

Another common marked difference in competency involves a a pupil's age/ability-appropriate verbal or perceptual reasoning coming up against unexpected issues relating to their working memory and processing speed, as highlighted in 2011 book *The Dyslexic Advantge* by Brock and Fernette Eide. Dyslexic pupils can present as not understanding, when in actual fact they have often forgotten what to do next. In effect, they are 'quick forgetters'. The challenge is to overcome the 'forgetting curve' (see fig 1).

The forgetting curve shows how pupils forget 20% of a lesson upon leaving the room, a further 20% during a 20-minute playtime, and can only recall around 33% of the lesson come the next day. That's one reason why our content-heavy National Curriculum is so difficult to cover without applying some research-validated principles to our teaching – and it also explains why pupils on the dyslexia spectrum can struggle to show their true ability.

There are, however, three 'memory-light', dyslexia-aware approaches that can enable quick-forgetters to keep their learning uppermost in their minds – 'mastery learning', 'spaced review' and 'assessment for learning'.

1. Mastery learning

Mastery learning is based on the premise that most pupils can learn most things, given enough time and appropriate teaching. To that end, learning becomes the constant and time the variable, especially when grooving in key skills, but there's an opportunity cost involved. In this case, the 'cost' is teaching less content in the early stages, balanced against the opportunity to teach a little less a little more effectively, safe in the knowledge that the pace can be picked up once core skills are embedded. Mastery learning for dyslexic quick forgetters will therefore involve the following four principles:

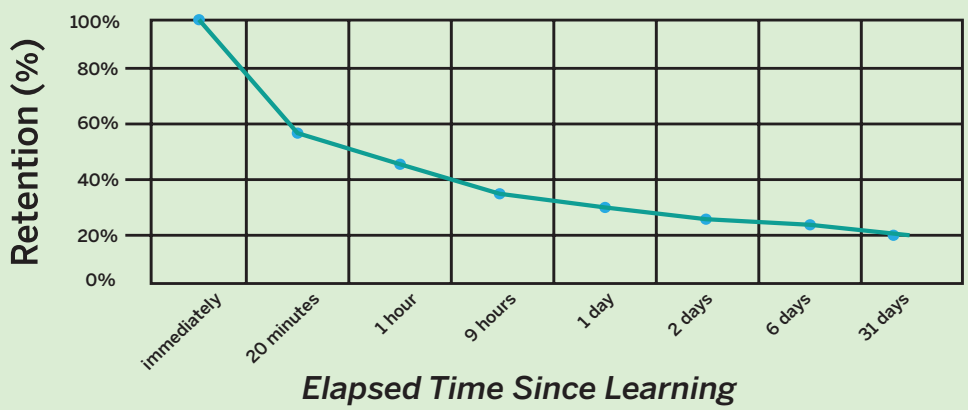
A) Each lesson begins with a quick demonstration of mastery. Working with a partner to jot down three important points from the previous lesson, without needing to be told, is a quick demonstration of mastery. This helps bring quick forgetters up to speed.

B) Each lesson also ends with a demonstration of mastery. This enables teachers to assess the impact of their teaching and sets imperatives for subsequent differentiation and personalisation. Research has shown that 'low stakes/no stakes' quizzes at the end of lessons can double the rate of retention. Getting pupils to create the questions themselves further increases this impact by harnessing the power of peer tutoring.

C) Ideally, only 15% of a lesson should be new; lessons should re-visit up to 85% of the content, knowledge, skills and concepts from the preceding lesson and continue in that vein. By teaching less content early on in a Key Stage, schools can ensure that core skills are properly taught, firmly embedded and ready for development later in the syllabus. From the perspective of dyslexic quick forgetters, this memory-light approach provides frequent opportunities for re-visiting. 'Overlearning' in this way also creates episodic memories based on what's gone before, which is a very dyslexia-aware strategy.

D) The final principle is to adopt the 'I say, we say, you say'/'I do, we do, you do' mantra, rather than ask "Who can tell me?" The former ensures that pupils start with a correct model and get it right first time. Dyslexic quick forgetters are liable to

FIG 1 **Ebbeinghaus Forgetting Curve**



remember things that they've learnt incorrectly and have to be subsequently corrected, such as their spelling of 'eny' (any) and 'thay' (they). Rather than attempting to change the habits of a lifetime, it's better to get everything right first time.

2. Spaced review

The next step towards empowering quick forgetters is to ensure their learning is checked regularly throughout the lesson. Spaced review consolidates learning and highlights any problems and misconceptions, giving teachers regular feedback on the impact their teaching is having.

The ideal 'space' between each review depends on the attention span of the class and/or individual. There's a simple formula you can use for this:

Attention span (in minutes) = chronological age + 2

The typical attention span of an 8-year-old will therefore be 10 minutes, and so on. Although pupils will appear to concentrate beyond this notional figure, each minute thereafter becomes subject to the law of diminishing returns.

Having begun with a demonstration of mastery from the previous lesson, after every 10 minutes or so we will therefore need to inject quick 'assessment for learning activities' to check our impact so far. The feedback from these activities will then determine the direction of the lesson for the class and/or individuals, as it becomes clear that some are ready to move on while others need more time.

3. Assessment for learning

Dylan Wiliam suggests that formative assessment can double the speed of learning, because it builds on all the principles outlined above.

Using a range of formative strategies helps to gauge the impact of teaching and ensures that we teach the pupils, rather than the lesson. A 60-minute memory-lite lesson for 13-year old-quick forgetters (with a notional attention span of 15 minutes) might therefore look like this:

Minute 1: Quick demonstration of mastery – three key points from last lesson.

Minute 16: *"Tell your neighbour the most important point so far – then share with the table."* Warn some quick forgetters that they'll be asked to share with the class, but check discreetly that they've got a good answer before going public.

Minute 31: *'Muddiest point'* – pupils work with a partner or their table to identify one thing that isn't clear. This harnesses the power of peer tutoring; anything which can't be resolved this way obviously needs re-teaching, so it's a win-win.

Minute 46: Prepare a quiz question that a teacher might ask.

Minute 59: Quick demonstration of mastery using pupil generated quiz questions

To reiterate, there's a cost to working in this way, in that less subject content can be covered during the early months of the year, but an opportunity in that what you teach will be remembered much more effectively. The teaching and learning can then accelerate as the year unfolds.

Dyslexic students are too often criticized for lacking in concentration or motivation, because they appear to be struggling having got off to a good start. The reality is often that they've forgotten what to do next – the solution to which is to become a 'memory-light classroom'.

6 QUICK FIXES FOR QUICK FORGETTERS

1. Check mastery at the beginning and end of lessons.
2. Use the 'attention span rubric' to chunk more – aim to teach a bit less, a bit more effectively.
3. Use a range of 'assessment for learning' activities to monitor the impact of your teaching.
4. Plan accommodations around 'dyslexia time', working on the basis that it will take twice as long to produce half as much.
5. Use a 'hands down' approach to class questions – allow pupils time to process, take up and think, before telling their partner and then the rest of their table.
6. Focus on your quick forgetters by telling them 'The next question is yours' – but only ask it after allowing them take up and discussion time, and discreetly checking that the answer will be correct. There should be no putting pupils on the spot for quickfire answers unless the individuals are sufficiently confident.



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RECOGNISE & ADDRESS YOUR DYSLEXIA NEEDS



Alais Winton highlights some of the dyslexia signs schools should look out for – and what to do if they spot them…

Identification

1. Phonetic spellings
Spelling things as they sound tends to be a very common trait among children with dyslexia. Look also for inconsistent spelling and grammar – a child may potentially spell the same word in three different ways, one of which might be correct.

2. Unusual subject outcomes
Look for low reading and spelling results in relation to other subjects where they otherwise fare much better. Pupils with dyslexia will often possess a much higher verbal ability in comparison to their written work. When talking to that pupil, they may come across as more articulate than their written work might suggest.

3. Literal thinking
Pupils with dyslexia can struggle to understand idioms and proverbs, and tend to have a very literal way of thinking, making it hard for them to understand expressions such as 'Water off a duck's back.' One of my past clients was once asked by his mum whether 'It was sinking in', and he immediately looked to see what was sinking – he didn't understand the analogy, mistaking it for something happening right now.

4. Early assessment scores
Early assessment is very important. Some schools will do this using online software solutions, others will talk to their pupils and ask them to perform particular writing tasks or other activities. Both processes should help identify certain traits, tendencies or 'at risk' factors that can be reported back to parents, though only an educational psychologist will be able to provide an official diagnosis.

5. Performance at KS2
The earlier an identification can be made the better, but dyslexia often doesn't get picked up before the age of 7. In my own experience, signs of dyslexia more commonly start to emerge around the ages of 9 and 10 – but even then, there can be a degree of uncertainty as to what the child's particular traits and tendencies might indicate.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

Parents will want as much information about their child's progress as possible. Research continues into whether dyslexia can be classed as a genetic condition and to what extent, but it may well be the case one or both of the child's parents might be dyslexic themselves. This might apply to a single-parent family, which may make it harder for the parent to work on reading with their child. The parent may additionally be 'time-poor'.

In those instances, I'd recommend that the parent and child play language-related games together. A couple I'd recommend include the spelling, punctuation and grammar board game Breaking News, which is aimed at ages seven 7 and up (see learningresources.co.uk). Crossbow Education (crossboweducation.com) also produces some good specialist grammar games, though it's worth taking into account the severity of the child's dyslexia when deciding on whether a particular game is age appropriate. Consider also whether there will be an adult they can play the game with.

Inclusion

1. Vary your print materials
Where possible, print class handouts on yellow paper. This won't necessarily help all children with dyslexia, but can it can benefit a significant number – and doing so will ultimately make no difference for those who aren't dyslexic. Try to print text in large fonts so that the material is easier to read.



2. Use handouts
Homework tasks and method sheets should be given to pupils as handouts. On a number of occasions I've had children tell me about homework tasks they've been set that were written on the board or explained via verbal instructions that they had to write down. By the time they get home they've no idea what they've actually written, and therefore no clue as to what they're supposed to be doing. Issue instructions and criteria on handouts whenever you can. This will not only save time, but help all children in the class, rather than just some.

3. Keep groups small
It can be useful in theory-heavy lessons, such as maths and English, to set group activities that present learning objectives in a more engaging way. In my book *Fun Games and Activities for Children with Dyslexia* there's an 'English terms rap' activity, where pupils examine antonyms and verbs and explain them in the style of a rap form by working together in small groups. One could be beatboxing, while others perform the different verses.

4. Use the right tools
I've found the Texthelp Read and Write DSA Gold software application (see dyslexic.com) to be very good – it adds a floating toolbar to your desktop that includes a phonetic spell checker, text-to-speech, picture dictionaries and other useful tools to help with reading and writing. For books and other printed materials the C-Pen (available via the same site) is amazing. Plug in a pair of headphones, hold it like a normal pen and the tiny camera in its 'nib' will read text aloud to you as you move it along lines of words. It also has a built-in dictionary that lets users highlight specific words and have their meanings read out.

5. Exercise caution
One thing I'd advise against is asking dyslexic pupils to correct their own spelling mistakes. I've spoken to some clients who've been asked by their teacher to correct their own spelling mistakes at home, but they simply can't see them. On a related note, teachers should try to highlight the positive aspects of dyslexic pupils' work, as well as correcting their errors. Confidence building is crucial – often, someone with dyslexia may put in a great deal effort but receive little in the way of recognition, making it harder for them to maintain confidence in their learning.

FEEDBACK

If somebody's made lots of spelling and grammatical errors, it's easy to cover their sheet or workbook with corrections and forget to praise those things that are positive – areas where they've improved or aspects of their work that are particularly good. That's not always easy when you've got a huge amount of marking to get through, but it's really important that the learner can come away from a task feeling there's something good about the work they've been doing.

If I was marking the work of a pupil whose spelling and grammar is clearly poor, I'd obviously comment on that – but if the same misspelt words keep coming up repeatedly, I'd only comment on one instance and perhaps just underline the others so that they're aware. I'd also make a point of praising any especially creative ideas or noticeable improvements they might have made – particularly words they might have previously misspelt.



Alais Winton** is a provider of tuition services for 11- to 16-year-old learners with dyslexia and author of the books **The Self-Help Guide for Teens with Dyslexia** and **Fun Games and Activities for Children with Dyslexia

dyslexictuition.co.uk

How to make a school DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY

Liz Horobin highlights what two schools have done to make dyslexia-friendly practice central to how they operate



Joanne Gregory, head of Quality Mark at The British Dyslexia Association, often says she has the best job in the world. Joanne has the privilege of working with the many fantastic schools and inspiring teachers who take up the challenge of working towards the BDA's Dyslexia Friendly Schools Quality Mark (see **tinyurl.com/bda-quality**).

Since the award scheme was first introduced 16 years ago, Joanne has worked with primary and secondary schools, FE colleges and universities throughout England that have all had the same aim – to strive towards an inclusive, dyslexia-friendly environment in which all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

Here, I'd like to share with you the experiences of two such schools, looking at how they approached becoming dyslexia-friendly, and the impact their journeys had on their respective staff and pupils.

West Thornton Primary Academy, Croydon

West Thornton Primary Academy is an extraordinary school. It was awarded the BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark in December 2016, has also achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark Centre of Excellence award and is rated Outstanding by Ofsted. Both the head of school, Di Pumphrey, and deputy head, Naina Chauhan, speak of wanting to take on new challenges and constantly ask 'What's next?' – the result being a school where barriers have been removed both literally and metaphorically.

Walls have been taken down to create inspirational open learning zones, the principles underpinning the 'growth mindset' approach have been fully embraced, the children are constantly challenged and stretched to achieve their best and 'failure' is word that's barely countenanced.

That said, the school is willing to celebrate notions of struggle, telling pupils that if they find a task easy, they haven't learned. That attitude can perhaps be seen most clearly in 'The Pit'. For most children at the school this is a metaphorical concept used grasp the idea of struggling with a particular problem, but for Year 5 'The Pit' is something tangible – a separate learning zone where pupils can receive support from both teachers and peers.

It's an environment where challenges are shared and discussed freely; where dyslexic, dyspraxic and dyscalculic pupils are encouraged to be open about their difficulties, in the knowledge that they'll be heard empathetically. The working through of problems with others that often takes place in The Pit further helps them to build resilience and develop skills in collaboration and teamwork, which Di Pumphrey believes are key to success in later life.

The West Thornton Primary school belief that you can do anything you want to doesn't just apply to pupils. Staff are actively encouraged to pursue independent lifelong learning through high quality CPD and training, empowering them to identify barriers to learning and understand the importance of early intervention. Their understanding of pupils' particular needs is supported by dyslexia checklists in each of the school's learning zones, and through the use of dyslexia profiles and passports that clearly indicate what resources children require to facilitate their learning.

You can find out more about West Thornton Primary's dyslexia provision in the BDA-produced video 'Creating a dyslexia friendly school' – see tinyurl.com/dfs-wtpa

Frewen College, Rye

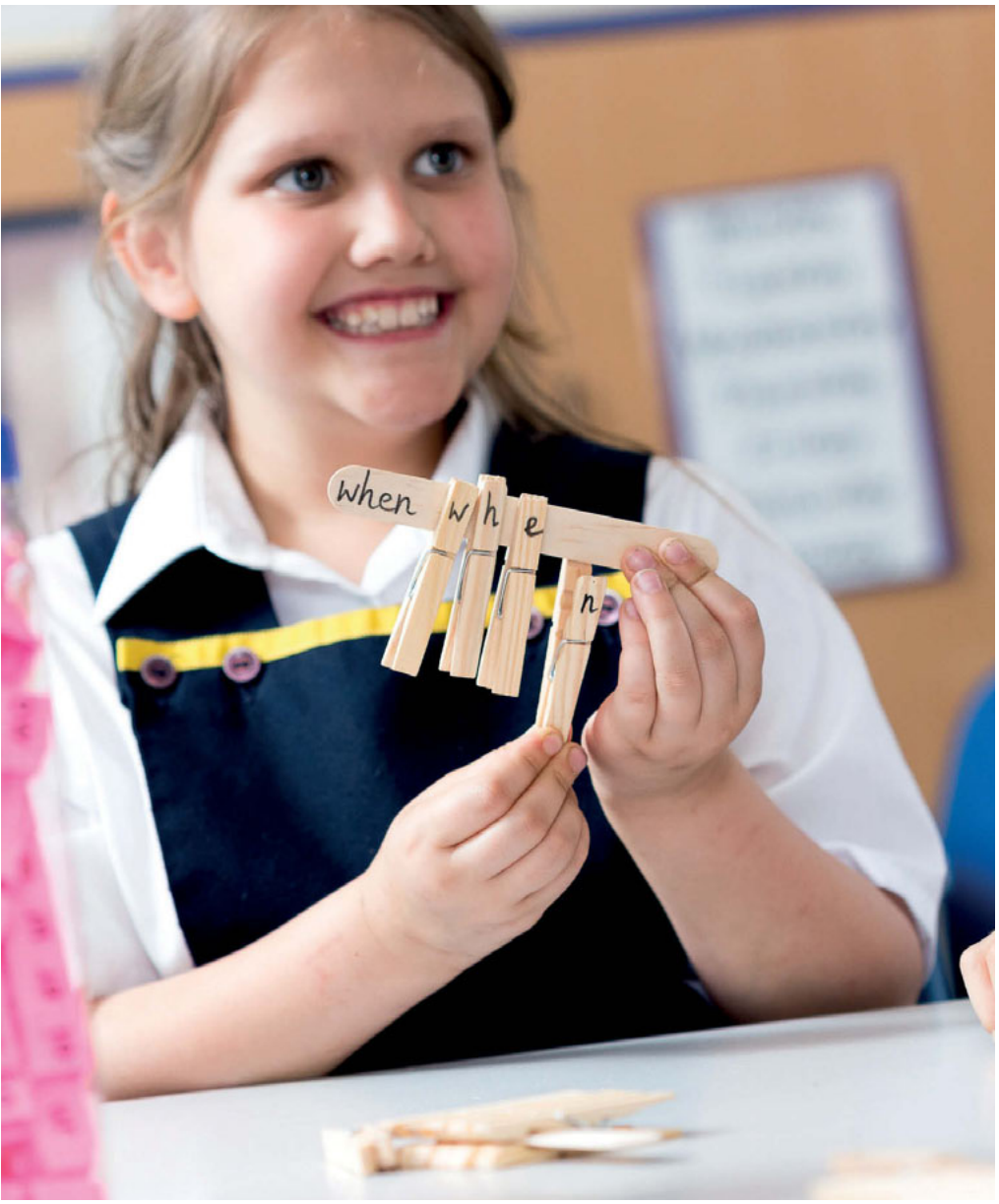
There's a similar ethos of high aspiration for all in place at Frewen College – an independent school specialising in the teaching of children with SpLD between the ages of 7 and 19, which was originally founded in 1910 (under the name Down House School) as the first specialist school for dyslexic students in England.

High on the agenda for Frewen College today is CPD and training. All staff are trained to a minimum of Level 3 in OCN's Dyslexia Awareness qualification; one teacher is trained to Level 7, while another is currently working towards their Level 5.

The school's ongoing training is led by needs that have been identified by teaching staff and provided via regular INSET days. Recently, said training has included cued articulation, Elklan speech and language and the use of assistive technologies. The school's principal, Nick Goodman, has also received dyslexia training, which has informed his vision for the school to serve as a centre of excellence for dyslexia. Thus far, this vision has seen the college become a learning hub for the local area and offer places on its INSET days to other schools within their consortium.

Pupils attending Frewen have often spent some time out of education, with the result that they're often performing well below age-related expectations and lacking in confidence and self-esteem when they arrive. This can mean that their emotional needs may need to be supported before they can begin developing the self-confidence they'll need to believe they can learn.

"It's the small things that make a real difference to their enjoyment of lessons"



All students' needs are assessed when starting at the school, in a process that includes gauging their writing and typing speeds, visual perception, and carrying out screening for visual stress. A personal learning plan is then developed, which provides staff with guidance on what adaptations will best meet the needs of each pupil, and helps them set individualised targets and success criteria.

For the pupils themselves, it's often the small things that make a real difference to their enjoyment of lessons. Pupils in Frewen's KS2 prep school are given an additional break in the school day, during which they're able to use wobble cushions, fiddle toys, writing slopes and special pencils, while being allowed to take their shoes off – all things that have had a tangible impact on their levels of engagement, compared with their experiences of attending mainstream schools.

Parents meanwhile welcome the extended amount of the time the school devotes to parents' evenings, and an open-door policy where regular parental communications with staff are actively encouraged. Parents are further appreciative of the high levels of skill and knowledge demonstrated by staff – since every classroom and lesson is dyslexia-friendly, there's no need for pupils to be taken out of class for interventions or one-to-one support, which does much to foster independent learning and self-reliance.

Frewen College was among the schools featured in a Manchester Metropolitan University study summarised in the document 'What works in dyslexia / SpLD friendly practice in the secondary school and further education college sectors: Four case studies of effective practice' – a PDF can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/mu-wwd



***Liz Horobin** has worked as a Project Director with the British Dyslexia Association since 2010, leading projects focussing on dyslexia and multilingualism, phonics at KS1 and KS2 and early intervention*





KidZania London





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- Ahead of the celebrations, we're offering a free class visit for up to 10 students and 5 teachers to KidZania London. To enter, simply email your name, school details and school email address to schools@kidzania.co.uk, quoting 'SENCo competition' in the subject line.

Further details about our STEM Fair can be found at *tinyurl.com/kz-stem-fair*

To enter, email schools@kidzania.co.uk

Competition closes at 5pm on Friday 29th June 2018. Winners will be notified within 21 days. For a copy of full competition terms and conditions, email schools@kidzania.co.uk

EMOTIONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Five Minute Box

A multi-sensory phonics programme, which enables the early identification of potential specific learning difficulties



AT A GLANCE

- Provides regular, consistent and secure basic skills for reading, spelling and writing
- Simple steps learning linked to multisensory teaching
- Designed so that no children slip through the net
- Provide baseline data for school records
- Suitable for expert or novice to support meaningful teaching



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

The quality of literacy interventions can vary greatly, from meticulously detailed to troublingly fallible, so it's imperative that we approach them with caution and a critical eye. We know that there are no magic wands, no quick-fixes, yet there are some interventions that simply do what they claim to and can really make a difference – especially if they're well targeted and well delivered. The Five Minute Literacy Box is an excellent example of something that's been expertly designed to cover basic skills, and comes presented in a clear and easy to follow way.

The level of teacher experience and approach will obviously have some impact on what pupils are able to get out of it, but the Five Minute Box is specifically designed with high quality instruction in mind, while requiring minimal training ahead of use. It comes with an instructional CD-ROM that includes some demonstrations of the Box in use and practical pointers for what to do. There's more detailed in-school training available too, covering background theory, as well as practical understanding of the intervention.

Conceived as an 'open and teach' all-in-one kit, it's well organised and contains a bundle of durable hands-on resources, including keyword cards and boards, a sounds board, 26 plastic letters, handwriting formation boards, a number formation board, whiteboard and pen, record of achievement booklets, an instruction guide and accompanying resource book with assessment sheets and keywords checklist.

The resource book is a slim, uncomplicated guide to using the Box that includes a step aside spelling programme, a spelling list, and individual record sheets for use with the keyword cards, as well as scripts for some supporting audiovisual material on the CD-ROM.

It all adds up to a programme that offers clearly focused intervention that's intentionally systematic and intensive, based around activities designed for short bursts of around 5 minutes. When subject teaching is structured in a cumulative and sequential way as it here, you'll soon start to see rapid progress. It's therefore reassuring to see that small steps and milestones are an integral part of the Box. Ideally, daily use is key to getting the most out of it, since the consistency, frequency and intensity it can help provide will all contribute to a child's mastery of English skills. Practice that is distributed throughout the week is typically more effective than practice delivered in a single block.

While different interventions will of course be relevant to particular contexts and children's specific needs, I've used the Five Minute Literacy Box in a range of schools with great results, and would confidently recommend it.

SENCo

VERDICT

- A very easy to manage teaching system straight out of the box
- Perfect for screening children on school entry
- Ideal for consolidating basic skills, supporting dyslexic pupils and EAL learners
- Gives children ownership of their own learning and progress
- Teaches self-help strategies and independence for functional literacy
- Boosts self-esteem and self-confidence

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1



Do you know your mental health obligations?

Primary schools have two main areas of responsibility for pupils' mental health, which call for very different sets of skills:

a) To support pupils with social, emotional, behavioural or diagnosable mental health difficulties that impair their learning capabilities and future life prospects – a group that comprises on average around 20% of all UK pupils

b) To provide good mental health teaching provision for all pupils as part of the curriculum.

However, some schools use mental health programmes that meet (b) to 'tick the box' of (a). Others will use inadequately trained school staff to carry out therapeutic work without clinical supervision. If a complaint is made against staff not on a register accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), the school will be found at fault, with potentially devastating consequences. Play Therapy UK manages and oversees the PSA-accredited register of play and creative arts therapists, as well as providing the initial training required for registration and ongoing CPD. **playtherapyregister.org.uk**

2

Boredom busters



Do your pupils find it hard to engage in lessons? Do they struggle to see how the content is relevant to them? Dekko Comics may have just what you need. We take school subjects and turn them into stories that are engaging, exciting and fun, while also being educational. Algebra becomes a form of magic, for example; biology is portrayed as an internal battle. The treatment of each subject involves a large cast of zany characters that ensure lessons can be made fun and accessible to everybody. A new issue is released every month and we can also provide supporting workshops and talks. **dekkocomics.com**

3



A helping hand

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on issues that are important to them, and provides a helpline that offers a friendly, understanding ear when the going gets tough. IDDT's free information packs (delivery charges apply to orders of 20 or more) can further help parents and teachers better understand the needs of children with diabetes in school.

The organisation also funds essential research and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries. As a registered charity, IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations – further information can be found via the IDDT website. **iddtinternational.org**

4



SLT your way

ChatterBug is a leading provider of speech and language therapy services, working closely with schools to support children and young adults with a wide range of communication difficulties. With a proven track record for providing high quality, evidence-based practice that provides real results, we can make a significant difference to your setting. We're familiar with the new SEN and Ofsted requirements for children with SEN, and can support you in achieving those. We at ChatterBug can work with you to create a bespoke package based on your specific needs and budget **chatter-bug.com**

INTO THE FIELD

After ideas for getting your pupils out of the classroom and engaging with nature, culture and exercise? Try this selection of school trip destinations...

1



Animal magic

Learning at Twycross Zoo is special, because nothing compares to experiencing the real thing. We provide interactive and exciting sessions for primary school students that fit in with all areas of the curriculum and are particularly well suited to the STEM agenda. The sessions are specially designed to inspire children about the natural world around them, covering topics such as 'Who Eats Who and How', 'Habitats and Adaptations' and 'Animal Senses'. Each year, 60,000 children come to Twycross Zoo as part of an educational visit. Our education officers are all DBS checked, we hold the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge and we were previously winners in the 'Best Education' category at the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) awards. **twycrosszoo.org**



2

Al fresco adventures

Essex Outdoors provides learning opportunities to schools and youth groups that range from activity days through to residential experiences and adventurous expeditions. Its four centres across Essex offer everything from aerial trekking, canoeing and climbing to mountain biking, obstacle courses and sailing. With reliable transport links to London and the wider Eastern region, Essex Outdoors is the perfect choice for your outdoor needs and can offer great value with its competitive prices.
essexoutdoors.com

Get creative

As the UK's first accessible arts and residential centre, Zinc Arts provides visitors with a truly inclusive 'learning outside the classroom' experience. Bespoke creative activities for young people and SEN groups are delivered by specialist educational providers with a passionate belief in the arts and inclusion. There's the option of running your own learning activities, visiting nearby attractions or having your students participate in Zinc Arts' creative multi-arts workshops, where trained staff offer tailor-made inclusive activities to suit different learning objectives and students' needs.
zincarts.org.uk



3

4



Curtain call

Curve is a state-of-the-art theatre based in the heart of Leicester's vibrant Cultural Quarter. As well as live performances, it offers a wide range of inspiring educational workshops intended to open up the world of theatre and reveal the hidden process of a rehearsal room. Students are given opportunities to engage more deeply with the artists, subject matter and processes involved in the theatre's artistic programme, and links are made to the curriculum.
curveonline.co.uk



5

Agricultural education

Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) works with schools to help students learn more about where their food comes from. As well as offering bespoke CPD for teachers and carrying out visits to schools, the organisation also facilitates farm visits that enable students can gain hands-on experience of the modern farming industry.
face-online.org.uk

My biggest challenge as a SENCo

One current and one former SENCo describe what it is about the role that's tested them the most...



Beth Cubberley

SENCo and deputy headteacher at Grove Wood Primary School

I love being an advocate for children with SEN. I love seeing how children can progress with the right strategies in place and how, given the right opportunities, they can thrive. It's during those moments when I can give a sticker to a pupil for trying so hard that I remember why I do what I do.

However, the biggest challenge I face as a SENCo is the relentless paperwork to ensure that those things can happen. With almost 30 EHCPs in my school, I can mostly be found either chained to my desk drowning under said paperwork, or beneath it trying to avoid writing another One Plan! I never thought all my training would lead me to this – it's by far the biggest frustration, and one I can't see changing unless the government decides to reassess its SEND agenda. Despite working in a large school, there are sometimes days when I don't actually see a child.

However, there are many Facebook groups, inspirational people on Twitter and members of the DfE SENCo forum that make things more bearable by helping me realise we're all struggling in the same way. When things seem impossible, I have to remind myself that the children – the reason I became a SENCo – are far more important than filling in forms. I remember the child that finally learnt to add their number bonds to 10. The ASD child who made a friend. And all the other children who need the support that we as SENCos can proudly offer them.

grovewoodprimary.co.uk



Pearl Barnes

SEND consultant, specialist assessor and executive director of SENDISS

I think it's fair to say the lack of time is probably the most challenging aspect of the SENCo role. When working as a SENCo I'd go from one activity to the next with barely any time to stop and take a breath.

A typical day might start with a breakfast meeting, before I had to rush back to class and organise my first lesson. Break would involve supporting and playing with pupils before my next meeting with a liaison worker or the educational psychologist. Lunchtime would involve catching up with essential paperwork or phoning an external professional, before organising the handwriting club or social skills group. After school I'd meet with my LSAs and provide training and drop-in sessions for teachers.

My work didn't stop at home. There were IEPs to review, intervention groups to plan, data to analyse and support materials to develop. I wanted to provide staff with additional information so they could support the children as holistically as possible. I also wanted to provide advice for parents who often struggled with supporting their children at home.

Despite the constant time pressures, I learnt to be persistent and relentless in pursuing provision for children with SEND. I'd be dogged in my determination to get the right support and specialist help for the children, which invariably involved nagging! The result, however, was that I managed to forge close links with external professionals, which translated into them offering more time and support than they would have done otherwise.

The pace of change, paperwork and endless meetings invariably suck time away from the grass roots of the role, which is essentially the children. I'd always aim to make time for them and try to create an environment of calm. To help ensure they felt valued as individuals, I developed the idea of a pottery club where there was no pressure – just time to talk, have fun and relax. Which is possibly the best advice for all of us!

sendiss.co.uk **@pearl_sendiss**

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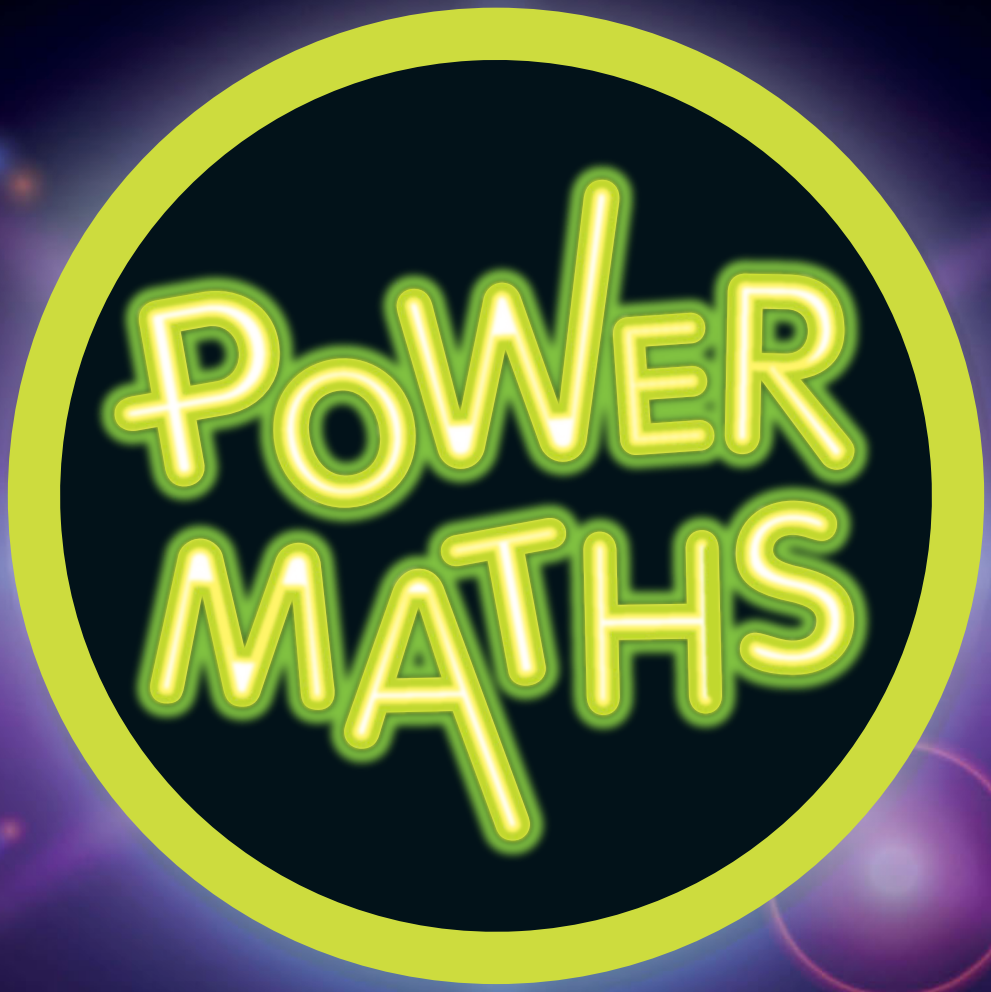
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