

HELPING YOU TO SUPPORT EVERY CHILD

teach  
PRIMARY

VOL8 ISSUE1

# SENCo

HANNAH  
RUSSELL



FROM PARALYMPIAN  
TO PRIMARY TEACHER

GREAT BRITAIN

## NO CHILD LEFT OUT

Don't differentiate,  
adapt!

*Lorraine  
Peterson*

"Schools will have  
to fight for funding"

## Need SEND staff?

Where to find  
hidden gems

CAN  
ONLINE  
TUTORING  
WORK FOR  
ALL?

## Imaginary Friends

The big benefits for  
autistic pupils

## HOW TO LEAD EXCELLENCE IN YOUR MAT



**SCIENCE**

SCHOOL SAFARI

**D&T**

READY, STEADY, COOK!

**LITERACY**

INCLUSIVITY THROUGH IMAGES



We absolutely love Maths For Life.  
It's so refreshing as a Maths Lead to  
finally have something designed  
with our learners in mind rather  
than always having to adapt  
something made for mainstream.

Katie Pollock, Ellesmere College

- ✓ value for money
- ✓ accessible via any web browser
- ✓ free Q&A sessions for support
- ✓ can adapt to any scheme of work
- ✓ engaging students
- ✓ delivering results

*"I love this maths."*  
- Felix, Oct 2022

## Save time

Over 10,000 pages of pdf  
worksheets available to view,  
download and print.

The programme provides  
**instant support**  
to educators and helps those with  
learning difficulties develop the  
essential maths they need for life;  
improving their

**self-esteem**  
and encouraging  
**independence.**

Age neutral content makes it accessible to all students from infants to adults.  
Currently in use at both mainstream and specialist settings at all educational levels.

**Preschool - Primary - Secondary - Further Education College**

**Maths For Life**<sup>®</sup>  
A Differentiated Approach

Scan here to request  
a brochure today



[www.mathsforlife.com](http://www.mathsforlife.com)



# Welcome...



Covid continues to cast a long shadow over children and schools, and this is no less true of pupils who have special needs and their teachers and classroom assistants. In fact, studies have suggested that SEND children have been worse affected than most by school

shutdowns in terms of isolation and missed opportunities. On page 36 of this issue, Ben Reading describes how wellbeing became an integral part of life at his school and led to it being nationally recognised for its work.

One of the main concerns of all schools as we move into the winter months are the fuel and cost-of-living crises. On page 13, Lorraine Petersen adds her voice to those of professionals across the education sector who are wondering just how schools will make ends meet. Meanwhile, on page 7, psychologist Naomi Fisher offers new perspectives on understanding school refusers and warns about using force to get them beyond the school gates.

Teachers and classroom assistants in mainstream schools do great work in accommodating a diverse mix of abilities, personalities and learning needs. On page 56, Celina Walsham outlines how her school reformed its approaches to inclusion by adapting every lesson so that no child felt left out in class.

It's always fascinating to read new research into how children learn and develop, and in this issue Dr Paige Davis outlines her study into imaginary friends and how these could be helping children with autism to function in a neurotypical world. Find out more on page 30.

Our specialist section features speech, language and communication. Read about the spirit of collegiality among staff at Meath School, ensuring the needs of pupils are met.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

*Dorothy*

Dorothy Lepkowska, editor



**EDITOR:** Dorothy Lepkowska,  
dorothy.lepkowska@theteachco.com

**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR:** Elaine Bennett,  
elaine.bennett@theteachco.com

**GROUP EDITOR:** Joe Carter, joe@theteachco.com

**HEAD OF COMMERCIAL SOLUTIONS:**  
Richard Stebbing

**ADVERTISING MANAGER:** Gabrielle Pitts,  
gabrielle.pitts@theteachco.com, 01206 505956

**JUNIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER:** Alfie Bennett,  
alfie.bennett@theteachco.com

**ART EDITOR:** Richard Allen

**DESIGNERS:** Adam Barford, Ben Kemp,  
Hannah Kemp, Luke Rogers & Steve Streeting

**AD PRODUCTION:** Angela Scrivener

**DESIGN & REPROGRAPHICS:**  
Ace Pre-Press, 01206 508608

**ACCOUNTS:** 01206 505995

## POWERED BY...



**DR NAOMI FISHER**

Clinical psychologist and  
author of *Changing our Minds*

*“The strategies schools use to manage refusal seem designed to make the situation worse, and that is often what happens” p7*



**LISA DALE**

Headteacher of Howbridge  
CE Primary School, in  
Witham, Essex

*“If we wanted to turn things around, we needed to stay focused on long-term goals rather than short-term solutions” p44*



**MAJELLA DELANEY**

Headteacher of Meath  
School, Chertsey

*“Wonderful things can happen when you have a strong team of collaborators - people who are willing to learn” p64*

The views in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure the veracity and integrity of the companies, persons, products and services mentioned in this publication, and the details given are believed to be accurate at the time of going to press. However, no responsibility or liability whatsoever can be accepted for any consequence or repercussion of responding to information or advice given or inferred. Copyright DC Thomson & Co Ltd.



# Contents

## VOICES

- 7 SCHOOL REFUSERS**  
Noami Fisher helps us to understand why some children just won't go to school, and how we should support them
- 10 HANNAH RUSSELL**  
The S12 Paralympian gives an insight into her sporting success and why she wants to be a teacher
- 13 SEND FUNDING**  
Why ring-fenced money must be spent appropriately
- 15 LIVING WITH DLD**  
Ellen Dormer talks about how the interventions intended to help, excluded her in school

## SPOTLIGHT

- 18 IN HARMONY WITH NATURE**  
Hurst Lodge school used the natural world for inspiration when reviewing its curriculum
- 20 INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE**  
Why Cavendish School is using a learning programme with autistic pupils, usually reserved for older, mainstream students

## BEHAVIOUR

- 24 TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND COUNT TO TEN?**  
Strategies for restoring peace and calm to your classroom
- 26 TAKING A RESTORATIVE APPROACH**  
Why a calm and structured approach reaps benefits

## BEST PRACTICE

- 30 IMAGINARY FRIENDS**  
How they help autistic children make sense of the world
- 34 MANAGING ONLINE TUTORING**  
Make remote learning less daunting for SEND pupils
- 36 FOCUS ON WELLBEING**  
Why Maple Grove School was recognised for its approach
- 39 EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY**  
A ten-point plan for making sure every child is included
- 40 USING EDTECH TO REVOLUTIONISE SEND TEACHING**  
How technology is supporting inclusivity



- 42 SHARING SEND STRATEGIES**  
How a special school influenced best practice across a MAT
- 44 LEARNING FROM OUR MISTAKES**  
A poor Ofsted inspection led to a review of SEND provision at Lisa Dale's school

## SEND LEADERSHIP

- 56 NO CHILD LEFT OUT**  
Don't differentiate for SEND pupils – adapt to include
- 60 RECRUITING THE PERFECT SEND STAFF**  
Don't be afraid to look beyond the education sector

## CLOSE UP

- 64 COLLABORATE TO COMMUNICATE**  
Sharing expertise to meet the needs of pupils
- 66 SUPPORTING PUPILS WHO STAMMER**  
The dos and don'ts of integrating stammering children in lessons
- 68 KEY DLD STRATEGIES**  
Supporting pupils affected – and their classmates
- 74 DAY IN THE LIFE**  
Annemarie Hassall MBE takes us through her working day



## LESSON PLANS

- 48 SHERLOCK SAFARI. SCIENCE THROUGH INQUIRY**
- 50 COOKING FOR SKILLS AND HEALTHY LIVING**
- 54 INCLUSIVITY THROUGH IMAGES**





## REVIEWS

- 72 BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE**
- 73 FIVE MINUTE BOX**

**SENCo**

*We want to hear from you!*

Get in touch with your rants, comments, photos and ideas.

 [teachwire.net](http://teachwire.net)  
 [facebook.com/teachwire](https://facebook.com/teachwire)  
 [twitter.com/teachwire](https://twitter.com/teachwire)  
 [dorothy.lepkowska@theteachco.com](mailto:dorothy.lepkowska@theteachco.com)





# UNLOCK COMPLETE CURRICULUM ACCESS WITH THE C-PEN READER 2™



Promotes independent  
reading & learning



Supports language acquisition  
for EAL students



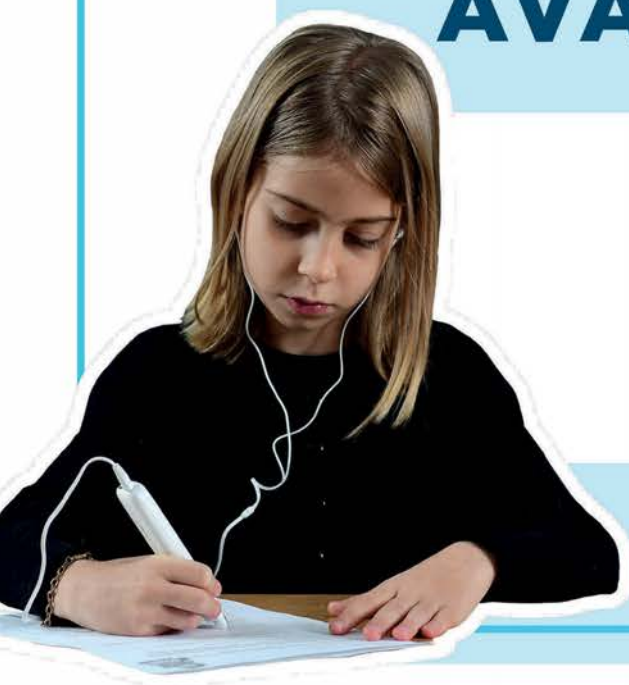
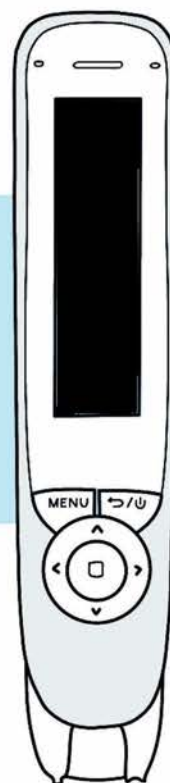
Great alternative  
to a human reader



Promotes inclusivity in  
and out of the classroom

## FREE TRIALS AVAILABLE!

**C-PEN**  
**READER 2™**



[www.scanningpens.co.uk](http://www.scanningpens.co.uk)

Executive head Lyndsey Jefferies talks about why the school's new modular eco-building has been an excellent investment for her special needs setting



Each modular

eco-building from TG Escapes can be architect designed with specific needs in mind. Small rooms can be included for breakout spaces, while treatment rooms and sensory rooms can be easily accommodated, as can accessible toilets, ramps and kitchens.

It feels lovely – very bright and airy. We are situated in quite a rural area, and it really is in keeping with the trees and fields. It doesn't look out of place in our environment. The natural materials change the feel, and for a modular building it's really solid and robust. All the rooms have lots of light; the floor-to-ceiling windows in the galley kitchen area being particularly bright. The height of the ceilings is another massive plus, as often these can be very low in modular buildings, so you feel too enclosed.

A lot of our children suffer from sensory processing issues and so the lighting and feel of a space is very important, as are the acoustics. Although many modular builds are echoey, the ceiling tiles in ours help negate this. We also have adaptive ventilation, due to our concerns about Covid, and air conditioning. The insulation is phenomenal – the building heats up very quickly, then holds the heat. It's very efficient. The verandas work particularly well. Decking comes straight off the front of the building, creating a useful indoor / outdoor space.



I think that was one of the most important aspects for me. We are quite a small site and there wasn't much space for the team to work with, but they were fantastic – very respectful of the fact they were working on a site with special needs children. They kept us up to date with what was coming on site and knew that many of our children would be excited to see it. They let us know what machinery was coming and



Lyndsey Jefferies is executive head at Mountfield Heath



tgescapes.co.uk  
0800 917 7726  
info@tgescapes.co.uk

when, so that the kids could be involved and watch what was happening. We've previously had workmen here smoking, using foul language and playing loud radio, but in contrast the TG Escapes team were so respectful.

Timing was tight, but every delivery was spot on schedule. This really helped – we were able to let our neighbours know when big deliveries were due, which made the build less stressful. Dealing with complaints can be tricky, so it was great to be able to give advanced warning of large deliveries and noisy building work. It also meant I could move children to other parts of the school, when needed.

- + Natural materials and excellent acoustics provide calming spaces that have a significant and positive impact on wellbeing
- + Timber frames and natural materials create a particularly suitable environment for children with SEND and SEMH
- + Floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors, along with covered walkways, provide easy access to the outdoors





## HOW DO WE HELP SCHOOL REFUSERS?

Forcing children to conform to adult expectations can lead to fear and distress, making things worse

Naomi Fisher

**I**'m often asked what to do about children who are reluctant to go to school. By 'what to do', the adults usually mean 'how can we stop them protesting?'

I think a high proportion of school refusers have some sort of additional need which makes school harder for them than for other children.

They're often disappointed in my response, because I won't tell them how to get the child to stop making a fuss. There are no quick fixes to create compliant children.

I work with families of children who have had problems attending school, and they tell some concerning stories. Sometimes their child is pulled off them, screaming, by teachers. They are told to bring in their child in their pyjamas if they won't get dressed. Or to make life very boring for their children – if home life is dull enough, the child will return to school.

They say that schools see the problem as 'refusal' and therefore their

interventions are designed to turn that refusal into compliance.

This is worrying, because the strategies schools use to manage refusal seem almost designed to make the situation worse, and that is often exactly what happens. Children become more anxious. It starts to affect every aspect of the family's life. Every evening is spent dreading the morning, with Sundays being the worst.

Why does this happen? When children are forced into school, usually one of two rationales is given. Some teachers tell parents that if they are anxious about school, avoiding the source of the anxiety will make it worse, and therefore missing school must not be allowed. This leads to the use of force. Others say that refusal is bad behaviour, and that this must not be reinforced by allowing the child not to attend school. This also leads to the use of force.

The child's perspective is not being considered. There's no space in either

scenario for trying to work out exactly what has gone wrong at school which has led to the child refusing to go. Instead, the focus is on how to stop them refusing, whatever it takes.

But force has the potential to make things much worse, because of how our brains work. When we are afraid or angry, we store those memories in a different way to day-to-day memories. We collect them in our amygdala, the alarm system of the brain and then use them as clues for signs of danger. This response kept our ancestors alive. If you have a close encounter with a lion, you don't want to risk another one. Your brain will be on the look-out for things which might be a lion – perhaps a lion-shaped rock or a person with lots of yellow hair. They will trigger your alarm system and your body's survival response, enabling you to fight or run away. You will feel terrified. The amygdala's priority is keeping you alive and it would rather you were scared than dead.

When children have repeated experiences of being forced into school in a state of high distress, it is priming their amygdala to respond to school as a place of danger. I've heard of children who can't walk past a school without panicking, or those who can't open a reading book without fear. This isn't under their conscious control. It's the inevitable result of lots of fearful experiences at school. The strategy which was meant to help makes things worse.

What's the alternative? There is no short cut. Adults must work out what the problem is. What's changed for this child? What do they say about why they don't want to go? When did it start? What is their day like, through their eyes? How is the school managing their needs? Are there particular flashpoints for them – playtime, or the toilet perhaps? What could be changed to make things better? And then they need to get alongside the child, and work with them with their consent. Re-integration should be done with, not to, the child.

Forcing may seem like the quickest and most efficient way to manage school refusal, but it's a strategy with the potential to entrench difficulties. Instead, we need to see refusal as a symptom. It alerts us to the presence of a problem, but the problem itself must still be understood.

*Dr Naomi Fisher is a clinical psychologist and author of [Changing our Minds](#). [@naomifisher on Twitter](#), [naomifisher.co.uk](#)*



## All children are entitled to child-centred assessment

### Tapestry is home to the Cherry Garden Branch Maps

The Cherry Garden Framework is a resource created by Ofsted Outstanding specialist school, Cherry Garden, to support educators working with children with learning differences and disabilities.

Because development doesn't look the same for all children, the Cherry Garden Framework is a unique approach to monitoring and supporting your children in early years and KS1/KS2.

Celebrate progress and engage children and families with their learning through the interactive orchard, which comes alive with every observation. Watch it grow!



Cherry Garden Orchard

### Your children – your curriculum

Tapestry's Bespoke Frameworks gives you the flexibility to create and upload your own curriculum, assessment framework, or milestones directly onto your account.

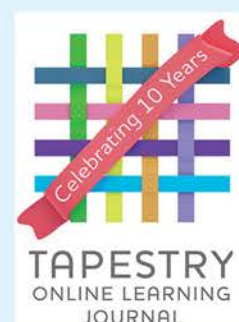
Capture learning and reflect on progress in a way that works for your cohorts and your team.

As with all the other benefits and tools, the Cherry Garden Framework and Bespoke Frameworks feature are available to all Tapestry users at no extra cost.



Give them a go with a two-week free trial. No card details. No obligations.

*\* Tapestry's Cherry Garden Branch Maps have been shortlisted for the SEN category of the Teach Primary Awards 2022*





# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Tapestry Online Learning Journal

Reducing workload and supporting learning



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Tapestry is an easy-to-use online learning journal for staff and families to support children's learning from Early Years to Key Stages 1/2, in mainstream and specialist provision. Subscriptions include a wide variety of features designed to reduce workload, assist with provision development, and build meaningful relationships with families.

### 1 DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

Tapestry is the exclusive online home of Cherry Garden Branch Maps. Combining their teaching experience with building on parts of the Routes for Learning framework, Ofsted Outstanding specialist school, Cherry Garden, created this child-centred approach which demonstrates lateral progress to support educators working with children with learning differences and disabilities in Early Years and KS1/KS2. Our development team collaborated with the school to add the framework to Tapestry, designing an interactive orchard which celebrates each child's progress with educators and families.



news and updates including documents, pictures and videos.

### 4 FREE CPD WHEN YOU NEED IT

Tapestry's CPD feature offers effective training to support your staff with building their pedagogical knowledge to inform their professional judgment. Our experienced education team are continuously creating engaging and interactive content that your team can access at a time that works best for them. Examples of courses currently available are *Additional Support Within Mainstream Education*, *Alternative*

*Communication Approaches*, and *An Introduction to Ableism*.

### 2 YOUR CHILDREN – YOUR CURRICULUM

Adapt your Tapestry account to your needs and support your unique provision with Bespoke Frameworks. This feature gives schools the flexibility to create, upload and share your own curriculum, assessment framework, or milestones directly onto your account, so you can capture learning and reflect on progress in a way that works for your cohorts and your team. With Bespoke Frameworks educators can monitor progress linked to the Engagement Model or specific outcomes from a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

### 3 ENGAGEMENT TOOL

Designed to support the building of meaningful relationships with families, Tapestry enables you to share valuable feedback through Observations which can be added and replied to by educators and parents/carers. With the Activities feature you can create, store and send bespoke activities to be done at home/school for groups of children or an individual child, responding to their unique learning needs. And Memos allows staff to communicate efficiently with parents and carers, sharing



Find out more:

[www.tapestry.info](http://www.tapestry.info)

[customer.service@eyfs.info](mailto:customer.service@eyfs.info)

### 5 SUPPORT AND FACILITATE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Tapestry Reflections provides a space for educators to share and discuss thoughts, experiences, and actions. Identify and plan changes to make sure all children are accessing your provision, and record their impact. Monitor trends and gain insight into the pedagogical knowledge and confidence of your staff, to then tailor training and support to the needs of individuals and the team. Develop personal reflective practice, recording your ideas, initiatives and their impact on your teaching.

## KEY POINTS

All Tapestry features, those already available and any new releases, are included in every subscription; there are no hidden fees to access additional functionality.

The Cherry Garden framework, used by over 700 settings, is a finalist of the Teach Primary Awards 2022 for the 'SEN' category.

The Tapestry app is a pared-down version of the browser, designed to allow efficient uploading, viewing and editing of posts.

Try Tapestry for free with a no-obligation two-week trial, which includes all the available features to ensure you fully experience the system.

# “I just **WANTED** to be a part of **TEAM ENGLAND**”

Competing against better-sighted swimming didn't faze **Hannah Russell OBE**, as a Playground to Podium scheme propelled her to success on the world stage

**I** burst onto the para-swimming scene at the young age of 14, where I achieved silver and bronze on my international debut at the Berlin 2011 European Championships, marking the start of an 11-year international career. I won my first Paralympic medal, a silver, in the women's S12 400m Freestyle, before adding a pair of bronzes in front of the home crowd at London 2012.

A first global gold followed at the 2013 World Championships in Montreal, and then two more top podium finishes followed at the Rio 2016 Paralympics, setting a new world record in the S12 100m Backstroke and winning the S12 50-metres Freestyle event.

**I took a period of time away from the water** in the run up to Tokyo 2020 to focus on my mental health and wellbeing, and during this period I completed my BSc Sports Science degree from the University of Salford, achieving a First Class Honours. I retained my Paralympic title in the S12 100m backstroke at the Covid-delayed Tokyo Paralympics in 2021, which stands out as a special highlight of my career. My achievements were recognised in the 2022 New Year's Honours list, when I was awarded an OBE.

In 2022, I competed at my first Commonwealth Games, swimming up a classification in the S13 50m freestyle, in which I won a silver.

**The Commonwealth games was such a thrilling, unique experience** as we were able to integrate fully with Olympic athletes. It was the first time a VI swimming event was included in the Commonwealth games. I had to swim up my classification to S13, which

where I felt I could reach my goals. I joined my first swimming club at four years old, and later was inspired by Rebecca Adlington and Ellie Simmonds. I remember saying to my parents, “That is what I would like to achieve.” I increased my training hours and, in 2010, was identified through the ‘Playground to Podium’ scheme gaining my national and international Paralympic Classification as an S12 swimmer.

the position and technique I was expected to perform in the water.

**I fondly remember many happy days at school.** I had a statement of educational needs and attended two mainstream state schools. The support I received was first class. I was fully included in all activities; one of the best experiences was taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, where I achieved the bronze and silver awards. I couldn't really read the maps or see the features around me, and my role within the group was based on being the team motivator.

**A positive school experience gave me a passion for primary teaching.** I would love to make a difference to a child's life and education and have the opportunity this year to complete my teacher training with Teach SouthEast. I teach three days a week and spend the other two learning pedagogy. I also want to inspire a new generation of swimmers after recently announcing my retirement from competitions. The time is right; I have achieved more than I ever expected from swimming and now feel it is important to start my teaching career.

My motto to all children and young people is ‘If you believe, you can achieve’.

*“I teach three days a week and spend the other two learning pedagogy”*

meant competing with better sighted swimmers, but that didn't faze me. I just wanted to be part of Team England. To be part of a fully integrated team, where all athletes worked together, was the icing on the cake. Able-bodied swimmers were curious and respected how I adapt my race plan with stroke counting and the use of technology.

**I've been swimming since I was aged 3**, when my parents introduced me to the swimming pool on a family holiday. I absolutely adored the water and never looked back. I have congenital extreme myopia, and swimming was

**Navigating myself to and from training venues and travelling to competitions** was often a challenge. I would typically rely on taxis, public transport, and technology to help me get around independently. At the pool, I would use an iPad which displayed a modified LED pace clock, and an individual whiteboard where the coach wrote my training sessions, both of which would be placed at the end of the pool. I have to count my strokes to deliver race plans and, of course, for safety reasons around my turn and finish. My coaches would help to move my body so I could feel







# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Maths For Life

Open up the world of numbers and support maths learning for all ages and abilities



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Maths For Life programme opens the world of maths to a range of learners for whom the national curriculum timescale and structure just doesn't work. It provides instant support to educators. The age neutral approach to content means that it is accessible to all students from infants to adults.

### 1 INCLUSIVE MATHS

It helps students with learning difficulties develop the essential maths they need for life; improving their self-esteem, encouraging independence, and increasing their future potential.

*"I work in a special school for children aged 4-19 and we are integrating it into our primary curriculum. We absolutely love Maths For Life. It's so refreshing as a Maths Lead to finally have something designed with our learners in mind, rather than always having to adapt something made for mainstream."* - Katie Pollock, Maths Lead, Ellesmere College



### 4 STARTING POINT

Using the Maths For Life 'Hierarchy of Independence' as a key, assessments are designed to reflect both the understanding of a maths concept and the ability to complete it independently, providing a true indication of mathematical attainment. The starting point. It then provides a pathway to progress and allows for a flexible, individually tailored approach within a structured framework.

*"Unlike the bland, sterile key stage assessments, the Maths For Life assessments are*

*fun and engaging. Students enjoy doing them."* - Georgie Devereaux, SEN LSA

### 2 FROM BIRTH TO AGED 25 (and upwards...)

It is currently used in both mainstream and specialist settings at all educational levels - preschool, primary, secondary, and further education college. And it is delivering results.

*"Our staff have found the resources easy to access, clear and strategically broken down into achievable targets. The children have benefitted and made progress where concepts are abstract, and love using the resources and ideas through Maths For Life."* - Emily Osabu-Matthews, SENDCo, Danegrove Primary School

### 3 PRACTICAL AND BEAUTIFUL

A bespoke programme designed for easy, efficient, and independent use without the need for expensive training. It includes educator guides, student books, comprehensive online resource library housing thousands of electronic worksheets accessible by any digital platform, tutorial videos, access to assessments, and progress tracking reports.

*"What I particularly like is the simplicity of explanation: you do not have to be a qualified teacher or have a deep understanding of maths to work though this with a learner."* - Lisa Coe, Primary Maths Lead



Find out more:

[www.mathsforlife.com](http://www.mathsforlife.com)  
[learn@mathsforlife.com](mailto:learn@mathsforlife.com)

### 5 DELIVERING RESULTS

A year-long pilot study was completed with the Down's Syndrome Oxford group to assess the impact of a parent-led programme on students ranging from age 4 to 18. Out of the 23 students who completed the programme, 100% demonstrated an improvement in overall mathematical attainment and increased independence.

*"I am recommending it in all the schools I work with for children with Down syndrome and others who are working below age expectations."* - Suzanne Pass, Director of Educational Excellence, Kingfisher Learning Trust

## KEY POINTS

To find out more simply request a copy of the company brochure and pricelist via the website: [www.mathsforlife.com/request-a-brochure](http://www.mathsforlife.com/request-a-brochure)

There are regular FREE Q&A sessions open to SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants and parents. A guided tour of the programme is included. Book here: [www.mathsforlife.com/qa-clinics](http://www.mathsforlife.com/qa-clinics)

Download the Baseline Assessments and find out what your students truly know and what level of independence they are working towards. Request access here: [www.mathsforlife.com/project-baseline](http://www.mathsforlife.com/project-baseline)

CPD certified webinar 'Maths For Life – A Differentiated Approach' - *"I've finally attended a maths training course which is relevant."* - Holly Budd, Pathfield School





# SEND MUST BE SAVED FROM CASH CUTS

A lack of ring-fencing could see money for special needs pupils diverted elsewhere

Lorraine1957

**S**chool budgets are more stretched than they have ever been. Additional unfunded pay awards, plus the huge increase in utility bills, have meant schools that set a positive budget at the start of this financial year may end up with a significant deficit by the end of it.

So, where will the additional funding be found to help balance the books?

My concern is that this will come from funding that has been given to schools to support children and young people's additional needs.

The notional SEND budget (Element 2) is not ring-fenced and this enables senior leaders and governing bodies to spend this on other things. Element 2 is allocated based on a number of local measures including prior attainment, EAL, IDACI (local deprivation index figure) and free school meals. It does not reflect the actual numbers of children and young people you might have on a SEND register. Element 2 is allocated to provide SEND support that is additional to, or different from, the support that most other children get. Schools are also expected to use this funding to offer provision for children and young people with an EHCP.

The consequence of this money not being available could lead to restructuring of support staff, reduced interventions and a significant reduction in the additional and/or different

provision that is available in our schools.

The other consequence is that schools may remove children and young people from their SEND register because they are not receiving the additional and/or different provision. This will have a significant impact on the school census data that is collected every January. We know that an increasing number of children and young people with complex needs are being educated in mainstream schools, but they may not be recorded on the census, which will result in data that does not reflect the current picture.

Element 3 is "top-up" funding that the local authority gives to schools who

are unable to meet the needs of SEND Support and EHCP children and young people. In each case, this must be directed to the pupil who requires that additional support. However, if this is not being monitored by the local authority and accountability measures are not in place, that funding could also be re-directed to the main school budget.

It is concerning that most local authorities have massive deficit high

needs budgets, which may result in less "top-up" funding for schools. The SEND Code of Practice 2015 clearly states "when an EHC plan is maintained for a child or young person, the local authority must secure the special educational provision specified in the plan".

Local authorities will often say that the school has to find the first £6000 of provision, though this is not the case. The LA is responsible and therefore it is really important that senior leaders and Sencos ensure this additional funding is actually coming into the school budget and then this must be ring-fenced for the individuals for whom it is intended. Schools will not be able to afford to meet these costs.

In March, the Department for Education launched its Green Paper, *SEND review: right support, right place, right time*. It outlined the millions of pounds that had been invested in SEND - but unfortunately none of that has found its way into schools.

*"Millions of pounds have been invested in SEND but none of it has found its way into schools"*

It proposes a significant change in how we support children and young people with SEND. However, since its publication, we have seen five Secretaries of State for Education and five Ministers with SEND within their portfolio. It is not clear what their direction of travel will be.

The current political and financial landscape does not help this situation. It is highly likely that education as a whole, and SEND in particular, will be affected by public sector cuts.

Schools are going to have to fight to ensure that they receive the funding they are due to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. If they don't, we may see a significant number not receiving the support they require.

*Lorraine Petersen OBE is an educational consultant, who works with schools on SEND provision and delivery.*

## Q&amp;A

# “Pupils achieve 10 months’ progress in eight weeks”

Joanne Howell says a study into the use of Scanning Pens revealed big benefits in reading attainment



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Scanning Pens provide award winning text to speech reading aids, designed to empower people of all ages with reading differences to read independently, develop a love for literacy and achieve their full potential. Your pupils will make progress faster than you could have imagined.

### WHAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY?

The aim of this study at George Dixon Primary School was to investigate the scope of literacy improvement that could be made over 8 weeks when students used a C-Pen Reader2 to support reading and comprehension.

It was important for the school to take part in this study to enable children who have a barrier with their reading to be given an opportunity to access the curriculum in a way they weren't previously able to, and therefore creating a more equal school with less barriers to learning.

### WHAT STUDENTS WERE IDENTIFIED TO TAKE PART AND WHY?

The whole school has had a huge push on reading, with some children receiving reading interventions. The SENCO was evaluating what else could be done to support children on the SEND register who needed something additional to all the personalised interventions they were already receiving, so that they could access the wider curriculum like their peers. Which is why they implemented the C-Pen Reader2, and chose 10 students from Years 4, 5 and 6 as a sample, to assess the benefits across the school.

### HOW DID TEACHERS MEASURE STUDENT PROGRESS IN THE STUDY?

Prior to using the C-Pen Reader2 the school carried out the YARC assessment to set a baseline score. YARC measures Reading Rate,



Fluency and Comprehension skills. The SENCO hoped to see some progress in the students reading, but ultimately a boost in their confidence and ability to contribute independently to lessons was the main aim. This assessment was carried out again after 8 weeks of using the C-Pen Reader2 and showed a big difference in the pre and post assessment scores.

### WHAT RESULTS DID THE TEACHERS SEE?

After eight weeks the standardised YARC scores showed outstanding progress, with some children making more than a year's progress in certain areas.



**ABOUT JOANNE:**  
Joanne Howell is Education Project Manager at Scanning Pens

**Contact:**  
020 7976 4910  
[ukinfo@scanningpens.com](mailto:ukinfo@scanningpens.com)  
[scanningpens.co.uk](http://scanningpens.co.uk)

This was due to the fact they now had the skills to approach those assessments with more confidence.

- Two students made one year and six months' progress in reading accuracy
- Three students made more than a years' progress in comprehension
- All students made an average of ten months' progress in both reading accuracy and comprehension
- All students made an average of seven months' progress on the Reading Rate component

### SO, WHAT DO STAFF AND STUDENTS THINK OF SCANNING PENS?

"I feel that the C-Pen Reader2 is a great way of pushing the children forward, I would 100% recommend this for any school and any SENCO out there to take a look into this." Samina Dixon, SENCO George Dixon Primary School.

"The C-Pen Reader2 is really great, it helped me to read and improved my confidence in reading, so I am now a lot better at reading out loud and I understand a lot more words thanks to the dictionary. I would 100% recommend anyone who is having trouble reading to try this." Year 6 pupil, George Dixon Primary School.

## What's the difference?

- + C-Pen Reader2 encourages independence, raises self-esteem, and enables students to feel included in the same learning as their peers
- + C-Pen Reader2 provides multi-modal reading support proven to increase fluency and reading rate
- + With multiple built-in dictionaries the C-Pen Reader2 accelerates comprehension skills, unlocking the entire curriculum



# PEOPLE WILL OFTEN ASSUME I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER

Developmental Language Disorder can mean it takes time to form a response - but it's a delay, not incomprehension

Ellen Dormer

I am Ellen, I'm 18 and from Liverpool. Recently, I've been studying Creative Media and I am also the editor of the college newspaper. But it hasn't been an easy journey to get here.

In my experience, no one knows what Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is. When you struggle with talking and understanding words, life can be hard for you and your family, as it feels like you need words for everything. Often, I have felt invisible.

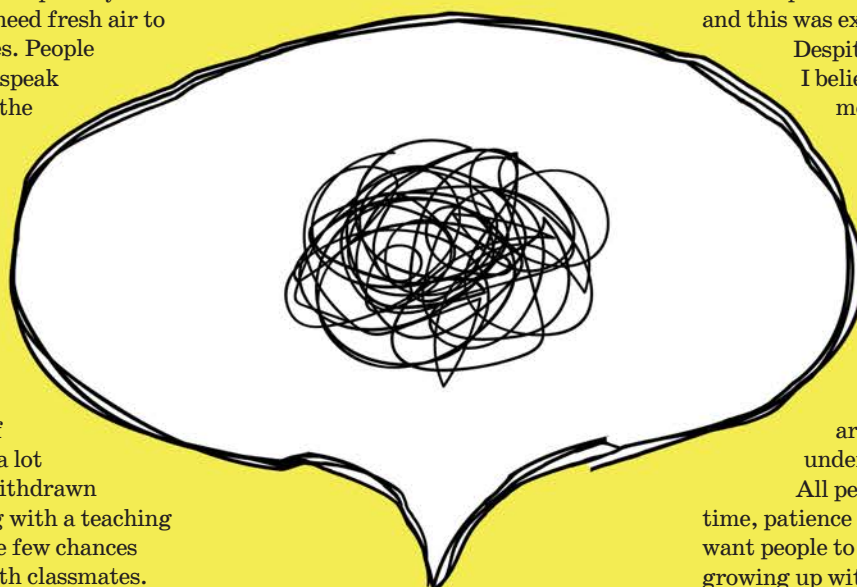
I was diagnosed with DLD while in Year 10, and it finally put a name to what I was experiencing. The biggest thing I felt at the time was exhaustion. If I'm not given enough time to answer or think, I can zone out and I just stare into space; it's like my brain has to restart. If there is lots of talking, I can't keep up, so I find it frustrating and I just want to leave the room for a break. Sometimes I need to sleep as my brain has overloaded, or I need fresh air to recharge my batteries. People often assume I can't speak or that I don't know the answer to a question if I don't answer straight away. This means they don't give me enough time to respond - which does my head in!

Sadly, my experience of school was not one of inclusion, as I spent a lot of time in primary withdrawn from classes working with a teaching assistant. There were few chances for me to interact with classmates. Ironically, the interventions meant to

support me ended up excluding me, and I felt segregated and marginalised working away from the mainstream classroom and teacher. As a result, I left primary school as a selective mute, with low self-esteem and aware that others saw me differently. The teachers did not have the same high expectations for me as they did of others.

When I was in the classroom, there was no time given for processing

*The interventions meant to support ended up excluding me, and I felt segregated and marginalised*



information. It was exhausting. It was a noisy atmosphere with lots of time spent listening to the teachers talking at pace, getting through content and copying from the whiteboard. My memory was often overloaded, causing me to zone out. My academic progress was limited, really knocking my confidence.

My parents were called in a lot to speak to teachers because I was deemed a problem. On one occasion they were told I'd been swearing and using the f-word, but what I had actually said was "uck" meaning "look" - another child had bitten me and I trying to show what had happened.

Speech and language therapists gave my teachers strategies to help me but they didn't follow the advice. My name was answered for me when the register was called because there wasn't enough time to wait for me to respond. This is what I mean about feeling invisible.

At secondary a couple of teachers - in science and maths - took the time to get to know me and adapted their lessons to my learning style. I really flourished in those classes, so it can be done!

The thing I found most frustrating was being misrepresented by those supposedly supporting me. I could not control what was being said about me as others were speaking on my behalf. The teacher often asked the TA about me, rather than getting my view. People spoke about me and not to me, so assumptions were made, and I was underestimated. I got used to always being misunderstood in the classroom and the expectation was always that I was the one who had to adjust to fit in. I had to put on a mask in school to fit in and this was exhausting.

Despite all its challenges, I believe DLD has made me brave, resilient and strong and I see things other people don't in conversations - such as non-verbal cues. I want to make life easier for people like me so there is a higher expectation of what we can achieve, and so that young people are not written off or underestimated.

All people with DLD need is time, patience and adjustments. I really want people to understand what it is like growing up without a voice. Everyone deserves a fair chance.

# Making Maths Fun at St Mary's Primary School

**Caroline Curran** - SENco, Assessment Coordinator and year 6 Class Teacher

**St** Mary's is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School based in Rochdale. Our school which has 425 pupils aged between 4-11, is part of a vibrant local community where we aim for families to quickly feel part of our school community too.

We were looking for a solution to help us close the attainment gap in maths and boost the progress of our students across a range of abilities. We liked Whizz Education's virtual tutor Maths-Whizz because it assesses knowledge and tailors its sessions to the individual child and their level of learning. The children love it as it's also great fun! We have now used Whizz Education's services including Maths-Whizz for three years for all our students across a range of needs with particularly positive results.

At St Mary's, we teach numerous children with moderate learning difficulties. Some are on the Autistic Spectrum, and some have dyslexic tendencies which can impact their learning in maths as well as other subjects. Maths-Whizz is great for our SEN students because it tailors lessons to their individual ability. It can also read out questions so students who struggle with reading can work with the tutor unaided with their headphones on.

The great thing about the virtual tutor is that the children find it such fun! When we arrange a Maths-Whizz lesson once per week, they all cheer! They enjoy the games; they like to earn coins and the characters are engaging. Children often learn best when they are having fun and interacting with what feels like a computer game means they think it's play, but they are still learning all the time.

Often SEN students don't want to speak up if they find a particular topic challenging and will sometimes copy a neighbour's work in class, so it can be difficult to make a true assessment of understanding in a mixed ability setting. With Maths-Whizz, in a good way, there is nowhere to hide. The tutor assesses and identifies any weaker areas and structures its lessons to scaffold learning in that area.

Whizz Education arranged a zoom meeting with our teaching staff and a separate one with parents which was attended by 80 families to demonstrate the capabilities of Maths-Whizz. This was really helpful to increase engagement during the lockdowns. Maths is a subject which needs constant practice to keep skills simmering. Regular use of Maths-Whizz during COVID has really helped our students mitigate learning loss.



As teachers, we can also access the assessment tool to get a clear picture of where a student may need further support and offer additional provision if necessary. It enables us to identify knowledge gaps on an individual basis and prioritise topics for teaching in class too.

During COVID and the lockdowns, we arranged zoom lessons every day and Maths-Whizz was an additional benefit where we could set tasks for homework. Resources were not an issue as Maths-Whizz can be accessed anywhere and from any device including a mobile phone. Parents also all have a login so they can see how their child is progressing.

If I had to offer some advice for other schools with SEN students considering EdTech implementation, I would say try before you buy. Play with the programme and understand if it's appropriate for your cohort and right for your school. Accessibility it is also an important consideration, particularly where a school has students from lower income families who may not have the resources of laptops and home computers to access programmes outside school. Most importantly, to ensure engagement, choose a solution that is easy and fun to use! Using Maths-Whizz at St Mary's means we have been able to make maths fun!



# Supporting **SEND** students in Maths

**Fiona Goddard** - Education Consultant, Whizz Education

**M**athematical skills such as counting, problem-solving, and mental arithmetic can sometimes be even more difficult for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). As Educators and parents, we know finding the appropriate maths programme can be a trial-and-error process, as what is right for one child may not be for another.

Making intuitive and informed choices, is essential to overcoming their specific barriers and building a positive attitude towards maths. We know how important it is to tailor the learning process to each individual child's needs.

We also know that teachers and support staff can be challenged with how to deploy themselves in the lesson to support the learning. The learning needs to be broken down into small progressive steps to build on understanding, but it's not always possible to guide and support each student. The learning difficulties encountered are often, but not always, associated with literacy and numeracy development. In many cases, students' needs will be met through appropriate intervention including the differentiation of tasks and materials.

Our differentiated virtual tutoring service, Maths-Whizz, can be helpful to ensure all students receive targeted support that addresses their specific needs. Maths-Whizz can be used to provide individualised support within different contexts, including identifying gaps, motivation, developing memory and creating a multi-sensory approach.



We believe one of the keys to supporting learning also lies in the identification of strengths and weaknesses. Maths-Whizz Tutor initial assessment will capture this. Maths-Whizz uses powerful AI to build a completely personalised plan for each child, and then continues to tailor it as they complete lessons. Maths-Whizz adapts to a child's needs and pace-of learning. If the student is struggling with a lesson, the Tutor automatically provides confidence-boosting prompts and scaffolded support, even intervening to take students back to foundational material.

Multi-sensory teaching techniques and strategies stimulate learning by engaging students on multiple levels by encouraging students to use some or all their senses. Some students who have SEND may rarely attend to their visual environment as they may be affected by difficulties with tracking or visual processing. One solution is to involve the use of more of the student's senses, especially the use of touch (tactile) and movement (kinetic) so they may need to be taught or guided on how to focus on the Maths-Whizz lessons.

Maths-Whizz Online Tutor can be accessed between home and school, so students can practise at any time. Parents can instantly understand their child's true level of ability – strengths and weaknesses, monitor progress and give encouragement. Teacher and parent can access the same reporting data, so this can be used at parent meetings. Students can also look at the mathometer to check their progress on their dashboard.

The Maths-Whizz Tutor keeps adapting to their needs, pushing every student to reach their potential with weekly goals, rewards and personal messages. This can really support SEND students by keeping them motivated and supporting retention and keeping the knowledge and skills simmering.

And let's not forget what we want for all children is to build a love of maths, the Maths-Whizz animated lessons are engaging with a bit of humour, perfect for showing children that struggle with maths that it can be fun after all!

Read more about how Maths-Whizz can help SEND students here:


<https://www.whizzeducation.com/wp-content/uploads/SEND-screen.pdf>





# Learning in harmony WITH NATURE

When Victoria Smit wanted a new approach to teaching and learning at her school, she looked to the natural world for inspiration, write **Emilie Martin** and **Lisa Atkinson**



**W**hat would teaching and learning look like if it drew together skills and content from a broad spectrum of subjects to provide students with a truly cohesive, relevant and inspiring educational experience?

This was the question that Victoria Smit, principal of Hurst Lodge School in Hampshire, sought to answer when she set out to create a curriculum for her school with nature at its heart.

“Many of our students have additional needs and special talents, and they found jumping from subject to subject without rhyme or reason illogical,” she explains. “Those who were immersed in what they were doing would get annoyed when they were told at the end of a lesson that they wouldn’t be revisiting the topic that had ignited their interest. As a result, these students tended to switch off and become disengaged.”

## Hurst Lodge School

Hurst Lodge is a small, non-selective independent school for boys and girls, aged from four to 19 years. Victoria describes the

children and young people in the school community as having ‘universal’ rather than ‘special’ needs, so pupils are not labelled and to make the point that all are seen as individuals. Of the 140 students currently on roll at the school, 124 have Educational Health Care Plans, of which 80% are local authority-funded.

The school aims to offer its students a purposeful learning environment in which they can become successful learners with a clear sense of their own self-worth. It also strives to support students in understanding the choices they can make to help them ‘tread lightly on the Earth’.

When Victoria was introduced to Richard Dunne, director of The Harmony Project and himself a former headteacher, she discovered an approach to education that resonated strongly with her vision for Hurst Lodge.

*“You could hear a lot of laughing, as unlikely departments collaborated with one another”*



## Seeking Harmony

The Harmony Project works with schools and educators to help them develop a highly cross-curricular approach to education, which seeks to support children and young people in developing the skills and understanding they need to live more sustainable lives. It aims to help them see themselves as agents of positive change and casts students in the role of co-creators of their own learning. “Harmony fitted with our school’s ethos and it also enabled teachers and students to look at topics in more depth and return to the themes that fascinated them,” Victoria notes.

It was this which inspired Victoria and her team to set out, three years ago, to create a nature-focused curriculum. They opted to pursue organic growth driven by the contributions of both the teaching and non-teaching staff, rather than overnight change, and this has nurtured a more collaborative way of working across the school.

## First steps

In the first phase of the project, Victoria asked the teaching staff to note the topics they intended to cover with their classes in the school year ahead on one shared grid. This revealed many complementary areas of teaching and learning where there was potential for inter-departmental collaboration. The maths department discovered, for instance, that students’ learning in other subjects about the pyramids of Ancient Egypt, the migration routes of animals, and star systems also lent themselves well to exploring mathematical concepts. “You could hear a lot of laughing, as unlikely departments collaborated with one another,” Smit recalls.

While she admits that developing a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning was not always

straightforward in the junior and senior school, where subjects are taught by specialist teachers, Victoria believes the benefits have outweighed the challenges: “The concept of Harmony now permeates our school, with everyone from the catering and maintenance teams to the science and music departments taking part.”

## A whole-school approach

The school’s new Harmony curriculum does not only join the dots between students’ skills and knowledge acquired in different subjects. It also connects the whole school across year groups, with students from Reception to Year 11 engaging with the same ‘big question’ each half-term.

Waste, within the enquiry of ‘can we afford this?’, was a recent half-termly focus for learning that saw students across the school work together to collect junk and recycle it into a stage set, clothes and jewellery for a fashion show. They composed and played music using instruments made from recycled materials and learnt to repair or repurpose items including bicycles, wheelbarrows and even the drums from old washing machines.

For some students, the act of taking items that had been discarded or overlooked due to perceived imperfection, and finding in them value and purpose, chimed with their own experiences in other contexts of feeling marginalised due to their educational needs. This proved to be a powerful stimulus for discussion and these students were keen to talk about how those for whom life is more challenging can overcome obstacles.

## Positive outcomes

Victoria is proud that the school’s new curriculum makes learning fun and is helping students develop a

strong sense of their own agency. “These are children who are happy to debate and put forward their point of view – youngsters who feel they can make a difference,” she says. “They are the type of children you are pleased will be looking after the world in the future, as they care passionately.”

As with any shift in working practices, it has taken time and effort to get all the school’s staff on board, but Victoria has noted that there is now a deeper sense of cohesion as a team. Many members of the teaching staff report they get a real sense of enjoyment from the opportunities the new curriculum offers to learn alongside the children.

For their part, the students themselves appreciate the opportunities the school’s new curriculum gives them to make connections between what is lived and what is learnt. One Hurst Lodge student said, simply: “I like learning this way because it is relevant to my life and the life of my family.”

The cross-phase approach to teaching and learning has also had the effect of creating a sense of continuity and security for students on their journey through the school. “For children with universal needs, transition into a new year group can be a lonely and unpredictable time,” observes Hurst Lodge teacher Lucy Sheather. “Harmony brings us together as one.”



**Emily Martin is a journalist and teacher with an interest in sustainability and education, and works for Harmony’s resources development. Lisa Atkinson is the school’s co-ordinator for The Harmony Project.**

## WHAT IS THE HARMONY PROJECT?

The Harmony Project approach places nature at the heart of teaching and learning by creating a framework for National Curriculum objectives that allows students to learn about, in, and from the natural world.

- Teaching and learning each half term is structured around an overarching question on a theme (an ‘enquiry question’), such as ‘Why is Antarctica worth protecting?’ or ‘Why are bees so brilliant?’ Students explore and respond to the enquiry question in different areas of their learning.
- Students learn from principles in nature that maintain the wellbeing and balance of the natural world, and reflect on how we might apply the same concepts to make more sustainable choices. For example, when they learn about the interdependence of living things in the Antarctic ecosystem, they might consider how they are part of a wider but equally interdependent system, and how their actions and decisions have consequences for others and for the planet.
- Children develop a deep connection with nature, begin to see the world as an interconnected whole, and to understand the role they can play in caring for and restoring it.



# Breaking down barriers for AUTISTIC STUDENTS

The International Baccalaureate is most commonly used at secondary level, so why has The Cavendish School decided to adopt it at primary?

**T**he Cavendish School is collaborating with the International Baccalaureate (IB), and its first working group of two other special schools, to develop and deliver the first IB programmes tailored to the needs of autistic students.

Official government data shows that there are more than 160,000 autistic students in schools across England, 70% of whom are in mainstream schools while the rest are in specialist provision, home-schooled or out of education completely. However, one in four children with autism wait more than three years to receive the support they need at school, according to the National Autistic Society (NAS), while three-quarters of parents surveyed by the NAS say their child's school did not fully meet their needs.

The pandemic had a particularly adverse impact on autistic students: 44% of parents think their child has fallen behind with work and 59% are concerned that their child has become more socially isolated.

Locally, in 2016, there were less than 2000 children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder in Cambridgeshire, now there are over 4000. The Cavendish School was conceived in that year as a way to provide accessible provision for students, aged 8 – 18 years, whose needs could not otherwise be met within the county's mainstream state provision. The school aims to provide a continuous educational experience for students until they leave education.

## Why the IB?

The International Baccalaureate is more usually associated as an alternative to A-levels but we have chosen to pursue accreditation as an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School because the Primary Years Programme, and then the Diploma and Career-related Programmes, offer a continuous learning journey for our students. Importantly, it is also particularly flexible in meeting the needs of autistic students as it teaches them skills for life, instead of finite facts.

## Challenge

Mainstream education can present multiple barriers to education for students with autism. The challenges include:

- understanding the hidden learning embedded in the National Curriculum
- creating connections between their learning in different subjects
- the need to develop their cognitive comprehension.

We believe the IB offers the best curricula to break down the barriers to education that autistic students regularly face, and helps them become independent self-advocates who are fully immersed in their communities.

## Dissolving boundaries to learning

Implicit learning within the National Curriculum, often known as the 'hidden curriculum', is a consistent challenge for students with

autism as they struggle to develop life skills that are not actively taught in a school, such as societal cues and values and beliefs conveyed in a social environment. It is because of this that autistic students need to be taught how to transfer knowledge from one subject to the next, and how to apply what they are learning to real-world situations.

The IB's Primary Years Programme uses transdisciplinary themes to organise learning and teaching around the construction of meaning in real-world situations, to dissolve the boundaries between traditional disciplines, and to give students the tools to take meaningful action in the wider world as a result of their learning.

## A tailored approach

A common trait of autistic young people is their intense focus on a small number of core interests that consume their attention, sometimes to the detriment of engagement with their learning.

The flexibility of IB programmes enables teachers to connect students' interests with the subject material to create an irresistible invitation to learn. For example, Thomas the Tank Engine is a powerful gateway to exploring broad topics that remain engaging and accessible to autistic students as a result of their affinity for the series.

Every character in the world of Thomas the Tank Engine has defined responsibilities and there is a clear hierarchy that demonstrates the success of the community, when each individual performs their role.

Creating connections between the important roles of each engine, their strengths and their weaknesses, facilitates understanding of a collective and an individual's impact on a community because students learn the value they add to society by being their authentic selves. Harold the Helicopter is often perceived as noisy, but is always welcome; this observation contributes to a broader conversation about embracing your individuality and being welcomed within your community.



## Creating connections

It's often the case that students with autism tend to compartmentalise their learning within subjects. Interdisciplinary study allows students to make connections between different areas of learning, and to develop appropriate transferable skills - such as communication, research and independence - to support successful progression towards their own education and adulthood goals.

Using thematic learning, the Primary Years Programme in particular provides a framework for

***“The IB meets the needs of autistic students by teaching them skills for life, instead of finite facts”***

learners to create connections between a theme, a core subject and its relevant applications outside of the classroom.

By inverting the traditional linear method of education, IB students begin their learning with a generalised line of inquiry that facilitates a deeper understanding of the correlation between concept and context, because the generalisation is explicit. For example, our students are exploring the hypothesis that a person's identity changes throughout their life by following the character development of Neville Longbottom in the Harry Potter series. To begin with, Neville lacks confidence in himself but the belief of his friends and teachers helps him develop his confidence and thrive after the battle

of Hogwarts. This enables students to create connections between their own experiences and what they are learning at school.

## Success beyond schooling

Progressing to university, joining the workforce and being able to actively participate in society is challenging for some students with autism as they have not successfully recognised and developed the attributes they need to succeed outside of the classroom.

Alongside academic knowledge, the IB focuses on the development of the whole student, an essential element of which is the IB learner profile; 10 core characteristics that are vital for intellectual, personal and social growth, regardless of neurodiverse or neurotypical development. Ethical qualities, such as caring, and practical qualities - for instance, communication - are embedded within the framework to prepare students for independent living and community integration. We aim to give them the ability to solve problems, make decisions and work as part of a team.

Since we welcomed our first cohort of students in September 2021, parent feedback has demonstrated the impact of explicit learning and student-led, skills-focused education. We have seen that our students are more comfortable with queuing, time-keeping and sharing. Relationships are being built, which is hugely encouraging for our children who have transitioned from home-schooling and is evidence that our students are improving their social-cognitive skills to understand their desires, beliefs and emotions, and those of others.

**Stephanie Smith is head of school at The Cavendish School, Cambridgeshire**





Timotay  
PLAYSCAPES



# Transform Your Outdoor Space!

Timotay Playscapes, your access to award winning inspirational outdoor play spaces. Using imaginative thinking and natural materials to create an inclusive and nurturing environment specific to your school.

- Playground design and construction
- Outdoor classrooms and canopies
- MUGA
- Forest Schools
- Climbing frames
- Playground surfacing
- Playground equipment
- Mile a day track

Contact us for  
your **FREE**  
funding guide



Book your  
**FREE**  
consultation  
today!

Call **01933 665151** or email [enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk)  
to book your **FREE CONSULTATION**  
[timotayplayscapes.co.uk](http://timotayplayscapes.co.uk)





# THE WOW FACTOR

Everyone can enjoy inclusive and fun outdoor spaces with the help of Timotay Playscapes



At Timotay Playscapes, we believe that every child has the right to play. We believe in fully inclusive environments where everyone is intrigued and engaged by their surroundings – whether that is via the inclusion of textured surfaces, sensory panels, mood lighting or musical instruments, or through the use of touch and smell. This SEND setting transformed their outdoor space into an inclusive sensory. If you would like to transform your space, book your free consultation with our award-winning team.



## Contact:

For further details about Timotay Playscapes visit [timotayplayscapes.co.uk](http://timotayplayscapes.co.uk). For more information call 01933 665151 or email [enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk)

## SENSORY

Sensory Play provides opportunities for children to use their senses when navigating and exploring their immediate surroundings. It's also crucial for brain development, helping to stimulate the brain and create neural pathways while improving a child's sensory processing system.

## INCLUSIVITY

We aim to create amazing outdoor spaces that are accessible to all, in which everyone is intrigued and engaged. Our award-winning team will help you to deliver your vision and succeed in creating an outdoor sensory and therapeutic space that's truly inspirational

## DURABILITY

All of our sensory products are created by skilled and experienced woodcraftsmen using natural redwood timber. This can withstand long-term exposure to the elements while maintaining dimensional stability, resulting in safe, durable products with a long working life.

## VERSATILITY

Our sensory product range includes the Light and Sound Arch – a wheelchair-friendly timber arch featuring coloured panels and two sets of musical chimes, making it a versatile addition to any play or sensory garden. We can also supply tactile sensory panels and 'grass-wrapped animal' seating.

# Sensory strategies FOR YOUR CLASS

Whether it's listening to music, running a lap, or taking a deep breath, we all have ways to calm down and focus. **Dr Ivana Lessner Listiakova** explains how this can work in schools...

**D**o you have a child in your class that appears to be slow, unmotivated or daydreaming; keeps running around, jumping up from their chair, or rocking; gets angry at other children out of the blue; chews their pencils and bites their nails, or avoids active participation?

Yes? Then this article is for you. Aside from being problematic to an organised and peaceful classroom, challenging behaviour, difficulties paying attention and problems with emotional

it receives, so it can be used purposefully in meaningful activities.

For example, writing your name. In order for a child to develop this skill, firstly they need to be sitting still. They need to be able to hold the pencil, apply the right pressure and have muscle control over the shapes. Only then can they form the letters on paper. At the same time, the child needs to filter out any excess information that is not crucial to the moment. For example, the sounds of chairs on the floor, voices

as it sounds. To design effective sensory strategies for the school environment, we need a good assessment of the sensory needs of individual children, and a good understanding of how sensory processing works in general. These starting points enable us to tailor strategies which identify individual needs.

So, when is it a good idea to consider offering a sensory strategy?

## Sensory sensitivity

There are two ends to the range of sensory sensitivity – hypersensitive and hyposensitive. In other words, children who run, jump around and cannot sit still, and children who daydream and are happy in their slower world.

Hypersensitive children let too much information into their sensory processing system and can become easily overwhelmed. This can result in fight, flight or freeze responses, and pupils are likely to protect themselves against experiences they perceive as threatening or stressful. This can lead to heightened anxiety, irritable reactions for 'no apparent reason' and difficulties in emotional regulation. The response can also become externalised in challenging behaviour such as hitting other children, screaming etc.

When the reaction of the child is not to fight, but rather to escape the situation, they might refuse to do something, which again can be considered challenging behaviour, although it is a natural protective reaction. If children do not have the opportunity to avoid overwhelming stimuli, they can sometimes find themselves in meltdowns or complete shutdowns.

Higher sensitivity (and reactivity) is typical for pupils

*It is common to see difficulties in fine and gross motor skills, organisation, planning, and attention*

regulation may be caused by unmet sensory processing needs, which can result in undue stress on both pupil and teacher, and can get in the way of meaningful learning.

We have seven sensory systems: visual – sight; auditory – hearing; olfactory – smell; gustatory – taste; tactile – touch; proprioception – body awareness; and vestibular – balance. They all play a part in effective learning.

To be able to learn and coordinate our movements, we need our nervous system to process all the information

of other children, seeing other objects on the table and on the walls, and feeling their clothes touching their body.

## Designing sensory strategies

Managing pupils' sensory processing needs can go a long way to helping them settle into learning, and sensory strategies are an effective way of doing so. These are adjustments we can put in place in the classroom to modify a child's environment or required tasks. However, it's not always as straightforward





Fig. 1

Sensory system	Providing sensory experience	Using sensory experience
Tactile system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing in sand, water, mud, clay and other natural materials</li> <li>• Finger painting</li> <li>• Swimming, massage, walking on grass barefoot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searching for objects in a bean bag without looking</li> <li>• Cutting, tracing, fitting puzzles and building blocks</li> </ul>
Auditory system	Listening to music, the sounds of nature, people speaking or singing	Learning rhymes, matching the same sounds, or matching sounds with pictures of animals
Visual system	Looking at pictures, colours and lights	Playing 'I spy...' and 'find the difference', reading, tracing, puzzles, mazes

on the autism spectrum. It is mainly auditory, visual and tactile hypersensitivity (defensiveness), but sensitivity to touch is also typical for children who appear hyperactive – they are often over vigilant because they want to avoid accidental touch.

In contrast, hyposensitive children may need additional input to feed their brain with information that can be processed and used effectively in everyday tasks. In these cases, it is common to see difficulties in fine and gross motor skills, organisation, planning, and attention, which can sometimes lead to frustration.

To put it another way, it might seem as if a wall exists between the child and the world, and that we need to manually input sensory information to reach them. This is where the sensory strategies come in. We can use these strategies to provide opportunities for the pupil to experience sensations that are crucial for the development of skills many of us take for granted, such as sitting, writing, drawing, cutting with scissors, using kitchen utensils, getting

dressed, playing football etc. But to do all of this with confidence and without hurting ourselves, we need our sensory systems to be working in unison.

Through providing sensory experience we can design activities that use sensory discrimination. For example, see Fig.1.

### What can we do in the classroom?

One of the most obvious issues in the classroom is when a child simply isn't paying attention. However, this could be for a number of reasons. Our attention, or activity (arousal)

level is naturally regulated by vestibular inputs. For instance, when we want to calm down and fall asleep, slow regular rocking can help. On the other hand, when we need to wake up, we engage in activities that include movement (especially movement of the head). Both hyperactive and hypoactive pupils can benefit from the same vestibular strategies. Either way, all children in the classroom can sometimes use a boost and regulation of their attention.

For 'fidgety' pupils, we can provide movement breaks or incorporate movement into the curriculum (e.g. squats while doing maths or spelling), encourage active movement during breaks, and not punish children for moving around the classroom. If you are worried about children becoming agitated, always involve activities that include a lot of proprioception. This regulates the brain, organises and calms, while allowing them to maintain optimal levels of activity.

Proprioceptive activities include muscle work such as climbing, hanging, pushing the walls, or pushing yourself up from a chair; carrying heavy beanbags, backpacks or floor mats; building forts from heavy materials; squats, push ups or wheelbarrows.

In cases of high sensitivity, you could try:

- Removing sensory inputs that bother the child
- Providing the pupil with a sense of control over the situation – e.g. letting them sit near a wall where they are protected from the back and can see the rest of the room
- Creating opportunities for proprioceptive input
- Giving tools to the child that they can use independently that a) help eliminate the bothering sensation (e.g. ear defenders, sunglasses, long sleeves/ short sleeves), and b) add more proprioception when the child starts getting anxious (e.g. chewing necklace or pencil top).

Remember, these strategies target sensory processing through fun, purposeful activities that are meaningful to the child because they are part of everyday life, play and learning. I hope they help you support your pupils and their learning.



**Dr Ivana Lessner Listiakova** is a senior lecturer in childhood studies at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Suffolk.

Sciences and Humanities, University of Suffolk.

# Taking a restorative APPROACH

A calm and structured response to poor behaviour reaps benefits with children who have social and emotional difficulties, says **Katrina Brown**

**P** rimary schools work hard to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, helping them realise their potential whilst minimising the wider impact of behaviours that can result from disordered social and emotional development.

Informed, responsive and flexible approaches are more essential now than ever. Schools need to be a place of security and nurture, and offer an environment where children can express their emotions in a regulated manner.

Strong and responsive relationships between school adults and children – underpinned by a predictable structure to the day, and tasks that address gaps in development and learning – can ultimately promote success.

## Relationships

Schools adopting a trauma-informed approach will deploy adults who understand the importance of relationships in supporting children to settle emotionally and physically.

Behaviour needs to be understood as a means of communication and responses to this should be calm, measured and consistent. Any adult who comes into contact with a pupil needs to know the child and adhere to an agreed approach. The goal is to ensure stress is minimised but also that adults are acutely aware of

any warning signs and what intervention is necessary to get back on track.

When adults have a shared understanding that the behaviour of the child is an expression of a deeper need, they are more likely to be able to support the child to make a sustainable behavioural change which relies on self-regulation.

Adults deployed to work with pupils who have social and emotional regulation difficulties should be able to focus on ‘the now’ and move on quickly from their own disappointments. They must remain patient, consistent, calm and flexible and have the confidence to employ strategies to de-escalate. Whether children spend all or part of their day in

make their own choices but sometimes circumstances mean the adult needs to instruct; for example, rather than “Would you like to tidy up now?” say “It’s time to tidy up”.

## Behaviour management

It is important to recognise the behaviours as they occur to reinforce what is expected. Staff should agree what the principal pro-social behaviours are and consistently encourage and acknowledge them. The recognition system can be recorded or verbal but should become so familiar to the child that they use the language independently, can explain what it means and

Behaviour management for pupils with PSED needs will often be individualised with risk thoughtfully planned for and recorded as part of a one-page profile or an explicit risk reduction plan. Rules are in place to safeguard and to ensure that children can be taught well enough to learn and move on from their starting points. Adults can support pupils to get back on track with gentle but firm reminders delivered in a neutral tone to put the appropriate course back in the child’s mind. They need to be vigilant and be aware of where pupils are on their personal scale of regulated behaviours. To stymie inappropriate behaviours, low key responses and descriptions of reality delivered by an adult to pupils off task and on the cusp of accelerating behaviours could be any of the following:

*“Simply put, the method leads to honest conversations that don’t dwell on the punitive outcome”*

a specialist provision or are mainly in class, adults need to work hard to build attachments and foster trust.

Language used with children with PSED difficulties needs to be clear. Instructions should be delivered in calm, simple language so that the core message is not missed. If the next task could potentially trigger a negative response, the adult needs to manage the expectations, such as, “we can enjoy this game even if we don’t come first.” It is expected that children will

recognise themselves when they are doing it. Throughout the day, adults should point out the following to the child so that she grows to believe that:

- I think before I act
- I can have a go
- I accept my mistakes
- I am considerate of others
- I bounce back
- I am positive
- I listen
- I keep my problems small
- I accept challenges
- I do not give up
- I do the right thing
- I am an independent learner

- Tactical ignoring. Sit it out and withdraw interaction and reaction.
- Swoop in and out. Give a quick instruction and leave because the expectation is that everything will be in order again from that point.
- Describe what has been successful prior to this moment. “Elizabeth, I really liked the way you re-read the sentence in order to correct your mistake earlier on. Maybe that will work here too? Give it a go.”
- Describe the reality. For example, “Elizabeth, you are shouting.”





## STRUCTURING A RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION

The restorative conversation will be scaffolded by questions to an end goal of how reparation can be made. Questions could be asked as follows:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have your thoughts been since the incident?
- Who do you think has been affected by your actions?
- In what way were they affected?
- What do you do now to make things right?

The adult's role in a restorative conversation is to support the child to recognise and understand their own behaviour, and make links between it and their emotions. If the child is having difficulty articulating answers to the questions the adult can lend their own thinking to the child to support an understanding of actions and consequences. The ultimate aim is for the child to take responsibility and repair any harm that a situation has caused.

- Describe what the positive behaviour looks like. "Elizabeth, we put our hands up and wait to be asked. Thank you."
- Reminder of the expectation. "Elizabeth, the expectation is that we walk to the line. Thank you."
- Bring the task to close but on the adult's terms. "Elizabeth, just finish those two questions because we need to go outside for our mile a day. Thanks."

Children need to be reminded to keep their problems small, but mistakes do occur and when they do, clear, logical consequences should follow. Thought should be given to what makes sense to the child and how it relates to the behaviour because the desired outcome is for the behaviour to be altered in the long term.

### The restorative conversation

A restorative approach separates the child from the

behaviour but supports an understanding of the child's own culpability and the harm that has been caused to others. Adults ensure when discussing an incident, the child knows they are listened to. When restorative conversations become part of the fabric of provision, children understand that mistakes are expected but with shared inspection the situation can be resolved calmly.

Simply put, the approach leads to honest conversations that don't dwell on the punitive outcome. There may ultimately be a consequence but because the process helps the child to accept their own culpability in a structured way, a consequence becomes logical. Adults plan the approach with questions/scripts to elicit an understanding of the incident and the child's place in it. Careful listening,

an open mind and empathy support a positive interaction.

Finally, for children with short attention spans, social stories can be used to improve understanding by presenting a short narrative in a concrete way in less time. Cartoon strips can be used to provide a visual map through the incident and prompt answers.

For young children, drawing very simple pictures on a whiteboard to make the sequence clear, with space for the adult to draw or write an alternative course of behaviour, will suffice.



**Katrina Brown** is SENDCo at Histon and Impington Park Primary School, and Leader of GROW at the Meridian Trust.

# THE **UK'S LEADING** EDUCATION POLICY EVENT!

**SCHOOLS &  
ACADEMIES  
SHOW 2022**  
BIRMINGHAM NEC  
17TH NOVEMBER



**30+ HOURS** OF CPD  
CERTIFIED CONTENT



**100+**  
SPEAKERS



**16 HOURS** OF  
NETWORKING

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

**17TH NOVEMBER | NEC BIRMINGHAM**

**[WWW.SCHOOLSANDACADEMIESSHOW.CO.UK](http://WWW.SCHOOLSANDACADEMIESSHOW.CO.UK)**



# 4 REASONS TO TRY... The WellComm Primary Speech and Language Toolkit

Practical help to identify speech and language difficulties in primary-aged children, and support better learning outcomes

## 1 QUICK & SIMPLE SETUP

No specialist knowledge or expertise is required to use the WellComm Toolkit - the easy-to-use reporting system is there to help everyone from teachers, SENCOs, speech and language therapists and teaching assistants. The aim is to provide easy-to-use support for everyone involved with children.



## 2 EVERYTHING YOU NEED IN ONE TOOLKIT

The toolkit contains all you need to screen, support and help develop your pupils. Each kit also comes with The Big Book of Ideas, which contains 150 age-appropriate activities and strategies, as well as an optional Online Reporting Wizard.

## 3 PERSONALISED APPROACH

The toolkit doesn't just focus on results, but also making sure that the individual needs of each pupil are met. The Big Book of Ideas provides play-based activities to help you understand a child's needs and ensure that appropriate action can be taken. Early intervention is vital in ensuring that a child does not fall behind.

## 4 USE AS MANY TIMES AS YOU NEED

The WellComm Toolkit can be used repeatedly, allowing you to screen as many times as you need and measure the impact of what you've put in place for each pupil. Each section within the toolkit works together to create a structured and personalised approach to teaching and learning.

### Contact:

Find out more by visiting the website: [gl-assessment.co.uk/WellComm](http://gl-assessment.co.uk/WellComm)

## At a glance

- Developed by Speech and Language Therapists at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.
- Devised for children ages 6 months–6 years (early years) and 6–11 years (primary).
- Also suitable for EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners, so you can determine whether the child's learning challenges are caused by a language barrier.

# WELLCOMM PRIMARY TOOLKIT (6-11 YEARS)

Practical help for speech and language development

- Quick and simple to use – no expertise required
- Screen, support and take appropriate action
- Play-based activities to help understand pupil needs

## FIND OUT MORE

[gl-assessment.co.uk/WellComm](http://gl-assessment.co.uk/WellComm)



# Re-imagining attitudes TO AUTISM

**Paige Davis's** research suggests that neurodivergent children have pretend friends just like other youngsters – and can reap the same benefits

**T**he concept of imaginary friends seemed mysterious and surreal

when I began to research it while doing my MSc in Developmental Psychology. The idea fascinated me, especially after reading that children know that these friends aren't real. I based my final research project on imaginary companions and got deeper into learning about children's imaginations. It was quite exciting to discover that even my old teddy was seen as an imaginary friend because dolls and toys count, as long as the child ascribes a personality and mind to the object. This is because children are using the same skills with personified objects as they are when creating invisible companions. After studying them now for years, it is clear that you, as Sencos and teachers, are key in facilitating these companions in both neurotypical and neurodivergent children.

## Historic evidence

Imaginary friends have been documented in scientific literature for more than 100 years, but the way we look at them has changed drastically over time. In the past, researchers, teachers and doctors worried that they

were a sign of pathology or disorder, and children were discouraged from having them. Over time, and with more research, it was found that imaginary friends were actually used by children in many adaptive and positive ways. For example, some children use them to deal with fears or anxiety (I'm afraid to leave my parents at the school gate, so my imaginary friend

and predict the behaviour of others - and being able to put oneself in another person's shoes. It meant that children who had pretend pals were thought to be better at getting along with their peers, parents, and teachers. Other studies suggested that children who had pretend friends were better at things like interpretive diversity (understanding that different people can

***“Autistic children do imagine and, under certain circumstances, in a very similar way to neurotypical children”***

accompanies me), while others may use them to connect with another person (I don't have anyone to play with at playtime so I'll conjure up my imaginary friend).

## Shifting attitudes

A landmark study in the late 1990s was a big part of the shift from discouraging imaginary friends to encouraging them. It showed that children who had such as companion scored higher than those without imaginary friends in tasks related to theory of mind – which is defined as our ability to understand

assign different meanings to the same thing), appearance reality distinctions (the knowledge that how something appears is not necessarily the reality), and false belief knowledge (a misconception resulting from incorrect reasoning).

## Imaginary friends and autism

In the course of my work, I heard many stories from different teachers about autistic children creating imaginary friends. I had a nagging feeling I should investigate this further, because there seemed to be no existing research.



There were studies on the imaginary friends of children who were blind or have Down's syndrome but nothing on an autistic child's imaginary companions. This was probably because of the outdated thought that autistic children don't have an imagination.

Armed with the anecdotal evidence from the teachers in the schools I visited, I ran a study with academic colleagues that was the first to show that autistic children can and do create imaginary friends.

## Less is more

We asked parents of 124 autistic children aged from five to 12 years about their child's experiences. Significantly fewer parents of autistic children





reported the presence of imaginary companions in their children than parents with neurotypical children; however, where they existed, the imaginary companions looked similar in profile and were used similarly. Among the pretend pals were:

- Ghosty Bubble - an invisible bubble person who is fun to talk to and sleeps on a bubble bed next to the child. When the child wants to be alone, he can be popped
- Pretend Ada - an invisible version of a child's real school friend who plays with the child when needed
- Mikey - an invisible ninja who lives in the sewer and is played with and read to daily by the child
- Andrew - an invisible boy who drives a

rainbow-coloured car and sleeps on a bunk bed.

After discovering that autistic children do, indeed, create imaginary friends, we asked ourselves how this related to what we already know about neurotypical children behaving similarly. We know that neurotypical pupils creating imaginary companions have been found to have better social skills and theory of mind, but did this also apply to autistic children? This time we asked parents of older autistic children about their child's communication skills, social understanding, and theory of mind ability. We found almost half of the parents reported that their autistic child had created an imaginary friend, and that these children displayed

significantly higher scores on social understanding and theory of mind.

We believe that imaginary friends are helping autistic children to practise their social skills just by imagining another person – and that this could help them learn about how they could interact with real-life peers.

We asked ourselves if autistic children were, therefore, helping themselves to excel in a neurotypical world?

There is more research to be done in order to investigate whether the reasons for these similarities between autistic children and neurotypical children - with and without imaginary friends - is originating from the same cause, or if they are getting to the same place via different pathways.

## Informing classroom practice

I hope this research can inform your practice by adding an evidence base to concepts that you probably already use in the classroom. Although in the past imaginative exercises with autistic children may have been discouraged, we found that, on the contrary, autistic children do imagine and, under certain circumstances, do so in a way that is very similar to neurotypical children. Tailoring imagination games and exercises can elaborate and bolster play activities - especially if you run into a child with an imaginary friend.

And if you do teach an autistic child with an invisible friend, you can reassure parents that this is related to positive social skills and theory of mind.

**(The author has used language with an evidence base, and is aware that the language around autistic individuals may not be right for everyone that reads this piece.)**

## Why it's good to have imaginary friends

- Only 16% of autistic children aged two to eight years had imaginary friends, but this went up to almost half in 11 year olds.
- Social interaction and comfort were the most prevalent reasons reported for having a pretend companion among autistic children.
- Neurotypical children with imaginary friends had significantly better emotional understanding and some theory of mind skills compared to neurotypical children without such a friend.
- Parents who said their autistic child had created an imaginary friend reported significantly higher theory of mind ability, and social skills compared to those without such a companion. Communication ability did not differ between these two groups.
- According to parental responses, girls were more likely to report having an imaginary friend.
- Youngsters who had a pretend pal were more interested in making real-life friends and spending time with them than other children. However, it did not relate to how many close friends the parent reported their child had in all.



**Dr Paige Davis is senior lecturer in psychology at York St John**

**University and led the study *Autistic children who create imaginary companions: Evidence of social benefits* ([tinyurl.com/pretendfriends](https://tinyurl.com/pretendfriends)).**



Special Needs Assessment Profile

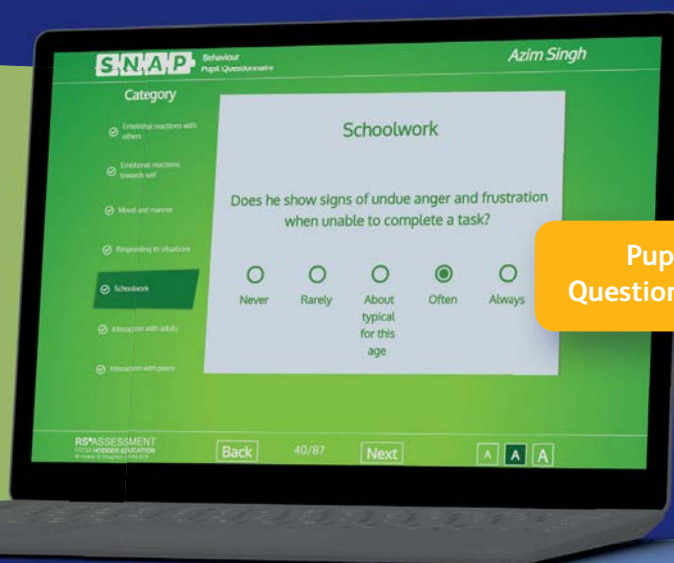
# Identify learning and behavioural difficulties and provide practical interventions



- ✓ Save time
- ✓ Intervene early
- ✓ Engage parents
- ✓ Track progress

## SNAP-B

- Profile 17 social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Assess relationship with self, relationships with adults and relationships with peers.



Pupil  
Questionnaire



Core profile

## SNAP-SpLD

- Identify 20 likely specific learning difficulties – more than any other SEN tool!
- Gain quantitative evidence about a pupils' ability.

[Risingstars-uk.com/senco-snap](https://risingstars-uk.com/senco-snap)

**RS** ASSESSMENT  
FROM **HODDER EDUCATION**



# 5 REASONS TO TRY... SNAP

Improving SEND pupils' potential to learn



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

SNAP (comprised of SNAP-Behaviour and SNAP-SpLD) is a digital diagnostic tool that profiles specific learning and behavioural difficulties which, without identification, may limit a pupil's potential to learn. Pupils take an online questionnaire and a 'Core Profile' is generated showing pupil strengths and weaknesses, suggested strategies and information sheets about the areas of concern.

### 1 IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC LEARNING AND BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS

SNAP allows teachers and SENCOs to quickly identify specific learning or behavioural needs which might be inhibiting a pupil's ability to learn. SNAP-Behaviour profiles 17 social, emotional and behavioural difficulties across three domains; relationship with self, relationship with other children and relationships with adults. SNAP-SpLD profiles 20 specific learning difficulties – more than any other SEN tool! SNAP-SpLD also includes eight short diagnostic probes (for ages 7+) which can provide additional evidence about the pupil and their abilities.

### 2 SAVING TIME AND RESOURCES

With time and resources being limited for many teachers and Sencos, SNAP is the ideal diagnostic tool as it can be easily administered by any member of staff, without the need for additional training. Once the pupil has taken the questionnaire, teachers are able instantly to generate a report on a child and see, at a glance, whether there are any underlying behavioural or learning needs. The pupil information generated by SNAP can also be used as evidence for support plans and EHCP referrals.



**RS ASSESSMENT**  
FROM HODDER EDUCATION

**SNAP**

### 3 ENGAGING PARENTS

SNAP offers a triangulated approach to supporting learning and behavioural difficulties. Initial questionnaires completed by pupils, teachers and parents/carers capture a complete overview of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses. The home report can be shared with parents, and includes details about the specific areas of need, a summary of the selected interventions being carried out at school, strategies and activities to

#### Find out more about SNAP:

[Risingstars-uk.com/senco-snap](https://risingstars-uk.com/senco-snap)

Find your local RS Assessment consultant here: [Risingstars-uk.com/senco-localrep](https://risingstars-uk.com/senco-localrep)

try at home, as well as useful websites. The home report is an easy document for parents/carers to digest and provides a visual profile of a child's strengths and weaknesses.

### 4 FOLLOWING THE SEND CODE OF PRACTICE

SNAP follows the Assess – Plan – Do – Review model, as set out in the SEND Code of Practice (2014). Once a 'Core Profile' is generated, teachers can view strengths and weaknesses at a glance, which will allow for more empowered discussions between the pupil and the school. Teachers are able

to access a selection of interventions and strategies, which can easily be combined with ideas, resources and approaches already being used at school.

### 5 EARLY INTERVENTION

Early intervention is vital for children with learning or behavioural difficulties. SNAP allows teachers to monitor the steps of progress, however big or small, that their pupils may be making. Staff can compare up to three assessments in one report, allowing them to track progress over time to assess whether interventions should be continued, adapted or stopped. By sharing intervention strategies with parents/carers, teachers can ensure that support remains consistent.

## KEY POINTS

Online pupil questionnaires are quick and easy to administer, without the need for a Senco or specialist support staff.

Information is triangulated from the pupil, school and home, allowing a fully rounded profile of the pupil to be generated.

By following the Assess-Plan-Do-Review model, teachers can put strategies in place and tracking the impact of them over time.

Where learning or behavioural difficulties are picked up, teachers can make further referrals for diagnoses, and for a pupil's EHCP.

# Making every session count

Online tutoring can be daunting for SEND pupils but, with some forward planning, it can be fun and productive, says **Fran Sutton**

**H**ave you ever thought about online tutoring for your students but questioned whether it's the right thing for your pupils? Will they engage via a screen? Will they be able to build a relationship with their tutor? Will you be able to build a relationship with their tutor?

With the right, relaxed conditions - with students, teachers, SENCOs and tutors all on the same page - you can ensure every session counts.

This is my third year of tutoring English for pupils aged from Year 4 to Year 9, and I have watched numerous children, of varying abilities, start thriving in response to online tutoring - SEND pupils especially.

With one-on-one interactions, or groups of no more than three, tutors can efficiently help teachers plug gaps, address misconceptions, and make steady progress at the pupils' pace, without them experiencing feelings of failure or embarrassment, or the stigma of being behind classmates.

## Laying firm foundations

Before a pupil's first tutoring session begins, school staff can help pave the way for a smooth introduction. Put the

learner's mind at ease by explaining that the tutoring is there to enhance their learning, assuring them that their tutor will be experienced. Let them know that their first session will be an introduction to the teaching platform, as well as a friendly get-to-know-you with their tutor.

Some pupils may be concerned about the use of the camera in lessons. You can let them know that using the camera from beginning to end isn't necessary. Instead, it could just be used to say hello and goodbye, and for

- What they should do if they need more support during sessions.

## Stress-reducing set-ups

Providing the best environment for learning will remove unnecessary stress for pupils with SEND. My top tip? Find somewhere quiet - not a corridor, staffroom or anywhere else with distracting background noise. It can be in the pupil's home if you and their family think that will work best.

Before learners get started, make sure an adult

It helps learners to know we're all working together.

## A strong pupil-tutor relationship

Building strong relationships can be difficult at the best of times, let alone when this can only be done via a screen. In their introductory session with the pupil, the tutor will use their skillset to find out what makes the learner tick, and begin to forge a good bond.

If I discover a pupil loves horses, for instance, I will look to add resources in later sessions that include this - for example, a text about horse riding. One of my pupils was into history, so we would have a five-minute chat about that before starting each session. The chat removed any anxiety, and got him ready to learn.

An experienced tutor won't be afraid to change what they are doing if the session is going off the rails. They might instead make space to watch a video; invite pupils to mark their fellow peers' work if they aren't in a one-to-one session, or - if they are in a one-to-one session - even ask the pupil to become the teacher. For one of my learners with SEND, finding questions and challenges for me to talk through was the highlight of his sessions. He loved finding that question that he thought I wouldn't be able to answer - and, like most of my students,

*“For one of my learners with SEND, finding questions and challenges for me to talk through was the highlight of his sessions”*

when they are sharing work. This can help children who struggle with eye contact greatly, such as some children with autism, helping them to feel more at ease.

To help demystify the experience, be sure that your learners are also told:

- Where they need to be for their sessions
- How long the sessions will last
- Who will be there from school

can check their device is fully working, and won't present any issues. Firewalls can sometimes block tutoring platforms, so make relevant adjustments wherever necessary. Take a look at the device's camera too: is it functional?

Lastly, let pupils know that we do have contact with their teachers - one young man I worked with was totally flabbergasted when his teacher asked him why he'd logged out of our session early!



*“There is no point teaching when someone has reached capacity; it could have a negative impact”*



greatly enjoyed the ongoing feedback process involved.

## Teachers, Sencos and tutors in tandem

The dialogue between teachers, Sencos and tutors is almost as important as the one forged during sessions with our pupils. Try your best to make time for a meeting online with the tutor. Tutors who are qualified teachers understand how much time pressure school staff face each day and will happily plan a time to meet that fits in with your schedule, at evenings or weekends if this works well.

An early conversation will take away any confusion on what is proposed for study. It can also help tutors hit the ground running by providing them with accurate information on the unique

needs and abilities of their pupils. If you know that your learners have specialist interests, or preferred ways of working – for example, typing things, taking snapshots, or dictating – a tutor’s knowledge of this is sure to save learners stress and time. Similarly, with issues such as dyslexia, does your school want text sending over beforehand to make an enlarged or hard copy? Tell us about your rewards system too: can we award house points, when things go well?

Don’t think that once the sessions start, that’s it with teacher/tutor conversation. You’re welcome to continue contact with tutors. Whether that’s a quick email to advise us of any issues that might affect a pupil’s learning on that day; information

about any sessions that will be missed; relevant topics that are being covered in class; or whether sessions should be cut short. There is no point teaching when someone has reached capacity, and doing so could have a negative impact on their future attendance.

At the same time, keep the dialogue open with pupils by asking what they have done after each session, and demonstrating that you are onboard with the tutor’s input. As part of Pearson’s process, we send up to 500 words to teachers following every session, detailing what has been covered, what the plan is for next steps, anything we want to revisit, or highlights allowing you a full look at how things have gone.

## IMPACT AND OBSERVATIONS

Tutoring sessions don’t just help a child or young person academically. The sessions also:

- Provide dedicated and personalised support that grows pupils’ confidence, self-esteem and desire to learn.
- Support classroom teachers, running the tutoring sessions parallel to lessons in class so children are developing alongside their peers, whilst taking away the extra workload that comes with creating their own additional content for their TAs to carry out.
- Support the SLT by providing additional and flexible teaching resource, allowing their own teachers and TAs to continue with their work.



*Fran Sutton is a past teacher of 20 years’ experience and is currently*

*an English tutor with Pearson Tutoring. Go to: [pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/pearson-tutoring-programme](https://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/pearson-tutoring-programme)*

# Wellbeing at the heart of the school

**Ben Reading** shares the innovative approaches that led to his school receiving the Wellbeing Award for Schools from the National Children's Bureau

**S**ince Maple Grove School, part of Options Autism, opened in 2020, developing a culture of wellbeing has been at the top of the agenda and at the heart of our school. When pupils feel safe, nurtured and listened to, they are able to learn and thrive. By building a whole school community and a real sense of belonging, and inviting families and caregivers to be a part of the team, we can be more effective in our approaches and provision.

Presently we have 46 pupils on role aged 5-16 years. From their first day at school, our focus is on preparing them for when they eventually leave us. As a result of their autism, additional diagnoses and past experiences, each pupil is unique and therefore their learning journey, personal circumstances and educational and personal outcomes need to be tailor-made. Qualifications often determine future choices for pupils in mainstream schools. For our pupils, it is self-belief, confidence and self-advocacy that help them to secure theirs.

## Nurturing relationships

Building relationships and communicating with parents and carers is key - developing a strong partnership helps consistency in approaches to behaviour and expectations,

as well as providing back up for the families. We have a full-time pastoral team lead, pastoral support and family worker. Parents and carers can contact our family worker at any time to discuss concerns or seek advice, and regular parent get-togethers, presentations and training offer parents a level of support they may not have had access to previously.

The daily routine at Maple Grove begins with members of the pastoral team and senior leadership team meeting pupils at the gate and walking with them into the building. The meet and greet helps pupils to transition in to school, which can be challenging for autistic children, and also allows us to monitor how individuals are feeling - which can affect their whole day. Even pupils who have been attending Maple Grove for a few years can have days when coming into school is difficult, but they know that they have different options open to them and we are there to help.

## Monitoring engagement

In the classroom, the generous pupil-teacher ratio means

our teaching teams can identify and respond quickly to the children's needs. During lessons, the teaching assistants monitor the children's level of involvement and wellbeing using the Leuven Scale. The evidence-based data collected helps us to identify patterns in a child's wellbeing and behaviour so we can put the necessary resources and support in place. Each week a team - which includes the pastoral staff, clinicians and SLT - discusses the progress and needs of individual pupils.

## Building self-esteem

There is always discussion and careful consideration about the best use of a pupil's time during

the school day. Accessing the curriculum and academic attainment are important, but providing experiences and opportunities outside the school community is also a powerful tool for building the self-esteem of individual pupils. We have several partnerships with local organisations such as the Fire Cadets, which provide additional options for the older pupils, helping to develop their confidence and widen their horizons.

Communication is also key for wellbeing and the recent recognition of British Sign Language (BSL) has allowed us to substitute BSL as our Modern Foreign Language. Training is underway across the school community with the hope that this will increase





avenues of communication for many of our pupils, making it more accessible in their future lives.

To support self-advocacy and help develop positive self-image we have ongoing conversations and discussions about autism with pupils in Year 7 and above. We encourage pupils to celebrate their neurodiversity and through this recognition, be accepting of themselves and others.

## Valuing staff and pupils equally

Staff and pupils' wellbeing is equally important. Working at Maple Grove is incredibly rewarding and also very intense – our staff need to be resilient, have lots of energy and a sense of humour, so we try to make sure all our staff feel valued and listened to. Staff who are supported and encouraged are naturally more committed. We have a six-week supervision cycle for every member of staff to check in with the SLT, discuss issues or concerns and receive the support they need. We also facilitate a whole-staff wellbeing survey twice a year, to gather data on staff collectively from across the school.

Staff development is important for their wellbeing.

## WHAT IS THE LEUVEN SCALE?

The Leuven scale is a five-point scale, originally developed in Belgium by academic Ferre Leavers, that allows child care experts and teachers to gauge a child's emotional well-being and involvement:

**LEVEL 1 – Extremely low.** The child may be crying, or showing signs of sadness and distress. The child is withdrawn and may behave aggressively

**LEVEL 2 – Low.** The child's behaviour suggests they are not at ease but the signals are not as explicit as level 1

**LEVEL 3 – Moderate.** The child shows no outward signs one way or the other that they are sad or happy.

**LEVEL 4 – High.** The pupil shows some signs of satisfaction, but not as explicitly as in level 5.

**LEVEL 5 – Extremely high.** The child is happy, cheerful and laughing. They are engaged and may be chatting to themselves. They are relaxed and at ease, and appear self-confident.



Alongside our regular weekly professional development programme, individual staff members can also choose to pursue their own personal development based on their interests – anything from phonics to gardening.

## Wellbeing hub

Our recently opened wellbeing hub - originally a large computer suite which we chose to convert to a more useful space for our pupils and staff - has therapeutic spaces, rooms for one-to-one sessions and The Quiet Place, an inviting room with a beautiful forest mural for

anyone seeking some calm.

Many of our pupils have experienced trauma in their young lives, either due to their family situations or during their time in mainstream schools unable to cater for their needs. They often exhibit challenging behaviours that act as barriers to learning and inclusion. An integral part of our holistic strategy is to overcome these barriers. We offer an alternative positive experience of school - a safe and accepting environment - where everyone can learn.

Our positive behaviour support strategy is based on an holistic, child-centred, trauma-informed approach. We understand that a pupil displaying challenging behaviour is often

communicating an unmet need. All our staff are trained in a trauma-informed approach and can recognise when children are in crisis or distress and proactively de-escalate the situation and support the child to self-regulate.

Instead of the threat of sanctions or punishments, we have clear boundaries and high expectations that everyone shows respect and consideration for others. We encourage an ethos of achievement through recognising pupils who display adventure, endeavour, resilience and kindness. Achievements are celebrated by the whole school during assembly each week. Pupils who have excelled in their personal goals can choose a high value reward according to their interests – for example, horse riding sessions or a trip to the local 'Nerf' play park.



**Ben Reading is headteacher of Maple Grove School (options autism. co.uk)**



# 4 REASONS TO TRY... RNIB's education training events

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) outlines its calendar of free training for professionals supporting children and young people with a vision impairment

**1** We know from our annual Freedom of Information report that numbers of qualified teachers of pupils with visual impairments are, at best, remaining the same. However, in the context of growing numbers of children with a vision impairment, this is putting services and provisions for children and young people with a vision impairment under pressure.

**2** Finding training that is accessible and easy to attend is not straight forward, yet it is essential for specialists to maintain their professional skills and development. Together we can overcome the blockades that currently prevent children with a vision impairment from reaching their full potential when it comes to education and beyond.



**3** Every year, RNIB offers a varied training programme with registration for QTVIs, QTMSIs, ToDs, Sendcos, TAs\* and other education and health professionals, and invites prospective participants to sign up to this fantastic training development opportunity.

**4** The training sessions take place virtually, on a range of dates, throughout the academic year, predominantly from 4-6pm and are free to sign up to. The topics to be covered this year range from eye health conditions to available support, and exam updates to Braille skills.

## RNIB

See differently

### Contact:

To sign up to a training event, visit [rnib.in/EducationTraining](https://rnib.in/EducationTraining)

## At a glance

- RNIB's training helps overcome barriers preventing children with a vision impairment reaching their full potential.
- Through this new calendar of training events, we can increase the pool of people who can apply including teaching assistants and those working in health and care services.
- The sessions give you creative and practical examples of how to support young people with complex needs.

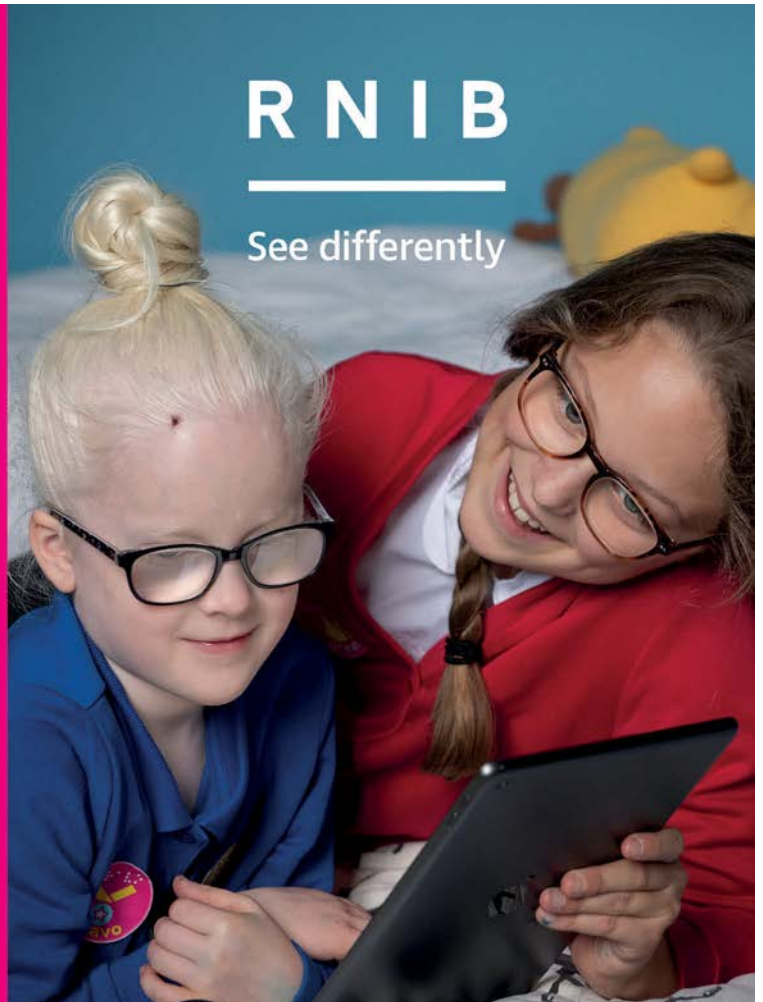
## Our services for professionals supporting children with a vision impairment

- Specialist advice and guidance
- Family, early years, and transitions support
- Products, toys and games
- New curriculum framework and educational materials

Visit [rnib.in/children](https://rnib.in/children)  
Call us on 0303 123 9999

## RNIB

See differently





# How to support pupils WITH AUTISM

**Pete Wharmby** sets out a ten-point strategy for ensuring neurodiverse children are accommodated in your school

**T**hough there have been improvements made in how schools accommodate autistic and otherwise neurodivergent pupils, there is still a long way to go. I do not say this lightly. Schools now understand better what autism *really* is, but the development of truly inclusive school settings is in its infancy, and to believe that the work is done would be a mistake. Here are 10 very simple-to-instate rules of thumb that ought to make any primary school setting more inclusive of neurodivergence.

**1** Whenever autistic children are moving around the school, consider allowing them either to leave and make the move a little earlier than the rest of the class (in order to avoid the sensory stress of crowds), or to follow up, a little behind the rest.

**2** Permit autistic children to use quiet, out of the way spaces during break times. Break and lunch can be the most stressful times of day, so quiet spots can be a lifesaver. The rule that pupils 'have' to be outside in good weather ought to have some inbuilt flexibility – autistic children are prone to bullying and allowing them to relax alone, in a safe space, is a real gift.

**3** Do not force autistic children to work in groups. You're not doing them a favour. Being forced into group work can be so overwhelming and distressing that any learning can be completely lost. By all means encourage it at times – not frequently – but be kind and flexible when it comes to allowing them to choose with whom to work.

**4** Give autistic students plenty of advance warning about any changes to the usual routine, including fire drills and non-uniform days. Knowing that the awfully loud fire bell will be going off at 11am is much better than being terrified by it unexpectedly.

**5** Be aware that autistic students might struggle to focus and concentrate in lessons with open-ended tasks and no clear direction. Executive dysfunction can make that kind of independent learning very difficult. Make sure that clear instructions and end goals are provided so there is little ambiguity.

**6** Allow autistic students to wear a modified uniform if necessary – especially shirt top buttons, ties and hot sweaters or blazers. Sensory discomfort due to clothing can ruin focus, especially in hot weather.

**7** Do not insist on eye contact, room tracking and don't ask them not to fidget. Doing so will only serve to overwhelm, meaning they'll learn nothing whilst trying to meet your rules. Eye contact is uncomfortable,

even painful for many autistic people, and fidgeting may well be 'stimming' – a self-soothing activity to regulate our stress levels.

**8** Make sure your room isn't overwhelming in terms of sensory stimulus. Reduce wall clutter and avoid strong smells, including on you (such as perfume or aftershave.) Keep things nice and calm as much as possible, and try to keep the temperature cool and neutral. Open windows are great for autistic students' comfort.

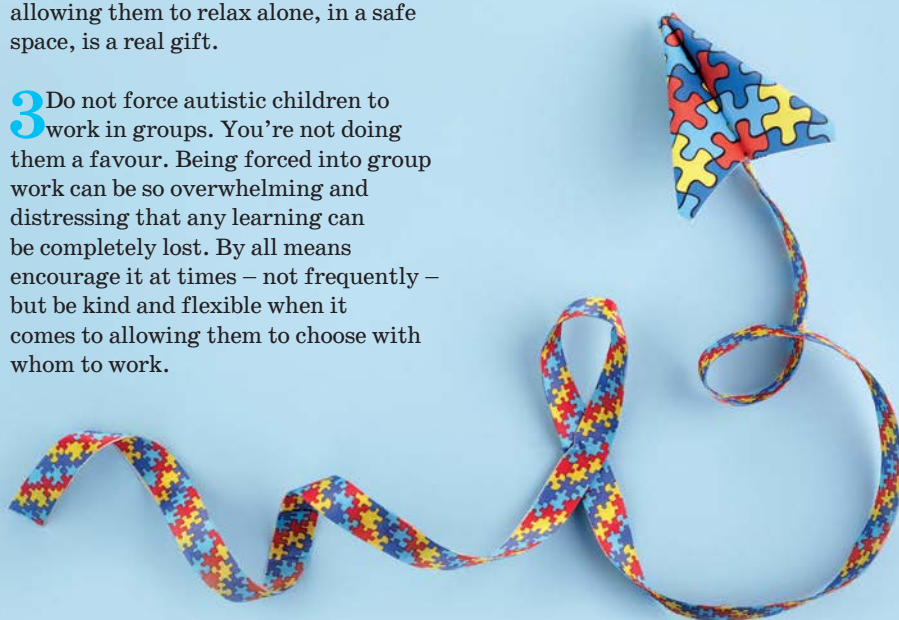
**9** Make expectations absolutely clear and avoid ambiguous or inconsistent behaviour management. If you make an error, own it and apologise. Autistic children are very perceptive when it comes to unjust behaviour and will call you out. Don't be defensive, unless you wish to lose their trust.

**10** Take the sting away from the word 'autistic' by educating students about what autism actually is, with information delivered by an autistic person. Schools can and ought to be spaces where difference is celebrated rather than masked. In my experience, non-autistic students can, when told about autism, be really fascinated and comfortable with the knowledge. Once a base level of understanding is reached, each school can assess the needs of its students on a case-by-case basis – no two autistic people are exactly alike in their needs, and what helps one may not necessarily help another.

Many autistic children have a rough time at school, but they can thrive when given adequate, patient support.



*Pete Wharmby is an autistic speaker, author and advocate. His first book, *What I Want to Talk About* is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.*



# Revolutionising SEND through EdTech

Technology is opening up a new world of learning opportunities for children with special needs, says **Al Kingsley**

**T**he tangible impact digital technology can have on the learning experiences of children and young people with SEND is significant. Teachers can engage students like never before, adapting resources and lesson plans to their unique needs, breaking down barriers to participation, and capturing pupils' attention while empowering them with essential digital skills.

A teacher might use classroom programs to 'gamify' a lesson by introducing competitive elements for pupils who struggle to stay on task, or who have executive dysfunction which can affect the ability to plan, problem solve, stay organised and manage their time effectively. Technology is also helping students overcome physical barriers. New eye-tracking technology, for example, allows disabled pupils to

answer questions and engage actively in their learning.

## Engaging formats

Digital learning strategies offer teachers and schools the chance not just to

experiments being performed on the opposite side of the globe via online streaming.

For autistic students, a primary benefit of EdTech is how visually appealing it can be. Motion graphics and

fewer opportunities for distraction and manage better emotional dysregulation.

## Overcoming barriers to communication

Inclusive communication should be an essential consideration of any school, but particularly those catering to students with SEND. EdTech can allow teaching to adapt to students needs and overcome communication barriers, both physical and mental.

For many students with SEND, their ability to communicate with teachers, support staff and classmates may be limited. For example, roughly 25 per cent of people with autism are non-verbal. Others experience a mental barrier to communication, perhaps feeling self-conscious about how they might sound to others. Enabling these students to communicate is vital both from an academic and wellbeing standpoint.

EdTech can provide additional ways of communicating with staff through messaging, voice recordings or feedback forms. Students can use tools to draw on their worksheets to indicate where they may be struggling rather than voicing their queries.

Additionally, for students suffering from anxiety, private message functions

***“Instead of standing up or raising their hand to speak, pupils can type answers or share live”***

supplement their current pedagogical methods but actually transform teaching and learning. EdTech empowers teachers to truly engage their students with resources adapted to suit the individual needs of each pupil, which can be transformational to the education experience of a child with SEND, who might find challenging a traditional classroom setting.

The gamification of learning can make class fun and rewarding for students, with surveys, competitions and quizzes to test students' understanding of certain topics. Instead of reading from a textbook, writing notes or filling out workbooks, students can learn about the Ancient Romans from immersive audio experiences, explore world geography using VR headsets or observe live science

brightly coloured assets can help maintain their attention and interest in the topic whilst regulating the sensory input to prevent the student from being overwhelmed.

Sensory learning resources such as audio-visual assets can even prove calming to autistic children by aligning with, and engaging, their unique sensory experience.

EdTech gives teachers more power to direct students' attention and prevent it from wandering. Having the ability to remotely access devices and share resources, open and close programmes and windows, play media on and even override each student's device, means teachers have more oversight and control over the lesson. They can limit the web pages and programmes students can access during the lesson, ensuring







provide a discrete way of talking to their teachers without drawing attention to themselves. EdTech can support them to feel more confident participating in class discussions. Instead of standing up or raising their hand to speak in front of a full classroom, they can type answers or share live responses from their desk.

Many EdTech platforms incorporate a question-and-answer system or automatic quiz feature which increases the ability of students who struggle with verbal communication to interact and participate in real time with snap surveys, quizzes and even competitions.

The variety of communication methods enable teachers to respond and adapt to the ability and challenge level required each day - as the ability of students with SEND to communicate and engage in learning can change daily.

For children who struggling to form interpersonal connections, or who would never be able to work in a class group, working collaboratively

via a digital platform can help them overcome any discomfort or difficulties they would normally experience with physical interactions. This could be collaborating in a document on an exercise, video calling students in other locations or communicating directly via instant message chat.

Facilitating connection between peers is critically important to encouraging a sense of inclusion amongst children with SEND. Often, particularly within non-specialist schools, children with SEND can end up feeling on the periphery of a school community, unable to form connections as easily with their peers.

### Increasing the accessibility of resources

For many SEND children, traditional forms of communications used in the classroom can be difficult to process, recognise or use. This can be due to learning difficulties such as dyslexia or physical difficulties like impaired vision. EdTech can

provide simple solutions which help increase the accessibility of the learning content by engaging a range of senses, including touch and hearing.

Teachers can use videos or voice recordings to issue instructions or share learning resources. Classroom devices can also be equipped with talking calculators or applications that will dictate content aloud or improve text legibility by transferring written content into dyslexia-friendly fonts that will be easier for the children to read.

As well as supporting the learning of dyslexic students, accessibility features such as being able to adjust the display to be colour-blind friendly or increasing text size, can also overcome the difficulties of, for example, visually impaired students.

Changes that are relatively easy to make using EdTech can make a huge difference to a child with SEND and be the difference between them being able to access content, and not engaging in lessons at all.

## BETTER ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

- Digital technology reduces the time teachers spend reviewing classwork with automatic marking tools and attainment trackers. Automatically generated reports can streamline student progress tracking, allowing teachers to spend this extra time addressing identified gaps in learning.
- Digitising the feedback process can also vastly improve efficiency and allow teachers to leave feedback in a way that best suits the student. For example, for students who respond better to visual aids, feedback can be left using symbols, pictures or even emojis. Some children with ADHD/ASD can struggle to understand feedback and interpret their feelings or the teachers comments via traditional written feedback; EdTech allows teachers to accommodate the feedback method that will best resonate with each student.

- For autistic students, providing feedback via voice recordings helps them view it as a two-way interaction as they can recognise the voice of their teacher and respond instantly in the same way. Autistic students tend to view work as complete as soon as they have finished it, and are less likely to revisit the content. Providing feedback in this way helps them see the work as a continuing interaction, which helps to consolidate their learning and improve their engagement.



*Al Kingsley is Chair of Hampton Academies Trust and Group CEO of NetSupport.*

# Sharing strategies for SEND

**Ashley Eastwood** describes how the Learning Harmony Trust's special school informed practice across the group

**E**nsuring a school has the right SEND expertise, resources and capacity to support each child's individual needs is a complicated but vital task. Whether it is a special school, a specialist unit or mainstream, there is often a broad range of students with diverse and sometimes conflicting requirements.

At Learning in Harmony Trust (LiHT) we developed our SEND strategy to ensure we are offering each pupil the most suitable and specialised support. A fundamental part of our ability to build this strategy is being able to draw from the expertise of our JFK Special School.

JFK has a rich history of setting the standard of excellence for SEND provision. The school was rated Outstanding by Ofsted in 2017 and has been awarded Autism Accreditation from The National Autistic Society, the Professional Development Quality Mark Gold Award and the Leading Parent Partnership Award. JFK has supported our mainstream schools in transforming their provision for pupils with SEND and most of them have now developed their own specialist provision.

Working with the staff at JFK has shaped the way that we view SEND provisions in mainstream schools. In realising the potential that an effective SEND strategy can have on making a lasting difference for our pupils, we made it a priority for our

Trust to build a foundation of SEND excellence in all of our settings.

## Priorities

Our SEND strategy features three key priorities:

- Drawing up an effective and collaborative admissions plan;
- Sharing best practice across our family of schools; and,
- Establishing specialist classrooms in mainstream settings.

## Creating an admissions plan

Support for students starts right from the beginning; a crucial issue that many schools face is not having the correct staff, facilities and environment to support a child with specific needs.

We put together an admissions plan, in coalition with the local authority, which looks at the needs of individual students instead of their disability alone. Parents are supported in placing their

child in the best environment for success and, where appropriate, affords them the option of enrolling their child in a mainstream school.

The plan has supported the local authority in better signposting students to the right schools for their specific needs. With the significant 129% increase of primary-aged pupils identified as having Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) in the last five years, who will now require specialist support at

## SPECIALIST CLASSROOMS IN MAINSTREAM SETTINGS

The support of JFK has enabled us to expand our specialist provision offers into our mainstream primary schools, through the creation of specialist classrooms. These settings are an important way of offering pupils unable to access the national curriculum exceptional engagement opportunities that can have a huge benefit on their social and emotional development.

But what did experience tell us about establishing a specialist classroom in a mainstream school?

- When setting up a specialist classroom, it's more valuable to recruit a teacher who has the experience to effectively deal with any initial challenges, than appointing a less-experienced teacher from within the school.
- These classrooms are not the best fit for every child - some do better in all mainstream classes, while others may thrive in specialist schools. It's important to focus on the combination of specific needs when determining the mix of pupils. Teachers must understand why each child is being placed in these classrooms and how it supports their development.
- Smaller class sizes are the most effective, with

an average of eight students and four adults who are teaching a highly personalised curriculum.

- Schools should be meticulous when designing the room. The classroom should include spaces that are designed for pupils with sensory-specific needs.
- Draw on the expertise of other schools, trusts or SENCo specialists when a new challenge arises.
- Ensure the learning for each child is tailored to their needs. A specialist classroom doesn't mean a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will work for every child. We addressed this with the careful planning of motivating and purposeful learning activities.
- A challenge we faced during the initial set-up of these classrooms was apprehension from parents. This was overcome by building on existing strong relationships, allowing them to express their concerns and addressing these individually, meeting the teacher who would be leading the provision so she could explain her experience and vision, then regularly getting their feedback once the provision started and making necessary adaptations.



secondary school, collaboration between schools, parents and local authorities will be imperative to ensure students start at the right school.

## Sharing best practice across schools

Throughout our journey of implementing a Trust-wide SEND strategy we shared best practice across our schools. What started as informal support for individual schools from specialists at JFK turned into a network of highly trained experts able, collectively, to share best practice, ideas, resources, case studies and problem-solve.

We now have a central team of SENCo leaders from JFK and the mainstream schools, which meet once a week. Thanks to the normalisation of remote working, these meetings are held virtually, making them accessible for leaders who may otherwise struggle to attend during the school day.

The meetings enable mainstream schools to discuss different challenges and gain support in streamlining processes such as SEND assessments, referral systems, and setting up and developing specialist provisions. These meetings prove particularly beneficial when a child requires a unique provision. For example, in a circumstance in which a pupil needed a feeding tube, the school was able to seek advice from colleagues on how to quickly organise training for staff.

Through our network, we have created a system of peer reviews between schools, providing an opportunity for staff to see a variety of excellent approaches. This helps schools develop their SEND strategy. Having done this over a few years, we have a full picture of the progress that each school has made, while also pushing them to always look for the next steps to improve rather than becoming complacent.

This has also led to



formal opportunities for professional development, as the network has run its own training sessions, and middle leaders from JFK have helped to upskill teachers in mainstream schools.

## Spreading the word

As part of our wider commitment to improving education nationally, we have been working beyond the Trust to improve opportunities and outcomes for children with SEND.

JFK, as part of the Teaching School Alliance, has undertaken school-to-school

outreach work across the country to assist SEND departments through CPD courses and support packages. We have also been working to build a new and innovative model that supports underrepresented cohorts in accessing mainstream secondary settings, which will be used to support students beyond our Trust in gaining opportunities that were previously unattainable.

We are keen to use our experience to open more specialist provision schools to support the most vulnerable children within our region. We have been working with

the local authority to support planning for 2024 admissions to combat the increasing shortage of secondary schools' spaces for children with SEND.

While we have faced our fair share of challenges during the development of our Trust-wide strategy, it has been extremely rewarding to be able to leverage our structure and the depth of SEND expertise we have across the Trust to create exceptional learning facilities for pupils who need it.

*Ashley Eastwood is executive leader at Learning in Harmony Trust*

# Kick-starting change for SEND PUPILS

**Lisa Dale** took her school on a three-year journey of special needs curriculum development after a poor Ofsted inspection

**W**hen I joined Howbridge as headteacher in September 2019, I had already identified aspects of our SEND provision that needed attention. So when we received a 'Requires Improvement' grade from Ofsted, I was hardly surprised.

One of the main reasons inspectors gave us this judgement, and not worse, was because they agreed with my self-evaluation of the school.

The inspection also helped me realise that this wouldn't be a quick fix. It was going to be a marathon not a sprint, so it was important for us to stay positive and patient in order to see noticeable change.

As Ofsted confirmed what I had already suspected, it was easier to keep a positive mindset throughout this process. If we wanted to turn things around, we needed to stay focused on long-term goals rather than short-term solutions, which is why it was crucial to collaborate with my new team and put a comprehensive plan in place.



## Improving our culture

After the Ofsted inspection, we knew we had to change our processes and culture to ensure best practice. We started

working on our relationships with parents and carers and becoming more open-minded with receiving support and help from specialists.

We started with asking for advice from anyone we could. We began with the inclusion partner from our local authority, Essex County Council, then we invited the specialist leader of education from The Vine Schools Trust to observe and advise. We also asked school nurses and specialist teachers for advice and began upskilling our team around effective support for all pupils.

One of the most impactful decisions was to appoint an inclusion lead who, as well as monitoring our progress, supports me as an assistant head. Around 18 months without a SENCo was challenging, so having the inclusion lead in place helped drive change within the school. And now that we have a SENCo, we can deliver training programmes for staff that cover all aspects of SEND.

## Quality teaching first

In order to kickstart meaningful change, I wanted to focus on our day-to-day classroom support. We felt that significantly reducing

classroom disruption for SEND pupils was a key priority, alongside enhancing the quality of our SEND delivery.

Firstly, we decided to bring in regular assessments and reviews of how we deliver our support, which allowed us to identify issues and make improvements collaboratively.

We established there was a need for additional staff training. Around 16% of the country's pupils are SEND pupils, which makes adapting delivery to meet the needs of everyone a significant challenge. Continuing professional development on SEND topics is a crucial part of ensuring our teachers can keep up with this demand.

We were able to keep SEND pupils in classrooms for longer by providing bespoke training and encouraging our LSAs to have a more hands-on role in lessons. Our LSA training has been based around a two-pronged approach with a particular focus on trauma perception practice and core subjects interventions. All the LSAs have the necessary training to ensure our pupils have access to the appropriate support

during each school day. Our training interventions and teaching initiatives in English and maths have allowed us to support children with very specific difficulties to continue making progress in the classroom.

We've recently started using a new teaching initiative, Numicon, which is a published mathematics approach to teaching for particular SEND requirements that has proven to be incredibly successful in the classroom. These interventions are reviewed regularly and designed to stop pupils from missing out on valuable classroom time.

The LSAs aren't fixed to one particular classroom or year group; they work across the entire cohort so that the whole school benefits from their expertise and what they can teach us, as well as supporting the children.



## Making Physical changes

It has been our aim to enhance our school so that we could also meet the physical needs of our SEND pupils.

We recently installed ramps and built a second accessible toilet. We hope this will further reduce any barriers restricting children from enjoying their time at school.

We also have a quiet area in the playground which SEND pupils can visit when they're feeling

overwhelmed during breaks and lunchtime. This area isn't directly on the playground but is still in sight of it; this way, pupils feel included at break and lunchtime but not isolated from others.

Depending on their EHCP or SEND plans, some children have one-to-one time with staff. These sessions usually occur during our nurture and gardening clubs. These clubs give children who have social, emotional and mental health challenges the opportunity to practise their social skills by interacting in a smaller peer group. Activities such as board games, Lego, marble runs, drawing and colouring are set up by staff to encourage social interaction. They also provide a space for pupils who find the playground a tricky place to negotiate, particularly those who struggle with social interaction when not under adult supervision. We allow the children to come and go

from nurture club as they please, but our staff do direct certain pupils towards participation if appropriate.

## Our future goals

In line with the government's most recent review of the SEND green paper, Howbridge is committed to delivering an inclusive practice where our SEND pupils remain in the classroom and have access to the entire curriculum.

We've already taken several effective measures, including working closely with parents, carers and stakeholders, but we're still on a journey to deliver an inclusive SEND provision and to be the very best for the children. At present, if there are special SEND needs for a pupil, we start liaising with the relevant infant school and parents up to a year in advance so that our assets can be in place and organised ready for their arrival. As a junior school, we don't have long to build on that relationship with parents and pupils, and have to get in as early as possible to ensure best quality practice for our SEND pupils.

## WHAT WE LEARNT

- Audit the current status of your school, warts and all. Whilst this may be painful, be honest with yourself and your staff. This way, you can pinpoint the significant challenges and prioritise them.
- Be clear about the quick fixes and make them positive things that people will notice. Increasing visibility will make it easier to spot changes and improvements throughout the school. These need some careful thought; a few may be inviting parents and carers in for coffee mornings for a chat or reviewing the effectiveness of your staff's paperwork.
- Make sure your vision for your SEND offering is clear. Making links throughout your entire school can increase the clarity of your ambition. For example, if your subject leads and staff adopt 'equity not equality' this will ensure SEND pupils are included in the classroom and give them access to the entire curriculum.
- Consider supplementing excellent teaching and classroom support with activities that will provide a safe and quiet space for children to develop their social and motor skills.
- Be clear with your staff on the plan and where you expect to be in three or six months. Remembering changes and improvements during staff meetings, and why these changes are happening, is an excellent way to keep progress child-centred.

*"If we wanted to turn things around, we needed to stay focused on long-term goals rather than short-term solutions"*



*Lisa Dale is headteacher of Howbridge CE Primary School, in Witham, Essex*

**BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE ONLINE COURSE**

CPD CERTIFIED  
The CPD Certification Service



- ✓ Beginners
- ✓ 20hrs CPD
- ✓ Study from home
- ✓ Staff training
- ✓ Learn at your own pace

Sign up at:  
**british-sign.co.uk**

Pay what you can: To enable more people to learn British Sign Language we are asking people to pay what they can for this course (minimum contribution of £3).

**£3**

**YOU HAVE THE POWER TO LIGHT UP THE DARKNESS**  
for critically ill children



Emily, 10  
heart condition

**Get your fundraising pack** to see how your school can light up the darkness this Christmas

[make-a-wish.org.uk/teach](https://make-a-wish.org.uk/teach)

Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING REGULATOR**

Make-A-Wish Foundation® UK  
Charity Registration Numbers:  
England and Wales 295672  
Scotland SCO37479

**Make-A-Wish**  
UNITED KINGDOM

# CARE SUPPORT SERVICE

Easing  
Isolation &  
Exhaustion



**We provide support, respite and home care to families who have children aged 0-19 with congenital heart defects or feeding issues across the North West of England.**

- ♥ All staff are Enhanced Child DBS Checked
- ♥ CQC Registered and fully insured
- ♥ Minimum of 2 hours support each week
- ♥ Fully trained support workers (Hoist, Meds, Suction, CPR, Vent etc)

This service is free to access for families who do not qualify for a funded care package from local authorities or CCG's. To refer a family or indeed yourself please get in touch or complete our simple Referral Form online.



 [info@lagans.org.uk](mailto:info@lagans.org.uk)

 01204 800300

 [www.lagans.org.uk](http://www.lagans.org.uk)





# 4 REASONS TO TRY... Phonic Books

Making phonics accessible to all: decodable books for children with Special Educational Needs

## 1 DECODABLE BOOK EXPERTS

The Moon Dogs Extras series is created and written by three reading experts with over 89 years combined experience of working in education, who believe passionately in teaching every child to read. All the books follow a carefully structured phonic sequence which encourages reading success and builds confidence.

## 2 MUCH NEEDED RESOURCE

It's a unique resource designed for older SEN children who are at the very early stages of learning to read CVC words. There are engaging stories - all of which are based on the adventures of a group of teenage friends in a band - and a diverse range of relatable characters.



## 3 ENCOURAGE SUCCESS AND BUILD CONFIDENCE

Key literacy skills are developed at a gentle pace of progression, with additional books to read at every stage for essential practice. They follow the same progression as Moon Dogs set 1, so they can be used as supplementary resource for children who need further support.

## 4 SUPPORTING ACTIVITY WORKBOOK

A workbook complements this series, offering further practice and the chance to consolidate phonic skills whilst developing confident, independent reading and spelling strategies. Easy to use activities provide a simple yet effective way to develop and embed essential skills for both reading and spelling.

### Contact:

Tel: +44 (0) 1666 822 543 or Email: [info@phonicbooks.co.uk](mailto:info@phonicbooks.co.uk)

## At a glance

- A full range of decodable books suitable for older readers requiring additional support
- Gradual introduction of sounds/letters and cumulative progression creates success
- Age-respectful stories and illustrations and a diverse range of relatable characters to engage and enthuse

## Decodable books for Beginner and Catch-Up readers



Can be used with any phonic programme

Great for decoding practice

Hi-interest catch-up range

Steady pace and cumulative progression



**PhonicBooks®**

View our products and shop online at

[www.phonicbooks.co.uk](http://www.phonicbooks.co.uk) [info@phonicbooks.co.uk](mailto:info@phonicbooks.co.uk)



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Pupils may answer simple questions about a variety of living things in their local and wider environment
- Develop communication and social interaction
- Develop their skills of working scientifically by observing closely
- Use and explore simple equipment

# Think like a scientist on Sherlock Safari



 @clairebrewers

If you want to build investigative skills in young pupils, get them looking for lizards and lions where they least expect it

Adaptive teaching is part of quality first teaching and can create an inclusive classroom environment that enables all children to access learning. This can, however, be an intimidating concept for both established and Early Career Teachers (ECTs).

Science develops children's curiosity and engagement with the wider environment. By setting a lesson objective for all children and considering ways in which science teaching can be adapted, we can include pupils with individual needs with their classmates.

## START HERE

All teachers are teachers of children with SEND and adapting our approach helps create inclusive classrooms.

This lesson came about whilst teaching a group of children with a fantastic range of differences in a mainstream KS1 classroom. Careful consideration and identification of the range of individual needs and differences were given when designing this lesson so that all children could make progress towards the lesson objective. Differences such as struggling with transcription, learning and applying new vocabulary, and interacting and responding to their peers, can create challenges for children when accessing learning in science. This lesson offers some ways to adapt teaching to include all learners in scientific exploration!



## MAIN LESSON

### 1| SETTING UP

Part of quality first teaching is the use of creative and relevant resources and developing inclusive learning environments. For this lesson, you will need...

- Child-friendly magnifying glasses in a bag.
- A range of 'living things' from a local environment (maybe collected by the children – we used our local woodland walk in a public park), such as evergreen leaves, sticks, moss, different types of grasses, and pictures of animals associated with that habitat.
- A range of objects that represent living things from a

contrasting environment, such as the desert - for example: cacti, pictures or models of lizards, camels. Set these up in different spaces around the classroom.

- In the middle of the classroom, have two large images of the different environments in builders' trays, to which you'll add things like sticks, mud, leaves, rocks and sand (depending on the type of location you're looking to recreate).
- For children with communication differences, have some laminated strips for asking questions such as 'What can you see?' and symbols of responses so the child can answer and actively participate in the lesson.

### 2| ADAPTIVE TEACHING AND PRE-TEACHING

Children will be working in







***“Demonstrate the activity before asking pupils to take part, and plan how the adults will support them”***

pairs, so consider carefully who should work together; are there children who can collaborate with peers who have communication differences, using the symbols to ask and support responses to questions? Is this something that could be taught to the class?

Identify children for whom verbal instruction and vocabulary development is a challenge and spend 10 minutes with them before the lesson, teaching key vocabulary such as ‘living thing’, ‘wood’, ‘desert’, ‘cactus’, ‘moss’, camel.

Have a visual timetable of how the lessons will be structured and what will happen, for example: listen, explore, sort objects, sit in circle, finish.

Be prepared to demonstrate the activity before asking the children to take part, and plan how adults in the classroom will support the children to access the learning. For example, you might decide that the class teacher observes pupils with identified differences, while the teaching assistant keeps the whole class on task.

### **3| SHERLOCK SAFARI!**

After playtime, gather all the children around the classroom door. The teacher then explains there has been a disaster! Living things from the woods we visited and the desert have got all mixed up! We need to use our magnifying glasses and observation skills to sort them all out. The teacher then pulls a magnifying glass from the bag and models finding an object,

such as a large mushroom. The teacher demonstrates using the magnifying glass, observing the mushroom and making comments, such as “I can feel it is quite wet. Maybe it likes the dark...I think it belongs in the wood!” and asks the children what they think. Encourage children to share their decisions by selecting a wood or desert symbol.

Now pair up the children and give them each a magnifying glass. Show the timetable for the lesson, ensuring all learners have listened and understood as far as possible what is required. Let the children into the classroom to explore the objects; they should start to sort them into the two builders’ trays. The teacher supports children using symbols in their pairs to ask and respond to questions about the living things.

### **4| PLENARY**

Once all the objects have been sorted, sit around the tray and discuss observations about the different living things and their habitats. If there have been any errors, see if the children can identify these and give reasons for their observations.

If possible, make a display of the two environments by supporting the children to stick the living things to the correct images and displaying these in the classroom. This is a creative way of recording the children’s findings without relying on transcription.

*Claire Brewer is a Lecturer in Education at the University of Plymouth. Claire co-authored the 101 Inclusive Lessons book series, with a new title due out next year.*

## **EXTENDING THE LESSON**



Consider how you might use a cross-curricular approach.

- This activity could easily be linked to geography where children are exploring physical geographical similarities and differences.
- Have a class story that uses some of the new vocabulary taught – this might be a book about the woods, such as *The Wildwoods* by Simon James.
- Use this lesson as a starting point to explore non-fiction texts about different environments and habitats such as *Cactus Hotel* by Brenda Guiberson.
- Use simple equipment such as the magnifying glass in other environments such as the playground and support children who need them to use the symbols explored in this lesson in other areas of the school and local environment.
- Teach all the children in the class how to use sentence strips and symbols as an alternative and augmentative communication tool.

## **USEFUL QUESTIONS**

- Could this approach be used to introduce concepts in subjects such as history – sorting items from the past and present – to support children who respond well to familiar routines?
- Is there an opportunity for children to be ‘experts’, using their preferred communication approach to explain about living things to another class?
- Could the builders’ trays be placed in the classroom with small world models for children to create their own stories in these environments and support their creative writing?



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Names, shapes, colours and features of ingredients
- Safety in the kitchen, and the correct use of equipment
- Following a recipe and recalling a sequence
- Meal preparation involving measuring and observing
  - Packaging information – nutritional colour-coding, food sources, recycling

# Let's get cooking for healthy living



Scales, sieves and spaghetti - using food to teach soft skills, vocabulary and how to follow instructions

[sainsburys.co.uk/gol-ui/recipes/scrapbooks/feed-your-family-for-a-fiver](https://www.sainsburys.co.uk/gol-ui/recipes/scrapbooks/feed-your-family-for-a-fiver)

@KateSargey

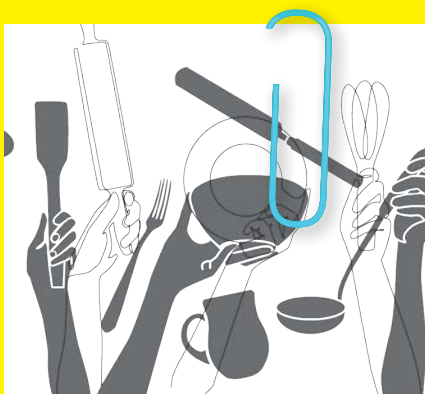
The news is full of cost-of-living headlines and parents may be speaking about financial pressures at home, which could be a worry for children. Although this means that many of the things that we need every day are more expensive, there are lots of things we can do to use our money carefully. A number of supermarkets have produced family and budget friendly healthy recipes that are easy to follow, and this lesson will be using one of them.

## START HERE

Risk assess the use of kitchen utensils and equipment and ensure there is an adequate staffing ratio. Ensure that you know about any food allergies and dietary requirements among the pupils, if you're planning to sample your delicious dish.

The Sainsbury's website has a number of different options of recipes which feed a family of 4 for £5 – I have selected this vegetarian option of creamy porcini spaghetti: [tinyurl.com/TPspaghetti](https://www.tinyurl.com/TPspaghetti)

Ideally, ingredients would be provided by the school, or an optional financial contribution could be made to help cover costs.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | READY..

Teachers should complete the recipe prior to the lesson, in the room where the teaching will take place, so that the setting, equipment and utensils will be the same and to check that the recipe works. Take photographs of each stage as a pictorial guide. Number each stage on the back, breaking the stages down further from the recipe where required, making it easy for children to follow. Add text and print and laminate so the paper is waterproofed, can be wiped clean, and used again. Decide in advance what will happen once the meal has been prepared. There could be different options explored

each week if this lesson repeats, such as serving the meal to staff and asking for a review, taking it home to have as a family meal, or for the pupils to enjoy themselves as part of the lesson – an exercise that could spark further interesting comments and observations.

### 2 | STEADY..

Unpack and explore the ingredients. Do the pupils know what everything is called, and have they seen or eaten them before? What do they think of the packaging; does it look clean and intact? Ask the pupils to look at food labelling; is it clear and easy to understand? Explain that foods with green and amber labelling are healthier than red. Ask what else can we do to be healthy, and prompt pupils where necessary (being







## “Consider partnering with a food waste organisation to provide ingredients”

Italian and what the phrase ‘el dente’ means! Teachers should clarify vocabulary that pupils might have not heard before, such as caramelise, or the actions such as ‘boil, stir and drain’. Tell the children the names of utensils and equipment, and repeat these during the process of cooking, and point out where recipes use abbreviations, for example, tbsp for tablespoon and tsp for teaspoon - which are easy to mix up.

Teachers should be sensitive to the sensory processing needs of the pupils and amend exposure as necessary. Get pupils to observe the changes in colour during cooking and when different ingredients are added, and look for the bubbles in the water when it is boiling. Use smell to describe the food as it cooks - is it a smell that they like? Have they smelt it before? Listen to the sound of the onions frying and the water boiling. Touch the ingredients such as the dry pasta, and observe how it changes from a hard to a soft food after cooking. What about seasoning – how much should be added and what impact does it have on the food?

Tidy up sensibly, taking care with hot water and cleaning products.

At the end of the lesson look at the pictorial recipe stages and ask children to sort them into the right order. Discuss what the pupils learnt and enjoyed.

*Kate Sarginson is an experienced teacher, a qualified dyslexia teacher, and a former SENCO and primary deputy head, who is a Lecturer of Education on a primary degree course in Lancashire. She has a book due to be released in 2023.*

physically active, eating well, getting good sleep).

Consider the origins of the ingredients: from which countries have the items come and why do they think this is? Pupils could think about what ingredients could be grown here and whether this is something they could do in school/home – what would they need to think about when growing their own food?

Look at the packaging for other information such as best before and use by dates. Check on a calendar to compare how long the items have to be used. Explain the difference; that ‘use by’ relates to food safety, and ‘best before’ to food quality. Ask the pupils why food might be thrown away, and why wasting food is not a good thing to do.

What does the word recycling mean and why is it important? Do the pupils know what products can be recycled? Is this something that is important in school already, and if not, what can we do to help protect the environment?

Pupils should uphold good hygiene practices by washing their hands before beginning the food preparation. Ask the pupils what dangers there are in a kitchen and what they should do to keep safe.

### 3| COOK!

Pupils will use numeracy skills - cutting mushrooms into quarters, measuring water for the spaghetti, and timing for cooking.

Literacy skills will be utilised in reading the packaging and the recipe, and perhaps even learning a little

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Consider including further preparation as an opportunity for learning. Pupils could be involved in selecting a meal, budgeting and planning a visit to a local supermarket to further promote independent living skills. There is scope for a unit of work practising and developing their practical skills.
- Consider running a cooking club as an after-school activity; pupils could take an evening meal home to share with their family and help with the cost of living.
- Encourage parents to facilitate practising food preparation and cooking at home, to enable transferability of skills in different contexts and encourage independent activity.
- School leadership could consider partnering with a food waste organisation such as Rethink food, to provide ingredients / food support for the most vulnerable families. They also have an education programme with resources to access ([rethinkfood.co.uk](http://rethinkfood.co.uk)).

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Could this lesson be linked to work-based skills activities, to learn about future career options in catering and hospitality?
- Would it be possible for meals to be served to others and to involve feedback, with pupils designing accessible evaluation questions? This could form the basis for compiling menus based on popular requests, so incorporating literacy and numeracy skills.
- Consider liaising with parents and encouraging them to facilitate pupils practising cooking at home, to enable and consolidate transferability of skills to different contexts.

Ideal for  
Intervention!

plazoom

Years  
1-6

# REAL GRAMMAR

Teach grammar **RIGHT** from the start  
Everything you need to embed grammar  
knowledge across your school

- 1 Teach quality-first grammar lessons with all the resources you need at your fingertips
- 2 Support and challenge EVERY child with 3 levels of differentiation
- 3 Upskill your subject knowledge with terminology definitions and modelled examples

"ALL THE  
RESOURCES I  
WOULD MAKE  
MYSELF IF I HAD  
THE TIME!"

Alice Griffith, Peppard  
CE Primary School



# A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE 5-STEP STRUCTURE

Ensuring progression and complete coverage of the  
whole curriculum

Can be used  
flexibly to  
suit the needs  
of your class

1

## TEACH

Comprehensive teaching sequences ensure your pupils grasp every concept and can apply their learning in context

### HELPING DAD

Dad is **cooking** dinner and I am **helping** him. He is **boiling** water for the carrots and peas and I am **mixing** herbs to go on the chicken. Mum cannot wait to eat it. She said the food is **smelling** great!

After dinner, Dad will be **washing** the dishes and I will be **drying** up. I love **helping** Dad make dinner.



2

## PRACTISE

3 differentiated practise activities that can be used flexibly to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions

Questions

### PRACTISE 2

1. Rewrite each word with the suffix -ed added.

press	pressed	pull
bang		play
mix		need

2. Add -ed to the words.

Then write a sentence for each word ending in -ed.

a) rain

b) push

c) pick

d) clean

e) buzz

3

## REVISIT

A range of games and activities that will ensure your pupils embed their learning

BINGO GAME

add	rain	moan
need	shout	buzz
play	float	melt
zoom	try	wash
sail	fly	pick
melt	moan	collect
boil	think	need
wash	add	pull
clean	play	pull

4

## APPLY

Extended writing tasks are used to encourage children to identify and apply the skill in context

Planning Sheet

### I HELPED

Draw some pictures showing how you helped others.


5

## REVISE

3 differentiated revision exercises to prepare your pupils for their end of year assessments

Revision

### REVISE 3

1. Rewrite the word with the suffix -ed.

They \_\_\_\_\_ to school.

\_\_\_\_\_ march

2. Can the words below have -ed added to them?

dig	-ed ✓	-ed ✓
keep		
roll		
melt		

3. Write a word that ends in -ed to complete the sentence.

Pete \_\_\_\_\_ the door.

GET YOUR  
FREE SAMPLE  
UNIT!



To download a FREE unit visit  
[plazoom.com/real-grammar](https://plazoom.com/real-grammar)



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to 'interrogate' an image, inferring and deducing what might be happening
- How to structure an engaging narrative which balances action and description
- How to experiment with shades of meaning when selecting vocabulary

# Use images to make lessons inclusive



Send your pupils on a flight of fantasy and inspire their imaginations with picture books

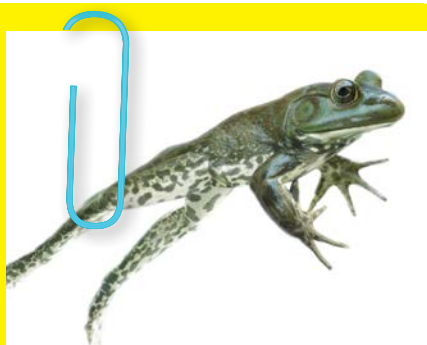
 @raglanvcprimary

'One picture is worth 10,000 words', or so the Chinese proverb goes, and this cannot be truer than when utilising high quality picture books to engage all learners. Traditionally the domain of early years settings, picture books have huge potential to enthral learners of all ages and will often deal with challenging, contentious and sensitive matters in a way that is accessible to all. Without the barrier of language, a whole class of KS2 learners can collaboratively engage with and explore a wordless text enabling everyone to be inspired by the wonders they have to offer.

## START HERE

The key to the success of any picture book driven sequence of learning is the selection of the text itself.

Within this lesson, the text *Tuesday* by David Wiesner was chosen. This tells the story of a mysterious Tuesday evening, when all the local frogs take flight on their lily pads and meander through the nearby town, encountering a range of different adventures. Wiesner's images are a font of inspiration as they are so detailed, with small features in the background and the clever manipulation of perspective resulting in a thoroughly engaging and easily understood story. At the same time, it also manages to include many, more complex, hidden sub-plots.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | MAP

It is always exciting to introduce a class of children to a new picture book as everyone, regardless of abilities or needs, can readily engage with the storytelling. The potent imagery and scope to interpret them in a variety of ways allows everyone to have a voice when exploring the text together. To start this lesson, the children were all provided with a series of images taken from the text. Without seeing them in their original form, they were then challenged to sequence the scenes in a manner which they felt would match the storytelling in the book. This resulted in a broad range of

discussions, from individuals independently looking for clues relating to the time of night shown in the images, to children - with individual adult support - examining a reduced selection of images from the book to map the beginning, middle and the end of the story.

Once the children had created their interpretations of the story, we collaboratively explored the original text. This prompted subtle cheers of satisfaction from some, who had matched the sequence of the book, whilst others were prompted to share the reasoning behind their alternative sequences. Regardless of the original story structure, the children were then challenged to use their personal sequence of images to create a story map (a visual representation of the







***“The potent imagery and scope to interpret allows everyone to have a voice”***

tale). Again, this activity provided great scope for inclusivity. Some children cut out what they felt were the most pertinent aspects of the images to be glued onto their story map; others created self-drawn story maps, and some made use of plastic frog models to orally re-tell their story, from the images, while an adult scribed their story map.

## 2 | PLAN

With our stories visually mapped, the children were then provided with small (6x4cm) card viewfinders to help them focus on the finer details in the original images, such as the expressions on faces or patterns on the wallpaper. Having discussed what they

could see with a partner or adult, the children then engaged with some playful, short-burst writing. Initially modelled by the teacher, the children experimented with different descriptive sentence structures, based on their observations. They investigated different vocabulary, such as the many different words for shades of ‘green’ when describing the frogs. Some children made use of the Google Docs speech-to-text tool to quickly capture their spoken ideas for later editing and to form a word bank, supporting them in the subsequent writing task.

## 3 | WRITE

Heads buzzing with sensational sentences and vibrant vocabulary, the children then

were then set to the task of writing their narrative stories. This portion progressed over a number of days, as the adults modelled each portion of the story, prior to the children developing their own stories. However, the consistent anchor throughout the process, which enabled all children to create stories appropriate their ability, was the original text. We repeatedly referred back to the images to help extend vocabulary, to prompt exploration of different descriptions and to support the children in maintaining an effective narrative structure. It was these images which also helped the children to develop a balance between action and description. Whilst all the children were readily retelling the acrobatic antics of the frogs and the frantic frenzy of the town’s residents, the images also supported the children to consider what else they needed to describe, in order to create a satisfying narrative. Tales of the flying frogs became all the more powerful when the children also started describing the night sky through which they were flying or the expression on the face of the terrified guard dog, running from a flotilla of frogs.

Satisfyingly, all the children in the class were ultimately the proud authors of their very own *Tuesday* inspired narrative stories. The final stage was to appreciate the outcomes, which involved everyone working in small, mixed-ability groups to share their stories and take feedback from their peers.

***Marc Bowen is a deputy head and primary teacher in South Wales. He welcomes further discussion and questions through his email: [marc.bowen@raglan.schoolsdu.org.uk](mailto:marc.bowen@raglan.schoolsdu.org.uk)***

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

Other inclusive English opportunities offered by this text include:

- Creating dialogue for the characters in the story, such as the investigative reporter or the confused homeowner. Some children may use the images as inspiration for an extended dialogue, add their own speech bubbles, or do it digitally through speech-to-text tools.
- Exploration of word classes, such as prepositions. Images could be used as the stimulus for investigating different prepositions or to conduct a thesaurus research for synonyms.
- Creating newspaper reports, inspired by the events depicted in the images. These could take a written form or could focus on the development of oracy skills by creating video reports; with green-screen apps being used to create a background for the ‘reporter’ using images from the text.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Could this book provide a launch-pad for learning in other areas of the curriculum, such as the study of habitats or frog lifecycles in science, maximising the engagement of all pupils?
- The final image of *Tuesday* shows the ominous shadow of a pig taking flight, a week after the events with the frogs. Could the children write a sequel to this story, applying their narrative skills more independently?
- Could the school invest in a range of different wordless texts, starting with David Weisner’s work, to support more inclusive opportunities with English across the school?

# Don't differentiate, ADAPT

A change of approach towards learning challenges at **Celina Walsham's** school ensured no child felt left out

**I**solation amongst SEND pupils and their parents is becoming an increasingly prominent issue in many primary schools across the UK, forcing teachers and Sencos to re-evaluate their SEND provision in order to continue offering a high-quality education on a smaller budget. To navigate spending cuts without widening the gap between SEND children and their peers is a daunting task, but one that we've spent the last few years tackling face on.

We needed to find a way of adapting our SEND teaching so that children with special educational needs could receive the necessary extra provisions without being made to feel different from their classmates. As a school, we had to think less about introducing new and potentially isolating measures, and more about adapting our existing teaching methods.

## Increased classroom isolation

When I started working as the Senco and inclusion manager, there were very few systems and processes in place to ensure that children with special educational needs were seamlessly integrated into each lesson. Although most colleagues knew how to include the whole class, including those with SEND, in groupwork and class discussions, many teachers were struggling to cater

to the entire class without planning a series of separate tasks for children with more specialist needs.

As is the case in many schools, SEND pupils were beginning to feel isolated from their classmates during lesson time - not as a result of bullying or a lack of attention, but because of a teaching style that differentiated them from their classmates. It soon became clear that we had to change our mindset

***"The key message was that the inclusion of children with special educational needs was everyone's responsibility – not just the Sencos"***

about what it means to be responsible for children with special educational needs; as a school, we needed to move away from our usual SEND teaching provisions and transition to methods of adaption rather than differentiation.

## Becoming a strong unit

We knew that in order for this transition to prove successful, the whole school needed to get involved. SEND was gradually woven into different areas in the school's annual improvement plan, including teaching, curriculum content and leadership actions. Not

only did this make SEND provisions a weekly focus in senior leadership meetings, but it also highlighted the key message that the inclusion of children with special educational needs is everyone's responsibility – not just the Sencos.

Over the course of several months, staff members took part in a series of training sessions based on 'adaption', wherein SEND pupils received the same learning

experience as their peers, with the added scaffolding of different resources and adult support. Using the Heuristic Scaffolding model, a framework designed to encourage pupil independence, teaching assistants were taught how to support SEND pupils without isolating them from the rest of the class. This could be something as simple as including more images on the screen during presentations to help children who need visual stimulation to spark their imaginations.

The key was to make all pupils and staff aware of how to support those with special educational needs without making them feel singled out. On World Mental Health Day, for example, we held a 'Hello Yellow' event where the whole school were encouraged to talk about mental health. They learnt about strategies they could use themselves and to help others.

## Transparency is key

At the risk of stating the obvious, parents are the experts on their own children. An important part of integrating children with SEN more seamlessly into a classroom setting involved really getting to know them as individuals. Through discussions with their parents and carers, we were able to form a clearer picture of each child's specific needs, most of which were then used to create detailed support plans. These support plans were accessible



to all staff across the school community, including teaching assistants and the senior leadership team. Not only did this enable wider discussions on how to adapt learning environments throughout the school, but it also encouraged all staff members to take responsibility for the pupils with special educational needs.

### Building confidence from early on

An important part of adopting a Heuristic Scaffolding model is encouraging SEND children to become more independent with their learning. While it is important to ensure that each child feels supported, intervening too early can lead them to become dependent on extra help.

To overcome this issue, we do everything we can to make our children with special educational needs feel valued and capable. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely

with each child to build their self-esteem and confidence levels using specific praise. Rather than making a general comment about how good a child's piece of writing is, for example, we would comment on how well that child had used descriptive words in their work. We've found that this helps children with SEND take more control over their learning without the need for teachers to plan separate tasks or group activities, both of which pose the risk of making those children feel isolated from their peers.

### Adaption in action

Since integrating the new adaption approach to planning lessons, we have seen a huge spike in confidence amongst our pupils with SEND. One example that makes me proud of how far the school and staff have come since I joined as the Senco three years ago involves a child who was

transferred to us from another school. He has severe ADHD and had been refusing to participate in English lessons at his former school, sometimes skipping school altogether.

When he first joined us, we spent a lot of time getting to know his individual needs, which then allowed us to provide the scaffolded support to be able to create fully accessible English lessons that he would feel confident involving himself in. Having spoken to his mother recently, she can't believe how much his self-esteem has improved in such a short space of time and was over the moon that he was happy attending school every day.

I never thought that such a fast transformation would have been possible when I first joined the school. Although we are always searching for ways to improve our SEND provision, the progress we have made over the last few years is a strong indication of the positive change that adaption and scaffolded support can have on a child's educational experience.

### HOW TO INTEGRATE ADAPTION

- In order to ensure adaption is effective, it is important to carry out a thorough assessment. Teachers, Sencos, parents and carers can all contribute to this evaluation, where the child's educational and personal needs are established as early as possible.
- After building a clearer picture of each child, take a step back and start by looking at what they can do rather than what they struggle with. This will then help you bridge the gap to what they should be doing for them to make the most of their learning experience.
- When considering the child's learning journey, always have the long-term outcomes in the back of your mind. Think about each child's next stage of education and what they need to do to successfully reach it.
- When planning lessons, use the information gathered by SENCOs and other teaching staff to create scaffolds which will help you to adapt these lessons in such a way that every child can access the learning.
- Remember to reflect on the successes and pitfalls of your chosen approach and consider how it can be improved for next time. Ensuring each child can access each lesson is a process of trial and error, one that is far more achievable when teachers, SENCOs and parents work together.



*Celina Walsham is Senco and inclusion manager at William Martin Church of England Infant School & Nursery and Junior School*



# Money Heroes



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Children start to form their  
habits and attitudes around  
money by the age of seven.



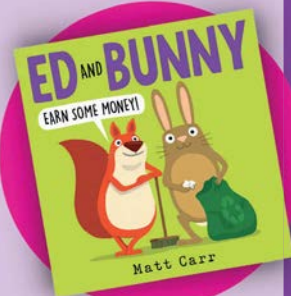
## Helping your pupils learn about money

Managing money is a key skill that is essential for adult life. And providing financial education helps children develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they'll need to manage their money, make informed financial decisions and achieve their goals.

Our free Money Heroes programme, supported by HSBC UK, transforms financial education for primary children, aged 3-11, in school and at home.

With **resources available in accessible formats for SEND children**, we offer a range of free opportunities to help you deliver fun and engaging lessons to your pupils, including:

- **PUBLICATIONS:** Accessible storybooks for different ability levels, available in **braille, large-print, BSL and audiobook** versions.
- **ACTIVITIES:** Continue children's learning about money with our **new activities adapted for different ability levels and non-mainstream settings** covering a range of topics.
- **CPD:** Take part in one of our free **SEND-focused financial education teacher training sessions** to build your confidence, knowledge and skills.



LEARN MORE  
AND SIGN-UP:  
**MONEYHEROES.ORG.UK**



Supported by



**HSBC UK**



# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Money Heroes

Discover the free financial education programme that brings to life learning about money and finances



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Young Enterprise's award-winning Money Heroes programme helps teachers and parents deliver financial education for children aged three to 11 years. The fun and engaging free teaching resources are available in accessible formats for SEND children for you to introduce into your lessons, helping young people develop a positive mindset with money.

### 1 INSPIRES ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Learning about money is an important part of growing up. Research tells us that children are developing their mindset around money by the age of seven, so we need to tackle this during children's formative years at primary school. We also know that teachers are the second most significant influence in helping them develop this knowledge after parents. That's why Money Heroes was created – to help children learn about money and finances in a fun and engaging way, both at home and in school.



### 4 INTRODUCES EXPERIENTIAL AND MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Children learn best when faced with real and relatable situations – that's why Money Heroes resources are based on practical, everyday scenarios such as going shopping or learning how we earn money. We explore themes that are important to children, such as sustainability and food waste. Money can provide a powerful context for learning in other subjects, so embedding financial education across the curriculum will help engage children with learning by making it more relevant.

### 2 OFFERS A RANGE OF RESOURCES

The programme is flexible and can be introduced at any point in the school year, covering topics such as savings, pocket money and budgeting. Resources are free to access and include storybooks, digital games and printable activities. The storybooks have recently been adapted for SEND children and are available in Braille, BSL, audiobook and large print versions. Teachers and parents are sure to find these resources fun, engaging and designed to spark conversations around money and finances, while at the same time helping to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

### 3 ENCOURAGES PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

The Money Heroes programme has been designed to encourage collaboration between home and school to increase financial capability. Working in partnership inside and outside of the classroom, teachers and parents can access resources with clear learning objectives that complement each other's activity, track progression, and provide real-world learning opportunities that bring financial learning to life.



#### Contact:

Visit [moneyheroes.org.uk](https://moneyheroes.org.uk) or search Money Heroes

### 5 PROVIDES ONGOING TEACHER SUPPORT

The Money Heroes resources are designed to provide you with the knowledge, skills and confidence to help you teach children about money and develop their mindset. But we know that financial education is more than just providing resources – it also needs to adapt to the fast-changing financial landscape children face. That's why we offer free CPD-accredited teacher training for mainstream and SEND schools, access to a supportive advisory service, mentoring, and much more to help you feel fully equipped to deliver engaging financial education lessons.

## KEY POINTS

Supports children to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to manage their money, and make informed financial decisions when they are older.

Fun and engaging resources available in accessible formats, including Braille, BSL, audiobook and large print versions, brings financial education to life.

Encourage children to consider the connection between money choices and broader issues affecting the planet with our range of resources linked to the climate.

Enable conversations with teachers and parents to help children understand and avoid the potential risks involved in gaming, gambling and other online scams.

# Finding the right SEND STAFF

When recruiting, don't be afraid to look outside of the education sector, says Helen Davies

**E**very school knows there are an increasing number of SEND pupils in their classrooms, and the education sector has had to evolve quickly to support not only the children but also the schools, providing specialist teachers and teaching assistants who are trained to help and support all young people and deal with many of the most difficult situations. Aside from expecting the appropriate qualifications, you will want to attract candidates with the right personal attributes and skills needed to work in SEND. But identifying and recruiting such candidates can be another matter, and is one of the many challenges facing headteachers.

So, what are the core skills needed when working with children who have such a wide range of special needs?

## Grow your own

The first place to look is within your own school. Are there any teachers or teaching assistants who are looking to develop their careers, or a non-teaching member of staff who engages particularly well with the pupils? They will require investment from the school in terms of training, but some of the best SEND teachers have previously been one-to-one teaching assistants in mainstream settings.

## Suitability for the job

When looking at suitable candidates for a SEND role, a recruiter will be especially focused on their ability to

work closely and connect with the pupils. Can they build a deep and productive rapport with students and encourage them to learn? Can they create structure in the young person's learning? How will they manage the additional responsibility of working with a child who needs extra support and may be hard to discipline or reach? A SEND teacher or TA understands that every step for a child with special

needs is a big achievement and a breakthrough. They will not necessarily be basing their results on the same measures that are used to monitor pupil progress in the mainstream.

## Family liaison

The teacher or TA will not just be teaching the child - it is likely that the family will need support too.

Teachers and TAs have regular contact with families, and this is especially true within a SEND setting. Reaching out to the family, getting them involved and working collaboratively can be of enormous benefit as you strive together to reach the same goal. There is no reason why you can't involve parents and carers in training and skilling, and there are lots of SEND courses which could

offer families fresh ideas about how to support their children.

Among the important qualities for a SEND teacher or TA are exceptional patience, empathy, understanding and the ability to cope with challenging behaviours. The ability to motivate and encourage a young person to learn is founded on a basis of trust and support. If these personal characteristics are already there, then you can be

***“Some of the best SEND teachers have previously been one-to-one teaching assistants in mainstream settings”***

confident that the specialist training will take care of the rest.

## Casting the net

But how and where should you recruit? Spend time on the advert, and think of where to find people who are not necessarily from within the education sector. Where would they potentially look for a new role or challenge? Local authority websites are good for teaching staff already in the sector or who have had a career break as they know to look here for prospective new jobs. But try other platforms such as Indeed, CV Library, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to get the message out.

The advert should promote the role to attract a range of different candidates. Be positive but honest in

your wording. Prospective candidates looking for a new challenge may not have realised that working in a school is an opportunity that is open to them, and that applying for a SEND role can lead to a very satisfying and rewarding career.

Remember, too, that there is a potential marketplace of parents who are ready and willing to return to work or are considering something new. Don't forget to mention that teaching experience is not necessary for teaching assistants and that training will be provided, as this could result in some excellent people coming forward.

A willingness to be open to people from other sectors can also yield excellent results. For example, applicants from the youth or charity sectors, who may have had experience of working with challenging young people. Sports coaches, health and social care workers, staff who work in children's residential homes, psychology graduates may all have a deeper understanding of young people with complex mental health issues, too. All of these are great skills to have among your staff.

## Investing in CPD

It is important for schools to invest in CPD, and to ensure that any new recruits are trained and skilled in the various aspects of SEND.



Don't forget to include your existing staff in any training and upskilling, alongside your new recruits, as it is a good opportunity for them to get acquainted and to learn more about each other. Training on de-escalation and how to manage difficult situations such as behaviour management, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and basic verbal communication can really benefit everyone on your team.



**Helen Davies** is an award-winning specialist SEND recruiter and head of SEND at Simply Education

## GETTING YOUR AD RIGHT

- Think about your target market - what type of person do you want to recruit into your team? Take time writing your job adverts, focus on the benefits of working for the school and what you are offering in training and development. Talk about the culture, values and ethos of the school as people will want to know they are joining a great team. Importantly, explain the key skills you are looking for, not necessarily qualifications, and specify that you will support,

train and guide them in this next step of their career.

- To ensure your advert reaches as many people as possible, repeat your job role title multiple times as it will achieve greater success on Google, leading to more applications.

- Look beyond what you read in CVs or application letters. Talk to as many applicants as possible as CVs and applications won't tell you everything about them. You are looking for interpersonal skills and how they interact with young people to encourage them to learn. Pick up the phone and have a conversation.

- Be quick to respond to applicants as the market moves at pace and the most talented people will soon be snapped up. Keep the closing dates as short as possible and interview promptly. In the education sector the best people tend to find a position within two weeks of applying for a role, so don't delay.

- For support with training your new recruits, get in touch with the numerous adult education providers who offer fully and partially-funded teaching assistant and SEND specialist courses.



**SPECIAL OFFER**

# 3 issues for £9.99

*when you subscribe to*

**teach  
PRIMARY**

SAVE  
**33%**



## Subscribe today and enjoy:

- Access to exclusive digital resources and special offers
- Free time-saving lesson plans from creative and outstanding teachers
- Insight and opinions from leading UK columnists
- An entire section dedicated to teaching English
- Details of outstanding schools and behaviour management

# 2 EASY WAYS to subscribe...

1 [dcthompsonshop.co.uk/TP-subscription](http://dcthompsonshop.co.uk/TP-subscription)

2 **0800 904 7000**

Quote: E167



ISSUES FOR ONLY  
**£9.99\***

with Direct Debit

\*Terms and conditions apply, see online for full details. Freephone lines are open Monday-Friday 8am-6pm | [aceville@dctmedia.co.uk](mailto:aceville@dctmedia.co.uk)



SENCo Special:

# COMMUNICATION

# 66

## What it's like to have a stammer

And how teachers can make it easier for those who do

### IN THIS SECTION

#### **64 Communication through collaboration**

Make all your staff experts

#### **68 Developmental Language Disorder**

How small changes can lead to huge progress



# Communication through COLLABORATION

Amazing things happen when colleagues draw on each other's strengths to meet the needs of pupils, says **Majella Delaney**

**T**op of many teachers' wish list for supporting the children in their setting would be 'another pair of hands'.

How many of us would love the right level of expertise at our fingertips to look for the support for 'that child'? I'm referring to the child who doesn't get it, can't sit still, who sits there silently not engaging as if they haven't understood or indeed can't cope with the anxiety of not knowing - when all their peers seem to know what they should be doing. Those who lash out or have a 'melt-down' or use avoidance strategies to get out of that uncomfortable feeling of not understanding. Surely every classroom in the country has at least one pupil who fits this description?

## Getting groups right

At Meath School, which specialises in speech and language, we have a maximum of 12 children in each class, grouped by functional comprehension and peer group. We try to ensure every child is in the most appropriate group for their maturity and their level of emotional intelligence. It's not an easy task but it works, and it's not always perfect - but what in education is ever ideal?

Each of our classes is staffed with a specialist teacher, a speech and language therapist and

a highly experienced and specialised learning support assistant. All of these professionals are worth their weight in gold when it comes to their expertise! We also have a team of occupational therapists who work with each of our classes to ensure the emotional, sensory and physical needs of our children are met, so they are able to access the curriculum.

How does it all work? Wonderful things can happen when you have a strong team of collaborators, people who are willing to learn and respect the role each other's





specialism plays in the educational life of the child - as well as a bespoke curriculum built to consider all aspects of a child's life. We need to get the best out of pupils and to ensure they are independent, happy and confident learners when their complete their journey at Meath school.

## Total communication

How so we achieve this? We utilise a total communication approach paired with an effective and bespoke curriculum which uses various evidence-based interventions such as word aware, and therapeutic support such as cued articulation and therapeutic listening - to name but a

they interact; we simplify our language and promote the learning of communication and language with visuals, cued articulation and sign-supported English in the form of matakon - the language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate.

## Classroom collaboration

When you walk into our classroom you may struggle to decipher who is the teacher, the therapist and the learning support assistant. This because you will see everyone working with children. You may also notice the varying strategies, support and resources used

*We seek advice from the experts daily, until we ourselves become experts in that strategy*

few. It's a curriculum that teachers both deliver and have helped to develop.

But how do you teach a child with a reduced attention span or a barrier to their understanding of language - the medium by which all teaching and learning is delivered?

Or to be more precise, how do we teach a group of learners with varying profiles and needs?

We look at the child as an individual and put the support and interventions in place for them to overcome the barriers. We use the expertise and vision of our speech and language therapists. We watch how

to ensure that all children can access their learning objectives and personal goals. This is not something that can be seen by the untrained eye: it takes knowledge and expertise. What symbols and signs are used to support a question or explanation? How often is something revisited? How are we relating the learning to the children's personal lives in order for them to feel included and important?

Wellbeing and mental health are knitted throughout our curriculum. This is a huge area of strength, and it supports our behaviour for learning. It also underpins behaviour management and helps us to avoid more challenging behaviours. This is down to our PSHE curriculum but also our SLTs, who develop confidence through 'friends'

## How does our approach work?

It was decided that there were certain elements of our instruction which needed to be fully embedded in our practice across the school. We created a list of five core elements and learning expectations for each lesson, based on what strategies work best to suit all learners in our cohort.

● **TLG (Talk, Learn, Grow)** - our curriculum is based on ensuring we are developing effective communicators. We equip them to develop a set of basic skills and knowledge for the next stage of learning and to know their own strengths and ability to work collaboratively. We support them to develop social and emotional skills with an ongoing level of independence and resilience.

● **Simplifying and extending language** - we continuously simplify language to support children's access to learning, and set targets to develop language acquisition and communication skills.

● **SSE (Sign Supported English)** - this is one of the key tools staff and children use to support communication and understanding of others.

● **Active learning** - children learn best when actively engaged and enjoying their learning. Adaptations are made to support individual styles of learning where appropriate. Resources are personalised to support each child's needs.

● **Overlearning** - we continuously offer opportunities for overlearning by recapping, consolidation, and reviewing what has been learnt in the lesson. Experiences are repeated and developed so children build transferrable skills with new but similar situations. Retention of knowledge is embedded when sharing learning with peers.

Using these elements allows us to give each child a mode of communication and understanding. It builds their confidence and allows them to blossom in a group learning setting. Every child is different and unique, and we celebrate that; as educators, we're also on a similar learning journey. Each new challenge is a mode of improving our instruction and learning from the range of professionals. It's all about collaboration and teamwork.

and social skills groups, and the development of emotional regulation - something that is often taken for granted. In the current climate, we have to explicitly teach our children about emotions and how to effectively regulate them. Our OTs have a role to play too, ensuring each child has the right seating, posture and regulation movements to maximise their potential to learn.

Colleagues in our school work as teams, with the child at the heart of everything we do. For example, we take our therapy onto the playground with our ELSAs (emotional literacy support assistants) working with children to support the building of friendships and a sense of

belonging. We train our staff, and our staff train us. We learn the therapeutic strategies needed to support our children, which includes a new topic every week. This allows us to seek advice from the experts daily, until we ourselves become experts in that strategy to support our pupils. We take time to understand our children, their frustrations, their strengths and their targets to enable them to progress.



*Majella Delaney is headteacher of Meath School, Chertsey*

# Supporting CHILDREN who stammer

Don't be tempted to interject when a pupil is struggling to get their words out, says **Abed Ahmed**

**Y**ou probably know a lot about autism, but what about stammering?

Both affect about 2% of the population. And both deserve our attention.

Stop and think. How many students are currently in your school? Up to 8% of them will stammer at some point in their life, and this will be a lifelong condition for up to 2%. There are almost nine million children in UK schools, which means almost 720,000 children need your support.

This article isn't for those who stammer, however, but for the overwhelming majority of you that do not. The small changes you make in your teaching will make a big difference to their lives.

I'm a 28-year-old secondary school maths teacher who stammers. I knew I wanted to become a teacher from the age of 15 but I feared my stammer would prevent me from achieving my dream. An advisor, who was also a teacher, even told me I should consider a different career because children might not understand me when I talk. I now know he was wrong – as I'm currently

in my seventh year of teaching, leading a maths department in an inner-city school in Birmingham.

Before I advise how to make reasonable adjustments to ensure your teaching methods are inclusive, I need you to understand what a stammer is and what it is like to be a person who stammers.

## What is stammering?

Stammering is a neurological condition that makes it physically hard to speak. The term "stammering" is commonly used in the UK, while other countries use the word "stuttering". Both mean the same thing.

Stammering is not linked to intelligence and, like many other conditions, it covers a wide spectrum, which means everyone's stammer is different.

## Identifying a child who stammers

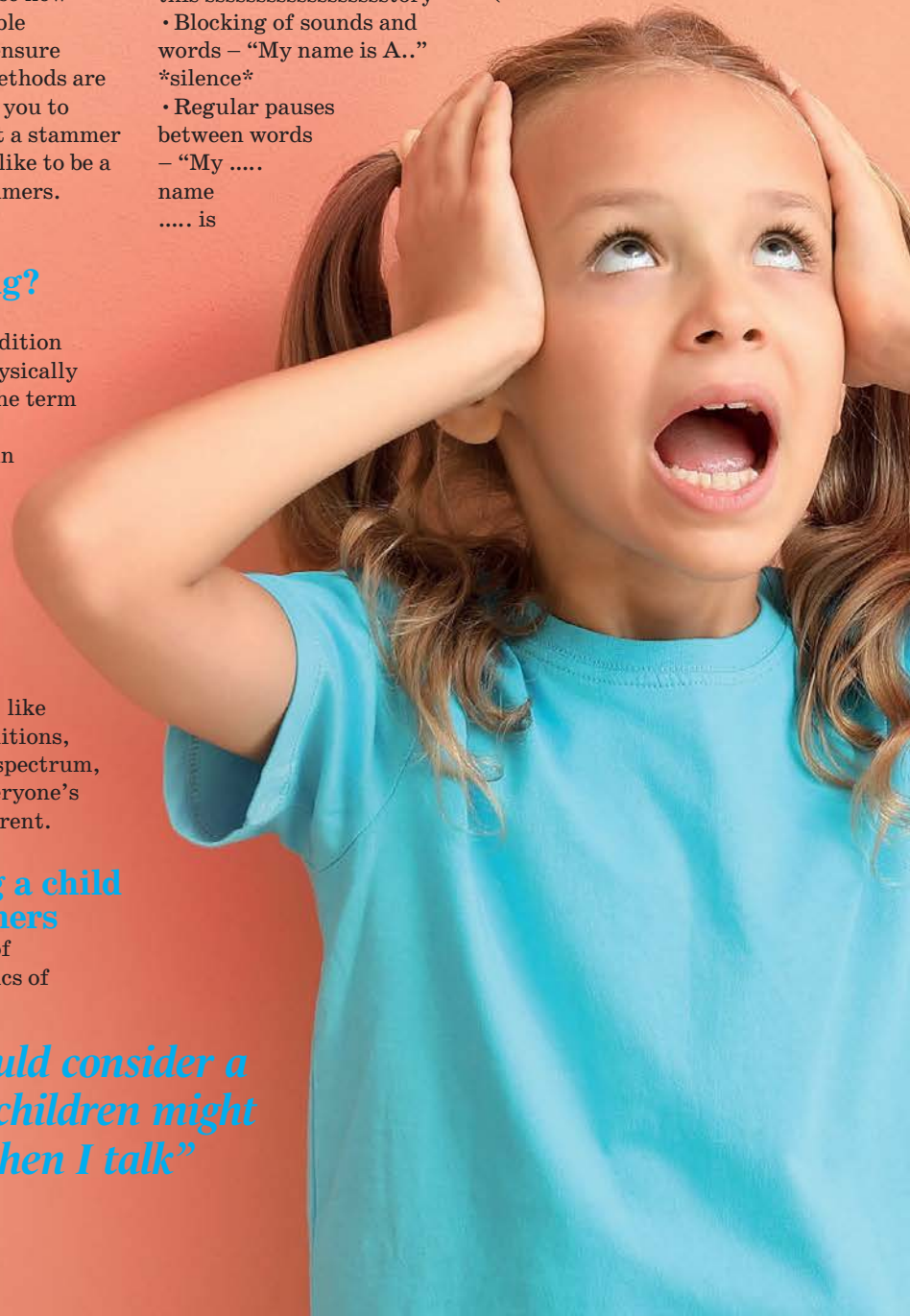
These are some of the characteristics of

stammering:

- Elongation of sounds and words – "My n n n n name is a a a ahmed" or "I like this ssssssssssssssstory"
- Blocking of sounds and words – "My name is A.."
- \*silence\*
- Regular pauses between words – "My .... name .... is

.....Abed.... Ahmed"

- Replacing a word with another word (avoidance) – "It's r r r r r r r ai ..... water is falling from the sky"
- Facial tension around the mouth/ jaw as they try to get the words out
- Coping mechanics such as tapping thighs or the table to give them a rhythm when speaking
- May use breathing techniques before starting to speak
- Reserved personality – they may be too embarrassed or shy to speak in front of others for fear of humiliation and imitation from peers
- Withdrawn personality – may come across sad, upset or experiencing low moods (sometimes)



*"A teacher told me I should consider a different career because children might not understand me when I talk"*



suicidal)

- Struggling to make eye contact – it is awkward to stammer and look someone in the eye
- Avoiding oral tasks – don't want to face the idea of talking in front of people

## Causes of stammering?

Stammering happens because of how our brains are wired when it comes to producing speech – hence, it's neurological. It is more important to know what is not the cause of stammering. For example, stammering is not caused by stress, nerves, or anxiety. However, being stressed, nervous or anxious

“masking” than males.

By contrast, acquired or adult-onset stammering is usually a result of someone having a stroke, head injury or Parkinson's disease. Others have developed a stammer because of emotional distress, drugs, and medication.

## Living with a stammer

If you've ever had sleep paralysis, that is what it feels like. You try

your best to speak, but nothing comes out.

Your body is frozen and you're physically pushing yourself to do something, but you can't. A rush of blood reaches your cheeks and your ears starting to burn. No sound is coming out of your mouth while you can see the people around you staring in silence. You're now grasping for air while you feel your chest tighten.

Now, imagine having these sorts of feelings from the age of three, and starting to develop anxious traits because of your stammer. Imagine waiting for your

turn to speak in a lesson. Imagine knowing that your teacher will cold call you any second. Imagine having to introduce yourself in an ice breaker activity. It's honestly the most terrifying experience ever. Some try to be helpful by finishing your sentences for you, which is also insulting. Many wish that their stammer would go away, but the sad reality is that it's here to stay.

However, you can do something about it to make life that tiny bit easier for people like us.

## Supporting children who stammer

How a family decides to seek support for their child is a personal choice. There is no “magical cure” for stammering – it's something that's likely to stay with a child for the rest of their life and usually we just learn to manage it.

However, there are speech therapists who can support, and early intervention is better than no/late intervention. NHS


## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS YOU CAN MAKE IN SCHOOL


- Speak to your stammering student about their concerns to find out how you can help them
- Speak slowly and calmly when talking to a stammering pupil. Talking quickly can overwhelm them
- Give them 30 seconds thinking time before cold calling in class – offer a mini whiteboard
- Don't focus on them when asking questions in class
- Don't measure success by expecting quick responses. Pupils may need a moment to reply to your question
- Be mindful when teaching at the beginning/end of the day – tiredness makes you stammer more
- Avoid ice breakers that gets student to stand and talk – use sticky notes instead
- Allow 25% extra time for oral tasks so they can gather their thoughts
- If working in groups, ensure roles are defined and that everyone has an equal part to play
- Regularly circulate to students who stammer in your class to see if they need help

therapists can help young people who stammer to learn to manage the condition and the emotions behind it. They can also provide techniques that can help children to try and speak fluently in certain situations. But it is important to note that fluency should not be the end goal as it's unlikely that they will achieve this. Parents can self-refer their child to speech therapy, or can speak to their GP.

There are courses that people who stammer can join such as: The Starfish Project and Maguire Programme – but these are not free. However, there are local support groups for children at specific ages which are often free. Free support is also available from stammering related charities such as: STAMMA and Action for Stammering Children.

*Abed Ahmed runs free student support groups via ZOOM during school time and outside of school.*

 @stammer\_teacher

 stammerteacher@gmail.com

# 10 key strategies FOR DLD

**Sue Marr** explains what DLD is and how mainstream teachers can support young people affected by it – while at the same time improving matters for everyone else...

**D**evelopmental Language Disorder (DLD) occurs when a child or adult has difficulties with talking and/or understanding language, but doesn't have any other biomedical conditions, such as autism or intellectual disability.

These difficulties can impact on an individual's level of literacy, ability to learn and form friendships, and emotional wellbeing. According to a 2016 study (see [bit.ly/ts103-dld1](https://bit.ly/ts103-dld1)), 7% of children have DLD. That means that in an average class of 30, two children may have DLD.

It's much more common than autism, yet remains a 'hidden condition' that's often missed, misdiagnosed or misinterpreted as poor behaviour, poor listening or inattention.

## Classroom strategies

Support from professionals can make a real difference to children with DLD. Speech and language therapists and specialist teachers can help them to develop various skills and strategies, and better understand their difficulties and strengths.

Mainstream teachers can support these children by developing an understanding of their individual difficulties, but also by making a series of simple adaptations to their teaching practice with the aid of these 10 key strategies:

**1 Time** Allow the pupil with DLD more time to process information and instructions (receptive language) and formulate their answers (expressive language).

**2 Use visual support** Visual prompting can help signpost activities for pupils with DLD and trigger memory. Make use of interactive whiteboards, iPads, apps and online videos. Provide visual timetables, language-rich displays and clear, simple signage around the school. Add pictures to your worksheets, and where possible, make use of real-life objects

**3 Sign it** Signing supports the development of expressive language and can help with understanding, since the young person will be given an extra 'visual clue.' The majority of teachers aren't trained signers, but we're all capable of effectively using gestures, facial expressions and body language in our everyday teaching. If you have a pupil with DLD in your class, ensure that you use these skills more overtly.

It might also be useful to familiarise yourself with, or even make up your own, signs for key curriculum vocabulary that the whole class can learn.

**4 Do it** Pupils with DLD will respond well when taught using a multi-sensory teaching approach. Try to provide multiple opportunities for kinaesthetic learning – especially in topics that have a heavy language load. Start with the pupils' own first-hand

experiences, focusing on life skills and creative tasks where possible. Model the language you want the pupil to use throughout practical activities – this will then support any subsequent spoken or written tasks.





## 5 Modify your language

Slow your rate of speech, issue one instruction at a time and build the task up. Keep your sentences short and concise, pausing between sentences so that pupils can process the information more easily. Be prepared to rephrase what you say more than once.

Try to use a word order that follows time – for example, ‘Finish question 10 before you go outside’ will be easier for a pupil with DLD to understand than, ‘before you go outside, finish question 10.’ Also simplify your vocabulary where you can, such as using the word ‘make’ instead of ‘produce’.

## 6 Chunk information

To support pupils’ understanding of everyday instructions, chunk the information by employing pauses. For example, ‘Tidy your desk ... collect your planner ... then line up.’ It’s often useful to repeat such instructions. Be explicit, and use literal language. Pupils with DLD struggle to understand inference and language forms such as idioms and metaphors.

## 7 Words

Pupils with DLD will know fewer words than their typically developing peers. It’s therefore vital that we teach them new words, ensuring that key curriculum vocabulary is explicitly taught. Try to plan vocabulary activities that target subject-specific words, as pupils with DLD will tend not to ‘pick up’

new vocabulary like their classmates.

Consider setting aside five minutes at the start of lessons for ‘vocabulary time.’ The whole class could benefit from this, particularly in subjects such as maths and science, where the vocabulary used can be highly abstract and involve a great deal of complex temporal or spatial language.

## 8 Small steps

Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable parts. Provide a tick list, so that pupils can see their progress and know what to do next.

## 9 Repeat it

Try to recap previous learning at the beginning of each lesson. Many pupils with DLD have difficulties with working memory and will thus benefit from such prompting. Throughout the lesson, repeat what you want the children to learn and model the use of targeted vocabulary. Do the same activity more than once, but make small changes each time to extend learning.

Ask the pupils to repeat back to you what they’ve been asked to do, so that you can assess their understanding.

## 10 Model it

Whether spoken or written, always model the language you want the pupil to use. Provide them with a toolkit of phrases and sentence structures they can use to answer specific question forms

These 10 strategies shouldn’t be viewed as ‘extra workload’ for teachers. Supporting pupils with DLD is ultimately about maintaining good classroom practice – making lessons visual and/or practical, prioritising vocabulary, using innovative resources, maintaining consistency and allowing time for consolidation of learning.

### EXPERT ADVICE

Moor House is one of the few schools in the country that specialises in supporting pupils aged 7 to 19 with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), providing individually tailored education with integrated speech and language therapy, for those with the most severe and complex forms of the condition.

Moor House aims to share expertise and specialist knowledge with the wider community, including staff at mainstream schools and colleges. Bespoke training sessions can be provided to primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges, with courses suited to the requirements of individual staff and students.

You can find out more about DLD by downloading a free training presentation for teachers created by Moor House Training & Research Institute, titled ‘DLD – What every Teacher needs to know!’, from the school’s website via [moorhouseschool.co.uk/dld-training](http://moorhouseschool.co.uk/dld-training)



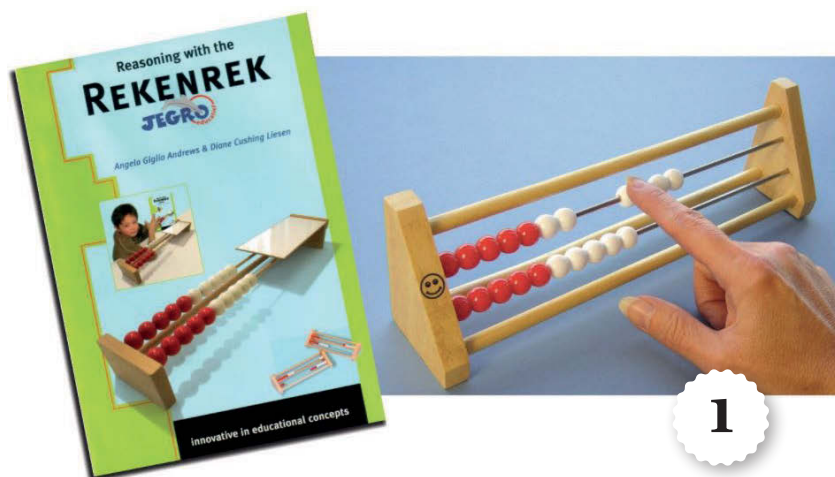
*Sue Marr is an experienced teacher, having previously worked*

*in both mainstream and SEN settings; she has taught pupils with DLD for many years, and possesses extensive experience of devising and delivering a mainstream curriculum that’s been highly differentiated for the language needs of the pupils in her class*

**“Pupils with DLD will respond well when taught using a multi-sensory teaching approach”**

# At your service

Add some additional excitement, support and comfort to your school's activities with these services, products and resources



1

## The rise of Rekenrek

Originating in the Netherlands and used effectively in several other countries, Rekenreks or 'number racks' have recently risen to fame here as part of the DfE / NCETM Mastering Number programme. They are a fabulous resource for encouraging progression from counting to subitising and then on to calculating. Autopress Education has supplied

these resources to UK schools for 20 years and has the widest range of related resources. In addition to the child's Rekenrek, Autoexpress supplies two different demonstration versions including screens for 'hiding' beads, as well as two support books written by Rekenrek specialists. Find out more at [autopresseducation.co.uk](http://autopresseducation.co.uk)



3

## BSL for beginners

Learning British Sign Language is fun, fast and effective with our online course. We offer a comprehensive introduction to BSL that covers a wide range of topics, beginning with the basics – such as fingerspelling, greetings, and colours – before moving through subjects such as food, time, money, animals, weather, feelings, and occupations, including education. Learners find out about the unique grammar and syntax of BSL along the way, and by the end of the course should feel comfortable holding basic conversations in BSL – even in topics that haven't been covered in the content. [british-sign.co.uk/learn](http://british-sign.co.uk/learn)

## Building foundations for maths learning

Maths For Life is a Surrey-based company with a mission to bring the love and benefits of maths to everyone. Rather than shoehorning students into a 'one fits all' curriculum, we address the unique needs of the unserved minority. We believe that building solid foundations and nurturing independence provides great potential to achieve and flourish in today's world. The programme is fit for purpose, and, unlike any other education programme, it works for the complete age spectrum of students from preschool to further education college. We prioritise the maths needed for life, the numeracy we use every day.



4

## Sports Premium inspiration

Timotay Playscapes creates inspirational outdoor spaces for schools and early years settings.

To support the Sport Premium initiative, we have developed a proven range of engaging products that will motivate children, increase participation in sports and help to reduce obesity. Contact Timotay for your free guide and free consultation.

[enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk)



2



5

## Celebrate all abilities

Rose Robbins is a trained SEND teacher with personal experience of autism and disability. She is the author and illustrator of three picture books about neurodiverse children and their siblings and friends. The books express the joys and frustrations of life at home and school for children with autism and ADHD, and can be used in the classroom as well as at home.

Entertaining and free resources to enhance engagement with the books are available at [scallywagpress.com/ros Robbins](http://scallywagpress.com/ros Robbins)



6



## Healthier buildings

TG Escapes' modular eco-buildings use modern methods of construction, traditional materials and sophisticated technology to create a stand-alone space that is net-zero in operation. The innovative, bespoke architect-designed system provides timber frame buildings that are ideal for SEND provision. A variety of finishes are available, including timber, composite cladding or

render in a range of colours, and brick slips. Off-site construction minimises disruption, cost and risk, with a complete design and build service. The buildings follow biophilic design principles, helping to connect to the outdoors. They're ergonomic, highly practical and designed to last 60 years or more with appropriate maintenance. Visit [tgescapes.co.uk](http://tgescapes.co.uk)

7



## Trauma informed

Trauma Informed Schools UK can provide part-time diploma training across the UK, to help ensure that your school truly supports the mental health and emotional wellbeing of both staff and students. The training is delivered by senior psychologists and education leads, and can empower key staff to respond effectively to children with mild to moderate mental health problems and devise effective whole school management strategies.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, TISUK has successfully delivered training to more than 20,000 staff in schools across the country. Further information about the training packages available can be obtained via our free Zoom briefings, details of which can be found at [traumainformedschools.co.uk](http://traumainformedschools.co.uk)

8

## Diabetes support

The InDependent Diabetes Trust (IDDT) offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals, on the issues that are important to them. Its helpline offers a friendly understanding ear when the going gets tough. IDDT supplies information packs to parents and teachers so they understand the needs of children with diabetes in school and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries. Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications and a cure is still elusive, so IDDT funds essential research. As a registered charity IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations.

For more information or to join, visit [iddtinternational.org](http://iddtinternational.org)



9



## Supporting learners with vision impairment

If you are working with learners with vision impairment from 0 to 25, including those with complex needs, RNIB is here to help - whether it's on the phone, face-to-face or through our online information.

With our expert guidance, we offer:

- Specialist advice and guidance
  - New curriculum framework and materials.
  - Resources, training and events available for professionals available through RNIB and partnering organisations.
  - Information and networks to share experiences and learn from others.
  - Educational products, toys and games that encourage independence and multi-sensory play.
  - Family, early years and transitions support.
- Call 0303 123 9999, or email [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk), visit [rnib.org.uk/education](http://rnib.org.uk/education)

10



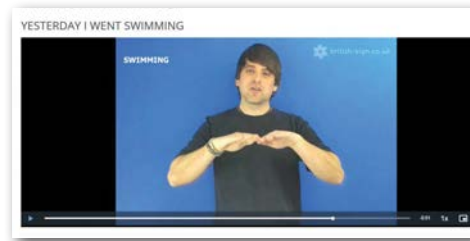
## Connecting schools and the education community

The Schools & Academies Show will return to NEC, Birmingham on 17th November, bringing the education community together to connect, network with like-minded peers and discuss the latest sector developments. As the UK's leading education policy event, this is a fantastic opportunity for attendees to source solutions for their schools, gain best practice insights, meet innovative education suppliers and hear directly from the most influential policy and decision-makers in education. URL: <https://schoolsandacademiesshow.co.uk>



# Introducing British Sign Language

Online signing course which acts as a comprehensive introduction for anybody interested in learning BSL



## AT A GLANCE

- Independent lessons allow for sequential or modular learning
- Themes allow you to focus on your area of interest
- Clear and easy-to-interpret illustrations
- Video support for extra accessibility
- Mirror function allows you to practise back to yourself (webcam required)

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Introducing British Sign Language is an introductory course that helps you learn and understand sign language, regardless of previous knowledge. The course is set up in a sequential way which allows you to master the basics of sign language through the use of text, videos and other mediums.

The lessons are accessible whenever, meaning that there are no time constraints on when tasks can be completed. Although the recommendation is one lesson a week or fortnight, those wishing to work at a more rapid pace can easily do so.

Each lesson is designed to be completed in the order it is set out on the site. By using this sequential approach, knowledge and understanding of sign language is built sustainably. Retake each assessment as often as you like to try to improve on your previous score.

The lessons are designed to take one and a half to two hours to complete but you're not constrained. Spend as long as you need to take in all of the information before moving on to the next lesson.

Something that stands out from the outset is that Introducing British Sign Language is designed with the user in mind. You can switch between left and right-hand preference, adjust the speed of the video demonstrations (brilliantly

helpful when practising) and if you have a webcam, you can use your screen as a mirror so that you can see what you look like signing. This is really useful because clarity of frontal communication is of such importance. The mirror function opens up another small window so you can compare your signing to an example video. This, coupled with the slowing down function, makes figuring out dexterity so much easier. This is the kind of feature that shows that the creators of this course really know how to teach their craft.

The course boasts simple functionality which is clearly signposted. There are 'next' and 'previous' arrows on each screen and embedded videos are in a letterbox format which means you don't have to open another tab to watch them. Although in places there are some subject specific terms, these are clearly defined and the jargon doesn't make the course content inaccessible. In fact, the additional knowledge makes accessing course materials more straightforward.

What is striking about the course is that you aren't just simply learning how to sign. You also learn about the intricacies of communicating using nonverbal methods, the science of dexterity and, most importantly, the ins and outs of another language.

# SENCo

## VERDICT

- ✓ Designed with simplicity and functionality in mind
- ✓ Exceptional way to quickly and effectively learn elements of sign language
- ✓ Well-designed interface with embedded videos and mirror function
- ✓ Variety of contexts cover many areas of everyday interest
- ✓ Course is accessible anytime for your convenience
- ✓ Easy to get started

## UPGRADE IF...

You want to train staff on the basics of how to communicate using sign language or are interested in developing your own knowledge and understanding of how to communicate with those with hearing difficulties.

Pay what you can (minimum £3; normal cost £25), [british-sign.co.uk](http://british-sign.co.uk)



LITERACY

# Ten Minute Box

A little suitcase that packs a punch for bite-size but effective literacy learning



## AT A GLANCE

- A multisensory phonics intervention for teaching digraphs to pupils of any age
- Includes instructions, assessments, lesson plans, activities and games
- Dedicated and signed for children who struggle with progress in literacy
- Teaches 50 digraphs and 300 curriculum words using phonics, fun and games

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



If you are looking for a systematic and individualised intervention programme for maximising learning potential that can be used alongside any phonics scheme, then Ten Minute Box offers a structured and cumulative programme with multisensory support second to none.

This adaptable and flexible resource uses a simple but effective approach for helping children needing further support with their reading and spelling, by using carefully thought through activities for just a few minutes a day that make a positive impact.

Ten Minute Box is basically a mini-suitcase of learning that uses a systematic sequence of teaching and comes with a whole host of supporting materials, record of achievement booklets and an illustrated teaching guide with really clear planning. To make the learning fun, children take on the role of Digraph Detective and their tutor assumes the persona of Inspector.

Teachers and Teaching Assistants will find this resource particularly useful because everything you need can be found inside the box which saves valuable time.

For something so small, this colourful case really does pack a lot of quality materials inside and includes an instruction manual, activities book, sentence list and sentence isolator, record of achievement and record of work bundles, nine digraph panels, nine sets of digraph cards, A5 whiteboard, two coloured pens and eraser cloth, blank game board, Beginning, Middle and End flags and board,

two shoelaces, round and long beads, timer, six-sided die and four coloured cubes and treasury tags.

The idea of the Ten Minute Box is to regularly support the learning of digraphs through quality one-to-one input so that gaps in understanding can be addressed, targeted and plugged. Children follow their own individual programme and still access whole-class provision so they are getting the best of both worlds.

The box is ideal for TA use but is very much for children to 'own' so they don't fall into learned helplessness and they are encouraged to unpack and select what they need for each session.

Each child has a record of achievement booklet so they can see the progress they make by working on skills in small steps. Comments can easily be added to the booklets and these show what children have grappled with and mastered over time.

A highly supportive teaching manual is provided written by SEND experts, and there is also online training available in how to get the best out of the Ten Minute Box to suit every setting.

What makes this resource so powerful is that lessons are short, snappy and focused, tuning into attention spans for long enough to make a difference. It reduces cognitive load so all pupils can feel a sense of progress, and it can be used from Year 2 upwards. This is an excellent classroom investment for a wide range of learners.

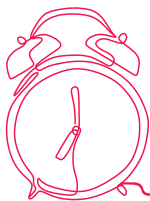
# SENCo

## VERDICT

- ✓ Highly inclusive and especially useful for children with specific learning difficulties
- ✓ Allows teachers and TAs to diagnose and address areas of strength and weakness
- ✓ Perfect for teaching in bite-sized chunks
- ✓ Ideal for one-to-one support or small group interventions to help children 'crack the code'
- ✓ Allows children to take ownership of their own learning and encourages independence
- ✓ Provides a range of strategies for pupils to access
- ✓ Recognises learning anxiety and tackles self-esteem problems

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to purchase a portable, professional and unique toolkit for teaching digraphs packed with literacy materials for reading and spelling.



# DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out

## WAKING UP

My destination today is nasen House in Tamworth, Staffordshire.

I'm awake at 6:15am, listening to BBC Radio 5 Live, scanning for education related news. By 7:00am I am ready for the 25-mile drive.



**ANNAMARIE HASSALL**  
MBE IS CEO OF NASEN

 @CEOnasen



## MY MORNING

My first task is releasing emails composed last night from 'delay send'. My first hour at nasen House is a walk and talk with nasen teams. After that, it's off to an online meeting, chairing the National SEND Reference Group.



## MY AFTERNOON

Department for Education representatives arrive for a quarterly board meeting. The Whole School SEND team and partners from the Education and Training Foundation and Autism Education Trust discuss progress on the DfE-funded workforce programme.



## LUNCHTIME

I have a phone interview with a magazine about the nasen Live Awards - an annual celebration of inclusive practice of practitioners and settings. We talk about the inspirational stories and experiences of our 17 winners.



## MY EVENING

I'm ready for an online evening event - recording a podcast with TTS Education, talking about neurodiversity. I catch up with emails and working on slides for a conference.



## BEDTIME

I aim to be in bed by 11:00pm, but tonight I remember I need rail tickets for an early train to London. That will be a 6:36am train from my local station - thank goodness for e-tickets and my secret senior discount card!

## QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

- ❖ **Career plan B?** I'd be a gardener and use that career to encourage others to join me outdoors. Gardening is a great boost for wellbeing.
- ❖ **Must-listen?** Audio books - I'm currently listening to 'Becoming' by Michelle Obama.
- ❖ **Must-watch?** Online webinars - especially the new 20-minute online units from Whole School SEND, using evidence-based techniques to foster friendships and relationships.
- ❖ **Must-read?** 'Behaving Together in the Classroom' by Sarah Johnson (Dove).
- ❖ **Twitter hero?** I avidly follow @WholeSchoolSEND and the @nasen-org, ready to retweet or download the link to the latest SEND and education related news.



- Used in thousands of schools worldwide
- For all learners who struggle with literacy and numeracy
- Time saving programmes of activities

**FREE TRIAL**

**“A valuable addition to any classroom”**  
– Dyslexia Action



**Five Minute Box**

The multisensory phonics programme which enables the early identification of potential specific learning difficulties. The Box provides secure basic skills for reading, spelling and writing. No preparation time needed, everything you need is in the box.



**The Ten Minute Box**

Multisensory programme for learning reading and writing digraphs and associated words. Fun activities ensure consolidation and are suitable for all learners of any age. This structured intervention works alongside any phonics scheme in use within schools and includes initial and summative assessments and progress tracking.

## New Training Available

- Increase understanding of dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.
- Signs and indicators of learning difficulties and how these children may learn differently
- Understanding of the psychology behind the Five Minute Box approach, getting the best out of children 1:1
- Practical 'How to' use the Five Minute or Number Box. Teaching Assistants will be able to go away and carry out the interventions with confidence and enthusiasm after this training.

## Get in touch

Call us on 01442 878629 or e-mail us at [info@fiveminutebox.co.uk](mailto:info@fiveminutebox.co.uk) for information and to order.

[www.fiveminutebox.co.uk](http://www.fiveminutebox.co.uk)  
 @fiveminutebox  
 facebook.com/fiveminutebox





# Modular eco-buildings



Our net-zero timber frame buildings are manufactured offsite for minimal disruption, using natural materials. Fully inclusive design and build from the Education Estates Contractor of the Year 2021, for permanent buildings that won't cost the earth.

0800 917 7726  
[info@tgescapes.co.uk](mailto:info@tgescapes.co.uk)

biophilic  
by nature

 **TG ESCAPES**