

HELPING YOU TO SUPPORT EVERY CHILD

teach  
PRIMARY

VOL6 ISSUE1

# SENCo

LLOYD EVERITT

*"Shakespeare  
is your worst  
nightmare"*



## STOP THAT!

Simple strategies  
to reduce bullying

## Take a step back

A radical approach  
to better behaviour

## IS YOUR VOICE HEARD?

*Communicate effectively  
with parents*

## Under the microscope

How to self-evaluate  
your SEND provision

## Lockdown impact

A catalyst for  
change?

**SEND-  
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# Welcome...



It's been a very unsettling year for everyone but especially for those with SEND. For over six months the country, and the world, has gone through significant changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The enforced lockdown saw schools close to all but the children of essential workers. Trying to deliver home education to children was difficult but even more so to those with SEND. The return to schools in September and a 'new normal'

would also have caused anxiety. But what have we learnt over these trying times?

Professor Adam Boddison, chief executive of nasen, (p68) highlights some of the challenges that have been faced, such as Covid-secure bubbles, school transport practicalities and the availability of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). However, he does believe that this has been a catalyst for change, resulting in some innovative ideas that have and will continue to help SENCOs and learners. Nasen have also announced that their membership will be free for all individuals across the UK from January 4, 2021. Membership will include access to shared information, research, Continuing Professional Development and Learning (CPDL) training and webinars from the Whole School SEND Consortium, hosted by nasen.

Also, Pamela Hanigan and Rachel Gelder (p70) believe that Covid-secure bubbles shouldn't hinder learning. While teaching staff may find themselves having to stay put in one classroom and cater for the least able, the most able and those in between – all at the same time, there's a risk that it will be harder to differentiate without the option of mixing between bubbles, and pupils of all abilities could miss out as a result. Delivering targeted support without bursting bubbles calls for a degree of creativity, however they say that with careful planning, schools can build interventions into a whole class setting. But, it is not only pupils who have been feeling stress and anxiety over the return to schools. Isla Billett asks (p66) who is looking after the wellbeing of SENCOs?

Mark

Mark Hayhurst, Editor

@teachwire

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**MARY ELLEN FLYNN**  
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*“Imagine teaching children who can't read conventional print.”*

p18



**SIAN TALBOT**  
describes how to communicate effectively with parents of SEND children

*“Without the ability to listen, messages are easily misunderstood.”*

p45



**NATALIE PACKER**  
explains why self-evaluating your school's SEND is vitally important

*“Consider the effectiveness of your Accessibility Plan and ensure it is being implemented.”*

p40

**EDITOR:** Mark Hayhurst  
mark.hayhurst@theteachco.com, 01206 508618

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

**HEAD OF COMMERCIAL SOLUTIONS:**  
Richard Stebbing

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

**SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER:** Chris Gibbs,  
chris.gibbs@theteachco.com

**ART EDITOR:** Richard Allen

**DESIGNERS:** Gemma Eales, Shannon Hall,  
Debbie Pratt

**AD PRODUCTION:** Angela Scrivener

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

**ACCOUNTS:** 01206 505995

**SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT:** Andrea Turner

**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES:** 0330 333 0043

**CUSTOMER SERVICES:**  
aceville@dctmedia.co.uk, 0800 904 7000

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**SENCo**

*We want to hear from you!*

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

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-  [mark.hayhurst@theteachco.com](mailto:mark.hayhurst@theteachco.com)



### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

TG Escapes provide inspirational learning spaces that are timber frame, sustainable and ecologically robust. Our modular eco-classrooms are designed using biophilic architectural principles and provide a time efficient, cost-effective solution for schools, affording standalone, naturally lit and tranquil spaces with covered walkways providing easy access to the outdoors.

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... TG Escapes

Why not consider TG Escapes' modular eco-buildings for additional SEND space

## 1 BESPOKE DESIGN TO SUIT ANY SEND

Every project begins with a free site visit and survey so we can design a bespoke solution that meets your school's specific requirements. In a mainstream school, a SEND classroom can provide a primary learning base for students, away from the main school setting, that is quiet and empathetic. This allows them to calmly interact in a low stimulus environment, improving their learning capacity. In a dedicated special needs setting our classrooms can provide breakout spaces, treatment rooms, performance studios, outdoor activity centres or even accommodation.

## 2 STANDALONE SETTING

The benefits of having a standalone classroom, set apart from the main school buildings in a natural location, cannot be underestimated. Not only will it serve to establish a vital connection with nature, but it will also bestow an entirely different, tranquil feeling from the rest of the school. For those students with significant disabilities, it can also open up a wealth of new opportunities to spend time in the outdoors that was previously inaccessible to them.

## 3 BIOPHILIC DESIGN

The basic biophilic architectural principle is to incorporate natural elements at every opportunity, from the



materials used to the lighting, air quality and acoustics, offering a building's occupants an effortless connection with nature and the outdoors. Timber is the oldest building material and still the best in terms of longevity and environmental impact versus concrete and steel. Three of the most crucial design elements are exposure to natural light, views of nature and easy physical access to the outside.



### Contact:

For further information  
email [info@tgescapes.co.uk](mailto:info@tgescapes.co.uk)  
or call 0800 917 7726.

## 4 MODULAR BUILDING

One of the most significant advantages of a modular building is that the modules can be assembled offsite while onsite preparations, such as foundations and amenity connections, occur simultaneously. Not only is the construction process shorter, but fewer workers spend fewer hours on site significantly reducing labour costs. Indeed, the entire project will be quicker, quieter, safer and less disruptive.

## 5 SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

In our economy, school buildings are one of the biggest collective consumers of energy and largest generators of waste. It has never been more important for schools to reduce their carbon footprint. The environment has always been at the heart of our design process. We use modern, eco-friendly materials, methods and technologies to create sustainable, durable and ecologically sound classrooms that can be net zero in operation. We also have a tree-planting scheme supporting young people and farmers in Uganda to re-forest. We gift these trees to our education customers, which has the benefit of off-setting 250Kg of carbon over the lifetime of each tree.

## KEY POINTS

Our classrooms offer significant time and cost savings compared to a traditional build and are considerably less expensive to run due to their inherent energy efficiency.

The 'Schools Without Stress Study', by Weitzer Parkett, showed that timber buildings reduced the heart rates of students by 8,600 beats per day versus a traditional classroom.

Working and playing outdoors are increasingly recognised as aids to enhance socio-economic development by improving discipline and concentration, promoting creativity and encouraging positive social interactions.

We can help reduce your carbon footprint and our tree-planting scheme is designed to engage students in sustainability and allow them to feel involved.



## How to improve the effectiveness of SEND Governance without spending a penny

# Adam Boddison

**A**s the Chief Executive of nasen and a National Leader of Governance, I have the privilege of visiting a large number of schools and of discussing the strategic approach to SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities) with school leaders, governors, trustees etc.

A question that I am often asked is 'What can we do to improve SEND governance without any budget?' and as a result, I have developed five top tips.

### **Give SEND an equivalent status to pupil premium:**

Most governors and leaders have a thorough understanding of the impact of pupil premium provision in their schools. This includes the number of pupils eligible for pupil premium, the amount of funding received and an overview of how that funding has been spent. Conversely, relatively few governors and leaders have an equivalent level of knowledge in relation to the impact of spending on pupils with SEND. This is because there is a statutory requirement to develop an annual report with the information about pupil premium, but this is not the case for SEND. Most governors (and arguably SENCOs) are not aware of the financial value of the SEN notional budget, let alone how it might be spent. Indeed, there is some debate about whether or not the SEN notional budget exists at all given that it is packaged with the general funding received by schools.

My suggestion is that when governors receive the annual pupil premium report, this should be extended to include pupils with SEND. There is likely to be a significant overlap between those eligible for pupil premium and those at the level of SEN support. Governors and leader will want to understand how the different funding streams are used collaboratively, since these pupils are arguably double-disadvantaged and triple-funded.

### **Make SEND everybody's responsibility (like safeguarding):**

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 was clear that SEND is everybody's responsibility. However, the risk of such an approach is that everybody thinks others have the responsibilities covered, but in practice the responsibility falls to a small number of individuals and so provision is not as effective as it should be.



Schools need to foster a culture of inclusion where SEND is everybody's responsibility in much the same way that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. All those working in schools would understand they have a role to play in safeguarding, and even though there are safeguarding leads, they would not seek to abdicate their safeguarding responsibilities. It is important that school leaders and governors seek to achieve a similar level of organisation-wide buy-in for SEND.

**Every leader a leader of SEND:** If we expect every teacher to be a teacher of SEND, then the essential prerequisite is for every leader to be a leader of SEND. Leadership in a school starts with the board of governors (or trustees if it is a Multi-Academy Trust), so they ought to overtly demonstrate their commitment to getting it right on SEND and inclusion.

In practical terms, it is important that schools ensure all governors are familiar with at least chapter six of the SEND Code of Practice, which consists of 20 pages that outline the key expectations for schools. A basic, yet key, requirement for governors is that they are familiar with the four broad areas of need in the SEND Code of Practice, which will help to prevent them making decisions about pupils with a diverse range of needs as if they were one homogenous group.

By having a more nuanced understanding of the distribution of needs within their own school, leaders and

governors will be better placed to make comparisons against regional and national data and to ensure that the allocation of resources is appropriately aligned.

**Think SEND!** A simple, yet effective, strategy for schools is to proactively consider the impact of all decisions on pupils with SEND, even if it looks as though there may be no direct consequence. It is too often the case that decisions made with good intentions have unintended consequences for pupils with SEND that then need to be retrospectively addressed.

By considering learners with SEND from the outset, fewer retrospective adaptations will be necessary since SEND provision will be built-in rather than having to be a bolt-on.

### **Maximise the impact of the SENCO through effective deployment:**

SENCOs are typically spending too much time on paperwork, which would make them a very expensive administrator! It is therefore appropriate for the SEND Governor to understand more about the amount of time the SENCO is spending on administration and how that time might be redirected towards supporting the development of high quality and inclusive teaching and learning.

*Professor Adam Boddison is the chief executive of nasen. Adam's tips are based on information detailed in nasen's Governance Handbook for SEND and Inclusion.*



### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Five Minute Literacy Box is a multi-sensory intervention providing early support or catch up for English, while highlighting potential signs of dyslexia and specific learning needs. For over 15 years Five Minute Boxes have been raising attainment in schools. Related resources include The Number Box (for mathematics) and The Five Minute Literacy Box 2.

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Five Minute Literacy Box

Discover how to support literacy and discover signs of dyslexia

## 1 STRENGTHENS FOUNDATIONS OF LITERACY

The Five Minute Literacy Box is a multi-sensory phonics programme which not only provides resources to develop key skills for reading, spelling and writing but also to enable the early identification of potential specific learning needs. The high-quality resources are particularly useful for teaching early phonics skills and the activities are designed to stretch children to encourage them to learn more sounds, blends and key words through regular sessions. Suitable from school entry onwards, Five Minute Literacy Box equally serves as a catch up intervention for children with EAL or extended school absence.



support in five-minute sessions means reluctant learners are not overwhelmed and find the sessions manageable. The resources are created to maximise teaching time with minimal preparation required. The box contains everything that is needed for each session including sound boards, keyword boards, plastic letters and keyword cards, even a dry marker and eraser. Progress trackers and assessment sheets help you to measure progress. With teaching professionals in mind, the resources are portable, reusable and easy to manage in a school environment.

## 2 PERSONALISED INTERVENTION

Self-help strategies are built into every session so children develop the tools for confident, independent learning which they can take into any situation. The child controls the pace of the session so has a sense of taking charge of their own learning and have a chance to overlearn elements they find more challenging. This way, skills are cemented and gaps in learning are avoided. Crucially, children build self-esteem by growing their skills and feeling empowered by their progress.

Literacy Box make measurable progress with their grapheme/ phoneme correspondence and their spelling. For example, monitoring the lowest performing 20 per cent of learners in one school, 100 per cent made progress in reading, while 95 per cent improved spelling accuracy by a year or more. All learners improved self-esteem and confidence in learning (Neilston & Madras Campus Pupil Equity Fund Report, 2018-19).

## 4 MANAGEABLE SUPPORT

Five Minute Literacy Box can be used inclusively at reception and KS1 and sits well alongside other reading or spelling programmes that may be used in school. Targeting

### Contact:

[info@fiveminutebox.co.uk](mailto:info@fiveminutebox.co.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)1442) 878 629  
Facebook: @fiveminutebox  
Twitter: @fiveminutebox  
[www.fiveminutebox.co.uk](http://www.fiveminutebox.co.uk)

## 5 TRAINING AVAILABLE

Our new 2020 version of the Five Minute Literacy Box introductory video helps teaching professionals get started with using the intervention. Each Box also contains a Resource Book to give background detail and teaching scripts to facilitate confident use of the intervention. Specific training is available to schools who require more in-depth CPD. In partnership with Understanding & Supporting Learning, Five Minute Box offers new virtual training, as well as face-to-face training, as required. Further details are on our website [www.fiveminutebox.co.uk](http://www.fiveminutebox.co.uk).

## 3 REAL PROGRESS AND CATCH-UP

Children using the Five Minute

## KEY POINTS

High-quality resources particularly useful for catch up in phonics skills, and activities to encourage children to learn more sounds, blends and key words through regular sessions.

Individualised sessions that motivate even reluctant learners. Children love managing the resources themselves and working at their own pace of learning.

Self-esteem develops through strategies that are built into the activities and transfer across the curriculum, thereby avoiding learned helplessness.

Progress is accelerated particularly amongst children with EAL, those with gaps in education, communication needs and the 20 per cent lowest performing learners.

# “SHAKESPEARE is YOUR worst NIGHTMARE”

The *Casualty* actor, **Lloyd Everitt**, explains how dyslexia didn't become a barrier to success

I'm an actor and at one point I was really struggling because I didn't have a technique to learn my lines, I was mad nervous and mad fearful in auditions. But I knew I could do it.

I had a really intense acting spell with lots of auditions to prepare for. One was a ten page script, and I knew I was never going to learn it in two days, it felt impossible, so I illustrated the script replacing the words with pictures. WOW! I knew the lines and I hadn't even tried! It goes in easier when you're relaxed.

I only found out I was dyslexic at drama school, which made sense because I always knew I couldn't read very well. I went to Barry Boys School in Cardiff, as a kid you don't want to stand out, you don't want to feel different, you want to be like everyone else and so I was into sport. I didn't do any school plays because I would have had to read scripts out loud. But one drama lesson I improvised a scene and the whole class believed me, I knew then that I wanted to act.

## Challenged

At 16 I went to improvisation classes where you didn't need a script or to learn any lines. All you needed was personality and intuition. All the things that have challenged me in the past have now put me in a place where I am at peace and calm. I now don't feel like I struggle as a dyslexic, I did, but now I have found a way to learn my lines, it's released me, that's the truth. I do still struggle with reading. If I have a read through, like in rehearsals now, I know I read s\*\*\* and I sense people are sometimes thinking 'OMG is he gonna be any good? The guy can't even string a sentence together.' I feel the inadequacy.

The biggest thing I've learnt this year is confidence comes from acceptance. If you

say 'This is how I read - I don't sound very good, but it doesn't matter, this isn't what you're going to see in a month's time on stage.' I have to prep ahead, as a dyslexic the process of learning isn't instantaneous. It still takes me time. I've got to get the script into my body, into my bones. I was the youngest actor to play Shakespeare's Othello at the Globe Theatre. It was a baptism of fire, very difficult, but you've got to get your wings at some point. Playing Othello gave me the confidence and it's all about that, it's what dyslexics struggle with. Having seen me on stage, the writers of the

*“Be fearless to all your struggles and they won't hold any power over you.”*

BBC drama 'Casualty' created a role for me. When I first arrived at drama school I couldn't read very well or learn my lines, and on stage I didn't engage with the other actors, I'd be going over the lines in my head and listening for my cue to come in. This was really bad acting, I wasn't present. Martin Houghton, my drama teacher could see I was really struggling and took me under his wing.

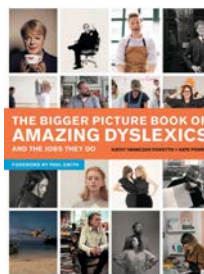
## Gravitas

For any dyslexic, Shakespeare is your worst nightmare because it can be hard enough to understand text without all the similes and metaphors! Martin explained the language of Shakespeare would give me so much power and gravitas and that it didn't matter that I didn't understand it at first. He encouraged me to keep reading it and to feel my way through, that there

was something divine in this language. And that changed my whole perspective. He was the perfect drama teacher because he taught me to use the things I had experienced as a kid and to channel these negative and troubling emotions in my acting.

## Vocabulary

My parents were very reward based, if I did well and got good grades my mum would reward me with some money, trainers or a tracksuit. That was for copying my clever friends' homework! I was clever and intelligent, I just didn't know how to write it down. If I was trying to get a message across it would get muddled in my head. I didn't have the vocabulary to put it together, which meant I was coming at things from my feelings. When I did eventually learn how to express myself, I realised the most important thing was what I was feeling. I now see these feelings of anxiety and depression as a beautiful thing in my life, because the struggle is the part that helps you get from A to B, but when you're struggling you can't see it. Be fearless to all your struggles and they won't hold any power over you. They become part of you and you'll get through it. You don't need validation from anyone, you don't need to be picked out to be great, you don't need to wait for someone to say 'You are a star'. You star in your life from today.



This interview is an extract from *The Bigger Picture Book Of Amazing Dyslexics And The Jobs They Do* by Kathy Iwanczak Forsyth and Kate Power. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers





# INFANT LanguageLink

## AWARD WINNING SUPPORT FOR SLCN

Infant Language Link is an online package that empowers SENCOs, teachers and TAs in their work with SLCN. Assessment, resourced interventions, staff training and support are all included in one subscription. Take a FREE trial by visiting our website or call our friendly Speech and Language Help Desk, which is there to support you every day.

### Bonus eBook

Our newly published book "The Ultimate Guide to SLCN" is now available at £23.99, but everyone who completes a free trial of Language Link gets a free digital copy. This gives practical and specific advice on how to support children in the classroom with regard to their particular diagnoses or needs.

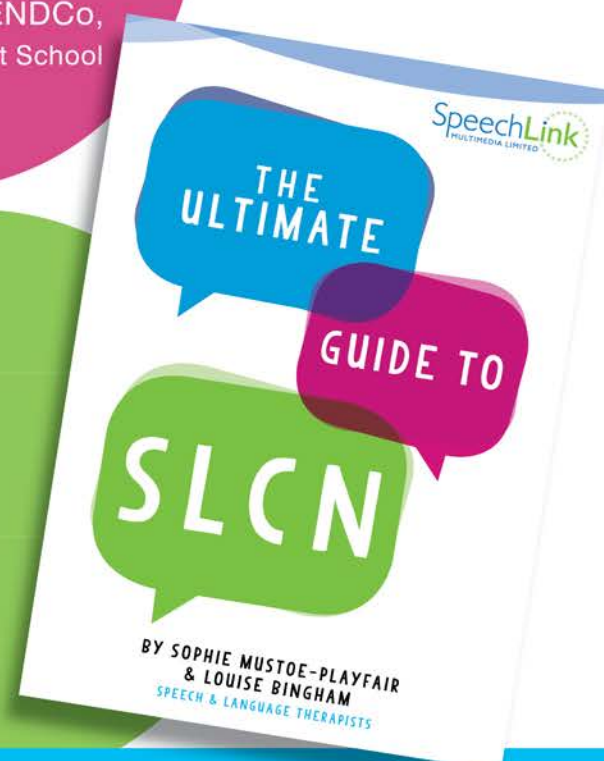
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TO SLCN FREE

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*"For us, Infant Language Link is our primary resource for addressing the needs of most of our SEND children."*

Tina Godden, SENDCo,  
Willesborough Infant School



VISIT [WWW.SPEECHANDLANGUAGE.INFO/TRIAL](http://WWW.SPEECHANDLANGUAGE.INFO/TRIAL)



### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

The award-winning Infant Language Link is an online assessment and intervention package enabling schools to identify and provide timely support for children with language difficulties. Suitable for children aged 4 to 8 years, it combines standardised assessment, built-in training, planned and resourced interventions, progress tracking, and dynamic reporting.

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Infant Language Link

Identify and provide support for language difficulties with this online tool

## 1 IDENTIFY SLCN

With the long-term impact of untreated SLCN on academic attainment well established, it is crucial that schools are able to identify children needing support. Infant Language Link provides a standardised assessment which, used universally in Year R, identifies children having difficulty understanding language, meaning that they are not left behind. The assessment identifies which children need targeted support in school and which children may need more specialist support, allowing you to target precious school resources in the right places.

## 2 BUILD KNOWLEDGE

Infant Language Link is designed as a whole school package to build the SLCN knowledge and expertise of all staff. Training is built in to develop understanding of SLCN and the package includes a bank of strategies and resources that are easy for teaching staff to implement in the classroom. Children with SLCN make the most progress within a communication-friendly environment, where quality first teaching strategies are in place within the classroom and many children can be supported using these strategies alone.

## 3 CLOSE THE GAP

Up to 50 per cent of children in areas of social disadvantage start school with below average language skills, that are not adequate to



support their next steps in learning, leading to a significant attainment gap in our schools. Infant Language Link is used by thousands of schools across the country and children following the programme make an average of five months' extra progress after an

average of 12 weeks of half-hour group sessions, showing that it is effective in helping schools close the attainment gap.

## 4 MEASURING PROGRESS

Infant Language Link enables teachers to track the impact of interventions using a range of built-in progress measures. Dynamic reports and provision maps show progress made for each child, class, year group and across the whole school. Reports provide detailed information about the level of SLCN across the school, including specific areas of language need, to enable whole school, key stage or whole class strategies to be implemented, targeting areas that are going to have the biggest impact on attainment.

## 5 REGULAR SUPPORT

Research shows that school staff can make a huge difference to children's language skills with the right support in place, however as language skills are very complex, school staff will continue to need advice in providing the best support for these children. Our Speech and Language Help Desk can be contacted by phone or email each day to answer any queries and, where needed, school staff can speak directly to a speech and language therapist for advice.

INFANT  
LanguageLink

### Contact:

Phone: 0333 577 0784

Email: [office2@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:office2@speechlink.co.uk)

Web: [speechandlanguage.info/trial](http://speechandlanguage.info/trial)

## KEY POINTS

A years' subscription can be purchased for the equivalent of the catch-up funding provided for just six children, representing excellent value for money

500 colourful resources, 12 planned termly language groups, 24 individual teaching plans and 52 handouts for parents, make this the most comprehensive SLCN package available

All materials are developed by experienced speech and language therapists and updated to reflect changes in research-based practice and in response to feedback from schools

Children make an average of five months' extra progress after an average of 12 weeks of half-hour group sessions, following the Infant Language Link programme

# POOLING KNOWLEDGE

SENCoS across Warrington Primary Academy Trust are drawing inspiration through networking. **Rebecca Kayll** explains how

**T**he past few months have reinforced the value of networks, especially when it comes to the support of our SEND pupils here in Warrington.

The SENCo role can be an isolating one, especially within primary schools. There is often just one SENCo in the school and, although the staffroom will be supportive, sometimes the SENCo needs the opportunity to talk to a colleague who is familiar with the ins and outs and challenges of the role.

In our multi-academy trust – Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT) – SENCoS are not alone. With a SENCo in each of our six trust schools – five in Warrington and one in nearby Widnes – there was a supportive network already there. It just needed to happen.

We began our SENCo network in autumn 2019 with the aim of using it to share best practice, develop consistent policies together and provide a support network for SENCoS across our trust schools.

## Opportunity

The meetings are held once every half term. Before the pandemic these were face to face, rotating around our schools, but since then we've decided to shift the meetings onto Microsoft Teams. The network has a chair and the agenda for each meeting reflects the current needs and priorities of our schools. For example, we identified the monitoring and assessment of pupils with SEND as a

development point across all of the MAT schools. The network meeting gave us the opportunity to share best practice across the schools and develop a shared approach to monitoring the progress of pupils.

This coming together of professionals, each with lots of experience-based insights into their practice, is what makes our network so powerful on so many levels. As well as monitoring we've shared our views on the best SENCo CPD and our experiences of SEND reviews and Ofsted inspections.

## Development

But it's not simply a forum for sharing views and advice. As the network develops it will play an increasingly important role in leading the development of our SEND provision across WPAT. We're looking at how we enhance the processes we use to identify SEND across the trust and we've started developing in-house CPD that could be offered across the MAT schools. Each of our schools has specialist knowledge in key SEND areas and their insights and

experiences should be shared with our other schools. For example, one school employs a qualified play therapist who works with the children, while another focuses on dyslexia-friendly strategies. A third SENCo is delivering ADHD training and a parenting workshop for children with neuro-developmental conditions.

We need to be sharing the knowledge and the insights each school gains from working in these areas across the network. If we can do that then our SEND provision will be even stronger.



## View from a SENCo

Staci Cooper, a SENCo at Evelyn Street Primary School, said the network was a "brilliant" source of advice.



"There is such a range of experience and if you have a question or a concern there is always somebody who knows and who can help. At Evelyn Street we use an excellent literacy specialist who works with our SEND children and we have recommended her to another MAT school who is now using her. I think that's a great example of how we use the network to share our knowledge.

"The network is really useful when it comes to developing SEND policies

and SEND information reports. These are complex documents that we have to get right. The approach we've taken is to create core documents which are then tailored by the individual schools.

"We took a similar collaborative approach with EHC plans for some of our SEND children and these have been well received. For me the network gives me the assurance that there are colleagues who face exactly the same challenges as me."

*"This coming together of professionals... is what makes our network so powerful."*



## Guidance

Since the pandemic started the network has been a valuable forum for the sharing of government and local authority guidance on SEND which has changed significantly over the past few months.

The transition of SEND children back to school has been a major topic for us during our virtual network meetings. Again, we've been able to discuss our individual experiences and advice on how best to work with CAMHS during this process. There is wider support and advice out there and if there is a network of people sharing their tips and advice we are all far less likely to miss something that will be valuable to our work in this area.

The agenda of our next half termly network meeting provides a good idea of the scope of topics that are discussed. Items on the agenda includes reviewing policy and our SEND information report to include the impact of covid on SEND pupils, working with outside agencies during the pandemic and reviewing the latest research and guidance on remote learning for SEND pupils.

## Expectations

Good SEND practice runs on sound policies that are regularly updated to reflect current rules and expectations. This is a big job if you are doing it on your own but with our network this is now a shared effort. It also means that our policies are more robust because they are scrutinised and quality checked by six SENCos.

The network is also playing a key role in the professional development of new SENCos. When one of our schools welcomed a new SENCo we appointed a network member to mentor them and make sure that they never feel isolated in their role. It was another example of why we set the network up in the first place.

## Building on key principles

The SENCo network at WPAT was built on a set of key principles:

- Develop a trust in which every teacher is a teacher of SEND and that every school leader is a leader of SEND.
- Develop a framework for planning trust wide improvement of the SEND provision.
- Make sure there is accurate and consistent identification of need so that resources and provision for children with SEND can be mapped and planned.
- Understand the progress children make from their individual starting points, and the impact that SEND provision has on this progress.
- Develop effective practice and be a MAT that develops effective multi-agency partnerships working across the trust, local authority, social care and other agencies.
- Ensure that SEND provision reflects and embeds the latest policy, research and evidence-based practice.
- Create a culture and ethos that actively welcomes and engages parents and carers of learners with SEND.



*Rebecca Kayll is headteacher at Penketh Primary School,*

*part of Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT), a multi-academy trust of six primary schools and a teaching school.*

[wpat.warrington.sch.uk](http://wpat.warrington.sch.uk)



# Literacy support that has a lasting impact

Read&Write literacy software has features to support a diverse range of learning styles, across in-class teaching or at home learning.

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# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Read&Write



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

An easy to use literacy toolbar, providing students with a wide range of helpful features and supports to increase accessibility. Helps improve reading, writing, comprehension and study. Working across any digital platform, it integrates with the tools that students are familiar with such as Microsoft Word, Google Docs and the web.

Patrick McGrath, Education Technology Strategist at Texthelp, shows how Read&Write supports a range of learning styles to help students with additional learning needs improve their reading and writing

### 1 COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT, EVERYWHERE

Read&Write includes over 20 support tools that can be used by students when and where they need them. Text-to-speech, SPaG checker, dictation, digital highlighters, dictionary tools and many more are available no matter what device students use. The toolbar becomes a natural part of learning. It integrates with Microsoft Word, Google Docs, PDFs, eBooks and on web pages. Because it's available in school and at home, it delivers consistent support through the day. It also offers the highest level of accessibility to help keep students learning.

### 2 INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR SEND STUDENTS

Texthelp has accumulated over 20 years experience supporting SEND students. Read&Write has been designed with Universal Design for Learning in mind. It provides vital support to help students with individual special educational needs. Features like text-to-speech are invaluable for Dyslexic students. The dictionary can help build understanding and aid comprehension. While dual highlighting and screen masking increase focus and reduce distractions. Word prediction builds students' writing confidence helping with spelling, word choice and vocabulary.

### 3 TRANSFORM AND EXPERIENCE PDFS IN A WHOLE NEW WAY

Texthelp's PDF Reader is your one-stop-shop to accessibility, engagement, and collaboration in PDFs. And it comes with all the support tools of Read&Write, plus much more. Students can compile research or study notes using the highlighter tools. The 'push pin' tool is great for revision - adding rich notes with images, speech and text. With powerful annotation tools, students can write, type and draw on PDF worksheets. Plus, in the hands of teachers, it's a fast and efficient marking and feedback tool.

### 4 USE AS A COMPUTER READER IN EXAMS

Read&Write is a computer reader permitted by and designed in line with the JCQ guidelines for 'access arrangements'. It's easy to set up, and it's flexible, meaning that exam officers can limit access to those support



tools that students are allowed to use. It gives control back to students who'd usually need the help of a human reader. Gone is the embarrassment of having to ask for a question to be read aloud several times. Instead, students can listen back to on-screen

text read out loud as many times as they need – in a choice of very natural, human-sounding voices.

### 5 BUILD VOCABULARY

For every student, building and increasing vocabulary is essential to learning. With the online dictionary, students can get a definition and view a picture reference to help link visuals with words. Text-to-speech helps with pronunciation. Prediction supports students with contextual word suggestions as they write. This helps to broaden their vocabulary. The 'Vocabulary Builder' tool helps reinforce new words. Students select the words they are learning and Read&Write creates a new document with the word, its definition and picture.

#### Contact:

For more information, visit:  
[text.help/senco](http://text.help/senco)  
Texthelp Ltd  
1 Orchard Way  
Antrim  
Northern Ireland  
BT41 2RU  
Tel: +44 (0)28 9442 8105  
Email: [info@texthelp.com](mailto:info@texthelp.com)

## KEY POINTS

#### ORAL FEEDBACK

Using 'Voice Note', easily record voice comments in one click and add it to student work for quick, effective and personal feedback.

#### LEVELLED READING

On any webpage, students can choose to 'Simplify' the text to provide levelled reading opportunities that declutter layouts and increase accessibility without losing context.

#### GOOGLE CLASSROOM

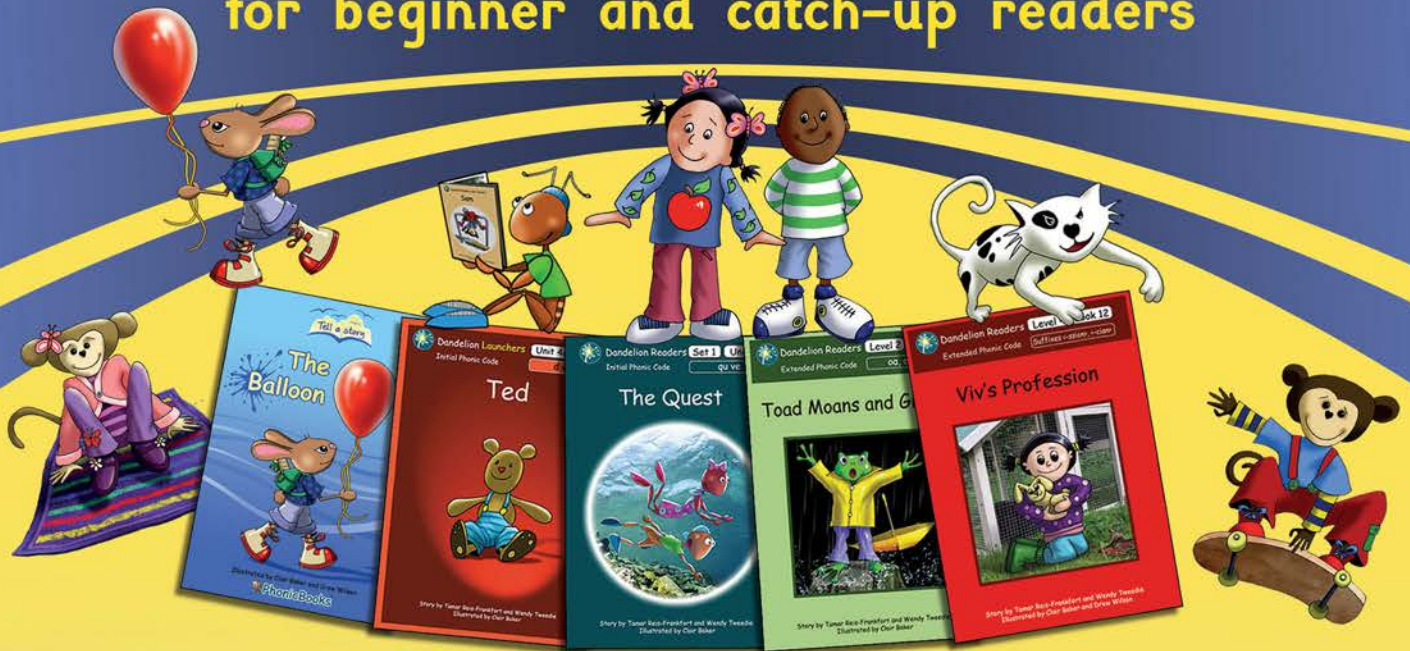
Read&Write ensures that every student has the same level of access to classes, assignments and tasks in Google Classroom - in school and at home.

#### WEB RESEARCH

Coloured digital highlighters enable students to research web pages and documents to draw out key text, and easily collate notes automatically into a new document.

Do your pupils need to catch up with their reading?

## Exciting decodable books for beginner and catch-up readers



### Beginner Readers



### Catch-up Readers

- Step-by-step phonics
- Engaging illustrations and stories
- Appropriate for different age-groups
- Ideal for struggling readers
- Complement any phonics programme

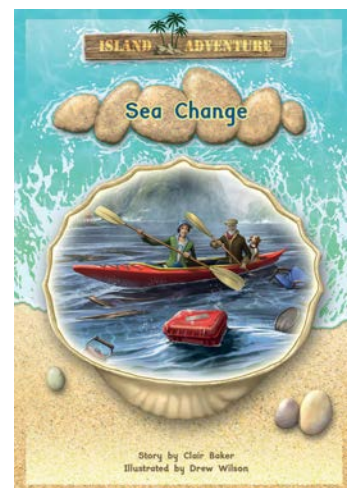




READING →

# Island Adventure Series from Phonic Books

Appealing, decodable books and activities aimed at older, struggling readers



## AT A GLANCE

- Age-appropriate stories and illustrations for catch-up pupils aged 8-14
- Designed to work with any phonics programme
- Step-by-step progression
- Each book targets specific phonemes
- Supplementary photocopiable activities available

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



It's hard enough to be aware that you are lagging behind your peers with your reading. To be then presented with books clearly aimed at children much younger than you is just adding salt to the wound. Children grow up. Their tastes and interests evolve. Shouldn't their reading matter reflect this, even if their reading skills have fallen behind their chronological age?

The Island Adventure series from Phonic Books represents an admirable effort to meet that need. As well as publishing resources for beginner readers, Phonic Books has created a varied collection of story series aimed specifically at helping pupils aged 8-14 to fill the gaps in their phonics skills and knowledge.

You can tell that these resources have been produced by experienced teachers. As you read through the ten-book Island Adventure stories, for example, you can't help mentally ticking off all the elements you would want from such a series – not to mention a few you might not have thought of. There is clear progression. Each book focuses on one or two target phonemes but also revisits those from previous books. There is a practice page at the beginning to prepare the reader by introducing key words. There is also a vocabulary page, including idiomatic language, to broaden pupils' own personal lexicons. I particularly

liked the way they unobtrusively show the readers how to split multi-syllabic words on each page – it suggests a thoughtful approach to teaching while remaining sensitive to the self-esteem of the child.

Just as impressive is the activities book that accompanies the series. With a section for each individual tale, it provides an interesting range of photocopiable challenges for the pupil to complete independently. These focus on a range of crucial reading and writing skills as well as providing targeted phonics practice.

Above all, these books have been created to make reading a genuine pleasure. The stories are fast-paced and absorbing, whilst the illustrations immediately appeal to the targeted age-group. By adopting a quest or mission style narrative, they cleverly draw in the reader and make you want to read further, not least by ending each book with a cliff-hanger (sometimes literally!) that propels you into the next book of the series. And if the target phoneme is a little obvious at times, that can be forgiven as these books are not meant to win literary prizes – they are there to build confidence, fluency and engagement in reluctant readers. Mission accomplished, I'd say.

# SENCo

## VERDICT

- ✓ Engaging, age-appropriate stories
- ✓ Visually appealing to the age group
- ✓ Sensitively supportive of the target audience
- ✓ Well-resourced with practice materials

## UPGRADE IF...

... you want to help older, struggling readers close the reading gap with their peers without patronising them with reading materials written for younger children.

*"You can tell that these resources have been produced by experienced teachers"*

Island Adventure series (ten books): £39.00, workbook: £25.00 [www.phonicbooks.co.uk](http://www.phonicbooks.co.uk)

# Reading is for EVERYONE

RNIB Bookshare makes learning accessible to all  
says **Mary Ellen Flynn**

**I** imagine teaching children who can't read conventional print. How do you take the novel you want to teach and create a copy for them to read? You could scan it or type it out but that all takes precious time teachers don't have. For children with print-impairments this means fewer chances to read and explore texts to find out what they'd be interested in. A service from the Royal National Institute of Blind People, RNIB Bookshare helps immensely on both of those fronts.

I am a qualified teacher of the visually impaired (QTVI)

at Priestley Smith Specialist School in Birmingham. We teach learners from nursery to sixth form in the first co-located all-age special school for pupils with severe sight loss sharing a site with mainstream schools. The children who attend our school often have other issues meaning they need more support. We are resourced to support the learning of children with visual impairments so that they can reach their true potential.

## Environment

I believe in the social model of disability where children are not

disabled by their impairments but by the attitudes and environment around them. This means that my job as a QTVI is to find creative methods for providing an environment where children with visual impairments can flourish and access the education they have a statutory right to. RNIB Bookshare supports this view, giving our learners the opportunity to read and study independently.

RNIB Bookshare is a web-based service that links with publishers so that learners with a print-disability, their teachers and carers can easily

obtain accessible electronic copies of education texts. The Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2018 allows accessible copies to be made for people with print disabilities, and this includes learners with sight loss, Dyslexia and other reading affected conditions.

## Accessible

I started to discover and use RNIB Bookshare at school about four years ago and it's been quite a journey for all of us. Initially I used it mostly to ease the process of making accessible copies of texts for our children. This was a labour-intensive part of my job and so RNIB Bookshare became really valuable to me. I learned how to use it myself and experimented with putting books on iPads and seeing what was possible. I found that RNIB Bookshare also allowed us to download a PDF or a Word version which was so helpful when I was making books for my English lessons. I use Duxbury's 'Perky Duck' software to convert the text into Braille, so I need Word documents to do this.

As I became more comfortable with it, I started to create learners accounts for my Key Stage 4 students to test RNIB Bookshare. This meant that they could open and read a book for themselves for the first time. My year 10 GCSE English group was full of able text readers and they took to it very quickly. I set up reading lists and linked their accounts to these resources so that they could easily access textbooks and revision materials, not to mention novels for enjoyment.





It was also helpful for a student about to take their GCSE's in year 11 who had recently lost their vision and was just learning Braille. They were an able student in English, but not able to access the amount of text needed to prepare for GCSEs. Using

RNIB Bookshare allowed them to listen to the texts they needed.

### Briallists

As I became more confident in using the service, I was able to introduce RNIB Bookshare to my colleagues at school. They

were pleased at how easy it was to use, not just for English, but also for subjects like History and Science. In Physics, my colleague was able to conduct a revision lesson solely using RNIB Bookshare. Students accessed their revision guides on iPads and were able to use accessible scientific calculator apps. They then typed up their answers and emailed them to their teacher. All of this happened in a way that met the students various large print reading needs as partially sighted learners.

I then learnt how to use RNIB Bookshare with Braillists so that they could read texts from the site in Braille as easily as my large print learners were able to. RNIB was able to show us how to connect a Brailnote (a braille note-taker) to an iPad via Bluetooth. This elevated not only my teaching but the possibilities for my learners. Sometimes Braille texts can be

really bulky – 'Animal Farm' in Contracted/Grade 2 Braille for example becomes at least four thick volumes - which is too much for a student to carry around. The ability to load novels onto Braille reading devices is amazing.

The Dolphin Easy Reader app was also a revelation. Using the app, students can alter the font size, type, colour, spacing and background to create their preferred reading format. The app links to RNIB Bookshare so that learners can easily find, download and read the texts they need on their devices.



*Mary Ellen Flynn, Qualified Teacher of Visual Impairment (QTVI), Priestley Smith Specialist School, Birmingham*

### Take note

*Tips for using RNIB Bookshare with your print-disabled learners*

- Set up accounts for learners on RNIB Bookshare and Dolphin EasyReader app. It's quick and easy to get a book and, importantly, a consistent way to read.
- Create reading lists for your learners so they can easily find their books and start reading.
- Let your learners be your guide about how they want

to access their texts; they can listen or read it in their accessible text.

- Encourage learners to search for their own books and be independent. RNIB Bookshare has created easy-to-find topic areas to help children browse.
- If you don't see the title you need, you can request for RNIB Bookshare to contact the publisher for it.
- Finally, be patient. The learning curve at our school has been enormous but well-worth it!

# Turning challenges into **SUCCESS**

Mark Hayhurst talks to Silver Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year winner **Oliver McIntyre**

**B**attling his own issues as a child has made Oliver McIntyre an exemplary teacher and rightly so.

The 25-year-old, a special needs teacher at Hillcrest Shifnal School in Shropshire – part of Acorn Care and Education – was honoured in The Pearson National Teaching Awards with a Silver Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year in recognition of his commitment to changing the lives of the young people he works with every day.

Oliver overcame his own challenges at school and was inspired by his teachers to begin a teaching career and use his own experiences to support young people with learning difficulties and Social, Emotional and Mental Health

needs. Teaching Geography and History under a combined Humanities subject means he keeps life varied for his students as they tackle tough topics and fierce debates.

With the school year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Oliver had his concerns when children were allowed back into the school in September. But, he was surprised at how his pupils have adapted. Oliver said: “I was somewhat shocked at how well the kids have settled back in because, being a SEMH school, we were expecting them, after being off for so long, to come back in and not be able to cope at all. I’m genuinely very impressed with how well some of them are coping.

“Sixty per cent of kids are residential and their structure remained the same. But for the 40 per cent that live at home,

the structure that they were used to with school was gone. So I think quite a lot of them were just missing how structured and organised their days were. I think that’s one of the things they’ve missed the most. Then there’s seeing their friends and everything like that. I think we hit the ground running.”

## Experiences

With things going well at school it was another high point to win the Silver Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year. But, Oliver doesn’t take all the credit for himself and thanked those who have helped him throughout his life.

He said: “Honestly, it was amazing. It’s nice to have recognition for all the hard work. Throughout my life I have had a lot of people put hard work in for me. So, honestly, this award is for them too. Because the award doesn’t have my name on it there’s a running joke that it’s for everyone, my mum, stepdad, teachers who have helped me and my one-to-one TAs. The TAs especially like to claim that it’s their trophy and not mine!”

Oliver believes that his empathy with his pupils stems from the experiences, both good and bad, he had during his own school days and that this helps him in his everyday interactions with the children.

He said: “While I was growing up I often struggled in school with my behaviour on account of my ADHD, ADD and other issues. Every teacher I have had has been helpful to me. Some showed me how things should be done and I now model my practice on them. But then on



the reverse side of that some of the teachers I’ve had throughout my education had been just as helpful in showing me what not to do. Some of the ways I was dealt with made me feel terrible. It diminished me, it made me feel awful, and I now try very, very hard not to do any of that stuff to any of the kids I work with.”

## Devastating

Oliver recalls that a teacher told him in class there was no point being in the lesson because he wasn’t going to get any GCSEs and he found that devastating.

He added: “Being told that, I just checked out and I didn’t try again for a very long time until I had teachers that took some of the things I did and didn’t see them all as negatives. Sometimes, I would shout out jokes and it wouldn’t be I’d be sat there thinking ‘oh, my God, yeah, that’s a really good one’. A thought would pop into my

## A CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

The Pearson National Teaching Awards is an annual celebration of exceptional teachers, founded in 1998 by Lord Puttnam to recognise the life-changing impact an inspirational teacher can have on the lives of the young people they work with. This year marks its 22nd year of celebrating, award-winning teachers, teaching assistants, headteachers and lecturers across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Michael Morpurgo, celebrated author and former Children’s Laureate, and President of the Teaching Awards Trust, said: “Over the past year, we have, all of us, come to appreciate and respect the value of teachers. They have so often been taken for granted. Not any more. Parents know now what it takes to teach, and teach well, and how much commitment, dedication and enthusiasm and knowledge and understanding, yes – and patience.

“Children know it too, if they didn’t before. So many missed their teachers, as well as their friends. We all honour them today. Let’s now praise them, wish them well and above all, thank them.”

*“I would rather teach another subject in a special needs school than teach my subject in a mainstream.”*



head and it would come out my mouth. The best teachers I had didn't say 'stop shouting out'. It would be the ones that would take the joke, laugh, and then redirect it and keep going. And that's one of the big things I really try to do.

"I quite often have a child make a joke about the work and then I redirect it back to what we're actually doing. That gets them back on track immediately."

From his own experience Oliver knows that sometimes you have to pick your battles in the classroom. He was also given feedback on his situation as he completed his PGCE at his former school.

Oliver said: "A lot of people would tell me about how I was when I was younger, that it was pointless to argue with me because it would go on and on and on. And that's very much something that I've taken on board into teaching now.



There are times where I could damage the relationship by arguing. When I was their age I did the same."

### Progress

Despite winning awards, Oliver isn't in teaching for the accolades, he's in it for the love of the job and the support he can give his pupils. While studying for his PGCE he realised that he most enjoyed working with students who

struggled in lessons due to SEMH issues and learning difficulties and had similar behaviours to his when he was younger.

He said: "I felt that I was able to make more tangible progress with these students than some of the other teachers. After successfully completing my PGCE I wanted to work in an environment that primarily focused on students who had SEMH and learning difficulties. I felt that this is where my skills and experiences could be best used to support them in making the best possible progress in a way that they can be proud of themselves.

"The main aspect of the job that I enjoy is helping the students achieve something. I had one pupil who wasn't really engaged in lessons but he was really interested in black history but not the oppression aspect. When studying the industrial revolution he wanted to know

about the success of African American inventors. So I set up an independent research project and gave him some hints. Just seeing him go from not being engaged to being so focused was great. He was always refusing to do homework and would kick off about it every time. But he was coming up to me the next day telling me he had googled the guy I told him about and had found this interesting fact. Knowing that a student has taken a lesson and liked it so much that he'd gone home and researched it further, without being told to, is more rewarding to me than any award I'll ever get.

"If I was ever to get another job it would never be in a mainstream school. I love teaching history and geography. But, I am a special needs teacher before I am a history teacher. I would rather teach another subject in a special needs school than teach my subject in a mainstream."

# Helping children to GROW

**Katrina Brown** explains how you can inspire pupils who are at risk of exclusion

**G**ROW is the name given to enhanced provision established for children whose progression in their current school is of concern due to barriers caused by behaviour, emotional wellbeing needs or social difficulties. The ethos of GROW stems from an evidence-based approach about trauma and attachment from the work of child trauma researcher Bruce Perry and studies on Adverse Childhood Experience (Dr Nadine Burke, 2011). The provision aims to promote a predictable, responsive, nurturing and sensory-enriched environment, and Cambridge Primary Education Trust (CPET) follows many of the procedures implemented by GROW Essex with whom we have worked closely to develop our facility since 2015.

All the children accessing CPET's GROW, which is based at Histon and Impington Junior School, have an EHCP

of this group in a mainstream school would have been unsustainable. Our staff have developed the model to reflect the needs of the cohort of children within CPET. For example, all the children have the potential to be at age-related expectations and at the start were very aware that their attainment was far below that of their classmates. This knowledge often caused dysregulation in itself so core skills teaching needed to be rigorous and finely pitched.

## Deficits

Relationships between staff and children are crucial for the development of bonding and attachment and staff deployed to the provision have been carefully chosen according to their experience and skills. The provision is led by myself and a deputy lead, Becca Doggett, who has worked at a local special school managing a team of TAs responsible for children with special needs. We also have Gayle Newman, an early years'

including child and adolescent mental health, drama therapy, occupational therapy, a paediatrician and speech and language therapy. We give children who could potentially be excluded from our school the support they need to be successful in their own class. Experiential learning is rigorously planned for with hands-on tasks to develop cognitive, personal and social and physical development. All of our children have deficits in their ability to play for any length of time independently or take turns and accept the rules of games with both adults and their peers, so we practise these skills frequently.

Children with emotional regulation needs are most likely not to be meeting their learning potential and we support teachers to differentiate the curriculum. The breaking down or chunking of tasks is crucial to ensure that children follow adult direction and teaching sufficiently to complete the set work within reasonable timescales. We also offer catch-up programmes in the core areas of reading and writing.

So what does a typical school day in GROW look like?

## Mornings

At the start of the day pupils are given the opportunity to talk to an adult to identify how they are feeling and plot this on the zones of regulation. The language of these zones is used throughout the day to encourage self-regulation and emotional control. Quite often this takes place over breakfast

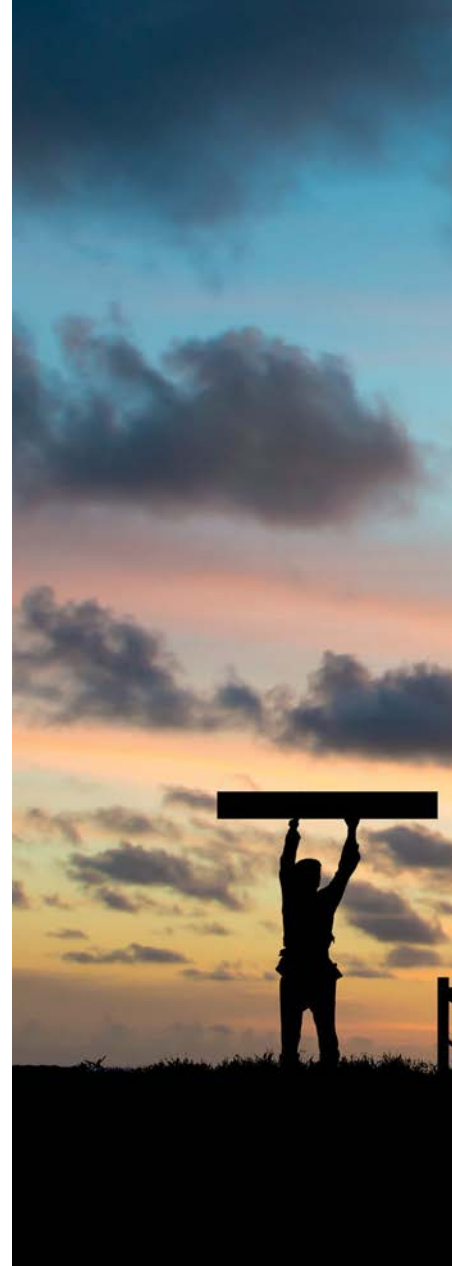
for their social and emotional development/attachment. They have had fixed-term exclusions and a small group have been at risk of permanent exclusion. There is no doubt that without this provision supporting some

specialist, and Matt Bedford, a super calm sports specialist. Having secured Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) funding for all pupils who access GROW regularly, we have also commissioned agency support

to ensure that the children are physically more enabled to approach their learning.

Becca ensures that all pupils are aware of the expectations for the day and supports not only the GROW learning coaches but also the other TAs who Histon and Impington Junior School and Histon and Impington Infant School have deployed to support children in the classroom.

In the beginning pupils were not accessing classroom time so formal learning tasks occurred in GROW and were adapted from the class teacher's curriculum planning. However, as time has passed pupils have accessed their classrooms more and more with the majority of time now spent in the classroom, occasionally with minimal support. This has been an enormous success of the





provision since we started out.

Short sensory breaks punctuate learning tasks in the form of educational games or activities that develop, for example, fine motor skills. Playtimes and lunchtimes are taken as independently as possible.

Throughout the morning staff note and comment on the positive behaviours that are displayed by the pupil and keep up a tally of what has been achieved. The behaviours are (credit to GROW Essex): managing strong feelings (self-regulation); having a go; thinking about thinking; accepting mistakes; being considerate of others; able to bounce back/showing resilience; being positive; listening to others; keeping my problems small; challenging myself; not give up doing the right thing; and independent learning.

## Afternoons

Experiences include any of the following on rotation and always include an outside task:

- Turn taking games
- Five a day (fun fitness)
- Specific work on listening (through games and other practical tasks)
- Restorative work
- Whole group story with discussion
- Garden time – tidying, planting, harvesting, den building, mud kitchen etc
- Music
- Cooking (one x per week)
- Sports skills
- Short bursts of intervention for core skills
- Social skills group

In summary, GROW provides clear and consistent expectations, routines and boundaries and support for pupils to bridge the gaps in their academic learning.

It also brings an emphasis on teaching respect for themselves, their peers and adults as well as logical consequences; both educational and protective. The children are very clear about the consequences and they are consistently applied by the GROW staff team.

Our team, in turn, follow eight key principles:

- Teach rules, routines and consequences systematically
- Model presentations of rules and routines
- Allow time to practise and question
- Provide feedback and review the rules
- Check understanding of the rules
- Praise and recognise when the rules and routines are followed
- Being thorough in following through the logical consequences

- Apply rules, routines and consequences fairly and consistently

For CPET, the provision has freed up the time of heads and assistant heads in the infant and junior school because staff directly approach the GROW team for support at times for general advice and in crisis. We are continuing to develop this role across the schools and also beginning to support other schools in the Trust.



*Katrina Brown is SENDCo, and leader of GROW, at Cambridge Primary Education Trust. She*

*is a qualified teacher with 20 years' mainstream classroom experience and a non-class-based Trust SENDCo for eight years*



EDUQ&A

# Maximising the potential of deaf children



Robert Rattary explains the benefits of Mary Hare School



## Tell me about yourself and your role at Mary Hare School?

I am the Headteacher at the Primary School, which is a specialist school for deaf children of all abilities.

## What profile of child do you accept at Mary Hare?

A deaf child may be achieving academically in mainstream but may not have a social and emotional peer group or we may have a child joining who is not reaching their potential. To learn with children 'just like them' is extremely important to our pupils and our Teachers of the Deaf use all their skills to make the

language of the curriculum accessible to them.

## As a SENCO how could I gauge whether a child would be suitable for Mary Hare?

Within our programme of assessments we include the non verbal reasoning assessment, which will indicate the child's ability levels without the language overlay. We also assess their language and academic process and if there is a gap between the two it means Mary Hare would be a consideration for the child. Equally important is to monitor their wellbeing and self image – negative changes in these might also

indicate that a visit to Mary Hare might be helpful.

## How would Mary Hare help these children in a way that another school could not?

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EDUQ&amp;A

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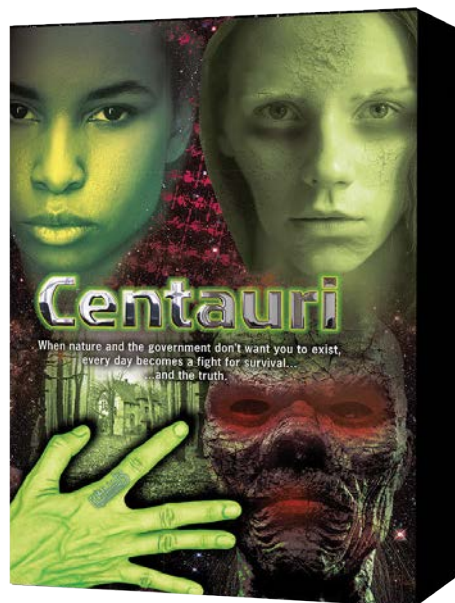
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# Step back from CONFRONTATION

**Steven Baker** and **Mick Simpson** explain how they implement a sanction-free approach to behaviour management

**C**onfrontation is the enemy of effective learning and positive behavioural choices. School can be a very threatening place for young people and their response to these threats has the potential to cause challenging and disruptive behaviour, damage relationships and ultimately derail learning.

So, if a confrontational approach isn't the way forward, what tools do we have left in our toolbox? I'm going to introduce you to some non-confrontational techniques that have worked for me.

## Copy the good stuff

Giving positive directions is, perhaps, the simplest strategy to adopt and one that can have a huge immediate impact. How many times do you tell students to stop doing something? Stop shouting out, for example? There are a couple of problems with this approach. One is that it is innately confrontational and will provoke a threat response in some students. Another is that it doesn't provide an alternative model of behaviour that students can adopt. We are telling them what they aren't supposed to do but not what they are meant to be doing. Try the following alternatives:

- 'Stop speaking when I'm speaking' becomes 'Facing the front, hands on the desk and quiet, thanks.'
- 'Stop walking around the room.' becomes 'I need you to stay in your seat, thanks.'
- 'Stop running' becomes 'Walk quietly on the left, thanks.'

Giving positive directions was the first non-confrontational

tool I ever consciously used and I was surprised by its effectiveness. Copying each other is ingrained into our behaviours because it is a valuable survival strategy.

Back in the classroom, the same rules apply and our brains predispose us to copy the behaviours that we see. A student might see their classmate throwing a pencil and be tempted to join in the fun, especially if the classmate in question is popular in the group. The student's brain might register a behaviour that is useful to copy – after all, these behaviours have not only kept the pencil flinger alive for this long but might also have contributed to their high social status. Now imagine that the teacher in the room raises their voice to say, 'Stop throwing pencils!' On one hand, they are, perhaps, unknowingly initiating a threat response in some members of the class. On the other, they are actually advertising a negative behaviour to the rest of the group that some will not be able to resist copying. I'm not saying that the instruction to 'stop throwing pencils' won't work. In the long run, however, a positive direction is likely to be more successful. 'I need you to focus on developing two questions from the question matrix' has clarity, gives an alternative model of behaviour that students can adopt and doesn't give any attention to behaviours that you'd rather not have to deal with.

## Use praise

Use praise; it is your most powerful tool. Try it when giving out worksheets or equipment, as an example. At the first instance of somebody thanking you,

simply say, 'Thank you for your lovely manners.' You will be thanked by everybody in earshot thereafter. Simply move on without comment if somebody fails to thank you, and offer praise to the people who do.

## Getting the message

As part of a wider plan to modify behaviour, the effects of praise can be transformative. In our school, praise is the foundation upon which our behaviour modification strategy is built. It's important that the praise is timely and explicitly linked to the observed behaviour. For instance, if a student passes a pen to a classmate, the immediate response of the adult should be something like: 'Thanks for passing that pen and helping John to get started.

the release of dopamine is likely to be repeated. Enough of this and a behaviour that once needed to be encouraged will be embedded in the repertoire of the student – they will begin to unconsciously present with the positive behaviours that you want to see.

## Good choices

In the classroom, we should focus on students who are making good choices and deny attention to the negatives. After giving a clear direction, for example, make a conscious effort to praise those who choose to follow the direction rather than point out those who don't. If you use a constant commentary to explicitly highlight and praise the behaviours you want to see, you

*"It's important that the praise is timely and explicitly linked to the observed behaviour."*

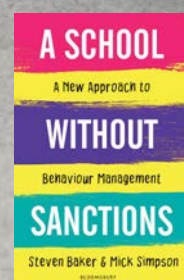
I'm sure he's really grateful.' The immediate effect is likely to be that John will be more consciously grateful to the person who passed the pen than he might otherwise have been. When he says thanks, it will have real meaning rather than being an automatically polite response. The staff member will have advertised positive choices to the whole group while encouraging the development of prosocial skills. This couldn't be simpler, but something will be going on at a deeper level. When somebody receives praise, it activates the reward circuits of the brain and these will release a little squirt of the 'feel-good' hormone, dopamine. Any behaviour that precipitates

will be harnessing the feel-good effects of dopamine as well as our unconscious desire to copy the behaviour of others.

Denying attention to negative behaviours should not, however, mean that they should be ignored. Keep a constant watch over them, and as soon as you see signs of a student making better choices, give them your attention.

## Compliance

You are much more likely to gain compliance with an instruction if you act with complete confidence that this is going to be the case that your students will do as you ask them. One simple way of displaying this confidence, if



This edited extract is taken from *A School Without Sanctions*, by Steven Baker and Mick Simpson, Chapter 3: Non-con-

frontational behaviour management. *A School Without Sanctions* is published by Bloomsbury Education, 9781472974525, £19.99

the layout of your room allows it, is to constantly walk around your classroom. You are sending the subliminal message that this is your territory and you feel comfortable whomever you happen to be close to. The converse, retreating behind a desk, conveys the exact opposite and hands control of the space

to your students. Take this approach to the corridor outside your classroom. Remember that it doesn't have to be confrontational: 'It's lovely to see you guys. Quiet, straight line, thanks.'

One of the key features of this strategy is to use thank you rather than please to

end instructions and it's the one I find most difficult to this day. This way of showing that you expect compliance takes advantage of the code of manners that exists in our society. The code of manners is such an important survival function that we all feel more or less compelled to abide by them – at least in public. Some of our students may come from chaotic households and their code of manners may contain some surprising omissions and inclusions but they will all be socialised to a certain degree and most will soon pick up the basic norms in school. They will all feel pressure to conform to societal expectations, and by saying thank you at the end of an instruction, you put an individual under pressure to comply because you are tapping into those expectations. It's much more difficult to refuse when you've already been thanked for something. By ending instructions with 'thanks', you are giving the student a powerful implicit

message that you are confident that your request will be met with cooperation; in fact, it hasn't even occurred to you that a refusal is even a remote possibility!

Remember that all of your strategies are more likely to work if you believe they will work and if your students think that you believe they will work! Look confident, even if you don't always feel it.



*Steven Baker FCCT is the executive headteacher of two outstanding schools in Merseyside that cater for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Mick Simpson has been a teacher for over 30 years and has spent his entire career serving his schools in challenging circumstances*

## Take note

- Catch them being good! Try not to miss an opportunity to praise your students, or colleagues. Praise activates powerful reward centres in the brain. The result: repeated positive choices and a boost to wellbeing.
- Give yourself thinking time to respond. Try slowly breathing in for five seconds, holding for five and then out for five. You will feel calmer, speak more slowly and your heart rate will drop. It gives you

15 seconds to plan your next move.

- Use a calm, even tone and open body language to show you are in control. Most of the information people pick up about your emotional state is from non-verbal signals.
- Talk about 'three good things' every day with your class, team or family. Each person simply says three things that have happened in the last 24 hours that were positive, explaining what they did to contribute to one of them. It's a startlingly powerful tool.

# SEND and Bullying: Supporting All Children

**Professor Adam Boddison**, CEO at nasen, provides simple strategies for reducing the bullying of pupils with SEND

All children are at risk of bullying, but we should be especially concerned about pupils with SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities). Not only are they at least twice as likely to be bullied as those without SEND, but the consequences of bullying are also likely to be more acute.

While schools have a moral responsibility to prevent bullying in general, the Equality Act 2010 also introduced a legal responsibility to ensure that those with protected characteristics, including SEND, are not discriminated against in the form of bullying.

A review of the evidence into bullying conducted by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) in 2018 (<https://bit.ly/3nKdXCm>) suggests that around two in five pupils experience bullying and it is perhaps unsurprising that cyberbullying is becoming increasingly prominent within these statistics.

While bullying has traditionally taken the form of physical or verbal abuse, it is important to be aware of other forms of bullying. Cyberbullying in particular may be harder to identify in our schools, but it likely affects a significant proportion of pupils.

The anti-bullying organisation Bullying UK (<https://bit.ly/2GZJ382>) suggests that almost two thirds of people have reported receiving nasty private messages via apps on their

smartphones, with 91 per cent of those reporting cyberbullying stating that no action was taken. While this data is for society in general, it has direct relevance to schools, given the rising use of smart phones by school-aged children.

Similarly, the types of bullying that occur may differ according to cultural and socio-economic backgrounds as well as gender. The EPI research report stated

*“Universal provision that is put in place to support the needs of all pupils should be a key priority for SENCOs.”*

that bullying between girls is more likely to be indirect and to take the form of say social isolation than physical aggression.

Given the relative under-identification of SEND in girls in comparison to boys (<https://bit.ly/3iUqNdJ>), the increased likelihood of bullying for learners with SEND and the potential increased severity of the impact of bullying for learners with SEND, schools should ensure they have appropriate mechanisms in place to protect girls with SEND from bullying.

## Creating an ethos of inclusion

There are many schools that are effective at creating a culture where bullying in

general is minimised, but also where preventing the bullying of pupils with SEND is a particular focus. This is achieved by proactive rather than reactive strategies that seek to encourage an ethos of inclusion. By actively promoting inclusion, schools can prevent individual children from being excluded and feeling like the ‘odd one out’, which reduces the risk of

them being a target for bullies.

A key part of the proactive approach to creating an inclusive school environment is helping children and young people to understand the impact of the terminology they are using, irrespective of whether it is being used intentionally for bullying. For example, expressions such as ‘it was mental’, ‘what a retard’ or ‘are you blind?’ can sometimes be used as part of casual interactions between children without them really understanding the offence of such expressions to others. An effective pastoral programme in school can help to tackle the ignorance that exists amongst pupils, so that unintended consequences are significantly reduced.

One of the consequences of

bullying is the potential negative impact on pupils’ SEMH (social, emotional and mental health), which is itself one of the four broad areas of needs as per the Children and Families Act 2014.

For learners with SEND who are being bullied, this adds a further complexity to their individual needs, which will make it more challenging (and potentially more expensive) for schools to put effective provision in place. For learners without SEND, this means that bullying can effectively create additional needs, adding further pressure to a system that is already at breaking point.

## Whole school approaches for all pupils

While the therapeutic focus in schools may understandably be



## STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING BULLYING

- Ensure that SEND anti-bullying interventions are weighted towards bystander training and restorative justice, rather than zero-tolerance behaviour policies.
- Preventing the bullying of learners with SEND is the responsibility of the entire school community. Review the prominence of anti-bullying content within staff and volunteer training and family communication. In particular, check that form tutors, teaching assistants and families have a consistent understanding of how to respond to reports of bullying as they are more likely than most to be the first adults that children speak to when there is an issue.
- Given the rise of cyberbullying, school leaders should ensure that social media policies and other IT policies are sufficiently robust.
- Pastoral leaders should check that PHSE arrangements are adequate to proactively listen to pupils with SEND to check they are not being bullied.

on those learners with SEND who are being bullied, it is important not to forget about other pupils. For example, the EPI research suggests that bullies are more likely to come from challenging home circumstances, so they may have their own SEMH or attachment needs that should be supported by the school.

Universal provision that is put in place to support the needs of all pupils should be a key priority for SENCOs. It could be thought of as a rising tide of support that lifts all pupils.

Another important group of pupils are the bystanders; those who are witnesses to bullying occurring. The Finnish anti-bullying programme Kiva (<https://bit.ly/2GSJgu3>) has a significant focus on enabling bystanders to effectively remove the power base from those

who are bullying others. This shifts bullying away from being about victims and perpetrators to being about the school community more broadly.

The approach to SEND in England is moving from being based on a medical model of disability to a social model of disability. The medical model is premised on the concept that a person with SEND needs to be 'improved' or 'cured' through medical, social or educational interventions. The social model focuses more on the environmental barriers to participation and how these can be removed or reduced, including through wider societal change. The anti-bullying focus on bystanders is closely aligned to the social model on the basis that changes to the wider school environment can reduce

exclusion. This means that children with SEND are less likely to be seen as different, so are less likely to be the target of bullying.

In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to be aware that some of the measures that schools might typically have in place to support anti-bullying may not be operating as usual. This comes at a time when significant numbers of children will be under increased emotional strain having experienced bereavement or other family pressures such as job losses. SENCOs should consider casting their supportive net wider than usual during this time of unprecedented challenge for children with SEND.



*Professor Adam Boddison is the Chief Executive of nasen. From January 2021, free nasen*

*membership will be available for all individuals. Visit [www.nasen.org.uk/membership](http://www.nasen.org.uk/membership) for further information. nasen's *Flying Under the Radar Miniguide*, which considers the under-identification of autism in girls, is available to download from [bit.ly/2FpGtb6](http://bit.ly/2FpGtb6).*

 @nasen\_org

# SEND, Behaviour and Lockdown

**Michelle Prosser Haywood** discusses the impact of the transition back to school for Learners with SEND

**D**uring the National Lockdown, learners with SEND, who had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) were considered vulnerable and were able to attend school, if their parent/carer wished them to. In some cases similar arrangements were made for learners receiving School SEND support, learners awaiting external agency support and/or were in receipt of a draft EHCP, where provision had yet to be identified. Some of this group of learners stayed at home, whereas others attended school, usually in a bubble of mixed-aged pupils.

The SENCo in each school would have followed emergency changes to statutory policy

*“Often behaviour will take time to unravel and assess the trigger.”*

and considered reasonable adjustments which could include flexible arrangements about a learner’s transition back to school. SENCos produced risk assessments (assessment of risk to COVID-19 infection and access to learning) which were discussed with parents/carers and their Local Authorities for the duration of the lockdown period.

Once a date was established for all learners to return to school, transition plans became part of the Risk Assessments. These plans focused on a wider recovery curriculum and

introduction to a bubble model, involving new routines and procedures to prevent bubbles of learners coming into contact with one another.

## Unpredictability

Individual transition plans may have included a staggered school start and a shorter day to support a learner with the new routine. Other learners may have needed shorter days for alternative reasons. Working at home, for example, may have been preferable to some, rather than attending school, where there may be less sensory interaction and unpredictability.

In most cases the risk assessments and transition plans have worked well and learners have been able, with support, to work in the same

room, in rows with a seating plan and manage new lunchtime arrangements, but for some they have found it more challenging. School staff in a recent survey stated that there has been a rise in poor behaviour across schools, although most of the reported behaviour is COVID19 related and focused on conscious choice; pupils coughing at people, refusing to wear face masks, crossing bubble groups and not washing their hands.

However, as we head into the latter part of the Autumn term, some learners are still not

fully transitioned to full-time schooling and for learners with SEND, despite the planning of the Risk Assessments, any changes to routine and new rules around COVID-19 could have had a significant impact. This group of learners may be demonstrating a range of poor behaviour in response to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

## Absence

During the extended absence from school, learners will have experienced five losses; routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom. We need to recognise these losses to help prevent the behavioural responses learners are presenting before these responses become part of a behavioural pattern and the norm in our schools.

For many learners with SEND, the biggest impact is

likely to be the loss of routine and structure, during lockdown and the familiarity of their own homes, where they feel safe and it can be these aspects which may be the underlying cause of their behaviour.

## Examples

**The loss of routine and structure on learners with SEND and how to provide a safe place.**

Rachel is currently late every morning. She and her family cannot adjust to the everyday rhythm of getting up at the same time, accommodating other family members and leaving the house at the same time every day. When she arrives at school, she is cross and angry and shouts at the school reception staff about wearing a face mask as she signs in. She has done this on most days, and she is arriving







### SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

- Consider factors outside the school, including family and friends and develop good relationships with parents/carers. Parents/carers know what works for their child at home and similar strategies may aid transition and help establish a sense of safety within the school environment.
- Develop ways to help learners articulate their behaviour and how change can be supported. Younger learners will need tools such as social stories and comic strip conversations and older learners may be able to respond within scaffolded conversations, identify the causes of their behaviour and work on targets to change it.
- Remind learners of the rules, and consider that some learners may need more reminders to correct their behaviour and different ways to remember them. Can visuals as well as written rules be used around the school? Can a film be made of the behaviour expected, and be posted on the school website?
- Keep any rules positive, 'Remember to wear your face mask' is better than 'Anyone seen not wearing a face mask will get detention at lunch time'.
- Recognise in learners when their behaviour might change and in which locations.
- Has enough transition work been completed? Do learners know the new routines, are teachers and other learners in the class unfamiliar?
- Continue to Assess, Plan, Do and review, daily if required, less often if the behaviour is changing.

later and later each day. Rachel's EHCP identified that she has sequencing difficulties, and she has had several targets around telling the time. Her lateness and struggle with a new routine had been anticipated but her behaviour was not and it was her daily outburst when she arrived which she then struggled to calm down from which was causing her, and staff managing her behaviour, a problem.

Rachel's sequencing difficulties had an impact on her recall, and she was unable to articulate coherently, why she was cross, but with the help of a social story she and her parent/carer started to understand her routine in the morning and the steps they all have to take to get ready to school.

Like Rachel, Ben has also been struggling with the

return to school but he did not want to leave his mum and brother, clinging tightly to them and when he did eventually go into school he often ran around the school rather than going into his classroom. In his classroom he was unsettled and frequently ran out crossing bubbles as he did.

### Secure

After a discussion with mum, it appeared that some of the behaviour could be anxiety driven, as there were signs at home, such as difficulty sleeping, bad dreams and bed wetting. The initial behaviour was rectified by a transition toy, helping Ben to feel safe and secure in his new class with a new teacher, which was brought into school and swapped with a tangle toy. He would then keep the tangle tool in his pocket and take it

out when he needed it and at the end of the day the tangle toy was swapped back, so he could take his own toy home.

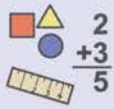
Often behaviour will take time to unravel and assess the trigger. This can be compounded by additional needs such as speech and language difficulties and Autism, so we should ensure that our good practice around behaviour includes space for informal learning, flexibility, and there is time to be responsive to our learners throughout the school day.



**Michelle Prosser Haywood,** SEND/ Inclusion/ Safeguarding Strategic Lead, University of Wolverhampton Multi Academy Trust

# EQUALS FORMAL CURRICULUM

## Mathematics



## English



## Independence



- Specifically designed for pupils working consistently and over time below age related expectations

## The World About Us



## Outdoor Schooling



## Physical Well-being



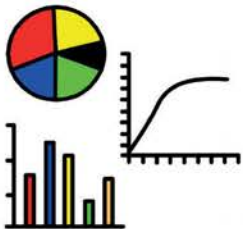
- Non key stage specific, so that pupils work at levels appropriate to their developmental stage

## Play and Leisure



- Each licence covers an entire school/centre thus affording all teachers easy access to these curriculum schemes of work

Written by Mike Sissons  
and originally developed at The Dales  
School (North Yorkshire)



## MAPP — Formal

### Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress

For learners of all ages working within a Formal Curriculum model

MAPP (Formal) is a suite of materials developed to facilitate the planning, assessment and recording of progress in relation to personal learning intentions.

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MAPP Milestones

#### Section 2: MAPP (Formal) Assessment

The Assessment of Lateral Progress (ALP)

#### Section 3: MAPP (Formal) Recording

Guide to the Spreadsheets

#### Section 4: MAPP (Formal) Guidance on writing and assessing personal learning intentions

#### Section 5: MAPP (Formal) Quality Assurance



EQUALS is committed to improving the lives of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities through supporting high quality education.

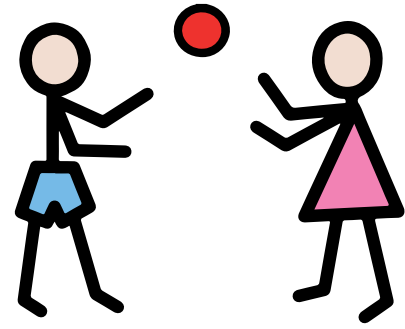
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EDUQ&amp;A

## Meeting the needs of struggling pupils

EQUALS' Semi-formal SLD/MLD Curriculum is for pupils working consistently below age-related expectations



### What would a curriculum look like?

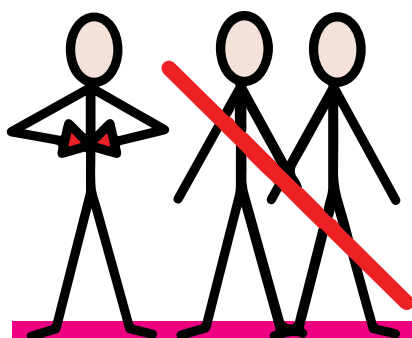
Taken together, seven in-depth and detailed schemes of work, consisting of Maths, English, Independence, The World About Us, Outdoor Schooling, Physical Well-Being and Play & Leisure, would form a broad and balanced holistic curriculum that fully meets the needs of pupils struggling within a conventional National Curriculum model.

### Would this need to be broken down into key stages?

The schemes of work could be non-key stage specific, so that pupils work at levels appropriate to their developmental stage.

### What about behaviour?

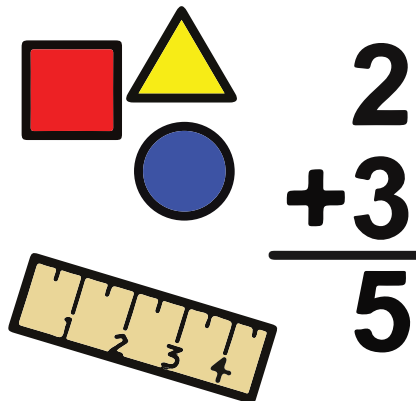
Both engagement and motivation should be at the heart of any such scheme of work. Issues relating to challenging behaviour and pupils' mental wellbeing



should be intrinsically woven into the fabric of the whole curriculum from the word go.

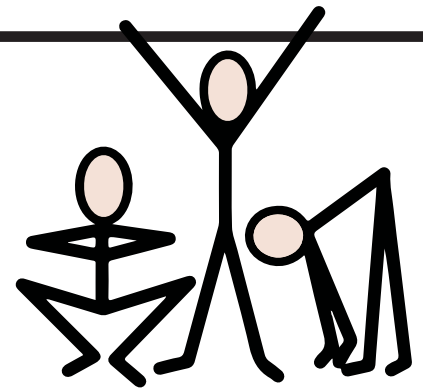
### How many pupils would this involve?

This would be designed for that very small percentage of the school population, perhaps as low as two per cent (Einfeld and Emerson, 2001), who have learning difficulties to such a degree that they are consistently working at levels considerably below their age-related peers for all of their academic lives, across all or most academic areas. In England, such pupils will probably be regarded as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD) or more likely, severe learning difficulties (SLD).



### What about Autism?

Some, perhaps many, of this population may also have a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum condition (ASC), but it is the level of the individual's learning difficulties that is of concern here. That is, the existence of autism may affect how the pupil is taught, but the existence of this severity of learning difficulty will affect what the pupil is taught.



### What does SLD – Severe Learning Difficulty encompass?

Irrespective of the existence of an additional ASC, Imray and Colley (2017) regard the term SLD as encompassing, to a greater or lesser degree:

- Communication difficulties
- Difficulties with abstract concepts
- Difficulties in concentration and attention
- Difficulties with both short term and long-term memory
- Difficulties with sequential memory
- Difficulties with working memory
- Inefficient and slow information processing speed
- Insecure general knowledge
- Poorly developed strategies for thinking and learning
- Difficulties with generalisation and problem solving. (Imray and Colley, 2017, p38)

Children and young people experiencing such difficulties will be working, consistently and over time, at academic levels below or at the earliest levels of the UK National Curriculum.

Contact Paul Buskin, Strategic Development Manager,  
on 0191 272 1222 or email [paul@equalsoffice.co.uk](mailto:paul@equalsoffice.co.uk), [www.equalsoffice.co.uk](http://www.equalsoffice.co.uk)



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# An accessible response to CORONAVIRUS

**Becky Parker** asks that after following Covid-19 advice is your school still inclusive?

**S**chools should not discriminate against those with a special educational need due to a disability and are required to have an 'Accessibility Plan' in place. This must show how they plan to improve accessibility for special educational needs pupils, and when they plan to do it. An 'Accessibility Plan' must consider all users of the school building and services, staff, pupils and visitors.

Pre-Covid was already a tough time for school leaders. Due to budget cuts, schools were forced to make teachers redundant, closing early, or even having to drop subjects from their curriculum to make ends meet. Unfortunately, accessibility planning in schools has always been an area that falls to the bottom of (an increasingly large) pile. This is usually because the lack of accessibility planning only becomes important when a specific issue arises, for example, the arrival of a disabled visitor or a pupil with a specific need.

With accessibility planning already being at the bottom of a very long list, the appearance of coronavirus has compounded the problem significantly.

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a

year that many would like to forget, not to mention those working in education. When schools were forced to close earlier on in the year, teachers were under pressure to ensure that strategies and measures were put in place to alleviate the impact of this on learners with disabilities.

## Planning

When schools opened in September, an enormous amount of planning and preparation had already taken place. New COVID-19 regulations meant that schools had to make

judgements on how to balance minimising risk from coronavirus, by maximising control measures, while providing a full educational experience. Schools had to thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments and draw up plans that addressed the risk identified using the government's 'System of Controls'.

To add to this, risk assessments were also carried out for children with Educational and Health Care Plans, to identify additional support needed to determine a successful

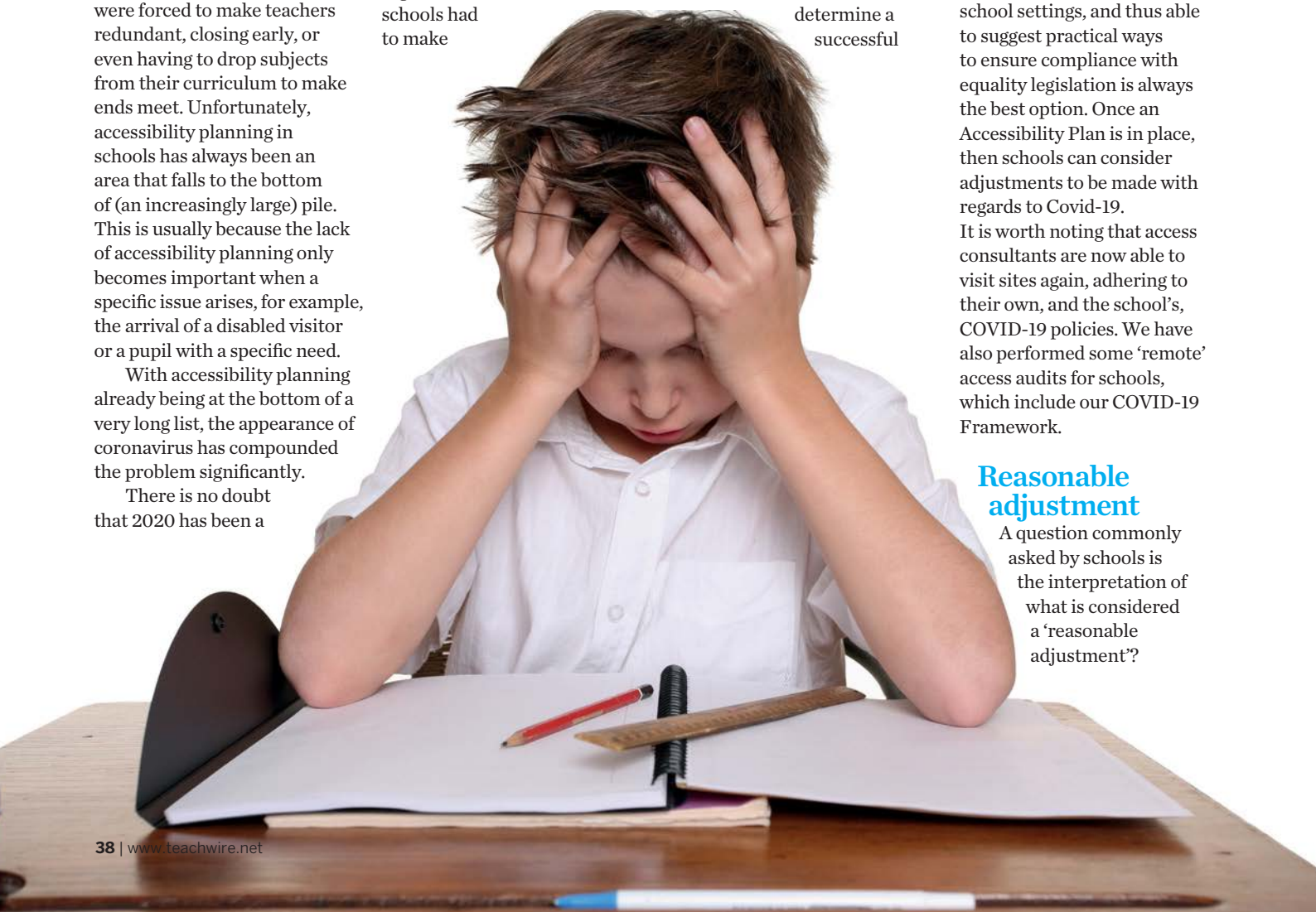
return to school life.

Schools have had to adapt their settings significantly for non-SEND children, what about their SEND counterparts? In terms of accessibility planning, there is not a great deal of support and guidance available and many are having to use their common sense.

We would advise that all schools firstly undertake a full access audit of their building, published information and curriculum. A good access consultant, who is sensitive to budgetary issues within school settings, and thus able to suggest practical ways to ensure compliance with equality legislation is always the best option. Once an Accessibility Plan is in place, then schools can consider adjustments to be made with regards to Covid-19. It is worth noting that access consultants are now able to visit sites again, adhering to their own, and the school's, COVID-19 policies. We have also performed some 'remote' access audits for schools, which include our COVID-19 Framework.

## Reasonable adjustment

A question commonly asked by schools is the interpretation of what is considered a 'reasonable adjustment'?



## Questions you should ask

When looking at an accessible approach to COVID-19, we recommend splitting into the following areas: health and safety, prevention, response to infection, transport and behaviour management.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

- All people who are ill stay at home. Is this communicated clearly in an accessible way?
- Do you have an enhanced cleaning programme?
- Are you reducing contact and maximising social distancing? Are one-way-systems and so on accessible for all?

### PREVENTION

- Do you have an isolation area for those who are unwell? Is it accessible? We have advised schools to have one in place, usually the medical room.
- Are you using face coverings and have you given consideration to those who cannot wear one due to a physical or mental illness, impairment or disability? Has this been communicated clearly?
- Is additional signage in place and, if so, is it compliant?
- Is there limited access to reception? Is this communicated clearly?

### RESPONSE TO INFECTION

- How are confirmed cases managed amongst the school community and is this communicated clearly?
- How would a local outbreak be contained?
- If pupils have to stay home due to self-isolation, are measures in place for those with SEND?

### TRANSPORT

- Have you liaised with local authorities where there is a statutory responsibility for 'home to school' transport?
- Are start and finish times staggered?

### BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

- Have all behaviour policies been renewed? Has this been communicated with all staff, pupils and parents?
- Do policies set clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour? This is particularly the case when restricting movement within the school.
- Is additional support in place for those struggling to cope with returning to school?

Especially in times like these, determining what would be a 'reasonable adjustment' (especially to an untrained eye) is extremely vague. While the Equality Act 2010 does not actually state what is considered to be reasonable or not, it is actually designed for flexibility – what is reasonable in one circumstance might not be reasonable in another. All situations are different and while it is not possible to say what would or wouldn't be reasonable in a specific situation without examination, there are some factors which do help to decide, for example the financial cost of making the adjustment, the practicality of the adjustment in question, or the impact on pupils.

As previously mentioned, Equality Act Audits has adapted their processes and can now either visit a site following protocols, or offer a remote access audit. A Coronavirus Framework has been introduced which prompts schools to think about their

accessibility planning in terms of new COVID-19 legislation.

Additional measures do bring with them challenges in terms of accessibility and schools must be prepared to consider this.

**Example** - a school is promoting good respiratory hygiene with the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. Additional signage has been put around the school which is all in bold uppercase lettering. Unfortunately, uppercase lettering is non-compliant with the Equality Act 2010. All signage must be in both uppercase and lowercase lettering so as to not potentially confuse those with a visual impairment.

Some pupils with complex needs may also struggle to maintain good respiratory hygiene, for example those who use saliva as a sensory stimulant. Schools will need to consider this in their risk assessments and ensure that they are treated equally and supported appropriately. To

deny these pupils face-to-face education would be discrimination.

## Bubbles

Maintaining social distancing in a school setting is extremely challenging, especially with the younger pupils. We have seen schools putting into place 'bubbles' of pupils, limited numbers in staff rooms, having staggered start and finish times and so on in order to maintain social distancing as much as possible. Classroom layouts have also been adjusted, with desks that were once facing each other, now in a straight line facing the front of the class. Schools must think carefully about the social, emotional and physical impact some of these adjustments will have on children with SEND.

**Example** – a child with SEND returns to the school with severe anxiety after the lockdown and this is having an impact on progress. Additional support in this case, whether it be the extra assistance of a TA

or the support from an external agency, would be considered a 'reasonable adjustment' for a school to make.

**Example** – a school decides to recommend the wearing of face coverings for pupils, staff and visitors in communal areas outside the classroom where the layout of the school makes it difficult to maintain social distancing. This school has a Year 7 child with a hearing impairment who relies on lip reading in order to communicate. It would be reasonable for all teachers and other pupils to be asked to remove their mask when communicating with the child in areas outside of the classroom.

## Policies

Schools have had to publish more information on their website which is vital for the safety of their pupils. Coronavirus policies have been published and various other policies such as Health & Safety School Absence, Travel, Learning from Home, and so on have all been updated. With this information being so vital, it is important for schools to ensure that their published information is accessible for all. It would be reasonable for the school to be prepared to offer this information in a different way if it was requested, for example in simple language, large print, via digital audio, or Braille.

To summarise, the importance of accessibility planning should not be underestimated, especially in the current uncertain climate. Under normal circumstances, pre-COVID-19 schools were failing to capture all aspects of accessibility when trying to do it themselves. Now, it is even more important and the global crisis is indeed giving many schools a reminder that the need for inclusive and accessible education is paramount.



Becky Parker,  
director  
Equality Act  
Audits Limited

# Reflecting on your practice

**Natalie Packer** explains why self-evaluating your school's SEND is vitally important

**W**hat do you consider are the strengths of special educational needs provision in your school or setting? What about areas of SEND that require further work? How do you know? Being able to accurately and confidently respond to these questions involves the ongoing process of self-evaluation, where SENCOs and other leaders reflect on their practice and identify areas for development across the school.

Including SEND as part of the regular cycle of school improvement and self-evaluation enables school leaders to make strategic decisions about how to plan for improvements in provision. Through the self-evaluation process, leaders will be able to come to clear judgments about the impact of the provision and develop effective support for colleagues.

The purpose of the self-evaluation process is for a school or setting to:

- Identify what's working well (and evidence how you know)
- Identify and prioritise key areas for development
- Inform your next steps in order to address the identified areas for development.

This will involve gathering a range of evidence through ongoing monitoring and

using this to make decisions about the impact on pupil outcomes. The overall responsibility for gathering the evidence of a school's own effectiveness lies with the leadership team – not just the SENCO! However, SENCOs, in their role as a senior or middle leader, will have a significant role to play in the self-evaluation process

*“Consider the effectiveness of your Accessibility Plan and ensure it is being implemented.”*

and in gathering evidence to show the effectiveness of SEND provision on progress.

## Forming a picture of your school

In order to gain a true picture of what's happening in your school, it will be useful to gather a range of both quantitative and qualitative evidence through your monitoring. This can include:

- **Reviewing your policies**  
Consider how your SEN Information Report and SEN Policy reflect the values and vision of your school and how these are demonstrated in practice. Gather parental views on your SEN Information. Consider the effectiveness of your Accessibility Plan and ensure it is being implemented. It may be appropriate to involve your SEND Governor

in this process of policy review.

- **Analysing data**  
Analyse your SEN Record or Register to identify patterns of identification and need. Carry out progress and attainment analysis for individuals and groups using national comparative data and the school's own

tracking data. Consider what other data you have available to show how pupils are achieving successful, personalised outcomes and how this reflects on your expectations and quality of provision.

- **Observing lessons or carrying out learning walks**  
Gather first-hand, real-time evidence of the quality of teaching and learning and how effectively the curriculum is being implemented. Observations or learning walks could focus on whole-class inclusive high quality teaching, effective use of TAs, the quality of small group interventions or specific provision for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. Try carrying out joint learning walks with other leaders, for example subject leads, to look at the

implementation and impact of the curriculum.

- **Work scrutiny**  
Look through pupil books, portfolios or any other recorded examples of work to gather evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. This can reveal whether the teaching leads to application of knowledge, skills and understanding and can show examples of progress over time. Where possible, talk to pupils about their work at the same time and note if they are able to articulate their learning.

- **Gathering views of stakeholders**  
Provide opportunities for pupils, parents, staff, governors, external agencies and other stakeholders to express their views on SEND provision. This can be done through informal discussions, questionnaires or online surveys. Gathering direct feedback from the pupils is particularly useful and should be built into your assess, plan, do, review process.

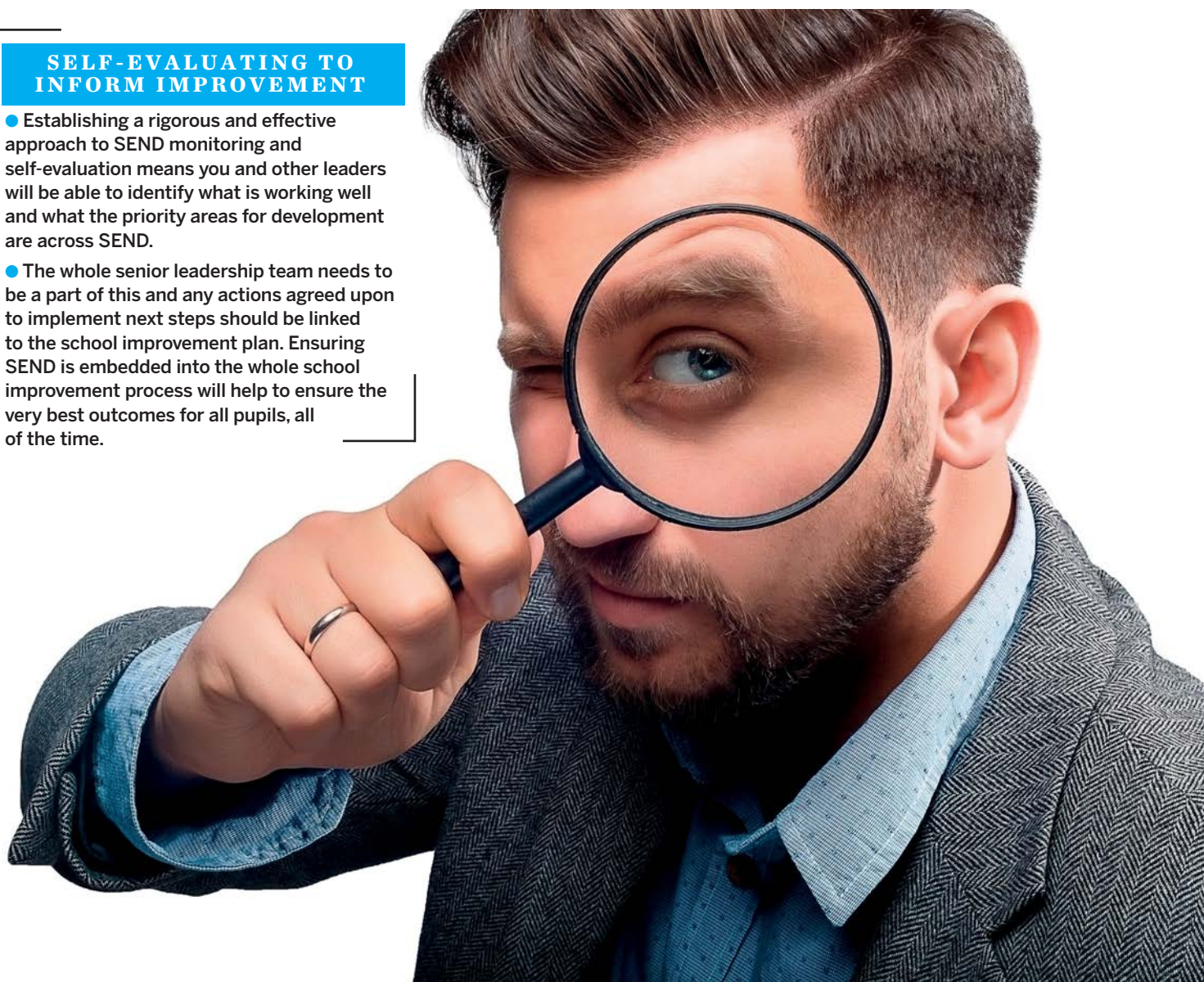
## Using the EIF to support self-evaluation

It can be useful to use the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) as a guide when carrying out self-evaluation. Although Ofsted does not inspect SEN separately, it is woven throughout the whole of the framework and before



## SELF-EVALUATING TO INFORM IMPROVEMENT

- Establishing a rigorous and effective approach to SEND monitoring and self-evaluation means you and other leaders will be able to identify what is working well and what the priority areas for development are across SEND.
- The whole senior leadership team needs to be a part of this and any actions agreed upon to implement next steps should be linked to the school improvement plan. Ensuring SEND is embedded into the whole school improvement process will help to ensure the very best outcomes for all pupils, all of the time.



making a final judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the school's education provision meets different pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND.

The following outlines some of the key questions leaders can reflect on in relation to the inspection framework:

- To what extent are all leaders, including governors, ambitious for all pupils with SEND (including ensuring an ambitious curriculum)?
- How well do leaders identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND?
- How well do leaders develop and adapt the curriculum so it is coherently sequenced to all pupils' needs, starting points and aspirations?
- How well do teaching assistants and other adults support learning to meet the needs of children with SEND in mainstream classes?
- How successfully do leaders involve parents/carers and other professionals in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND?
- How well do leaders include pupils with SEND in all aspects of school life?
- How well does the school assess the learning and development of pupils with SEND?
- How effectively do leaders support all staff to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils with SEND?
- How well are pupils' outcomes improving as a result of the 'different from' or 'additional to' provision being made for them?
- How well are pupils with SEND prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training, and their adult lives?

Gathering evidence through monitoring and self-evaluation in order to respond to the above questions will not only support you to reflect on policy, practice, provision and outcomes but will also support you to feel prepared for any inspection visit!



*Natalie Packer is an Independent Education Consultant, specialising in SEND and school improvement. Natalie is a trustee of Learn-AT multi-academy trust in the East Midlands and a member of nasen's 0-11 Advisory Group.*

✉ [n.packer174@btinternet.com](mailto:n.packer174@btinternet.com)  
 🌐 [nataliepacker.co.uk](http://nataliepacker.co.uk)  
 🐦 @NataliePacker

# Music, language and autism

**Adam Ockelford** explains how music can play a part in language development for autistic children

**M**any children with autism find getting to grips with language a real challenge. They may have difficulties in understanding what words mean, or problems in speaking. They may find it challenging to sense the usual ‘give and take’ of a conversation, and be unsure as to what it is appropriate to say to different people and on different occasions. Yet these same children may enjoy listening to music (of their choice) almost obsessively – often associated with short video clips on tablets, computers or phones that they will play over and over again. They may tap and flick objects and enjoy the ringing sounds that glasses and bowls make. They may hum or sing fragments of songs incessantly.

Why should this be so? Studies of 100s of autistic children at the Applied Music Research Centre at the University of Roehampton in London give us some idea of what may be happening.

## Intuitively

For almost all children, the ability to process musical sounds develops very early in the brain. Three months before birth, the auditory system is fully functioning, and babies-to-be instinctively search for repetition and regularities in the sounds that penetrate their mothers’ wombs. By

the time they are six months old, babies can already remember sequences of up to three different sounds, and by their first birthday, they intuitively start to recognise the deeper patterns that give

making music – in the form of vocalising and dancing – may predate the use of language by hundreds of thousands of years. And in all societies today, parents intuitively use a sing-song

maintained in those with delayed development. So a four-year-old, for example, functioning globally at a 12-month level, is likely to have little or no grasp of language, but may be able to follow simple musical structures (such as those found in nursery rhymes) quite well. The second important point is that, for some children on the autism spectrum, language and musical development may be decoupled. So the same four-year-old, although unable to speak, may have no difficulty in singing whole songs, for instance. And beyond this, in around five–10 per cent of cases, autistic children’s musical development may actually exceed the level that one would expect to find.

The four-year-old may have taught herself to play the same nursery rhymes fluently on the piano, for example, using both hands, with tune and accompaniment.

Because music and language are so closely and naturally connected in song, this means that educators have a ready-made approach to assisting children on the autism spectrum whose ability to process or use words is delayed. The advice is simple. Use music whenever and wherever you can.

## Relevant

Often, people’s response at this point is to say, ‘But I’m not musical’ or ‘I can’t sing!’

The micro-songs used in Tuning In.



the music of their culture its particular style or ‘feel’. In contrast, children’s grasp of sound used to convey symbolic meaning – that is, words – is still in the starting blocks. In round terms, at this point in their development, children’s ability to process music is around six months ahead of their capacity to understand language. Interestingly, it seems that this disparity reaches far back into human evolution. The latest thinking from anthropologists is that

voice when interacting with their young children, communicating with them spontaneously in a way they instinctively know (without needing to be taught) that their babies will understand.

## Structures

What of children on the autism spectrum who have language and communication difficulties? There are two crucial points to bear in mind. The first is that the gap between the capacity to engage with music and language is likely to be

**TRY SOME  
OF THESE**

Here are some suggestions for teachers working with autistic children who are in the early stages of language development.

- Start with close observation – does the child indicate preferences in non-verbal ways (for example, by handing an object to adults, or by pushing them away)?
- Does the child vocalise at all – perhaps to express their feelings or in an attempt to block out unwanted sounds?
- Try introducing one micro-song at a time – start with one that enables the child to express what they are most keen to tell you – it may well be ‘No thank you’!
- Don’t be afraid to model the songs yourself – it may take a long time for the child to reciprocate.
- Involve all adults (and peers and siblings) who have contact with the child if you can – the more consistently any form of augmentative form of communication is used, the greater its chance of success.
- For more suggestions or advice, do get in touch – [a.ockelford@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:a.ockelford@roehampton.ac.uk)



Romy and Adam share a joke using the micro-songs.

With this in mind, I created a set of songs in the 1990s that use only functional, everyday language that is likely to be relevant to children and young people. The materials have recently been updated and expanded, and are

are constructed. Whenever a word is repeated, it uses the same, characteristic musical motif. This has two important consequences. First, it means that they are easy to remember. Second, they are easy to reproduce. Even an approximate version

Yet through music she can communicate not only her feelings, but specific choices too. The expressions ‘Yes please’ and ‘No thank you’ alone open up for her a new world of communication, including the ability to

***“For almost all children, the ability to process musical sounds develops very early in the brain.”***

published under the title Tuning In. They are freely available online – together with recordings of the songs that can serve as ‘backing tracks’ for teachers and teaching assistants to use – at <http://www.ambertrust.org/amberplus/>. The sheet music can also be purchased from Jessica Kingsley at <https://www.jkp.com/uk/tuning-in-music-book-1.html>.

At the heart of Tuning In are what are termed ‘micro-songs’ – very short melodies that just focus on one or two key words. A map of the micro-songs that appear in Tuning In is shown in the figure opposite.

What makes the micro-songs special is the systematic way in which they

of a micro-song, in which only the rhythm is correct, can be understood. This gives children the confidence to ‘have a go’, knowing that they will be understood. For some children, the music will scaffold language, providing a simple framework for them to use words. For others, who are unable to speak at all, the music can substitute for language – a proxy means of symbolic communication.

### **Communicate**

The empowering effect of micro-songs can be extraordinary, for children who have endured years of being misunderstood. Romy is aphasic, due to a postnatal brain trauma.

express preferences and the capacity to choose. She even enjoys teasing me, playing the ‘Goodbye’ song when she means ‘Hello’, and vice versa!

It is important to recognise that micro-songs should be treated as a strategy that may be suitable for some children, but not necessarily all. And, as with every child on the autism spectrum with little or no verbal communication, they can and should be used in combination with other approaches, including signs and symbols. The crucial thing is to open up all potential channels of communication in the hope that messages will be conveyed and understood in a reciprocal way.



**Professor Adam Ockelford is Director of the Applied Music Research Centre at the**

**University of Roehampton. Adam’s book, *Music, Language and Autism: Exceptional Strategies for Exceptional Minds*, published by Jessica Kingsley, is available from all the usual outlets.**



# Elevator PITCH

Ambitious about Autism, the charity for children and young people with autism has a range of free resources for young people, parents and professionals



To learn more about the work Ambitious about Autism do, visit [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

## 1 *Right from the Start toolkit*

This free, downloadable toolkit is for parents and carers who think their child has autism or have a child who has recently been diagnosed. It's packed with information to support them through their child's journey in the early years. [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/right-from-the-start](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/right-from-the-start)

## 2 *Know Your Normal toolkit*

This mental health toolkit is designed to help autistic young people explain what their 'normal' is so they can explain to those who support them when they aren't feeling themselves. [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/know-your-normal](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/know-your-normal)

## 3 *Include Autism*

The Include Autism toolkit was developed by autistic young people to provide help and support so that their peers can access youth groups and other extra-curricular activities. [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/include-autism](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/include-autism)

## 4 *Coronavirus and autism resources*

Ambitious about Autism has created a range of practical resources, including templates, easy-read guides, and posters, that parents and young people can download and use at home during this difficult time. Some of these templates are editable. [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/coronavirus)



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Enfield and North East London  
(CONEL), N15 4FY

**West Thames College,**  
Isleworth TW7 4HS



# Make sure your voice is heard

**Sian Talbot** describes how to communicate effectively with parents of SEND children

One of the stated aims in our SEND Policy Document is to ensure that parents have a voice in the process so we are always looking for ways to improve our communication – this is ongoing, and is never complete.

## 1 Listening, not just hearing

Listening is key to all good communication. Without the ability to listen, messages are easily misunderstood. In the past, parents of SEND children felt they were not always listened to. In a busy school environment, when teachers are faced with a number of responsibilities, it can be easy for us all to hear but not listen. We have undertaken some work with colleagues on the importance of listening and how we always need to listen to parents' perspectives, even if we as professionals do not have the same concerns.

## 2 Make sure you have the facts

In July all the teachers have handover meetings with the staff member/s who will be teaching their class next year. This is still facilitated regardless of whether the staff member is already working in school or not. All the information about a child's needs should be passed on at these meetings. In the event that anything is missed our SENDCo then meets with all the teachers separately to go through the child's SEN folder. This takes place within the first two weeks of term enabling effective approaches to parental communication and ensuring teachers are fully informed when dealing with queries.

## 3 Establish a clear point of contact

Different from the process we have for class teachers, parents are given the email address of our SENDCo. We feel it is much easier for parents to have this and helps to allay many anxieties. It shows we are taking communications seriously and, because it acts as a 'go-between' teachers and parents, this has been a huge winner and



relationships have improved all round. We plan for class teachers to informally 'catch' parents about the child's needs so the parents know the teachers are aware and prepared.

## 4 'Inform and share' termly meetings

We have regular meetings each term to update the progress of SEND children with parents. We inform the parents of any outside intervention, and share the process of decision-making by providing clear information relating to the education of children with SEND. Information given to parents is always user friendly and we will be aware of the needs parents have in respect of a disability or communication and linguistic barrier. Action plans (and targets) are shared at our parents' evenings in October.

## 5 Make it a partnership approach

The home-school communications book allows us to track, and share with parents, what happened in any given day. For children with behaviour issues we have extra communications in terms of reward and recognition. We also work closely with parents to be honest about their child's needs and, if appropriate, the need to share these openly with others, including parents of other children.

## 6 Utilising existing channels

The school newsletter is a great platform to speak to parents. Some have enquired about how information regarding their child is passed on to their next teacher to facilitate a smooth transition for SEND children when they enter the next year group. We responded with a detailed update for parents within the first two weeks of term, highlighting how handover meetings work and inform our action plans. We also ask parents how we can improve our communications.

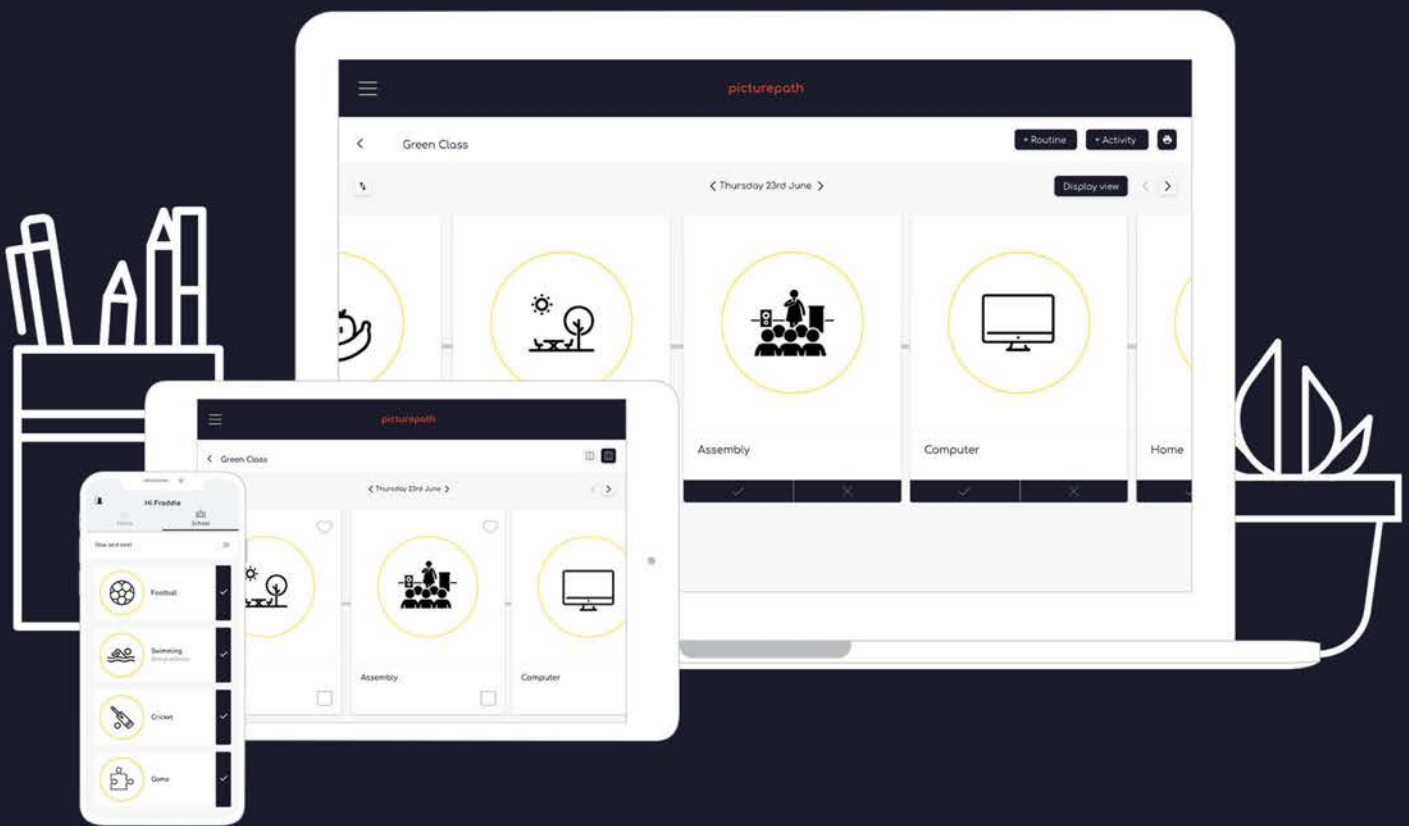
## 7 Visibility and approachability

We do, where possible, make ourselves available to speak to parents in person if not over the phone. This can cut out a number of time-intensive email conversations, so it can be beneficial to be visible at the school gates every morning and afternoon and speak to parents on an individual basis as needed.



*Sian Talbot is SENDCo at Somersham Primary School, part of Cambridge Primary Education Trust*

# The award-winning digital visual timeline app for children with additional needs



“I wish I had this when I was in the classroom.”

Judge's comments,  
Teach Primary 2020

Visit [mypicturepath.com](https://mypicturepath.com) to book your demo

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Picturepath

In a time of unpredictability, Picturepath can help plan a daily routine and reduce the anxiety of children with special education needs



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Picturepath is an award-winning visual timeline app designed to help children, with autism and additional needs, plan and progress through their day. Founded by Richard Nurse and co-created with SENCos and autistic families, Picturepath has proven to effectively reduce anxiety in children and disruption in classrooms.

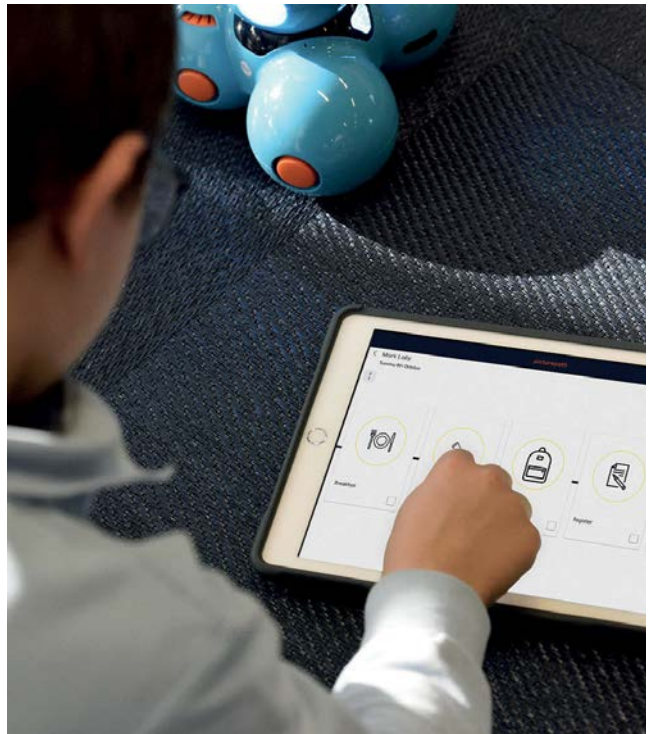
**1 STAYING CONNECTED**  
Adapting to changes in lockdown was very challenging for schools, parents and children with autism. Though we can't be sure of what will happen in the future, Picturepath's got you covered for any eventuality. Their digital home and in-school applications connect parents and teachers, allowing them to collaboratively plan their child's daily routine. Picturepath replaces printed and laminated visual timetables with an interactive, fully customisable and editable solution. This way, no matter what unpredictable changes happen in the week, everyone is prepared for the day ahead.

**2 REDUCES ANXIETY AND STRESS**  
The idea for Picturepath came from the founder Richard, and his own experience with autistic son Freddie. He noticed Freddie became severely distressed and anxious without a clear timeline schedule and activity list that he could tick off throughout the day. Co-created by SENCos with input from The National Autistic Society, Picturepath has helped to reduce the everyday anxiety of thousands of children who have special educational needs.

**3 SAVES TIME**  
Though laminated cards are a great way to break down difficult days into bitesize achievable chunks, printing, laminating and

maintaining them is highly time-consuming. Picturepath's timelines can be created in minutes for days, weeks or months in advance! Simply build a day's lessons, add it to the class's timeline and choose the number of weeks you want it to repeat. If a pupil has a different timeline to the rest of the class, that's no problem! You can easily change it within their individual profile.

**4 FULLY CUSTOMISABLE**  
Every child is different, and so is their Picturepath timeline. Picturepath comes with 100s of activities pre-installed, plus the ability to make your own and even use your own photos! Using a photo of the actual room or of the student doing the activity is a great way to reduce anxiety when it comes to repeating it in the future. Children also have access to their individual timelines, allowing them to tick off completed activities and see their day's schedule.



**5 AFFORDABLE**  
We believe Picturepath will help you to achieve the best possible outcome for your students. Reduce stress, anxiety, minimise disruption and improve the attendance of children living with special educational needs. To help support schools during this uncertain time, we are offering picturepath at a reduced rate for this academic year! See how Picturepath would benefit your school, book a free 30 minute demo and set up call today.

### Contact:

Richard Nurse  
support@mypicturepath.com  
07860 149 971  
Website: [mypicturepath.com](http://mypicturepath.com)  
Twitter: @mypicturepath  
Available on the App Store and Google Play

## KEY POINTS

Co-designed by SENCos and autistic families with input from teachers, child psychologists and The National Autistic Society.

Quick and easy to use, able to be amended at any time as events change. Any change updates automatically on all devices.

Parent and school accounts can be synced, so parents can know what happened during the school day and prepare their child for their after school activities.

Reduces stress in students living with ASD and improves their wellbeing, personal development and education.

subordinate cause

As she saw Baba Yaga for the first time, Blanka trembled.

use of synonyms

She was a gruesome sight.

ambitious adjectives

Warts covered her chin and her teeth were black as ~~night~~ a starless sky.

editing to improve a simile

Oliver, Year 3

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CPD 

# Introducing British Sign Language

Online signing course which acts as a comprehensive introduction for anybody interested in learning BSL



## AT A GLANCE

- Independent lessons allow for sequential or modular learning
- Themes allow you to focus on your area of interest
- Clear and easy-to-interpret illustrations
- Video support for extra accessibility
- Mirror function allows you to practise back to yourself (webcam required)

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Introducing British Sign Language is an introductory course that helps you learn and understand sign language, regardless of previous knowledge. The course is set up in a sequential way which allows you to master the basics of sign language through the use of text, videos and other mediums. The lessons are accessible whenever, meaning that there are no time constraints on when tasks can be completed. Although the recommendation is one lesson a week or fortnight, those wishing to work at a more rapid pace can easily do so. Each lesson is designed to be completed in the order it is set out on the site. By using this sequential approach, knowledge and understanding of sign language is built sustainably. Retake each assessment as often as you like to try to improve on your previous score.

The lessons are designed to take one and a half to two hours to complete but you're not constrained. Spend as long as you need to take in all of the information before moving on to the next lesson.

Something that stands out from the outset is that Introducing British Sign Language is designed with the user in mind. You can switch between left and right-hand preference, adjust the speed of the video demonstrations (brilliantly helpful when practising) and if you have a webcam, you

can use your screen as a mirror so that you can see what you look like signing. This is really useful because clarity of frontal communication is of such importance. The mirror function opens up another small window so you can compare your signing to an example video. This, coupled with the slowing down function, makes figuring out dexterity so much easier. This is the kind of feature that shows that the creators of this course really know how to teach their craft.

The course boasts simple functionality which is clearly signposted. There are 'next' and 'previous' arrows on each screen and embedded videos are in a letterbox format which means you don't have to open another tab to watch them. Although in places there are some subject specific terms, these are clearly defined and the jargon doesn't make the course content inaccessible. In fact, the additional knowledge makes accessing course materials more straightforward.

What is striking about the course is that you aren't just simply learning how to sign. You also learn about the intricacies of communicating using nonverbal methods, the science of dexterity and, most importantly, the ins and outs of another language.

# SENCo

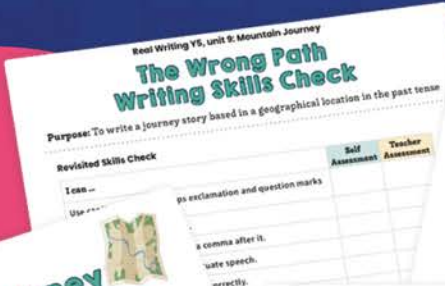
## VERDICT

- ✓ Designed with simplicity and functionality in mind
- ✓ Exceptional way to quickly and effectively learn elements of sign language
- ✓ Well-designed interface with embedded videos and mirror function
- ✓ Variety of contexts cover many areas of everyday interest Course is accessible anytime for your convenience
- ✓ Easy to get started

## UPGRADE IF...

... You want to train staff on the basics of how to communicate using sign or are interested in developing your own knowledge and understanding of how to communicate with those with hearing difficulties.

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### Model Text 9: Mountain Journey

## The Wrong Path

This annotated version of our model text shows where examples of writing features taught or referred to in the suggested lessons. Further examples of writing feature may be found within the text.

Vocabulary Grammar Punctuation Composition

Three paths lay before them, leading off into the **dense** forest. The rest of the party shouted and laughed not far away but it wasn't certain **which** path they had taken. Kenny Cheung scowled at Jake and Aji. "Nice one, you two," he grumbled. "Now we're lost."

Aji raised his eyebrows, like he always did when Miss Pearson told him off. "It wasn't me," he squeaked. "Jake nearly pushed me in that stream!"

"Don't start crying, Kenny," Jake snorted. "They're just down here. I know the way. I've been here before."

Kenny had been looking forward to the geography field trip to these Welsh **mountains** for weeks. Miss Pearson had shown them photographs and they'd been learning about the different features of the area: **valleys, forests, peaks** and all kinds of other things. She'd talked about how, **thousands of years ago, glaciers had carved** out the bottoms of the **valleys, making them flat and 'U'-shaped**. **When Kenny had been paired up with Jake and Aji, his heart sank. Now here they were. Lost.**

Relative pronoun used to link back to the three paths referred to in the first sentence

Using different sentence structures, including using commas to separate clauses in longer sentences and shorter sentences for effect. Short sentences add to the sense of panic and danger.

Examples of Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary taught throughout text



**plateau (noun)**  
 Meaning: a raised land area with a level surface  
 They found themselves standing on a flat plateau covered in rocks.

**mist (noun)**  
 Meaning: a thin fog near to the ground  
 A thick mist covered the landscape.

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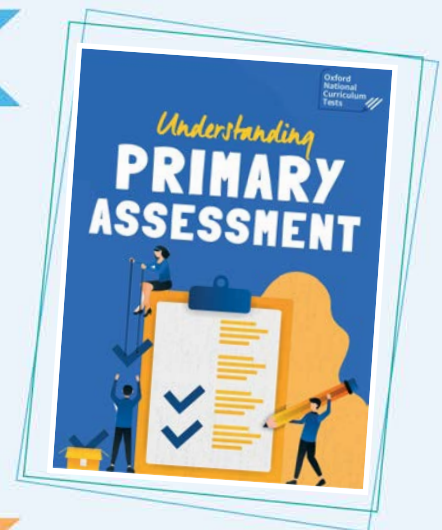
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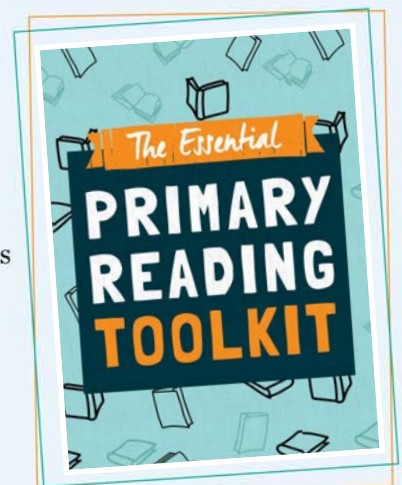


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# Sharknado!

## A maths lesson with bite

### WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to predict specific quantities and test in a practical maths-based activity
- How to compare quantities using mathematical language eg. "more", "less", "empty", "full"
- How to engage and take turns in an adult-led activity



**Lauren Alonso Miller** explains how to engage EYFS learners with special educational needs to learn about quantity

The new EYFS framework includes a greater focus on quantity in its maths guidance. Although children with SEND have their own unique learning goals, it's vital that all children at EYFS level have access to the breadth of learning the new framework will set out.

Learning about quantity is a great opportunity for sensory-based lessons. These activities are often difficult to provide for at home. Where some learners have spent a large stretch of time away from school, now is a great time to introduce practical lessons in a safe way. Messy and risk-based activities may particularly engage pupils with SEND who struggle with joint-attention and extended engagement.



### START HERE

According to the current EYFS Framework, all early years learners should be provided with activities based on the following; Play and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically. The following ideas show how to incorporate EYFS principles into Maths lessons about quantity for pupils who may not access traditional learning sessions.

Areas of Engagement (previously P1 - P4)

- Exploration – child shows an interest in the relationship between objects, reaches out and touches water or containers
- Realisation – child compares different objects, changes the quantity by pouring or filling different containers

- Anticipation – child can predict what might happen using facial expressions or visuals to identify 'more' or 'less'
  - Persistence – child experiments with approaches to an activity, trying different resources based on previous outcomes
  - Initiation – child can use prior knowledge to engage with task independently eg. during free play, replicates activity in the water tray
- Pre Key Stage Standards (previously P5 – P8)
- I can compare the overall size of an object where the difference is/isn't great
  - I can use familiar words in practical situations when comparing quantity eg. 'more' 'less' 'full' 'empty'



### MAIN LESSON

#### SHARKNADO!

This activity can also work well as a Stage Two or Three Attention Autism session, an engaging group activity developed by Gina Davies.

#### Resources:

water tray, large bottle, blue paint, glitter, fish or shark toys, laminated visuals 'more' 'less' 'empty' 'full,' different sized vessels

Take a large plastic bottle and fill with glitter, foil, beads, and small shark or fish toys. Show the children the bottle. Fill the bottle from a water tray using a selection of different sized vessels - containers, cups, plastic teacups of different capacities etc. Model how some vessels are 'full' and some are 'empty', some



## SAMPLE SESSION



### QUANTITY AROUND THE CLASSROOM

During snack time, show children a jug of water. Ask the children how many cups they think can be filled. Use language and visuals to indicate “full” and “empty” to help consolidate learning. When tidying away after free-play or choosing sessions, have children help fill toy boxes, making sure to use terms such as “full” and “empty,” “more” and “less.” You could even use a countdown to make this process quicker and to also build on estimation e.g. Can we fill the box in ten seconds? Ready, steady, go!



are ‘heavy’ and some are ‘light’. Use laminated visuals so the children have to request or sign for ‘more’ each time you fill the bottle.

Watch as the bottle fills up and the fish, sharks and glitter begin to float. Once the bottle is full, swirl it around and allow the children to watch the Sharknado in the bottle.

If possible, each child can take turns filling the bottle. Have them select their vessel and fill with water. Use laminated visual prompts to help children discuss the weight of their vessel, or even make predictions about which vessel will add the most water. Show how the container of blue water is becoming ‘empty’ as it is being added to the Sharknado.

Ask children to compare vessels at different times throughout the sessions – which holds the most volume and

which holds the less?

Children can then experiment with a smaller scale version, filling their own smaller bottle with blue water, making predictions and estimating the quantity of containers needed to fill the bottle. I.e. How many large bottles and how many small teacups are needed to fill the bottle?

### DIFFERENTIATION

Some children may react differently to water and sensory input. For those children, more concrete items such as Lego bricks, play dough or large pompoms can be used to learn about quantity. (It can also be helpful to have a towel or cloth nearby so pupils with sensory aversions can explore but have the option to quickly wipe their hands.)

Have the child sit with their

own small tray, an adult showing how to fill containers with different objects. Have the child empty or pour the containers out. Ask the child to help fill the containers, then pour out again. Use visuals or signing to support with indicating how the containers are “full” and “empty”.

*Lauren Alonso Miller is a teacher and writer living in East London. She has over seven years of experience teaching children with autism and special educational needs across a range of settings. She has delivered training to help arts organisations provide more inclusive public programmes and is currently developing a creative curriculum with an emphasis on providing learners with special educational needs with a broad and rich learning experience.*

### USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Can I teach an understanding of quantity that children can go on to use in independent play?
- Can I provide an alternative activity that will provide for children who find sensory processing a challenge?
- Can I engage most learners in an adult lead activity, encouraging concentration and emotional regulation?

# Exploring Emotions with Autistic Children

## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How an emotion can be triggered
- How emotion affects us physically and our behaviour
- How emotions can have different words
- How we can learn to feel better

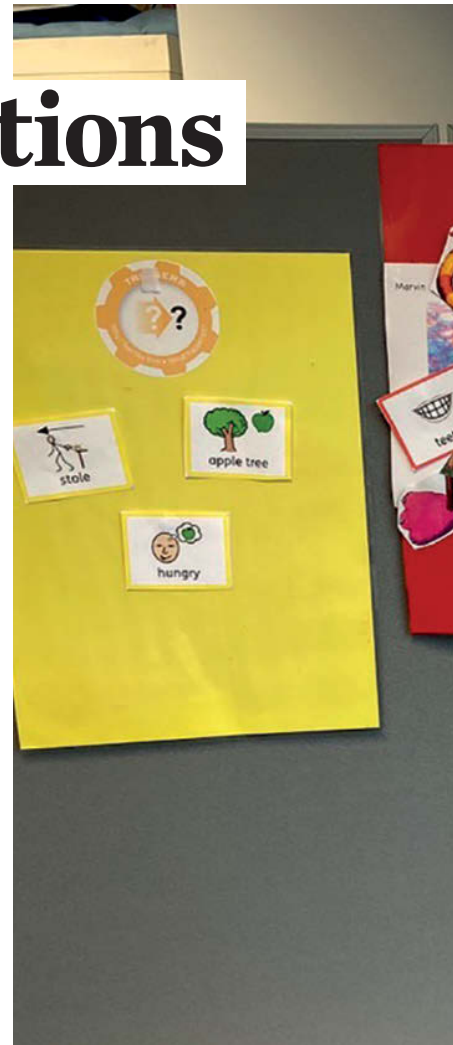


**Lynn McCann** explains how to use stories in the classroom to help recognise emotions

For autistic children stress can intensify emotions and make communicating difficult. Learning about emotions through stories can be a good way of beginning to examine what emotions are and all the elements that work together such as triggers and body sensations so that we can learn how to recognise emotions in ourselves.

“A lot of the difficulty is because ‘emotions’ in and of themselves are abstract ideas. I actually experience many complex emotions at any one time caused by a multitude of things, it is like being asked to hear a single tune out of a cacophony of sound.”

*Hilary Forbes, autistic person*

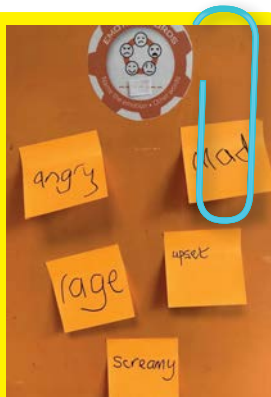


throughout the story. Once you have this you are ready to continue with the main part of the lesson.

## START HERE

Autistic children feel emotions and have empathy. The difficulty can be in recognising and naming emotions with words that they and others can understand. This lesson introduces emotions through a story and looks at how we can differentiate between emotions based on their intensity. We look at how emotions affect our bodies and how we can use different ways to communicate what an emotion is like so that others can help us feel better. This is what you will need:

- A copy of the Marvin Gets Mad story.
- Coloured post-it notes
- Emotions word bank
- Emotions worksheet



## MAIN LESSON

### MARVIN GETS MAD RESOURCES

- Activity pictures and crafts: <https://bit.ly/2GUerVF>
- Summary of the elements of emotions in the story as described in this lesson from Emotion Works: <https://bit.ly/34Na0nH>
- Visual worksheet about my feelings: <https://bit.ly/2SP2oLX>
- Free emotion visuals: [www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)

Read the story through once and ask the children if they can find some emotion cards or colours that describe how Marvin was feeling at the beginning, middle and ending of the story. You are looking for an awareness that Marvin’s feelings changed

### PART 1

From the introductory activity you should have some key words relating to being ‘mad’ as is described in the story. Write these on a coloured post-it (I use orange as it relates to the Emotion Works resource I use – see in the resource list).

Then we ask the children to find out “Why, and what happened to make Marvin mad?” (Use a yellow post-it) We can introduce the word ‘trigger’ to this section. At this point the children might start to tell you things that trigger their anger and if they do, then they can write or draw this on a yellow post-it note of their own.

Then we look at the behaviours that Marvin did that showed how angry he was. The children often enjoy this because he did BIG things that often



## FOLLOWING ON



This sample lesson uses one particular book to look at one emotion. As Hilary said in the earlier quote, for most of us emotions are mixed and messed up in a lot of other thoughts and feelings so to make sense of them takes a lot of time and learning about your own body and responses. There are many good books we can use to explore different emotions. For older children use excerpts from books they like to read. I have done a similar lesson with teenagers based on Harry Potter books for example. Get yourself a set of books or excerpts and plan a whole term of lessons using this structure and then your children will know more about emotions and hopefully have more emotional literacy to communicate and regulate their own feelings eventually.

people do when they are mad. He destroyed the chicken shed and stamped on all the flowers for example. We write these on green post-it notes.

Next we explore the physical effects of Marvin's anger. The book describes some wonderful visual effects of Marvin growing mad teeth, horns, feet and a mad tail. This is where we try to get the children thinking about internal sensations of feeling mad. I use a body outline and some words to support this. I let them colour in or point to the parts of the body they might feel shivering, hot, shaking, 'bubbling' and racing sensations, for example, when they feel mad or angry. We write these on pink post-its.

Finally, we look at the end of the story and discuss what made Marvin feel better. This explores going quiet, getting help from friends and feeling safe and calm. I like to teach different ways of calming down that includes feeling safe, calming

down the body sensations and cheering up. We discuss which of these Marvin needed first and what helped. We write these on blue post-it notes.

It is at this point you can summarise your visual chart that you have built up with the post-it notes and begin to refer to the post-its the children have with their own experiences on them. You might want to do a recording activity making up a picture of Marvin, drawing a picture from the story or writing some sentences based on the word bank you have created in your post-it notes. This will depend on the age and ability of your pupils and could be done using symbols around a picture of Marvin.

### PART 2

Teaching Calm and okay as a baseline emotion. We go back to the story and look at the beginning and ending of the story where Marvin is not mad or angry. We can do the

same activity with the coloured post-it notes to explore what calm and okay are like for Marvin. This is a bit harder as calm and okay are often neutral states and there are not as many visible signs or behaviours that someone is really okay and calm. We must proceed cautiously here as many autistic children mask their feelings and do feel a lot of anxiety all the time. They may not have experienced much calmness in their lives. As we explore calm and okay through Marvin we can see if the children are able to fill in their own post-it notes as before. One tip to note is that they can often feel calm and okay during sensory activities or when involved in a special interest. It is okay if they link calm and okay with being happy.

*Lynn McCann is an autism specialist teacher, trainer and author working with schools in the North West of England. You can find out more on her website [www.reachoutasc.com](http://www.reachoutasc.com)*

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What happened to make them do those things?
- What feelings might they have inside their bodies?
- What words or colours could we use for that emotion?
- What can they do to help them feel better?
- Who could help them, and how?
- When do you feel like that?
- What happened?
- What feelings inside your body did you have?
- What helped you feel better?

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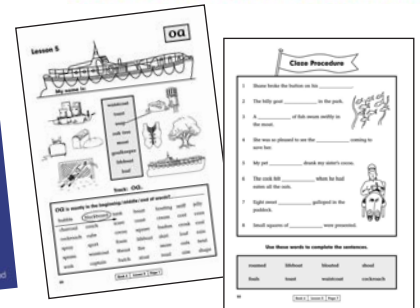
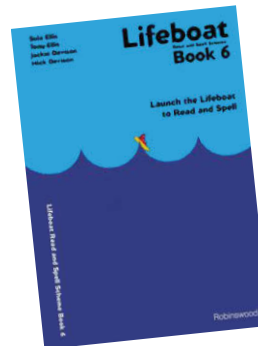
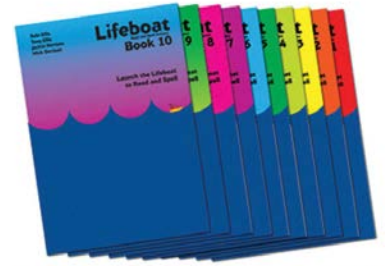
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# Rising to the challenge

**Talit Khan** looks at the obstacles that need to be overcome in these unprecedented times

**S**chool Governance has not been easy these last eight months. To deliver effective governance has been challenging and not having clear guidance, when most needed, especially for our most vulnerable learners, has not been helpful. However, it has been amazing to watch how senior leaders, teaching and support staff have rallied together to ensure that their learners as well as parents, are receiving as much support as possible. More than ever, it is essential for us as governors to reassure and strategically challenge the operational procedures within our schools.

## Responsibility of SEND governors

It is vital that the business of conducting regular governing board meetings, along with committee meetings continues. Although there have been teething problems for those of us who are not 'tech savvy'. Zoom, MS Teams, Google hangout meeting, are all welcomed online platforms that we have had to familiarise ourselves with, in a short space of time. In addition, it has been important to create short, smart agenda's that deal with the most critical items and then proceed to other substantial matters in committee settings where possible. Although, it must be noted that it is not always possible to arrange for key committee meetings to take place. In this instance, it should be a primary concern for the chairperson, and the vice chair where possible, to engage with the head teacher and keep the door of communication open. Especially in the case

of ensuring that teaching and learning for our most vulnerable learners does not fall by the wayside. We must not forget that there are still a group of children who have not returned to school because they are medically vulnerable and their parents have chosen for them to stay at home. As well as those parents who just refuse to send their children into school because they themselves are part of the "shielding group."

In this situation, it is imperative that school governance takes an active role of responsibility.

Collectively, the headteacher, SENCo and SEND Governor must do all that they can to maintain an effective communication pathway. This will allow for essential information to be conveyed by the parents, child and school, allowing for learning to be maintained and if not, for this to be highlighted and strategically dealt with in a sensitive manner.

We can no longer as governor's put this down to being 'operational matters,' that do not concern us. We must play our part to ensure the continuum of providing a robust education framework in our schools.

## Safeguarding

Those involved in governance and as trustees of MATs, have really needed to pay close attention and step up when it comes to concerns related to safeguarding and risk assessment planning. This has been at the forefront for most senior leaders as well as the aforementioned individuals. Although safeguarding has always featured as an agenda item for

most governing body meetings. Since the lock down in March, and the announcement of schools reopening for all learners this September. It has been a crucial aspect of focus for us all. The latest information surrounding COVID-19, provided by Public Health England, along with material

from our local authorities and the DfE has supported the implementation of safety procedures.

It is also important that we continue to pay close attention to child protection issues. Finding new ways to work and to adapt policies in order



to efficiently manage these safeguarding concerns at short notice.

Our engagement with school's leadership teams as a 'critical friend,' to talk through urgent matters, in order to make decisions should feature as a high priority. Continually checking that the school is safeguarding learners, as well as protecting staff during the pandemic should form a crucial part governance and academy trustees play.

The best way to strategically do this, is by asking designated safeguarding leads about the challenges they face and providing them with the support that is required to keep children and staff safe.

## Engaging with Senior Leaders

The government has promised a substantial amount of money for disadvantaged learners, in the region of a £1 billion 'catch up premium' funding package. This aims to provide a solution towards lost teaching time. The Education Endowment Foundation has produced guidance on how the catch up funding may be used. As well as government funding, a systemic response from senior leadership in collaboration with governance in schools will be needed to address complex issues and successfully manage the attainment gap. Furthermore, establishing good pastoral care, through Family

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

Asking questions and finding out more about how your school is tackling arising concerns as well as managing the operational side is your responsibility if you are in governance. Discussions should generate tangible objectives, and a notable success criterion.

Here are some pointers that you may want to consider:

- Have you updated your Governor Development Plan to include a Recovery Phase?
- What are the priority actions for the Recovery Phase – Do they include addressing the attainment gap for SEND and disadvantaged learners?
- How are you approaching the monitoring of teaching and learning in school?
- Do you need to investigate options for catch-up education for

disadvantaged pupils – what research is available?

- How can you increase pupil attendance and parental engagement?
- What are we doing to support our learners to re-socialise and establish positive learning habits?
- Are Parent and Staff Surveys being conducted to reflect the changes implemented during the pandemic?
- Have you decided on who will be conducting school visits and when?
- What are the resource implications of focusing on critical priorities – do you need to adjust your strategy for spending the Pupil Premium grant funding?
- Do you have a long-term strategy for online learning and what are the best remote teaching tools that are available?

Therapy Groups, and individual counselling for learners who have suffered neglect, abuse, anxiety or bereavement during the pandemic.

The fact that operational concerns trump all other strategic thinking at present has left many school governors worried, confused and feeling helpless, but this need not be the case.

Recognising that governors and academy

trustees are an integral part of the school community, is more important than ever. Particularly if we wish to take robust action in such challenging times.

We do not know how long the pandemic is going to last, but we must stand together to support our schools so that they may continue to remain open and offer the best of a broad and balanced education for all learners.



*Talit Khan is an independent SEND consultant and Chair of Governors for Victoria Junior School, Feltham.*

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# SEND staff in short supply?

**Chloe Sood** examines the way you can plan for fluctuating staffing during Covid-19 to avoid disruption

There were two key issues facing schools during the Covid-19 lockdown period, managing staff levels and providing pupils with continued provision of support. Many schools found themselves in a situation like never before, quickly having to adapt week-on-week. With local and even national lockdowns an increasing reality, what can we do better this time round?

Since schools have returned, some have been restricted to partial openings, some entire class bubbles have been sent home, families have been advised to self-isolate or socially distance themselves from friends and family and some teachers have found themselves shielding.

For children with SEN, many normal structures and routines have been and continue to be severely disrupted, adding extra pressure on headteachers and staff to equip children and families with the tools to help them grow and learn. But it's not just the children that headteachers need to manage, but the fluctuating staff levels as and when teachers need to self-isolate or shield too. With some clever short and long-term planning, school leaders can face the challenges of uncertainty and disruption now.

## Tackle recruitment head on

It's possible that SEN schools will have more staff and members needing to isolate due to the nature of the school community. This could easily

necessitate a big increase in recruitment activity and lead to a high demand for specialised staff.

That's why now is the time to analyse and predict your school's likely staffing requirements for the rest of this year and beyond. Doing this early and aligning your workforce and talent acquisition strategy for the year accordingly will minimise the need to be reactive if and when staffing gaps begin to appear, or as delayed resignations (which in normal times would have been tendered during the summer, months) necessitate additional recruitment drives from the resignation deadline in October and into Spring and Summer next year.

When speaking with SEN Schools, SENCOs and educational psychologists, we hear several key goals repeatedly come up when considering SEN recruitment and staff provision. School leaders tend to want:

- A reliable supply of high quality, on-demand staff trained in SEN basics such as Makaton/ PECs and personal care.
- To know that all safeguarding requirements are always adhered to when recruiting.
- Staff who understand that children with SEN can be extremely vulnerable in terms of safeguarding.
- To save money on external resourcing and advertising where possible.
- More quality direct applicants for their roles, so they can be more self-sufficient when hiring.

- To be able to provide flexible opportunities so current staff can achieve their desired work/life balance.

- To keep staff happy, keep candidates engaged and ultimately retain staff better.

Through strong forward planning, empathetic consultation and decisive leadership not only can these aims be realised but you can provide a more certain environment for your children and young people during these unsettling times.

Children, especially those with SEND, can find the circumstances surrounding Covid-19 very chaotic and confusing, there is a lot of uncertainty which leads to anxiety. Children with ASD or a Learning Disability require a very concrete, literal and predictable world to feel secure. Something can have a specific meaning in one situation and mean something very different in another.

To help deal with their insecurity and anxiety, we have to decrease the uncertainty in their lives. So when it comes to consistent provision, we must be prepared to reduce uncertainty both for ourselves and our pupils through good workforce planning and timely recruitment action.

By analysing your workforce data and previous absence patterns it is possible to predict likely requirements with a good degree of accuracy – meaning that high quality cover staff can be engaged and prepped for deployment well in advance.



Having a ready and engaged bank of trusted cover staff ready to go whenever something does come up (like a sudden need for a staff member to isolate) is better for pupils, better for your colleagues and better for your school.

Making sure you have that provision available in the first place requires routine engagement with, and continued good treatment of, a group of high-quality cover staff. By outsourcing the provision of staff to third parties like recruitment agencies, you risk losing some of the rapport, trust and connection you build up with good staff. Once established, having a Talent Pool in place where you are in control of your provision will aid your long-term retention and workforce management strategy by enabling greater flexibility for your network of trusted staff.

And don't forget to reach out to your local network of other leaders and the individuals in your community too. At a time of need they may be able to offer support, advice or direct



*“Do local candidates look favourably on your school?”*

#### SIX WAYS TO AVOID RECRUITMENT STRESS

- Review your staffing requirements - what staff do you need to make your school tick?
- Reach out to those teachers who impress you now, and get your school on their radar.
- Reach out to your local network of leaders to share advice and assistance - through these current circumstances the bigger the support network the better!
- Question how your school is perceived by others. If your school is seen in a negative light, recruiting will be a whole lot harder
- Analyse your workforce data and previous absence patterns. Doing this will help you predict, to a degree, where you may need additional staff and when.
- Create a bank of known staff who are engaged and prepped for deployment when needed.

assistance with provision should you experience a sudden challenge with staff levels due to isolation/shielding, for example.

### Keep your network engaged and positive!

developing a positive recruitment approach (rather than a stressful and expensive one), is vital so take a moment to interrogate your current recruitment and retention strategy. Ask yourself how your school is perceived by candidates and others in your local community, and how this compares with other schools. Does your recruitment and onboarding system/process allow for the best possible candidate experience? Do local candidates look favourably on your school? Is your school ethos, culture and employer brand clearly and convincingly communicated?

If candidates go quiet after initially expressing interest in a vacancy you need to look at why this might be. It's

important to look at how your school is perceived from the outside, collect feedback from candidates and keep in touch with them regularly after they apply for a role.

The same principles can apply when it comes to improving recruitment and retention - interrogate your current processes, seek out best practice, actively reach out to and engage with those who implement best practice, translate their experience to your own circumstances and lead your team and community to a better outcome for all.

Remember that there are support services out there to help you with all of the above but if you address these questions now, the results are twofold: in the short term you will ensure as little uncertainty and fluctuation in staff levels and continued provision as possible, and in the long term you will be starting a virtuous cycle of recruitment and retention success by enhancing and

developing your school's brand!

There are a number of tools you can use to keep candidates and your network engaged, for example via a Customer Relationship Management tool, via social media outreach or via direct content sharing like emails or a newsletter. And consider inviting prospective candidates for casual or supply work, even before you have a suitable permanent or long-term vacancy. This is a great way to keep them engaged. Using a tool such as a Talent Pool service will help you to build and grow a network of staff.

However the pandemic plays out, however the change in sentiment across the sector as regards to flexible working develops, now is the time to position your organisation as an engaged, forward-thinking employer of choice. With clever planning you can ensure you have a reliable pipeline of SEND staff for the coming year and beyond.



*Chetan Sood is Head of Operations at Teacher Booker.*

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# Are your trainees well prepared?

Sustainable SEND training for the next generation of teachers needs to be provided says **Emma Hollis**

**E**ver since the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (<https://bit.ly/2H1msYY>) in 2015, which reminded us that “good teaching for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is good teaching for all children”, practitioners and policy-makers have highlighted the variability in coverage of SEND in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in this country.

It is clear, however, that the need for thorough, sustainable SEND training is greater than ever. An alarming number of teachers feel unprepared or unsupported to teach pupils with SEND (<https://bit.ly/3jRFghT>), which raises

*“It is clear, however, that the need for thorough, sustainable SEND training is greater than ever.”*

urgent questions about the suitability and accessibility of existing training and CPD. Typically, exit interviews and the Newly-Qualified Teacher (NQT) survey reveal that trainee confidence is weakest in terms of their ability to teach children with a range of needs.

You could argue that this is unsurprising – I would be suspicious of any experienced teacher who could honestly say they had high confidence in managing every possible need they might encounter, never mind trainee teachers and NQTs who are just embarking on their

journeys – but it reinforces what we know about SEND training in ITT: that it is highly inconsistent.

The issue has been that there is a lack of expertise among ITT providers: School-Centred ITT (SCITT) providers, School Direct Lead Schools and higher education institutions specialising in teacher training, to develop structured and sustainable programmes with a clear SEND input. But the provision of meaningful SEND training for trainee teachers is something we take very seriously, and ITT providers need support in equipping a new generation of teachers with the skills and knowledge to teach well for SEND.

Our experience has been that there is huge support among providers for the idea of high-quality SEND training, but with a crammed Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum it can be difficult to know what can be achieved and how best to achieve. ITT providers therefore need help around the ‘how to’ and explore wider principles with their trainees, with the understanding that learning is never complete.

To further support this important agenda we have developed a SEND toolkit, designed in partnership with

nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs) to offer SEND support, resources and guidance to ITT providers. We re-launched this in September to provide more scope for the continuing development of SEND training for trainee teachers, and ensure trainees can work effectively with every pupil. Our toolkit is broken down into 12 bespoke areas:

- **SEND legislation, relation to Teachers’ Standards**

– covering the three most important pieces of statutory legislation and guidance on SEND: Equality Act (2010), Children and Families Act (2014) and SEND Code of Practice (2015).

- **Identification and the graduated approach**

– focusing on developing understanding of different types and purposes of assessment, and how they will inform knowledge of an individual pupil’s needs. This is then considered in the context of the graduated approach cycle of assess, plan, do and review.

- **The role of the SENCo and class/subject teachers**

– providing an overview of the roles, there are practical applications for delivery as a teacher which are based on the Teachers’ Standards, SEND Code of Practice and other relevant documents.

- **Broad areas of need** – as described in the SEND Code of Practice. For example, it is important to understand that “the purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil into a category”.



- **Working in partnership** – learning about why establishing effective working relationships with parents is important, some of the barriers that can prevent this happening, and practical strategies that can be used to overcome these barriers including consideration of person-centred practice.

- **Classroom strategies** – as recommended for all learners and particularly for those with SEND. Those outlined in this section are highlighted as strategies, or types of teaching technique, which are evidence informed.

- **Differentiation** – what it is and is not, when and how it is best applied and its relationship with adaptive teaching, as well as the provision of different types or levels of teaching strategies/support/resources for different



## NEED TO KNOW

- The Carter Review of ITT reminded us that “good teaching for SEND is good teaching for all children”.
- Practitioners and policy-makers have, however, highlighted the inconsistency and variability in coverage of SEND in ITT in England.
- An alarming number of teachers (and trainees) feel unprepared or unsupported to teach pupils with SEND (<https://bit.ly/3jRFghT>).
- There has been a lack of expertise amongst ITT providers in developing structured and sustainable programmes with a clear SEND input.
- ITT providers need help around how to do this and explore wider principles with trainees.
- NASBTT is seeking to address these issues with a new SEND toolkit designed in partnership with nasen.
- This toolkit offers SEND support, resources and guidance to ITT providers, with a view to ensuring trainees can work effectively with every pupil.
- A robust SEND curriculum for ITT/ITE needs must include the graduated approach, how to measure the impact of interventions, and four other key criteria.



*Emma Hollis is Executive Director of the National Association of School-Based Trainers (NASBTT)*



pupils or groups of pupils.

- **Impacts of interventions** – the factors that contribute to maximising the impact of interventions or additional teaching sessions, delivered over a set length of time, to support pupils who have gaps in their learning which may or may not be due to SEND.
- **Subject-specific advice** – for the teaching of SEND children in English, Maths, Science, Humanities and practical subjects.
- **Supporting children who have SEND** – possible strategies, with suggestions for tutors to consider regarding their own practice as well as ideas that trainees may find helpful in supporting them in their training and future careers as teachers.
- **SEND audit for providers** – for SCITTs and School Direct Lead Schools to use to RAG-rate their offer in terms of its SEND

content. The short and simple tool enables ITT providers to identify areas of good practice as well as areas for development.

- **Planning the sequence: guidance** – here we provide two alternative suggested teaching sequences which support interweaving of SEND across year-long school-based ITT.

In summary, based on our experience, a robust SEND curriculum for ITT/ITE needs to include:

- the graduated approach. This is non-negotiable. Trainees need to be able to explain this clearly for the NQT interviews.
- how to measure the impact of interventions. This is about how they use data. At the initial training stage it may be support staff and the SENCO who provide data, but teachers need to know what questions to ask and how to interpret the answers.
- the milestones in a child or young person’s development, and how to determine whether or not these are being reached.
- the four broad areas of need and specific needs within each area. Trainees can never fully know this, but a well-designed programme will give them the skills they need to research more as they progress in their career.
- subject knowledge (at secondary level) and different pedagogical approaches to SEND. This is about trainees developing their ability to spot when a pupil is underperforming and discern if this reflects a special educational need.
- partnership and multi-agency working. This means working collaboratively with children and young people, parents and families, support staff and external practitioners.

# What about the teachers?

**Isla Billett** asks who is looking after the wellbeing of SENCOs?

**W**ith schools closed for a long period of time it would be easy for those outside of education to think teachers have had an easier time this year. Much has been written about teacher workload in recent years and so a logical conclusion could be that, with schools closed and parents taking on homeschooling, educators have had an opportunity to have a bit of a break. But nothing could be further from the truth. And while headteachers, SLT, teachers, SENCOs and support staff alike have launched into the new term with enthusiasm and drive, this has followed one of the toughest years yet.

Teachers have had to adapt rapidly to new ways of teaching and interacting with learners, spending even longer on teaching, planning and keeping in touch with learners. And it continues – learners returning to school are bringing a host of new challenges, particularly for those learners with SEND or additional learning needs, with the need to re-establish the rhythm of learning and understanding learning gaps, identifying emotional support needs, communicating with parents and forward planning for possible continued disruption to the school year. All of this takes its toll.

In November last year, 78 per cent of teachers reported levels of stress (<https://bit.ly/2GWkQ2G>) with a further study in August of this year revealing over half felt their mental health and wellbeing had since declined (<https://>

[bit.ly/34RVw5V](https://bit.ly/34RVw5V)). The three main sources of teacher stress (pre-COVID-19) included: excessive workload and working hours, challenging pupil behaviour and pressures of assessment targets. I can imagine all of these have increased recently.

Last December, Pearson surveyed over 1,000 teaching staff. When it came to building a happy and healthy school, teachers considered the three most important things to be pupil mental wellbeing (59 per cent), staff mental wellbeing (46 per cent) and a safe environment (41 per cent). When asked this question in 2020 following COVID-19, teachers rated a safe environment above their own staff mental wellbeing.

SENCOs are often the person in schools most affected by the anxiety of others in the system, both adults and children, and are often exposed to greater challenges and expectations in terms of containing the anxiety of those involved and holding the responsibility for these individuals. This can make SENCOs prone to experiencing high levels of primary and secondary stress.

So as teachers and SENCOs prioritise supporting others, who is looking after them? Here are six ways schools and SENCOs can support their own wellbeing.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of training the mind to enhance our awareness of our thoughts, feelings and sensations. It can help by increasing attention span,

concentration, and emotional resilience throughout periods of uncertainty, when it's common for stress and anxiety to build up. Knowing particular skills and techniques to manage stress and anxiety can help you improve resilience, helping you to improve your overall mental health. Try the techniques in Pearson's free Mindfulness for Unsettling Times guide which supports teachers to practice mindfulness with their students.

## The importance of language

Some schools I've spoken to find that terms such as 'catch up' and 'closing gaps' have negative connotations which can cause anxiety for learners and teachers – especially with lots of media attention and statistics relating to learning loss. Flip the narrative and think about terms like 'accelerated learning', 'levelling up' and 'getting back on track'.

Reinforcing

more positive messages in the staffroom and classroom will create a more supportive environment for teachers and learners.

## Communication

Continuing to involve parents, inviting feedback and building a sense of the school community is an essential part of the return to school. This will help to ensure there's a consistent approach across school and home wherever possible which, in turn, is an important source



## “So as teachers and SENCOs prioritise supporting others, who is looking after them?”

of support for not only SEN children but teachers too, as classroom practice continues to be reinforced in other environments.

Test different means of communication that ensure you are able to maintain regular communication without impeding on your time at home or adding workload. A school/parent app, phone calls to parents or virtual meetings could all support this continued engagement. You could also share support and guidance available from other sources, such as Pearson’s free Guide for Supporting Children with SEND at Home.

### Planning

Planning can provide reassurance, especially in uncertain times, and can help in identifying sources

of help available both within and outside school. Although back to school and planning for the academic year ahead is receiving more attention this year from external sources, you are the experts in this and will already have a range of effective tools and approaches that work. Further support is also available this year. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation’s Guide to Supporting School Planning, aims to support school leaders with their planning and Government funding is available to support with the approaches highlighted in the guide.

### Let’s talk

As learners return to school, it’s important that we talk about and listen to their concerns. The same advice is true for teachers. Working together and being

able to talk openly about the challenges, the impact these challenges have and working on strategies to support and overcome them are really important.

Staff meetings focused on personal and emotional support or introducing teaching buddies – another member of teaching staff to confide in or let off steam or planning activities with staff – are just two ways of doing this. But if you feel you need further support or become concerned, do reach out for professional support.

### Know your limits

The 2018 National SENCO Workload survey revealed that almost six in 10 SENCOs work at least one day of their weekend to get all their work done. Striking the right work/life balance is extremely difficult to manage and adds to stress levels both at work and home.

A teacher suffering from stress is likely to find it difficult to give their best in the classroom, so, although it isn’t easy, sometimes it’s about focusing on yourself and giving yourself what you need. Switching off when not at school, establishing non-work activities as part of your routine and recognising if you need to take time off when you’re ill is really important for supporting wellbeing and avoiding burnout.

I was asked by a parent recently ‘how do we decrease anxiety and increase appetite for learning?’. We want our children to enjoy learning and learning should be fun, shouldn’t it? The same applies for our teachers. We want you to enjoy teaching so we must work together to support you to do what you do best, in a way you can enjoy. Let’s focus on the positives and the brilliant impact being back at school with their teachers is already having on children, the great steps being made to plan for any continued disruption and say thank you whenever we can.

### GUIDE TO WELLBEING

- It’s important for teachers to support their own mental health and wellbeing in order to support their learners.
- Mindfulness can help by increasing attention span, concentration, and emotional resilience.
- Language is important. Focusing on what we can do by way of ‘accelerated learning’, ‘levelling up’ and ‘getting back on track’ can help to reinforce more positive and supportive messages.
- Close communication with parents is an important source of support for our educators as classroom practice continues to be reinforced in other environments.
- Planning can provide reassurance and help identify sources of help available inside and outside school.
- Talking openly about the challenges, their impact and working on strategies to support and overcome is really important.
- Focus on yourself and give yourself what you need. Switching off when not at school, establishing non-work activities and recognising the need for time off when ill is vital for supporting wellbeing and avoiding burnout.



*Isla Billett is the Intervention Transformation Lead for Pearson’s UK Schools business and has been a primary school governor for over eight years.*

To find out more about how Pearson is supporting schools with catch up, please visit: <https://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/issues/catch-up.html>

# How has the Global Pandemic impacted SEND children?

**Professor Adam Boddison**, looks at the effect Covid-19 has had on learners with SEND and provides strategies and advice to help them get back on track

It has been more than six months since Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic, and during this time there has been significant discussion about how the virus has impacted on the most vulnerable learners in our schools. The consensus is that significant periods of school closures have adversely affected vulnerable pupil groups more than those considered non-vulnerable. Although this may not be universally true, how can we help our learners with SEND reach their full potential in these challenging times?

## The differing notions of vulnerability

The term 'vulnerable' has been used by different government departments, but in doing so they have been referring to slightly different groups of pupils. The language has now become more nuanced with terminology such as 'financially vulnerable' or 'medically vulnerable', but the underlying problem of language remains.

When thinking about vulnerability in the context of SEND it becomes more complicated. Learners with SEND who are deemed vulnerable have been identified by government as those with EHC plans (Education, Health and Care plans) and not those receiving provision at the level of SEN Support in schools.

This is problematic because for two children with the same

needs in two different schools, one may have an EHC plan and the other may not. This may be because the ordinarily available provision to meet the need of one child is already in place, resulting in an EHC plan not being required. However, the mass closure of schools and support services during lockdown meant that what was once available to that child was no longer in place. These learners who are on the cusp of requiring an EHC plan are therefore not prioritised for support since they are not

considered to be vulnerable under the original definition.

More broadly, it is not yet clear whether learners with SEND have become lost within the wider sea of vulnerability or whether the notion of vulnerability has elevated the status of at least those with the most complex needs. Irrespective of the complexity of need, recent months have demonstrated that effective risk assessment and meaningful collaboration between families, schools and Local Authorities must both be in place for children to safely make educational progress.

## Challenges

School-based colleagues have worked incredibly hard to minimise the impact of the pandemic on their pupils, not least on those with SEND. However, they have faced a myriad of challenges along the way: Covid-secure bubbles, school transport practicalities and the availability of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to name just a few.

Additional financial costs have affected all schools in relation to cleaning, staffing, and becoming equipped to

*“Covid has also been a catalyst for change resulting in some innovative ideas that have and will continue to help SENCOs and learners.”*

provide a remote learning offer. In some schools, staffing levels have been further increased to ensure sufficient capacity should numerous staff have to self-isolate simultaneously. For many maintained schools, it has been possible to account for such additional costs within the financial year, since this runs to August, which provides an opportunity to make some potential savings during the summer term, when hopefully the Covid risks are greatly reduced. However, the situation is not so simple for academies, where the financial year



typically runs to April and they are prohibited from setting a deficit budget.

It is also worth noting the disproportionate financial impact on special schools and specialist settings, where expensive equipment that was previously shared is now needed in duplicate, and where the operational reality of keeping children with complex or medical needs safe is also costly. Indeed, there are ongoing debates and discussions about the safest approach in schools for children who may require access to external expertise or to specialist support, such as that required for certain types of aerosol generating procedures.

## Learnings from lockdown

Despite the challenges, Covid has also been a catalyst for change resulting in some innovative ideas that have and will continue to help SENCOs and learners. These include:

- Taking annual review meetings online: SENCOs



have often commented on the challenge of getting all of the required professionals in one room at the same time when going through the annual review process for EHC plans. However, the pandemic has resulted in annual reviews generally being conducted online, which has made them more accessible to health and social care professionals with significant diary pressures.

- **Embracing virtual parent sessions:** Schools have taken advantage of online opportunities with their parent/carer groups. Having virtual meetings ensures that families are even more active partners in the rapid process of decision making, especially during these strange times. In some schools, these virtual groups have become a valuable support network between families and this may be particularly useful for families of children with SEND.

- **Making more local community links:** Some classroom teachers have started

to consider how they can support learners with SEND to adapt to the changes occurring in their local communities.

For example, there is an exemption to the government's 'rule of six' for educational activities and the Department for Education has confirmed that this exemption can be applied beyond the boundaries of the school. Teachers are arranging for appropriate off-site activities for learners with SEND within the local community that benefit the learners, but also support local businesses.

- **Adapting curriculum priorities:** In relation to the curriculum, a recommended activity for teachers is to consider how their lessons not only support the delivery of subject-specific content, but also support individual recovery and educational reintegration. Lots of schools have an overarching focus on adapting their curriculum offer to educationally support learners with SEND. This is

underpinned by practical strategic decisions that reduce risk, such as the use of fogging machines to support the cleaning of soft furnishings and the use of long-term supply staff, who have received specialist skills and training.

## Moving forward

In the immediate future, schools should be preparing for periods of delivering a remote learning offer, although it should be noted that remote does not necessarily mean online. Longer term, consideration will need to be given to the fact that some pupils may have found remote learning easier to access than traditional face-to-face learning. If remote or flexible learning is deemed to be a reasonable adjustment under the duties of the Equality Act 2010, then this pandemic period could impact on the shape of education for many years to come.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Whole School SEND's Covid-19 SEND Review Guide** identifies the key areas pertinent to understanding and delivering effective practice for children with SEND as they return to school. Their handbook dedicated to Recovery, Re-introduction and Renewal: Safe and Successful Returns to School is grounded in psychological research and theory and seeks to outline essential information in a clear and accessible manner
- **The Council for Disabled Children (CDC)** offer a list of frequently asked questions in relation to SEND support during the pandemic.
- **nasen's '7 Days, Many Ways – working together to build resilience through relationships' pack** for young children includes a set of 14 fun activities for parents to do with their children and 14 related activities for practitioners to carry out in their setting, aiming to build resilience through relationships for children's transition back into settings.



*Professor Adam Boddison is the Chief Executive of nasen. nasen's Annual Webinar Pass*

*is available now, including at least 30 webinars per academic year, designed to improve SEND provision. Further information is available at [nasen.org.uk/training-and-cpd/cpd-webinar-pass.html](https://www.nasen.org.uk/training-and-cpd/cpd-webinar-pass.html)*

 @nasen\_org

# COVID BUBBLES *shouldn't hinder learning*

**Pamela Hanigan** and **Rachel Gelder** explore techniques schools can use to support children with a range of educational needs

**C**ovid-19 is showing no signs of going away anytime soon. In the grip of a public health crisis, the number one priority for schools is to keep pupils, staff and the wider school community safe. This has seen school leaders rise to the knotty logistical challenges of staggered start times, one-way systems and hand washing stations. Each school has had to implement measures to stem the spread of the virus while creating an environment in which children can continue to learn, share and play without compromising on safety.

A key element of the Covid secure school is the introduction of bubbles to keep contact between different groups of children and staff to a minimum in order to limit the spread of infection. By and large it's proving to be an effective way to

keep children in school where social distancing is difficult or impossible to achieve.

However, there is a drawback to the classroom bubble, and that drawback could affect a school's ability to support children with additional needs.

## Hidden impact of the pandemic

In schools where learning interventions are delivered by a range of practitioners, small groups of pupils tend to work away from the classroom with a teaching assistant, teacher, SENDCo or another specialist. But with school staff largely restricted to their bubbles, it could be difficult to take individual or small groups of pupils out for specific learning activities.

Teaching staff may find themselves having to stay put in one classroom and cater for

the least able, the most able and those in between – all at the same time. There's a risk that it will be harder to differentiate without the option of mixing between bubbles, and pupils of all abilities could miss out as a result.

That's a worrying prospect at a time when learning gaps are wider than ever. Following months of disruption to classroom learning, there's a pressing need to support children with special educational needs through targeted interventions. An estimated ten per cent of any school population presents with some degree of dyslexia, and these children could end up bearing the brunt of a school's coronavirus restrictions.

## Whole class tasks and activities

Delivering targeted support

without bursting bubbles calls for a degree of creativity, but with careful planning, schools can build interventions into a whole class setting. Many of the approaches that work well in supporting children with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and other forms of neurodiversity also have a positive impact on children of all abilities.

One example is exercises to boost a child's working memory. Developing memory skills is important for children who suffer from dyslexia, but every child in the class can benefit from exercises that will help them retain learning and secure the building blocks of their progress. By repeating concepts, a child is firmly embedding knowledge into their long-term memory stores.

A quick-fire memory game such as 'I went to market and I bought...' is a fun and interactive way to start the day and helps to get the brain firing on all cylinders first thing in the morning. Activities which go right back to basics in core skills such as phonics and times tables are very valuable for pupils with processing difficulties, but are also enjoyable – and useful – for everyone in the classroom.

## A multi-sensory learning environment

Many schools have adapted their learning spaces to create a dyslexia-friendly classroom. Certain learning resources, typefaces and background are better suited to children with reading difficulties. These adaptations can be used in any classroom so children with





special educational needs are well supported in a whole class environment.

Likewise, activities which encourage children to use all their senses enable teachers to respond to a full range of learning styles in one classroom bubble.

Children who find it difficult to recognise letters of the alphabet, for example, could embed their learning through a range of senses, using physical letters (such as plastic letters or letter pebbles), saying and hearing the letters, tracing over these with a finger, tracking the letters and putting them in alphabetical sequence.

Similarly, physical objects like pebbles can be used for adding, subtracting and multiplying.

This multi-sensory approach also works for children of all ability levels because learning that combines touch, sound and vision is more likely to stay with the child.

## Re-establishing learning behaviours

Pupil wellbeing should be at the heart of the Recovery Curriculum. Children have returned to school having lived through some difficult experiences during lockdown, and this could worsen any

learning difficulties and widen existing gaps.

If pupils are given the time and space to express their concerns and find reassurance, they will reintegrate into school life more quickly, and develop the good learning behaviours that might have slipped while they have been out of the classroom.

If it isn't possible to work with small groups of pupils, there are whole class wellbeing activities schools can run to renew children's confidence and help them find their voice in the classroom. Circle time is a great way to encourage children to talk and listen and to remind them to take turns. Songs and poems which help children learn number facts or vocabulary give children the opportunity to vocalise their learning without having to speak up in a large group if they prefer not to.

Many children's digital skills have undergone a major upgrade while learning from home, and working on-screen is often more accessible and less threatening for a child than a pen and paper exercise. Online quizzes and games are a good way for teachers to identify gaps in learning without children even knowing they are being tested.

Short stints on an online learning resource can help to plug specific gaps in learning

while children remain in their classroom bubble.

This academic year is bound to present new challenges as we navigate our way through the pandemic and the restrictions it imposes on our daily lives. However there are creative ways for schools to support children with a whole range of needs even when confined to a classroom bubble.

Equally, pupils of all abilities are able to build their resilience and grow in confidence as they revisit learning that's familiar to them, in an enjoyable and inclusive format.

The introduction of bubbles may be designed to limit the spread of infection, but it needn't limit teachers' ability to support every child in the classroom.



*Pamela Hanigan and Rachel Gelder, founders of Lancashire Dyslexia Information Guidance and Support (LDIGS). They are joint authors of Explore Intensive. You can find out more at <https://bit.ly/31odxYB>*

## PAMELA AND RACHEL'S TOP TIPS

- **Break up the day:** Use memory boosting games and quizzes in the morning, at lunchtime and before going home. This can be a good way to introduce variety into the day when many children will be spending much of their time in one classroom. Keep them short and sweet and make them fun.
- **Encourage communication:** Include activities which encourage children to express themselves. Songs and rhymes work well for the youngest pupils. Older children may want to talk about how school life has changed and will value the opportunity to share opinions and concerns.
- **Build confidence:** Let pupils demonstrate new skills they have learnt while away from school. Children may have improved their digital literacy or found new interests such as baking or spotting wildlife in the garden. Encourage them to share their knowledge with the class.

# At your service

Add some additional excitement, support and comfort to your school's activities with these services, products and resources



## Tailor-made learning

New College Worcester is a residential special school for children and young people who are vision impaired. Every student has a tailored programme that's carefully planned to meet their individual needs in three key areas – academic achievement, independent living skills

and extracurricular activities, both at the College and within the community.

It is our aim that students leave the College with friendships that will last a lifetime, skills that prepare them for the world and academic qualifications that will enable them to fly. [ncw.co.uk](http://ncw.co.uk)



## Specialist literacy training

Dyslexia Action Training is a provider of specialist online teacher and assessor training at levels 4, 5 and 7. The dyslexia and specific learning difficulties (SpLD) courses are designed to strengthen the expertise and confidence of teachers, SENCOs, practitioners, teaching assistants, learning support staff, language therapists, tutors and lecturers who support students with literacy difficulties, dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties. The training is accredited by The Dyslexia Guild, the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), The CPD Standards Office and the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC). Our Postgraduate Professional Programme modules are accredited by Middlesex University London. [dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

## Support for vision-impaired students

WESC Foundation (the specialist centre for visual impairment based in Exeter) has announced an assessment service for children with a cortical or cerebral visual impairment (CVI).

Assessments based on Christine Roman-Lantzy's CVI Range framework are carried out to provide a baseline assessment of functional vision for children with this condition. Staff from the charity recently presented the results of a study that showed how subsequent interventions carried out by WESC Foundation staff resulted in improved functional vision in students over the period of several years. For more information, email Richard Ellis at [REllis@wescfoundation.ac.uk](mailto:REllis@wescfoundation.ac.uk)



## Sports Premium inspiration

Timotay Playscapes creates inspirational outdoor spaces for schools and early years settings. To support the Sport Premium initiative, we have developed a proven range of engaging products that will motivate children, increase participation in sports and help to reduce obesity. Contact Timotay for your free guide and free consultation. [enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk)



## Learning in action

Deafbooks.co.uk was founded in 1998, to address the need for engaging and affordable materials for learners of British Sign Language across all ages and abilities. The Let's Sign BSL series is now widely used in schools and among families who value its clear, well-chosen vocabulary for everyday situations, and elements of learning from other signing systems to support children with additional speech, language and communication needs.

More recently, our titles have innovated further by incorporating the use of QR codes. These link illustrated signs within the books to video clips that demonstrate said signs in action, as seen in our latest publication, **BSL Baby Sign Link Book**. [deafbooks.co.uk](http://deafbooks.co.uk)







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### Plenty on offer

Ackers Adventure is a charity offering a wide range of outdoor activities set amongst a green wildlife haven just two miles from Birmingham City Centre. Whether you're an individual, family or group Ackers Adventure has something for everyone! You can scale the heights of the three climbing walls, explore the Grand Union Canal by canoe, kayak or

bellboat, whizz down the 100m ski slope or 25m toboggan slope, aim for a hole-in-one on our woodland disc golf course or test your team working abilities with the obstacle course, team building tasks or bushcraft survival skills sessions. For more information call **0121 772 5111**. [www.ackers-adventure.co.uk](http://www.ackers-adventure.co.uk)



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### Meeting the reading challenge

Over 20 years ago Robinswood Press introduced the Lifeboat Read and Spell Scheme. While immediately recognised as an excellent reading scheme for all children, it was also seen as particularly well-suited to pupils with dyslexia and SEND, due to its practical handwriting requirement, multisensory exercises and incorporation of repetition.

Since then, many thousands of schools around the world have made use of the Scheme – not just in English-speaking countries, but in many cases as an EFL resource. The resources making up the Lifeboat Read and Spell Scheme are among a range of products from Robinswood Press that have helped many children with a variety of challenges. For more information, contact **01684 899 419** or email [ops@robinswoodpress.com](mailto:ops@robinswoodpress.com)



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### Trauma informed

Earn a Diploma in Trauma and Mental Health Informed Schools and Communities (Practitioner Status), via the 12-day weekend training (university validated) offered by Trauma Informed Schools UK. Our practical, skills-based training is designed to inform and empower school staff to respond effectively to vulnerable children and those who have suffered trauma or have a mental health issue. Without such interventions, painful life experiences are likely to present in challenging behaviour, and/or blocks to learning. The training provides delegates with key insights into the psychology and neuroscience of mental ill-health and challenging behaviour, as well as tools and techniques for identifying how to respond to a child's narrative of painful life events.

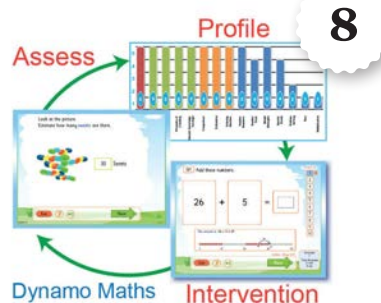
[traumainformedschools.co.uk](http://traumainformedschools.co.uk)

### Access to maths

Dynamo Maths is an evidence-based, standardised developmental dyscalculia assessment and intervention program designed to support children with dyscalculia and those with maths difficulties. The assessment uses the NumberSenseMMR framework to provide areas of strength and weaknesses and a scheme of work, with signposting to the Dynamo Intervention program.

The intervention programme itself consists of 600+ multisensory online modules to support children and lesson plans for teachers, and includes a set of audit tools for capturing special and additional educational needs to support EHCP and access arrangements. Dynamo Maths is perfect for pupils not making age-appropriate progress with maths – visit our website for details of a free intervention trial and webinar for schools.

[dynamomaths.co.uk](http://dynamomaths.co.uk)



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### BSL for beginners

Learning British Sign Language is fun, fast and effective with our online course. We offer a comprehensive introduction to BSL that covers a wide range of topics, beginning with the basics – such as fingerspelling, greetings, and colours – before moving through subjects such as food, time, money, animals, weather, feelings, and occupations, including education. Learners find out about the unique grammar and syntax of BSL along the way, and by the end of the course should feel comfortable holding basic conversations in BSL – even in topics that haven't been covered in the content.

[british-sign.co.uk/learn](http://british-sign.co.uk/learn)

# Education for all despite Covid-19

**Gary Spracklen** explains how challenges became opportunities during lockdown and beyond

**T**he past seven months have been extremely challenging for all schools nationally and Prince of Wales First School is no exception to this.

We are a fully inclusive Mainstream First School with a wide range of experience of successfully meeting the needs of children with significant barriers to their learning. We have a resourced provision for children with physical disabilities, mainly cerebral palsy. During lockdown, we seized the challenges and turned them into opportunities to ensure all pupils including those with complex needs received as broad and balanced education as possible. Our core offer was the following:

**Communication** — Email was used as the main method of communication. All teacher email addresses were listed on our website and parents and carers were encouraged to email the SENCo and me as headteacher directly as required.

**Wellbeing Calls** — Our first priority was the health and wellbeing of all our pupils. Each and every single week a child was away from school we gave them a call to check everything was ok. Call divert was used out of hours to ensure parents/carers could ALWAYS speak to someone if they needed help. As headteacher, I also shared my personal mobile number directly with all parents and carers.

**Microsite** — We set up a dedicated #InspiredToLearn COVID-19 Virtual School 'Microsite'. The microsite provided a one-stop for everything children might need while away from school. The site included extensive online learning tools using sites all children were already familiar with.

**Physical Resources** — A pack of physical resources was prepared for each child while they were away from school. This included a Power Maths Practice Book, a new exercise book, login details for our IT systems (for remote access) and other age-specific resources. Specialist and personalised resources were also included for children on the SEND Register. Our SENCo quality-assured these resources and work



across the school to ensure consistency in approach.

**Daily Learning Programme** — A suggested daily learning programme was broadcast live through our Facebook and YouTube services and offered a blended approach to family learning throughout lockdown. Activities included “takeaway” topic-based assignments and challenges. The ‘Daily Learning Programme’ was also shared daily with parents and carers via email in advance of going live, thus also supporting offline access.

**Daily ‘Learn Live’ Shows** — Finally, throughout the 19 weeks of lockdown, we also broadcast a series of ‘Learn Live’ shows through our Facebook and Youtube services. Shows included ‘Good Morning POW’, ‘Daily Assembly’ and ‘Today at POW’. These shows helped build community and became a thread that held us all together during the uncertain times.

The ‘new normal’ isn’t just about doing ‘the normal’ though. ‘The normal’ was an amazing staff team who are trained and positive about including children with serious medical conditions, children with learning difficulties and a variety of syndromes within an inclusive mainstream environment.

‘The normal’ was a strong SEND team

with specialisms in dyslexia, movement and coordination issues, speech and language, social communication difficulties and Aspergers Syndrome. ‘The normal’ was an ethos that welcomes all learners and seeks to inspire everyone to learn. The ‘new normal’ is EVERYTHING in ‘the normal’ plus a new sharpened focus on pupils Emotional Literacy Development, especially for those with pupils with SEND needs.

At The Prince of Wales School we’ve increased ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) time from one hour per day to four days per week. The ELSA now caters for approximately 30 pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2, over 50 per cent of these pupils are also on our SEND Register. It’s just one example of how we’ve responded to the need created by COVID-19.



*Gary Spracklen is Headteacher at The Prince of Wales School: Dorchester. During the COVID-19 Lockdown, Gary was named a BBC*

*News ‘Lockdown Community Hero’ for his work supporting the #InspiredToLearn Community both physically and online with three live broadcasts every day.*

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