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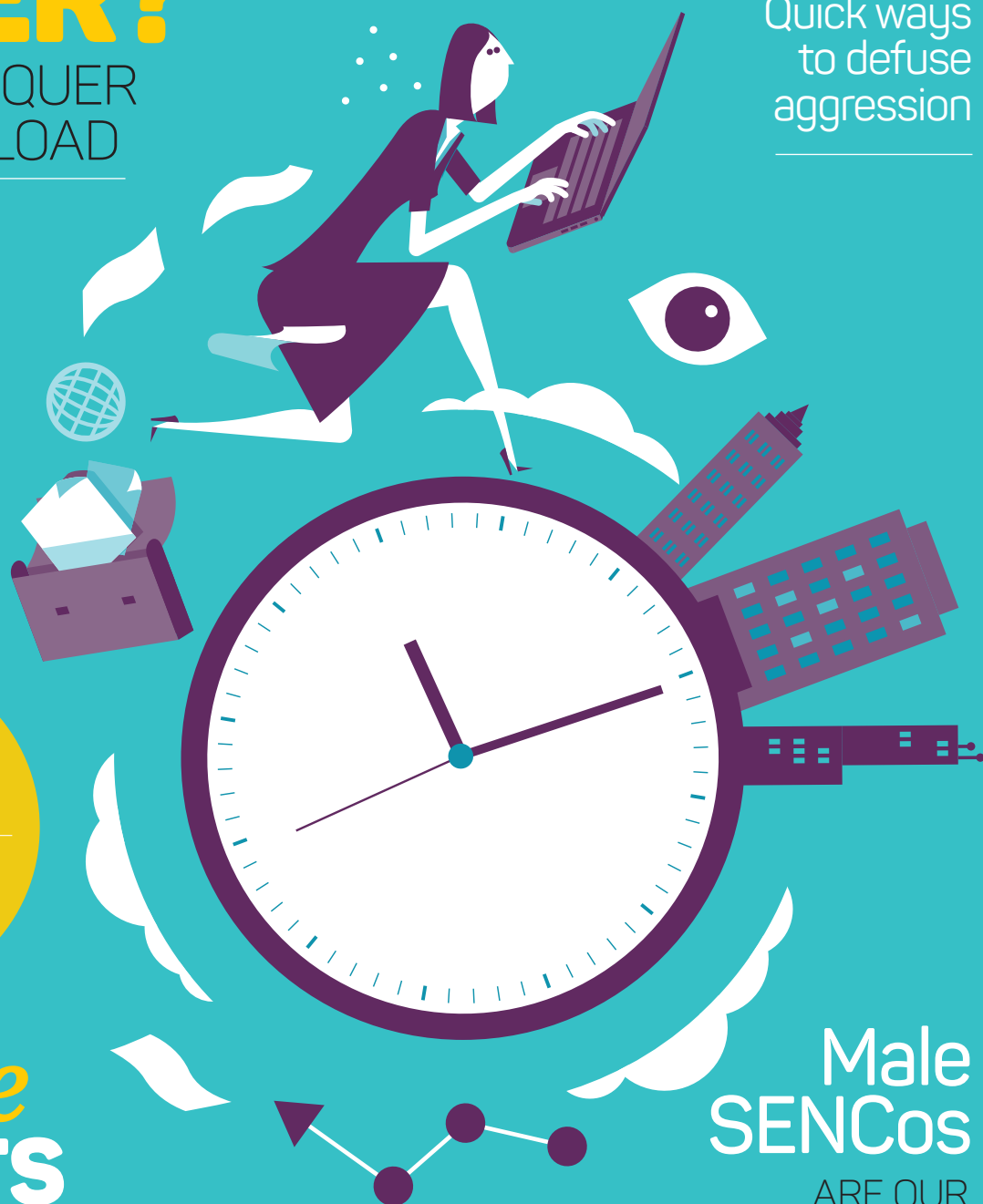
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Welcome...

...to the second edition of *SENCo* – a publication produced with the needs and concerns of special educational needs co-ordinators in mind. Once again we've assembled a roster of professional voices and a wealth of material which we hope will inform, inspire and perhaps even surprise you.

When putting together a publication like this it's always interesting to see if any recurring themes or topics start to emerge, and so it's proved. One seems to have been the recent publication of the Rochford Review – you can find Lorraine Petersen's summary

of its likely impact over on p76, while on p37, SEND consultant Jackie Ward considers whether it may usher in an era of pupils with SEND being recognised for what they can do, as opposed to what they can't.

Elsewhere this issue, there's some discussion of how schools can make up for the gradual paring back of support services once provided by local authorities. That may involve forming their own links with local agencies, as detailed by Sonia Blandford on p62, or establishing productive relationships with special schools, as Simon Knight suggests on p42.

The reason that schools are having to contemplate such actions is in part down to something that's become inescapable in recent years – that there's less money in the pot. It would be remiss of us at this point not to mention the government's announcement last month of a financial package of just under £60 million intended to support children with SEND, including £40 million of funding for councils – though how much of a difference it's likely to make remains to be seen.

Certainly, there are problems within the current system, some highlighted by our contributors over the following pages – and yet there's something to be said for trying to envisage a better alternative as Sue Gerrard does on p18.

The challenges might be tough, and the circumstances sometimes, but we continue to see SENCos, heads and teachers offering rich insights, coming up with remarkable ideas and doing extraordinary things in the service of those children and young people who need their help the most. And that's what we want to reflect in the magazine that's in your hands.

Callum Fauser,
Editor

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Our experts IN THIS ISSUE



Lynn McCann is an autism specialist, teacher and consultant



Simon Knight is director of education at the National Education Trust



Sue Gerrard is an independent researcher affiliated to the Knowledge Modelling Group at Keele University



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Dr Rona Tutt OBE is an author on SEND and inclusion, and a former chair of the NAHT Special Education Needs committee



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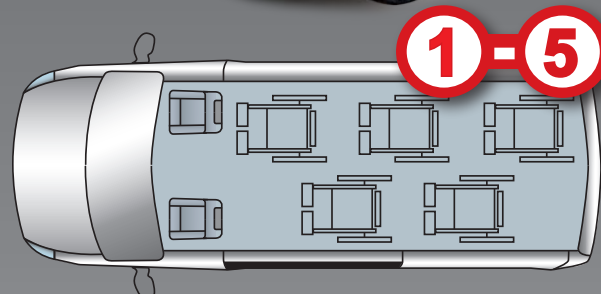
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WE CAN WORK IT OUT?

With so many competing demands on their time, what can SENCoS do to keep on top of their workload? James Bowen has a few suggestions...

Whenever I ask SENCoS to name the single biggest challenge they face in their role, the answer is nearly always the same – time. The reality for most is that it feels as though there's simply too much to do, and not enough time available to do it in. National policy changes, such as the shift from Statements to Education Health and Care plans, have only exacerbated the issue and there are few who would argue that their workload has decreased in recent times.

Most SENCoS, especially those in primary, also retain significant teaching responsibilities and in many cases will have a class of their own. Juggling the competing demands of each role can be an enormous challenge. So how can this seemingly impossible balancing act be made slightly more manageable?

Prioritising

In order to succeed as a SENCo, one of the first things you have to do is accept the uncomfortable truth that you will not be able to get everything done. This can be a hard message for those who take great pride in completing their to-do list, but the reality is that it just won't happen (at least not if you plan on sleeping at some point).

Instead, you need to prioritise and focus your time on those things that will have the biggest impact or are statutory requirements. The problem with being a SENCo, though, is that often everything can feel like a priority.

A useful tactic is to look at each task and ask yourself, 'What will happen if I don't do this?' Not completing a statutory assessment application for a child will clearly have significant consequences; not getting round to filling in a survey you've been asked to complete by the Local Authority, less so. You have to be ruthless and prepared to let some lower priority tasks fall by the wayside.

As a SENCo, you will be one of the most in-demand people at your school. Whether it's a parent wanting to meet with you, a teacher needing some advice or a teaching assistant needing a one-to-one chat, it can often feel as if everyone wants a piece of your time, and that they all need it *right now*. If you're not careful, you can end up frantically dashing from one person to the next in order to satisfy their competing demands. To alleviate this, schedule specific times during the week when you will be 'available', and ensure everyone

knows about them. This is especially important if you also have a class of your own to manage.

Consider holding a weekly drop-in 'SENCo surgery' for your fellow teachers – a set time when they can come and talk to you about any issues they need your support with. It can be equally useful to allocate time in the week to meeting with parents and carers. For this to work, however, it's crucial that you have the support of those responsible for booking such meetings, such as the school's office staff. You don't want to appear inflexible, of course, and there may well be occasions when it's necessary to meet parents outside of your agreed times – but having such allocated slots will allow you to retain an important degree of control over your very limited availability.

One of the most useful things I used to do as a SENCo was hold a monthly 'parent / SENCo coffee morning'. This not only helped in terms of communication and building relationships, but also allowed me to discuss multiple minor issues or queries within a small group setting, thus negating the need for lots of individual meetings at a later date.

Help with admin and planning ahead

There is a great deal of administrative work associated with being a SENCo, and a

seemingly endless number of forms to fill in. Some of these forms will require your expertise and input, but many will simply be about gathering information or data, which isn't the best use of your time.

Instead, ask if there's someone else in the school who could shoulder some of this administrative burden for you. It could be someone in the office team, or an assistant appointed specifically to carry out the role. If you do not already have such support, it's worth raising the issue with your line manager or headteacher. The SEND Code of Practice is clear that SENCoS should receive "Sufficient administrative support to fulfil their responsibilities".

As a SENCo I was always incredibly busy, yet there were still certain times of the year that were worse than others. The second half of the summer term, for example, is always a real pinch point, what with all the work that's needed around planning transitions. Planning ahead is therefore vital.

At the start of the year, try mapping out all the different tasks you know you will have to do across the three terms. Look for any opportunities to reschedule certain jobs in order to spread your workload out more evenly. Be sure

"It's simply not possible to do the job of a SENCo without having dedicated time to do so"



to share any important SEND-related deadlines with the rest of the staff, so that they know well in advance what you will need from them and when.

If there are going to be clear peaks in terms of your workload, consider asking your line manager or headteacher if you can have some additional release time. If you can show why you'll need it and can give them plenty of notice, you'll be far more likely to get a positive response.

The bottom line

Whilst I hope some of the above advice will prove useful, I do want to stress one very important point – that it's simply not possible to do the job of a SENCo without having dedicated time to do so.

Again, the Code of Practice is very clear on this. You should expect to have time away from your teaching role, if you have one, to fulfil your responsibilities as a SENCo. You can have the best time management skills

in the world, but without specific time set aside for you to do the job, you will not be able to do it – and nor should you be expected to. Due to the different size and context of each school, there

is no agreed set amount of time that the job should involve. But if you feel you have insufficient time to properly complete your duties, you should have a conversation with someone at your school.

Meetings, meetings, meetings

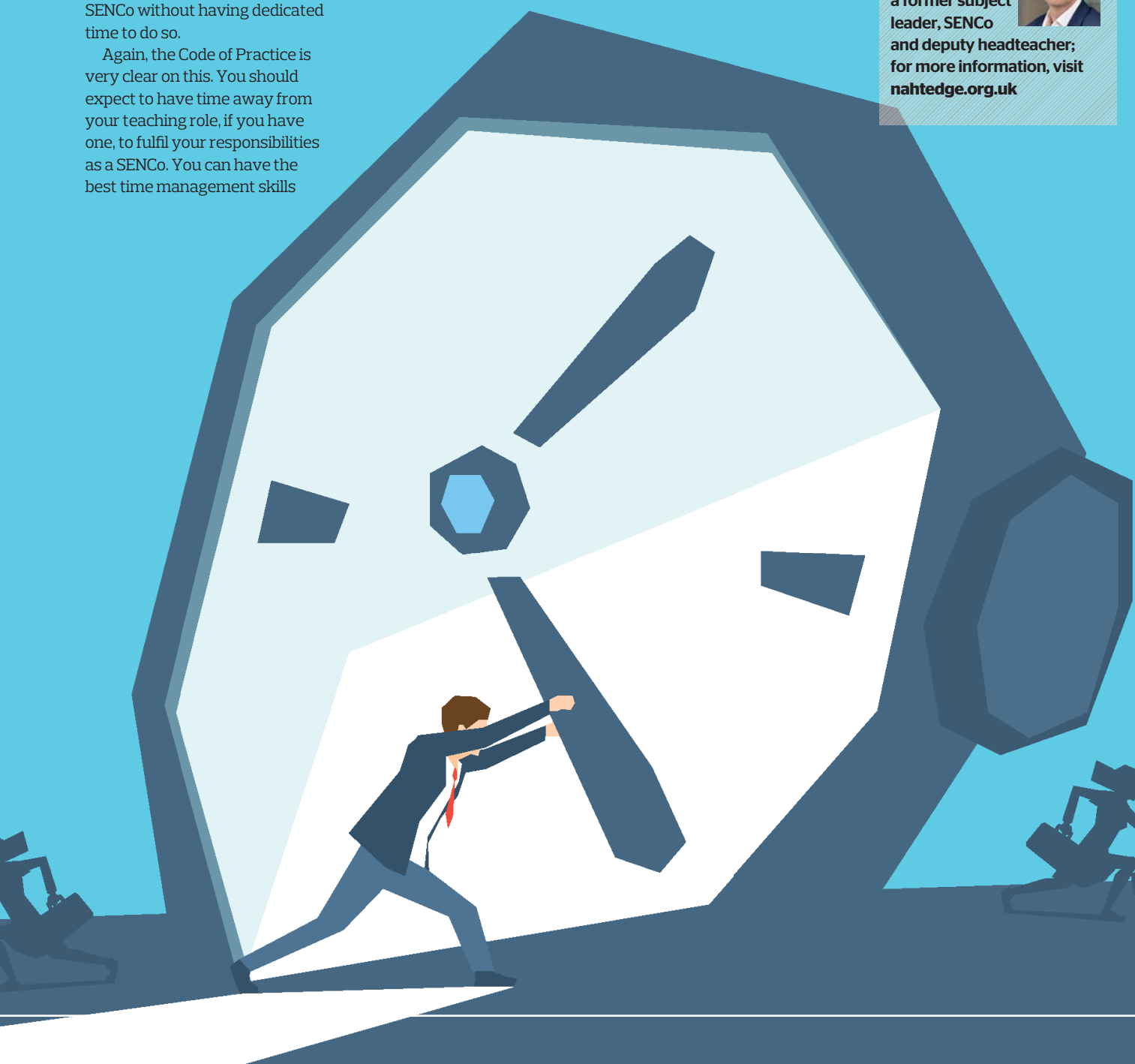
IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT'S CERTAINLY TRUE FOR SENCOS, IT'S THAT THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF MEETINGS FOR YOU TO ATTEND.

Whilst it will indeed be crucial for you to attend some of these meetings, such as an important annual review, there may be some where it might be better to send someone else on your behalf. Could a senior TA perhaps attend that LA update meeting and report back to you? Not only will that help you, it will be great for their professional development. Again, it's about prioritising and asking yourself which meetings it's critical for you to personally be at.



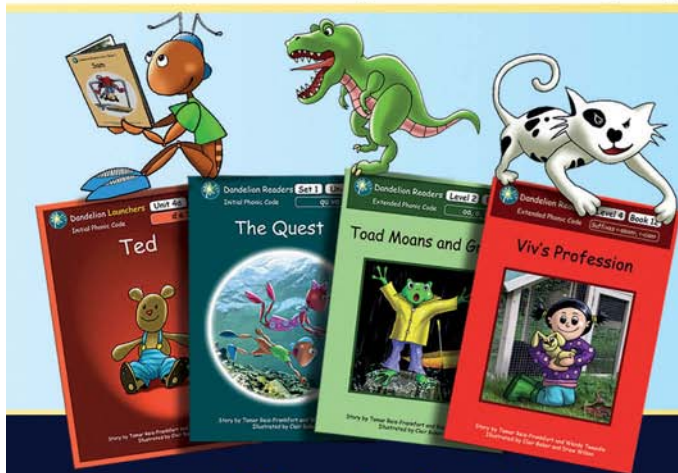
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Bowen is the director of NAHT Edge and a former subject leader, SENCo and deputy headteacher; for more information, visit nahtedge.org.uk



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“The needs of the child are now always at the centre”

Dr Rona Tutt OBE examines how the government's recent SEND reforms have tasked SENCOs with bringing about a major cultural shift within schools...

Since the role of SEN Co-ordinator was established by the first SEN Code of Practice in 1994, it has become a key post in all types of schools, aside from special schools (where SENCOs are optional, since all pupils will have SEND). Few realise that the SENCO is one of only two roles a school must have, the other being the headteacher – and of those, only the SENCO has to be a qualified teacher.

Despite the 2001 SEN Code of Practice describing the SENCO's role as being a strategic one, it hasn't been until the more recent SEND Reforms and 2015 SEND Code of Practice that this side of the role has been given a fresh impetus.

Significant changes

From the start, the government made it clear that said reforms were about more than simply changing structures. Yes, we saw a move from Statements to Education, Health and Care Plans, a new requirement for local authorities to produce a Local Offer and a new responsibility for schools to produce a SEN Information Report. The move from School Action and School Action Plus to SEN support, and the expansion of 'SEND' support to cover individuals from birth to 25 years of age, were further significant changes, but behind them all lies an attempt to change a culture – from one where professionals make the decisions, to one where the wishes, views and aspirations of young people and their families contribute to the decision-making process. This approach applies whether a pupil is on



SEN support, is having an assessment of their needs, or already has an EHC plan.

The process of getting these new structures in place, including transferring those with Statements to EHCPs, is due to be completed by the end of March 2018, but the government has recognised that cultural shifts can take rather longer. Within school settings SENCOs have a key role to play in bringing about this cultural change, whereby teachers will not only see themselves as being responsible for the progress of all the pupils they teach, but also take on board the wishes and ideas of pupils and their families.

Some pupils with SEND will need encouragement to express their ideas, and may need to do so in different ways. In either case, it is important

to involve them in discussions about what helps them to learn and how they prefer to

receive any support they are entitled to. Part of the SENCO's newer strategic role involves ensuring that other school staff recognise that pupils with SEND need to feel that their views matter, that their voices will be heard and that their ideas can make a difference.

Unexpected benefits

It is equally important that parents and carers are involved in any decisions regarding how their child's progress will be assessed, monitored and supported. As pupils become older and families have less contact with the school this may become more difficult to achieve, but the same principle of engagement applies. This may mean, for instance, that parents are not informed after

a school has decided what to do, but rather that every effort is made to involve them in any decisions that affect them and their child.

In the same way that asking a pupil what helps them to learn can throw up some unexpected responses, listening to parents and being open to their ideas can also yield unexpected benefits. After all, it is parents and carers who are the experts when it comes to knowing their child. Of course, there will be some parents who do not have the time or ability to be as fully involved as they or the school would like, but SENCOs should always encourage staff to see what more can be done.

As well as helping to embed various structural changes, the SEND reforms of recent years have given SENCOs a key role in changing attitudes towards pupils with SEND and their families, so that the needs of the child are now always at the centre of decision making. Depending on how the school has operated in the past, this may or may not be easy – yet working together in this way is one of the most effective ways there is of ensuring that pupils who may struggle to learn have a positive experience of school.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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





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Is 'no excuses' inclusion possible?

Can a school that maintains certain expectations, no matter what, still call itself inclusive? **Loic Menzies** tries to unpack the contradictions...

At a recent Institute of Ideas debate event I argued in favour of a 'No excuses' approach to behaviour and expectations in schools, and I've been returning to the question ever since. How can 'No excuses' and inclusion be reconciled?

'No excuses' means maintaining expectations, regardless of the reasons as to why a pupil might not have met them. Events at home, for example, are not considered excuses for not completing homework. The value of this approach is that it maintains high standards for all and pushes every pupil to achieve. Tailoring expectations to needs can open up a race to the bottom, and create a self-fulfilling prophecy of low achievement and difficult behaviour.

In contrast, schools which have pursued a culture of 'No excuses' have shown that pupils can achieve against the odds, bucking national trends and challenging mine and others' previous beliefs about what is possible. I've often found it is the most vulnerable pupils who benefit the most from this. They may lack order elsewhere in their lives, but their defensiveness and insecurity can fall away in 'no excuses' schools, leaving them more confident and relaxed.

The limits of the approach

But how far can this approach go? Debra Kidd, when discussing Michaela Community School, has argued, "Talk to anyone who has ADHD and they'll tell you the difficulty they have in



maintaining attention. It is a battle. We know from research that these children can find it easier to focus if they can stand or fidget with something." (see tinyurl.com/dlk-no-excuses)

What happens in 'No excuses' schools where this is not allowed? Can they really be described as 'inclusive'?

Part of the solution lies in differentiating between 'excuses' and 'reasons'. Compare two similar, but slightly different, formulations of a 'no excuses' approach – one from SENCO Katie Ashford, the other from SEND specialist Nancy Gedge.

Ashford, quoted in *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers – The Michaela Way*, states that, "We have the same expectations for every child, regardless of labels. If Jimmy doesn't do his homework, it is not a result of his ADHD, but a failure to make the right choice... To say that the problem is beyond their control is to

remove any ability they might have to change it."

Gedge, meanwhile, writing in *Inclusion for Primary School Teachers*, says that, "As well as opening doors to specialised support, the labels we apply to children can cause us to unwittingly limit our expectations. Can a child with ADHD be expected to behave themselves and follow the same rules as the rest of the class? Of course they can. You may have to adapt the rules or routines of the class in order to conform, but a diagnosis shouldn't become an excuse."

A detective hunt

For Ashford, enforcing the expectation seems to be the end of the conversation. For Gedge, diagnosis is a clue in a detective hunt. It points the way to a response which will ensure the pupil can overcome their difficulty and succeed. Thus, if a pupil does not complete a task because their dyslexia makes

a text difficult to read – or they do not behave as expected because of their ADHD – this does not mean they should no longer have to do the task or behave as expected. Instead, skilled professionals seek out the reasons and respond accordingly, providing specialist support where necessary.

Of course, this still leaves the question of what should happen where, regardless of support, a pupil simply cannot do something. In such cases, 'No excuses' risks leaving pupils with no option but to move to a school where expectations better match their abilities – the very opposite of inclusion. On the other hand, Gedge's reference to 'adapting the rules' could precipitate the slippery slope towards low expectations highlighted earlier.

SENCOs have a critical role to play in navigating such dilemmas. Their role involves helping teachers along the detective trail; identifying reasons, finding the right response and working with teachers to navigate the small minority of extreme cases where expectations need to be adapted. Only then can the right balance between 'No excuses' and inclusion be struck.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Loic Menzies is director of the education and youth 'think and action-tank' LKMco; for more information visit www.lkmco.org or follow @LKMco





Lessons from

THE UNDERGROUND

We can learn a lot about how to include pupils with SEND by taking a ride on the Tube, suggests Adele Devine...

You're about to get on a jam-packed underground train at rush hour. It's a hot, sweaty midsummer morning and you really need to be on that train.

Imagine the people squashed too close together, the smells, the ground wobbling, those feelings of vulnerability you might experience as the doors slide shut. Hopefully you'll know where you're going, how long the journey will last and have a way of counting down the stops. You might have a supportive friend to talk to, or a mobile phone to distract you.

To our SEND students, a normal school day can be as overwhelming and sometimes distressing as an underground train during rush hour. They may experience sensory issues that amplify sounds or find touch intolerable. The school setting itself might cause them to panic, to the point where their fight or flight instincts ignite.

So let's think about the measures that Transport for London has put in place to improve journeys for its passengers, and see whether any of those strategies can be applied in our schools...

PROVIDE DIRECTIONS

The London Underground has a hugely diverse customer base. As a passenger, you'll hear multiple languages and share carriage space with people of various learning abilities, differing physical abilities, ages and cultures.

Over the years, operators have devised clever ways of using colour coding and signage to simplify the information that passengers need to know and help people to navigate the system independently. With a similarly diverse population in our schools, we too must create visual signposts so that all students can find their way.

LESSON 2

PRIORITISE SAFETY

TfL oversees many systems that are designed to keep commuters safe. These include physical ticket barriers, regular voice announcements, having staff wear easily recognisable uniforms and having stations patrolled by transport police. Knowing that these systems are in place helps commuters feel more secure, and makes it more likely they will remain calm and continue to be regular public transport users.

Similarly, we have to ensure that our pupils know about the systems we have in place to ensure their safety at all times.

LESSON 1



LESSON 3

'ZONING OUT'

It's common to see commuters engrossed in their book, tablet or smartphone. These distractions help make time seem to pass quicker, while enabling them to zone out from the boredom or anxiety their journey might otherwise involve. Imagine if a conductor came along and confiscated every passenger's mobile device without warning - there would be uproar!

We must be respectful and give reasons when enforcing our rules regarding technology use - rules that should be fair and clear to all. You might find that Carol Gray's 'Social Stories' approach (see carolgraysocialstories.com) is helpful here.

LESSON 4

NOISE REDUCTION

The speaker systems on trains aren't used for playing music at loud volumes. You can typically put some distance between yourself and noisy fellow passengers, or simply opt to travel at quieter times. Closed doors between the carriages help to create smaller and quieter spaces. Be aware that tolerance to sounds, touch and smells are individual. Provide your pupils with visual volume controls, or potentially headphones. Reduce talk and listen.

LESSON 5

SEATING OR STANDING?

Even when there are seats free, some commuters will prefer to stand - perhaps because they want to be near their luggage, be better prepared to make a quick exit, or simply because they're more comfortable standing. They are allowed to choose, and this choice eases their journey. Think of this when drawing up your seating plans. Involve your students - let them know that they too have a voice and a choice.

LESSON 6

TIMETABLES

Beyond the aforementioned maps and signage, Tube passengers receive constant visual reminders of where they are, and have several ways of navigating between stops. On the train, this information is broken down further to clearly show the stops of the line they're travelling on overhead, where everyone can see it. We can apply this same idea in school by displaying class timetables on walls, and giving out portable individualised timetables. Use colour coded visuals so that pupils can find the information that's most relevant to them more quickly.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adele Devine is a teacher at Portesbery School and the director of SEN Assist - see senassist.com for more details



LESSON 7

BE PREDICTABLE

The more often passengers complete the same journey, the easier that journey will become and the fewer visual supports they'll need. But what if they were to glance out the window and see an unfamiliar station name? This is why any re-routing is clearly announced, so that passengers don't get anxious.

We can avoid similar feelings of panic arising in our students by being predictable and providing clear warnings if our original plan is going to veer off track.

LESSON 9

EYE CONTACT

Think back to those commuters engrossed in their technology and avoiding looking at each other. Now imagine what it would be like to go on the Tube and maintain direct eye contact with the person seated opposite you for the entire journey.

Be respectful of the fact that some students will find eye contact distracting or invasive. Not looking doesn't always mean 'not listening'.

LESSON 10

THE DESTINATION

Why do commuters get on the train? What makes them stay? The destination is everything. It might not be somewhere they want to get to, but it's somewhere they *need* to get to. The train has a purpose - that of getting passengers from A to B.

In the same way, our lessons must have a clear purpose for our students. They must have a reason for listening and learning; there must be a motivator, or some sort of reward.

LESSON 8

'MIND THE GAP'

We hear this phrase announced so often we might wonder why they still bother - but what do we do when we hear it? We enjoy the familiar. We pause, and each time, no matter how rushed we are, we watch our footing and look out for others.

Consistent verbal reminders work to slow us down, make us less anxious and keep us safe. Repeated phrases such as 'Walk in corridors' and 'Write homework down' will stay in a pupil's head like a mantra, just like 'Mind the gap' messages.

10 LEARNING ANXIETIES AND HOW TO TACKLE THEM

I'M NOT SAFE!

Be consistent, firm and fair

IT'S TOO LOUD!

Provide a visual volume control and five-point scale

I'M LOST!

Provide visual maps and signposts

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

Provide consistent verbal and visual reminders

IT'S DIFFERENT!

Precede changes with warnings and reassurances

NO ONE CARES ABOUT ME

Listen, smile and reassure

I DON'T LIKE THIS!

Identify individual motivators and incorporate them

THIS HAS NO POINT

Ensure there's a purpose or reward for pupils to work towards

“A lot of mind-wandering goes on”

Impressionist **Rory Bremner** reflects on being diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, and how the condition's proved to be both friend and foe...

I didn't have a formal diagnosis of ADHD until recently. It came to light after a relative of ours was diagnosed and I found myself recognising many of the symptoms. The impulsivity, inattention and organisational issues – those all applied to me.

As I looked into it more, I became involved with the ADHD Foundation [Bremner is a patron for the charity] and other organisations and saw I could play a role in highlighting what we can do to help the half a million children living with the condition. While filming a *Horizon* documentary on ADHD for the BBC, it was decided that I should visit the Maudsley Hospital in London to establish what my own experience was. I completed a questionnaire, did an interview and on the basis of that was formally diagnosed with the condition.

ADHD doesn't impair my life to an intolerable degree, but I'm very aware of it. In terms of my time management, organisation and attention, a lot of mind-wandering and procrastination goes on. I get a great many requests and don't always deal with them effectively. I also take on too much, get easily distracted and fail to complete various tasks. I'm constantly making lists.

I attend weekly sessions with a specialist ADHD counsellor, which I find very helpful in terms of controlling

any anxiety. I generally manage pretty well, and am also in a job in which it can actually be an asset. I sometimes think of ADHD as being my worst enemy and my best friend – it's not fun having this noticeable impairment, but it allows me to make leaps of logic and think outside of the box. Among comedians, particularly when improvising, it's useful have a brain that's 'freer' and comparatively uninhibited.

Interestingly it's when I'm on stage that it least affects me. When I'm performing, amid the pressure and adrenaline, I'm able to find a 'zone'. It's during daily life and everything else off-stage – preparing, reading, researching and seeing to other tasks requiring organisation – that it affects me the most.

'Irrepressible showmanship'

When observed at a neuroscientific level, there are clear differences in the brains of people who have ADHD. The frontal cortex and basal ganglia, in particular – two areas of the brain relating to organisation and networks – are significantly underdeveloped in children with the condition.

Many children go undiagnosed, causing lots of families to live in this world of frustration and despair. I think there's a worrying tendency among those children towards

anxiety and low self-esteem. These are talented, energetic children with creative minds who are experiencing exclusion and emotional stress, due to a diagnosable impairment that we can do something about.

Understanding and awareness of ADHD was obviously very slight when I was at school. My prep school reports referred to my 'irrepressible showmanship' – I was always showing off, but in many respects I was lucky. My name begins with 'B', so I was sat at the front in a relatively small class; had I been in a larger class at the back, the potential for distraction would have been far greater.

I was very fortunate at public school to be put in a gifted year group and receive lessons from an inspiring teacher who transformed my life. I was engaged by his teaching and the people around me, so I wanted to do well. That combination of a good teacher and challenging, demanding and exciting schooling effectively meant that I was hardly impaired.

Children with ADHD often have a strong visual memory, so mnemonics can be really helpful for their schoolwork – using sentences such as 'Mummy Buys Really Awesome Food' to remember the vertebrates 'Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Fish', for example. Use simple visual learning strategies – if a child constantly forgets their gumshield, put a label on their

bag with a picture of a gumshield and a pair of shoes and without having to think, they'll see it and remember. There's a website called 'Additude' (additudemag.com), that has lots of useful advice and guidance.

Physical activity is also important. Allow children who find it difficult to concentrate to engage in some form of physical expression – though expecting everyone to sit still in a classroom for 45 minutes almost seems like a counter-intuitive way of learning. We didn't learn like that when we were living in caves, though I'm sure life was more exciting back then. In fact, you would have needed your ADHD people, since as one expert once told me, they're the ones who'd eat the poisoned fruit, take the risks and go that little bit further – they'd be the pathfinders.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rory Bremner is one of the UK's most well-known and successful impressionists, with a TV and radio career spanning 30 years.

The ADHD Foundation provides information and support for parents and teachers and delivers training for SENCOs, teaching assistants and school nurses across the country; for more information, visit adhd.foundation.org.uk



IN AN IDEAL WORLD...

People often talk about what's wrong with the current system of SEND provision – so what would the perfect system actually look like? **Sue Gerrard** assembles her wishlist

The scene – a workshop about educating children with autism. The lovely lady leading it had just given us a pep talk on how demoralising it could be to simply complain about the existing SEN support system.

"Let's share some positive examples of good practice," she exhorted, pen poised over the flipchart. You could have heard a pin drop. A few brave souls eventually came to her rescue, but her 'good practice list' ended up being a short one.

Flipping bad practice

What the workshop leader hadn't seemed to realise is that 'What doesn't work' is a much richer seam to mine for ideas

than 'What does work' – simply because there are usually more ways of getting something wrong than there are of getting it right. What you can do, however, is flip examples of bad practice round and figure out what should have happened instead.

The SEN system has come in for a lot of criticism. Ever since the introduction of compulsory education in England – and irrespective of whether children with SEN were being quietly shuffled off into special schools or ushered into mainstream settings at any given time – there have been problems.

We know what those problems have been. Some children with SEN have been deemed 'ineducable' or become institutionalised. Some have disrupted the education of other children, or failed to achieve their full potential.

So what would a SEN system look like in an ideal world?

'SEN or not SEN?'

Let's start with the children, who will often have a lot in common with each other but can also be very different. At one end of the spectrum are those who are pictures of rude health – potential Olympic athletes with IQs of 150; at the other, those who have life-limiting medical conditions, can do nothing for themselves and appear to have little awareness of what's going on around them. The vast majority, of course, will be somewhere in between.

The focus of debate is often over whether or not a particular 'in between' child has a special educational need or not, but this debate shouldn't be necessary. Each child is legally entitled to an education suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any educational needs they have – and between them, that range of needs can be very wide indeed. The 'SEN or not SEN?' debate only happens because resources are difficult to access.

The 1978 Warnock Report (tinyurl.com/warnock-1978), which first defined what we now understand as 'special educational needs', estimated that up to 20% of children would at some point in their school career require special educational help. The current legal definition of 'a child with SEN' is that they will have a difficulty that calls for educational provision not generally available in local schools – typically some form of additional support to help manage or mitigate the impact of a neurological, physical or behavioural factor on their ability to learn.

If the right support is put in place, those learning difficulties won't necessarily 'go away' – but as such provision becomes more widespread, the number of children with special educational 'needs' will go down. Only a small percentage of children attend special schools, however. 98% of children with SEN are in mainstream settings – which brings us to the teachers.

Teachers and training

Teachers in mainstream schools need to teach each and every child in their class. The Warnock Report called on all teachers to receive training in SEN, and the Education & Skills Select Committee was still calling for it in 2006 – yet successive governments appear to have struggled with making SEN training a statutory requirement for teachers.

Governments like 'one-size-fits-all' systems, because they appear on the surface to be easier and cheaper to run than systems that accommodate individual differences. But children don't come in one size.

What governments have overlooked is that the best way we've found of accommodating individual differences is to give professionals the skills they need to do their jobs and then let them get on with it. Teachers can meet the needs of a standardised education system, or the needs of each child in their class; there aren't enough hours in the day to do both. That said, it's unreasonable to expect mainstream teachers to grasp the finer points of all developmental disorders, and they don't have to. Teachers need to know about children's

educational needs.

Problems with sensory processing, attention, cognition, co-ordination and mobility crop up repeatedly across a range of conditions. Children might have different problems relating to these core functions, but once you've got your head around what those core functions are, it's a lot easier to figure out what a child's educational needs will be and what provision they require.

It's necessary for all schools to have a workable whole-school behaviour strategy and ensure that children can discriminate between speech sounds, and clear, age-appropriate teaching, but some children need more than that. In an ideal world, teachers would be trained to teach all the children they're expected to teach.

Giving with one hand, taking away with the other

When my own son entered Y1, his school requested a multi-agency assessment because their interventions just weren't making any difference. The assessment took 18 months – a ridiculous waiting time for a school, never mind a 5 year-old.

In the end, fed up with having to wait, his school enlisted the services of a local speech and language consultancy to train their staff in basic SLT techniques. In an ideal world, we would see more schools able

to access this type of specialist support as and when they needed it.

In 2006, The Education & Skills Select Committee pointed out that if local authorities are responsible for assessing the level of children's SEN and for funding the additional educational provision they require, it's a recipe for trouble. The Committee recommended back then that this link between assessment and funding be broken, but it hasn't been.

In an ideal world, such assessments would be carried out by independent professionals, and LAs would simply fund the provision.

In an ideal world, there would not be a binary division of children between 'those who have SEN' and 'those who don't'. Instead, all children would be seen as being somewhere on a broad spectrum encompassing a wide range of educational needs. It may be that new types of specialist schools, or units within existing schools, would then start to appear. Initial teacher training would begin to incorporate much more in the way of SEN instruction, and in-service SEN training would be made more readily accessible.

Schools would receive prompt responses and support from specialist services. Children thought to need



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Gerrard is an independent researcher affiliated to the Knowledge Modelling Group at Keele University; she tweets as @suzyg001



additional provision would be assessed by independent specialists, with LAs providing the funding. Central government might still get to decide on the overall structure of the broader education system – but otherwise, it would let trained education professionals simply get on with their jobs.

Every child would be able to receive an education that's suitable for them, parents would be reassured and teachers could get on with actually teaching. Communities would benefit too, since fewer resources would be needed for patching up a system that doesn't work – and ultimately, we would all see more people being happier and better educated.

“ Give professionals the skills they need to do their jobs and then let them get on with it.

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ANYTHING TO DECLARE?

Ensuring that parents and school staff are on the same page regarding a child's needs would be much easier with Pupil Passports, says **Victoria Hill**...

During that brief period when our children are babies and toddlers, it's our job to act as their voice. No one else can make out their babble, and since you're the one communicating with them for most of the day, every day, it's inevitable that the person best placed to interpret their verbal and visual signals will be you.

For some parents, however, this phase can last much longer. And even when a child is able to communicate with others, it can still be difficult for them to explain something important about themselves that they might not be fully aware of.

Less obvious' needs

I was blessed with three children, all of whom attend a mainstream primary school. One has a Statement of SEN, and is attended to by a fabulous team of dedicated learning support assistants who write daily updates in our communication book and do lots to encourage his self-help skills. He and I attend bi-termly 'One Page Profile' meetings, in which we come up with an individual education plan in consultation with the adults who work with him.

I have a second son who is also on the spectrum, as well as being dyslexic and affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder, but is not statemented. His needs may be 'less obvious', but in many ways I find him to be more affected by his autism



than his brother, since he is more aware of feeling different compared with his peers.

It is because of his needs, and those of other children like him, that I would like to see a Pupil Passport scheme put into place by all schools.

Small adjustments, big differences

A Pupil Passport is a short document that summarises for educators any additional needs or particular behaviours a child may have, ideally on one page.

The most effective Pupil Passports will be those completed by parents and carers with input from the child, and revised at least yearly to ensure everything's up to date. The Passport is then given to the teacher, who can discuss its contents with parents and carers to ensure that everything's clear and understood. From there, the Pupil Passport can be shared with supply teachers, teaching assistants, dinner ladies, subject teachers and any other

members of staff the child might encounter throughout their day.

Often the smallest adjustments that can make the biggest difference. For example, one of the children was recently taught by a different teacher, who was great, but unaware that my son has an eating phobia. If it's raining at lunch, his usual teacher will allow him to sit in the classroom away from everyone else; on this particular day, he came home very hungry having not eaten anything at all, because it was wet and he was expected to eat in the main hall. If he'd had a Pupil Passport, that detail would have been passed on.

Passing on the message

Pupil Passports can also travel with children to their next school. My eldest is soon moving up to secondary, and I'm currently trying to find out how to pass on messages that staff at his new school likely won't hear from his primary teachers – 'Don't sit

him under fluorescent lights or near windows, as he has light filtration issues,' for example. I can explain these things in an email, which I'm sure will reach who it's supposed to – but wouldn't it be great if there was a format for reporting additional needs that was instantly recognised across all school settings?

Every child feels apprehensive ahead of a new school year. Some might have a new set of classmates they don't know, others a different teacher – but some children will also be conscious of a different chair, the background ticking of a different clock, differently coloured walls, even the way sunlight illuminates different areas of the classroom.

Every parent wants to feel that they're doing the best for their child, rather than sitting by feeling helpless. With some parents and carers wary of approaching teachers too often about the concerns they have for their child, a Pupil Passport would give them a sense of control and a starting point for structured conversations between them and the school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victoria Hill is a parent and school governor



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SENCoS are losing the blame game

Talit Khan questions whether we're placing responsibility for the progress of SEND pupils on the right shoulders...

When I come across the terms 'accountability' and 'responsibility' regarding SEND pupils, I often wonder if, as teachers and senior leaders, we properly understand what they mean.

There is an overwhelming amount of information, in the SEN Code of Practice and elsewhere, regarding mainstream schools and the role they have to play in identifying and supporting pupils with SEND, much of which is then conveyed through schools' SEND and inclusion policies. Yet there seems to me to be an avoidance of accountability for the progress and attainment of SEND pupils in schools, regardless of whether or not they have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Why? Is it simply because we're not clear as to who is ultimately responsible for SEND pupils in our classrooms? Or is it just easier to make staff who are already working closely with these pupils, such as TAs, accountable for their progression, thus enabling us to focus on other pupils who 'really need our support' – i.e. those whose results will make a difference to our school data...?

Considerable confusion

With many SENCoS now part of their schools' senior leadership team, there seems to be a greater focus on the achievements of pupils with SEND and better understanding of how to identify SEND. There



are, however, exceptions, with a number of SENCoS still not recognised as senior leaders. A failure to grasp the importance of bringing these individuals on board to address what the SEN Code of Practice clearly outlines will give rise to a school setting that doesn't fully appreciate or value its SEND pupils.

The upshot of this is that the SENCo is held accountable and responsible for the progression of every pupil with SEND who attends the school, which can in turn lead to further problems and considerable confusion.

The SENCo will be asked to report on the support systems in place for SEND pupils, and provide information on said pupils' progression. To do this, the SENCo will typically communicate with teachers to address planning and provision concerns regarding their SEND pupils – yet it will often be a TA who is actually supporting the SEND pupils in question. If so, then in some cases accountability for the

pupils' attainment will rest with them, since they're the ones administering the teaching and running the intervention sessions. Yet as practitioners, we know that it's officially the teacher – be they a class or subject teacher – who is responsible for the teaching and learning outcomes of their pupils, including those with SEND.

'Quality first' teaching

How is it that so many schools are willing to hold TAs responsible for the learning outcomes of SEND pupils by teachers, SENCoS and senior leaders? Surely we need to be aware of specifically who should be held accountable for what in terms of SEND pupils' progression and attainment?

On many occasions I have witnessed TAs being told that they need to receive specific SEND training, or asked to attend a course such as the TEACCH programme in order to

enhance the outcomes of the pupils they support.

There's an obvious irony here. We might understand the TA's role as being there to 'support' SEND pupils, but we hold them responsible if a pupil has not made sufficient progress in their learning outcomes. Is it not the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that a pupil with SEND meets the success criteria previously established in their planning and provision mapping? The teacher must take ownership of the situation in relation to their SEND pupils, and see to it that he or she can access the best teaching practices, regardless of whatever individual help they might have received from support staff in achieving their set goals and targets.

It's therefore vital that SENCoS and senior leaders alike take time to address what the SEN Code of Practice states in terms of their responsibility towards pupils with SEND – and particularly how they should approach the task of ensuring that 'quality first' teaching in schools is upheld. Teachers, no matter what their particular perception of the job may be, are the ones who are ultimately accountable and responsible for all SEND learners.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



Talit Khan is an independent SEND consultant; for more information, visit advantagesend.com

"Let's speak up for oracy"

Will Millard explores why oracy has taken a backseat in recent years – and why we owe it to pupils to make it a priority...

Oracy is fundamental to the learning process and young people's development. We should aspire to ensure that all children leave school able to communicate appropriately, with clarity and confidence. Yet in a recent report that Loic Menzies and I co-authored for the organisation Voice 21, titled 'Oracy – The State of Speaking in Our Schools' (see tinyurl.com/voice21-oracy), we found that oracy can often take a backseat.

We reviewed a wide range of existing research on oracy, surveyed over 900 teachers and conducted 36 interviews and focus groups with a range of teachers, pupils and academics. We found that while most teachers believe oracy is broadly comparable in importance to literacy and numeracy, it tends not to be prioritised in the same way – which could put learners with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) at a disadvantage.

What is oracy and why is it important?

Oracy involves two main processes – learning to talk well, and *learning well through talk*.

By learning to talk well, young people develop the confidence and ability to express themselves appropriately and clearly, but also to listen effectively. Learning well through talk captures the processes by which young people, with support and guidance from their teachers, deepen their knowledge and understanding of a given topic or issue through verbal interactions.

Oracy can have more generic features, such as the way in which teachers set ground rules regarding talk in their lessons, and more subject-specific features – how teachers approach building their pupils' subject-specific vocabulary, for example, or use questions to probe and extend understanding.

Our research pointed to a number of ways in which high quality talk underpins all pupils' development as communicators – socially, emotionally and cognitively. It also highlighted how placing a focus on oracy in mainstream primary schools could be of particular benefit to pupils with SLCN, who can arrive at primary school without the language they need to

communicate, or even think and reason systematically.

Somewhat worryingly, recent research published by The Communication Trust suggests that without the right support, these pupils are in danger of falling further behind as they grow older. They will also be at higher risk of exclusion from school; well over half of all young people in the youth justice system have SLCN, and as many as 50% of pupils in disadvantaged areas can start school with underdeveloped language.

So what's the problem?

The issue is that oracy often takes a backseat in schools. For example, our report found that just one in four (27%) of the schools our respondents worked at took pupils' verbal contributions into account during lesson observations, while only one in five communicated with parents about their children's progress in oracy.

Why is this? The teachers we spoke to reported the following issues:

> Time constraints preventing

better oracy provision

> Worries among teachers that shy and underconfident pupils might struggle with verbal activities.

> A frequent tendency among teachers to prioritise other tasks – particularly writing – due to curriculum pressures

> A lack of available training; 57% of respondents told us they had not received any oracy training within the last three years, while 53% said they would not know where to find further information if they wanted to

> A reluctance among school leaders to actively endorse oracy initiatives

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ORACY?

> Voice 21's website has a wide selection of information and resources about oracy, including lesson plans and assembly ideas – visit voice21.org

> 'Speaking Frankly' is a collection of essays on oracy published by the English Speaking Union

that can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/esu-frankly

> The Communication Trust website hosts a variety of resources for supporting young people with SLCN – see thecommunicationtrust.org.uk



Inclusive oracy strategies

Here, I want to detail two strategies we saw that seemed particularly valuable in supporting pupils with SLCN.

At Green Lane Primary School in Bradford a high number of pupils arrive with SLCN, often because of limited development in a language other than English (meaning these pupils additionally have EAL). The school's leadership team consequently sees spoken communication and social interaction as fundamentally important, with one teacher joking that anything else is "Icing on the cake".

Every teacher in the school uses Makaton sign language in their day-to-day interactions with the children (see makaton.org), because they believe that signing helps to reinforce new and existing language, while providing a bedrock for communicating within and across all areas of the curriculum.

The benefit of this approach is not the learning to sign *per se*, but rather that it helps children communicate with their teachers and peers with greater confidence, and to explore and deepen their understanding of key ideas and concepts during lessons. This appears to be an

effective strategy because it is applied universally; there is an expectation that all teachers and pupils will use it, not just those in need of additional support (although the school's teachers can and will provide additional support if necessary).

Newer staff at the school mentioned that learning to sign could be an intimidating prospect, but that the weekly training sessions held by the school meant they could pick it up quickly.

Dialogue and reflection

Eastwood Primary School in Keighley, West Yorkshire, similarly works with a number of children who present SLCN upon entry.

One way in which the school's teachers support these pupils is by defining and revisiting common 'ground rules' for talking and listening – for instance:

- > Not interrupting classmates while they are speaking
- > Making eye contact when speaking or listening to someone

By bringing oracy to the fore, the pupils become more aware of how they speak to one another. As they move

through the school, they therefore become increasingly able to support one another and collaborate in discussing ideas or solving problems. This helps to ensure that all pupil contributions – including from pupils with SLCN or other additional learning needs – are invited and supported by teachers and other pupils.

Teachers at Eastwood sometimes film parts of their own lessons and watch the footage back with their classes. After reflecting upon their verbal interactions, the pupils sometimes ask to revise their class ground rules. One teacher told us that her class wanted to place greater emphasis on the importance of inviting and supporting contributions from the quieter members of their groups.

Neither of the strategies

described above are specifically intended to target learners with SLCN, but this is precisely their strength. These types of approaches can help all pupils move forwards together as they gain confidence and ability as verbal communicators, allowing space for teachers to use more individually-focused interventions as and when necessary.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Will Millard is a former English teacher and currently an associate at the policy research and campaigning organisation LKMco





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How do I find the guidance?

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/schoolscommissioningguidance/



The Communication Trust
Every child understood

7 things to know about selective mutism

Lindsay Whittington presents an overview of a condition that can render children physically unable to speak, or even communicate...

Selective mutism is a severe anxiety disorder that prevents people, usually children, from speaking in certain social and/or public situations, such as within school. Yet they are able to speak easily and freely with family or friends in environments where they feel at ease. It is considered by researchers and clinicians as an extreme form of social phobia.

SM is much more than simple shyness or an unwillingness to speak; it's a disorder that affects the individual's day-to-day functioning and communications within society. A child or adult with selective mutism doesn't refuse or choose not to speak, they're literally unable to speak. The expectation to talk to certain people triggers a freeze response with feelings of panic, rather like a bad case of stage fright, making talking impossible.

1 The causes aren't clear

It's not always known what causes some children to develop SM, but it's understood to be connected with anxiety, a tendency often inherited from a family member. Stressful environments may also be a risk factor in its development and continuation. Some children become overwhelmed by loud noises and big crowds, struggle to process the sensory information associated with them and 'shut down', losing their ability to speak.



2 It's more common among shy girls and minority groups

Children with SM tend to be inherently shy and withdrawn. The condition is thought to affect around one in every 140 children under the age of 8, and evidence suggests it's more common in girls and children of ethnic minority, or those who have recently migrated from countries where the language and/or culture distinctly differ.

3 The symptoms emerge early on

Symptoms of SM are usually noticed in early childhood when the child begins to socialise beyond the family circle – i.e. at nursery or primary school. The main symptom is a distinction in a child's ability to interact with different people; when they're expected to speak to someone outside their comfort zone they become very still, with a frozen facial expression. Some children with

SM can manage a word or two, often whispered, or respond with gestures like nodding or shaking their head. The worst affected can't communicate at all.

4 Children with SM are prone to tantrums

Often seen by others as sulky, rude or withdrawn, children with SM may have temper tantrums when they get home from school as a way of releasing their pent-up tension.

5 It can cause learning outcomes to suffer

SM can significantly hinder a child's learning and development, since they can't ask for help or participate fully in classroom or playground activities. In severe cases, children might end up having accidents because they can't ask to use the toilet, or even avoid eating or drinking at

school so they don't have to ask to go to the loo.

6 It can present alongside other conditions

A proportion of children with SM have developmental delays in motor, communication and/or social development; some may also be diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

7 It affects social skills

Unsurprisingly, SM can affect a child's ability to make friends. They often find it difficult to look at people, turn their heads away or avoid eye contact. They might struggle to laugh or smile, and can exhibit stiff, awkward body language that seems unfriendly. Despite outward appearances, however, most children with SM actively want to make friends and aside from their communication difficulties, can sometimes possess good social skills.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lindsay Whittington is coordinator of the Selective Mutism



Information and Research Association - a charity that provides support, information and training for parents, carers and professionals. Find out more at smira.org.uk

In search of *the male SENCo*

Male SENCos tend to approach the job differently to their female counterparts, says **Dr Mark Pulsford** – and if we care about gender equality, we might want to start looking at why...

Exactly how many men work as SENCos in schools in the UK isn't known, since it's not a recorded statistic – but talk to almost anyone within the education sector and you'll be hard-pressed to find someone who can point you in the direction of a male SENCo. I know, because I've asked.

I did eventually manage to find four, though, who agreed to take part in an in-depth research study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on their experiences of being male and working as SENCos in English primary schools.

Motherly, selfless care

The role of SENCo has an historical legacy that links it with forms of motherly, selfless care. Evidence from National Award for SEN Coordination providers suggests that most people signing up for their courses are women in their 30s and 40s. Associated with the role is a host of assumptions about the skills and attributes needed to work with some of the most vulnerable and most in need pupils in our schools. Yet it was common for the men in my research to report being barred from accessing that particular type of identity as a SENCo, despite feeling a great affection for the pupils and professing a love for the sort of work they are involved in.

One of the participants, Graham, when talking about how parents reacted to him as the new SENCo put it like this: "The old SENCo, Mrs Jenkins was 'lovely'. And then along I come, this young lad, and hang on... 'You didn't go in and give my child a hug in the morning?', you know? 'Who are you to tell me anything – how do you know my child?'"

But as Simon, another man in my research pointed out, any physical contact with children can be seen as suspicious: "A woman in my position would probably give a cuddle, probably have a child sat on their lap and things like that, whereas I wouldn't – I don't feel I could do that. Even if that's what the child needed, it still probably wouldn't be any more than a hand on the shoulder."

A prominent theme in the accounts the men gave was that they found life as a SENCo to be more straightforward if they fitted with some stereotypical behaviours associated with men, such as being seen as efficient, procedurally focused and an authority on the subject of SEN. These men would often adopt a 'SEN expert' position, from which a 'managerial' type of SENCo emerged in their stories.

This identity would be characterised by the way they worked with the instruments of SEN, those tick-boxes of learning difficulty diagnoses and files containing

information and intervention plans becoming important props. The men's office spaces, where we spent hours during our interviews, were shrines to procedure and process, to paperwork and paperclips.

Another beacon of these men's SENCo identity was the suit, shirt and tie. This business-like attire was a symbol of their status and a marker of their authority when it came to special needs in their settings. In sum, a certain vision of SEN provision could be glimpsed here – one which in its starkest form looked far from pupil-centred.

Lasting impressions

The forging of these 'male SENCo identities' has potential consequences that all of us – men, women, headteachers, NQTs and SENCos alike – need to be mindful of.

It reinforces the notion for children that it is not a man's

role to care for them in ways such as hugging them and getting to know them well. It cements the gap between men and children, makes it seem normal for men to maintain their distance and can affirm and preserve the gender divide when it comes to 'caring roles'. There may appear to be a naturalness or common sense to this divide, yet it's a key factor in the continuing inequalities in pay and status between men and women.

If men face pressures *not* to demonstrate their care, and are therefore not seen to be *caring*, surely this undermines the impact of gender equality efforts aimed at supporting women into leadership positions? School is one of the first places where children see adults at work; any gendered role distinctions they see are likely to leave lasting impressions.





“A woman in my position would probably give a cuddle, probably have a child sat on their lap, whereas I wouldn't – I don't feel I could do that

SIMON | STUDY PARTICIPANT

Daily enactments of the SENCo role

The experiences of the male primary SENCos in my research suggested that caring in 'maternal' ways is often expected of SENCos. With this approach effectively out of bounds for them, however, they had to adopt other modes of being instead. This complex negotiation of gender identity and the role of the SENCo is worth considering in some depth, so that educators can find ways of smoothing out such deeply gendered distinctions regarding the SENCo's purpose.

Yet whilst it seems important to have more men working as SENCos in our schools, there are some ways of working towards this goal that I would caution against. One might be the perceived need to improve the status of the SENCo role, or to mount an inspirational recruitment campaign using a male SENCo 'role model'.

I'd suggest that these solutions would merely feed the existing narrative that men require (and deserve) kudos and prominence in order for a job to appeal to them, and might further erase the caring dimensions of the role in favour of promoting 'professional' competencies, while framing the work that women already do in these roles as inferior.

Instead, I think there is value in examining how those parts of the SENCo role that became prominent for the men in my research lend themselves to being gendered – the ways SEN data is collected and managed; the holding on to or dissemination of 'expert' knowledge; the clothing and office accessories that signify openness or enforce a sense of distance; and the nature of daily interactions with pupils as a result. These everyday enactments of what it means to be a SENCo will work to encourage or put off other teachers in school that otherwise *might* aspire to take the role in future.

Perhaps instead of asking why there are so few male SENCos, we should ask how the women and men currently working as SENCos can start actively countering the daily gendering of the role?

“I WAS THROWN ONTO THE ‘GLASS ESCALATOR’”

SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN DR PULSFORD'S STUDY:

Charlie, on facilitating discussion between colleagues regarding good practice and inclusion:

“That is care, isn't it? Being able to talk to each other, and being able to do something you'd want the children to be able to do, rather than top-down leadership.”

James, on forging networks within and outside of the school:

“Word's getting out that the partners we have are professional, that they help and that it's successful, so the school is becoming known as a caring environment”

Simon, on becoming a SENCo to advance his career:

“I was thrown onto the 'glass escalator', like many male primary teachers before me – but I developed a love for the role and intend to stick with it, because I saw the difference I could make.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Mark Pulsford is a former primary school teacher and now programme leader for the MA in Education Practice at De Montfort University.



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How can primary teachers ensure that pupils who find it difficult to speak or understand verbal instructions don't get left out in class?

Derry Patterson, SaLT offers some advice...



designed for precisely this purpose, being easy to administer and taking only 20 minutes to complete. It will then provide intervention recommendations for children identified as having mild or moderate difficulties, and highlight whether in-school assistance or speech and language therapy may be needed for children with more severe difficulties.

Where can parents and teachers turn to in cases where pupils have both SLCN and some other form of SEN?

We work closely with local speech and language therapy teams and SEND advisory teams, and there are a number of charities – including the Communication Trust and Afasic – that provide SLCN advice and support for parents and professionals. For SENCos, the DfE SENCo Forum is an invaluable tool for obtaining advice and developing your professional network beyond your local offering – details of how to join can be found at tinyurl.com/DfE-SENCo-Forum.

You can also find advice articles for teachers and parents written by speech and language specialists in our in-house magazine, *The Link*, which can be read via the Speech Link website.

What can schools and teachers do to effectively engage with parents of pupils with SLCN?

We fully recognise the importance of engaging with parents, which is why our packages provide SENCos with parent-friendly advice sheets and worksheets that can be used to support the work being done at school in a fun way at home.

What is widely recognised as good practice when it comes to supporting pupils with SLCN?

In short, 'ASSESS', 'PLAN', 'DO' and 'REVIEW'. A Language Link assessment can help generate evidence that children's understanding of language has been fully investigated at school entry. The resulting reports will provide a clear picture of the language needs of all children in the class, while our online reporting system will ensure that intervention outcomes are objectively recorded and that progress is being monitored and evaluated.

As a primary teacher, once I know I'll be teaching pupils with speech, language and communication needs in the coming year, what can I do to prepare?

The most valuable support that you can give children with SLCN is to ensure the language you use for teaching is accessible to everyone in the classroom. Slowing down your pace of delivery and allowing extra thinking time are two strategies that will not only help children with SLCN, but also many others in your class.

Our Language Link package details a range of further strategies you can use, grouped into four broad headings – 'Break it down', 'Explain as you go', 'Check as you go' and 'Keep it visual'.

Which common difficulties and challenges encountered by pupils with SLCN should I be most sensitive to?

If a child has a speech problem or difficulty with their spoken language, you will be able to identify it as soon you meet them. Conversely, the issue that is hardest to detect will be difficulty in understanding language. Children with verbal comprehension difficulties might outwardly appear to understand you – they will often soon learn the daily classroom routine by watching and copying their peers, and

readily respond to any non-verbal cues when available. These children will tend to be very good at 'making themselves invisible' and can easily slip under the radar.

It is therefore important to be sensitive to any signs that a child might be struggling to understand the language of the classroom. Language Link features a whole class language screening tool for children in Reception, enabling teachers to quickly identify whether any children have difficulty understanding, and a provides comprehensive range of ways to support said children during class, group and individual work activities.

How can I accurately determine and assess my pupils' understanding of spoken language?

It can be hard to know for sure whether a child understands a command, since we often use visual supports such as pointing or other visual cues – putting on one's coat while saying 'It's time to go outside,' for example.

Because these cues will provide heavy hints for children who don't understand the words used, it's vital that a formal assessment be performed to accurately measure a child's real understanding of spoken language. The Language Link standardised assessment is

Independently minded

Could occupational therapy have a useful role to play in your school's SEN provision? Student therapist **Kerri Schubert** recalls the impact of her work placement at Topcliffe Primary School, Birmingham...

I spent the final 10-week, full-time work placement of my occupational therapy course based at Topcliffe Primary – a mainstream school in Birmingham with a 60-place resource base for children with speech and language difficulties and autism.

When I arrived I saw a range of techniques being used to help pupils with SEN. As well as employing three SENCOs, the school ensures that all staff receive training from the Autism Education Trust and that calming environments are available for those children who need them. These include classrooms designed to offer minimal stimulation, quiet areas, a quiet classroom that is available at lunch and break times and a state of art sensory room that children can use to shelter in, if required.

With no existing

therapist working at the school, my role was to show how OT could complement what the school was already doing with its SEN provision.

Breaking tasks down

One of my main roles as an OT within the school was to provide care and promote independence among students within the mainstream part of the school, as well as children within the resource base, as part of a holistic approach.

I worked on a one-to-one basis with nine children referred to the OT service – five who had been diagnosed with autism, four with speech and language issues and one from a mainstream class. While the nature of the sessions would vary significantly depending on what issues the child presented with, it was common for these interventions to focus on:

- > Promoting independence in dressing – especially buttoning skills
- > Self-care skills, such as how to use cutlery

- > Self-regulation and developing sensory strategies

I drew upon a number of techniques and activities and provided the children with specialised equipment to help them participate in certain tasks, such as special cutlery to help with correct finger positioning and special cushions to sit on that aided their concentration.

I graded and broke tasks down so that they became easier, and then built the pupils' skills back up to the point where they could carry them out in full – for example, having them practise doing up big buttons first, then progressing onto smaller buttons.

Improved independence

Based on what they had witnessed from their observations and assessments, the school's staff reported the OT programme as having had a positive impact on the children. Pursuing those strategies – of providing 'caring cutlery', and instructing the children in how to accomplish a simplified

task and building on that to help them complete an everyday task – was noted to be extremely beneficial. Since then, not only have the children been able to demonstrate improved

independence in dressing and eating, but their handwriting skills and ability to self-regulate have also become better as a result. To achieve this, I worked in close collaboration with the school's class teachers, teaching assistants and SENCOs. I would pass on the details of any techniques or equipment that I found to be particularly useful when working with a certain child, so that the or she could continue to benefit from the progress we made during their class time.

Following on from the OT placement, the school is now much more aware of what having an OT based within the learning environment can do for their pupils – so much so, that some Topcliffe staff have since expressed an interest in the school employing an OT on a regular fixed basis. The senior management team has moreover mooted the possibility of placing more OT students in the school in the years to come – thus validating and strengthening the case for having an OT based within the school setting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kerri Schubert is a 3rd year occupational therapy student studying at Coventry University



A matter of life and death

Four academics from Canterbury Christ Church University examine what schools need to consider when supporting children with serious medical conditions



Around 49,000 children and young people in the UK are diagnosed with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition. These conditions can include cancer, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, spinabifida/hydrocephalus and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Many of the children in question are taught within mainstream schools.

As medical advances continue to enable babies and young children to live longer than before, that number is set to rise. Some of those children will survive and live a long and healthy life; others will not. All, however, will be required undergo extensive, and often ongoing medical treatment that has a profound effect on their lives, their family, their friends and sometimes a whole school.

Our team recently carried out research with teachers, including SENCos, to find out how they felt about working with children who have life-limiting and life-threatening conditions in mainstream schools. The teachers were

clearly motivated to do their best for the child, their family, other children and the wider school community, but were also very anxious and clearly needed more support and guidance.

Government policy

Those teachers who had experienced working with children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions explained to us the difficulties of getting professionals (from education, healthcare and other services) and the family together, so that they could provide integrated support for the child. The government is aware of this problem, and has produced a number of policies which aim to address it.

Integrated Personal Commissioning

This is a kind of overarching umbrella under which all the policies below fit. It is the government's grand plan to integrate education, health and social services in England around individual children and their families, who will receive their own personal budgets to spend on the services they need.

National Framework for Children and Young People's Continuing Care

This states that children who have complex medical needs and require specialised healthcare have the right to additional funding.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

Some children who have SEND will also have complex medical needs and sometimes life-limiting or life-threatening conditions; the SEND Code of Practice includes statutory

guidance that schools must follow in such cases.

Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions

Meeting the needs of children with medical conditions is now a statutory duty for schools, as outlined in the DfE guidance document 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' (See tinyurl.com/dfe-medical).

Our Commitment to You for End of Life Care

Sadly, some children with a life-threatening conditions will die. This policy document from the Department of Health (see tinyurl.com/doh-eol) contains a note on palliative and end of life care for children and young people.

Once a teacher becomes aware of a child with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition, the first task is to develop an individual healthcare plan. Teachers will work alongside the family, healthcare professionals and other key people to develop a comprehensive, individual and coordinated plan for the child. The child is likely to have a key worker and a lead professional, such as a children's community nurse, with whom a teacher will liaise. Integrated personal commissioning means that not only will the family have a budget for securing the services they need, but they will also receive guidance through the process of obtaining those services.

Common symptoms and challenges

The teachers in our research wanted to understand some of the more common symptoms and challenges experienced by

KEY ADVICE

LET THE CHILD KNOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES THAT THEY ARE DEALING WITH.

- > Regularly ask the child how they are feeling, what they are worried about and how the school might be able to help
- > Provide plenty of encouragement and find ways of rewarding them for their achievements
- > Use inclusive strategies that help them to feel part of their class and school and be sensitive to any self-esteem issues
- > Be flexible when setting work; break activities down into chunks and allow extra time when needed,
- > Keep in regular contact with pupils on long-term absence, and encourage their peers to stay in touch too

children with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition, and how they could be supportive. Children with complex medical conditions are likely to be very fatigued due to their symptoms, insomnia, frequent travelling to visit specialists and the side effects caused by various medicines and treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Be flexible, plan work in short bursts and make maximum use of the times when children are able to concentrate.

These children will be experiencing a roller-coaster of emotions, so don't be surprised if they find it difficult to think and remember in class. Focus on providing work in small amounts and provide plenty of prompts to aid memory. Make learning as multi-sensory as possible.

A child's condition and treatment may also impact on their breathing, leaving them with less energy. Enable the child to complete their activities by either providing sufficient

time and/or adjusting the scope of the activity. Consider alternative ways of including the child with their peers, such as giving them the role of timekeeper.

Self-esteem, diets and absence

Children who lose their hair through medical treatment will often feel self-conscious, develop low self-esteem and may avoid interaction with peers and other learning opportunities. Discuss this with the child and check whether or not they would be happier wearing a wig, hat or scarf to school. Normalise this by discussing individuality and differences among all children – perhaps organise occasions when all the children wear a hat for the day.

Children might additionally lose their appetite, feel nauseous or experience problems with eating and swallowing. Poor eating will impact on their energy levels and ability to concentrate.

Some children might respond well to being allowed to graze, little and often, while others might prefer privacy when eating or require practical support. If they frequently experience nausea, ensure there is a sick bowl to hand and allow them to leave class if needed.

Children will inevitably miss school when they are unwell, due to health appointments or post-treatment recovery. Children who are too ill to attend school or have received prior permission to be absent can be excused from school, but Ofsted will want to know how children with complex medical needs are being supported.

Be flexible and prepared to work around their time schedule and wellness. Consider sending work home and using a virtual learning environment. Children who are away from school for long periods can become very isolated, so it's important to keep in contact and find ways in which their peers can communicate with them on a regular basis.

Progress and hope

The DfE and Ofsted both acknowledge that pupils' progress is not always linear. Children with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions are especially unlikely to achieve smooth academic progress. The school must be able to show that they are aware a child is not achieving the 'floor / minimum standards' and why, and demonstrate how they are proactively trying to address it.

Above all, even children who know that their life is short need to dream, to have hopes and ambitions for their future – and teachers are perfectly placed to provide this.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sally Robinson is a principal lecturer in the School of Public Health, Midwifery & Social Work



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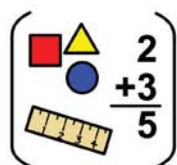


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The mistakes mainstreams make

Cherryl Drabble explains why the barriers to inclusion within mainstream schools are not as obvious as some might think...

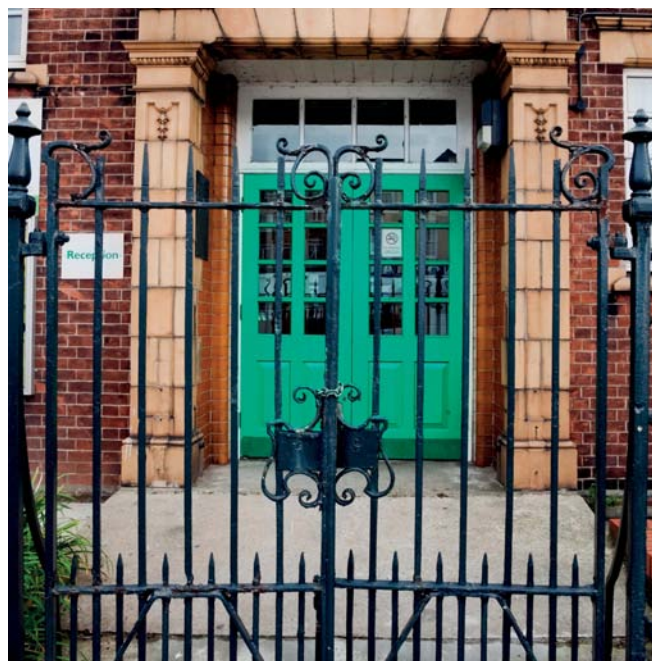
Some children face challenges which are so severe they will always require the skills of a specialist teacher or specialist provision. However, there are some children who have learning difficulties, communication difficulties or other behavioural challenges who will thrive, if given appropriate teaching in mainstream schools. These are the children I want to talk about here.

Think outside the box

How do we remove barriers to inclusion within mainstream schools? In the first instance, I would always recommend checking the relevant Statement of SEN or Education Health and Care Plan to identify the specific areas of special need. That may sound obvious, but it's easy to overlook when endeavouring to do your best for the child, especially if you are aware of the diagnosis.

For example, one child on the autistic spectrum will not have the same needs as any other child on the spectrum. Avoid approaching a child's education with any preconceived ideas based on your knowledge of their label or diagnosis. Put simply, think outside the box. Think about what the individual child needs, and don't be tempted to offer the same interventions to multiple children on the grounds of a shared label.

Always remember that personalisation is the key to success. With a child on the autistic spectrum, consider whether they need assistance with relaxation or strategies to help them cope with a sensory meltdown. If so, it may be worth



acquiring a weighted blanket to help provide deep pressure across the body and aid the calming process.

Alternatively, will the child need assistance with turn taking, or transitioning from a favoured activity to another activity? If so, consider making 'Now and Next' boards to help them cope with this aspect of their day. A third child on the spectrum may require assistance in staying on task until they know the structure of the day ahead. If this is the case, consider using a visual timetable broken down into sections of the day.

Those are just three of numerous different ways of assisting a child on the spectrum. Spend time with the child, learn all about them, identify their greatest need and implement bespoke interventions. Always remember that a child with any learning difficulty, communication or behaviour issue might benefit from any of

these strategies.

High expectations

The most specific advice I can offer regarding children with SEN is to keep your expectations high at all times, which is often where mainstream teachers start making mistakes. Simply having an illness or a disability is not an indicator of the child being unable to work to the best of their personal ability.

The 2014 SEND Code of Practice talks of 'Quality First Teaching' and a 'graduated approach'. The latter is a four-step process of assessing the child's needs, planning interventions, implementing and monitoring said interventions and then regularly reviewing them to check progress. There is, however, a further aspect of quality first teaching, in my opinion, which is to maintain a belief in the child and ensure they know that you believe in them.

This means that as a teacher,

you should work with the child yourself rather than consistently handing them over to a teaching assistant. As skilled as TAs are, those children with the highest needs in the class deserve time with the most qualified person in the room. Mix things up a little by having your TA work with the highest attaining group, which will free you up to work with those who need your assistance the most.

Ultimately, SEND provision in mainstream schools is a difficult balancing act. Teachers must spend time with all pupils and ensure that all achieve to the best of their ability – but to manage this, teachers must not be 'afraid' of children with SEND.

Keep in mind that there are no shortcuts when it comes to working with children with special needs; it takes time to learn how to personalise the curriculum for each child. While there are many examples of excellent practice in our schools, there continue to be instances where children are routinely handed to a TA – which is possibly one of the greatest barriers to successful inclusion there is.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cherryl Drabble is acting assistant head at Highfurlong School in Blackpool; her latest book, *Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*, is available now, published by Bloomsbury; follow her blog at cherrylkd.wordpress.com



THE BEST DAYS of our lives?...

What impact can having a disability have on your ability to make friends at school? Three adults tell their stories...



Penny Pepper is a writer, performance poet and disability activist

My first day at special school began with a fight between myself and my long suffering mum to get me on the special school bus. It arose from a fundamental question – I was only 5, but I knew in my bones that there was something wrong in sending me to a school 20 miles away from the friends I'd played with all my life. It would take me a long time until I could properly articulate those feelings.

Once on the minibus, surrounded by other kids, I was seated next to Angie. Angie had long, straight black hair and told me immediately that she had cerebral palsy. She offered me a Fruit Polo, as long as I didn't mind opening the packet. I giggled as I struggled with the arthritis in my own fingers. This incident illustrates what would one of the most positive aspects of my life at special school – the friendships I formed from being with others who understood how difficult things could be.

“There was an early sense of comradeship”

But what became much more meaningful for me as time went on was the early sense of comradeship I would feel as we fought back, even with the little understanding we had of how confined we were within that special school world.

I'm not sure whether the concept of socialising had been invented then; it certainly hadn't been at this school in the suburbs of Hertfordshire. Staff would occasionally take us to the theatre, and there were day trips. I still remember the cold fear that a day at the Natural History Museum roused in me. We received little support for our personal needs and access was scant. Such trips provided opportunities for incidental abuse – smacking and rough handling, especially.

Back at home I soon lost touch with my friends on the street where I lived and my disabled friends became everything. That's the abiding legacy of my school years – friends who've stayed with me all my life, some of them becoming activists like me.



Mik Scarlet is a freelance journalist and broadcaster

“I kicked out at them with my metal leg brace”

I was lucky enough to go through the mainstream schooling system, after my parents fought to find me a place against opposition from our local education authority. They found the only school in our town that would take me on a trial basis, so moved house to be nearer. That meant having to leave all of my friends from our quiet, child-friendly cul-de-sac and starting at this new school knowing no one.

My mum still loves telling the story of how she watched me go through the school gates, her heart

“Most of my friends were adults”

Looking back at my school days, I didn't have many friends who were the same age as myself. Most of my friends were adults, especially those I've kept in touch with over the years. I believe this is because I had to work with adults on an unconscious level to realise my freedom and have my intelligence respected as someone with a speech impairment. I therefore lost a lot of my childhood.

I experienced significant bullying throughout my time at the all-boys mainstream school I attended. The headmaster saw the fact I was bullied as a part of my 'learning experience' – something I had to get used to as a part of my future. To make friends I had to meet people most of the way, but instead of making me withdrawn it made me angry



Simon Stevens has cerebral palsy and is a disability consultant, activist, writer and performer

and frustrated as I refused to accept I was more or less important than anyone else.

I had one friend at school, Matthew, whose mother was coincidentally also my teaching assistant for science and other subjects. He was the geek of the class, and we bonded through our interest in computers. On reflection, it was not a very deep relationship, and once we reached sixth form college we drifted apart. I kept in contact with his mother, though – it seemed I'd made more of myself than he had.

I think that making friends was made more difficult for me because I was 'integrated' rather than 'included' in school, in an era where my level of impairment made me a 'freak' due to the stigma of disability at the time. I'd assumed the role of an ugly duckling, with no peers with a similar impairment – too busy managing everyday life and barriers put in place by others to afford friendships. It wasn't until instant messaging and social media came along that making real friends became possible.

stopping as kids surrounded me, calling me names. They backed me against a wall, but instead of hearing me cry, the kids started flying as I kicked out at them with my metal leg brace. She knew then that I'd be OK, and I was.

I have really happy memories of my early school life. My best mate was Aston Hill, who was very tall even at the age of 8, but I had loads of friends. My main recollection of playtime back then was always being caught when we played kiss chase and absolutely hating it. A few years later I'd have killed to have girls chasing after me...

Once I was older, instead of moving to my primary's high school I went to a newly built school that had been specifically designed to integrate disabled kids and was the first disabled kid to go there. I could still walk at this point, though, so didn't need stuff like the lift and accessible loos.

Yet again I found myself having to start a new school with no mates, but I soon formed firm friendships. I fell in with a gang of



Mik and the gang, aged 12

outsiders who resembled The Goonies. Late developers, we were still running around playing war while the cool kids got on with trying to impress girls. Many years after leaving school I formed a band with two members of said gang and toured around Europe with them. We were much cooler by then, promise!

As well as my qualifications, school taught me that friends come and go, and that you're lucky if you can keep one or two good ones as you go through life...



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

When it comes to overseeing and managing a school's SEND provision, what habits distinguish the honourable sheriffs from the self-serving outlaws? **Jarlath O'Brien** shares his thoughts...

I started out as a teacher in a comprehensive, moved to a selective independent school and went on to work in three different types of special schools. I've worked with young people from the ages of 2 to 19; children who've gone to Oxford or Cambridge; children who've gone to prison and some who've died from life-shortening conditions.

I can therefore claim to have a wide perspective on our education landscape. I have seen policies, curricula and practises that have resulted in exceptional provision for young people with SEND, and provision that has made it extremely difficult for those young people to survive, let alone thrive.

Here, I'll share with you what I have come to see as some of the good, bad and ugly habits of SEND leadership...

The Good **PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**

The single most effective, lasting and transformational thing a school can do to improve its SEND provision is pour time and energy into its relationships with parents. Far too many parents have to fight to secure what the rest of us would consider to be a basic

entitlement for our children. They will know far more about their children than we ever will, and if we don't treat them as equals we will be missing a trick.

They will be our best supporters – so get to know them early, invite them in, be open, honest and transparent and it will pay dividends.

THOROUGH PREPARATION

The best leaders prepare their schools before the children even arrive. They know their new cohort, can spot where their CPD needs are and get busy filling them. You may know that you have a child with SEND arriving next year with a rare condition, such as fragile-X syndrome. Getting ahead of the game by sourcing some specialist training and advice early on and talking to the child's current school is smart. It's also a massive early win with the parents.

> The best schools I know truly believe that good teaching for children with SEND is good teaching for everyone. They know that there isn't a special box of resources that you pull out when you teach a child with Down's syndrome or autism (though that's not to say there aren't specific things you need to know about such conditions

and how to factor them into your teaching – there definitely will be). Instead, they have high expectations, baseline well and are clear about what the child(ren) can and cannot yet do, and plan ambitiously from there.

FOSTER INDEPENDENCE

Good leaders will ensure that their curriculum is set up to give children with SEND the best possible chance to live and work independently as adults. If you think that sounds blindingly obvious, you can read my book *Don't Send Him in Tomorrow* to see just how dire the life outcomes for people with SEND are. Insisting, for example, that you can no longer spare curriculum time for work experience may not be in the best interests of each and every child.

PLAN FOR TRANSITIONS

Planning for the transition out of your own school well in advance is crucial. Take the deputy headteacher and three TAs from a local primary school who spent a morning at our school late last year. They have a child in Year 5 who may move to a special school for their secondary education. They visited our classes to

learn what they need to do over the next two years, as they're acutely aware that they could build dependency that may make transition difficult for the child.

The Bad **LACK OF INDUCTION**

You have an induction programme for teaching assistants, right? I am shocked and saddened when I consider the number of schools that don't offer their TAs an induction, even in just the basics. Some TAs arrive with no experience of working in schools at all, yet we expect them to work with children who, in some cases, have very complex needs. They will go on to work with some of our most vulnerable children, yet they receive the least CPD.

Give them a high quality induction and make sure they're paid to attend all your INSET sessions. Give them some time to visit a couple of special schools too, and they'll come back brimming with ideas.

LACK OF APPRAISALS

The same goes for appraisals. In my view, failing to offer an appraisal to any colleague communicates that we believe that member of



staff's contribution to the school isn't worth discussing. Give TAs an appraisal just like your teachers, and let them know what a damn good job they're doing.

PUPIL ISOLATION

I have met children who have spent their time almost exclusively educated at their own workstation in a corridor or by the coat pegs in the name of 'inclusion'. Do you ever look at the proportion of time a child with SEND is actually spending outside of their class? Try it. It'll be enlightening.

> In the same vein, analyse how long children with SEND are taught by TAs and how long by their class teacher(s). Some children with SEND are being effectively educated in a school of one child, since they spend all week with a TA.

The Ugly

ILLEGAL EXCLUSIONS

There are, unfortunately, occasions when it's clear that a school simply doesn't want a particular child in their school any more, or to even cross that threshold in the first place.

The disgraceful use of illegal exclusions – whereby children are prevented from attending school by their headteacher – is one of the most shameful aspects of our profession that research has shown affects children with SEND. If a school feels the need to exclude a child, then they must follow the statutory processes set down in law.

(NOT SO) CODED LANGUAGE

Something I frequently hear about from prospective parents is schools that use language that's carefully selected to make it clear what kind of schools they are. 'We're an academic school'; 'We only do GCSEs'; or (and this is an exact quote) 'If your child has any form of additional needs then this is not the school for your child.' It could be argued in most cases that such statements are open

to interpretation, but parents of children with SEND may well simply hear 'We don't want you'.

There is much that we must do as a nation to improve the life outcomes for children with SEND – but it all begins in the classroom, and the steps I outline above are a good place to start.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jarlath O'Brien is the headteacher of Carwarden House



Community School in Surrey and the author of *Don't Send Him in Tomorrow*, published by Independent Thinking Press

GOOD HABITS CHECKLIST

> Provide CPD that includes all staff, including your office staff and site maintenance team

> Share information among all staff regarding the progress of children with SEND. It can be hard for staff to feel that they're doing a good job if they think the progress they're observing is slower than what they're used to

> Establish partnerships with special schools; they will often be very keen for mainstream schools to make use of their outreach and CPD services

> Place educating children with SEND at the heart of what you do, rather than tucking it away out of sight. Make it normal, important and visible, and it's less likely to be thought of as 'other'.

> Check that children with SEND aren't overrepresented in sanctions such as detentions and fixed-term exclusions. They are grossly over-represented in national figures, so look at your own trends and be clear about what you're going to do to improve matters.

Navigating the safeguarding maze

As austerity measures cut deeper, the range of support schools are expected to offer vulnerable families is becoming increasingly wide and complex – but, **Jaine Stannard** asks, at what cost?

It's news to no-one's ears that school staff are feeling the strain. According to a report from the Education Policy Institute, the majority of teachers work an average of 48.2 hours per week – a full day over the standard working week. One in five work 60 hours per week or more. And the pressure doesn't look set to ease.

Due to reduced budgets, local authorities are passing much of the responsibility for 'early help' cases to schools. An Ofsted report titled 'Early Help – Whose Responsibility?' (see tinyurl.com/ofsted-early-help) stated that schools should deliver such services, but as social care thresholds have risen, cases that previously met the threshold (and were therefore the responsibility of the LA) are now classified as 'early help'. As such, schools are now facing having to deal with complex cases, where families have multiple presenting issues – with no extra funding or resources.

Slipping through the net

I work for School-Home Support (SHS), a charity helping children and young people overcome challenging home lives in order to make the most of their education. We're in constant dialogue with schools

and hear the same things again and again. SLT members tell us that they are given new safeguarding responsibilities with little training (often just a day at most) and no supervision.

These increased responsibilities are adding to their already heavy workloads and long work hours, meaning there's a danger that vulnerable children could slip through the net. One headteacher reported to us that the week before a school holiday she spent 90% of her time on early help work with families. This ranged from taking a dad to a mental health appointment (he had missed two already, and his illness was affecting the children's attendance and behaviour) to helping another parent complete a housing form (the family was in overcrowded accommodation, again affecting the children at school).

Should this have been her responsibility? We recently put together a Serious Case Review on a case that tragically ended in the death of the child at the hands of her mother. We found that the school staff member in charge of supporting the family had not received adequate training or supervision, and that the lack of proper management and a second, objective opinion was an important factor in the case.

The staff member let her personal experience colour

her judgement, taking the side of the mother due to her own experience with domestic abuse, and failed to put sufficient boundaries in place with the family – with terrible consequences. Ensuring the right frameworks are in place isn't something that should be subject to cost cutting.

Troubling times

Around the same time that the study on teachers' increasing work hours was released, the National Audit Office announced that protection for at-risk children was 'unsatisfactory and inconsistent'.

Concerned, we sent out 34 Freedom of Information requests to find out what early help support is currently being given to schools by LAs (targeted to boroughs with the highest rates of persistent absence and the highest number of children subject to section 47 and initial child protection conferences in 2014/15). The response? Most support had been cut. It is also clear from

“ Ensuring the right frameworks are in place isn't something that should be subject to cost cutting ”





our research that many schools receiving what little support and training is available often find it inadequate.

We also found that the number of safeguarding interventions we've had to make over the past five years has doubled, so this is the worst time for child protection issues to be sidelined. Looking nationally, the number of social care cases has also risen: the number of children who were

subject to a child protection plan increased by 12.1% in one year alone (2012/13 – 2013/14).

Looking to the future

So what can schools can do to ensure children are protected and teachers' working hours are reduced? I can't emphasise enough the importance of ensuring that there are dedicated safeguarding staff in place wherever possible.

In response to requests from schools – whose senior leadership team members are unable to deal with the additional duties – we now provide safeguarding lead practitioners. These take on the safeguarding delivery in the school, focusing on casework and supporting children and families both during term time and school holidays, when the lack of routine and support can undo some of the progress made and delay positive outcomes. In an ideal world, every school would be able to have one.

With further budget cuts likely to be on the way, however, we know it's not always possible to have one member of staff dedicated to early help and child protection. In that case, it's vital that staff with safeguarding responsibilities on top of educating and/or leadership duties are both a) properly trained and b) closely supervised. If staff are trained they can act efficiently; instead of spending hours trying to find a solution to an issue they should know how to resolve it, or exactly to whom they should go. If they have proper supervision, children and staff alike will be better protected. Clear boundaries can be put into place, risks can be better identified and again, resolutions can be more efficiently found.

Whatever happens, children's wellbeing has to be priority. As a charity that's focused on school attendance for over 30 years, we'd be delighted if every child could fulfil their potential and achieve all of which they are capable. In the current climate, we'd settle for every child being safe.

COUNTING THE COSTS

> 3.9 million children in the UK are growing up in poverty – 29% of all children – and don't always have food in the house.

> Over 2 million children in the UK are estimated to be living in difficult family circumstances, including children whose family lives are affected by parental alcohol and substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health issues.

> 1.6 million children in the UK live in housing that is overcrowded, temporary, or dilapidated.

> In 2016, almost 400,000 children in England were identified as being 'in need'.

> Also in 2016, over 172,000 children were subject to new Section 17 enquiries.

> Over 50,000 children were the subject of a child protection plan in England in March 2016. This has increased steadily over the past few years.

> Over 50% of the above cases involved abuse or neglect.

Sources: CPAG; Ofsted; Shelter; DfE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jaine Stannard is interim chief executive and safeguarding lead at School Home Support; for more information, visit shs.org.uk



Special schools & the knowledge gap

Without better sharing of knowledge and practice between mainstream and special schools, we'll be paving the way for a crisis of demand in the coming years, cautions **Simon Knight**...

Towards the end of the 2015/16 academic year, the DfE published a document that set out the projected pupil numbers for the years up to 2025. (tinyurl.com/pupils-2025)

Whilst there is a significant increase in primary (173,000 or c. 4%) and a dramatic one in secondary (567,000 or c.17%), the data provided for special school placements is equally surprising. The projected numbers show an increase of 14,000 pupils or c.14%.

If you consider a typical special school, with just over a hundred pupils and a 2:1 staffing ratio on the basis of one teacher with three teaching assistants per class of eight pupils, you are looking at classroom space equivalent to approximately 140 new schools and 7,000 staff, 1,750 of whom will need to be teachers. *In eight years!*

Meaningful partnership

So how are we going to address the impact of this projected increase in demand for special school places? How can we ensure that children with SEND are able to access excellence in greater volume than ever before?

Well, it can't be done in isolation. We need to move away from the often binary choice of 'mainstream' and 'special' and start to explore opportunities for meaningful partnerships – because there

is more to this issue than the need to boost investment in special schools.

Mainstream schools will, in all likelihood, need to educate increasing numbers of children with SEND with a greater degree of complexity. So what can we do to mitigate the impact of a potential capacity crisis in the specialist sector?

Expert input

When I first started working in special education we had an inclusive assessment nursery collocated on a mainstream site. Children would arrive without a Statement in order to have a period of time benefiting from our specialist expertise, while also receiving a highly detailed assessment of their individual developmental needs.

They were essentially accessing the pedagogical characteristics of a special school education as a proactive intervention, to establish whether they would need a special school placement in the long term. As such, many of the children who came to us would go on to successfully transfer to mainstream, having had two years of expert input.

Over time, however, the children became more likely to go straight into the mainstream system. In my experience, the school's intake became increasingly characterised by those who

had severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities, or who had arrived following the breakdown of a previous mainstream placement.

The experience of mainstream failing them, and of them 'failing', would usually have a significant effect. In many cases, the 'gaps' this resulted in would become insurmountable.

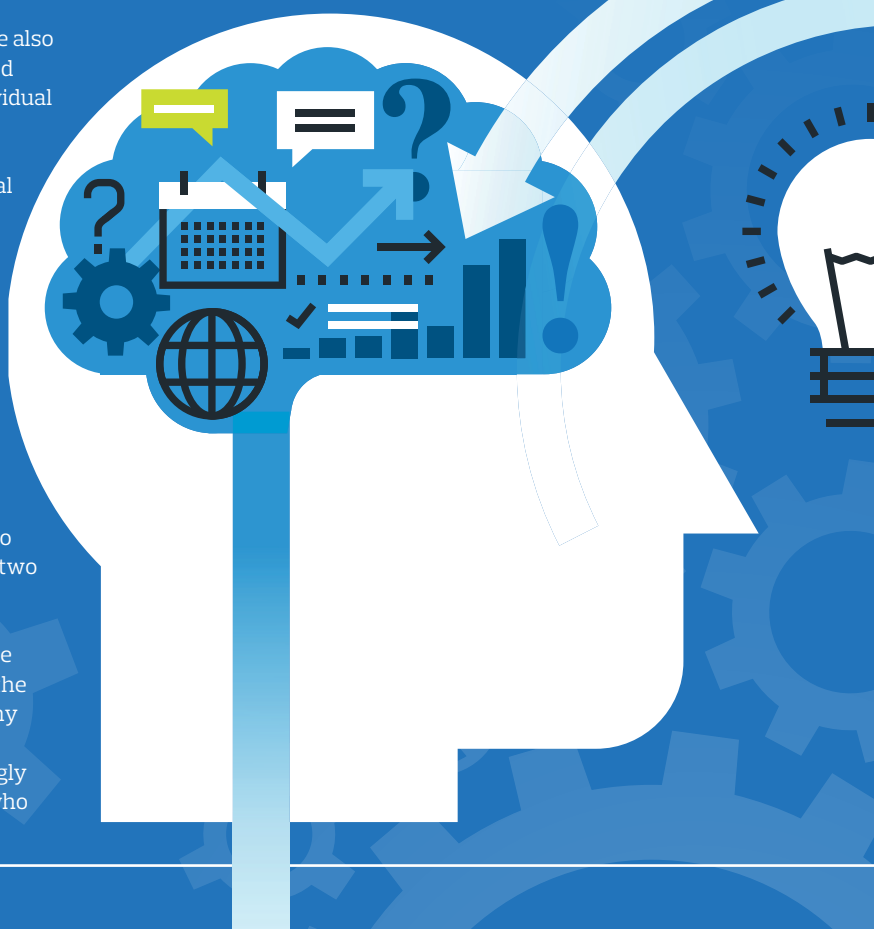
A systematic approach

Returning to a more systematic approach to preschool placement – in specialist inclusive assessment nurseries,

for any child who need one – may go some way to ensuring that fewer pupils require long-term placements in special schools.

If we advocate a more proactive approach to special school provision referral at an earlier stage, rather than seeing special schools as an 'education of last resort', we may also be able to ensure that a greater number of pupils successfully transfer from special education into mainstream.

Given that there is already a capacity issue in special schools, with many being full and significant



waiting lists in operation in some parts of the country, the notion that every teacher needs to be a teacher of SEND is going to take on even greater significance.

Grasping the nettle

Irrespective of where you sit on the inclusion continuum, for many families the option of choosing a special school education is one that's likely to become less readily available. This means that those children will remain in mainstream education, with an entitlement to have their educational needs met.

We will therefore need to grasp the nettle that is the variability of SEND professional development. We must consider how to build a more cohesive and comprehensive post-qualification landscape for SEND; one that equips schools with the expertise necessary to ensure that increasing numbers of pupils with an increasing complexity of need can be taught effectively.

This would be in addition to the existing National Award for SEN Coordination, and focused more on the pedagogy and practice of educating children with SEND. The ongoing development of Nasen's SEND Gateway (sendgateway.org.uk) and the emergence of the Whole School SEND Consortium (wholeschoolsend.com) will likely offer new opportunities for teachers seeking support in this area.

'Houston, we have a problem'

My own experience of outreach has often been characterised by a 'Houston, we have a problem' approach to early intervention. A move away from seeing outreach as a responsive solution to a situation that has become critical that would potentially serve everyone better.

This may result in children who currently reach a point of no return having their needs met far more proactively, thus enabling them to successfully remain within the mainstream system.

It will, though, need to be

MUTUAL SUCCESS

> One of the most important things I was involved with while working in special education was providing a form of mainstream education for every child, irrespective of complexity of need, for a morning every week.

> We had direct partnerships with eight mainstream schools across 11 classes, covering academies, faith schools, comprehensives and the independent sector. Each week, around 350 to 400 children would come together and work in partnership, in a reciprocal relationship that saw us visiting mainstream settings and pupils from mainstream coming to us.

> This had a profound impact on both sets of pupils and the staff working with them. Beyond the benefits for the children, it provided opportunities for informal dialogue between staff. We could question our mainstream colleagues about stretching our most able pupils, and they could ask us about the children that posed them the most complex challenges.

> It cost both parties nothing more than a willingness to promote inclusive opportunities and share our collective expertise – but the value of the collaboration was felt by many.

an approach characterised by open and honest professional reflection, in which a recognition of where needs are not being met is considered a professional strength, rather than something to hide.

Communities supporting communities

The needs of schools and the children who attend them may be further served by linking specialists employed by Multi-Academy Trusts and school partnerships with local special schools. We could start to see special school staff allocated time for working within mainstream schools as part of a 'SEND expertise timeshare' model.

This approach could work to head off the kind of challenges that can lead to children moving out of mainstream, but it may also help to address the various SEND-related complexities that can be encountered within classrooms in a less reactive manner. At the same

time, it would help encourage participating schools to invest in the SEND knowledge, skills and capabilities of their staff, so that 'meeting the needs of all' becomes an integral part of the schools' offer.

If schools are to meet this challenge, then we will need a national response, supported by local implementation, that drives the specialist and mainstream sectors towards better structured collaboration. We need to move away from defining responsibility according to the children on your roll, and towards a system where communities of schools collectively support communities of children.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Knight
is director of education at the National Education Trust and formerly deputy headteacher at Frank Wise School, Oxfordshire.



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Picking up the pieces

If we're to properly support children from traumatic backgrounds when they're in school, we need to see a major change in our learning culture, argues **Nicola Marshall**...

Light years ago, our lives changed drastically when my husband and I adopted a sibling group of three. Aged four, five and seven, they had come from a traumatic background. The adoption process at that time took three years and was quite intrusive, but rightly so. Those three years gave us time to process the big step we were making – but as with any big life change, however prepared we thought we were, the reality was very different.

Negotiating the education system was a tricky, challenging and sometimes painful experience for our family. As our children were of school age when placed, their schooling became part of our lives immediately; by contrast, when you give birth you have four to five years to prepare yourself. The reality

is that learning and education environments can be difficult for adopted and looked-after children.

Shame, loss and rejection

When we're tiny and our brains are first developing, the environment in which we live in is vitally important to our brain development. For children who don't have their basic needs met, or who live in a chaotic home, their brains will often have been impaired in a way that goes on to influence how they learn. For such children, the ideal learning environment is likely to be one where they feel safe and calm, in a place containing a few people whom they trust and little in the way of distractions. Sound like any school you know?...

Having watched the impact that school had on my own children, I felt moved to do something to help not only my own family, but also families of other vulnerable children. Drawing on my background in coaching and training I started a business called Braveheart Education, and for the last five years have been training educators in understanding how to work with vulnerable children in the classroom.

If we want to give every child the best chance of reaching their potential, then some paradigm shifts need to happen in our approach to learning. The rewards and sanctions systems that many schools use, for example, can hinder a child's progress through being based on shame, loss and rejection. Detentions, isolations, yellow cards and exclusions all serve to compound the sense of shame and rejection that vulnerable children often feel.

I heard a quote a few years ago from the American civil rights activist and comedian Dick Gregory that really resonated with me – *"I never learned hate at home, or shame, I had to go to school for that."* For children who have had a difficult start in life, they may have experienced hate and shame at home and then go on to receive more of the same at school.

Attachment-focused schools

The way we often focus on weaknesses instead of valuing strengths can cause some children to be overlooked. My youngest son's primary school tried everything they could to increase his understanding of numeracy, for example, but did little to foster and nurture his love of science and animals.

Don't get me wrong. I understand how challenging it can be to meet the complex and diverse needs of a classroom full of children, but understanding that all

behaviour communicates a need is paramount. If we can change the culture from one of 'behaviour modification' to 'relieving anxiety', we can provide a safe and calm environment in which every children is able to learn.

A new concept has come about in recent years called 'attachment aware schools'. These are schools that are invested in understanding the emotional needs of their children and how to create a culture which children can learn more effectively. At BraveHeart we prefer the term 'attachment-focused schools', since this shows a greater commitment on the part of a school to changing its wider culture, beyond just treating vulnerable children differently. That way, we can actually change how we work for *all* children and focus more on relationships and trust across the board.

What would this look like? No more reward systems that publicly highlight the struggles some children have; being proactive, rather than reactive; investing in relationships; and building the foundations for better emotional resilience in future. Primary schools are ideally placed to provide early interventions that give children the chance to start again and build a better future for themselves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicola Marshall is the founder of BraveHeart Education; for more details, visit bravehearteducation.co.uk





"YOU DON'T NEED AN EXPENSIVE, PURPOSE-BUILT SPACE"

It might be a well-resourced specialist setting, but Westmorland School can still teach mainstream primaries a great deal, as **Sal McKeown** discovers...

Westmorland School, part of the specialist education and care provider Witherslack Group, is a co-educational primary school in Chorley, Lancashire. Judged outstanding by Ofsted, the school has also received Autism Accreditation from the National Autistic Society.

"Andrea Smith has been the SENCo at Westmorland School since 2013, after moving from a mainstream primary school near Rochdale. Westmorland offers much more in the way of specialist support compared with mainstream provision, employing its own speech and language therapists, an occupational therapist, an educational psychologist and

mental health practitioners. There is also a dedicated pastoral staff that meets as a team once a week to discuss issues such as SEN referrals and plan interventions.

A briefing session at the beginning and end of each school day helps everyone keep tabs on pupils who are giving cause for concern. "In mainstream, when we needed a speech and language therapist it would take weeks to get one into school," Andrea remembers. "Now I'm surrounded by an in-house team of experts."

Overactive and under-responsive

Many children at Westmorland have sensory processing difficulties. If a child is disturbed by different textures, becomes

overwhelmed when there is too much noise or visual input or can't cope with strong smells, the school's OT will assess their needs and provide recommendations through individualised 'sensory diets' and environmental adaptations.

Some classrooms are specifically designed as low sensory environments, containing workstations and a safe space that children can escape to if they are feeling overwhelmed. Children in the main building can meanwhile use one of the school's 'contemplation' rooms to take time out from the classroom.

While some children may overreact to sensory input, others will be under-responsive. To counteract this, the OT oversees a programme of Movement Breaks, which

Andrea uses to encourage alertness among pupils and can involve moving, stretching, practising dance moves or doing press ups against the wall.

The school's curriculum places a strong emphasis on social communication. Every half term there's a focus on how teachers can support children's communication skills in a particular way – past examples have included teaching children about the importance of making eye contact, being able to share and being willing to take turns – so that there's a consistent message running through all lessons.

Approaches that work

Although Andrea is aware that Westmorland School is

exceptionally well resourced with a low pupil to staff ratio, she explains that there are many simple things mainstream settings can do to make a real difference for children with autism.

Most schools admittedly don't have safe spaces or sensory rooms, but Andrea has found that providing a child with ear defenders can reduce their sensitivity to noise, while a big cardboard box in a corner can be a decisive factor in whether a child stays in class or takes flight. 'They need a little space and time to become calm,' she says, 'but you don't necessarily need a purpose-built or expensive space.'

Concrete examples

Seating can be crucial. For children with ADHD who have problems sitting still, a chair that rocks may help them to focus on the lesson rather than their physical discomfort. Even something as simple as a cushion can have real benefits for a child who dislikes sitting on hard surfaces.

Providing pencils of different widths can further help with developing children's fine motor skills, while using pencil grips will help to discourage some pupils from gripping their pencils too tightly. As the grips cause their hands to relax, their muscles won't be as strained, enabling them to write more successfully.

Children with autism frequently have strong interests that can be used to good effect. One of the boys at Westmorland, for example, is very keen on the video game character Mario and more likely to compete

worksheets with 'Mario Says...' printed at the top. At other times, the teaching of concepts such as Venn diagrams have proved more effective when the pupils are asked to sort items that relate to their interests, such as trains or dinosaurs.

Teachers at Westmorland typically model what they want the children to do. As Andrea explains, 'We might have a picture of a fair or the beach and talk about what we might see, hear, smell, touch and taste. We'll gather ideas together on the flipchart, and using suggestions from class discussion, I'll model sentences such as, 'When I got to the funfair the lights were as bright as fireworks'. Children who struggle to process language or use their imagination fare better if they have concrete examples to work from.'

The teachers also help personalise learning using iPads. The pupils enjoy using Book Creator, an app that lets them bring together text, images and sounds. Some of the more creative children can get carried away with using the app's sound effects, however, prompting Andrea to concede that if the task is intended to develop or assess literacy writing skills, they do need to actually write something! 'We don't use technology for every activity,' Andrea notes. 'If using the iPad is no better than pencil and paper, then we will use pencil and paper.'

Learning to thrive

Children thrive when lessons are structured and they know exactly what they must do. This affects the way activities are run



Westmorland's SENCo, Andrea Smith, joined the school from a mainstream primary setting

– a reading task, for example, can be broken down into four or five steps that pupils tick off as they compete each stage.

Westmorland pupils also get to experience 'Choosing Time' at the end of most lessons. Sometimes this might again relate to a pupil's special interest in the form of a treat or relaxation break after a concentrated spell of work; on other occasions, a canny teacher may suggest a choice of three activities that help the children to consolidate their learning.

SENcos in mainstream schools can sometimes feel that

they have to fight their corner against other school priorities – especially if they want expensive equipment that will only be used by one or two children. As Westmorland's SENCo, Andrea is part of the school's senior leadership team and her skills and knowledge feed into the school development plan. 'It works well,' she says. 'I can find solutions and implement lots of positive change.'

For more information about Westmorland School, visit witherslackgroup.co.uk/westmorland-school or follow @WitherslackGrp

THE TEACCH METHOD

The work done at Westmorland is underpinned by the TEACCH method - 'Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children' - originally developed by Professor Eric Schopler of the University of North Carolina.

what will happen and when during their time in school via a series of symbols, photographs or drawings. It ought to include information about which teachers and TAs the pupils will be working with, and may span a day, a week or even just a single lesson.

PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE

Materials should be provided that will allow a pupil work independently. The materials should employ clear and concise language, scaffolding and modelling and break tasks down into separate stages, as seen with Andrea's reading sheet example.

CONTROLLING THE SPACE

The room needs a clearly defined layout with separate areas for work, play, reading and other activities, while allowing enough space for independent and group work.

TRACKING TIME

A visual timetable should be clearly displayed, showing pupils

Find out more about the TEACCH method at autism.org.uk/teacch





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Crossbow

1 What better way to correct grip problems than to put a dinosaur on the end of a pencil? This Stegosaurus' scales prevent fingers from crossing over, while the body reinforces a correct tripod hold. Crossbow Education's reading rulers have already transformed the way over half of UK schools approach dyslexia-related reading difficulties: now their stegosaurus pencil grip heralds a new Jurassic age of handwriting! SpLD professionals should also note Crossbow's CPD certified conference on June 29th - see spldcentral.com for more. crossboweducation.com

EQUALS

2 EQUALS is an education charity that supports teachers working with pupils who have profound, multiple and severe learning disabilities. The charity was recently pleased to announce the availability of its first three revised primary Schemes of Work, all of which are specifically written for pupils working below age related expectations. The three guides cover English, mathematics and science, are fully in line with the 2014 National Curriculum revisions and can be purchased separately. equals.co.uk

LEGO® Therapy Workshops

3 Now taking place at The LEGOLAND® Windsor Resort are these 45-minute workshops that allow children to collaborate as a team, while developing and reinforcing their play and social skills through LEGO. Working in teams of three, each member is given the role of LEGO Supplier, LEGO Architect or LEGO Builder, who all work together to complete a LEGO model. LEGO therapy aims to encourage verbal and non-verbal communication, joint attention, task focus, problem solving and team work. legoland.co.uk/education

Phonic Books

4 Moon Dogs Vowel Spellings is a series of 14 books that introduce alternative vowel spellings. Aimed at older catch-up readers (ages 8-14), each book presents two alternative spellings for a vowel sound. Cool, contemporary and age-appropriate stories and illustrations engage the reader, whilst providing a gentle step-by-step approach to learning those tricky alternative spellings. The accompanying Moon Dogs workbooks contain various activities, including blending, segmenting and comprehension exercises, providing readers with practice and consolidation. phonicbooks.co.uk

Speech Link

5 Look out for *The Link* - a magazine containing speech and language advice for mainstream settings produced by online SLC support specialist Speech Link, which will be posted free to schools across the country from 13th March 2017 onwards. The company's Speech Link and Language Link information and resource packages feature online standardised assessments, instant reports, online training and interventions guidance for those providing SLCN support for ages 4 to 14, and are available for a one-week free trial. speechlink.info

Rocksteady Music School

6 This unique form of inclusive music tuition empowers primary schoolchildren to learn an instrument and play in their own rock band. At weekly rehearsals pupils will work together towards putting on an end of term concert for the rest of the school and their parents. Rocksteady's unique child-led peripatetic music sessions will allow children to grow in confidence and develop skills such as listening and resilience. Schools can get a taste of what to expect by arranging a free Rocksteady assembly - for more details, call 0845 094 1259 or visit the website. rocksteadymusicschool.com

Communicating the need

The Communication Trust tells us what it's currently doing to drive improvements in professionals' ability to support children with speech, language and communication needs

Effective communication skills have a profound and positive impact on our lives, affecting social and emotional development, mental health, behaviour, learning and attainment. These skills are central to who we are, what we do and the opportunities we have throughout our lives; when they do not develop as expected the impact can be serious and long lasting.

Over a million children and young people in the UK have long term and persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and many more will experience difficulties communicating at some point in their life.

It is essential that those working with children and young people have the knowledge and skills to support their communication, and are able to spot developing problems. The Communication Trust recently conducted a survey among members of the teaching profession and other members

of the children and young people's workforce to ask about their experiences of professional development in speech, language and communication. We found that more than half have possessed very little professional development in this area, despite what we know about how crucial children's communication skills are and the prevalence of SLCN.

Policy and practice

The Communication Trust has shared the findings of its survey in a report that also offers recommendations on key priorities for policy and practice, which will help improve the profession's access to good quality training and professional development around SLCN. You can find the report at **thecommutationtrust.org.uk/workforcesurvey**.

They are also re-launching the Speech, Language & Communication Framework (SLCF)



– an online self evaluation tool which sets out the skills and knowledge that everyone working with children and young people needs to know and be able to do in order to support the speech, language and communication development of those they work with.

Practitioners can use the SLCF to:

- > Evaluate their current level of knowledge in this area
- > Highlight their professional development needs
- > Find the training, resources and information needed to fill any knowledge gaps
- > Track their professional development progress over time.

Practitioners will also find a series of short online, universal level activities for quick and easy on-the-spot learning. Register for the SLCF for free at **www.slcframework.org.uk**

The Communication Trust is a coalition of over 50 not for profit organisations who work together to support everyone who works with children and young people to support their speech, language and communication.

thecommutationtrust.org.uk

VITAL STATISTICS

1%

of all children have the most severe and complex language and communication needs

10%

of all children have long-term, persistent speech, language and communication needs

UP TO
50%

of all children in some areas of the country have delayed language



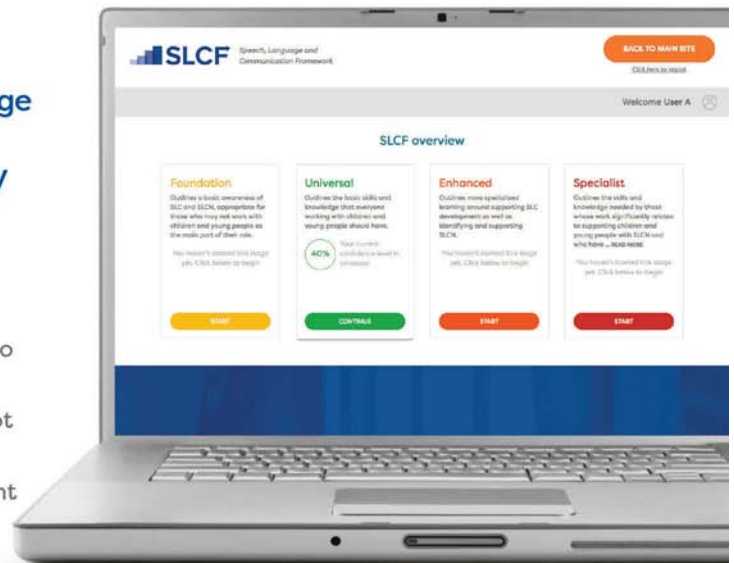
Speech, Language and Communication Framework



A free online professional development tool, designed for the children and young people's workforce, which sets out the skills and knowledge needed to support the speech, language and communication (SLC) development of those they work with.

What can you do on the SLCF?

- Evaluate your skills, knowledge and confidence around SLC
- Find training and resources tailored to your learning needs
- Try out online activities for on the spot learning
- Assess the strengths and development needs of groups of practitioners, whole settings or organisations



Register for free at www.slcframework.org.uk

The Communication Trust is a coalition of over 50 not for profit organisations who work together to support everyone who works with children and young people to support their speech, language and communication.

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Assessing for success

Post-Rochford Review, asks **Jackie Ward**, will pupils with SEND finally be seen for what they can do, and not just what they can't?

Late last year I was asked to present a keynote speech at the @BeyondLevels #LearningFirst Lancaster conference (see beyondlevels.website), followed by a workshop aimed at opening up a wider discussion.

Both focused on how to conduct principled assessment from a SEND perspective, with a grounding in quality first teaching, whereby SENCos maintain strategic oversight of what is happening across their school. As a keen user of 'EduTwitter' I canvassed the views of professionals and parents beforehand, and the consensus seemed to be that we need to know the child in order to assess and meet their individual needs.

More than a PRU issue

That might sound obvious, but whether it happens still largely depends on teachers' ability to recognise SEND in their pupils and put appropriate interventions in place – or their willingness to seek further advice and support from their SENCo. As a former deputy head and SENCo in a primary pupil referral unit, I regularly received children with a range of underlying or complex needs that had often gone unrecognised. Some would have displayed challenging behaviours in a mainstream setting that stemmed from social, emotional and mental health difficulties, leading to their permanent exclusion.

It was our job to unpick those difficulties, build their self-esteem, combat their feelings of worthlessness and failure and deliver an appropriate curriculum



matched to their abilities. Yet failure is not just a PRU issue!

In my current role as an independent specialist teacher, I remain concerned that schoolchildren with SEND who are cognitively 'below' the expected standard are framed in the language of failure, rather than success. It all seems to be about what they cannot do, rather than their achievements, however big or small.

Falling below expectations

I therefore read the findings of the Rochford Review with great interest. As well as recommending the replacement

of P scales – which tend to assume an upward trajectory, rather than the more fluid 'steps of progress' that tend to be the reality – it called for the introduction of a statutory duty to assess pupils against seven aspects of cognition and learning and report this to parents and carers. The aspects in question are 'responsiveness', 'curiosity', 'discovery', 'anticipation', 'persistence', 'initiation' and 'investigation'. It will be up to schools to decide how they should assess progress in these areas, and use the resulting information to build up a picture of the whole child.

At my #LearningFirstworkshop, the gathered heads, SENCOs and

other professionals cheered this apparent rejection of what had up to then been a relentless focus on whether pupils fell below (or even well below) certain age-related expectations. Instead, we now have what appears to be a willingness to embrace the idea that progress can be made in small, positive steps – a notion that hitherto you would only have expected to find in the EYFS profile.

The language in the air now seems to focus far more on enjoyment, excitement, curiosity, stickability – and most importantly, on what a child *can* achieve, not just what they can't. So how can we ensure that systems are in place to 'assess for success'? There are some useful checklists out there that explain, step-by-step, the signs of SEND that teachers should look out for – there's one I particularly like created by Chris Chivers, which you can find at tinyurl.com/chivers-send.

If the school has firmly embedded quality first teaching, the SENCo can concentrate on their strategic role, ensuring the teacher has access to high quality resources and external specialists. Early intervention is key. When everyone knows which children have SEND, there can be a real sense of a shared purpose in helping the most vulnerable children succeed.



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visit sendforjax.co.uk



ONWARDS & UPWARDS

Meriel Bull looks at what primary SENCos can do to ensure that pupils with SEND make a relatively trouble-free transition from primary to secondary...

The move from primary school to secondary school is a daunting one for all children, but for children with special needs, the step can be a particularly anxious time for both the child and their parents.

A good strategy can help make the transition for your more vulnerable children less traumatic and more exciting. By ensuring that your strategy includes the input and skills of TAs, parents and the secondary SENCo (or SENCos, depending on the number of schools your setting feeds to) it will be high in impact and less of a burden on you alone. Sharing tasks with other primary SENCos feeding to the same schools can ease the process yet further.

Pen portraits

While a SENCo's main focus will always on children with SEND, there may be other children who will struggle with adapting to a new environment, so liaise with class teachers to get a clear list of children in need of extra

transition activities. Working with class teachers and TAs, put together pen portraits that outline each child's needs and personality. This will help you identify the factors of transition they will most need support with.

Good communication with parents is essential for maintaining an effective working relationship – something that will be especially appreciated when preparing for transition. Organise an event (no later than the end of the spring term) that all parents of those children identified will be invited to attend. If possible, secure the attendance of the secondary SENCo, or arrange for another member of their learning support team to attend on their behalf if needs be. Present to the assembled parents the planned activities for transition and additional strategies you have prepared, then invite questions that they can put to yourself and/or the secondary representative(s).

Secondary SENCos will likely welcome the chance to discuss the children they will be responsible for; the aforementioned pen portraits can form the basis of transitional activities you develop together to ensure that each child is appropriately supported.

Utilise the skills of your team by assigning a TA as a 'transition coordinator', and see if the secondary SENCo can link one of their TAs to your school in return. Visits by TAs between both schools will help to establish a sense of continuity and familiarity for the children. Try arranging a couple of informal tours of the secondary school before the main induction days, giving the children and parents a chance to look around when the school is quiet and start getting acquainted with the new school environment. This will also provide children and parents with an opportunity to ask questions of the secondary SENCo or their TAs and begin building a relationship with them.

A second tour during the day –

maybe around lunchtime – will allow the children to have their new school's routine explained to them in more detail, and perhaps even the chance to try it for themselves.

Join the club

A regular transition nurture group or lunchtime club will provide further opportunities for a TA from the secondary school to come in and chat to the children regarding any fears or excitement they might feel about changing school. Having the TA offer reassurance about issues relating to bullying and explain who will be there to help in the new school will help to calm the children's worries.

You could also use these sessions to create transitional aids, such as a scrapbook containing photos taken from the children's school tours. These could then provide discussion prompts regarding new lunchtime arrangements, the secondary's key members of staff, what the toileting arrangements will involve, the location of recreational areas and other details.

Floorplans could be coloured in to reflect subject areas. Mock timetables combined with map reading games can help the children begin to understand how they will find their own way between lessons, and the responsibility they will have for preparing for the right lessons each day and bringing the correct equipment with them.

Pictorial prompts showing items such as science lab equipment can be exciting, but for children you might have identified as dependent or less organised, a pictorial

TRANSITION CHECKLIST

- > Identify those children who will need extra transition support, and assemble pen portraits that can be shared with the SENCo at their new school
- > Meet with parents to discuss their fears, thoughts and ideas for transition
- > Arrange for additional secondary school visits during and outside working hours for the children, their parents and TAs so they can get start getting familiar with their new learning environment
- > Appoint TAs as transition coordinators to provide familiarity and continuity for the children
- > Create scrapbooks using photos from said visits to remind the children visually of key areas such as form rooms, toilet facilities, dining halls and recreation areas
- > Use maps of the new school and the surrounding area for orientation activities
- > Prepare independence aids such as 'What goes in my bag?' charts
- > Arrange for your former pupils to send transition advice letters during their first autumn term
- > Evaluate your transition activities each year, so as to improve the experience of the next intake



'Things to pack in my bag' poster they can keep at home may be invaluable.

Homework will be a worry too, so encourage good habits early on to minimise issues later. This might include using a homework diary or planner; completing work the day it's set; a willingness to find out about homework clubs; and knowing who they need to speak to if there's something they don't understand.

Orientation activities

The children's journeys to school can be looked at with the aid of local maps and the use of storyboards. An organised walk

from the primary school to the secondary school will help to develop their awareness of location, as well as their road safety skills. Find out how each child plans to get to school and discuss travel training with their parents as appropriate. If they can make the journey safely themselves, this will build up both their independence and their self-esteem.

Before you know it, the summer term will have slipped away and your year 6 children will have become year 7 students. They will likely get lost a few times, perhaps get into trouble for forgetting a

piece of homework and may well initially miss the smaller primary school setting.

Thanks to your prepared strategies, however, these sorts of issues will hopefully be kept to a minimum. By half term, chances are they'll have firmly settled in to their new routines, made new friends and be enjoying the range of opportunities now available to them. This is a great time for reflecting on what worked well during their transition, what you would do differently and what could have been better.

Finally, consider asking the secondary school whether your recently departed pupils

might be able to send letters or posters to your incoming year 6 children based around the theme 'What I wanted to know before I started secondary school'. Peer advice carries credibility, and presents a lovely opportunity for you to find out how they're getting on.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meriel Bull is a qualified SENCO and has taught in the West Midlands and Norfolk for over 12 years.



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“SENCoS lead – so let’s make them leaders”

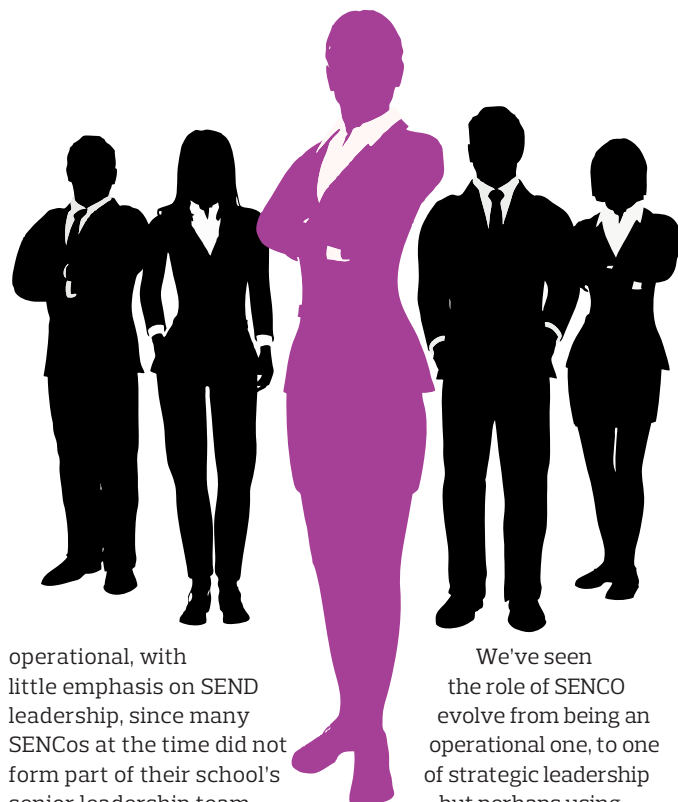
The post of SENCo is too often treated as a middle management position rather than a leadership role, argues **Michelle Haywood**...

Some years ago there was a dedicated TV channel for the teaching profession called ‘Teachers TV’. One of the programmes produced for said channel followed a secondary school SENCo around for the day, though the duties she was shown carrying out could be similarly applied to a primary school.

Viewers saw the SENCo accompanied by a man with a clipboard, who asked her about the various tasks she was performing before giving her advice on how to manage those tasks better. Having filed her paperwork, she was given tips on how she could employ a ‘RAFT’ approach (Refer, Action, File, Tash). After answering a telephone call about how a pupil’s needs were being met, she was advised to record the conversation on a pro forma. She was also shown holding a meeting with a group of teaching assistants, as well as undertaking some class teaching.

To help the SENCo manage the more strategic aspects of her role, another specialist was drafted in, who proceeded to introduce her to the principles of provision mapping. It was interesting that throughout the day there had been barely any mention at all of the role being strategic, aside from this brief provision mapping session – nor any talk of how the role should fit into the school management structure.

Instead, the role was portrayed as largely



operational, with little emphasis on SEND leadership, since many SENCoS at the time did not form part of their school’s senior leadership team.

Then and now

Fast forward to 2016, and the SENCo’s role is seen very differently. In some schools, deputy heads teachers are required to combine the role with their other duties, while some larger multi-academy trusts now appoint SEND directors to lead on SEND matters across several schools.

These different visions of the role have emerged in the wake of the latest SEND Code of Practice (see tinyurl.com/SEND-COP-2015), point 6.87 of which states, “The SENCo has an important role to play... in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school. They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team.”

We’ve seen the role of SENCo evolve from being an operational one, to one of strategic leadership – but perhaps using the title ‘SEND leader’ could help define this change more clearly, and raise the role’s status within the school structure yet further.

Range of responsibilities

‘SEN leadership’ ought to be considered a senior position due to the range of responsibilities it now entails – assessment and identification; tracking and evaluation; improving pupil outcomes; ensuring resources are used efficiently...

A good SEND leader attached to a school’s SLT will be able to monitor all of that, while at the same time gauging the effectiveness of staff working with pupils who have SEND. They will be well placed to effectively monitor

the SEND provision that pupils receive, and ideally positioned to contribute widely to leadership and management strategies across the school.

What we see instead is that SENCo roles tend to sit within middle leadership. The individual in question will usually complete the National Award for SEN Co-ordination after acquiring the role, which will provide them with an overview of SEND that covers not just leadership and management, but also knowledge and signposting around meeting children’s needs within the four areas of SEND defined by the Code of Practice.

The National Award might provide a good grounding for the role, but today’s SEND Leaders don’t necessarily need such extensive knowledge – not when there’s now an expectation for ‘every teacher to be a teacher of SEND’. However, there should certainly be someone within the school who possesses experience of identification, assessment and intervention processes, and is fully aware of the statutory requirements surrounding SEND – and where better for that person to sit than the senior leadership team?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Haywood is the SEN and inclusion manager at Entrust Education; she blogs at michhayw.wordpress.com



Making the emotional personal

Oliver Kendall explains why schools need to take a multi-pronged approach when supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Upon joining a large primary school in September 2015, it quickly became apparent to me that a minority of students with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties were not having their needs fully met – as demonstrated by the regular physical and verbal aggression they displayed towards their peers and staff.

The school had relied heavily upon behaviourist methods in its attempts to change habitual poor choices by these students, but unsurprisingly, this just exacerbated the problem. Moreover, I could see how much of a negative impact this was having on the wellbeing of the staff working with these children.

My aim was therefore to develop a much needed 'package' of support for children with SEMH difficulties that went beyond merely behaviourist methods and a sprinkling of time with a learning mentor – though this was against the backdrop of ever-dwindling

support from outside professionals and services.

Theories of behaviour

At this point it's worth noting the main theories of what drives behaviour, since schools lacking awareness of these might fall foul of the notion that behaviourist approaches alone will improve behaviour for this vulnerable group (see facing page).

More recently, another perspective on behaviour has emerged, namely the 'Bio-Psycho-Social' model, which incorporates elements from the various perspectives detailed opposite. With this in mind, we introduced an assessment tool to identify each child's individual needs and the subsequent creation of personalised plans. The assessment covered social, psychological and medical areas, in accordance with the Bio-Psycho-Social model, which meant we now had a whole school referral and assessment system in place for children who may have

SEMH difficulties.

One of our Y5 children, Sarah, scored poorly on the social aspects, suggesting that she is not socially secure and lacks understanding of the feelings and attitudes of others. She does not adapt flexibly or constructively with others, and finds it difficult to express her own needs and accept and accommodate those of others.

Her low scores on the psychological aspects further suggested that she doesn't heed her teacher or give appropriate attention, lacks purposefulness and self-motivation, is not self-accepting, has limited trust of others and lacks internalised constraints and self-control.

Personalised Plans

We were now ready to use the initial assessments to create personalised plans for each student. Sarah's looked like this:

> Sarah had witnessed traumatic events, thus some of her behaviour could be driven by subconscious feelings created from her early life experiences She does not

yet have the internal skills to understand and 'solve' such inner conflict.

Sarah to work with a Child Psychotherapeutic Counsellor for 2 hours per week.



> Sarah's behaviour is partly driven by her misperception of situations, where she responds in a way appropriate to her but not to others.

Class Teacher to plan whole class Life Skills lessons around situations she often misperceives, such as someone accidentally bumping into her in the corridor.

> It appears Sarah did not develop a secure attachment, impinging on her ability to form relationships. Her mother has also modelled undesirable behaviours, such as overreacting to minor events. **Sarah to participate in Lego Therapy sessions taught by the learning mentor in a group of three, to help develop her social skills and sense of belonging to a group.**

RISKS & PROTECTIONS

The DfE advice document 'Mental health and behaviour in schools' (See [tinyurl.com/dfe-mental-health](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544612/dfe-mental-health.pdf)) outlines risks and protective factors that can be indicators for children who might develop SEMH difficulties, as shown here. I now target children who display a number of these risk elements, aware that difficulties in this area are more likely to escalate without timely intervention.

	IN THE CHILD	IN THE FAMILY
RISK FACTORS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Genetic influences > Low IQ and learning disabilities > Communication difficulties > Difficult temperament > Physical illness > Low self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Overt parental conflict > Family breakdown and criminality > Inconsistent/unclear discipline > Physical, sexual or emotional abuse > Parental psychiatric illness > Parental or personality disorder
PROTECTIVE FACTORS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Secure attachment experience > Good communication skills > Being a planner, believing in control > Experiences of success > Faith or spirituality > Capacity to reflect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > At least one good parent-child relationship or supportive adult > Affection > Clear, consistent discipline > Support for education > Absence of severe discord



THE BEHAVIOURIST PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour is strengthened if it leads to satisfaction, and weakened if it leads to being ignored or an unsatisfying experience.

THE HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour is driven by the necessity of belonging to a social group and thinking well of oneself.

THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour is driven by individual cognitive processes, such as reasoning, understanding and interpretation of an event.

THE ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour is the result of social interaction, rather than coming from within the individual who displays it; misbehaviour is part of a cyclical chain of actions and reactions between participants.

THE PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Behaviour is a result of subconscious feelings that are created from early life experiences; problem behaviour arises from inner conflicts due to trauma or loss.

“The school relied heavily upon behaviourist methods in attempting to change habitual poor choices, but this just exacerbated the problem

Creating the ‘package’

A significant amount of my time, energy and resolve was spent on ensuring we could provide the holistic support detailed in each child's plan,

which entailed employing a counsellor. The head and I chose to employ one directly, since we felt this could foster a whole school approach to wellbeing through mindfulness classes and other activities.

Creating a job specification and interview questions for a role outside my area of expertise was daunting, but the rewards of line managing this crucial member of staff reaped dividends. I also employed an extra learning mentor trained in delivering the excellent Lego Therapy sessions and other evidence-based interventions. A targeted Breakfast Club was established to provide a calmer and more nurtured start to the day, and we introduced a Forest School. To evaluate these interventions I introduced a pre- and post-assessment, plus a ‘strengths and difficulties’ questionnaire for use by the counsellor.

Our ability to now meet the needs of pupils with SEMH was demonstrated via more desirable behaviour and improved attendance; school records show we have had no exclusions in the last three years, and that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is improving rapidly. Pupils who have struggled to succeed elsewhere are now extremely well supported, and there are excellent systems to nurture and care for vulnerable pupils with additional needs. *Note – names have been changed.*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EDUQ&AS:

SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

EMAIL: INFO@PATOSS-DYSLEXIA.ORG **VISIT:** WWW.PATOSS-DYSLEXIA.ORG **CALL:** 01386 712 650

We hear from the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Patoss) on what SENCoS can do to improve access and outcomes for children with SpLD

What barriers to learning do dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties (SpLD) present in the classroom?

Learners may present with varied characteristics, but teachers should be aware of the impact of these difficulties. Sir Jim Rose's 2009 report 'Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties' (see tinyurl.com/rose-dld-2009) presents these in detail.

Learners with SpLD are increasingly being described as 'neurodiverse' – how can SENCoS help their teaching colleagues to understand this term and its implications?

Neurodiversity is a term that acknowledges neurological differences among individuals and the multitude of variations within those differences.

Teachers and TAs should be encouraged to look beyond their initial impressions of a pupil and develop a fuller understanding of their needs based on detailed observations. By building a unique picture of their students' needs in this way, they can see where different SpLDs may overlap. Seeing pupils in terms of their neurodiversity potentially results in a more tailored approach to meeting students' needs. The SENCo's role should be to ensure information is accessible. Patoss recently contributed to a DfE-funded project that produced a range of free neurodiversity resources for early years, primary, secondary and post-16 learners – further details can be found at tinyurl.com/patoss-nd-res.

How can SENCoS become more confident in analysing a learner's needs and maximising their outcomes?

To make better, more informed choices SENCoS would be advised to access reliable information and utilise evidence-based interventions using resources such as the excellent Education Endowment Foundation (www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk). The Literacy and Dyslexia-SpLD Professional Development Framework (see tinyurl.com/dspld-framework) provides SENCoS and teachers with a wealth of resources, self-assessment modules and other information



relating to professional development.

For SENCoS interested in learning about psychometric assessments, how to analyse reports and how to identify SpLD, Patoss runs a number of excellent day courses, details of which can be found at patoss-dyslexia.org.

How can SENCoS learn to assess for access arrangements and ensure these are consistent with the whole school approach?

Access arrangements can be provided for students with disabilities and learning difficulties who require reasonable adjustments to access examinations. They are based on a student's needs as reported by subject teachers and support staff, alongside specialist evidence, and must reflect a normal way of working. For this reason, access arrangements will require a whole school approach, with the SENCo taking the lead.

The 'Patoss AAA: Assessing for Access Arrangements' qualification will enable SENCoS to assess for access arrangements and complete Form 8 Sections A, B and C. You can find more information about this course on the Patoss website.

How can SENCoS help deliver effective interventions for SpLD learners using the Graduated Approach of Assess – Plan – Do – Review?

Every school should have clear principles regarding the assessment of SEN pupils.

SENCoS should consider what assessment tools are appropriate for their setting while taking account of the different developmental stages of learning. This will establish a baseline of strengths and weaknesses for individuals and groups of pupils. From this, effective intervention can be planned with agreed outcomes to be reviewed.

SENCoS should also ensure that those adults assisting the pupils in question possess an appropriate level of skill and knowledge, and that parents and pupils are involved in producing a qualitative profile, such as a one-page 'pupil profile' or 'pupil passport'. This profile should contain details of what has been achieved so far and any next steps that might be needed.

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust's 'Framework and Teaching Handbook' (see tinyurl.com/framework-and-teaching) is a free resource that does an excellent job of explaining how SENCoS can deliver effective interventions using a graduated approach.

Further information

Patoss is THE Professional Association for teachers and assessors of students with specific learning difficulties, providing access to a wealth of resources, expert advice, a helpline, networking, CPD events and courses.



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Top of the Class

Give your school's SEND support a boost with these specialist products and services

The Communication Trust

1 The Communication Trust has developed a short online course all about speech, language and communication. Suitable for anyone working with children and young people, the course will support you to develop your understanding in a number of areas, including the different elements of speech, language and communication and how to identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs. To access this free course, visit the link below and see the 'Workforce Development' section. thecomcommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years

ChatterBug

2 ChatterBug is a leading provider of speech and language therapy services, working closely with schools to support children and young adults with a wide range of communication difficulties. Boasting a proven track record of providing high quality, evidence-based practice that delivers real results, ChatterBug is familiar with the latest DfE and Ofsted requirements for children with SEN, and can help settings implement them via a bespoke package based on needs and budget. www.chatter-bug.com

iASEND

3 iASEND is a user-friendly SEND pupil tracking service – and priced at £20 per pupil annually, a budget-friendly one, too. It breaks down the full curriculum, from P Scales to KS3, into incremental steps, accurately magnifying SEND progress so that it's easy to use and understand. Using customised pupil profiles to identify specific learning barriers, iASEND tracks depth of learning in maths, English, science and computing and can generate reports for Ofsted with just one click. www.lcp.co.uk/iasend

Timotay Playscapes

4 The outdoor sensory space of any setting should be fully inclusive and provide the same opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability or special need. It should be a place where diversity is respected and valued, in which children of all abilities can explore their surroundings in a safe, child-centred environment. Timotay Playscapes can provide settings with a free inspiration guide, detailing its outdoor sensory play spaces and play equipment – for your copy, email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk timotayplayscapes.co.uk

Explore Your Senses

5 Explore Your Senses is a passionate supplier of sensory resources that aims to deliver the highest quality products and service, with a team dedicated to ensuring customers receive speedy service and great value for money. Its exciting range of products can be used to enhance surroundings, keep fiddly fingers busy, aid focus, create calm environments and prevent distracting behaviour. It also offers tailored product kits targeted at groups and individuals with specific needs. www.exploreyoursenses.co.uk

Literacy life-saver

6 These colourful comics use funny, entertaining and highly engaging layouts to communicate National Curriculum learning objectives to kids in a unique and innovative way. Having received positive and enthusiastic reviews from pupils across the UK, in particular from pupils with dyslexia and autism spectrum conditions, they are notable for imparting information via a system that the comics' creator, Rossie Stone, himself devised as a teenager to pass and eventually excel at his own school exams, and are not to be missed... www.dekkocomics.com

Keeping the peace

WHEN WORDS DON'T WORK

Paul Dix looks at how to plan for shifting fears, sensory explosions and the other forms of unpredictable behaviour that aggression can take...

It is not enough just to 'be calm', even if sometimes that feels hard enough. It's the finer aspects of your response to a child's physical aggression that matter more.

Back away too quickly, and you can leave an unpredictable vacuum. Step in too fast, and people get hurt. Experience teaches, but often painfully.

Most primary classrooms reveal a chaos of sensory issues for children whose triggers aren't human. Dangly things drip from the ceiling. Bouncy 3D neon displays scream 'LOOK AT ME!'. Strip lighting competes with shoes squeaking on a lino floor. If you can't work out what the trigger is, it's usually sensory.

The answer, however, is not to strip everything back to white walls, but to make simple, reasonable adjustments. A low barrier around the child's desk that creates a controllable space; net curtains that can be pulled across crazy colours to create temporary calm; reducing your reliance on strip lighting; or using natural colours and hessian-backed displays.

Words don't often help much in the flurry of an aggressive outburst. They confuse, irritate and merge into one. Much more important is your physical language – and your eyes are the key.

How you respond must be carefully controlled. Don't show shock, regardless of the behaviour. Resist those looks of astonishment and panicked,

searching eyes. Pretend that everything is normal, and you will come across as in control. Release your own emotion, and it will be quickly stirred into the mix. This isn't a time for adults to respond with strong emotions. There needs to be someone in control – someone who is responding rationally and keeping everyone safe.

When to intervene?

Physical aggression often comes without warning. It can be sudden and shocking, with no apparent trigger. Fear is unpredictable. It shifts, moves and mutates. One day, the hair of another child will be of no consequence; the next, it's being torn out with a vice-like grip. One day, maths might be the problem; the next, it's Mr Harris and his irritating voice – *'I'm just not going into that classroom... whatever you do...'*

Behaviour management never runs in straight lines. Unpredictable, catastrophic behaviour gives you no time to divert, lead away or distract. It demands your immediate response, yet gives you little time to think.

Physical intervention is often used when the child has reached the peak of crisis, yet a swift and gentle leading

away by the shoulders at the start of the escalation can be far more effective. Knowing when to intervene is a fine judgement that should not be made in a crisis. Make it part of your planned agreement with the child and family. Identify the children who need to hand over control earlier and those who can pull themselves back from the brink. Remember those for whom a calm touch is reassuring and those who recoil from it.

Focus on meeting the needs of the child and safety of the rest of the class, rather than the strict demands of the policy. Intervening and restraining children isn't always a 'last resort'. It can be a highly effective first response, and avert more protracted and complicated incidents.

You might not have done it for a while, but losing your temper and regaining control is tiring. Losing it and regaining it repeatedly is utterly exhausting. For children who struggle to stay in control, it's a story of diminishing returns across the school day. The more control is lost, the harder it becomes to re-establish next time. By the third time a child has loses

their temper, it can be difficult for them to fully regain their composure before a long rest or sleep.

False expectation appearing real

Working with that understanding means that children who lose control twice in the morning should not immediately be thrown back into afternoon lessons – at least not without some one-to-one supervision. That said, I have seen many children who seem calm during a one-to-one return to class and destroy it in a heartbeat. The average recovery time for a child

“Catastrophic behaviour demands your immediate response, yet gives you little time to think



who reaches crisis point is 45 minutes, so leaving children out of lessons after single incidents for too long would be a mistake also. Of course, that recovery time will lengthen for repeated incidents.

Fear was once described to

me as a 'False Expectation Appearing Real', which I think really helps when trying to plan ahead for children whose triggers are hard to read. What false expectations are being acted upon? What may be

obviously unreal to everyone else,

yet very real to them?

For many children, reaching the point of fury will be accelerated by the mismatch of expectation. They can't read, compute or calculate what the rest of the class is looking at. Their basic skills are so far behind the others that an undifferentiated lesson is like walking into the dark without a torch.

The ferocious reaction to having this lack of skills exposed can be as strong as a trauma-triggered response. Children back away quickly, hurting others in the process, but their intent isn't to hurt. Their response is pure emotion.

Such behaviours are often interpreted as a 'behaviour problem', when in truth it is a learning gap that needs backfilling quickly. Many schools I'm working with are reporting fabulous results with Sound Training (soundtraining.co.uk) on reading recovery, and I was recently introduced to Mrs Wordsmith (mrswordsmith.com), which looks great. Not being able to read fluently means you are excluded from the class whilst remaining in it. That would make even a patient adult angry.

Restorative conversations

You don't teach new behaviours by punishment. Teach behaviour by holding up a mirror for the children and helping them learn about themselves, like good parents would. This demands a planned restorative conversation, where calm reflection builds understanding and resilience. Detention builds resentment; conversations build understanding. Use the same questions each time, so the children become used to them as a reference. You'll find that in time, they'll use simple restorative questions to make decisions, as well as for reflecting after difficult events. Examples might include:

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

A 5-POINT CHECKLIST

- 1 Agree a three-step plan with the child and parents.
- 2 Check your first response - don't show shock or react with emotion
- 3 Be prepared to intervene early to prevent an escalating situation
- 4 Focus on your physical response; limit your words
- 5 When everyone is calm, use restorative questions to encourage self reflection and teach empathy

- > What happened?
- > What have you thought since?
- > Who was affected?
- > How were they affected?
- > What can you do to make things right?

You might choose to go through each in turn, or use one or two for shorter reflecting conversations. The children will get better at answering them – and become better at reflecting on the impact of their behaviour – the more often they're used.

You're building the children's ability to empathise with others, and to see the impact of their behaviour on others, not simply on themselves.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Paul Dix is a behavioural specialist and CEO of the education consultancy, Pivotal Education; for more details visit pivotaleducation.com or follow @PivotalPaul





MEET, GREET, PARTNER, BUILD

With local authority services continuing to be scaled back, Professor **Sonia Blandford** looks at how schools can plug the gap by liaising with external agencies...

Funding for SEND is going through challenging times. Services once provided by local authorities are being scaled back, and in some areas the role of 'Area SENCo' within the local authority is becoming less clearly defined. LA advice, previously just an email or phone call away, is now harder to find.

The Children and Families Act (2014), legislated for a more inclusive approach in educational settings for children and young people with

special educational needs and disabilities. The current SEND Code of Practice makes clear that it is mandatory for schools to appoint a SENCo with certain defined responsibilities, but they are currently having to do so within a difficult economic climate.

New ways of working

The situation could be worse, however. In schools, SEND has come quite a long way in a relatively short period of time. There is now greater clarity around identification and support, and more importantly,

higher expectations for children and young people with SEND. Now is the time for schools to take a lead by auditing their SEND provision, scrutinising their internal systems and developing effective channels of communication with external agencies.

Effective partnership working is at the centre of the government's programme for creating a better system for children and their families, with the aim of improving long term outcomes. The Children and Families Act confers a duty on LAs that should bring

about better integration of education, health and social care provision, where this will promote wellbeing and improve the quality of provision for those with SEND. These reforms are far-reaching, with many entailing a change in culture, perception and the professional experience among teachers and other school professionals.

Improving outcomes for children will increasingly depend on the integrated working of multi-agency teams in which effective communication between managers, headteachers and

SENCOs will be essential. It's important that there's a clear understanding as to what is intended – a change in the way that schools both see themselves and are seen within the community. This follows a recognition by the government that environment and circumstances can have a significant impact on a child's learning, attainment and future life chances, and that engaging parents, carers and other related agencies will have a positive impact on children's achievement.

A family-centred focus

This family-centred focus of the government's change programme is not concerned with the provision of services *per se*, but with providing services that meet the needs of the child and improve their outcomes in a person-centred approach.

Successful practice in a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary context means being clear about your role and aware – and respectful of – the roles of other workers and agencies. You should actively seek out and respect other people's knowledge and input, and use that to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

To ensure every child and his or her family has someone who knows them, and with whom they can talk, educational settings must develop policies and protocols that will facilitate seamless service. The table above (adapted from the government-produced

THE CHILD'S VOICE	SERVICE PROVIDERS SHOULD...
If I have a need, someone in my school works with me and my family/carers to understand my needs and helps me and my family/carers decide what's best for me.	Identify needs early (be they behavioural, social, problems at home, etc.). Upon identifying a specific problem, a teacher or SENCo within the school who knows the child will know how to respond.
If I need more support, someone I trust works with me and my family/carers to work out an action plan and decide who can help me.	Assess those needs and provide information and advice. A SENCo or trained teacher will work with the family to develop a personalised action plan, supported by the multi-agency team.
If I need more people to help, someone brings together all the people I need to support me and my family/carers and makes sure we get the support and can access it.	Form the team around the child. A SENCo or teacher will select those people most able to help and support the child from the multi-agency team and specialists from various service providers.
If I have been receiving support, someone talks to me and my family/carers to see if the support has helped me or if I need something more.	Ensure that the child and his/her family/carers are involved in regular reviews of progress.

document *Building Brighter Futures* – see tinyurl.com/building-brighter-futures) still provides a good framework for guiding initial practice and highlighting where schools might need to take further action.

Three principal models

All agencies have to recognise the importance of involving children and parents or carers. The consultative responsibilities and communication systems at school level will also need to be clearly identified. Organisational structures and working practices must reflect this principle, so that joint planning arrangements do the following:

- Take account of good practice
- Ensure consultation with all relevant services
- Involve agreed priorities
- Clearly communicate decisions to parents, carers and professionals

➤ Review policies and objectives

In practice, there are three principal models of multi-agency working with which you might be involved. The first is the 'multi-agency panel', whereby members remain with their agency, but meet regularly to discuss children with additional needs who would benefit from multi-agency input. Panel members may carry out case work or take on a more strategic role.

The second, 'multi-agency teams', see members seconded or recruited onto a team with a leader and common purpose and goals. They may still receive supervision and training from their home agency, but have the opportunity to work with a range of different services.

In the final model, 'integrated services', different services (such as 'health' and 'education', for example) are co-located to form a highly visible hub within the local community. Funded by the partner organizations and managed to ensure integrated working, they will often be based in schools or early years settings.

Examine your procedures

A key concern for schools today should be to ensure that their

SENCo is an active member of a local Network Group. After this, consider whether the leadership of SEND across your school might involve a culture change and examine your procedures for internal communication – particularly between managers, headteachers and SENCOs.

Look also at your external communications procedures and the extent to which teachers must take on responsibility for those with SEND, rather than relying on the SENCo alone.

Most importantly of all, consider this – are you listening to the voices of the parents, carers and children?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sonia Blandford is the founder and CEO of Achievement for All, a provider of education programmes to early years settings, schools and FE colleges; for more information, visit afaeducation.org



“All agencies have to recognise the importance of involving children and parents or carers.”

What to do when *'doing'* is difficult

Could those outward signs of clumsiness point to dyspraxia, and if so, how should teachers respond?

Veronica Bidwell takes a closer look...

Mark is 8 years old. He reads well, is bright and talkative and always has a lot to contribute to class discussion.

However, he is getting into a lot of bother because he finds it hard to sit still. His written work is also always messy and his handwriting poor, with letters of different sizes often squashed together and frequently going off the line.

Mark can be relied upon to be the last child to get changed for PE and generally keeps the class waiting. He is never picked to be on a games team as he just can't throw, catch or kick a ball successfully. His class teacher is perplexed – why does this bright boy seem to take so little trouble? He comes across as not wanting to make an effort, which has the result of annoying his peer group. His mother says he is tired out and often angry when he gets home.

What his teacher doesn't know is that Mark is an undiagnosed dyspraxic. Until this specific learning difficulty is diagnosed and he gets appropriate help, he will continue to become increasingly alienated, frustrated and despondent.

Thoughts and perceptions

The good news, however, is that there is much teachers can do to support pupils with dyspraxia. A lawyer I know by the name of Abigail, who I first met when she was a disruptive 12-year-old, once told me that it was the small changes her teachers and parents made in response to her dyspraxia diagnosis that had greatest impact on her ability to cope and thrive.

At its simplest, dyspraxia refers to difficulty with motor coordination – 'Dys' meaning 'difficulty' and 'praxia' meaning 'doing'. The condition

can also be referred to as developmental coordination disorder (DCD) and was in the past previously known as 'clumsy child syndrome'.

Whilst dyspraxia is primarily a developmental coordination difficulty, it gets more complicated. It manifests as an immaturity in the coordination of movements, but can also affect perception and thought processes. It might cause younger children to struggle with performing physical actions in sequence, such as those required to clean their teeth or get dressed, for example. Teenagers, on the other hand, might struggle with planning and organising the higher order mental activities needed for tasks such as writing an essay, planning revision and drawing up a timetable.

Dyspraxia is on a continuum. The difficulties experienced by individuals with the condition may be serious or mild, and can be easily confused with

dyslexia, attention deficit disorder or even a subtle communication difficulty. This is because there is much overlap in the signs and symptoms of each area of difficulty, and often they will not be mutually exclusive. It is estimated that between 2 and 8% of pupils may experience dyspraxia, with boys outnumbering girls by four to one.

What teachers can do

The earlier description of Mark conveys some of the key difficulties a young person with dyspraxia may experience. As children get older and the demands of school become greater, more areas of difficulty are likely to emerge. Poor planning and organising may become an ongoing issue. Copying from the board and other sources is likely to be slow and inaccurate. Their grasp of maths can be impacted, structuring and executing written work may not come easily, and there will often be a gulf between what the child knows and understands and his ability to express this in writing.

“ Break complex tasks down into achievable chunks and make a point of recognising when the pupil has clearly put in effort



So what can teachers do? First, raise any observations you've made with parents and see if they have noticed anything themselves, or have any concerns. Work with parents to establish the best way forward and consider obtaining an occupational therapist's assessment and intervention.

In class, ensure the child has enough time to complete work that involves fine motor skills, and consider using modified equipment. Some children might find that a sloped desk, special pen or wobbly cushion helps them – an occupational therapist will be able to advise.

Think also about organising physical activities based around helping to develop and improve physical strength and coordination.

When issuing verbal directions and instructions to children with dyspraxia, do so bit by bit with no more than two or three points at a time. Try not to chastise a child too much if he or she is slow to complete self-help activities such as changing for PE lessons. It may be worth asking the parents to provide their child with Velcro shoes or trousers with an elasticated waist. Give him or her a head start.

Putting in the effort

Remember to also give plenty of positive feedback when the child makes a good effort, along with lots of encouragement. I have heard many young dyspraxics tell me that they have given up bothering, because however hard they try, their untidy and poorly presented work will always be criticised and never given praise for good content. Similarly, their untidy appearance and clumsiness is often misinterpreted as deliberate lack of effort and respect.

Instead, teachers can help by marking for content

rather than presentation and giving sufficient time for the pupil to copy from the board. Typed notes should be provided where possible, and they should be given additional time to finish tests and exams.

Try breaking complex tasks down into achievable chunks, and make a point of recognising when the pupil has clearly put effort into their work, even if their progress is slow and the end results messy. Try to modify their homework assignments where appropriate, and help the pupil develop strategies to manage their equipment and stay organised.

All dyspraxic pupils should have the opportunity to learn touch typing and use laptops to complete written work. This should start in primary school and continue into secondary.

Pupils like Mark can and will thrive if they feel valued and are supported to find effective strategies to manage their particular areas of difficulty.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF DYSPRAXIA

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Difficulty with managing buttons, zips and laces and using scissors and cutlery. Colouring in and pencil control may be weak and handwriting will be poor. Letters may appear squashed and uneven in size. Books are likely to look messy, and the pupil will dislike having to write.

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

A tendency to appear clumsy and uncoordinated, with obvious difficulties in throwing and catching during ball games. The pupil may have difficulty in disassociating movements, making dance and PE classes hard.

VISUAL/SPATIAL ABILITY

Confusion in distinguishing left and right and lack of interest in puzzles and construction toys. Copying off the board may be a challenge, and aspects of maths with a spatial component will be difficult. As the pupil gets older, they may find maps and diagrams hard to follow.

SELF-HELP SKILLS

Dressing can be slow; clothes may go on inside out and in the wrong order.

ORGANISATION AND SEQUENCING

The pupil may find it hard to follow class and playground rules and have little sense of time. Structuring their written work will often be a struggle, and they may have a tendency to lose or forget their belongings.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

The pupil may exhibit immature behaviour, struggle to read body language and not react appropriately to facial expressions. He or she may sometimes overdo things, coming across as too rough, socially gauche and not knowing when enough is enough, while at the same time being easily distressed and emotional.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Veronica Bidwell is an educational psychologist and the author of *The Parents' Guide to Specific Learning Difficulties*





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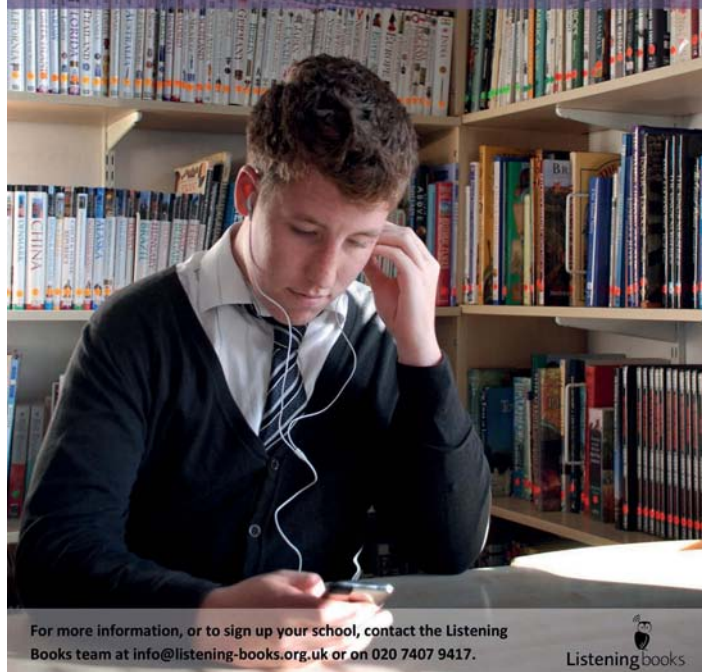


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Are your adjustments **REASONABLE?**

Laxmi Patel unpacks what schools need to know with regards to disability discrimination law...

The law covering disability discrimination at school falls under the Equality Act 2010 (EA), under which it is unlawful for a school to treat disabled pupils unfavourably.

According to the EA, discrimination can take the form of:

> Direct discrimination – where a school might refuse admission based on a pupil's disability, for example

> Indirect discrimination – for instance, when a school only provides work in a single format that might not be accessible

> Discrimination arising from a disability – such as cases where a pupil might be prevented from attending a school trip due to their disability.

Discrimination is unlawful in schools in relation to current pupils (even if temporarily absent or excluded), prospective pupils and former pupils. This duty applies to the governing bodies of all schools – be they academies, LA maintained or independent – and covers all areas of school life, from extra-curricular activities and after-school clubs to inter-school sport fixtures and school trips.

What are 'reasonable adjustments'?

Schools have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled pupils are not discriminated against. This might involve providing extra support, such as specialist teachers or equipment as detailed in a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (or occasionally the Statement of Special Educational Needs that the EHCP is intended to replace)

The pupil's home local authority has a duty to provide (i.e. fund) the



support set out within the ECHP, but the school also has a duty to ensure it has made reasonable adjustments.

This duty to make reasonable adjustments is set out in section 20 of the EA, and entails three requirements:

1 Where a **provision, criterion or practice** puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage, there is a duty to take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage

2 Where a **physical feature of a property** puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage, there is a duty to take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage

3 Where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage without an **auxiliary aid**, there is a duty to take reasonable steps to provide the auxiliary aid.

The general duty for schools only extends to requirements (1) and (3).

Pre-emptive measures

Schools do, however, also have to comply with schedule 13 of the EA, which states that

the responsible body of the school must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they can receive the same level of access enjoyed by other pupils and avoid being put at substantial disadvantage. This duty is anticipatory, which means schools must take pre-emptive measures to overcome any obvious barriers to disability, in addition to any further adjustments they may need to make. Schools must also prepare and further an accessibility strategy.

If an adjustment is reasonable it should be made, and there can be no justification for not doing so. Failing to make a reasonable adjustment is an act of unlawful discrimination.

The Act does not *define* what is considered a 'reasonable' adjustment, but does contain guidance that sets out factors schools may take into account. These include:

> The extent to which special educational provision will be provided to the disabled pupil under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014

> The extent to which an adjustment would overcome the substantial disadvantage

suffered by a disabled pupil

> The practicability of the adjustment – an adjustment that is easy and inexpensive to make will likely be found to be more reasonable than one which is difficult or expensive, but the costs should not be passed onto pupils (by increasing the pupil's school fees, for example)

> The effect of the disability on the pupil

> The resources of the school and availability of financial or other assistance

> Health and safety requirements

> The need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards and the interests of other pupils and potential pupils.

Funding adjustments

Many disabled pupils will receive additional support through the SEN framework, to the extent that the school will have no further obligations under the EA. Schools would be advised to document carefully any decisions taken on reasonable adjustments, so that they can be justified to parents and/or presented at a tribunal hearing for a claim of disability discrimination.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laxmi Patel is head of education at **Boyes Turner Solicitors**; for more information visit **senexpertsolicitors.com**





"WE HAD TO HIDE WHAT WE WERE DOING"

There's no quick fix when it comes to engaging emotionally with children and parents, but making the effort, like staff at Water Hall Primary School, can pay real dividends, says **Jacob Stow...**

There's an unusual tranquillity to the start of each day at Water Hall Primary School, Milton

Keynes. It's part of the very fabric of the grounds – from the decorative (and suitably water-themed) entrance that serves every child and parent, to the classical music-filled courtyard, leafy and well-stocked with standing stones, through which they must pass to reach the bright, modern classrooms.

"When I go into a classroom today, everyone is engaged in

their work – 13 years ago it was just a warzone," Water Hall's headteacher, Tony Draper, tells us. If the name sounds familiar, that's because Tony is the immediate past president of the NAHT.

Starting early

When Tony first arrived at Water Hall more than a decade ago he was under no illusions as to the scale of the challenge he faced. Issues posed by the school's intake – the proportion of children eligible for the Pupil Premium, and with SEN at

Water Hall is well above the national average, while mobility is high – couldn't be avoided, but the responses to them could be changed.

"At the time the Foundation Stage was in a dire state – and if your Foundation Stage isn't right, then the rest of the school isn't," Tony says. "In the early years you're developing children's values and their perception of school. You're developing their parents' perception of school as well.

If the staff blame children for where they come from, as happened here many years ago, they pick up on that. They know whether or not they're valued by the school. And if they're not, why on earth should parents support you?"

Prior to Tony's arrival it was Karen Roberts, then a Year 2 teacher and now deputy

head, who was tasked with implementing a new approach to the school's youngest children in the first step on Water Hall's long road to recovery. "It was about having high expectations, distinguishing what was learning through play and what was play with little or no purpose – and, importantly, improving communication between staff and parents, which was very, very difficult," she explains.

"Things were quite hostile at the time; there was a lot of friction. Many of the parents had been bullied at school, and therefore felt they were sending their children to school to be bullied. We had to break down those barriers and let the parents know that we cared as much about their children as they did."

“ We were absolutely convinced that the key to switching children on to learning was emotional engagement.”

TONY DRAPER | HEADTEACHER

Emotional engagement

Establishing the school's values and desired behaviours provided a consistency of vision, but more was needed to improve children's learning outcomes. "We were absolutely convinced that the key to switching children on to learning was emotional engagement," Tony says.

By chance, both Tony and Karen stumbled upon a means to achieve just that – Kaleidoscope, an approach based on aspects of colour therapy and developed by headteacher Anne Lubbock, also based in Milton Keynes.

Water Hall embraced Kaleidoscope, placing it at the heart of every child's school experience. Its practical application takes various forms, but the end goal is always the same – to foster self-esteem and a state of mind conducive to learning.

Classroom sessions present children with a sensory focal point – for example, a battery-powered candle and piece of tactile material – and see them engaging in different relaxation techniques. After that, they might play with Play-Doh or pipe-cleaners, or blow bubbles. "In this context it's very much about getting 30 children relaxed and ready for the day,"



Karen explains.

At other times, the children benefit from small group therapy sessions in a specially designed Kaleidoscope room – a soothing environment, fitted with multisensory equipment. "These sessions run for at least 10 weeks," Karen explains, "but some children will use the programme throughout their school lives, because they need that space and time to re-engage with themselves."

Go your own way

Tony and Karen are clear that while Kaleidoscope is for everyone at Water Hall, it is particularly effective in

supporting the school's many children who could be classed as emotionally vulnerable. Teachers work to build self-esteem, too – "A lot of our children find it very hard to look at themselves in the mirror, so we draw on mirrors, put sequins on them," Karen says.

Today, every member of teaching staff is trained to implement Kaleidoscope with their children. "If everyone buys in, then it's going to make a bigger difference," Karen notes. And that difference comes to the fore in Year 6, when all the efforts to scaffold self-esteem translate into significantly improved attainment.

That Tony, Karen and the team at Water Hall have turned things around is an achievement made all the sweeter by the fact that the LA at the time was dismissive of their approach. "Our belief in emotional engagement was not shared by the powers that be," Tony recalls. "We went through a very difficult time where we had to hide what we were doing to improve this school, and play the game with what they were imposing on us.

"We were still doing the things we were being told to do," Karen clarifies, "We still had the consultants coming in, we were still doing the extra literacy and numeracy. But alongside that we were doing more and more of the emotional engagement.

"As things slowly started to improve, we were doing less

Pupil voice



Jack Sharp

"Kaleidoscope is good because it relaxes our

minds and helps us learn. We do it every day. There's music too – calm music without words. Everyone in the class says it's very relaxing. I think things would be noisier without it."



Owen Wright

"Our 4D room is where we go for learning

topics. There are screens on the floor and curtains. We'll watch pictures and films, and then have a discussion. Afterwards we go back to the classroom to write about what we've seen."



Chantelle Mariera

"Learning cafes get our minds working so we

don't just keep our ideas to ourselves; everyone knows what they're doing and gets a say. We want to have a growth mindset, where you accept other people's comments and things you can improve on."



Philip Gustov

"At playtimes we have different

groups, for example, football, skipping and table tennis. People used to just run outside and wouldn't always join in, or do silly things. But now we're together and we know what we're doing. I like the new way."



MEANING *through melody*

Mary Isherwood explains how music plays a central role in the daily rhythms of school life at Camberwell Park School...

The nursery rhymes we hear when we're little. The first dance at our wedding. Those unforgettable live performances of our favourite bands or opera. The soundtracks we put on to accompany our car journeys.

Music plays an important part in all our lives, evoking memories and emotions as we go and allowing us to communicate who we are – and it can play an integral part in the daily life of a school.

Camberwell Park School caters for primary aged pupils with a range of SEND, many of whom are non-verbal or have limited verbal communication. These pupils rely on a variety of communication strategies, from using objects of reference to symbols, signing and switches. It's been our experience that music can enhance and support our pupils' communication abilities, and in turn support outcomes across many areas of learning.

Here, I want to share with you some of the ways in which we have put this thinking into practice from the perspective of a teaching practitioner. I am now a headteacher, but have taught learners with SEND throughout my career and was a subject leader for a number of years. Whilst I am aware of the specialist work carried out this area by music therapists – we engage one ourselves using

some of our pupil premium funding – what follows is a series of practical ideas that we know to be successful, and which could be implemented in all schools.

Express yourselves

There are many ways in which different forms and styles of music can be used to support children in expressing themselves – both as part of music lessons and across other areas of learning.

Music curriculum examples include letting pupils have a go at conducting the class or school band. As well as helping them learn the concepts of 'fast/slow' and 'loud/quiet', by allowing them to decide how they want their class to play they will be able to express themselves musically in a non-threatening way, where there's no 'right or wrong'.

Engaging pupils on a one-to-one basis to support their communication skills with music can be magical. One of my favourite ways of doing this is to use an instrument, such as a bodhran for example, to hold a 'musical conversation'. This can begin with the adult copying noises made by the child using the instrument. As the child's confidence and understanding grows, the exchange will become more reciprocal and can be a great way of developing communicative relationships.

Composition presents a

challenge for some of our pupils, but using body percussion – claps, stamps and so forth – can give children a freedom to express and communicate their ideas. Try capturing the patterns and sequences they come up with using a set of symbols, so that they can 'notate' and repeat their compositions.

Music and other subjects

Music can have a role in enhancing and supporting communication and learning across other areas of the curriculum too. Music is regularly used to encourage physical expression during PE lessons, but why not try using music to also support pupils' writing skills?

We have implemented the Write Dance programme (writedancetraining.com) at Camberwell Park and found that it's had a great impact on the pupils' confidence, level of engagement and writing skills.

Total communication, including signing, is embedded in our school. We have a weekly whole-school sing and sign session, at which we are joined by pupils from a neighbouring mainstream school who learn the songs and signs along with us.



Transitions and anxiety

Many of our pupils find change difficult and are supported throughout the school day with visual timetables that enable them to 'check what is next' in order to reduce their anxiety. We have also found that singing original rhymes about the school and its routines to familiar tunes can help our pupils better cope with heightened periods of anxiety during key transition periods, such as dinner and home times; some children might use these

songs and rhymes during class times as well.

Pieces of music are further used around the school as auditory cues, to support children with recognising and understanding particular activities. One example of this is our weekly assemblies, where we will consistently play the song 'A Whole New World' from the Disney film *Aladdin* as the pupils enter. This, combined with the visual schedules they use and our assemblies' familiarity, effectively reduces the pupils' sense of anxiety while promoting understanding and engagement.

We also regularly use songs to support understanding and communication within lessons.

'Hello songs' are played to greet children in the morning, and play an important role in helping the children to develop their awareness of, and friendships with each other. 'Feelings songs', meanwhile, enable the pupils to tell if they are happy or sad in a non-threatening way.

An aid to learning

Music, as we know, can additionally help us to learn and retain facts. 'Days of the week', 'number' and 'alphabet' songs all therefore feature as part of each school day, and we have often heard of pupils singing them at other times. After a parent told us that his daughter had been singing some of the school's original songs at home, it prompted us to compile an audio CD of the songs and produce an accompanying book of words and signs. That way, the pupils could enjoy singing the songs

with their families, thus further supporting their communication at home.

Another activity many classes have organised is to create 'song boards' using symbols and other visual images to represent favourite songs that children can choose between. The children can use the song boards to communicate their preferences, and then enjoy the class singing the song they've chosen.

Music can be a motivator and a reward. It can be calming and relaxing in some situations, stimulating and engaging at others, and be a very powerful tool for de-escalating anxiety when a child is in crisis. The key to using music effectively is to know your pupils well, and what you are trying to help them to achieve.

TRY IT YOURSELF

WHAT IMPACT COULD THESE CAMBERWELL PARK MUSIC ACTIVITIES HAVE ON THE PUPILS IN YOUR SCHOOL?

> Creating 'songboards' using visual images to represent popular songs and asking pupils to choose their favourites

> Putting rhymes to familiar tunes to support your pupils with transitioning between activities

> Using an instrument such as a bodhran to conduct a turn-taking musical 'conversation' with one of your pupils

> Assigning pieces of music to certain auditory cues and using these to signify regular activities, such as assembly

> Learning the signs to a set of favourite songs and having regular 'sing and sign' sessions

> Using music to support cross curricular learning and expression in other subject areas, such as PE



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Mary Isherwood is headteacher at Camberwell Park School, Manchester; she blogs at maryisherwood.wordpress.com and tweets as @Mishwood1





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Make your school deaf-friendly



How can schools minimise the impact of hearing impairments on their pupils' learning? **Ian Noon** looks at the available options...

Note – The term 'deaf' is here used to refer to all levels and types of hearing loss

Deafness is not a learning disability, but because so much learning occurs through listening and seeing, it can present complex challenges to school-aged children and those teaching and supporting them.

With more than 45,000 permanently deaf children in the UK, and many more experiencing temporary deafness such as glue ear (80% of children will have experienced at least one episode of glue ear by the age of 10), all educators should be aware of these challenges and how to overcome them.

Assessing needs

Levels of deafness can range from mild to profound. Some children may be deaf in just one ear, or experience chronic but temporary deafness. Half of all deaf children are born deaf, with the other half acquiring it later in life. The age at which children with late-onset deafness are diagnosed can vary, with significant implications for their language development.

Most deaf children will communicate through spoken English, but many also



communicate in sign language. Deaf children may benefit from hearing technologies, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, to varying degrees, but it is important to remember that no technology currently exists that will enable a deaf child to hear as well as their classmates.

When a deaf child is first starting school, ensure that there is a clear process and plan in place, and that key information about the child is captured and shared among staff. As well as the information that can be obtained from health professionals, parents and the

child themselves, a number of specialist assessments are available which could examine, for example, a deaf child's skills in communication, language, listening, literacy and numeracy.

It's particularly important to include non-verbal assessments in order to understand a deaf child's cognitive abilities. A specialist Teacher of the Deaf can provide further advice on setting realistic, but stretching targets and outcomes for each child.

Planning and doing

Many deaf children can

experience slower language development, both spoken and written, with reduced vocabulary and understanding of words and concepts. Teachers of the Deaf can advise on appropriate strategies and interventions for individual deaf children, which might include:

- > Tailored and accessible language and literacy programmes, such as pragmatics and teaching grammar or phonological awareness
- > Pre- and post-tutoring for new topic areas as required – pre-tutoring helps establish



what the deaf child already knows and introduces new concepts ahead of the lesson, while post-tutoring reinforces key learning points from the lesson and sees if there are any areas the child didn't understand

> Creating a good listening environment by improving classroom acoustics and reducing background noise – eg. turning off any noise-emitting devices (whiteboards, projectors) when not needed, and preventing sounds from bouncing off hard surfaces by covering them with drapes and displays

> Ensuring that hearing technologies are used effectively

A key technology for many deaf children is a radio aid, which carries the teacher's voice via a microphone to a receiver attached to the child's hearing aid or cochlear implant. These can mitigate some of the issues with background noise and poor acoustics, providing they are used properly. Teachers of the Deaf can advise on the steps staff should take when using one, which include ensuring that the radio aid is worn around 15cm from the mouth, and that there is no jewellery

for the microphone to knock against.

Attention, memory and concentration

If a deaf child relies on lipreading and listening to understand what is being said, they can sometimes tire easily and struggle with attention and concentration. Research has found that deafness can also interfere with working memory development and a child's ability to hold information whilst processing other tasks.

To address such issues, consider using visual cues to support your teaching points by incorporating pictures, diagrams, illustrations and objects into the lesson. You could also create specific vocabulary handouts using visual cues for specific topics.

Ensure that the pace and length of your learning sessions will give deaf children additional time to process information and check their levels of understanding after lessons. Teachers of the Deaf can provide further advice on using programmes aimed at improving working memory that are specifically deaf-friendly.

Remember that no hearing technology can 'fix' deafness;

deaf children will still struggle to pick up what others are saying through casual listening. To manage the difficulties around incidental learning that this can cause, try to organise one-to-one and small-group work activities in good listening environments so that it's easier for deaf children to pick up on what others have said. Another useful strategy is to ensure that any video material used within the lesson is subtitled, or at least accompanied by a transcript.

Multi-tasking and social skills

Deaf children will find it difficult to lipread or watch someone using sign language while simultaneously taking in a presentation or demonstration. You can help support deaf children with multi-tasking by deploying teaching assistants effectively – for instance by asking them to take notes while the demonstration is being carried out.

If you can, repeat the demonstration with an explanation provided in between, or allow additional time for deaf children to process what is being said while looking at the screen or presenter. Give deaf children

REVIEWING PROGRESS

Your school should receive ongoing assessments and advice from specialist Teachers of the Deaf to confirm that specific strategies are working, and that expected targets and outcomes are being achieved.

It is also important to seek feedback from the deaf child and their parents on what is and isn't working.

an opportunity to look at any presentations in advance.

Deaf children may also experience challenges in engaging with hearing children and school staff. Provide opportunities for children to build up their social skills and develop self esteem and confidence through small group work. You could also establish 'quiet zones' in school to allow for easier interaction between deaf children and their peers.

Consider initiating a deaf awareness programme and having the deaf children themselves play a role in advising on the content it should include. A Teacher of the Deaf can provide advice on what resources are available to support this, and how deaf awareness programmes could form part of your school's anti-bullying strategy.

Ensure that there is adequate communication support in place during extra-curricular activities so that deaf children can access them – but also encourage deaf children to take responsibility for explaining and asserting their needs.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Ian Noon is head of policy and research at the National Deaf Children's Society; for more information and further guidance, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement



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READING THE ROCHFORD REVIEW

Lorraine Petersen OBE examines the recommendations of the Rochford Review into how pupils with SEND ought to be assessed and considers what its impact will be...

The Rochford Review (named after its Chair, special school executive head Diane Rochford) was established in July 2015 to review the statutory assessment arrangements for pupils working below the national curriculum test standard.

Its final report (available via tinyurl.com/rochford-review-final) was published in October 2016, and outlined 10 recommendations for pupils unable to access statutory assessments, due to having

not completed the relevant programmes of study upon reaching the appropriate age (see opposite). Those recommendations are not statutory, but will form part of a widescale review of primary assessment in Spring 2017.

Interim pre-Key Stage standards

Many felt that the ultimate outcome of the Rochford Review would be the replacement of P scales, but an interim report published by the Review in 2015 stated that P scales would remain

for at least 2015–16 whilst further discussion took place. Schools therefore continued using P scales to measure those working below the national standards expected at the end of KS1 and KS2, but it was agreed by many that the gap between P8 and the new national curriculum expectations was too wide – hence the introduction of interim pre-Key Stage standards to try and fill the gap.

The end of KS1 thus saw the addition of an extra standard below the existing three – 'Foundations for the expected

standard' – while three further standards were added to the end of KS2 for reading, mathematics and writing – 'Foundations for the expected standard', 'Early development of the expected standard' and 'Growing development of the expected standard'.

These pre-Key Stage standards were meant to be used for pupils not entered into SATs but who were working beyond P scales. Having spoken to many SENCOs across England, however, I am not sure that many schools used them. The difficulty was

that schools felt that they had to enter their pupils for the SATs as per the Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA) guidance, which states, "If pupils are considered able to answer the easiest questions, they should be entered for the tests" – yet elsewhere, the ARA guidance also states that a pupil should not take the tests if they have not completed the KS1/KS2 programme of study; are working below the overall standard of the KS1/KS2 tests; and are unable to participate, even with suitable access arrangements.

Many pupils were therefore assessed as 'Working towards the expected standard', when in fact they should have been assessed using the interim pre-key stage standards. I would urge schools to think very seriously about their pupil populations at the end of each Key Stage. If they do not meet the full criteria for entry to SATs, then schools should not allow these pupils to participate and instead use the pre-Key Stage standards for teacher assessment only.

What the 10 recommendations mean

The final report called for P scales to be removed, which was not a surprise. The removal of levels raised suspicions that P scales – deemed by many to be no longer fit for purpose – would soon follow.

The Rochford Review identifies two types of pupils among those working below expected standard – those undertaking subject-specific learning and those who are not, which can be generally equated to pupils working at P5 to P8 and those working at P4 and

“The current system sets up a significant number of pupils to 'fail'”

THE ROCHFORD REVIEW'S 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Remove the statutory requirement for schools to assess pupils using P scales
2. Make the interim pre-Key Stage standards permanent and extend them to include all pupils engaged in subject-specific learning
3. Limit statutory assessment for pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning to cognition and learning only
4. Introduce a statutory duty for schools to assess pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning against seven aspects of cognition and learning
5. Allow schools to pursue their own approach when making these assessments
6. Improve initial teacher training and staff CPD so that teachers have a better understanding of how to assess pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests
7. Encourage the sharing of good practice and expertise across all schools
8. Foster collaborative working between schools
9. Schools should not be required to submit assessment data on the seven areas of cognition and learning to the DfE
10. Carry out further work to consider the best way of supporting schools in assessing pupils with EAL.

below respectively.

For 'subject-specific' pupils, the report proposes extending the pre-Key Stage standards by a further two – 'Entry to the expected standard' and 'Emerging to the expected standard'. This would let teachers assess in finer detail the 'can do' aspects of reading, writing and maths at the end of each Key Stage, while allowing progress to be measured across Key Stages for those pupils who will always be working below or towards the expected standard.

My concern, however, is that there are significant gaps in development that these new standards don't recognise. They overlook a number of learning challenges that pupils between those standards will experience.

The recommendation for pupils not undertaking subject specific learning is that they be assessed using the seven areas of engagement for learning – namely 'responsiveness', 'curiosity', 'discovery', 'anticipation', 'persistence', 'initiation' and 'investigation'. The Review's members believe that early development in cognition and learning centres on a range of skills that enable pupils to engage in learning situations, and that assessing this engagement will allow teachers to monitor the amount of attention, interest and involvement that

pupils demonstrate in learning situations.

The report goes on to state that assessing pupils not in subject-specific learning against these seven should be made a statutory duty, but notes that there should be no requirement to submit assessment data on these areas to the DfE. Schools will, however, be expected to provide evidence to support dialogues with parents, carers, LAs, inspectors, regional schools commissioners and others to ensure robust and effective accountability.

What happens now?

The majority of pupils not undertaking subject-specific learning will be in special schools or specialist provision, though the rising number of pupils with complex needs in mainstream schools will mean that all schools will require training, support and guidance on implementing the aforementioned seven areas of engagement for such pupils. The assessment process will be formative and based on observation, very similar to current assessment in EYFS.

The biggest challenge for mainstream schools will be to offer non-subject alternative curriculum that won't conform to the subject-specific curriculum they offer currently. Since the curriculum

must come before assessment, schools should not be looking at the seven areas of engagement as their new curriculum.

As previously noted, the report's recommendations will soon form part of a wider primary assessment consultation which I would urge all schools to respond to – you can stay up to date with the DfE's latest consultations via tinyurl.com/dfe-consult.

For pupils identified with SEND, the whole process is flawed and not fit for purpose. The Rochford Review's recommendations offer an alternative, but so long as we still have schools being judged on SATs results, there will continue to be a pressure on schools to enter all of their pupils for the tests. The current system sets up a significant number of pupils to 'fail' – and it needs to change!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lorraine Petersen
OBE is a former headteacher and CEO of nasen, and currently leads an educational consultancy specialising in SEN issues; for more information, visit lpec.org.uk



Whose learning is it, anyway?

If we want pupils to grow in confidence and achieve more, it's vital that we personalise their learning, argues **Sylvia Edwards**...

Learning is deeply personal. So is failure. However schools try to disguise under-achievement, children will always know.

Many learners with special educational needs and disabilities feel failure from the heart. Tom feels upset, having scored only 11 out of 30 in a spelling test. Imani has done badly in maths. Their self-esteem had taken a severe beating.

Could improved personalised approaches to learning reduce these feelings of failure and boost pupils' self-esteem? Results for learners with SEND might have improved in recent years, but many children could still do better. Could personalisation help to shorten the long tail of underachievement in our schools?

Always something worth celebrating

First, what do we mean by personalisation? In my view, it is about:

- > Removing all barriers that prevent success
- > Seeing learners with SEND as individuals with unique differences, rather than a collection of people whose difficulties are categorised into boxes (such as 'SLD' or 'autism')
- > Recognising the individual characteristics of learners as valuable tools for success
- > Being flexible with school rules and routines

- > Having high aspirations for every learner.

Personalisation starts at whole class level, as quality first teaching (QFT). Children whose QFT encompasses a strong sense of belonging are more likely to succeed, regardless of additional SEND provision. Not all children need personalised approaches – which is good, since teachers can't teach in 30 different ways – so what personalised strategies can boost learning for those children who do?

The process of learning to spell, for instance, involves a long-term, developmental journey, along which a child's spellings gradually achieve absolute correctness. So why do we mark spellings either completely right or wrong, when each attempt lies somewhere along a learner's personal road towards 'rightness'?

Praising for 'five out of seven' correct letters, or for representing each syllable in a long word, is a more sensitive way of motivating children. From the perspective of the aforementioned Tom, the few incorrect letters that rendered his word spellings totally wrong negated his otherwise extensive and successfully applied knowledge of word patterns.

Writing is also personal, and often dreaded. Is this because there is much to think about – vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, handwriting? A personalised approach might

be able to motivate reluctant writers, as can marking sensitively and praising positives before focusing on negatives. There will always something worth celebrating in a child's writing.

Negotiating 'wriggle room'

How might personalisation apply to maths? Reducing numerical challenge when introducing mathematical ideas is will allow concepts to be assimilated more easily, helping less able children to graft newness onto familiarity. Finding three fifths of 20 using visual aids will be easier than finding three fifths of 145. Once new ideas are secured, practising them using higher numbers is more likely to result in success. Such strategies will enable some children to better focus on, absorb and eventually master mathematical ideas, without numerical barriers being allowed to stifle understanding.

You could consider personalisation from a broader perspective – as a form of flexibility for pupils who find it difficult to conform. Children with a chaotic home life, or who perhaps care for a disabled parent, will need a flexible response to their problems, whilst truants need to build on part-time success.

Personalisation can also

influence behaviour.

Would your classroom discipline improve if some disruptive pupils – especially with autism – could negotiate some 'wriggle room' within accepted rules and routines? Beneath much observed aggression will lie deeply personal needs that control a pupil's learning and behaviour, lurking unseen. Successful schools will go the extra mile to seek out hidden potential, uncover missed talent, calm negative emotions or identify specific learning styles.

Solution-focused problem-solvers

Personalisation invites schools to question their methods of assessment. Is 'success' always about achieving at least average, or should success represent 'excellent progress' or 'personal best' – especially for children with significant difficulties, for whom 'average' may be unattainable? Personalisation





“Learners should never be passive receivers of teaching”

should also invite officials and schools to view assessment more sensitively, and consider using strategies that measure children against themselves, rather than their peers.

So how should personalisation be achieved? It relies in large part on pedagogical excellence – flexible teaching, informed by acute and powerful observation. Instead of asking, ‘How is the teaching being

received?’ ask ‘Whose learning is it?’

Learners should never be passive receivers of teaching. Make it so that all children can negotiate their personal learning goals and have these recorded in Individual Education Plans. They can then help to organise termly or annual reviews and be more involved in making their personal plans work. Help children become ‘solution-focused’ problem-solvers who can overcome difficulties through talk, and encourage them to write their own reports for parents, alongside those

PERSONALISATION HAS THE POWER TO

- > Bring out the best in all learners
- > Create stronger links between teaching and learning
- > Improve school results.

produced by adults.

Is the last point idealistic? I don’t think so. Some children may need a template to work from, but imagine the deep-seated thinking! Feel the positive energy! Bask in the success! Pupils will take pride in demonstrating their personal progress parents as active, rather than passive learners. This way, the learning is done with, not to learners, while also encouraging a rich exchange of information between home and school.

Where pupils have a sense of self-responsibility, teachers are better able to manage inclusion, since all learners will possess the tools they need to play personally active roles. This engagement will in turn help to maintain order and discipline, and in the relaxed environment that results, might the teaching itself even become less stressful? With so many teachers leaving the profession, it needs to be.

Mastery for all

The 2016 PISA scores overseen by the OECD highlighted the UK’s stagnant performance in comparison with other countries, notably Singapore. Could improved joint planning within and between UK schools help develop more creative, personalised strategies for harder to teach pupils? The OECD attributed Canada’s high scores to what The Times summarised as “Personalised learning, strong results for poor children and effective assimilation of immigrants” – something the UK could learn from.

The rote learning associated with ‘mastery’ frequently features as a strategy pursued by countries that score highly in education performance. Stronger collegiate planning might lead to better understanding amongst UK teachers of how to enable all learners to achieve mastery. That said, we must be mindful that whilst accumulated facts are necessary tools for problem-solving, particularly in maths, rote learning must never replace the understanding from which it follows.

The latest PISA scores should prompt UK policy makers and schools to consider pursuing personalisation in the drive towards mastery for all – but it can only work if learners are at the wheel. The fundamental question that should serve as the starting point for any discussion on how to transform failure into success is, ‘whose learning is it?’



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sylvia Edwards has taught in primary, secondary and special schools and is a trainer in SEND policy and practice; her book, *The SENCO Survival Guide 2nd Edition*, is available now, published by Routledge



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Visual timetables done right

Visual timetables are a helpful tool, but only if they're used properly, advises **Lynn McCann...**

A visual timetable will often be one of the first strategies suggested to support a child with an autism spectrum condition (ASC). It may be written in a child's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), though many teachers will already have some form of visual timetable displayed in their classroom for the whole class or individual children.

Not all teachers understand the true purpose of a visual timetable – they let the child know what's going on and in what order, but are also an important teaching tool. The main teaching opportunities include:

MEMORY AND RECALL SKILLS

Seeing the structure of the day can improve memory skills for children who think better in pictures than verbal language. Instead of absorbing a list of verbal words, they can utilise their visual memory to remember what will be happening and in what order.

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS AND INDEPENDENCE

The child should be managing their own timetable. That means self-checking what they should be doing and where they should be, and taking off symbols and putting them in the 'finished' pocket themselves.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

These are the skills the brain uses to start, work through and manage tasks, routines and events, including our own reactions and behaviours. I see far too many visual



timetables serving as pretty pictures for a classroom wall – and even then, the pictures won't be relevant to that day's schedule, and the children won't have been taught to manage the timetable themselves.

I'll then often hear, "Oh, we tried a visual timetable but it didn't work," or "They don't need a visual timetable, they've grown out of it."

Visual timetables should grow with the child. As adults, we use calendars, lists and memos to help keep ourselves organised. If we want our pupils with ASC to develop good organisational skills, then a visual timetable can be a great start. Whether you use photos, symbols or written lists for older children, the format can develop as the child does.

Orientation obsession

Let's dispel one myth, once and for all – IT DOES NOT MATTER

WHETHER IT IS HORIZONTAL OR VERTICAL. Go with whichever orientation fits into your space and the pupil can easily use. I have known staff who worried about this endlessly, simply because one professional said to do it one way and another said do it the other way. Some didn't start using their visual timetable for weeks, because they were so concerned about getting it wrong.

Start by ensuring that the visual timetable is pitched at the right level for the child by using objects of reference, photos, symbols and words that will make sense to them. Print them out on cards and laminate them, so that they can be reused each day. Remember to include timetable cards that represent sensory breaks and reward activities, so the child isn't anxious about when these will take place.

Once the cards are finished, make sure that the timetable

is accurately set up with part or all of the day's activities every day. This presents an ideal opportunity to teach the child(ren) how to manage removing the symbols after each activity is completed. The finished activity symbol should then be posted in a box or envelope to indicate the ending of that activity and commencement of the next.

Year 6 children could benefit from using a visual timetable that spans an entire week to help prepare for their transition to secondary, if they can cope with the higher volume of information.

A pivotal strategy

Over the years I've worked with some pupils who were at risk of being excluded for their behaviour. When a visual timetable was used to show them their lessons, 'calm or choice times', sensory breaks – and most importantly, when home time was due – alongside other strategies, it had a huge impact in helping the child to navigate the day, reducing their stress and anxiety levels and thus reducing their challenging behaviours.

Honestly – visual timetables can sometimes be a pivotal strategy that makes all the difference for a child.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynn McCann is an ASC specialist teacher and author; for more information, visit reachoutasc.com



What does attachment disorder look like?

Colby Pearce outlines the complexities and challenges that can arise when caring for children with an attachment disorder

Many children who have an attachment disorder show both an avoidance of intimacy and extreme attempts to control close relationships coercively using threatening, angry or menacing behaviours and/or seductive, charming or demanding behaviours.

As close relationships for these children have often led to abuse, fear and hurt (shame and rejection), closeness becomes equated with distress or danger and intimacy becomes something to be resisted. The closer a caregiver tries to get to the child or the more love they show, the more threatening they become to the child.

Perpetuating the cycle

Nevertheless, the child who has an attachment disorder is also uncomfortable with too much distance from the caregiver and associated concern that the caregiver may no longer be under their direct influence. A vicious cycle often ensues, whereby the child draws the caregiver closer through demanding or charming behaviours, only to distance them when they come too close, and then draw the caregiver

back in when the distance (physical and/or emotional) becomes too great again.

The child's behaviour serves to demand attention and a caregiver response to their needs, punish and distance the caregiver and release pent-up frustration and anger. Other children who have an attachment disorder exhibit diffuse attachments, as manifested by indiscriminate sociability and a marked inability to exhibit appropriate selective attachments.

Such children are typically perceived to be charming and gregarious, are likely to be excessively friendly towards strangers and do not display appropriate selectivity and orientation towards attachment figures when attachment behaviours are activated (for example when hurt, unwell, frightened or hungry).

Where care arrangements change (for children in foster or adoptive care, for example), children who have an attachment disorder often compulsively re-enact their maladaptive interactions with their new caregivers. Like other children, they feel safe and reassured in association with people behaving in predictable and expected ways.

As they expect caregivers to be angry and threatening,

or undependable and rejecting, they often behave in a manner that precipitates similar behaviour in their new caregivers, thus confirming their belief systems, which is reassuring, and perpetuating the cycle. Their belief systems also tell them that caregivers cannot be trusted or relied upon to understand them and meet their needs.

Manipulative behaviours

Children who have an attachment disorder conclude that they are the only person they can depend upon and the only way to get their needs met is to take matters into their own hands. The outcome is the exhibition of controlling, manipulative behaviours and/or deceptive and deceitful behaviours arising from a preoccupation with accessibility to needs provision.

The controlling and manipulative behaviours of children who have an attachment disorder typically take the form of angry, aggressive and destructive behaviours, charming and seductive behaviours or a combination of these.

From the first days of life, the infant uses affective displays, such as crying and smiling, to command the attention of

their caregivers. Throughout childhood, children who have an attachment disorder continue to rely on affective displays to assure attention to their needs, punish and distance their caregivers and release pent-up anxiety/arousal.

Children who have an attachment disorder seek to communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs through their behaviour and affective displays, much like a preverbal child. In addition to smiling and crying, behaviours and affective displays used to communicate thoughts, feelings and needs might include sulking, tantrums, aggression, destructiveness, clinginess and repetitive actions to secure attention (such as turning the TV off or turning lights on and off).

As a result of neglectful care and associated mistrust of others, they often do not progress to the stage of articulating their thoughts, feelings, wishes and needs when they acquire the language to do so. They consider controlling, manipulative behaviours and affective displays to be a more effective strategy.

A lack of concern

When caregivers ignore, admonish or discipline aberrant behaviour and affective displays, the child who has an attachment disorder feels misunderstood and their belief that their caregivers are uncaring and unresponsive is again confirmed. They see punishment as arbitrary, cruel and rejecting. Their behaviour reflects their expectation of

“Children who have an attachment disorder conclude that they are the only person they can depend upon

caregiver unavailability, rejection and/or maltreatment, and the imposition of punishment serves to confirm these expectations.

When caregivers learn that love and patience is not enough for these children, they can feel discouraged and reject the child, further contributing to the child's self-concept of being unlovable and their caregivers as rejecting. Caregivers may even develop negative and abusive feelings towards the child. Because these children can be superficially charming to others, especially to those who do not present the threat of intimacy, professionals may see the caregivers as unduly harsh or rejecting.

Children who have an attachment disorder demonstrate an apparent lack of concern for maintaining close and loving relationships with their adult caregivers. As a result, compared with other children they are relatively unconcerned about the impact of their behaviour on their relationship with others.

Rather, they develop a range of aberrant behaviours that assure accessibility to needs provision while also punishing and distancing their caregivers. In turn, the caregivers can experience feelings of revulsion and loathing towards the child that impact negatively upon their care of the child and further reinforce the child's negative attributions or beliefs about the relationship.

THE 'CARE' MODEL

Consider infants. They are not born with a sophisticated language system. They cannot successfully be reasoned with about who their parents are, and therefore who they should form an attachment to and who not to. Rather, they form an attachment to the person or persons who they experience to care for them, physically and emotionally, on a continuous basis.

A key concept here is what infants experience. In the same way that infants' attachment to their primary attachment figure(s) develops in

association with their experience of who cares for them, the type of attachment relationship or attachment style is very much dependent on the infants' experience of the care they receive.

That is, an infant's attachment style is strongly influenced by the type of CARE they receive. By that, I refer to how *consistent*, *accessible*, *responsive* and *emotionally connected* infants experience their primary attachment figure(s) to be:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| > Consistent | > Accessible |
| > Responsive | > Emotional connectedness |

The result, in many cases, where carers lack knowledge and understanding of attachment disorder, is the breakdown of the child's care arrangements, sometimes occurring continually.

Unfortunately, this often only serves to reinforce the child's negative attachment representations.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colby Pearce is principal psychologist at Secure Start - a private psychology practice based in Adelaide, Australia; this article is an edited extract from his book *A Short Introduction to Attachment and Attachment Disorder, Second Edition*, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers



Access GRANTED

Technology aids mainstream schools in countless ways, but when it comes to supporting the diversity of SEND, is it up to the challenge? Lloyd Burgess finds out

There's an app for that'. That was Apple's now-trademarked slogan for its 2009 iPhone ad campaign. Its premise – if you wanted to check snow conditions on the mountain, see how many calories are in your lunch or find out exactly where you parked, there was, indeed, an app for that, and for just about anything else.

But what if you want to help a class full of children with a range of different educational and behavioural needs to access learning? Is there an app for *that*? Well, perhaps. But finding digital solutions for the many and varying needs of SEND pupils takes imagination, flexibility and perseverance, as the resources you need don't always come straight off the shelf.

At The Cedars Primary in Hounslow, a school that caters for students aged 4–11 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, IT coordinator and teacher Mary Farmer explains that, "In our case, I would say it's 100% the teacher using what's already out there. I can't think of many programs

I use that are specifically SEND-based. It's the skill of the teacher using the app, more than the app itself."

Read error

At Oak Grove College in Worthing, assistant head James Winchester uses Clicker – a word processor that can be adapted for individual students depending on where they are in their learning. "We are a generic secondary school, which means we have a full range of needs here," he says. "Therefore we have a very bespoke curriculum too, because some students with profound and multiple learning difficulties are only working at a Year 2 or 3 level. So it's all about tools that help them to be more independent."

In particular, tablets and apps that act as communication tools are a great benefit to children with SEND, specifically in terms of boosting literacy, which is where Clicker comes in at Oak Grove.

"It's really useful for helping reluctant writers and promoting independent learning," says James. "It comes up with prompts predicting the pupil's next word, and if you spell something phonetically it will bring up a list of words from which they can

choose the correct spelling.

"A classic example is if they type 'foto' – the suggested words pop up to indicate the spelling is wrong, then they can click 'photo' from the list to correct it. It also reads words or sentences back to them out loud, which is great because often they can recognise much easier if it sounds wrong, rather than spotting it when reading back themselves."

The majority of the students that Mary Farmer teaches also have difficulties with literacy. She's found storyboarding apps that use cartoon characters or stickmen have been the perfect alternative for those who struggle to start writing or typing. "They do the storyboard, then verbally tell me what's happening while I audio record them," she explains. "I can then mesh the audio with each of the frames to create something like a mini-movie, which produces a much higher quality of work than what they might otherwise have done with pen and paper."

"I also use stop-motion animation on apps like iMovie, which is brilliant for history topics, for example. It's another way for them to be creative. When you ask children to put something down on paper they have to consider lots of different elements – handwriting skills

secretarial skills, spelling skills, the physical holding of the pen – but with the app they can just talk."

Motion passed

Other advancements and innovations go far beyond basic literacy and maths tools into something more akin to an episode of *Tomorrow's World*.

This is where ed-tech has really excelled in offering all students access to learning. "We have an immersion room where one year group is studying the Blitz, for example," says James. "As they are visual learners, they're better able to understand what's going on and use those stimuli as an impetus for their writing. And gesture-based technology has had a massive influence in promoting engagement, especially for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It allows them to affect the environment by making big, physical gestures. They can just lie on the floor and make things happen."

Oak Grove has also found success with iGaze – eye-tracking technology that children can use as a cause-and-effect tool. "What it does is twofold," says James. "Its basic function is to track where you're looking on a monitor or device, so that

“They've always had ability. What's nice about the technology is that we can now see that.”

JAMES WINCHESTER | ASSISTANT HEAD, OAK GROVE COLLEGE



SAVE THE DAY

DAN HEAP, FROM PLYMOUTH GROVE IN MANCHESTER, EXPLAINS HOW A SIMPLE APP WAS A LIFE-CHANGER FOR ONE SMALL BOY...

"We had a boy here who was on the autistic spectrum, and when he came into the class he would need there to be very little distraction. If he walked in to find too much going on, he would get quite anxious. But there's an app, that was designed by someone with autism, that helps you calm down when you're feeling overstimulated and chaotic. It looks, essentially, like those 1990s screensavers you used to get where the lines flash across the screen in different ways, but it also has activities and memory games, and they helped focus his attention – it really worked. It's about trying to find those different things for the different needs in the class."

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you can make things happen. So, for example, using an on-screen keyboard you focus on the letters and words you want and it will type them out for you.

"We have a student with muscular dystrophy who is using

it to access a computer, so he can now do everyday things like going on Facebook and sending emails. Eventually he'll be able to control his environment and do things like turning off the lights and opening doors. It's really

amazing technology."

The second element is that teachers can record where students are looking, which can be difficult with non-verbal pupils. "We have a student who I always thought

had the cognitive ability to quite clearly understand what we were talking about, but as they were non-verbal I couldn't know for sure," says James. "But with iGaze, because I could see where they were focusing on-screen, I could talk about that whatever it was. For example, I could say, 'Oh, are you looking at the child on the swing?' and straight away they're smiling, because they know you understand what they're doing. Then I could ask them to look at their favourite part of the picture, and we were able to build up communication.

"The technology is amazing," James concludes. "And people say, 'The students are making so much progress now,' but for me that's not quite it. They've always had that ability. What's nice about the technology is that we can now see that. We now have the tools to release their potential and see what else they can do."

The Sociology of SEN

Professor Sally Tomlinson contemplates whether the continuing expansion of inclusive education ultimately serves to 'manufacture inability'...

Why, despite a world-wide movement towards the inclusion of previously excluded populations, has special education, increasingly located in mainstream schools, flourished? Why have governments acquiesced in the expansion of a 'special needs industry'? How far will those regarded as defective or deficient be increasingly regarded as a surplus population in global economies; does special education really meet the needs of diverse groups, and whose interests are actually served by the expansion of programmes for the special and lower attainers in schools?

Historical contradictions

In attempting to answer these questions it has to be recognised that there cannot be any theories about special and inclusive education, without understanding the social and historical influences on policies and practices, and the psychological and medical influences that became so pervasive, now joined by neuroscientists, behavioural geneticists and others.

There are also historical contradictions to be faced. For example, in Sweden discussion about the 'integration' and 'normalisation' of children with disabilities into mainstream

schools was taking place in the 1950s and 60s, at the same time that compulsory sterilisation of 'defective' women thought likely to produce deficient children was in operation.

One of the most coherent analyses of the development of special education as an institutional practice related to mainstream education, and the complex administration needed to legitimate the changing assumptions and practices, was produced by Thomas Skrtic in his 1991 book *Behind Special Education*. In his view, in the USA it was industrialisation, immigration and compulsory school attendance that produced the large number of students who were troublesome to mainstream classrooms.

The issue was reframed as a problem of inefficient school organisation and defective students. This encouraged the development of an educational administration to deal with the troublesome, which in turn encouraged the development of a special education sector.

Among the many insights in the book was the notion that special education is constructed and sustained as a machine bureaucracy, whereas what is needed in the 21st century is an 'adhocracy' in which people collaborate and learn from each other. He pointed out that segregation, ability groupings and trackings have no place in an adhocracy, as it reduces young people's capacities to learn from one another.

The global context

Neither can any theorising about special and inclusive education be useful if the wider national and global contexts are ignored. In 2011 John Richardson and Justin Powell produced an authoritative sociological analysis of the origins and development of special education, and took up the challenge of examining special education practices in societies with widely different cultural, religious, political and economic systems.

They described the structures established for dealing with disabled and disruptive children and young

people and established why historical antecedents and cross-cultural differences are important in understanding what societies are doing when they send large numbers of their young into lower-level instruction and limited futures.

They also pointed out that special and inclusive education practices in developed countries cannot be discussed without understanding the relationship to vocational training and the recourse to youth offenders' institutions and prisons for those who cannot adapt to school systems and lower level courses.



“there is a distinct lack of coherent explanation about what is going on



Defining inclusion

Explaining and defining the global and national interests in inclusive education from the later 20th century has proved an even more difficult task than explaining the complexities of special education. There have been a plethora of attempts at defining inclusive education, none of which appear satisfactory to participants, who are often emotionally concerned to defend existing special education practices.

This is understandable, as what was being suggested was a reversal of a century of traditional practices concerned with the separation of young people, into separate institutions, or classes, and instructional practices. It is also a reversal of traditional understandings of child development, and learning, and established concepts of ability and potential.

There are currently over 7000 books on 'inclusion' listed on the Amazon website. *The International Journal of Inclusive Education*, founded in 1996, is just one of numerous journals publishing hundreds of articles discussing, defining, criticising, explaining and theorising about the area.

There have also been

attempts to synthesise the concept of inclusion of children with labels of disabilities and learning difficulties, while retaining traditional forms of special education.

Recent work by Garry Hornby illustrates these attempts. He describes what he terms 'a theory of inclusive special education', which is actually a blueprint for dealing with these expanding groups of troublesome children by assessing their different defects, training professionals and organising classes and schools on a continuum of separation.

Although often what passes for theory turns out to be description and prescription, this is perhaps as far as understanding can go, although adherence to human rights and social justice underpin many of the attempts to define inclusion and the place of special education programmes and localities within an inclusive education system.

Maintaining the status quo

The large amount of literature on racial disparities in educational placements and achievements in the USA – and the continued disproportionate

numbers of minority young people in special education – has led to numerous attempts to move beyond description and data collection to use notions of equity and power structures, and make sense of the intersections of race, class and poverty that ensure spatial and economic segregation.

If segregated inner-city schools are six times more likely to have students in concentrated poverty than schools with overwhelmingly white populations, as is the case in many American cities, then theories that combine multiple disadvantages are needed. One of the most coherent explanations for disproportionate representation is the combination of institutional ableism (the failure to provide proper services to persons with disabilities or difficulties) with institutional racism (the failure to provide proper services to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin) to transpose legally acceptable special education discrimination, to maintain illegal segregation by race.

Despite assertions of inclusivity and equity, no country has ever achieved this. Under the mountain of research reports, government

papers and academic literature describing inequalities, and bemoaning the development of an underclass, a lack of social mobility and the seemingly unstoppable expansion of social problems – exclusions, drop-outs, delinquency and mental health issues currently topping the lists in the UK and USA – there is a distinct lack of coherent explanation about what is going on.

What may be going on are attempts to maintain a traditional hierarchical status quo in a rapidly changing world, by recourse to manufacturing the 'inability' of many of the children in lower socio-economic groups and removing them from mainstream institutions.

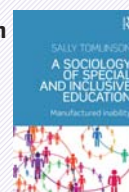
Four ways of doing this are:

- Perpetuating the belief that there is only inherent potential in the few, fixed levels of inability in most children and that many need a 'special' education
- Perpetuating the belief many children and young people have less 'ability' and 'human capital' to develop, and thus cannot perform well in a knowledge economy.
- Removing young people who are regarded as interfering with expected standards and credentialing of others into separate institutions, alternative education, and young offenders institutions
- Denying that educating previously excluded social and racial groups has been partially and slowly successful



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article is an extract from her book, *A Sociology of Special and Inclusive Education*, published by Routledge. To receive 20% off the book's RRP, quote code 'IRK69' when ordering at routledge.com

JUST A THOUGHT

Teaching young people about the awesome power of their own minds is the best way to protect their mental health, insists **Terry Rubenstein**

In May last year, *The Times'* social affairs correspondent, Rosemary Bennett, noted that the government had committed an additional £1.25 billion to address mental health issues in schools. Yet at the time of the article, only £142 million had been allocated for the financial year. That, of course, was pre-Brexit and the sudden change in national leadership.

Will those funds be delivered as promised? With statistics showing that 1 in 10 children aged between 5 and 16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder – that's around three children in every classroom – we need to act fast.

The missing piece

But what can we do? Can we help our young people access their inner resilience and mental wellbeing in a quick, easy and empowering way? Can we educate, or even re-educate them to be innately healthy children, teens and young adults who are confident to navigate their own psychological pathways through life's inevitable challenges?

I believe we can. But to do so, we need to prioritise mental

health education. And this goes way beyond merely raising awareness of mental health issues. That's the easy part.

There is a vital missing piece in our education system which lies at the heart of understanding why our young people are seemingly so fragile and prone to anxiety disorders, addiction, depression, eating disorders and self-harm. It's a missing piece that has become necessary, if not essential in these troubled times.

The incessant stream of today's social media, instant on-demand information, and subsequent lack of privacy and quiet leads to feelings of confusion and inadequacy. Young people do not know where to find their own inner sense of security, confidence and common sense. So where do we start? The answer is with an education of the human operating system.

Natural instincts

As human beings we have inbuilt factory settings that are designed to guide us through life. This is evident from a very young age – small children are both incredible and credible

examples of the human capacity for resiliency and mental health. They are passionately motivated and have an innate common sense that guides them to learn the skills they need to survive and thrive.

This inherent, but often overlooked capacity for high mental and emotional functioning is built into our psychological DNA. We are powered by a creative intelligence that guides the mind via thought to navigate the human experience with perspective and sound judgement.

As we mature, our highly sophisticated, analytical minds often override and obscure this innate ability. Yet it is always there underneath the noise, just as the sun is always behind the clouds, even in poor weather. We are constantly making sense of our world through our thinking minds; we are thinking creatures from the cradle to the grave. And yet our children are not educated about this extraordinary capacity of thought – what it is and where it comes from.

We use thought to socialise, learn, make decisions and perceive our world. Thought lies at the core of our psychological

functioning; our potential is actualised or limited through our understanding and use of thought.

Dr. George Pransky, one of the pioneers of the Three Principles of Innate Health approach, explains how moment-to-moment, we are experiencing our own subjective version of reality. This is created by energy that shows up in the form of thoughts, images, perceptions, feelings, opinions and sensations, carrying with it enormous implications. It may feel as if we are merely reacting to a reality that is 'out there', but when we take a step back we begin to see that this reality is in perfect alignment with the thoughts we are thinking at any given moment. If we are experiencing a dissatisfying world, we will be thinking dissatisfying thoughts.

A transient, formless energy

Once we see the underlying nature of thought, everything changes. That is because thought is a transient, formless energy that has no power but the power we give it. If a person thinks something is true, it will be true for them.

OBSERVE AND INTERVENE

SOME KEY INDICATIONS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OVERRIDING THEIR OWN INNATE PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEMS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- They are very attached to what they think, rather than being able to easily let go of their opinions.
- The feeling and energy in the classroom is intense and erratic, rather than easygoing and stable.
- Their behaviour is compulsive and reactive, rather than considered and responsive.
- Their recovery rate is slow after upsets, even relatively minor ones
- They blame others for their upset or stress
- They are withdrawn, demotivated and act disinterested.

“As human beings we have inbuilt factory settings that are designed to guide us through life

When we feel bad, sad, frustrated, stressed or anxious, we often attribute this to outside factors. We blame the weather, our relationships, exams, the Tube, the city we live in, our teachers – not to mention countless other factors – for how we feel.

Knowing all of this, surely it's incumbent on us to teach our children about the workings of the mind and the power of thought as part of their curriculum of learning? It's crucial that we educate young people about how thought works and its connection to feelings and state of mind. Children and teenagers need to be shown that we live in the feelings of our thinking, not in the feelings of our circumstances or other people.

As they learn how thought creates feelings and how feelings compel our reactions, they will see their role in creating what they live in. Another way of putting it is that the more we think, the stronger we feel – and the worse we behave. There is no more important lesson for a young person, or any person for that matter, to learn.

But the good news is that thought is nothing more than energy. This is very hopeful. It allows us to see that our thoughts are naturally changing and constantly evolving. They come and go, like clouds. They may look menacing but they have no substance. And though we may not always see it, the sun is always present behind those clouds.

Built-in resilience

Understanding how thought works suggests an enormous range of possibilities. It permits us to see the remarkable ability we have to gain insight, create, imagine, understand, discover, heal and recover. This is how we change, evolve and get through difficult times. This understanding reassures us that a change of thought will bring a change of feeling, even if the circumstance stays the same.

Just as we have an intelligent physiological system, so too are we born with a healthy and intelligent psychological system. If our kids are overriding this innate capacity

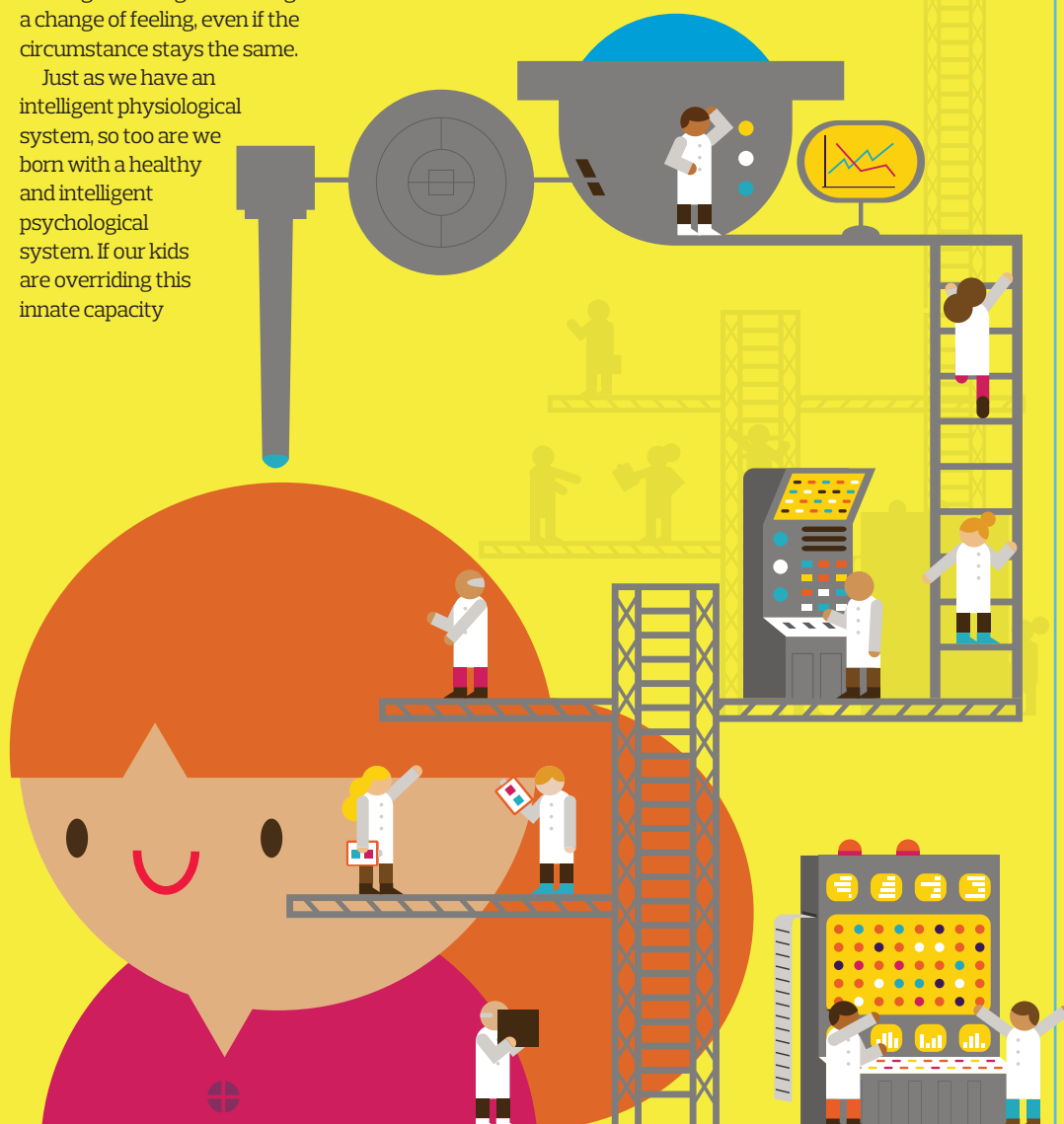
to thrive in life and deal with their social, academic and family lives, it is our job to re-educate them to engage with the built-in resilience and wellbeing with which they began life.

This extraordinary gift is intrinsic and innate to all human beings, no matter what. And teaching our young people that is the greatest lesson we can deliver.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terry Rubenstein is the co-founder of the London-based Innate Health Centre; for more information, visit innatehealth.co



I recently ran some teacher training, something I've been doing more of since writing the book *Inclusion for Primary School Teachers*. I've found that teaching adults is very similar to teaching children – except that teachers, especially, don't like being talked at or lectured to. They prefer to be doing something while they are learning.

Having planned a session on understanding the four categories of special educational need, I decided to go old school and get them running around the room. Well, that's what I had in my mind, at least. Being a Saturday morning, most of the participants were tired, making the 'running' more of a reluctant shuffle...

Plumbing the depths

When you teach SEND children, it never comes as a surprise that there are things – a lot of things – that they don't know. That said, the depths to which lack of knowledge can extend can sometimes come as a bit of a surprise. I remember being momentarily taken aback one day upon discovering that a young boy I was teaching to read did not know what the word 'instrument' in a book about pop stars meant. I also recall my gast being a bit flabbered the day I was asked what 'The black bit above the Earth was like' when we were looking at a globe, but there you are. If you're not prepared for surprises, you haven't been teaching for long.

Many of the children I have taught over the years have considerable gaps in their learning and for many different



We should be concerned when teachers display a lack of basic SEND knowledge, writes **Nancy Gedge** – but should we actually be surprised...?

reasons, sometimes related to a type of learning problem. But when you teach adults – a group of teachers, at that – there's an expectation that they'll know at least a bit of what you're talking about. Some of them will have spent a good few years in the classroom, and considering that one in seven children has some form of SEND, that works out to about four children in every class. Special educational needs therefore can't be a total mystery to them. Or so you'd think...

The activity went as follows: I called out the name of a special need or a disability, and the teachers had to run to one of four places in the

room, under the headings 'Cognition and Learning' (C&L), 'Communication and Interaction' (C&I), 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health' (SEMH) and 'Physical and/or Sensory'. Using four categories of special need, I was asking teachers to identify where certain SEND labels should go.

The results were intriguing.

Five hours or less

The first couple of rounds went as I'd expected. I called out 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' and everyone hurried (as far as they were able) to the C&I wall. 'Dyslexia' – straight to C&I. Next came 'ADD' and 'ADHD', which prompted the gathering

to huddle together on the SEMH wall. It wasn't long before I realised that I might need to adapt the activity so that they stood half a chance of getting some correct...

Since I both live and work with SEND (my son has Down's syndrome), and therefore having intimate knowledge of the area, I can sometimes forget that not everyone realises that labels are just that – labels. And that the application of the label is only the start of the story. When you live with learning disability, when you experience daily the fact that a person has needs that can span and even go beyond the four categories of need in the Code of Practice, this seems obvious. When your experience is limited to five hours per day (or less, given the way many SEND learners spend much of their time out of class working with someone other than their class teacher), it is less so.

Every teacher may well be a teacher of special educational needs, but that doesn't mean that every teacher either knows what to do about that, or even understands what that means. Consequently, it's incumbent upon those of us who do know a bit more, to do more to spread that knowledge around.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nancy Gedge is a primary teacher in Gloucestershire. She blogs at **notsoordinarydiary.wordpress.com**



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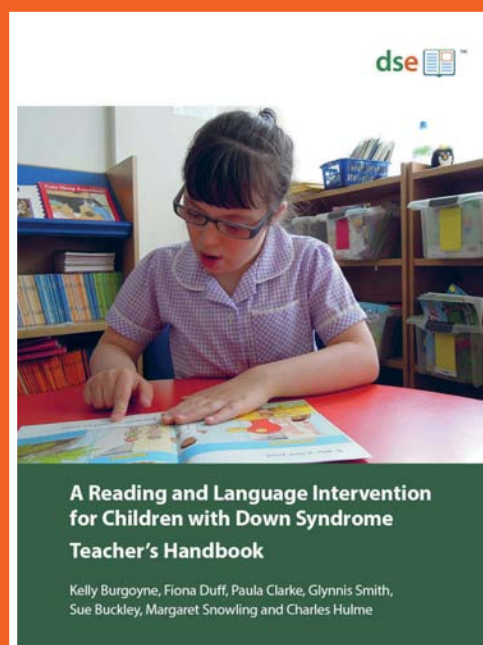


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