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Welcome...



...to the third issue of SENCo. You'll notice a few changes around here, in the form of some visual tweaks to bring us in line with the rest of the Teach Company family. We also have a couple of new additions – the first being a selection of four lesson plans beginning on page 49 that you can use to teach your pupils about money and multiplication, and develop their social

skills with the aid of board games and some fruit.

The second is a feature section that we'll be dedicating to a specific area of SEND provision each issue, starting with autism. We kick things off on page 68 with a look at what you can do to help pupils who are withdrawn, try to see a lesson through the eyes of child with autism, and consider the social and environmental challenges that lie beyond the classroom door in a school's shared spaces.

If there's one common theme to emerge from the other articles this issue, it's the continuing importance of collaboration and partnerships. It's there in the readiness we saw at a special school in Essex (page 29) to not just impart its expertise to local mainstream schools, but learn from them in turn, and also in Natalie Packer's advice on forging productive relationships with parents on page 40.

I write these words barely a fortnight away from a general election, the outcome of which will have far-reaching ramifications for pupils, parents and educators alike across the country over the coming years. Whatever the outcome, given the ongoing concerns over school funding and rising demand for SEND provision, that spirit of co-operation and collaboration is going to be needed more than ever.

Callum

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POWERED BY...



DR RONA TUTT OBE

considers how pupils with SEND are likely to fare under a more selective school system

"At the heart of the proposals lies the issue of admissions" p13



JARLATH O'BRIEN

calls on leaders to challenge staff assumptions regarding pupils' backgrounds and future prospects

"We don't label children or families in this school"

p58



NANCY GEDGE

asks why discussions around literacy outcomes seem to ignore children with SEND

"The stigma of a SEND label is strong, culturally speaking" p82

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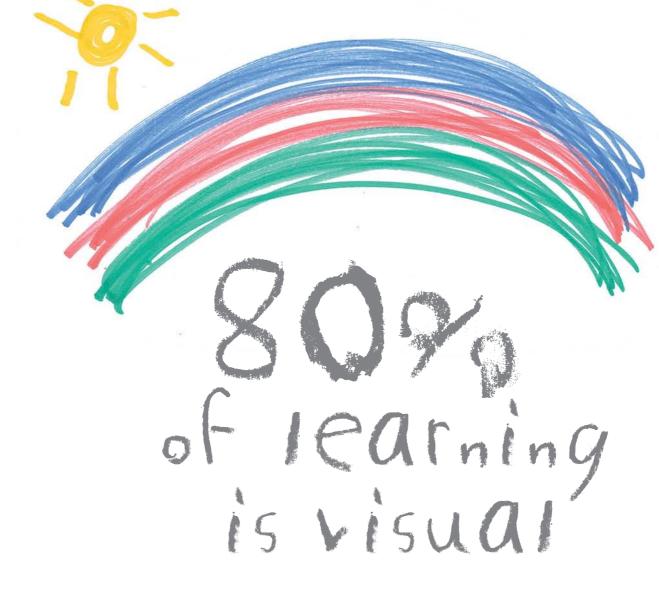
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British Heart Foundation If schools aren't yet paying attention to how the high needs national funding formula is changing, they should be...

Julie Cordiner

🥤 @Julie_Cordiner 🛛 juliecordiner.com



n all the noise around school budgets, not much attention has been paid to the high needs funding reforms. Perhaps everyone assumes only special schools will be affected - but the changes could have a big impact on mainstream school funding, so let's take a look at the current proposals.

The DfE's funding to local authorities for SEND has remained almost static in recent years. It certainly hasn't kept pace with the increase in needs that's evident from published statistics. For example:

• The percentage of pupils with SEND attending special schools has risen from 5% in 2012 to 8.5% in 2016

• Top up payments (costs exceeding £10k per pupil) to all types of school increased by 14% between 2013/14 and 2016/17

Last year, 111 out of 150 LAs planned to spend a total of £323m (8.1%) above their high needs allocations. How did they manage this funding shortfall? Simple they reduced their mainstream budgets for schools and nursery providers.

Limited window

The high needs national funding formula (HNNFF) is about to make this even worse. It will drive funding predominantly by population and current funding levels, with much lower weightings for indicators that directly relate to need - particularly deprivation, health, disability and low attainment. This won't reflect increases in high cost complex needs.

The DfE's modelling based on 2016/17 data has shown that 78 authorities could lose funding on the pure formula. Protection will ensure that no LA sees an actual loss, but how will LAs with a funding freeze manage if demand and costs continue to rise? To fund the protection, areas gaining from the HNNFF will be limited to 3% extra per year until the formula is reached, so they may also struggle to meet rising demand.



LAs will have a limited window in 2018/19 to transfer money from school budgets to support SEND pressures, but a majority of schools will have to give consent. From 2019/20, it will be an individual school decision. Given the current school funding situation, this doesn't sound like much of a solution from anyone's perspective.

If you have a SEN unit or resource base, changes are afoot. You currently receive £10,000 per place with a top-up per pupil above this. In future, top-ups will stay the same but these pupils will count towards budget share, and per-place funding will reduce to £6,000. This is all very well if the school's HNNFF gives you £4,000 or more per pupil. If it doesn't, you'll need to subsidise this provision - yet another disincentive to be inclusive. So what does all this mean?

Managing expectations

If the proposals go ahead it will undoubtedly be harder for LAs to manage their high needs budgets, given current trends in needs and costs. Statutory duties and the risk of tribunals will inevitably make LAs focus on those with the highest needs. Mainstream schools will have to work harder to prove they are achieving value for money with their

SEND funding before accessing any extra funds.

The DfE has asked all LAs to undertake a high needs review to prepare for the changes. These reviews could involve examining thresholds for specialist placements, the level of inclusion in mainstream schools, and the boundaries between what schools and LAs pay for. Inclusion support, and training for staff in key growth areas such as the autism spectrum, will be crucial.

Schools need to understand how much SEND funding they receive, how it's being used and the impact it's having on pupil progress. The latest Ofsted framework requires governors to understand this, and to challenge leaders on it. Managing parental expectations is vital too, focusing on provision and outcomes rather than money spent.

Preparation is vital to avoid being caught out. Take a whole-school approach to find alternative, creative ways of supporting pupils with SEND while improving their progress, and try to release funding from other parts of the budget. No-one can afford to ignore this aspect of the funding reforms.

Julie Cordiner is an independent consultant specialising in school funding and education finance.

THINGS ABOUT SEND I wish I'd known at the start

Cherryl Drabble looks back on the lessons that a career spent working with SEND pupils has taught her...

CHERRYL DRABBLE

f you're a teacher in any capacity, you'll know that teaching is full on. The workload can be enough to break even the strongest of people, making it very hard to strike a healthy work-life balance and hang on to your sanity.

With that in mind, here are six things I wish I'd known about being a teacher of SEND when I started, in the hope of saving new SEND teachers some valuable time...

"For teachers, the strategies you choose to use will be more important than the label assigned to the child."

1. Relevant CPD can be hard to find

CPD is rarely aimed at special needs teachers; in fact, most of it is fairly irrelevant for us. I've found from experience that even if it says 'SEND' in the advertisement, it won't be able to reach children on low P Levels or those who need specialist interventions.

I've lost many hours listening to professionals who are experts in their field, but who can't help children with complex needs.

The solution:

Take the initiative by phoning ahead and enquiring as to exactly who the target audience is.

Ask if there's a SEND focus to the course, and if so, whether it will address the needs of the children you teach. This simple act can be a real time saver and help to avoid much frustration later on.

2. Pre-empt behavioural issues

All behaviour is

communication in one way or another. Extremes of behaviour, such as tantrums or violence, generally occur when a child is unable to express that they have a problem or an unmet need.

The solution:

You'll save yourself time and effort if you introduce visuals into your classroom. Establish a visual timetable with symbols to help children follow the day's routines, and introduce simple 'Now and Next' boards to help them know what will happen next.

These two easy strategies can calm anxieties and prevent such behavioural challenges from occurring in the first place.

3. Look beyond the labels

Ignore the diagnosis. On the face of it that's a bold statement to make, but for a teacher of SEND, it's fair. For parents, the diagnosis or label is significant and can hold the key to gaining much-needed help for their child. For teachers, the strategies you choose to use will be more important than the label assigned to the child. Remember – the label doesn't define the child.

The solution:

Work with the child, find out their foibles and select your strategies according to what *vou've found. For example,* one child on the autistic spectrum will not be the same as another child on the autistic spectrum; in teaching terms, the label is irrelevant. The best advice I can give is to always remember that no two children are alike, and that this is even more the case for children with special needs, irrespective of what their label might indicate.



4. Get to know the parents

I wish I'd known how to get the most from parents right from the start. It wasn't a part; I'd simply never thought expertise. I'd spent years training to be a teacher and acquiring extra qualifications to be a teacher of SEND, during which time parents had simply slipped off my radar. Now I realize just how much knowledge and skill they have concerning not just their own child, but also quite often other children with special needs.

The solution:

As soon as you possibly can, do a home visit. Spend time forming a bond with the parents and tap into their personal knowledge and skills. Drain them of every strategy, resource and nugget of information. It will likely come in handy somewhere for another child with special needs in addition to their own.

5. Learn from others

As I've discovered to my cost, there's not much training out there for SEND teachers and often very little support of any kind outside your own school. As a group, we must learn to help ourselves.

The solution:

Join Twitter and follow all the SEND teachers. I tweet

as @cherrylkd, and am happy to introduce interested readers to Twitter's SEND community. Read all the SEND posts you can for new and innovative ideas. Join Facebook groups. Contact other special schools and share ideas, planning and resources. Do whatever you need to do to get some support.

6. Get ready to wear lots of hats

All teachers find themselves with a variety of alternative roles to play, but it's especially the case for SEND teachers. In a small special school, for example, you may be expected to lead as many as one of which might be your specialism. You'll be expected to quickly get up to speed with the requirements for other subjects and support teachers with their planning. As a class teacher, it's probable that you'll line manage as many as six TA and conduct appraisals for all of them.

Moreover, you'll be expected to contribute to collaborative meetings with other professionals, while keeping up to date with the requirements of the national curriculum and possibly learning how to teach a sensory curriculum.

The solution:

Learn to accept that you'll never reach the end of your 'to do' list. Instead, prioritise daily and re-prioritise as the day progresses. There's no practical alternative to doing this. Don't become anxious about your workload – just stay on top of those tasks that are imperative, and know that you've done your best. Don't be tempted to overwork yourself by going in early and working late. Therein lies the road to burnout.

To be an effective SEND teacher you need your energy for the children. And remember that among your priorities, the children are the biggest priority of all.



Cheryl Drabble is assistant headteacher at Highfurlong School in Blackpool; her book Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is published by Bloomsbury.

) @cherrylkd





"I wouldn't be as good an ATHETE if I'd known what was WRONG,"

Parasport athlete **Georgina Hermitage** recalls her experiences of growing up with a disability, but not seeing it as such...

went to an all-girls Roman Catholic prep school but was never academically minded. I think my grandfather was trying to do the best for me by sending me there, but I just wasn't an academic kid. Everything always revolved around sport – it was the only thing that relatively speaking I was naturally good at.

Of the teachers I had, my PE teacher at secondary school, Miss Lawrence, probably influenced me the most. She was always very supportive, and never drew much attention to my disability, I was just treated as a normal kid.

My mother brought me up calling my disability by its name – hemiplegia [*a form of cerebral palsy affecting one side of the body*] – but she never went into any great detail with me about what it was. She just told me I had a weak arm and a weak leg, but nothing serious. The word 'disability' was never used. I grew up knowing I was slightly different, but never saw it as anything major. I'd have physio once every two weeks and be looked after by doctors at the local hospital, but my mum used to just say it was a general check up.

Looking back, I was blissfully unaware of what must have gone on in the background. It wasn't until I read my old medical records when going through the classification process in my 20s that I learned what my mum had had to go through and deal with.

At school I was just chucked in with everyone else and sent on my

merry way. The staff were obviously aware, but it was really a case of sink or swim. Having now visited some schools and met children with disabilities, my view is that to an extent, yes, you should know what you have – but it's also possible to overcompensate. I don't think I'd be half as good as I am with my athletics now if I'd been fully aware of what was 'wrong' with me. I can see myself as wanting to have used it as a get-out clause for not doing certain things, as an excuse – but because of how I was brought up, I never had that excuse. It's a difficult one.

Carrying on

When I was 14, I'd been at local athletics club for a couple of years. My disability was becoming more apparent as things got more competitive. I was starting to struggle, finding it hard to keep up with the able-bodied girls, which was when my coach suggested I could probably qualify as para athlete, and that was it [Hermitage proceed to quit athletics before returning 10 years later as a para athlete]. I'd been brought up to believe that what I had wasn't a big deal. Why shouldn't I have been able to carry on like everyone else?

14 is a hard age for a girl. All you want to do is fit in, disappear into the crowd with your friends and be a normal teenager. With the best intentions, she was highlighting the fact that I wasn't 'normal'. And rightly or wrongly, I didn't take it very well.

Things didn't change much for me personally after that, at least not straight away. In my world, all I was doing was blocking athletics off - 'I've heard something I don't like; all I want to do now is be with my friends and carry on'. So that's what I did, and went on to leave school and later got a job. I feel that I now look at myself differently. I'm proud of my achievements, but I'm still not confident with certain things. It's strange - when I first entered the para scene I'd never been around people using wheelchairs, living with cerebral palsy and whatever else, and I found it really hard. If it wasn't for being the way I am, I wouldn't have been able to do what I have, but it's a double-edged sword.

If schools want to get disabled children more engaged with sport, the important thing is to make sure the parents are on board. Kids are only ever going to do the things their parents allow, so you've got to make everything really accessible and not put up any barriers.

I'm doing some work at the moment with the Superhero Tri Series [see cpsport.org] and a company in Surrey called Stonegate Homes. They're setting up a service where they're going to supply kids with wetsuits and arrange minibus travel, so that kids can get to training site. Parents won't have the excuse of saying 'It's too far' or 'I can't afford it.' It's just about making it all as accessible as possible.

Georgina Hermitage is a T37 para athlete, current holder of the 400m world record and two-time medallist at the Rio 2016 Paralympics in the 100m (gold) and T35-38 4 x100m (silver).

VOICES

PIC PARK

OLV

She is among the athletes participating in the World Para Athletics Championships taking place at London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park from 14th to 23rd July. Ticket prices start from £10 for adults, with entry for children up to 16 priced at £5. For more details, visit **tickets.london2017athletics.com**

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By increasing the number of selective schools, do we run the risk of leaving SEND pupils out in the cold?

Rona Tutt

hen David Cameron was Prime Minister, the thrust of educational policy was for all schools to become academies. Under Theresa May, the focus has shifted from academisation to an expansion of selective secondary education, including increasing the number of grammar school places.

This was one of the main themes of a green paper, 'Schools that work for everyone', published last autumn. The consultation on its contents closed in December, and at the time of writing (just prior to the 2017 general election) the government has yet to publish its formal response. Phillip Hammond did, however, confirm in his spring budget statement that money was being set aside for these schools and for free transport to help children from less advantaged backgrounds attend them.

May has stated wanting to see more children from disadvantaged families given the opportunity to attend grammar schools as part of a drive to increase social mobility – yet her opponents point out that only 3% of grammar pupils receive free school meals compared with 20% across the country. As for pupils with SEND, they don't even merit a mention in the green paper, despite its title.

The implications

The SEND continuum ranges from those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) at one end to those who will be aiming for university at the other. It seems likely that some pupils who have Asperger's syndrome, high functioning autism, severe dyslexia or sensory impairments will be overlooked.

On average, (while allowing for those exceptional grammar schools that offer excellent SEND provision) SEND pupils without a statement or education, health and care plan (EHCP) make up just 3.6% of a grammar school's intake, compared with well over 11% in non-selective comprehensive schools. Overall, just 0.04% with statements or EHCPs attend



grammar schools.

It's by no means certain at this stage that the government's plans for greater selection will go ahead, but it's worth considering what the implications might be for those who have SEND, as well as those from more deprived backgrounds.

Could grammar schools become more inclusive? There's already a proposal in the green paper for selective schools to take a proportion of pupils from lower income families; a minimum number of places could be similarly set for pupils with SEND. Another proposal might be to allow pupils to join selective schools at 11, 14 and 16, to help pupils who may need longer to demonstrate their full academic potential.

Defining 'all backgrounds'

At the heart of the proposals, however, lies the issue of admissions. At present, getting a grammar place typically involves pupils sitting an 11+ exam. However, pupils with a diagnosis of, for example, ADHD and autism would find being required to sit in an unfamiliar setting in silence for long stretches of time as far from ideal for showing what they could achieve. In a section headed 'Fair admissions and access', the green paper says: "We want selective schools to make sure they help children from all backgrounds." This can and should equally apply to those who need reasonable adjustments to be made for them.

Establishing links between the SENCos of different schools would help give SEND pupils the best chance of making a smooth transition, be that at 11, 14 or 16. Toby Young, director of the New Schools Network that oversees the free schools programme, has previously made two suggestions: that primary headteachers could decide which pupils should get in, and that selective schools need to adapt if they're to improve social mobility.

Like many, he's concerned with getting things right for disadvantaged pupils through a more flexible approach – one that would also improve the life chances of pupils with SEND.

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







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ALWAYS LEARNING
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"The most dangerous soldier is the one with a library card"

The SAS sergeant turned bestselling novellist tells us about his rocky path to literacy...

ANDY MCNAB

went to nine different schools between the ages of 5 and 15, so I had a lot of teachers to be angry with. I was annoyed that they kept putting me in remedial classes, but I didn't exactly do anything productive in the classroom to get out of them. It gave me yet another reason to feel angry, but I liked feeling I was in the minority and that everyone was against me. I began to feel my anger was justified, entitling me to do things that others couldn't or shouldn't do. When you've nothing to lose, you can do whatever you like.

I was hardly the only one with issues, so they had their work cut out, and I changed schools a lot. Coming from a South London council estate, there wasn't much forward thinking done by me or any of the other

kids I grew up with in Peckham. Along with education, what we were going to do with our lives didn't feature high on our agenda.

The highest hopes I ever had as a kid was wanting to become a bus driver, a printer or a panel beater. To be honest, not one of us kids really knew what the latter did, but we knew they earned good money, so it had to be good. You didn't need much education for any of those jobs, so that was it. Why bother going to school?

Change for the better

By 16 I'd ended up in juvenile detention, sent there for destroying a flat full of nice shiny things that someone else had worked really hard for. I didn't get that people had to work to get the things I smashed up or stole, and that to get work you needed to be educated. I just wanted everything without understanding how to get it.

The army used to recruit boy soldiers from detention centres, so I soon found myself in an Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion committed to six years of service. After three months of being shouted at and chased over assault courses we were marched off to the Army Education Centre. I didn't even know the army had educators. Why did I need to learn? But that was when my world changed for the better.

I remember being in a classroom alongside 20 other boy soldiers, with an old sweat of a captain standing up front. He pointed out of the window towards the barbed wire fence and the real world beyond. "Out there, they think you're all thick as shit, but you're not. The only reason you cannot read or write, is because you do not read or write. But from today that all changes."

And it did. I learnt that I had the literacy and numeracy levels of an 11-year-old. I couldn't even read the tabloids properly. As a 16-year-old I read my very first book – *Janet and John Book IO*. I was on my way to getting an education, and more importantly, understanding why I needed one.

True social mobility

The education set up by the MoD is Europe's biggest adult education system – it's a success story that the MoD doesn't shout about enough. The army's one of the few places left in the UK where there's true social mobility. I regularly visit Army Training regiments and talk to soldiers about the importance of education. The gist of what I tell the troops is that the most dangerous soldier out there is the one with a library card.

I see an enthusiasm and passion in teachers now that I didn't when I was a kid – though I probably wasn't looking. I'm lucky enough to visit a huge range of schools, from fee-paying to ones where teachers are buying books for the library, and those are the schools I want to visit. Those are the kids I want to talk to, and say, 'Frankly, if I can do it, anyone can'. If I can make just one of these kids think again about picking up a book or visiting a library, I'd be happy.

Andy McNab is a former member of the SAS, a security and intelligence consultant and the author of numerous novels, including **Bravo Two Zero**

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Elvi,15, has rhizomelic chondrodysplasia punctate. She has severe learning difficulties and can only speak 50 words. She has shortened limbs, cataracts and is confined to a wheelchair.

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What should schools do to ensure parents get the information they need – and can act on it?

Babs O'Hara

empoweringparentsuk.co.uk

worked in a primary school for 10 years, a significant number of them as SENCo and inclusion manager. During that time I met with hundreds of parents and heard of many others who said that although they were being provided with more information, they were confused by the messages they received. I was also informed that this information could change, depending on who they asked. Even where parents felt that they had a handle on what they were being told, their search for accurate information could take a long time.

Parents are still not being given a clear picture of what their child's diagnosis or education care and health plan means in real day-to-day terms. There are parents who are 'lost in the system', and while there might be some who are highly informed and 'push' for additional support. I have yet to meet a parent who's been able to fully access the SEN support system by themselves.

The latest SEND Code of Practice states that, "Local authorities, in carrying out their functions...in relation to disabled young people and those with SEN, must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and the child's parents; [*and*] the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents." (section 1.1, page 19).

This sounds like a renewal of the intention to ensure that parents and carers should be fully involved in the education of their children – the 2001 Code of Practice made it clear that all should work in partnership with parents – so what exactly has changed?

Building a clearer picture

To give parents the important role they should have within the decision-making process, and allow them to participate fully in their child's education, we can move beyond current thinking about labelling and diagnosis. While there is a place for this, the most important thing is to meet the needs of each child. To do that, it's obviously important to understand what the needs of the child *are.* This can be done through classroom and playground observations, but also by asking parents and teachers for their views. Parents offer a different angle from which to view the child, which can lead to a fuller understanding of the child's needs. With this clearer picture of the child, the available support can be matched more closely to help with their progress, independence and growth – though it's important not to forget their social and emotional well-being too.

Regular contact, even once a term, enables parents to feel more included, and gives them a chance to share information of their own. Even when you have nothing new to pass on, still 'check in' with parents regardless, even if it's only to say that there isn't anything to report!

Bridging school and home

Give parents practical tips to help and support them with their child; don't feel that the knowledge you have is just for the classroom. It's likely that parents will benefit from knowing what's working in school for their child and implementing it at home. If using a fiddle toy works for them in class, why not suggest they use one when doing homework?

Be careful when using education sector terms or acronyms around parents – it's easy to forget that parents might not understand what they mean! Where appropriate, however, discuss the implications of the child's diagnosis honestly, what the ECHP is and does and what 'SEN support' actually means for their child. Explain that these are about the child's needs and ensure that they're met to the best of the school's ability.

Finally, think about how the child and their parents can be supported by the class teacher without the teacher having to increase their workload. Things like a home-school book can make parents feel included with minimal input of the part of



the school, while also providing a great way for the school to find out what's happening at home.

Babs O'Hara has been a primary teacher and SENCo for a number of years and is the founder of Empowering Parents UK – a company providing support and advice to parents and schools.



• THE TEACHERS I REMEMBER

Three adults with disabilities look back on the teachers they can't forget – for reasons good or bad...

"She used to

say I was her

'brainbox'"

Penny Pepper is a writer, performance poet and disability activist

put it down to good genetics that I have a curious mind, especially from my father – a mind which saw learning as a pleasure, even before I went to school. Maybe this curiosity and enthusiasm attracted certain teachers who saw something in me that was worth cultivating. I was always too shy to be teacher's pet, but I could win them over with my inexhaustible enthusiasm for English. Two teachers in particular outshone the others. During my

Two teachers in particular outshole the outers, buttley of junior years at Hangers Wood School for the mentally and physically handicapped there was Miss Cohen. She wasn't much taller than me, with thick curly hair, wearing a necklace that looked like a star. She used to say I was her 'brainbox' and would always set me challenges in composition at a higher level than others in the class.

She was always kind. In an era when kids with arthritis were banned from doing sport and PE, I would have the privilege of spending an afternoon at her flat, which to me was the epitome of grown up sophistication. Not once did she make me feel I was lesser than anyone, or suggest that my expectations in life should be low

because I was disabled. Fast forward to my teenage years, and I'm under the wing of Mrs Marsh at a hospital school where many of us were patients for up to four years. Mrs Marsh – who I'm pleased to say I'm still in contact with – was the first person to tell me I had talent as a writer. Poor Mrs Marsh must have despaired as she dragged me whining through Shakespeare and Keats, yet something connected with me, and after my English O Levels I eventually went on to do an English degree with

the Open University. Since Mrs Marsh opened that exciting possibility to me, I've never once felt that I wanted to be, or could be, anything other than a writer. Mik Scarlet is a freelance journalist and broadcaster

have to admit, I don't have a story of an amazing teacher who filled me with confidence or who inspired me. Alas, I lived through the era when most teachers were a tad more critical of their charges – the teachers that touched my life had more of a negative impact, but one that I rebelled against to become the person I am today.

At junior school I had a teacher who believed sport was key to creating a rounded adult. And as I was useless at games, he wasn't keen on me. He'd played cricket at national level, and once bowled an 8-year-old me a fast ball that knocked me out. His obsession with sport and dislike of me sowed the seeds of my hatred of sport, which in turn led me to fall in love with art and creative pursuits.

With this love festering in my heart, when I started at senior school I was keen to learn how to play a musical instrument. When music lessons began I tried every instrument possible, but was never



Martyn Sibley is founder of the online lifestyle publication, Disability Horizons

"It's not just the positive teacher who will touch your life"

chosen to take them further that the introductory month. My mum asked my teacher why, and was told I was tone deaf – though I actually later went on to write theme tunes for TV and film and play in rock bands for two decades, touring all over Europe playing to packed venues...

The next teacher to have a real impact on my future was my English teacher. During a lesson on poetry, in which we had to write a poem based on The Beatles' 'She's Leaving Home', I had my poem chosen to be read out to the class. As my teacher finished, she peered over her glasses and told the room this was the worst example of a poem she had ever had the misfortune to read. I now make my living by writing. Enough said.

I think I'm proof that it's not just the positive teacher who will touch your life. Fighting against those who put you down can shape your tomorrow just as strongly as living up to the expectations of the teacher who believes in you.

"She'd make everything possible"

 've had my disability, spinal muscular atrophy, since birth.
 With my wheelchair, other assistive equipment and great
 care support, life is generally good.
 I live independently, run my own inclusion business and travel the world. I was recently voted Britain's third most influential disabled person by Power 100.

Of course it's not always easy. Back in my school days I went to a mainstream school and felt very included, but accessing PE lessons was a more difficult matter. One of my favourite learning support assistants (nowadays a TA) was called Glenda. She was like my second mum - when I got stressed or ill, or had any problems, Glenda was there for me. In PE she'd make everything possible. We'd rally the badminton shuttlecock for ages without a net,

as I couldn't hit it high enough. We'd play wheelchair hockey at the local disability sports club. We'd participate in dance lessons. Most impressively, we did gym with my non-disabled peers.

I've never been tall or massively heavy, but around the age of 12 I was a chubby boy. Glenda would still get me out of the chair, on the mats, along the benches and partly up the ropes. She was an inclusion wizard.

I still think of Glenda a lot. She defines the reasons why I had a happy childhood. She was determined to only see solutions, not problems. To always be positive. To always enable me into an inclusive education. What she did played a huge part in me going on to university and what I've done since.

Fortunately, through Facebook I still have contact with Glenda. She recently received a Queen's honour for her services to disabled students. Glenda thoroughly deserves this recognition, as do all the many other Glendas out there. These enablers are true everyday heroes, whether recognised by the Queen or not.

For further information visit disabilityhorizons.com

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KATHY BRODIE Early Years Professional, trainer and author based in East Cheshire

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After the gains we've made, the idea that funding cuts could sink our SEN provision should fill us with shame

Annie Makoff

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uch has been written about an ongoing crisis in the public sector – the budget cuts, skills shortages and controversial pay restraint we've seen don't exactly point to a thriving, affluent sector.

The government's announcement in March that they'd be extending their 1% public sector pay rise for another year was met with widespread criticism. Thousands of public sector workers will therefore receive no more than a 1% pay rise, whilst their private sector peers continue to enjoy pay bonuses, pay rises in line with inflation and other employee benefits.

Right now, there's a major recruitment crisis in education. Add to that the unprecedented funding cuts that schools are currently facing, a shortage of qualified applicants and the bigger classes schools are having to accommodate, and you have an education sector on the brink.

Figures from the NAHT reveal that the education system will have a £3bn deficit by 2020, helped in part by a £600 million cut to the Education Services Grant and the first real-time cuts to education spending since the 1990s.

In January this year *The Guardian* reported (**tinyurl.com/gdn-school-cuts**) that schools were having to cut their training budgets, make redundancies, drop key subjects and let go of entire pastoral teams. Some cash-strapped schools have considered introducing a four-day week, and many headteachers have warned that the system is in danger of imploding if nothing is done.

It's 2017. Schools should not be in such dire a position that they're having to ask parents to provide toilet rolls and essential stationary items, as one cash-strapped school in Sussex was recently forced to do.

Bearing the brunt

Unsurprisingly, all this is having a massive impact on SEN provision. The NASUWT



warned in April this year that pupils with SEN aren't getting the right support, due to a lack of specialist training and budget cuts.

The future of SEN provision in schools is headed in a worrying direction. With this clear move away from inclusion we're in danger of returning to an age of segregation, where pupils with disabilities and special needs are marginalised and cut off from their mainstream peers.

Whichever side of the 'mainstream inclusion' versus 'specialist education' argument you're on, we shouldn't be in a situation where children with special needs are being turned away from mainstream education because we cannot afford them – yet this is exactly what's happening. Yes, specialist education plays a valuable role for many children with additional needs, but the decision to attend this type of setting should be one based on free choice, rather than one dictated by funding challenges.

In March this year, the Institute for Fiscal Studies warned that the government's proposed new national funding formula for schools – which was designed to make school funding fairer – would actually represent "The largest cut in school spending per pupil...since at least the early 1980s." And children with SEN are among those bearing the brunt of those cuts.

It's becoming a common thread – where there have been cuts and austerity measures, it's those needing additional support who have suffered the most.

Worryingly, all this is happening before we've officially left the EU. It's too early yet to predict the impact Brexit is likely to have on SEN provision, but the early signs are there. Reduced specialist training, fewer specialist teachers and reduced budgets for SEN.

After all the progress made in education during the late 1990s, it would utterly shameful if a once-thriving sector, and SEN in particular, was sunk after years of so-called austerity measures.

Annie Makoff is a former editor of SEN Magazine, now a freelance journalist specialising in disability, business and HR



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Science that goes WITH A BANG

David Hammerson, director of STEM learning provider Science Boffins, explains how its dramatic experiments and demonstrations can liven up your classroom...

e often receive calls in the Science Boffins office asking if we're willing to work with SEN children. The sad reality is that not every STEM provider is willing to work alongside children with additional needs – yet the fact remains that children are still children, regardless of their educational needs. Every child wants very similar things – to be loved and cared for, to have fun and to be able to learn.

Science Boffins are on a mission to get children aged between 5 and 12 excited about the wonders of science through our interactive, educational and fun science workshops and demonstrations – and as part of that mission, we have worked over past 12 years with various schools, charities and individuals to entertain and educate children with SEN.

Studies have consistently shown that play is a remarkably effective form of therapy and education, both of which help greatly with a child's development. With additional needs covering such a broad spectrum, it's vital that children have the opportunity to take part in hands-on activities that enable them to develop at their level and pace – be it learning a new scientific term, or improving their motor skills by stirring their own pot of slime.

Lots of smiles

We've found that using trained actors as presenters adds a big visual stimulus to our presentations, which is a huge benefit to all children that we visit. This, combined with our regular work alongside charities such as Mencap and Action for Children, has allowed us to tailor our presentations and scripts to a range of ability levels.

From a new presenter's perspective, working with children who have SEN can be a daunting task. The pupils aren't always as able to interact as in mainstream schools, but the main objective of our presentations is always to ensure that



the children have fun – and that doesn't deviate from school to school. There are normally lots of excited faces wanting to know why there's a strange person wearing a white coat standing at the front of the room, and always lots of smiles leaving the room at the end.

Personal satisfaction

This year alone, Science Boffins has worked with over 60,000 children, with many more events planned over the coming months. Many of those children have had additional needs, both physically and with their education. We train our presenters to engage with all children, ascertain their ability level and then adapt their presentation accordingly.

The vast majority of our presenters would say that they enjoy working with SEN children even more than mainstream children, since they enjoy a far greater sense of achievement and personal satisfaction. A teacher from an SEN school we recently visited told us that, "The scientist gave an excellent demonstration – it kept all of our pupils' attention and they all found it very interesting. There were lots of visual things, some straightforward explanation and a little bit of higher level science for those of our pupils that have a little more ability.

"I thought the whole talk was very well pitched for a group of special needs students and there was something there for everyone."

Our workshops, assemblies and events focus on the educational elements of the science syllabus, but with a heavy emphasis on entertainment. Over the past 12 years, we've learnt that presenting educational facts and ideas in a fun and interactive way that's visually stimulating and a bit different really helps them to stick in the children's minds. We've even had some of our Boffins go back to schools and groups months, or in some cases years later, and the children still remember their last visit and what they learnt.

We look forward to working with more SEN groups over the next 12 years and beyond.

David Hammerson is the director of Science Boffins; for more information, visit scienceboffins.co.uk or follow @Science_Boffins



"It's a less stressful environment now"

Vanessa Foxall, early years and communication lead at Parkdale Primary, explains how the school boosted its SLC provision by calming things down...

e're a large suburban primary school on the edge of Nottingham, with quite a diverse intake of pupils and a higher than average level of deprivation and special needs. When it became apparent over time that language and communication was increasingly an issue for children starting here, we resolved to make tackling that a priority, starting with reception.

In summer 2016 we decided to invest in our reception unit and redesign it as a communication-friendly space based on Elizabeth Jarman's research into communication-friendly spaces. The head and myself visited an Early Excellence Centre (**earlyexcellence.com**) so that we could get an idea of what a good communication-friendly space might look like. Our aim was to create areas in which the children could communicate independently, and for the layout to encourage and support children's language development.



As well investing money into the layout of our provision, other things we did that summer included making sure that we had a way to open the classrooms to the outdoors, looking into ways of reducing noise levels and equipping our staff with appropriate expertise. We enlisted the services of a speech and language team and now fund regular weekly visits by a speech and language therapist, who supports our staff training and oversees small group sessions with some of the children.

Traffic lights

Our identification of children needing additional support at Parkdale starts in reception. When they move into Y1, those children who might have been receiving narrative interventions are reassessed, and if they still require support they'll receive it in Y1 through the intervention programme Talkboost (**ican.org.uk**/ **talkboost**), and receive further intervention in Y2 if their reassessment indicates that it's needed.

On entry, we'll use a traffic lighting system to identify what needs the children might have. 'Green' children we don't need to worry about. Those identified as 'red' will have specific speech sounds and require a referral. That's where the training comes in, because without it, a teacher won't necessarily be able to identify those specific sounds correctly.

Amber is for children we're aware of who require some form of further assessment. We've been using the Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tools (see **tinyurl.com/ct-slc-pt**) to isolate which aspects of their speech and language they're struggling with – at Parkdale it's ofen narrative and sentence structure – and then tailor our interventions accordingly.

In terms of day-to-day tracking, the Progression Tools have been really useful in helping us identify exactly which strands of speech, language and communication





"If everything's 'visually loud', chances are you're going to get loud play and interactions"





we need to work on. We can then tailor our interventions, re-test and make sure that the children's progress is what we've expected, which 9 times out of 10 it is. Where it isn't, we can look at carrying out different, more focused interventions and strategies for that child.

Purposeful play

One of the first things we did when changing the school environment was start using muted colours, rather than multiple primary colours. That was a big switch, based on the notion that if everything's 'visually loud', chances are you're going to get loud play and interactions. The idea is to instead keep things muted and quite simple. We also started making use of more natural materials, so that the children could start talking about their surroundings in terms of texture, about surfaces and features that didn't all feel the same, thus providing them with more opportunities for using language.

We now use a lot of netting to lower the ceiling level and create areas in which children feel less visible and not as much 'on show', giving them greater confidence to communicate with each other. Another practical change was a shift to us using open-fronted shelving so that children could be given independent access to items, while at the same time removing clutter and making more space within the classrooms.

Had you visited our reception class beforehand, you would have seen that it was very noisy, with limited purposeful play going on and limited opportunities for children to interact together and extend their play. They couldn't connect different ideas by moving from one area to another – if they were using water, for example, and needed pipes and funnels, they wouldn't have been able to access them if they weren't already out. Now they can link their learning to other areas; if they want to make the sand wet they can just go and get the jugs off the shelf.

These days I can stand in that environment and feel that it's calmer. Every child is engaged in a purposeful

"I could have cried"

There's one child we have who's now in Y2. In reception he said nothing at all, he simply didn't speak – but last Christmas he stood up and said two lines in the Christmas play and many of us just looked at each other. I could have cried.

He was able to do that because he was part of an arrative group in reception, then part of Talkboostin Y1. That support

has continued throughout his schooling to

the point where he can now confidently stand up and speak in front of other people. That's massive.

His behaviour within his peer group became better, he was a lot less physical – because he was able to communicate, negotiate and develop friendships much better now than he could initially.

play activity. I can look round and know that there's a group doing a narrative session, while the other children are able to find spaces to talk, communicate and explore their ideas. Previously, that wasn't happening – it's a less stressful environment now.

Since the changes were made, we've seen a massive rise in the number of our children reaching age-related expectations by the end of reception. Having an SLT visit and support us has helped massively in tracking the children's progress. She's trained our staff in using progression tools to identify the strands children need to be working on, and how to use them to record data and chart their progress throughout school.

In March this year, Parkdale Primary School was awarded 'Primary School of the Year' at the 2017 Shine a Light Awards – a national awards scheme run by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust. Further details can be found at www.shinealightawards.co.uk

For more information about the school, visit parkdale-notts.co.uk or follow @parkdalecarlton

"We celebrate EVERY little achievement"

We find out how the physical development and confidence levels of children with SEND can be given a boost through cycling...

> he Chalet School in Swindon caters for children with complex learning difficulties. Two years after adopting the mainstream learn-to-cycle programme Balanceability, it's seen not just a dramatic rise in the number of children who've learned to ride a bike, also rapid progress in many other skills.

"Lots of children may not be able to access reading and maths, but for those who are physically able, riding a bike is a pretty amazing, tangible and achievable thing." says Liz Lloyd, who delivers the programme at the Chalet School. "Our mission is to have every child leave Y6 able to cycle, but we see many other benefits too."

Over in Northern Ireland, Balanceability trainer Gregory Massey works with older children between the ages of nine and 16 who have autism and Asperger's. He observes that, "The ability to ride a bike means that a child can go and play with friends, cycle to school or on holiday, or just cycle to the shop to get an ice-cream."

Boosting balance

Learning to cycle helps generate multiple positive outcomes because children master one skill in particular – balance. Patricia Maude, Emeritus Fellow at Cambridge University's Homerton College, specialises in children's physical literacy and advised on specific elements of the Balanceability programme. Balance, she explains, underpins just about everything we do. Without it, we can't sit at a table to eat or write; nor can we stand, walk, run or do pretty much anything with our bodies.

Learn-to-cycle programmes that use balance bikes are brilliant, she says, because as well as boosting balance they help children build on previous skills. The games that Balanceability participants take part in help to develop balance and stability across the body's midline – important when standing still or sat in a bike saddle. They also promote the development of dynamic balance, enhancing stability on alternate sides of the body – something noticeable when walking along a bench, for example.

"Learning to cycle helps generate multiple positive outcomes because children master one skill in particular – balance" Each new skill builds slowly and steadily on skills that have been previously learnt. Once a child can balance on one leg, for example, they can try to do so with their eyes shut. As soon as they've mastered walking along a line on the ground, they can have a go at stepping stones.

"The progressive activities that form the building blocks of each element of biking provide seamless routes to successful cycling and encourage young children to become independent learners," says Patricia. "Put those two things together and you're giving children access to a world they may never access otherwise - or at least be unlikely to acquire at the same speed as they would through taking part in a programme like Balanceability."

Progressive skills

Once teachers are trained up, the Balanceability programme is then theirs to adapt as they see fit, depending their cohort.

Liz Lloyd explains the approach in place at the Chalet School: "We group children by ability, not age. Children who need to work on their gross motor skills and balance join the 'balance games' group. Those who need to work on coordination will be introduced to balance bikes. We might also have a group transitioning to pedal bikes, so I could have a six-year-old and a 10-year-old in the same group."

Another key consideration is time. Those overseeing the Balanceability programme pride themselves on being able to get most children riding a balance bike within 12 sessions, while at the Chalet School, time normally goes out of the window. As the school's PE lead Claire Morris

notes, "We think in years, not weeks. Whatever pace the children want to do and need to work at, that's what we do. The children will get there, and it's amazing how much progress they can make in a short space of time."

Materials can also be adapted. Gregory Massey, for example, makes enlarged copies of the Balanceability visual resources and sticks them on the classroom wall so that the children know exactly what to expect from each activity and how long it will take, down to the second. "We adapt everything to their needs to minimise anxiety," he explains.

Balanceability's standard milestones can also be broken down into dozens of 'minimilestones'. "We see each tiny progression as a massive outcome and celebrate every little achievement," says Liz. "If a child has improved 0.001%, we know that's amazing. This isn't a 'quick fix' programme, but if you can take the long view, it's phenomenal." To find out more about the Balanceability programme

Øbalanceability
balanceability.com

"HE WAS OFF!"

Liz Lloyd expands a little further on how the Balanceability programme works in practice...

Balance building



At first, Henry wouldn't even stand on the footprint shapes that serve as 'stepping stones' in Balanceability's balance games. It took a whole year of Liz repeatedly using the shapes to encourage Henry to develop a left-right stepping motion, but he can now complete all of the Balanceability balance games independently, and his overall balance has improved dramatically.

Stamina and fitness



Children later learn to propel themselves forward on lightweight balance bikes by keeping their feet on the ground, using the same stability and stepping skills developed in the balance games. Amelia could do this but tired easily, prompting Liz to adapt the activities to better suit Amelia's needs. "At first she could only manage 20 seconds before stopping for water," Liz recalls. "Now she can do 25 minutes."

Spatial awareness and focus



At first, Stanley kept crashing into things. He was in a balance bike group that Liz oversaw in the school's hall, following cones and tracks and gradually boosting his spatial awareness. One day she took him outside to a track running around the perimeter of the playground. "It was brilliant – he was off! We couldn't believe how focused he was. He stayed on the rack and stopped where I asked him to. His spatial awareness had improved tenfold."

Social opportunities



Outside of school, Liz notes, "Cycling opens up so many opportunities, now and in the future. These children may not be able to sit down and tell mum or dad what kind of day they've had, they might not be able to sit down and play a board game – but they can all go on a bike ride together."

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Jennifer Grotier, Headteacher

"We'll help anybody"

With several 'Outstanding' ratings under its belt, and a demand for places that's starting to outstrip its capacity, what can mainstream primaries learn from Shorefields special school? Callum Fauser finds out... t's a humid, drizzly day when I arrive at Shorefields special school in Clacton-on-sea. I'm there to meet with headteacher Jennifer Grotier, get a sense of how the school's managed to secure three Ofsted 'Outstanding' ratings on the trot, and see whether there are any elements of their approach that could be successfully applied to mainstream primaries.

As it happens, Jennifer is a good person to ask about this, having previously worked for 17 years at a mainstream primary. As she recalls, "The head at my mainstream was leaving, so I was weighing up whether to go for the headship there – but then the deputy headship came up here. I'd taught in special needs previously, I met the head and we really clicked."

Productive though this working relationship was, Jennifer found herself assuming the top job rather sooner than expected when the school's head announced her departure within a year. "Having appointed an all-new SLT and achieved her third outstanding Ofsted, she wanted a new challenge," Jennifer recalls. "I remember hoping that the new head would be as nice, but then she said to me 'You should do it." Jennifer duly became acting head in September 2016, assuming full headship in February this year.

Building capacity

Shorefields in its current form opened in 2007, following the merger of two special schools – the Windsor School, for pupils with severe learning disabilities and the Leas School, for moderate disabilities. The intake is diverse, spanning ages 3 to 19 across its school and college settings, covering a 'catchment area' extending out to the village of Tiptree some 30 miles away.

In 2011 a Building Schools for the Future grant enabled the school to expand and redevelop its site, the legacy of which



quickly becomes apparent during a tour of its grounds. Built around a red brick Victorian building, the school's outdoor space gets plenty of use. Each of the 15 ground floor rooms has its own separate outdoor area, complete with seating and trampolines (the latter "Very good for calming pupils down", notes Jennifer) while the first floor classrooms reserved for the school's older year groups have their own enclosed balconies.

On the other side, further away from the building is a fenced off multi-games area, a go-kart track, bucket swings and even a zipwire. Shorefield's outdoor learning facilities are extensive, to say the least – and also come in useful at times for providing some much needed additional classroom space.

As well as the dedicated soft play space, sensory areas, quiet rooms and medical wing might expect from a special needs school, there's an independent living apartment on the first floor equipped with a fridge and washing machine to help impart life skills to the school's FE learners. To help pupils identify different locations within the school, each room is identified via a low-level sign with text, Makaton signs and a small 'object of reference' pertaining to what it's used for (an old attendance register in the case of the school office, a small book outside the library).

One point that comes up often throughout our conversation with Jennifer is the rising demand for what the school has to offer. "When I arrived we were on 122 pupils – we admitted our 141st last week." she says. "We don't have the building capacity to expand any further, but we need to because there are more and more pupils requiring our services."

For the time being, however, there's a determination at Shorefields not to compromise any more than necessary on its current set up – modest class sizes, a healthy teacher/pupil ratio and teaching staff with a considerable amount of specialist expertise. "We'd like to keep the numbers to eight or nine pupils per class," Jennifer says. "We try to have a 2:1 ratio; if there's one class teacher we'll have three or four teaching assistants. For children needing extra support we'll occasionally see ratios of 1:1."

2 Sharing advice

Naturally, those numbers allow for far more time, space and flexibility in the classroom when compared with mainstream primaries. It's something that Jennifer remains sensitive to, partly from her own teaching experience but also through serving on the steering group of the 31-strong Coast 2 Coast Teaching School Alliance based in neighbouring Jaywick.

She recalls having discussions with mainstream schools

THERAPIES AND TRAINING

In addition to its 16 teachers and 80 or so TAs, Shorefields also enlists the services of a sensory OT, a speech and language therapist and two therapists specialising in music and play, plus a paediatric nurse and nursing assistant.

Beyond attending to the pupils' needs, their role at Shorefields extends to developing the teachers' and TAs' therapeutic skills in the classroom via a series of twilight CPD sessions. Recent topics have included managing pica, epilepsy, medical training, Thrive, communication groups and Lego therapy.



"It's not just about what mainstreams can learn from us – we can learn from mainstreams too"

about the need for SLTs to take a more active role in overseeing their school's SEND provision, rather simply delegating such matters to a SENCo who might not contribute to the school's strategic decision-making. "It's about getting SLTs and governors to adopt a more inclusive nature, looking at what we believe an inclusive SLT should be. We don't want to be prescriptive, but in future, will a school's SEN funding be contingent on hitting specific benchmarks for particular pupils?

"I often hear about primary schools that aren't necessarily Ofsted Outstanding, but are otherwise very welcoming, accepting and therapeutic, with lots of children who thrive there. Their attainment might not be very good, but their progress will be, because their pupils' special needs are being met."

Beyond that, Jennifer is keen for her staff to be more mindful of such distinctions themselves. "We'll help anybody, and often have visitors from other schools, but it's not just about what mainstreams can learn from us – we can learn from mainstreams too. My wish is for all of our staff to spend a day at mainstream. We're aiming for some of our teachers and TAs to do so next year."

Sharing advice

One of the things that sets Shorefields apart is the emphasis placed on pupils' long-term learning and development. "We accommodate ages 3 to 19, from children on P1 or P2 right up to children who will live independently and enter employment," says Jennifer. "We recently saw one of our students pass his driving test first time – the first ever in the school's history, which is just wonderful. We're really proud of him."

Assessment at Shorefields is currently based around PIVATs, aka P Scales. Following the recommendations of the Rochford Review, and comments about its assessment system in the school's last Ofsted inspection, however, this is in the process of changing to a system Jennifer describes as "Based around looking at the child's EHCP – examining what we perceive to be their outstanding steps for that year and measuring those, so that our assessments are completely individualised."

Something else that comes across strongly from our time at Shorefields is the school's commitment to staff development – from its enthusiastic embrace of apprentices and regular identification of TAs with the desire and potential to become teachers, through to its regular twilight CPD sessions for teaching staff (see 'Therapies and training').

Should someone wish to apply for a position at Shorefields, then, what should they expect? "We try hard to recruit only what the old head used to call 'Shorefields people'." says Jennifer. "It's hard to define, but I know what I'm looking for – people who 'get it' and are going to bring something. We never have post-interview conversations where we say 'We really need another teacher – do you think they'll do?' We only ever ask 'Were they brilliant? Yes? Okay, where are they going to fit in?'"



CHOOL SPOTL

Meet the staff



VERITY WHITESIDE, INTERIM HEAD OF LEARNING

"We aim to give all of our children a voice and a means of making choices. It might be something very small - offering them two objects and having them tell us by feel which they'd rather have. Many of our children have so much done to them; some are medically very poorly with many frequent interventions. As much as we can, we strive to make our students independent and give them back some control."



ALEX MCCARTHY, EARLY YEARS TEACHER

"Our children's early years assessments are passed to their next teacher, who takes them on board. Hopefully, if the targets in there are accurately based on their EYFS assessments and their EHCP, they should progress naturally along a line towards their early learning goals. We review their targets every term, and if they've met a target too easily, or not come close to it over two terms, we'll tweak it a bit to make it as appropriate as possible."

"Joe forced me to become a better teacher"

Robin Launder recalls the pupil who compelled him to quickly get up to speed on ADHD – and the lessons he learned in the process...

oe came to my class in the middle of year 6 - a funny, lively and charismatic boy who loved trains, geography and Man United. He was also a boy who had ADHD. And I very quickly realised that I was out of my depth.

His behaviour was a whirlwind of disruption. I was exhausted by the end of the first hour, let alone the first day.

That night I decided to do my research, and find out what works and what doesn't for students with ADHD. I knew I needed a strategic approach - and given how demotivated I felt, it was obvious what the first strategy had to be.

STRATEGY 1

Depersonalise

I had to manage my own emotional responses. Being able to manage myself was a prerequisite for being able to manage Joe, and to do that I knew I had to depersonalise his behaviour. I coined a phrase, a mental mantra, that I'd repeat to myself in order to stay emotionally neutral: "This is Joe's ADHD".

It worked. Whatever the behaviour, be it chatting, shouting out, picking up other students' belongings, asking me inappropriate questions or whatever, I'd repeat my mantra and keep my cool - and my professionalism.

STRATEGY 2

Seating plan

I initially seated Joe in the middle of the classroom. That was a big 360° mistake, because Chunking it placed Joe at the centre of every possible distraction.

The next day he was at the front with me. Now, with his back to the class, his attention instantly improved. Having him close also made it easier for me to keep him on task.

STRATEGY 3

Standing plan

Some students with ADHD also benefit from a standing plan, since sitting for long periods of time can be difficult for them. For Joe, however, standing breaks were another route to distraction, so I avoided them. To compensate, I built movement into Joe's day, getting him to hand out and collect in work, clean my whiteboard, run messages. It helped.

STRATEGY 4

Vary it

The trick to sustaining Joe's attention was variety from one lesson to the next, but also variety within lessons.

Silent working, pair work, group work, cooperative learning, card sorts, quickfire quizzes, hot seating, project-based work, videos, multimedia use - shifting

between these and other approaches helped to keep Joe engaged and learning.

STRATEGY 5

Joe's least favourite activity was writing. The longer the assignment the more he disliked it, and the more he disliked it, the more challenging his behaviour became.

What helped was 'chunking' - breaking the work down into meaningful blocks of learning with short-term goals. It allowed for mini mental breaks, gave me an opportunity to check his understanding and made the work seem less daunting.

STRATEGY 6

Nudges

We all need a little nudge sometimes to help us modify our behaviour. With Joe, the more explicit that nudge, the better.

To control classroom noise, for instance, I used a traffic light poster. Red, no talking; orange, hushed paired work; green, open discussion. Prior to Joe joining my class, to get student silence it was enough for me to say 'We are now in red'. But that didn't work for Joe.

What did work, though, was something I now call the 'triple-tell approach'. I would:

1. Explicitly point at the

red rule

- **2.** Get all the students to look at the red rule **3.** Read out the rule in full:
- 'Red means no talking'

The triple-tell approach gives three routes into the brain, and so amplifies the message.

STRATEGY 7

Routines

Students with ADHD benefit greatly from routines. The thing is, though, those routines can take a very long time to become, well, routine.

The 'You tell me' approach helped. Instead of reminding Joe of what any given routine entailed, I would get him to remind me. If the class were about to go to the school library, for example, I would get Joe to tell me the routine for doing just that - the what, the when and the how. I'd turn it into a bit of a game. seeing how much he

could remember. It's another explicit nudge, of course, but this time a preparatory one.

STRATEGY 8

Descriptive praise All students need praise, but students with ADHD need it even more – not least because they're less likely to get it. For Joe, I praised his effort, his progress

and his approach (how he did something). In other words, I used descriptive praise. My focus was his academic work and his behaviour, including his ability to remember and adhere to routines.

STRATEGY 9

Reach

Joe rarely completed homework, despite an end-of-day routine where we would check that all his homework was in his planner. I therefore enlisted the help of his mum, and together with Joe's input we created a set of home-based routines to get the work done.

Initially there wasn't much progress, but we eventually got there. And we got there because of the next strategy.

STRATEGY 10

Persistence

Persistence gets you to where you want to go.

But there's another reason, beyond the obvious, why my persistence helped Joe. It helped because it gave Joe two important messages – it told him that I believed in him, and that he was worth persisting with.

If you believe that your teacher believes those things about you, then ADHD or no ADHD, you will make progress.

But I also made progress too. Which leads me to my last strategy; one that I've taken with me since my time with Joe.

STRATEGY 11

Be thankful for challenges

Joe challenged me (I'll never forget that first hour)! and in the process he forced me to become a better teacher. Not a perfect teacher, not the best teacher – just a better teacher.



Robin Launder is the director of Behaviour Buddy – a company

specialising in evidence-based CPD, including behaviour management – and serves on the executive committee of PRUsAP, which represents PRUs and the alternative provision sector.

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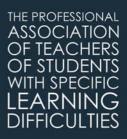
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ARE YOUR HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS ABLE TO READ?

Talit Khan considers how we should identify dyslexia in pupils for whom established screening techniques might not be suitable...

🖲 @Talat1703

advantagesend.com

ow often do we come across deaf children who struggle to read and spell in our classrooms? How many of us then take the time to find out if they have a literacy difficulty such as dyslexia, or do we tend to dismiss any reading and comprehension difficulties they might have as due to their hearing impairment?

Is it possible to use similar screening techniques to identify if a deaf child has dyslexia, as a child that is able to hear clearly? Well, it appears so...

A cause for concern

A recently concluded two-part study conducted by the Nuffield Foundation (see **tinyurl.com/nuffield-dyslexia**) found that, "Half of the 79 oral deaf children in the study (aged 10-11) were identified as having reading difficulties. In addition, a substantial group of oral deaf children with average reading skills are at risk of developing reading problems because of poor language."

Children exhibiting a deficit in language skills and phonological awareness will typically have had a lack of exposure to a rich vocabulary environment, which can have an impact on their decoding and subsequent word reading skills. As SENCos and teachers, it essential for us to explore whether a deaf child with phonological concerns might fit a dyslexic profile. Why? Because we have to ensure that all pupils, regardless of whatever disabilities or difficulties they might have, are given the same opportunities for intervention support.

It may be difficult to match the typical age-related reading profile for a deaf child, but there's no reason why we can't use a typical dyslexic reading profile to identify whether there is cause for concern in relation to an oral deaf learner. Acknowledging that a child who is deaf and has good oral spoken language skills may have a tendency to make phonetic spelling errors, or present issues with alliteration tasks, should help to inform us about the specific support that he or she may require.

The strong likelihood of deaf children with weak reading skills developing further problems due to their language difficulties ought to be a real cause for concern. The earlier that intervention support for such individuals can be introduced, the more effective the monitoring of their progress will be.

Look beyond the standard

We need to ensure that all poor readers, regardless of their ability to hear or not, get to receive the same opportunities for support, so that any 'reading gap,' that might exist doesn't widen and prevent a deaf child from catching up with his or her peers.

A 2009 report by Sir Jim Rose to the then Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (**tinyurl.com**/ **rose-report-09**) stated that every child should have the opportunity to become successful at reading. This shouldn't just apply to hearing children who have been identified with dyslexia, but those who are poor deaf readers too.

As educational practitioners, it's up to us to ensure that an inclusive education is offered to all of our pupils - not just hearing pupils identified as having literacy difficulties via standardised assessments. We have the option of administering assessments such as the phonological assessment battery (PhAB), which can help to distinguish whether an oral deaf child has the same difficulties as a dyslexic learner. By offering intensive interventions to hearing and hearing-impaired pupils in broadly the same way (albeit with some administrative modifications), both groups could access to a broader understanding of the curriculum, which would ultimately facilitate their entry to a richer and more fulfilling life.

Talit Khan is an independent SEND consultant

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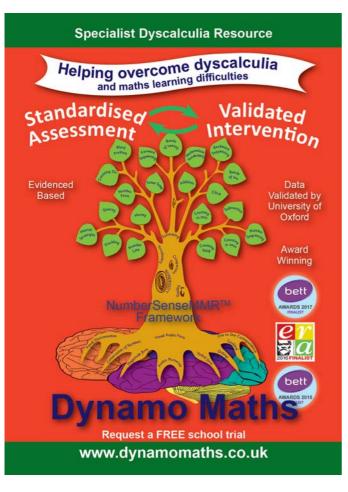
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IS EXCLUSION REALLY THE ANSWER?

Fintan O'Regan asks why, after a period of decline, the number of primary pupils being excluded is starting to rise again...

ブ @FintanOregan 🛄 fintanoregan.com

he overall trend in recent years has been a decrease in the number permanent exclusions. Where there have been increases, however, the highest have occurred in primary school – such as the 870 permanent exclusions in 2013/14, up from 670 in 2012/13.

'Persistent disruptive behaviour' (PDB) is the most commonly cited reason for permanent exclusions, accounting for 32.7% of the total.

There's also been an increase in the number of fixed term exclusions, from 267,520 in 2012/13 to 269,480 in 2013/14. 78% of those occurred in secondary schools, but it's worth noting the considerable rise of fixed term exclusions at primary over the same period – from 37,870 in 2012/13 to 45,010 in 2013/14. PDB is again cited as the most common cause, accounting for 25.3% of the total. From those figures, one might come away with the impression that things are improving in secondary schools but getting worse in primaries. Credit is certainly due to the efforts secondary schools are putting in to reducing their exclusions, but then they have a greater capacity to offer alternative provision to pupils who may be at risk, compared with some primary schools.

What does PDB mean?

In current practice, PDB tends to be applied to a range of pervasive (and to some extent predictable), yet consistently inappropriate behaviours, as opposed to one-off actions such as physical or verbal assault or damage to property.

However, given that the definition varies from school to school, it follows that there may be significant variation in the criteria being applied when making the decision to exclude a pupil, which may make interpreting inter-school comparisons of exclusion statistics somewhat difficult.

It's worth highlighting here the prevalence of ADHD – one of the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorders there is, which is estimated by NICE to affect between 3% and 9% of school-age children and young people across the UK. ADHD is typically characterized by symptoms such as a failure to pay close attention to schoolwork, an inability to listen when spoken to directly and a tendency to leave a classroom without permission.

Those symptoms closely resemble the types of disruptive behaviours often associated with school exclusion. If manifested over a prolonged period of time, such behaviours may place a child at risk of exclusion, particularly if the underlying cause of these behaviours is not recognized and appropriately managed.

Although the relationship between ADHD and school exclusion has not as yet been well studied, the available evidence suggests that rates of exclusion are indeed higher among children who have been diagnosed with ADHD than in the general school population (Daniels & Porter, 2007 – see tinyurl.com/dp07-adhd).

Unrecognized ADHD may also help to explain in part the disproportionate rates of school exclusion among boys compared with girls. Boys are over three times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion, and nearly three times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion. Published studies have further shown that ADHD diagnosis rates are higher among males than females, and that girls are at a lower risk for disruptive behaviour disorders.

The way forward

So how should we respond? A child's first fixed-term disciplinary exclusion could perhaps present the first opportunity to detect such disorders. Early intervention by the school or teacher, with subsequent screening and diagnosis carried out by a medical professional, may help many disruptive behaviours from becoming persistent.

That diagnosis may in turn help to circumvent the avoidable burdens of multiple fixed-term exclusions or even permanent exclusion. Improving the level of training received by teachers in this area will also help to identify children at risk of behavioural disorders before the problem escalates further.

Fintan O'Regan is an associate lecturer at Leicester University

PLANA SCHOOL TRIP that works for everyone

X X I

Leading off-site visits can feel like hard work – and more daunting still when the group includes children with SEND – but it needn't be if you pay attention to the following areas...

MARIE SMITH

Researching and choosing your destination

This is the key to a successful, fully inclusive visit. Carefully list your requirements, and once you've established your wishlist begin your research. You'll probably find that there's a much wider selection of potential venues available than you might think, many of which will be able to provide for your needs. If you're unsure, just get in touch with them – additional support can typically be negotiated without additional cost.

Consider the length of your visit, whether it will involve meal times, staying away overnight and the impact that might have on any children with medical, feeding and health conditions requiring specific support. Your school's nursing team or the child's regular health professionals will be able to advise.

Preparation and pre-planning

Preparation is your best friend. Complete a site visit by walking around to establish whether the venue will work for you. Ask plenty of questions and take photos – both will be invaluable. Stay in touch with the venue and keep asking questions as and when they come up; when ensuring a successful day out, no query is too small.

Appropriate transport will be critical. For pupils with physical needs this may involve securing an accessible form of transport or a vehicle with wheelchair access. Other pupils might have sensory or behaviour needs and require appropriate support – you may decide that the sensory impact of the journey will be too much, resulting in heightened stress levels and a greater risk of challenging behaviour, and therefore allow them to travel separately.

If pupils have a care and/or management plan, it's vital that you use it to ensure that you have everything you need. If any medicines or specialist equipment will be needed, ensure that you've planned for this and have checked the implications of carrying it with you.

Spend time on your risk assessments, both group and individual. The more detailed and specific they are, the better. This process will ensure that any legalities are covered, but also allows you to be certain that you've covered all angles and are prepared for any eventualities.

If you're concerned that you might have missed something or that your plans are inappropriate, don't be afraid to seek advice from your LA's legal team or any outside agencies working with the pupils. This is especially important when supporting children with potentially challenging behaviour.

The final and most important area of planning is to consider your staffing. You need to ensure appropriate ratios and deploy staff with the correct expertise, skills and knowledge of the pupils. Will you require an additional adult to potentially respond to challenging behaviour, intimate care or medical needs? Are you taking the staff member who knows the pupil best and can manage their needs most confidently? Will they be happy to support the pupil in this situation, and what support do they feel they need?

Preparing pupils

Children with physical and medical needs might need reassurance that appropriate facilities will be available for them during the visit, while others may



BEST PRACTICE









Be sure to carefully consider the specific needs of your pupil group at the planning stage. These might include:

- \mathbf{A} How accessible the site is
- 🛉 The need for intimate care facilities
- How safe the site will be for the children
- The impact of the venue on children with sensory needs

The availability or otherwise of safe spaces to help manage sensory overload.

need additional support to prepare for such a big change in their usual routine.

A venue's website is the perfect tool for familiarisation. Many will often feature YouTube clips that can be viewed and used to create a video or photograph book, perhaps alongside images taken on your initial site visit.

For many pupils, daily familiarisation with the aid of photograph books, slideshows and internet access can help ensure a successful trip. They can be taken home and possibly brought along on the trip itself to mark off landmarks or signal a countdown until the trip concludes in a similar way to a schedule or visual timeline. They can add a sense of structure and routine that helps reduce anxiety and support children who may normally be less less flexible.

Working together with families

Remember that family members will know their children best, and are likely to have been on visits with them before, so ask them for their views and ideas. It's also important to consider their anxiety levels and emotional response to the idea of a school visit – it can be a worrying time. Be mindful when approaching them for assistance with documents such as risk assessments, which will need to outline all areas of the child's need. Discussing the contents with them, rather than having them read such documents in isolation will help reduce anxiety and the likelihood of conflict at a later stage.

Some family members may wish to join you on the trip. If this is appropriate and helpful for the pupil, then that's great – but it can be a difficult issue. If a family member can't attend because taking time off work or arranging childcare for siblings presents issues, they might feel frustration or concern that their child's level of participation or inclusion in the trip may suffer as a result.

On the day

On the day itself, ensure that you've brought all the appropriate equipment, paperwork and resources with you. Check *and double check* before you leave.

See to it that the pupils have everything they need, be it their timelines, photograph books, fiddle toys and/or sensory support items. Try to ensure a calm start to the day, as this can have a massive impact on the tone of the visit – and be relaxed and enjoy it! Pupils take their cue from us; if we're calm ourselves, usually they will be too.



Marie Smith is a former assistant head for inclusion and designated senior leader for child protection now working as an

independent SEND Consultant across early years, primary and secondary.

- MarieSmithSEND
- mariesmithsend.co.uk

PARTNER with your parents

Consistent communication with parents is vital – but remember that it can be used for happy occasions too, writes **Natalie Packer**

s teachers, we understand what pupils are like when they are in our class, but parents have vital and unique knowledge about their child's needs and can bring a different perspective. Research by Henderson and Mapp [see tinyurl.com/hend-mapp] suggests that when parents or carers are fully engaged in their children's learning, their children are more likely to attend school regularly, have better social skills and achieve better outcomes.

The SEND Code of Practicechild's SEN will be sen[tinyurl.com/TS-SEND-CoP]and emotionally chargrecognises that parentalcan be especially true willinvolvement is particularlychild is first diagnosedimportant for children andtold their child has speyoung people with additionalneeds, acknowledging thatneeds, acknowledging thatany parent, and they willparents and carers know theirtime to come to termschild best of all. Parents shouldthe diagnosis.be fully involved in every stepParents may holdof the SEN process, from initialdifferent views to you,identification right throughand although everyoneto making decisions aboutwants the very best forprovision for their education,child, ideas as to whathealth and care plan.might be and how to ac

Developing positive relationships with parents starts at a whole school level. Initially, this involves establishing clear communication systems between parents and staff (for example, phone calls, texts or home-school liaison books) and setting up regular opportunities for meeting with parents, such as parent forums, progress review meetings or coffee mornings. The school can then seek the views of parents on what's working well, or not so well, in terms of SEN provision, and act upon any feedback they receive.

The role of the teacher

Working with the parents of children with SEN can be extremely beneficial. However, it can also be very challenging. You will come across families with a diverse range of needs, and for many parents the issue of their child's SEN will be sensitive and emotionally charged. This can be especially true when a child is first diagnosed; being told their child has special needs is a difficult time for any parent, and they will need time to come to terms with the diagnosis.

Parents may hold different views to you, and although everyone wants the very best for the child, ideas as to what this might be and how to achieve it may vary! The key is to develop a positive relationship with parents, so they can have professional trust in you and you can establish effective communication.

Listening to parents' concerns and hearing their point of view will go a long way to building that relationship. Anna, mum of Elijah who has autism, says, "The most helpful thing the teacher can do is take the time to listen to me, take my concerns seriously and just let me know what's going well and what's not going so well with Elijah."

Simply giving parents the opportunity to talk about what their child is like at home and share any concerns they have can provide a really useful insight into their child's strengths, interests and needs. It can also help you to empathise with the family and put yourself in their shoes, as far as this is possible. How would you feel if it was your child? What support would you want for them? What would you change to make things better?

"Parents may hold different views to you, and although everyone wants the very best for the child, ideas as to what this might be and how to achieve it may vary!"

PARENT POSTCARDS

Although most schools use texts or emails to communicate with parents, using good old-fashioned postcards to share positive comments means the pupil can physically present the card to their parents (and the parents can then display the postcard on the fridge door!).

Alternatively, try investing in a 'talking postcard'. These contain a voice-recording chip so that you or the pupil can record a brief verbal message for the parent, and the parent can choose to record a message in return. Talking postcards can provide a great opportunity for pupils with speech and language difficulties to practise their speaking skills by recording their own message.

BEST PRACTICE

To promote positive relationships with parents, make time for important conversations. Show you are really listening by making eye contact, summarising what has been said and keeping the focus on the child. Try to deal with any concerns on the day they arise. If you miss a phone call, try to return it as soon as possible, or ask someone else to ring on your behalf and let the parents know when you'll be in touch.

Be wary of using educational jargon or acronyms that parents may not understand (there are many acronyms in SEN!). Also avoid using negative language, as it immediately creates hostility. When you're meeting parents as part of a review, check you have all the relevant information to hand – for example, the ISP, assessment information, pupil's views and reports from specialists. Keep a record of any important discussions you have with parents, particularly if there is likely to be a follow up afterwards, or if potential issues may arise as a result of the conversation.

Recognise the realities of life for some parents of children with SEN (lack of sleep and high stress levels, for example), and consider the practical implications of when meetings are held to avoid childcare issues. Recognising and acknowledging how parents are feeling can immediately give comfort and reassurance, and often de-escalates a difficult situation.

Make sure communication happens for positive reasons too. If the pupil's done something really well, let the parents know!

No matter how hard you try, you won't always agree with parents, and you won't always be able to help them with their concerns or allay their fears. When talking to parents about their child, at times they may become upset or angry. Don't take it personally, as it's usually the situation they're expressing negative feelings towards rather than you.



Natalie Packer is a member of the Academies Enterprise Trust SEN

team and an associate consultant for Nasen. This article is an edited extract from her book **The Teacher's Guide**



to SEN, available now from Crown House Publishing.

🥊 @NataliePacker

nataliepacker.co.uk



PERSON-CENTRED PLANNING

The Code of Practice advocates using person-centred approaches when planning for pupils with SEN. Person-centred planning is when a facilitator, such as a teacher or SENCo, works with a pupil and their parents, wider family, friends and professionals to gather information about the child – what their strengths are, what really matters to them and what the best ways of supporting them are.

Parents are key partners in this process. The planning results in actions that are focused on the child or young person's learning and life and reflect their long-term aspirations.

HOW TO MANAGE **THE STRAIN OF**

Anne Gilbert explains what schools can do in response to the relatively unknown, yet common condition of juvenile idiopathic arthritis...

uvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) currently affects over 12.000 children in the UK and is one of the most common causes of physical disability encountered during childhood, settings can do much to with around 1,500 under-16s newly diagnosed each year.

JIA may not be outwardly visible at all times, but flare-ups of the condition can come on suddenly - any staff member who works or is in regular contact with a child who has JIA ought to be made aware of their condition. If a child has JIA their affected joints can become extremely stiff. Regular movement helps, so allowing a child to move around is essential. For a young child required to sit for long periods of time, especially on the floor, this can cause them a huge amount of pain. Where this is the case, a simple solution many opt for is to simply let them sit on a chair, though this then

draws attention to the child and can cause them to become self-conscious. Not all children will want their peers to know about this invisible condition that they have.

Schools and nursery support younger children with JIA via inclusive approaches that do less to mark children out as different. If your school decides to let a child with JIA sit on a cushion, for example, why not extend the same privilege to others in the class who want to share in it?

Playtime and PE

Many children with JIA will worry about everyday playground activities in a way that others don't. Getting tripped up or jostled in the playground can cause considerably more pain for them than their peers. for example.

They may therefore ask to sit inside, which can be isolating. Schools can make

a huge difference to their level of engagement by introducing playtime and PE activities that can reduce the risk they're exposed to, while still allowing the child to be included. For all the risks involved, it's important that children with JIA get to join and take part in PE lessons unless they're having a flare-up or are feeling unwell - though the child and their parents or carers ought to be consulted on the nature of activity involved and how long they can take part for.

Timetabling

It's difficult for schools to ensure their timetable meets everybody's needs. If possible though, where a child has difficulty using stairs or walking long distances between classrooms, providing them with a timetable that take that into account will help enormously. In exceptional circumstances, you may need to consider a part-time

timetable that allows a child with JIA who is regularly and severely unwell for prolonged periods to still engage with school.

Staff training

JIA is different to conditions such as asthma, diabetes or epilepsy in that staff require no specific training with regards to administering medicine to pupils, but they will need to have a general understanding of what JIA is and how a flare can be triggered.

Schools won't need any specialist equipment, but for inflammation and sore joints a lot of children will get relief from an ice pack or heat pad and anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen. All schools should have a medical conditions policy which states how the school will care for any children with medical conditions, the procedures for getting the right care and training in place and who is responsible

for making sure the policy is carried out.

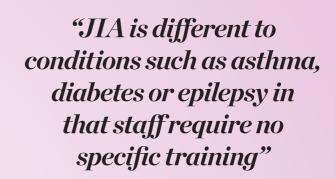
Additional support

With support from their school, any child with a long-term condition or additional needs can apply for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which have replaced Statements of Special Education Needs in recent years. In many cases the process can take some time, but if granted, EHCPs will ensure that a child receives continuous provision and support whilst the child attends school. An EHCP could mean that a young person receives extra support during exams, such as more time or help with scribing. If the child or young person has an occupational therapist who supports them with their JIA, we would recommend that the school use the OT to help with the EHCP while supporting the understanding of JIA throughout the school.

Parental engagement

JIA flare-ups can occur overnight and can make a child feel unwell for weeks, so there may be occasions when a child will be off school for multiple weeks. The child's parents/carers and the school will need to maintain regular and open communication. If JIA starts to impact upon a child's attendance, the school can lend support by being mindful of its messaging about attendance to the family; standard letters demanding explanations when a parent has already been in touch will cause additional and unnecessary stress.

There is no known cause for JIA but the condition can be influenced by stress, making the child's friendships, mental health and confidence levels key areas for schools to take into account.



Anne Gilbert is youth and family services manager for JIA-at-NRAS (National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society)

🥖 @JIA_NRAS

🔵 jia.org.uk

THE SAFE IN SCHOOL CAMPAIGN

JIA-at-NRAS is among the organisations making up the Health Conditions in Schools Alliance (medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk), which has worked with the DfE to remind schools of their legal obligation to have a medical conditions policy. Recent research by the Alliance found that just 11.5% of schools were able demonstrate that they follow said law – and of those that did, two thirds of the policies were found to be inadequate, missing key details such as staff training, how to safely include children with medical needs in all activities and, crucially, what to do in an emergency.



What should you do for **A CHILD WHO'S GRIEVING?**

Sarah Helton looks at how schools can support children with SEND through the difficult process of bereavement

t is often thought that children can 'bounce back' from things more easily than adults - this is a myth. All individuals (adults and children) grieve in their own way and in their own time. Assuming that children will quickly bounce back from a bereavement is a very dangerous assumption, as it means that the child's emotions are unsupported and they are left to cope on their own.

You may wish to protect the child and think that by masking their emotions you are helping them, but by stifling a child's grief you are ultimately causing further problems. All children, regardless of their developmental level, need to work through their grief in their own way and in their own time. All children will display grief through their behaviours. If children do not have verbal language, and therefore lack words to express their grief, their behaviours may be the only way that they can convey their grief.

Managing change

For children with SEND, their 'normal world' is bound in structures and routines, and this becomes even more important during a period of grief. A death will undoubtedly

result in some changes, but as far as possible these changes need to be managed slowly and sensitively to avoid extra confusion and distress.

When children are younger Instead, we need to keep (or are at an earlier developmental stage), they are generally happy with basic explanations and definitions of death, but as they get older, they will probably require greater detail and more answers to their questions.

The answering of the child's questions and concerns and the overall support given to grieving children is not just for the weeks and months following the death, it also needs to be part of the ongoing support and development for the child (and part of the ongoing ethos of a school). Like adults, children will re-grieve at different points in their lives, with episodes being triggered by any number of events, large or small.

A child with SEND will find it hard to understand what death really means, especially the fact that it is forever. They may have no understanding of the finality and permanence of death. If they have not developed this awareness, they will often long for things to return to the way they were. For some children, a full understanding of the

conclusiveness of death may never be achieved, but this does not mean that we should leave them in a state of confusion with their bereavement. explaining to them what has happened and why they are feeling the way they feel.

Explanations need to be basic, real and practical, with a very visual element. Do not rely on words.

Safe spaces

Some grieving children may need a bit of time and space

alone, which you will need to be able to provide them with at school. This space could be a small room adjoining the classroom, the sensory room, the library, a very large cardboard box with cushions and blankets and so on. No matter how small your school is or how limited the space, there are always ways of creating a 'safe space' for the child to have some quiet time. If a child is able to ask to spend some time in this safe space, this shows they are developing good self-regulatory skills.

"Assuming that children will quickly bounce back from a bereavement is a very dangerous assumption"



Remember that while children may request time alone, they always need to be monitored. This can. however, be easily done without disturbing their need for solitude. Children who are non-verbal should also have the means to ask for time in this safe space and this can be done by them pressing a switch (that says 'quiet time please' or however you choose to describe this space), by signing, eye pointing to a symbol, reaching for the object of reference and so on.

How to talk to grieving children

Always be open, honest and available. The death of a

Profile Kan

child's family member or someone in your school community is no time to be a slave to the timetable. How can a child learn if they are in a state of emotional distress?

Always use the appropriate words and not euphemisms – use the words 'dead' and 'death', not 'just sleeping' and so on. Also, be patient and prepared to explain things over and over again so that the child can process and accept the death. You may have to answer the same questions repeatedly, but by doing so you are providing the pupil with comfort and reassurance.

When you have given the child information about the death, or what will be happening next, regularly check that they have understood what you have told them – but do not repeatedly ask them 'Do you understand?' Instead, check their understanding through conversational routes. If, for example, you have told them that the funeral for the deceased person is on Thursday, ask them later on if they remember what is happening on Thursday.

Building resilience

After a loss, children need to regain a sense of safety and stability – how is thisachieved? All of the child's basic needs must be met first (food, drink, warmth, safety and security). Then, re-establish the child's routines.

Parents, carers and school staff should have support systems in place for both themselves and the child. Teach/support emotional regulation skills, such as asking for 'time out', using relaxation and breathing techniques. Provide lots of 'ordinary time', even though you might think the child needs lots of 'special time'.

A child's resilience has a great deal to do with their self-esteem - what they know, what they can do well, what they have and what they can rely on. For children who are grieving, building resilience is especially important. We cannot take away the child's sadness, but we can help them through the loss by supporting the child to feel better about themselves, by teaching them skills to manage their emotions, worries and uncertainties that the death will have given them.

WHEN TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT LOSS...

Do:

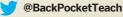
Explain that their feelings are normal

- Reassure them they aren't the only person feeling this way
- Express that you understand they feel upset/angry/sad/lonely/scared
- Acknowledge comments made by the child using utterances such as 'Yes', 'Right' and 'I understand.'

Don't:

- Interrupt the child when they're talking about their feelings or experiences
- Repeatedly ask 'Do you understand?'
- Bombard them with questions
- Make statements such as 'I know how you feel,''Don't cry' and 'Don't be angry.'

Sarah Helton is a SEND consultant, having previously worked as a teacher, deputy head, LA education officer and educational publisher. This article is an edited extract taken from her book A Special Kind of Grief, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.



backpocketteacher.co.uk



SEND and assessment - what happens now?

Richard Aird OBE was a member of the Rochford Review – here, he explains why its recommendations amount to a 'once in a generation opportunity' to change things for the better...

n October 2016 the DfE published the final report of the Rochford Review (see **tinyurl**. **com/rochford-reviewfinal**), before launching a consultation on its content April of this year. The terms of reference for the Rochford Review included a requirement to recommend whether P scale levels remain fit for purpose, and to consider how any proposed solutions to P level issues might:

• Recognise achievement and progress made by all pupils

• Support the ambitions of the most recent SEND reforms

• Assist with school inspection and improve accountability for SEND provision

• Suggest wider implications for professional development

In response, the Rochford Review has recommended that the requirement to statutorily assess the lowest attaining pupils by reference to P levels be removed, and that assessment by levels be replaced with a new statutory requirement to assess and report on standards of pupil engagement in cognition and learning.

Cognition and learning is one of the four domains of SEND prescribed in the SEND Code of Practice. The Rochford Review goes on to recommend that when schools report on the standard of their pupils' engagement, they should also report on progress within the other SEND domains of:

- Communication and interaction
- Physical and sensory
- Social, emotional and mental health

By linking statutory assessment of the lowest attaining pupils to those SEND Code of Practice domains, the Rochford Review is offering teachers a once in a generation opportunity to improve the effectiveness of their specialist provision for pupils with SEND and bring about better outcomes on a whole child basis.

Beyond the 'best fit' approach

Should the Rochford Review reforms be enacted, the *qualitative* assessment

of outcomes in the SEND domains will take priority over the production of quantitative data in narrow bands of national curriculum attainment.

Although it's often stated that P levels provide a 'common language' with which to judge standards of pupil attainment, attainment within the P levels is only awarded on a 'best fit' basis, with no requirement that pupils are secure in all aspects of learning at a particular P level.

This best fit approach has meant that the DfE has never 'data crunched' P level data, because it's not been possible to moderate such data on a national scale - there's often ambiguity about what pupils actually know and can do.

Although P level assessment is only a tiny part of what schools should be assessing in terms of the progress their lowest attaining pupils are making, schools have invested a relatively overwhelming amount of time and expense in tracking and reporting P level progress in comparison to assessing and reporting holistic impact. On occasion, the perceived need to satisfy myths about

Ofsted's insatiable hunger for P level performance data has compromised the requirement for schools to assess and report the impact their special provision has had upon the SEND issues of their pupils, and how pupils are being prepared for a participatory adulthood.

Profoundly personalised

Back in 2006, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust advised schools to "Transform their responses to the learner from the largely standardised to the profoundly personalised". The Rochford Review's recommendation that statutory assessment of pupils with SEND focus on pupil engagement, rather best fit P level assessment, is an ideal starting point for securing such personalised provision.

However, pupil engagement will only contribute to the success of personalisation when that engagement focuses on the whole child, and is embedded within curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Teachers of pupils with



ADD YOUR VOICE

The DfE's open consultation, 'Primary school pupil assessment: Rochford Review recommendations' closes at 5pm on 22nd June 2017 - for more details, visit tinyurl.com/rochford-consult.

Further information regarding the Rochford Review's recommendations, plus a range of freely downloadable accompanying resources, can be found at engagement4learning.com

SEND have a duty to know and Resource Framework' be able to demonstrate whether they're making a real improvement to the circumstances of their most fragile learners. Provision shouldn't be about teaching generic, standardised measures of knowledge. Instead, it should be about understanding what needs to happen in order to facilitate improvements in the issues and barriers that confront pupils on a daily basis.

Personalised learning respects a pupil's existing attributes, whilst also responding constructively to impaired functional issues. Careful note is taken regarding the barriers posed by a pupil's specific issues, as well as the pupil's complex and unique nuances, in order that distinctive teaching approaches can be employed empathetically.

Nothing to fear

The Rochford Review identified seven aspects of pupil engagement in cognition and learning believed to be essential for facilitating personalised learning. This focus on pupil engagement builds on the innovative 'Engagement for Learning

(ELF) published in 2011 by the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities project (see **tinyurl.com**/ CLDD-ELF), which has since been thoroughly tested and endorsed by international research.

Using the ELF can readily provide the kind of quantitative data which Ofsted inspectors require to inform their judgements and ensure that statutory assessment of pupils with SEND is sufficiently robust. The ELF has a numerical scoring system, which can assist schools in exemplifying the learning trajectory of pupils - even when the standard of such learning is only of a lateral nature and planned improvement targets are still being worked on.

Teachers should not be afraid of the changes proposed by the Rochford Review, but rather feel assured that the needs of their lowest attaining pupils will be far more effectively addressed as a consequence. To help bring about this much needed change in the culture of SEND provision, teachers are encouraged to respond positively to the DfE



Richard Aird OBE is the former leader of four maintained and non-maintained special schools, a regular advisor to the DfE and a SEND consultant.

sensibleconsultancy.co.uk

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Fire your pupils' imaginations with these four engaging lesson plans from our expert contributors



A PICNIC RIPE FOR LEARNING Find out how a picnic accompanied by fruity treats is the perfect recipe for fostering your pupils' language development



MAKE TIMES TABLES VISIBLE Patterns are the key to grasping multiplication, so put them front and centre, suggests Judy Hornigold



FUN, GAMES AND SOCIAL SKILLS Board games are the perfect way to get children naturally communicating and interacting with each other, says Lynn McCann



p56

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS Teach your pupils one of the most important life skills there is, with this money-themed lesson by Kate Bradley

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



Promote minofulness



The Be the Jellyfish Training Manual by Lucy Cree and Sarah Brogden (Jessica Kingsley Publishers £24.99) contains a

series of one-hour lesson plans aimed at nurturing children's social and emotional wellbeing, through activities involving art materials, peer massage, breathing, sensory equipment and mindfulness. Find out more at **bethejellyfish.com**

Big feelings



Use the free Spread a Little Kindness resources from children's mental

health charity Place2Be to plan a session about recognising and managing big feelings. Download assembly guides and slides, plus tips for school staff and students from teachwire.net/teachingresources





The Dyspraxia Foundation has produced a toolkit in the form

of an eBook (Amazon Kindle, £7.99) aimed at parents/carers of young people with dyspraxia, aka developmental coordination disorder. Contained within are a range of practical suggestions to help address daily dyspraxia challenges in school and at home, plus a series of techniques and tools for boosting independence and resilience. Visit **dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk** for more details

LESSON PLAN

A picnic ripe for learning



• Locate, sort, classify and compare information

• Use the basic principles of a healthy and varied diet to prepare dishes

• Give reasons for actions and opinions

• Communicate ideas and ask relevant questions



From nutrition to social skills, fruit can be a rich source of valuable knowledge, says **Russell Grigg...**

🍠 @russellgrigg

What is your favourite fruit? Does your friend agree? What's the most unusual fruit you've ever eaten? What sort of fruit would you like to take on a picnic?

Research tells us that learning is enhanced when children feel engaged, motivated and empowered. What this lesson aims to do is bring learning to life using the cross-curricular context of planning, preparing and evaluating some fruity picnic treats.

Placing fruit at the centre of the lesson means we're touching on health and nutrition – but it's the communication and reasoning skills linked to the picnic part we're most concerned with here...



START HERE

This activity is designed for a small group of young children working alongside an adult who scaffolds the learning. The language of thinking is made visible throughout and can be differentiated according to children's individual

needs. The activity will take around 20 minutes, depending on the size and age of the group.

Start by talking to the children about their favourite foods: '*Today we are going to think about healthy treats and will be exploring fruit ready to take some on a picnic*'. Explain the concept of a 'picnic' as an outdoor meal, with plenty of treats. Have any of them been on a picnic? Where did they go?

MAIN LESSON

Sit the group around a circular piece of fabric – this is the 'chat mat'. The chat mat offers an ideal opportunity to support, develop and extend children's talk in a social context, developing turn-taking, listening, voicing opinion and responding to the views of others.

In the centre of the mat place the 'mystery box'. Today it's a picnic hamper filled with a variety of familiar fruits. Explain that inside the picnic basket are some exciting foods. They are to pass the box around, choosing a fruit that they like the look of, and place it in front of them on the chat mat. Model this by choosing an item of fruit. Encourage children to make independent choices and to take turns.

1NAME AND EXPLAIN

Children communicate their choices to others, offering simple reasons for their decisions. Model the kind of explanation that you would like them to give, differentiating as appropriate – e.g. *T have chosen the (x) because it...*'

Go around the group, taking it in turns to share the children's choices. Encourage the use of a range of vocabulary at an appropriate level for the children in the group, and record key ideas on pieces of paper that can be placed next *"The process of reasoning about possible connections and explaining these is the most important part of the activity"*



to pictures. For example, if a child says "I have chosen the strawberry because it is sweet," write 'sweet' and place it beside the picture.

2 CONNECT AND COMPARE

Select a fruit that has a connection to the one that you have chosen. If you had chosen an apple, for example, you might make a connection to an orange. There are several possible connections to discuss – the fact that both are round, both can be made into juice, and so on.

Connect the two fruits with a piece of string, ribbon or paper as a visual prompt. Encourage the children to reason about your connection, and to try and guess what it could be. As children become more confident you can select increasingly less obvious connections, or make connections between more than two items. Allow children the chance to make connections for themselves, and encourage them to ask each other questions such as, *Ts the connection...?*

Children can then look for connections between their fruits, developing their understanding of sorting, classifying and comparing. Encourage the children to use their prior knowledge, and remember that the process of reasoning about possible connections and explaining these is the most important part of the activity.



3 QUESTION AND EXPLORE

Cut into the fruit and describe how it looks, feels, smells and tastes. Encourage children to try new fruits, and extend this activity by including some more unusual fruits for the children to explore. Which fruits would go well together in a fruit salad and why? The simple picture book *Oliver's Fruit Salad* by Vivian French [Hodder, £6.99] could provide a useful starting point for thinking about what to include.

Finish off the session by highlighting and celebrating how well children have done and recapping the key vocabulary that has been introduced – 'explain', 'connect', 'compare'.

Helen Lewis is PGCE Programme Lead at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and co-author with Russell Grigg of A-Z of Learning Outside the Classroom [Bloomsbury, £19.99].

Dr Russell Grigg is an experienced teacher educator, inspector, consultant and author of the books Becoming an Outstanding Primary Teacher [Routledge, 27.99] and Big Ideas in Education [Crown House Publishing, £22.39]



• Find out where these fruits originate, how they grow and how they get to the shops.

• Cut or share the fruit in different ways – explore shape, simple fractions and number practically.

• Create some fruity artwork – printing, sketching, collaging, photographing or exploring still life paintings of fruit. Look at the work of the artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo, or the book *Food Play* by Elfers and Freymann [Chronicle Books, £13.65] for inspiration.

• Encourage the children to vote for their favourite fruits and capture their choices using ICT or simple bar/tally charts. Use this to write a shopping list ready for the picnic.

 Research costs and go shopping for the picnic.
 Plan and prepare fruit kebabs or individual fruit pots for the picnic. Use cameras to take photos of the finished products and create a display from them.



• Why did you choose that?

• What do you think might happen if...?

• How could we...?

• How do we know ...?

LESSON PLAN

Make times tables visible



• How patterns can be used to help learn the key times tables

• How these tables relate to each other

• The commutative property of multiplication

• Representing multiplication as an array and repeated addition



Demystify multiplication by showing your pupils what's going on visually. **Judy Hornigold** explains more...

🍠 @DyscalculiaInfo 🛄 judyhornigold.co.uk

This lesson is based on Dr. Mahesh Sharma's 'six stages of learning' in maths – those being the 'intuitive', 'concrete', 'pictorial', 'abstract', 'application' and 'communication' stages. What we're going to focus on in this lesson is giving learners confidence in the key times tables of 1x, 2x, 5x and 10x.

Being able to manage and recall these key tables confidently means that children can use them to derive other, more advanced table facts later on. They can try deriving 6x table, for example, by adding the 1x table to the 5 x table. But to do that, it's necessary to make the underlying multiplication patters as visual as possible.





Before you begin, gather together the following resources:

- A set of cards you can use to represent the numbers 1 to 10
- A set of Cuisenaire rods
- One blank Multiplication grid

MAIN LESSON

1 FINDING PATTERNS

Provide the child with a multiplication square and ask them to highlight the 1x, 2x, 5x and 10x tables, using a differently coloured highlighter for each table. Can they see the pattern in the 5x table? In the 1x table? In the 10 x table? Can they continue these patterns beyond the facts presented to them in the square? What's special about all the numbers in the 2x table?

Ask the child to then lay out the number cards in a row beside each other in numerical order. Ask them what times table this sequence represents, and follow up by asking what the sequence would look like if all the numbers were 10 times bigger. What time table would the sequence represent then?

Our brains are wired to recognise patterns; doing so helps us to make sense of the world. Patterns are vital in maths, helping us to understand the relationship between numbers and predict and estimate when calculating.

2 INTUITIVE STAGE

Ask the child if they can see the link between the 1x table and the 10 x table – what's the connection? Moving on from this, can they see any



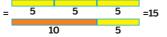
links between the 1x table and the 2x table? Would it be possible for them to work out the 5x table using just the information available from looking at the 10x table?

Conversely, would it be possible for them to work out the 10x table from just the 5x table, or perhaps the 2x table? What if they were to try and work out the 10x table using both the 2x table *and* the 5x table?

3 CONCRETE STAGE

We're now going to use the Cuisenaire rods to look at the 5x table. Set down one yellow rod and ask the child how many units long the rod is (they can use white unit cubes if they need to). Now add a second yellow rod to the first, doubling its length. What single rod are these combined rods the same length as?

Add a further rod to each row. Can the child tell you what number both rows now represent?



Continue in this way until the child can predict the next number without the rods.

Make sure that you encourage the child to swap pairs of yellow '5' rods for an orange '10' so that the pattern in the 5x table becomes clear. The rod arrangements should either consist entirely of orange rods, or orange rods with one yellow rod at the end.

4 PICTORIAL AND ABSTRACT

This is a good point at which to help the child discover the commutative property of multiplication, i.e. the fact that '2 x 5' is the same as '5 x 2'. One way to do this is to look at the rows and columns in the multiplication grid – make sure that the child has highlighted the tables going across as well as down, and that they've understood that these represent the same result.

Another way to do this is to use the Cuisennaire rods. Using the example of 2 x 5, select two of the '5' rods and place them next to each other on the table. Now select five of the '2' rods and place them on top. The child should be able to see that these two sets of rods take up the same area and are therefore mathematically equivalent:



The three arrangements of rods illustrated above can be placed on top of each other, illustrating multiplication as repeated addition and showing that '5+5=10' and '2+2+2+2=10'.

They can also be rearranged to illustrate multiplication as an array:



These two arrangements can also be placed one on top of the other to show that '5 x 2 = 2 x 5'.

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



• One application of multiplication tables is for working out the area of squares and rectangles.

Present the child with twenty unit cubes from the Cuisenaire rods and ask them to make as many different rectangles as they can. Once they've made one, see if they can use larger rods to make the same shape. For example:

20 can be found in the 2x, 5x and 10x table (and the 1x table, of course, if you go far enough). The idea here is for the child to discover the different shapes for themselves. This will help them to understand the concept of mathematical equivalence, even though they may not realise this at the time!



- Does it matter which way round the numbers are when you multiply?
- Can you explain why?
- Can you use one key table to help work out a different one – such as the 5x table to help work out the 10 x table?

LESSON PLAN

Fun, games and social skills



• Being flexible when responding to others' actions

 Communicating for a purpose

 How to deal with differences of opinion and arguments

• How to self-regulate their emotions and deal with losing



A regular board game group can be highly effective for helping autistic pupils develop their social skills, says **Lynn McCann**...

🍠 @reachoutASC 🛛 🛄 reachoutasc.com

It's important that we don't try and make an autistic child 'conform' or socialise in situations that they clearly find overwhelming and uncomfortable. What we can do, however, is bring children together in a structured and interesting task where they can all learn about getting along together, discover the skills they possess and pick up new ones in a way that's suitable for everyone in the group. We can teach knowledge, skills and understanding to all children, so that every child can feel more confident and comfortable in social situations.



START HERE

I usually help the children perform a self assessment activity at the start of each group session. Scales work well – if a child scores '2/10' on their ability to cope with losing a game, then scores a '4/10' when they're



next assessed, that's progress. It's always good for the children to be involved in the assessment themselves, but you might want to run a more detailed teacher assessment alongside it – an example can be found on the CD accompanying my book How to Support Children with ASC in Primary School (see **tinyurl.com/ Im-asc-primary**).

MAIN LESSON

1CHOOSE A GAME

I've previously organised weekly social skills groups at both primary and secondary, often using board and card games, and sometimes Lego or other practical cooperative activities.

Board and card games play to the strengths of many autistic pupils because they have rules, they have a point and are visual, featuring patterns and structure. They can depend on skill as well as chance, and the participants don't necessarily need to look at each other while playing them. And while they're repetitive, they also introduce different events within the rules.

The sessions follow a predictable pattern. First, we discuss a specific social skill and allow the children to contribute to what they know about that skill. Alongside the children I then assemble the resulting information as a social story or other visual format. After this we choose a game to play and do so whilst commenting on using the skill we've just been learning about and any other skills they might be using.

2 INVITE EVERYONE

Games are a great way to develop connection and interaction naturally. Because they're not 'work',



and because there's something inherently motivating about them, many autistic children can find themselves using communication and interaction skills more naturally, with the result that they learn about the need for flexibility when interacting with others, how to be observant of their surroundings and how to follow instructions. They're also being asked to follow a set of instructions (which they can see an immediate point to) and called upon to communicate purposefully, while at the same time having conversations about other topics during play.

They will further learn how to handle disagreements with others, and ways of self-regulating their emotions when dealing with losing. It's important to stress here that this type of activity shouldn't just for autistic children, but for all children.

3 BE CONSISTENT

That said, it's also important to remember that it can take some children a long time to develop the confidence and skills they need to play board games successfully. Regularity and consistency are vital – social skills groups and games shouldn't be the first thing to come off the timetable when a teacher

"Children can find themselves using communication and interaction skills more naturally"

> is off sick or other events intervene. It really needs to be a weekly event, in which the children are made aware of the skills they're learning and are supported in trying them out in other daily situations so that they become generalised.

> An autistic child may need more support than others in doing this, but it should never become a huge pressure for them. Learn to notice when they're interacting well with others and praise them for it, which will in turn will support all the children in the group.

4 CHANGE IT UP

I've been establishing, teaching and monitoring such groups for many years. On numerous occasions they've led to the development of real friendships and autistic children finding that they're no longer left out, but have a group they can belong to.

It's a model I've used with pupils at KS1, KS2 and KS3 – changing the games and sometimes the skills we're focussing on, depending on the group's particular needs. They can work particularly well for new Y7s starting secondary or high school, for example.

A social skills group won't suit every child with autism, but for those want to join in and make friends, or just find social interaction confusing and difficult, it can be one of the ways in which we support them and their peers to develop good relationships and skills that stay with them for life.

Lynn McCann is an *ASC specialist teacher and author.*



AIMS:

 To learn to take turns and accept being in a different order each turn.

 To join in games with a different person starting each time.

1. Discuss with the group what 'taking turns' means and what skills they need to be able to do it. Show them a turn taking board and ask how it could help the group take turns.

2. Play a simple and quick game (Uno and Connect 4 are good examples) a number of times. Each time, write down the names of whose turn will be first, second, third, fourth and so on. For the next game, change the order.

3. Give points to the pupils for good 'looking' or noticing, listening, turn taking and waiting on skills cards.

4. Total the points; everyone says 'well done' to each other.

5. Finish.



• Can you notice what others are doing?

• Can you listen and understand what they are saying?

• Do you know what to say?

LESSON PLAN

A penny for your thoughts



• How to distinguish between different quantities

• The effects of simple addition and subtraction

 How different coin coin combinations can enable financial exchanges



Knowing how to use money is a vital life skill for SEND pupils, says **Kate Bradley**

🍠 @oakes_dan 🛛 🛄 danoakes.co.uk

The latest National Curriculum for mathematics includes a range of money skills that need to be covered across a child's school life. For children with SEND, money is one of the most useful maths skills they can be taught – but there is a disparity between the demands of the curriculum and the smaller steps that many learners with SEND will need.

Understanding, using and developing money strategies are key life skills that we can teach learners with SEND from a young age. Here, I'll show how learners working at current P levels can participate in a Y2 maths lesson based around money.



START HERE

The four activities described here are graded, focusing on different skills that will be useful for children to learn on their journey towards money competence.

P4: 'Pupils are aware of cause and effects in familiar mathematical activities'

Link to money – making an exchange

P5: 'Pupils make sets that have the same small number' Link to money – demonstrating an understanding of

different quantities

P7: 'Pupils demonstrate an understanding of 'less' **Link to money** – demonstrating what 'one more' or 'one less' means in the context of paying for something

Source: Performance – P Scale – attainment targets for pupils with special educational needs, published by the DfE (tinyurl.com/dfe-p-scales)

MAIN LESSON

1CAUSE AND EFFECT

Set aside an area of the classroom and set up a partial train track on the floor using Brio pieces or similar. Beside this, arrange a set of visual symbols representing pieces of track, trains and accessories, such as trees, people, buildings, etc. Nearby, set up a 'shop' in the form of a table display consisting of track pieces, trains and the aforementioned accessories.

Allow each child to spend time solving the problem of how to get more pieces to continue building the track. The TA or teacher can model making an 'exchange' of a symbol for an item. The child can then 'buy' the pieces that they want to be able to build and play with. Take turns being the shopkeeper and the shopper. Invite other children to join the session from the rest of the class once they've finished their work.

2|SETS AND NUMBERS

Use the children's movement breaks as an opportunity to develop their understanding of number and quantity. For this activity you'll need two large dice with 'pockets' that let you customise the faces. Insert cards in one that display actions such as 'star jump', 'hop', 'crab walk' and so forth. In the other, place cards showing different numbers.

"Understanding, using and developing money strategies are key life skills"



Assemble as a group and ask the first child to roll both dice. The adult models naming the action and the number, and then carries that action out. The next child then takes their turn. If you have some items of physical equipment in your class, such as gym balls or scooter boards, you could use these in place of of the action dice. This activity might work equally well in a PE session to begin generalizing the skill.

3 WHAT DOES 'LESS' MEAN?

Things can get messy here, so make sure everyone has an apron. Around a builder's tray, place five cake cases, some play foam, some red sequins and a set of cards numbered 0 to 5. Give each child in the group the chance to squirt some foam into a case and add a 'cherry' sequin on top (great fine motor skill work).

Once all the cases are filled, place the number cards in front of them and give each child a penny. Together, sing the song '5 currant buns in a baker's shop'. As you say each child's name, they hand the penny to you, and as you go to give them the cake, you splat it down. Repeat this, encouraging the children to wait, and then allowing each a turn to splat the cakes. Make the children aware of the numbers decreasing by one each time.



4 I CAN ESTIMATE!

Working in pairs, one child is given the role of 'recorder', while the other becomes an 'actor'. The actor takes a bouncy ball and drops it from a height. The recorder uses a tablet device to record a video of the action being performed. Once the ball has stopped bouncing, both children write down their guess of how many times it bounced on a whiteboard. They then watch the video back, count the number of bounces and compare the figure with their estimations. If their estimates are very inaccurate, an adult can model making a close estimate to support the children.

The pair then swap roles. Ensure you have plenty of different balls to hand so that the children have a chance to explore within this.

Kate Bradley is an occupational therapist and teacher, currently working as an inclusion leader at a large London mainstream school. She is also the co-author of 101 Inclusive and SEN Maths Lessons, available now from Jessica Kingley Publishers.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

During your next extended snack session, present the children with a selection of items that they can 'buy' for a price. For a class of 30, split the class into four groups. Each child in the class is given some real money, aside from one child who's appointed as 'shopkeeper'. The children then get the chance to look at a pre-prepared price list and work out what money they need to buy the item they want.

• You can extend this further by running a short 'snack shop' activity each day. You could even try to create a basic 'savings' system that allows the children to 'save' money in order to buy a more expensive item the following day.



• Can I engage the children in money-based activities that teach them valuable basic skills?

• Can I plan for other children who may need additional practical support to be included in these activities?

• As the class teacher, can I work with the group for part of the session rather than it being solely the TA's role?

BEWARE THE fortune-teller error

Staff should call out low expectations and thoughtless labelling for the counterproductive habits they are, says **Jarlath O'Brien**...

eing a headteacher can be a very lonely existence that leaves you feeling isolated. For a long time I thought it was the only role in school where this could be a potential problem - but put your tiny violins away, because I've learned I was wrong. I'm married to a SENCo, and have therefore seen first-hand how it's possible to feel like the lone voice advocating for a group of children that we work so hard to champion. We can sometimes find ourselves alone in having to challenge negativity or low expectations, but challenge them we must.

I used to be one of those people that needed challenging. When I taught in a secondary school, one of the most important times of year was that day in the summer term when we received our timetable and class lists for the next academic year. One such day sticks in my mind - as I scanned the lists, a distinctive surname jumped out at me, that of a family of half a dozen siblings and cousins, who all had behaviour and learning difficulties of some sort. They were - in the language I used to employ before knowing better – a nightmare.

The boy in question was joining Year 7 in September. I'd never even met him, but



had already consigned him to my watchlist as someone to impose my will on at an early stage; someone who needed to understand who was boss. Two things happened that year. I learned that he wasn't related to the school's other Clarksons, and that he was delightful, with a wicked sense of humour.

I felt incredibly guilty afterwards for writing him off, and learned a salutary lesson that has never left me. I had predicted failure on one very dangerous and erroneous assumption. I had made the 'fortune-teller error'.

The fortune-teller error a prediction of failure that fails to materialise – is one of many exaggerated or irrational ways of thinking that we engage in when responding to children and their needs and behaviour. The American psychiatrist Dr Aaron Beck did extensive research into 'cognitive distortion' during the 1970s as part of his work on depression, which I've found useful for challenging my thinking. I'd like to highlight here some of the cognitive distortions I've seen most often (and sometimes been guilty of myself), and how you might challenge them.

All-or-nothing

"Sîan. You have to be perfect for the rest of the term or else you can't go on the class trip."

All-or-nothing thinking places children (particularly those with behavioural difficulties) in an almost unwinnable position, by demanding perfection and deeming them to have failed if they don't achieve. This faulty thinking is reinforced by the notion that we're extrinsically motivating the child to hold it together for the trip and assuming that the prior negative behaviour was just a premeditated choice to be naughty. To compound it even more, we tend not to impose such unattainable expectations on the rest of the class. We demand that this one child has to work harder than everyone else, despite their difficulties.

Helping colleagues understand the position the child has been placed in can allow them to readjust. (And besides, if the trip is part of the curriculum, your school's unlikely to let it to be used as a reward).

Ignoring positives and focusing on negatives

"Lara's had an awful week."

Doing this will maintain negative beliefs in contradiction of actual evidence regarding child's conduct when viewed across the whole school. This can be reinforced in a secondary school environment, where we are almost certain to see a partial picture of a child's time in school, which is then held to be true for all other teachers and times of the day.

Asking colleagues to describe things the child has done well can redress the balance, as can use of the school's database to show where and when the child has been successful elsewhere in the school – "Yes, a missed homework and a uniform detention for you – but three bonus points in English, a bonus point in French and picked for the school netball team!"

Labelling

"Them? They're a nightmare."

My unforgivable dismissal of an entire family above is a case in point. Labelling (or more accurately, 'mislabelling') uses strong and emotionally loaded "I'd never even met him, but had already consigned him to my watchlist as someone who needed to understand who was boss"

language in an extreme form of generalisation, extending one area of difficulty a child may have to their entire being – or in my case, their relatives. This should always be brought to the attention of colleagues: *"We don't label children or families in this school."*

Catastrophising

"Emily is going to destroy my lesson today."

A nuclear version of the fortune-teller error, this is a prediction that things will go pear-shaped on an epic scale. Also called 'magnification or' the 'binocular trick'. I've previously had to say, more often than I'd like, "We don't predict failure in this school."

Fallacy of control

"If you're not the most influential person in your classroom, Mr Turner, then who is?"

This is a form of selfemasculation, whereby we see ourselves as helpless and at the mercy of fate. It weakens our position, as we feel little or no ability to influence, change and therefore improve behaviour. In these cases it's support that's needed, not challenge. If a colleague feels helpless, that's the time for us to pile in with as much support as we can muster to turn that mindset around.

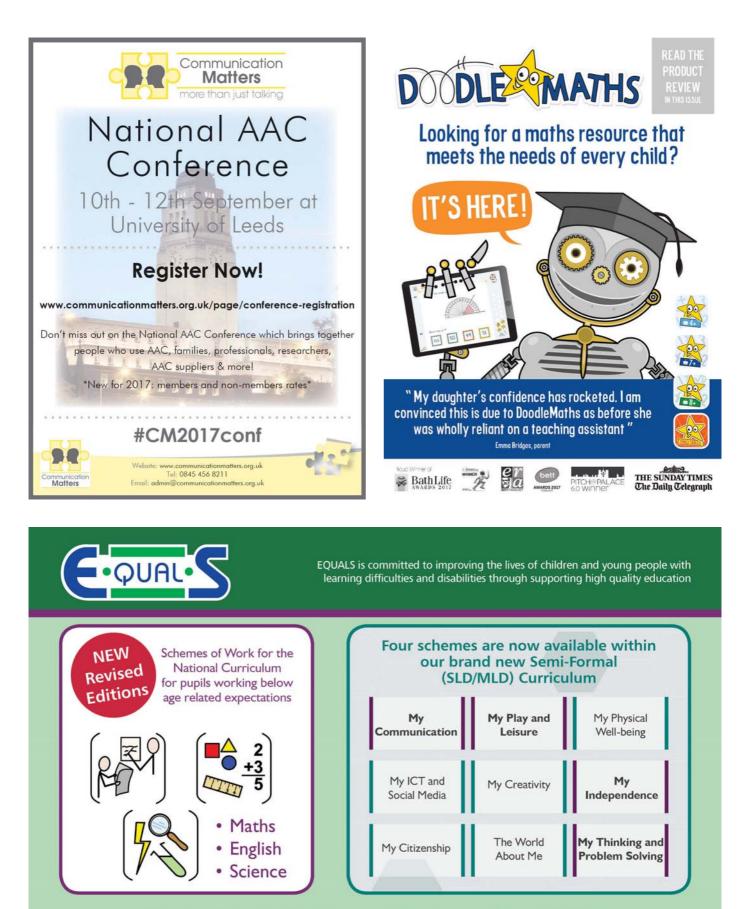
If we're honest with ourselves, we'll all admit to having done one or all of the above at some point. I know I have. Yet it's hard to train ourselves out of it, especially when times are tough.

That's why it's vital that we challenge each other when we encounter such labels being used, even if that's easier said than done. If we're to develop a culture in our schools where such limited thinking will no longer be heard, it's a duty we can't afford to avoid.



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



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"Language difficulties limit life chances"

Diana McQueen and **Jo Williams** offer some ideas for improving your school's speech, language and communication support

DIANA MCQUEEN & JO WILLIAMS

ost children with SEN have speech, language and/or communication needs (SLCN).

By starting school without the language they need in order to learn, children with SLCN will be disadvantaged from the very start. Children need language to learn, socialise, manage their behaviour and develop emotionally. In short, language difficulties limit life chances.

Do things differently

Speech and language therapy (SLT) these days consists of far more than the 'broom cupboard' model of old – a therapist operating in splendid isolation, with no one really sure what's happening or why, and few opportunities for the wider workforce to take advantage of their specialist skills.

Schools with access to a SLT now typically make far more extensive use of the skills and expertise they have to offer – but in most schools, with the best will in the world, no one person can deliver enough therapy for every child who would benefit from it. We therefore need to pool our scarce resources and be prepared to do things differently, while simultaneously empowering schools to do as much as they possibly can for themselves.

At Soundswell, our experienced therapists work as part of the school, each bringing particular skills that contribute to the overall SEN/SLCN strategy. We provide schools with virtual 'toolboxes' comprising ideas, resources and information aimed at helping them manage as much 'Tier 1' and 'Tier 2' activity themselves as possible.

The toolbox model

Basic training and awareness-raising at Tier 1 can reap huge rewards. This tier includes providing staff-specific SLCN training, making environments more communicationfriendly and setting up parent workshops. If schools want to raise attainment among children with SLCN, universal activities should

include screening tools – not just in in EYFS, but for older children too. Identify problems early and know what action to take before children start falling behind.

Tier 2 builds upon this by adding SLT-designed and TA-led therapy programmes, as well as encouraging the use of signs, symbols and visual supports throughout the school and group interventions. Finally, Tier 3 introduces SLT-led interventions and sees TAs take on a more 'hands-on' role in your SLCN provision. This can involve one or more of your TAs being trained as a specialist or link person.

What's your plan?

Before commissioning a SLT, decide on what you can afford (phased delivery can allow you to spend your budget as your needs dictate) and be sure to shop around. Always ask for a consultation to discuss your options – a reputable company won't charge you for a preliminary visit.

With colleagues, think about the service you want. What training would help most, and who needs it? When talking this



through with a prospective therapy service, remember that they're there to help you explore the options, not tell you what you need. Use the Toolbox model to map what you already have and to identify gaps.

With SLT personnel in place, ensure they're consistently shadowed by TAs who can begin to pick up hints and tips immediately.

Decide on your short, medium and long-term objectives. The SLT can help you get things underway and then 'hand hold' for only as long as you need, coming back later to monitor progress Finally, see if you can build in – or ask your provider to help – find ways of evidencing the value for money of your SLT, to prove it was worth the investment.



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Why it pays to nurture your TAs

Struggling to find the time and resources needed to upskill your teaching assistants? Here's a 6-point plan to making it happen...

iving your teaching assistants additional training can be challenging – but with some careful planning and a firm grasp of your school's needs, you can develop a strategy that boosts your SEN provision, supports quality first teaching and increases inclusion within the classroom.

Training your TAs effectively will strengthen their motivation, improve their performance and increase their job satisfaction, thus lowering your staff turnover. It will also help to promote a culture of professionalism around the school, boosting the impact that their work has on each pupil.

Come up with a plan

First, it's essential to devise a training plan. Collate some key information from your SEN strategy, school development plan and main feeder pre-schools, and use this to assess your school's current and future needs.

Then, carry out a team audit, or check your professional development records, to identify any skill gaps among your TAs. You might be able to link this process to strategies already in place for increasing awareness of particular physical or sensory difficulties, or for introducing new interventions. With the existing and anticipated needs of your pupils identified, you can explore your funding options.

2 Is there money available?

You might be one of those lucky SENCos with both a clear understanding of the SEN budget and some influence on how it's managed. If not, then I'd encourage you to make a cuppa for your school business manager and ask them to give you a full breakdown of what's available in the current and next financial year, and some help in evaluating how this might be shared between resources and training.

Don't be put off if you're told the pot is empty. Your school will likely have some form of training budget, which may overlook training for support staff – but if you can prove that said training is essential for your pupils' progress with the aid of your training plan, it will help make the case that your school's staff development policies should apply to your team too. Another potential source of funding is the Pupil Premium, which may be available if your TA training will have a positive effect on disadvantaged children at your school.

9 Present the pitch

Having established what financial sources are available, you need to sell the idea to those holding the purse strings. Share your vision with the SLT and present the information you've collated thus far to demonstrate how this training will benefit the pupils and the wider school environment.

You might find a useful 'hard sell' partner in the form of the SEN governor, who you may already meet with regularly to discuss the annual SEN report, policy updates and other such matters. If not, get them on side by informing them of the wonderful things your TAs already do, and how they could be further improving the learning of even more pupils. Their support is invaluable, so it's worth investing time in building a good working relationship with them.

Knowle

Pool your resources Your school may be lucky enough to

Your school may be lucky enough to work within a cluster of schools. If this is an official arrangement, the cluster lead will be aware of any funds that might be available for training. Other schools in the cluster may have similar training needs to yours, allowing the necessary costs and resources to be shared.

Be it officially or though a more informal arrangement, working with other schools can make your TA training more affordable and ultimately beneficial to more children within the wider community. Schools are increasingly working together; you'll likely find from collaborating with other SENCos that you

"Don't be put off if you're told the pot is empty. Your school will likely have some form of training budget, which may overlook training for support staff"

> Internal training will be comparatively inexpensive, and can have the added benefit of strengthening relations among your team. Departmental training, in which lead or senior TAs demonstrate and practise the skills they've learnt, share good practice and offer job shadowing, can be arranged through careful planning of staff Inset days and meeting times.

See if it worked

Choose the

training

Once you've secured

your funding options, the next part of your training plan will be to decide

on the type of training most relevant

to your team. External training has

the benefit of resulting in recognised

qualifications or credentials, which can

feel more valuable for your TAs, but it

can be costly. Encourage your TAs to

gather information about the training

available from different providers to help

you assess which course will provide the

most relevant training at the best cost.

Monitoring the impact of your training is just as important as monitoring the impact of your interventions and teaching methods. If the training provided had the desired effect, it can be replicated. Training you've tried and found wanting can also be learnt from, in that you'll know what approaches or methods to avoid in future.

Always encourage your TAs to give honest feedback about their training experiences, and use that information to improve your training plan for next year. Build conversations about training into your departmental and professional development meetings, and reflect on these in your department development plan. It might take a while to get the training balance right, or for its impact on your pupils to start showing – but when it does, your TA team will go from strength to strength.



Meriel Bull is a writer and qualified SENCo with 12 years' teaching experience in the West Midlands and Norfolk.

TA training -what are your options?

Development

Workshop

share a similar long term vision, and can

invest in the skills you need more easily

by pooling your resources.

Teaching

Coaching

arn

dqe

External training	Internal Training	
Private providers, such as Optimus and Capita	Having staff job shadow your own lead TAs or those at another school	
Distance and online learning providers, such as the Open University	Setting up a private social media group to share 'What went well today' stories	
An independent SEN specialist who may offer a course that upskills all of your team at once in a particular area, such as ASD or sensory support	Holding TA-led training sessions that help to teach soft skills	
Third sector organisations such as British Dyslexia Association	Having your team contribute to an induction handbook for new staff containing tips, advice and strategies	

Help your NQTs get off on the right foot

Michelle Haywood argues that experienced teachers should take on more of a role in helping NQTs develop their knowledge and skills around SEND...

n *The Great British Bake Off,* amateur bakers are given three challenges – a 'signature bake', a 'technical challenge' and a 'showstopper'. The bakers are given planning time for their signature and showstopper bakes and can practice these at home. The technical challenge, however, is a blind test – the one challenge where very little information is provided.

The instructions may include specific words, such as 'cream or' 'whisk' or simply consist of 'Bake a sponge'. The bakers are expected to have enough knowledge about baking to understand and undertake the task effectively.

ITT is just the start

As an NQT takes ownership of his or her classroom for the first time, they too face a technical challenge of their own. A new teacher on an initial teacher training programme will have started their teaching journey by essentially choosing a recipe book and modelling the skills and styles it suggests, but they won't have had time to learn all of the book's technical vocabulary and put it into practice.

NQTs will undertake around 120 days of teaching practice on an ITT course, teaching another teacher's classes while working within existing structures and routines and following schemes of work created by someone else. The NQT will then have a class of their own. This will be the first time that they'll have worked with a class from the beginning of the year or term - and it may not be until they first open the door to their own classroom

alongside other important and equally valid aspects of classroom preparation, such as planning and assessment, child development and learning, behaviour management, early reading, using evidence and research to inform teaching, and more besides. A teacher's ITT programme ought to be considered a starting point. with responsibility for the next stage of the journey falling to both the NQT's school and the NQTs themselves.

"Make sure your NQT knows what provision is available across the school and how it's allocated"

that they find some of the key components they need are missing.

One such component is the ability to work within SEND processes. All ITT programmes address SEND, and are obliged to prepare all new teachers to be able to support SEND in their classrooms – yet the SEND content on ITT programmes tends to sit

Keep NQTs in the know

Following the SEND reforms of 2014 and their focus on ensuring that 'Every teacher is a teacher of SEND', continuous evaluation of SEND processes and provision should now be a feature of every school's SDP. NQTs are expected to be part of this process, but they should also have a separate professional development plan



of their own – one that focuses on their development as a class teacher and ability to support pupils with SEND.

Existing teachers will already know what 'Best Endeavours' are and who the designated SEND coordinator in their school is. NQTs need to know how their school assesses the progress of pupils, how it identifies those pupils making less than expected progress, what this looks like and what interventions are available to support pupils.

An NQT will have a mentor during their induction year, who may or may not be the school SENCo. If the SENCo is not involved in the support package, this should be adjusted to make them an integral part. The school SENCo won't be planning all the interventions for each individual class, but they will have an overview and knowledge of the provision that's taking place and what strategies can be used. This overview should form the first



part of an NQT's induction process; thereafter, the SENCo and mentor should develop a specific support plan for SEND that includes sessions on the following three areas:

School policy

Looking at how SEND pupils are identified, how they're supported and the procedures used for statutory assessment. Make sure your NQT knows what provision is available across the school and how it's allocated – what is there for the year group or subject that the NQT is currently working with?

NQTs should also be familiarised with how to gather evidence to demonstrate a pupil's need (both formally and informally), be able to undertake an 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle and show that they know how to manage TAs – and cope without them, if needs be.

SEND Process & Procedures

NQTs should understand the process of acquiring an education, health and care plan and the statutory responsibilities around them. They should also be taught how to integrate individual targets into lesson planning and assess pupils who aren't working within the National Curriculum. Many schools still use P levels, while others employ other methods.



Learning from others

Plan in times for visiting other classrooms throughout the school, and ideally other schools too. When sitting in on colleagues' lessons, NQTs should observe the support that pupils with SEND are receiving, how the room is organised and what resources are being used.

Spend some time looking at children's individual support plans and ask different class teachers to explain their approach to supporting the different needs of individual pupils within their classrooms. Explore opportunities to meet with external agencies and professionals, such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. It can also be helpful to visit specialist settings, such as special schools and PRUs

Managing personal professional development

Encourage your NQTs to read key publications such as *TES*, *Guardian Education* and *Schools Week* (and indeed *SENCo*) and consider joining organisations such as The Chartered College of Teaching, Nasen and the British Dyslexia Society.

Sign up to receive news updates from Ofsted, the DFE and any other organisations with a SEND focus, such as Whole School SEND (wholeschoolsend.com) and the Driver Youth Trust (driveryouthtrust.com). They also should try and attend networking events, including TeachMeets (teachmeet.pbworks.com) and #ResearchSEND events.

That said, when supporting an NQT it's important to ensure they don't become overwhelmed. Impress upon them that when entering and making our way in the teaching profession, none of us ever stop learning – there will always a new recipe or variation to learn.



Michelle Haywood is a SEND consultant, a senior lecturer for

primary education at the University of Wolverhampton and the co-founder of #ResearchSEND.

Date for the diary

The next #ResearchSEND event takes plance on 18th November at Sheffield Hallam University; to add yourself to the event's mailing list, email your request to fehwevents@wlv.ac.uk with 'ResearchSEND' as the subject line.



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Paula Bosanquet





ARE YOUR TAS DOING MORE THAN THEY SHOULD?

Wean children off high levels of TA support by using a scaffolding approach, says **Paula Bosanquet**

he teacher has explained the task and modelled any key parts that are new to the children. She sends them back to their tables. You settle down with your group. Immediately comes the question – "What do I do?" Answering that question means the child will get started, but will make it more likely that they will ask the same question the next time, and the next. Alternatively, you will have children sitting there doing nothing until you notice and tell them what to do.

The role of the teaching assistant is a really important one, but also incredibly difficult. You have to support children, but you don't want them to become completely dependent on you. We know that children who regularly receive high levels of TA support can develop 'learned helplessness'. It is, after all, quicker and easier to ask an adult what to do or how to do it than to think for yourself.

Developing dependence on adult support has long term consequences for children. It can affect their self-esteem, social relationships and ability to think and act for themselves. It also makes them less likely to make progress in school. We need to use a scaffolding approach with these children to reduce dependence and increase their ability to work independently.

Acting on clues

As a simple example, if Sarah can't think what to write next about her trip to the zoo, the least amount of support would be just to wait and give her time to think. She might need a verbal prompt to support this process, such as, "What did we see next?" If needed, you can then 'clue' the child by giving them a small piece of information to help: "It had a long neck".

A bigger clue would be, "Was it the elephants or giraffes next?". If this does not help, we might model how to use notes or pictures made at the time to find the next event. What we wouldn't want to do is correct, by saying, "It was the giraffes next". The important thing is to wait and see what the child's response is at each stage. If they seem to be moving forward then stay at the same level. If they are just as stuck, then you might need to move to the next level.

Alongside scaffolding interactions, we need to teach children self-scaffolding skills. These give them strategies to use to help themselves when they are stuck. In the previous example, Sarah could have self-scaffolded by referring to her notes from the trip as soon as she got stuck. How often have you seen children refer to instructions or resources available to them without being told to use them? The answer is probably not often! They need to be taught to do this, using simple strategies like highlighting key words and ticking off steps when complete.

Where children have got used to having high levels of support and are skilled at getting an adult to take them through tasks step by step, it will take time for them to get used to being expected to work more independently. They won't always like it to start with. But this approach will, over time, raise their own view of themselves as someone who is able to work through problems for themselves. It also gives the TA and the teacher a better understanding of how much the child can do independently.

The most common comment I get when TAs have tried this approach is, "I feel like I've been conned! They can do much more than they let on." No one blames children for this. Nor must we blame TAs – they often feel under pressure for children to complete tasks. This can lead to over-supporting pupils or giving answers. Good liaison between teachers and TAs, focused on learning during the task rather than task completion, can help with this.

Paula Bosanquet is head of training and development at the Cass School of Education and Communities, University of East London; The **Teaching Assistant's Guide to Effective Interaction** by Paula Bosanquet, Julie Radford and Rob Webster is available now, published by Routledge

Focus on.. AUTISM

INSIDE THIS SECTION



Getting withdrawn pupils to open up involves observing antecedents, behaviours and consequences, advises **Robyn Steward**



Ask whether your school's shared spaces be made more welcoming for autistic pupils, suggests **Victoria Honeybourne**



"Some autistic children might require a quiet space in which to spend breaktime... the playground can offer hell, rather than respite."

Sarah Hendrickx explains why teachers should view their schools through the eyes of a child on the spectrum

More show, LESS TELL

Adele Devine explains how modelling can play a crucial role in engaging pupils with autism...

ave you ever tried getting a pop-up tent to go back into its little bag? Imagine that's your task – as you wrestle with this enormous tent, you wonder how on Earth it's possible. The instructions are unfortunately only printed in Chinese, with no pictures, so you look around in desperation and luckily see someone else with the same type of tent about to tackle the same task.

You watch what they do, observing how they twist the tent into a circle before simply popping it into the bag, and suddenly you feel up to the challenge. You will try that confident 'twist it into circles' technique. If they can do it, you can do it!

Often, when we see someone else complete the steps that a task requires it can seem less daunting and more achievable – in essence, showing can be far more effective than telling. This is especially true when it comes to teaching pupils on the autism spectrum – so here are 10 simple ways to incorporate that thinking within your practice...

Surprise me!

Gina Davies, creator of the Attention Autism approach (see **ginadavies.co.uk**) says that we should ask ourselves, 'Is my activity absolutely irresistible?' According to her, if we want to get our students' attention and sustain it, we must 'Offer an irresistible invitation to learn.' If staff show how excited they are, and if support staff can model that sense of wonder, then the students will want in as well.

Staff modelling

Z Instead of helping students complete the steps of a task they've been set, staff should set about completing an identical task of their own. As they complete each step, the students





can look and see what they need to do, reducing their dependence on prompts and improving their self esteem. The students will learn to first look and see what others are doing before asking for help, thus promoting their independence. Think back to that pop-up tent...

• Peer modelling

Point out those students who are doing what you expect. If Ginny is squiggling under the table, don't react to her but instead praise Oliver for his great sitting. Ginny may have been getting bored and wanted to provoke a reaction, but by praising Oliver you've shown Ginny how she can get a reaction that's good. You've also given Oliver the praise and attention he deserves (and may not always get).

4 Video modelling

A video showing how to complete the steps of a task can enable students who don't take in verbal instructions well to complete a task independently. Many of your students will be used to watching their favourite 'YouTubers' play through video games; in a similar way, they will tune in to 'walkthrough' learning.



5 Mistake making

Show that it's okay to make mistakes. Spell something wrong, forget something, show that it's okay. Don't be afraid to reveal your human side. If you were once no good at handwriting or had trouble learning to tell the time, let them know. Hearing you explain how you overcame the things you found hard could give a child the confidence to focus on their 'can do's' and believe in themselves.

Rewards

Take care when using whole school visual reward systems. Imagine how demoralising it would be if each day everyone could see your name at the bottom of the achievement tower. What would that do to your self esteem, self image and expectations? Would it inspire or dishearten you? Students don't necessarily work harder or behave better because of such displays, so replace those 'up and down' reward displays with a wall of 'Wows!' and instead show them how happy they make you.

7 Token boards

Token boards can work as a strategy when a student isn't staying on task, but they're most effective when it's clear what each token is for. They can be split into time sections, or the token itself can display an image of the expectation, such as 'sitting' followed by 'listening' and 'writing'. When a student is anxious, they won't be able to process lots of language. Using words can, if anything, be akin to fanning the flames, so keep your language minimal – clear visuals will be more effective.

ODry wipe boards

The student's timetable will show what lesson is next, but the lessons themselves may seem very long. Try outlining the structure of the lesson on a dry wipe board and crossing things off as you go to show how the lesson is broken down into sections. We started doing this in our Attention Autism sessions as suggested by Gina Davies, and were soon using it in most of our lessons.

9 Traffic light supports

Traffic light systems are a great way for students to indicate when they need help. In some schools the students' planners contain three pages in bright traffic light colours; the teacher can then ask students if they're finding a task too easy (green), about right (amber) or too hard (red), giving the teacher immediate feedback when pitching their lesson, while enabling students to communicate openly without the embarrassment or fear of having to put their hand up. Assessment without a tickbox in sight!

10 Positive pictures

Displays can be used to showcase brilliant work and link the learning space with different topics, but we don't want to create too much visual clutter. That said, we do want learning spaces that are uplifting and inspirational. Have you noticed how many people now display framed inspirational quotes in their homes? Try displaying an inspirational quote on your classroom wall, selecting it with care. Those words will become memories for your students, and may well stay with them for life.



Adele Devine is a special needs teacher and author; her book Flying

Starts for Unique Children is available now from Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

@AdeleDevine
Senassist.com

If a child on the autism spectrum appears quiet and withdrawn, look at the antecedents, behaviours and consequences,

suggests Robyn Steward...

eltdowns – which can look like tantrums but aren't – happen when an autistic person becomes overwhelmed. The difference between meltdowns and tantrums is that tantrums tend to happen when a person wants something but can't have it. Meltdowns are what happens when someone is unable to take in any more information.

Shutdowns have the same causes as meltdowns, but look outwardly different. A child may become unresponsive (though this should always be investigated, in case it's evidence of an epileptic absence), they might pull their jumper over their head, crawl under a table and so forth. As with meltdowns, their cause is down to the person being overwhelmed in some way, be it emotionally, with information, or through sensory overstimulation, for example.

Over the last few years, people have become increasingly aware of the breadth of the autism spectrum. As a consequence, more children who perhaps don't present in a way that people typically associate with autism are now being picked up.

The

of getting children

Autistic people will tell you that they can't help it when they have shutdowns or meltdowns, and that they often feel ashamed after they've happened. It can be a tough call to work out which aspects of a child's behaviour are due to their personality and which are related to their autism. Autism will obviously be part of who a person is, so it's necessary to have an in-depth understanding of the child in question.

There are tools that can help you do this, one of which is the 'ABC chart'. What I aim to do here is outline a strategy based around the ABC chart that can help you work with autistic children who are typically quiet and withdrawn.

A is for 'antecedent'

It's important to establish whether a child has always been quiet and withdrawn; if they're quiet and withdrawn in every lesson, every environment and with every teacher. What's their behaviour like at home?

It can be useful to draw up a one-page profile – the learning disability support organisation Dimensions has a good template that you can download from their website at **tinyurl.com/ one-page-profile**. You can change the questions to fit your school's needs and use this as a quick reference for any teacher needing to know if a child has, for example, an auditory processing delay or sensory differences, either of which might be the reason for their withdrawal.

If the child regularly sees a supply teacher or specialist, they can provide you with information about what the child's behaviour is typically like and help you adapt your teaching style accordingly.

B is for behaviours

When trying to understand behaviour or teach a child strategies to manage their behaviour more effectively, a 5-point scale can be a big help – see **tinyurl.com/5-pt-scale** for an example by US teacher Kari Dunn Buron.

I set up my 5-point scales with '5' as the most extreme for any given emotion and the point of no return, while '1' is calm – the numbers can be represented by words, colours, symbols, etc. I then go through the chart with the child, asking four questions about each number:

- 1. How would others know when you are at x?
- 2. How do you know you are at x?
- 3. What can others do to help you at x?
- 4. What can you do to help yourself at x?

They might not have any suggestions to begin with, so you may need to ask them if they'd be willing to experiment with strategies to see which ones work best. You may also have to do some work around emotional literacy to ensure that they understand what you mean by 'anxiety' and similar terms.

With their permission, the scale should be made available to all staff and sent home, so that they receive a consistent response from the people they're with and can learn what strategies work for them.

C is for consequences'

What happens as a result of the child's behaviour? Bear in mind that your idea of a favourable outcome may not be the same as theirs.

One consequence of remaining quiet, for example, may be that the child avoids having to answer questions, making it difficult to ascertain his or her understanding of the lesson. In this case, placing Post It notes on the child's table and asking them to write their answers on them might be a good solution. "Meltdowns are what happens when someone is unable to take in any more information."

THE ABC CHECKLIST

1 Think about past antecedents for the child's behaviour (which could go back five or even 10 years) and try to observe the things that seem to happen immediately before meltdowns or shutdowns.

2 Be specific when describing the behaviours of the child that you want to be aware of – try creating a key or legend to describe the different varieties of those behaviours that can occur.

3 Ensure that you've thought about the consequences of the child's behaviour from his or her perspective. A negative consequence to you might be positive to them – losing their lunch or break time may be actually be seen as positive to a child on the spectrum, since many say that this type of unstructured social time is when they have to work hardest.

Ensure that a child's ABC chart is followed both at school and at home.

WHAT PROCESSING DELAYS FEEL LIKE

I recently had to have a blood test. My brain became overwhelmed by the idea of what this would involve, causing my processing speed to slow down. I therefore asked the phlebotomist to tell me everything that was going to happen.

She was a really nice lady and very gentle, but I needed her to first tell me what she was going to do, pause and then do it. Instead, she told me what she was doing as she did it. That lack of a pause – which for me only needs be three or four seconds – made me more anxious and caused me to tighten my muscles, resulting in me experiencing more discomfort that I needed to.



Robyn Steward was diagnosed with Asperger's at 11, and for the past 13 years

has delivered autism training and consultancy in schools.



Make your school's environment less threatening

Victoria Honeybourne offers some tips for putting autistic pupils at ease when in school, but outside the classroom...

upils on the autism spectrum can find the mainstream classroom environment confusing and challenging, but what about the rest of the setting? Schools aren't usually designed for autistic pupils, and shared spaces can be just as difficult to navigate as the classroom itself.

It may not be possible to redesign your entire school, but some simple adjustments can make a big difference.

Differences in perception

Pupils on the autism spectrum can often experience sensitivity to sensory stimuli. They may be over- or under-sensitive to any of the senses – touch, smell, taste, sight or sound. Complex patterns and colours may appear overwhelming and disorientating, or background noise can appear amplified, making it difficult to concentrate.

In addition, some pupils experience difficulties with proprioception – awareness of where their body is in space. Some may appear clumsy, stand too close or too far away from others, or may 'hold on' to walls and furniture to help them move around a room.

All of these differences can increase anxiety and frustration, making it difficult to focus, interact and cope. For many pupils sensory overload is not only uncomfortable but actually painful, and some pupils may go into 'shutdown' or 'meltdown' as a result. So how can we make shared spaces more autism-friendly?

Navigating the school

Corridors and open shared spaces can present specific difficulties. With space at a premium in many schools, it can be easy for these areas to become cluttered, crowded and used for multiple purposes.

Define the use of each space. Create different 'zones' through colour-coding, clear signs and helpful visuals. Furniture or display boards can also be positioned to create specific areas, such as a cloakroom or silent reading area.

Use natural lighting where possible. It can become a habit to turn lights on when they're not needed - some autistic pupils can be particularly distressed by fluorescent lighting. Low tables and storage boxes can be difficult for children with poor spatial awareness, so keep furniture against the wall to prevent trips and bumps. Brightly coloured walls brimming with work and posters are a feature of many schools, but can be overwhelming to some autistic pupils. Keep displays tidy, relevant and use neutral background colours.

Narrow corridors can induce anxiety in pupils who



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trainer, and has a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. Her book Educating and Supporting Girls with Asperger's and Autism is available now, published by Speechmark

stigma that might become attached to them.

Dining halls can be especially difficult due to the mass of smells, people, noises, tastes, textures and movement that children will encounter in them. A child with heightened senses might be able to hear every crunch and every rustle of a crisp packet as loudly as their own! Devising clear dining hall routines for lining up and eating can be helpful, as can providing quieter areas.

Adjustments of this type to the wider school environment will typically help many pupils, not just those on the autism spectrum. As pupils become older, encourage them to take more responsibility for developing their own individual coping strategies for their personal needs. This will empower them to be able to cope independently with secondary school and subsequently everyday life.

are uncomfortable in groups of people. Dismiss one group of pupils at a time, or else introduce a one-way system.

lessons 1

Assemblies and larger gatherings

Larger gatherings can also create anxiety for some pupils. Some children may feel more comfortable at the end of a row or near the back rather than at the centre of a crowd of people. Others may find it difficult to know how close or far away to sit from other pupils.

You could try using masking tape to indicate the distance needed between one row of pupils and another, or have a clear rule (one pupil per carpet tile, for example). Visuals can also be helpful to give all pupils some clear guidelines (e.g. 'When queueing, the person in front should be an arm's length away'). Space out rows of chairs so that pupils do not feel squashed.

Remember too that some pupils on the autism spectrum may be particularly sensitive to noise. If a video or music is playing, they might be more comfortable sitting further from the stage or away from speakers.

Social times

Morning breaks and lunch hours are often cited as times of difficulty for autistic pupils, typically due to the lack of structure and emphasis on socialising.

Structured activities and games led by an adult may help some pupils understand how to participate.

Create a space (indoors or on the playground) for arts, crafts and toys. This will allow autistic pupils to engage in an individual activity while still being in the company of others, reducing their feelings of isolation and loneliness while removing the anxiety of having to interact.

Buddy benches may also be beneficial. Provide a bench where any child can sit when they would like to join in with others or are feeling lonely. Other pupils can be encouraged to keep an eye out and help those sitting on the bench to take part in whatever they're doing. Clear zones can be helpful on the playground. Signpost which areas are for running, which are for ball games, where toys can be played with and other similarly zoned activities.

Some autistic pupils will need to spend social times alone; the interactions of lessons can be enough for them, and they'll require 'alone time' in order to recover. Provide quiet spaces which are kept quiet and peaceful. Allowing any pupil to make use of these whenever they need to will reduce any



How do AUTISTIC CHILDREN View your school:

Sarah Hendrickx looks at what staff ought to consider when trying to understand the behaviour of children on the autistic spectrum

'm a trainer and conference speaker who regularly engages with education professionals, and the number one question I get asked is, 'How do I stop A doing B? For me, the answer to why an autistic child behaves as they do is actually pretty simple – you need to look in the autism.

If you have an autistic child who struggles to hold it together in the classroom, it's imperative that you try and look at the situation through their eyes. As an independent, highly intelligent autistic adult who continues to find many social and physical environments exhausting, overwhelming and anxietyprovoking, I can assure you that this stuff is very real and that the answer is always in the autism.

The experience of living as an autistic child required to attend a school not designed for their needs would be enough to make anyone feel like shouting or running away. Without understanding the potential triggers for the child, resolution and calm are unlikely to be restored. So what can we do?

Here are some elements of classroom life that may be intolerable for the child and may well lead to behaviour that is no fun for anyone – least of all the child themselves – together with some ideas on how you could make a difference.

Physical surroundings

Schools are noisy, full of people, changes and multiple visual demands. For some autistic children, just entering the school building can be akin to a physical assault – a tsunami of stimuli to be borne, processed and filtered before you can even think about speaking politely or following an instruction.

Simple approaches for an obviously overloaded child include providing them with ear defenders, seating them near natural light and providing a screened-off section for working should the child need it. Some autistic children might require a quiet space in which to spend breaktime and eat their lunch. The unstructured cacophony of the playground can offer hell, rather than respite.

Speaking and listening

Processing multiple voices in a classroom in order to work



"Some autistic children might require a quiet space in which to spend breaktime ... the unstructured cacophony of the playground can offer hell, rather than respite." out which one belongs to the teacher and should therefore be attended to can be an impossible task – one which can lead to accusations of 'rudeness' or 'disobedience', when this may not be the case at all.

Having sat and observed many autistic children in classrooms, I've watched as they try desperately to work out what's required of them, looking round at their peers to see what they're doing, having failed to hear the teacher's verbal instructions. If a child has an autism diagnosis, this means that they have been clinically assessed as having a language - verbal and non-verbal processing difference, which means adjustments must be made to enable the child to participate and learn.

Without comprehension of language, core skills, concepts and knowledge cannot be mastered. Simple changes - such as writing all tasks on the board in bullet points, using the child's name when you require their explicit attention and checking understanding - can all lead to decreased frustration and behaviour challenges. It can also be helpful to only use verbal and visual language prompts, rather than rely on body language and facial

expressions which the child is unlikely to be able to read.

Social interactions

Many autistic children in mainstream settings will have an awareness of their own social difference from around eight years of age, often resulting in a long-term erosion of self-esteem. Knowing that you find it hard to make friends, but having no means to do anything about it, is a very frustrating place to be. Most autistic children want friends; the true loner is rare.

Autistic adults will typically tend to have friends who are similar to them, so rather than encouraging peer friendships with more socially popular children, finding pals who have similarities may be more satisfactory for both parties. Autistic people sometimes find peers of their own age and gender particularly challenging, preferring interactions with the opposite gender and/ or younger or older children.

Contextual thinking

Imagine a world where you only have half the information you need to know what's going on, and no ability to generalise, guess, estimate or fill in the gaps. This is life with autism, and it's why autistic people seek certainty, routine, rules and predictable outcomes.

In a changeable and flexible world, an autistic child is highly likely to be consistently stressed, worried and unable to understand why they must do what they have been told to do – all potential recipes for meltdowns, shutdowns and distressing behaviour.

Being aware of how little stability and certainty an autistic child will have in a

> typical day should lead to some understanding of how scary their world is, and how reacting to that isn't necessarily an unreasonable response.

Schedules, calendars, flowcharts and linear charts can all help to show the child how their day or task will progress, and provide anchors in what for them can feel like a fast-moving river.

Individual profile

The key to supporting a child with autism to cope in classroom settings without distress is to understand the specific and individual profile of that child's autism – their triggers, soothers, weak spots and strengths. Without this knowledge, gathered through observation, reports and parents, our efforts to support and explain may be focused in completely the wrong direction for that child.

Despite a diagnostic criteria that identifies core differences in specified areas, each autistic person will exhibit and make sense of their world in a uniquely different way. Becoming familiar with what that person's way happens to be is the secret to enabling a happy autistic learner.



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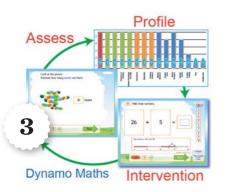
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dynamomaths.co.uk (Free trial available)

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Listening Books

Listening Books is an audiobook subscription service for children with SEND who struggle to read. Supporting the National Curriculum from KS2 upwards with set texts, study and revision guides, the library also includes professionally recorded fiction titles from bestselling authors such as J. K. Rowling, David Walliams and Jeff Kinney. Easy

to administer, the service requires no specialist equipment – all books can be played through a PC or Mac, or be easily downloaded to mobile devices to make reading more accessible and engaging

for all. soundlearning.org.uk



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PRODUCTS



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SchoolScreener EZ

Good evesight is vital during a child's schoolyears - yet research suggests that one in five children under the age of 12 has never had an eye test. Thomson Screening has therefore developed SchoolScreener EZ - an online vision checking tool that quickly and simply assesses children's vision to see if a more thorough eye examination at an optician may be needed. The software is intended for regular use as children progress through school, and is freely available to schools thanks to support from Specsavers. screeningforschools.com

Speechlink

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Sky Badger

Sky Badger is a charity that provides assistance and adventure to children with SEND and their families all over the UK. It seeks to help teachers, TAs, medical professionals, support workers and families by building bridges between disabled children and those charities and services that are able and ready to support them. The charity's aim is locate everything from disabled sports clubs to 'make a wish' charities, and tell families about them via its website, social media platforms, videos, information packs and telephone helpdesk (call 0845 609 1256).

skybadger.co.uk





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What do you get when you combine personalisation, adaptive learning and creativity? The answer is DoodleMaths a carefully-engineered, trailblazing, five star app.

This innovative learning system promotes a mathematical mindset by offering healthy doses of cognitive challenge, inspiration and enjoyment so children in KS1, KS2 and KS3 can engage with the maths curriculum.

Getting started is a doddle. DoodleMaths HQ has produced an effective four-step lesson plan for getting your class up and running, so children can confidently start using it for high-impact homework, with no marking! Start by registering via the excellent website. Children can choose their own pet avatar (and nation flag) and, with adult help, select which year they are in and whether they find maths 'easy', 'OK' or 'tricky'.

To work out a pupil's ability, the app asks each user a number of questions then configures a tailored work scheme, giving everyone a chance to shine. Upon completing the exercises the children get a score and are shown how long they spent answering the questions. There are many question types, from multiple choice and linking to placement order, sorting and true or false; all rich in thinking with plenty of challenge.

DoodleMaths works well because of its short sessions and the fact that activities



are always at the right level. Children collect DoodleStars whenever they complete an activity, so the motivation to succeed is high. The top DoodleStar collectors are displayed on the DoodleMaths website, and the stars can be spent on building a virtual robot, or on accessories for their in-app pet.

In terms of user interface. DoodleMaths hits the back of the net with a clean design, attractive graphics and interactive touches, all finished to a high production standard. From a teacher and parent perspective, the feedback and analytics DoodleMaths provides is particularly great. You can see what content has been covered, gap analysis, and weekly reports show exercises completed, time spent and stars earned. From the teacher dashboard, you can easily see who's been busy and who hasn't, and even watch them answering questions live.

The basic plan is free but only offers a curriculum snapshot and limited data. With the £4 per student option you get reports, analytics, extra lessons, and access to individual, group and whole-class progress data over any time period.

DoodleMaths was shortlisted for two Bett Show 2017 Awards and two Education Resources Awards 2017, and I'm not in the least surprised. Stimulating, challenging and inspiring, DoodleMaths will help children become more confident mathematicians.





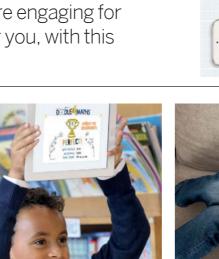
VERDICT

 Helps with mastering maths skills Can be tailored to the needs of different learners Provides a reliable form of assessment

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking for a maths learning tool that can help pupils catch up, top up their knowledge or prepare for tests

"Doodle Maths will help children become more confident mathematicians"







10-Minute Sentence Adventure

A ready-made eight-week intervention programme to help KS1 and lower KS2 children understand the components and structure of sentences



AT A GLANCE

Designed for children in Y1-3 'stuck' at level or below expected level
Laser-sharp focus on sentence structure for quality impact
Ideal for TA mediation with lower-ability children, dyslexic learners and EAL pupils
Concrete, practical and flexible

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

This hands-on dynamic resource has been designed to help children get to grips with the basic parts of a sentence so they can begin to combine words and use them effectively in their own writing. It also helps them to co-ordinate their ideas and promotes self-checking.

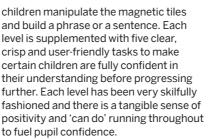
The resource comes as a pack containing 150 colour-coded magnetic word tiles in a handy plastic tray, along with a vibrant 80-page teacher's guide containing photocopiable worksheets, checklists, certificates and a progress tracker.

The teacher author has arranged the content into eight supremely practical learning levels and it is designed to be used on a one-to-one basis or with small groups for eight weeks, concentrating on rudimentary phrases, capital letters, punctuation, conjunctions, adjectives, adverbs and sentence openers.

What makes this resource so useful is that no specialist knowledge is required – everything is self-contained and can be used with ease to teach basic writing skills up to mastery.

At each of the developmental levels,





The quality of literacy support programmes can vary from the meticulous to the inappropriate but one look at this programme will tell you it is admirably fit for purpose. It is devoted to developing automaticity and fluency and the rich activities gently guide children out of their comfort zones into new learning, helping them to take risks and experiment with words and punctuation in safe and fun contexts.

Ordinary teaching does not enable children with literacy difficulties to catch up, which is why this resource adds real value. It is an affordable, proactive intervention course with a clear focus, underpinned by highly competent thinking and engaging activities.

VERDICT

 Tactile, tactical and targeted
 Promotes independent writing and self-regulation
 Creative activities that support conscientious thinking

✓ Off-the-shelf and easy to administer

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to help children jazz up their sentences, shape up their grammar basics and boost their writing confidence in short bursts.

"There is a tangible sense of positivity running throughout"

Product code HE1506002, £59.99 (inc. VAT), hope-education.co.uk

"We have shockingly low levels of literacy"

Too often, conversations about improving literacy provision treat children with SEND as invisible, says Nancy Gedge...

hen you look at literacy outcomes for young people today, you could be forgiven for taking a deep breath. Headline statements from key position papers about literacy state worrying statistics, such as "17.8 million adults in England are reported as having literacy skills below GCSE grade C, with 5.2 million of these reportedly lacking functional literacy." (Beanstalk, 2013 - Charter for Children's Literacy, p8.) Even more worryingly, "The UK is the only economically developed country where 16 to 24-year-olds have the lowest literacy skills of any age group in society." (National Literacy Forum, 2014 - Vision for Literacy 2025, p.10)

Children and young people are being failed by our education system, sent out into the world ill-prepared in terms of literacy. They are at greater risk of being trapped into poverty than their peers, with limited opportunities for well-paid work and a higher chance of falling into crime. Struggling with literacy at school has a negative impact on a child's sense of self worth, and consequently their mental health.

Complex and overlapping

For a developed nation, we have shockingly low levels of literacy amongst our young people. Clearly, something needs to be done. Literacy outcomes for all need to be improved - the goal of 100% literacy is an important, even noble one - but when we at The Driver Youth Trust looked at 21 education policy and position papers published by the government, think tanks and organisations such as Ofsted, the Sutton Trust and the Education Policy Institute (which are all rightly concerned about literacy levels), we found something rather mysterious. Some children, it seems, are invisible.



No, they haven't got themselves a scholarship to Hogwarts – these children and young people have special educational needs which, rather depressingly, might as well add up to the same thing. And we're not talking small numbers, either – DfE data shows that there are currently 1.2 million SEND learners, the overwhelming majority of whom go to mainstream schools.

When analysing those 21 reports, strategies, policies and initiatives, we found that the focus for change is on tackling social and economic disadvantage. Children disadvantaged by SEND were seen as an entirely separate group, if indeed they were seen at all. Yet anyone who's worked in a school, especially those like myself who have served children from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds, will know that these groups overlap and link together in a number of complex ways.

Cultural stigma

We can only speculate as to why this might be, though we know that the

stigma of a SEND label is strong and long-standing, culturally speaking. If we accept that as a group, 'the disadvantaged' are deserving of our attention morally, politically and materially, then there's every reason for us to expect a well-articulated vision of what the system must deliver in order to raise standards.

Unfortunately, though, what we find tends be nothing more sophisticated than good-quality teaching, comfortable story corners, well-stocked libraries and fathers reading to their children at bedtime. The focus remains obstinately upon those children who may 'catch up' conventionally, rather than upon those with SEND, for whom an alternative approach is necessary.

What we need is a discussion of how best to identify barriers at the system level, and how to overcome them in such a way as to bring about the greatest improvements. Solutions need to be practical for schools and teachers to manage in relation to their other demands and priorities, and they must bring about tangible results. You can read more about the Driver Youth Trust's recommendations in the 'Through the Looking Glass' report via **tinyurl.com/dyt-literacy-report**.

We must recognise that 'all children' means *all* – not just the 80% who are typically developing, and our approaches to literacy provision need to reflect this.



Nancy Gedge is a consultant teacher at the Driver Youth Trust

🍯 @nancygedge



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A targeted approach to mathematics intervention

5

ON TRACK



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