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VOL3 ISSUE2

SENCo

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SCHOOL DAYS

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a bit
cheeky"*



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Welcome...



More so than most jobs, the role of SENCo isn't one that lets you to declare, *"That's it – I've cracked this. I've got nothing else to learn."* You can be extraordinarily good at what you do, sensitive to the needs of pupils and colleagues at all times and able to virtually recite the SEND Code of Practice from heart – but there'll always be something you can be doing differently,

or areas of your practice that you can improve on.

What's more, this process of self-improvement has to apply across the whole school if it's to be properly effective. As Nicole Dempsey notes on p29, it's no good treating what a school does in relation to SEND as something separate to its 'core duties' – everyone needs everyone to be on board with making your provision work, and prepared to play their part in always trying to make it better. That's not always easy, but as Simon Knight explains on page 33, there are ways of tightening up teachers' expertise in a practical, non-judgemental way.

There's one particular area where demand for provision is growing, putting pressure on schools to equip their staff with appropriate skills and knowledge, and that's speech, language and communication needs. This issue's dedicated SLCN section begins on p68, and includes advice from a range of experts on how to make your school a communication-friendly one, along with some tips on what technology is available to help. For an example of some exceptional SLCN practice in action, look no further than the work taking place at Meath Primary School, documented on p21.

When it comes to SEND, the work is never 'done'. It's only through doing that we can find what works.

Callum

Callum Fauser, Editor

@teachwire

POWERED BY...



GARETH D. MOREWOOD

calls for more smarter partnerships between schools and parents/carers and highlights the difference it can make

"One of the most valuable things we can do is to take a step back and think a little more strategically."

p36



ANNE HEAVEY

outlines the skills and attributes schools ought to look for in a would-be SENCo and how to nurture them

"A SENCo must be someone who's really good at maintaining relationships with colleagues, pupils and parents."

p38



MICHAEL SURR

suggests that what works for our learners with SEND may also work when rolling out staff CPD

"We should begin by identifying what the evidence is telling us about our setting's development needs."

p64

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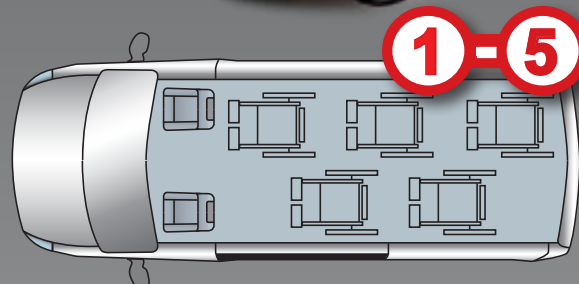
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Rona Tutt welcomes the government's long-awaited response to the Rochford Review and ponders where things go from here...

Rona Tutt



After a series of delays caused by the EU referendum and its aftermath, an additional general election and various changes at the top of government, schools and SENCOs can at last have some certainty about the future of assessment for primary pupils, including those working below the standard of the national curriculum tests.

In September this year, the DfE finally issued responses to two consultations that had been running concurrently – one on primary assessments for all pupils launched back in March (see tinyurl.com/dfe-pae-response) and another to the final recommendations of the Rochford Review (see tinyurl.com/dfe-rr-response).

In 2015, Diane Rochford was appointed by the DfE to lead a group tasked with looking at ways of assessing primary pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests. With the national curriculum having been made more demanding, and following the scrapping of levels, there has been a rise in the number of pupils falling into the gap between the top end of the P scales and those able to take the tests.

The review group's first report, published in December 2015, started to address this gap by extending downwards the three existing standards. In the review group's final report of October 2016, these were extended further to cover pupils hitherto assessed as being at P4 to P8 of the P scales.

That leaves a small percentage of pupils who are at the earliest stages of the P scales, i.e. P1 to P3. For these pupils, Rochford has suggested that they be assessed using the seven areas of engagement for cognition and learning, which draw on the work of the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) research project that was carried out between 2009 and 2011, led by Professor Barry Carpenter. The areas in question are responsiveness, curiosity, discovery, anticipation, persistence, initiation and investigation.



Since the progress of other children is also measured using cognition and learning, this provides some continuity in terms of progress in reading, writing and maths.

The DfE has largely accepted Rochford's main proposals – namely that:

- P scales no longer be statutory
- The interim pre-key stage standards be made permanent and extended to cover all pupils engaged in subject-specific learning
- The Engagement approach be piloted for assessing pupils in non subject-specific studies

Over the autumn 2017 and spring 2018 terms, up to a hundred schools will be working with the DfE on this Engagement pilot. Researchers have been asked to produce a preliminary report in late spring, before the publication of a final report later on.

The DfE is also running a second pilot to review the pre-key stage standards, now that they're to be made permanent. Already, a few tweaks have been made for the current academic year – partly to match the minor adjustments that have been made to the teacher assessment

frameworks, and partly to recognise that pupils with SEND may need additional ways of demonstrating what they can do.

The following documents, intended for use in 2017-18, were published by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) in September:

- Teacher assessment frameworks at the end of KS1 (tinyurl.com/TAF-KS1-1718) and KS2 (tinyurl.com/TAF-KS2-1718)
- Pupils working below the test standard, interim pre-KS1 (tinyurl.com/IS-KS1-1718) and KS2 (tinyurl.com/IS-KS2-1718)

It will be a few months before the outcomes of the pilots are known, but at least there's now some clarity as to the way forward. In the meantime, there's more than enough reading to be getting on with in preparation for yet another change. Hopefully this one will bring greater recognition to the achievements of pupils with SEND and those who support them.

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

“I NEVER FELT there was ANYTHING I COULDN’T do”

Journalist, presenter and comedian **Alex Brooker** remembers occasionally misguided, if well-intentioned, lessons of his school days...

 @alex_brooker  tinyurl.com/c4-last-leg

My mum wanted to send me to a special needs school, but my dad didn't see the need for it.

I ended up going to a mainstream infant and primary school, where I was very well looked after, but it was a bit of a challenge for them. Back then I was still having operations on my hands, and the school had to help me work out how to write. I had visits from an occupational therapist who got me to write with triangular pencils and pens and try using a laptop, but I didn't end up using the laptop as much – I just preferred to write.

As a student, I was okay. I was a bit cheeky – I did what a lot of kids do and tested the boundaries a bit, seeing what I could and couldn't get away with. I used my disability when I felt like it, which was probably bad. Mum and dad worked with me a lot outside school on my spelling and particularly with maths, which was my one sore point, and I had private lessons. I wasn't falling behind as such, as I understood a lot of the subject. It was more to keep me ahead.

I decided I wanted to be a football journalist before I'd even left primary school. I wrote my first match report after Arsenal lost to Real Zaragoza in the 1995 Cup Winners' Cup Final, which left me absolutely gutted. My way of getting over it was to write about it. I'd just turned 11, and knew then that a football journalist was what I wanted to be. And that never changed, right the way through school.

I did the 11-plus and went to the local boys' grammar school, Norton Knatchbull. There was a bit

of a boisterous atmosphere there. I remember other kids getting bullied a bit, but I was very fortunate in that I didn't have to deal with that. I was friends with some of the tougher kids in class and never really got messed about with.

“A football journalist was what I wanted to be”

The teachers included me in everything. I never felt there was anything I couldn't do, even when it came to sport. I was obviously better at some sports than others, but I played rugby, cricket and hockey. I remember the games teacher once going out of his way to get someone he knew to make me a special glove with Velcro on the end to help me hold a hockey stick. The teacher, Mr Challis, didn't have to do that.

It's a big thing to have – a good network of people who are willing to go above and beyond. The school hadn't had many disabled pupils before that, but they really looked after me, and I'm extremely grateful. I've visited a couple of times since, and it was a pleasure to go back.

I probably found moving to secondary easier than most. At primary school you'd sit at tables with kids working at a similar pace, and the boys on my table went to Norton Knatchbull with me, which helped.

There's a story I tell in my stand-up about my first day at secondary, when we had a lesson in the school's outdoor swimming pool. I remember the games teacher putting armbands on me and putting me in a canoe, which I thought was a bit odd, and wondered how he was going to fit another 29 canoes in the pool. He didn't give me an oar, so I remember just spinning around, watching everyone else having swimming lessons. A lad I was at primary with told the teacher I could swim further than him, and I remember the teacher running up and helping me out the canoe, because it turned out he'd just wanted me to be included – which was sweet, but quite funny...

The only bad memories are little things, really. I remember once getting in trouble for something I didn't do. A kid had scratched something offensive on a teacher's car, and I was hauled in by a teacher who had it in for me. To be fair, they treated me like everyone else – I was named as a suspect and questioned – but at no point did anyone seem to think, 'The words were quite well written – does Alex actually have the dexterity to key someone's car that accurately?' I was like, 'Look guys, come on...' Eventually common sense did prevail.

There were often kids in class who'd give deliberately shocking answers to teachers' questions. They'd always get a laugh, which I still think about sometimes. I suppose you could say my comedy is very much that of a 13-year-old child...



After studying journalism at Liverpool John Moores University, Alex went on to work for the Press Association as a sports journalist covering football in print and online. In 2010 he successfully applied for Channel 4's 'Half a Million Quid Talent Search', which led to him joining the broadcaster's 2012 Paralympics presenter line-up, including a role on the evening discussion show *The Last Leg* – since expanded into a live weekly satirical chat show that he continues to present alongside comedians Adam Hills and Josh Widdicombe.

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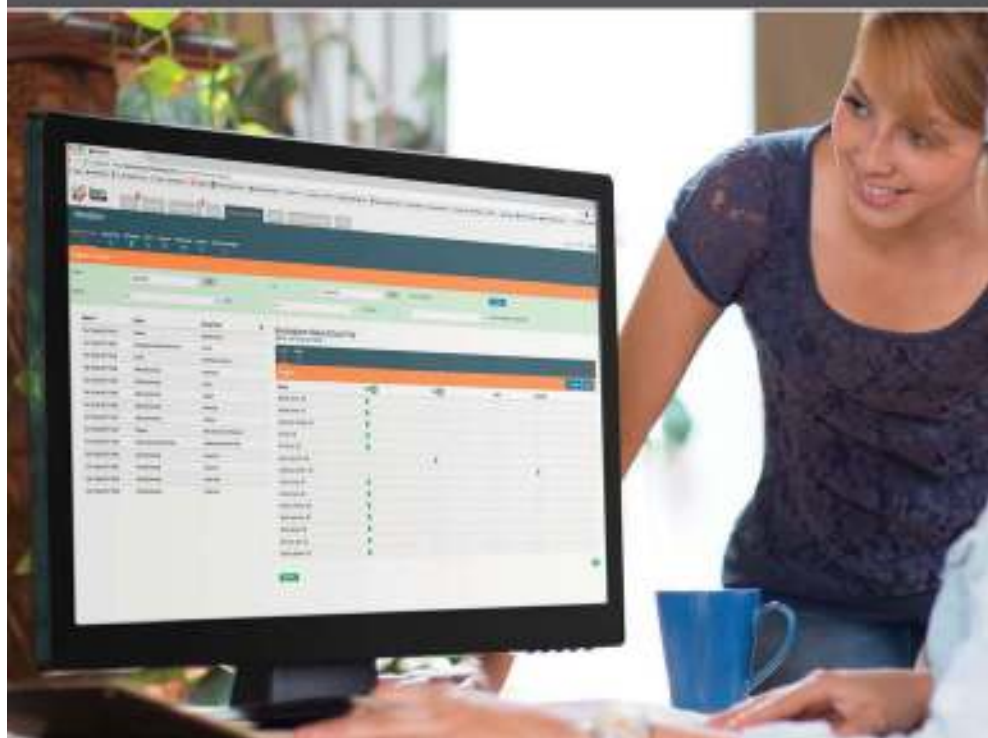


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LABELS NEEDN'T BE A BAD THING

For many education professionals, 'labelling pupils' is something to be avoided at all costs – but as **Talit Khan** notes, there are times when doing so can actually help...

[@Talat1703](https://twitter.com/Talat1703)

advantagesend.com

Love them or loathe them, you'll find 'labels' being used on a daily basis in every school. The issue to focus on, however, is whether we let those labels define who we are and what's projected through them. We shouldn't be talking about removing, replacing or verifying labels, but rather how we can move forward and support pupils' accomplishments within the current education system. Surely the ultimate goal is for every child to achieve more than they think they can?

'SEN pupils'; 'LAC child'; 'high achievers'; 'high ability'; 'mixed ability'; 'low ability'; 'slow learners' – just a few of the terms commonly employed in

everyday 'teacher speak.' Rather than focusing on the labels themselves, however, we should be concentrating on the shift in mindset that needs to happen so that an all-inclusive education can be delivered.

The foundations of how we teach children shouldn't be based on a grouping system, but on effective delivery of succinct information for the purpose of learning. Differentiation, for example, is a key aspect of teaching, but we don't use a label for this. So why do we find ourselves compelled to describe children via labelling in order to teach them? The only reasonable answer is that we believe it's easier to define pupils by categorisation and capability.

If this becomes the focal point of our teaching, it diminishes the prospect of

a SEND child being given the chance to reach their potential. Some labels are therefore not useful at all – in fact, they can be more problematic than we think.

Beneficial terminology

In most of the schools I've worked with, unless a SEND-aware headteacher or inspiring teacher has made teaching and learning a focal point for all pupils, there'll be a massive gap in the education of the most vulnerable children. If we hear that "John is dyslexic and Najma is on the spectrum," does it really matter if that type of language and the terms 'dyslexia' and 'autism' are used to describe and support children with identified SEND? I'd argue that it doesn't matter at all, just so long as the child and his or her parents are comfortable with it. It's our understanding of what those 'labels' actually mean, and how we plan to use them in order to support the child that really matters.

An identified (named) specific learning difficulty can provide a child, their parents and teachers with a conclusive answer to many questions that might have arisen due to confusion and a lack understanding of the problems experienced by the child. Some labels can therefore be useful in explaining a child's learning requirements and during teaching preparation.

Any terminology which proves to be beneficial for teaching and learning purposes ought to remain within our vocabulary. The suitability of a label to help support a child with SEND should be the deciding factor in whether we apply it. It shouldn't be used to form an opinion on an individual, but rather to facilitate their learning.

If an individual acquires a label that identifies some form of SEND, it can further help that individual in terms of how resources are allocated to them. Statutory obligations towards children with SEND – or indeed a 'label' – may mean that they're entitled to additional support and help in securing LA funding and services.

We need to stop using disadvantageous labels to administer 'quick fixes.' If a given label isn't useful in adding value to upskill teachers or support staff, and doesn't lead to improved learning for a child with SEND, then we can legitimately question its importance. If, however, it raises awareness and facilitates educational progress, we should keep it.

*Talit Khan is an independent
SEND consultant*



ABC

MY FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

Three adults with disabilities reminisce over those school classes that enthralled them the most...



Mik Scarlet is a freelance journalist and broadcaster

“My teacher’s enthusiasm was infectious”

I must admit, I don’t look back on my school days with much joy. It was somewhere I had to go, but I never really enjoyed the experience. Most lessons were a chore, with some being more akin to torture.

One lesson I did look forward to, though, was biology. I was fascinated with the beauty of the natural world and how everything worked so beautifully. I suppose that as someone who had lived with the flaws in biology’s wonder from birth, I was able to see how it could adapt to any situation. I was also lucky that the lesson was taught by the mum of one of my best mates – her enthusiasm for the subject was infectious, and she had a way with explaining processes and making them easy to understand.

In contrast, I found both that both chemistry (taught by a teacher who’d obviously had a humour bypass) and physics (taught by a teacher who looked like Kenny Everett and could easily have been one of his comedy characters, since every experiment of his went wrong) bored me rigid. It was only in later life that I realised how all three were tied together to give us the world around us.

Funnily enough, the lesson I disliked most was music. The subject should have been joyous, but instead it was centred around the pointing out of failure. I was told I was tone deaf, because I couldn’t take to the French horn. A few years after leaving school I was working as a professional musician – which just goes to show how sometimes, what we’re told at school can really have no impact on our future once we’re out in the big bad world.

As for PE? I hated every living second of it. Still do.



Martyn Sibley is founder of the online lifestyle publication, Disability Horizons (disabilityhorizons.com)

Looking back at school and remembering my favourite subjects, I’m struck by a few thoughts. Whilst being good at a particular subject definitely enhances our enjoyment, there are other factors beyond our aptitude that matter too – so much so that these factors can end up increasing our abilities, just by being more fun and engaging.

My own favourite classes were economics and French. I was okay at French, but have lost most of my vocabulary now (In fact, I’m currently learning Spanish for my work). Furthermore, I didn’t particularly like my teacher. Nothing bad, but he was a bit strange. The main reason I remember enjoying it was the songs we got to sing. Having learnt in this unusual and fun way, those classes have really stayed in my memory. I can still remember some of the songs to this day.

I was good in economics, which definitely made me enjoy it more



Penny Pepper is a writer, performance poet and disability activist

“I can still remember some of the songs to this day”

– we all like to be good at stuff. I also really liked my teacher. He always challenged and encouraged me, and we had great banter too. I went on to get an A at GCSE, C at A-level, and a 2:1 in Economics at university. You can see how impactful that teacher was for me.

Since graduating, and after spending five years at the disability charity Scope, I've been running my own business. I'm a well-known expert on inclusion and accessibility, so was very happy to bump into my economics teacher last year, and share all I've done – in large part, thanks to him.

I believe that giving students a great experience involves looking at two key areas. One is to mix up and be creative with learning styles. The second is to strike a good balance of challenging them, with giving them encouragement and having a good rapport. The latter is admittedly harder – sometimes personalities will just clash – but the former is an easy, quick win.

“I became a bit of a teacher's pet”

It won't surprise anyone who knows me that my favourite subject at school was English (or 'comprehension', as we called it at primary school). Teachers recognised my love of words, and on more than one occasion I became a bit of a teacher's pet because of this. Other subjects did tempt me, though looking back, this was perhaps part of a natural progression into other creative interests.

Art was one of them, and at the age of 10 I won third prize in a local competition for a painting of a boat in a lock. I was never naturally gifted in terms of being able to reproduce a likeness, but I always had a good eye for colour and form. At special school, art lessons weren't especially complicated

and felt more like play time. By the time I went to secondary school within the special school system, art had practically disappeared off the curriculum and wasn't available at the boarding school I attended – that would have been an extra cost. I still have a great interest in art as a viewer, however, and my participation has since evolved into more of an arts and crafts area. I keep a craft bureau in the corner of my living room.

The other subject close to my heart, and one I still enjoy today, is music. I was never taught in the subject formally, but sang when I could and was delighted to receive unofficial lessons from a lovely teacher at said boarding school. I was taught the basics in piano, which gave me a grounding in music that saw me go on to write my own songs and record an LP. To this day I love singing and recently revived a song I composed in 1984 to perform at the launch of my memoir, which tells more of the story of my foray into pop music...

Penny's book *First in the World Somewhere* is available now via unbound.com

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Make that next visit one to remember – for the right reasons – with these tips from **Stevie Mayhook**

1 | IDENTIFY WHO'S GOING

Depending on your setting and the nature of the visit, there could be just one deaf child or a larger cohort involved. Consult your Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) and specialist TAs about the communication strategies and audiology equipment they each use. The accompanying adults should include someone who knows them.

2 | KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING

Ask your ToD or TA to make a preliminary visit to assess the destination's listening conditions, lighting, layout and use of audiovisual technology. Use what they find to plan how support staff and the children's technical aids can best be used.

3 | CONSIDER THE PROGRAMME

Study the proposed schedule and suggest ways of improving access and understanding. Ask for a list of any technical terms and concepts so that your pupils and support staff can become familiar with them beforehand. For residential trips, consider your 'lights out' policy – deaf children don't usually wear their hearing instruments in bed, and may be stressed by not being able to hear or see to communicate.

4 | PROVIDE INFORMATION

Your hosts won't have the same level of skill or confidence working with deaf learners as your colleagues. Providing venue staff with a factsheet would be helpful. Stress that 'having a loud voice' won't as effective as using a radio aid! If your pupils use sign language, explain where your colleague will stand, and how they will interpret the spoken words and provide a voiceover for pupils' contributions. Explain to the staff that your deaf pupils will look at your staff more than the host speaker – out of necessity, rather than rudeness!



STEVIE MAYHOOK

is education consultant at the national deafness inclusion charity, the Ewing Foundation

5 | ANALYSE RISK

Identify any deaf-specific risks. Will pupils be able to access warnings, signals and other information? Will flashing or vibrating alarms be available? Designate a staff member to wake or accompany a deaf pupil in the event of an emergency. Is there a buddy-system in place for activities and sleeping? Consider information access when travelling – minibuses, chartered coaches and public transport may entail different communication issues.

6 | PREPARE YOUR DEAF PUPIL(S)

Don't assume they'll have followed whole-class discussions. Run a discrete session to ensure they know the purpose of the trip, check their prior knowledge of the venue, theme and activities, and send the information home for reinforcement.

7 | ENJOY THE TRIP!

Deaf pupils shouldn't feel manacled to an adult, but staff can discreetly ensure that they're positioned where they can see, listen and participate optimally. If moving them closer to a speaker, encourage their friends to move with them so that they don't feel singled out. They may look to staff or peers for clarification or confirmation of information – this shouldn't be misinterpreted as being disruptive or 'chatty'.

8 | LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN

Include deaf pupils and their families in the visit's planning and evaluation. Encourage them to participate in discussions and activities with classmates, but also provide opportunities to work discretely, so that their understanding of the activities and grasp of the language used can be assessed. Ask for their feedback on how they felt the trip went and how similar visits might be improved.

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Joined-up thinking

The Royal Borough of Greenwich recently received a favourable local area inspection of its SEND services from Ofsted and the CQC – here, **Cllr. Chris Kirby** describes the steps they've taken to make that provision work...

We believe that strong partnerships, where roles and responsibilities are clearly understood, is what's resulted in children in Greenwich making better progress at both primary and secondary level, compared to nationally. By working closely with schools, health providers, our local NHS clinical commissioning group, young people and parents we've been able to develop an integrated approach, as demonstrated through our joint commissioning of services, deployment of staff and actual service delivery.

We offer non-statutory Early Years funding to ensure that 2 and 3-year-olds receive personalised support before starting primary school. At one children's centre, for example, an educational psychology parent drop-in service enabled one parent to share concerns she had about her son when he was just two years old. A single referral was made, which led to health and children's services working with his parents and staff to understand his complex needs. There then followed two years of early specialised support, including video interaction guidance sessions, to ensure a comprehensive EHCP and help prepare him and his family for primary school.

Our Early Years inclusion team liaises regularly with NHS colleagues so that we're able to have health knowledge from birth and joint working in place right from the start. An example of this is the support that was provided to a 3-year-old boy with ASD and his parents, who were struggling to access appropriate services. A referral was made to the Early Years co-ordination team, and they allocated an area SENCo who supported his setting, applying for one-to-one support. An inclusion worker supported the boy's mother, and ensured that an EHCP was ready for when he started primary school.



Budget pressures

Senior managers from across the partnership regularly meet and work on monitoring and reviewing what we do in order to improve outcomes. Our staff are vital to us achieving our vision, so we're pleased that they describe themselves as being supported, well-trained and able to influence policy and processes. Our SENCo network provides twilight sessions for sharing best practice, CPD and induction for SENCos who are new to the post or to Greenwich.

Part of our vision for children and young people with SEND is that they're able to have their needs met locally. We've successfully identified gaps in our offer and opened new provisions to meet those needs. We also have a programme that's developing provision for children with ASD in mainstream schools, and are growing our dedicated specialist provision within mainstream settings.

Like all LAs, we're acutely aware of budget pressures. In Greenwich we have a growing population, and with school

funding under pressure, we've had to work even harder to meet the level of need. We devolve money straight to schools, so that it's easier for schools to deliver the interventions that are needed. We aim to keep children local, both to reduce transport costs and because we believe it leads to better outcomes. We also invest heavily in our outreach services, which provide excellent support.

Greenwich Parent Voice, which is an independent group of parents who have children with SEND, was rightly singled out for special mention in our inspection letter. The passionate and enthusiastic volunteers who run it ably meet their objectives of informing, connecting and empowering their fellow parents. The group's free sessions include popular monthly rambles, arts and crafts sessions, an informative website (greenwichparentvoice.com) and school-based coffee mornings that provide parents with some much needed 'me time' – which isn't always easy to carve out when your child has complex needs.

Greenwich Parent Voice representatives and young people also play a critical role in both our commissioning of services and recruitment of key staff. Both groups also meet regularly with Members of the Council and senior leaders from the partnership to ensure that their voices are heard in any future developments.



Cllr. Chris Kirby is cabinet member for human resources, co-operatives and social enterprise at the Royal Borough of Greenwich

@Royal_Greenwich

royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Kelly Clark

“These children have access to something amazing”

Kelly Clark looks at how one primary school juggled its priorities and budget to create a £25,000 sensory room, and the learning opportunities it's since made possible...



Children with education, health and care plans are now being fully supported to achieve their very best at Cooks Spinney Primary Academy, in Harlow, Essex.

The school had previously been proud of the one-to-one assistance it was providing to pupils with conditions such as Down's syndrome, autism and developmental delay, but had hitherto lacked the physical resources to match its expertise.

According to head of school Neil Stirrat, however, the school is now able to enjoy the best of both worlds. “We have been running

bespoke curriculums for those who need them, to ensure they can thrive in our mainstream school. Parents send their children to us as they believe this is the best place for them. We embrace the challenges these children bring, and work hard to give all children the same opportunities.

“The children began using the room just before the summer break, and it will be used every day going forward. We do not usually see the level of engagement in class that we have seen in the sensory room. The provision we now have for our children is incredible. For the six or seven years that these children are with us, they will have

access to something amazing. It sets us apart from other primary schools.”

Squeals of excitement

Children with EHCPs are allocated a set number of hours per week in the sensory room, with visits taking place daily. That said, the whole school is able to benefit from the space and the equipment it contains, which helps to nurture good behaviour and social skills, while also acting as a desirable reward and relaxation space.

Rachel Grant, Cooks Spinney's assistant headteacher for SEN, observes that the children have quickly come to love the new space, having responded with squeals of excitement when it was first unveiled.

“Our children are getting a lot out of the sensory room,” she says. “It's about being able to add multi-sensory aspects to

“There are also light-up bubble tubes, glowing fibre optic cabling and an interactive element to the aforementioned projector”

our children's learning. There are lights, a tactile board which allows them to touch things, and themes which enable us to put children into an environment to help them to relate to what they're learning, rather than everything being paper-based.

"It all just adds to what they're doing in the classroom already; an extension of their learning in a way which works best for them as individuals."

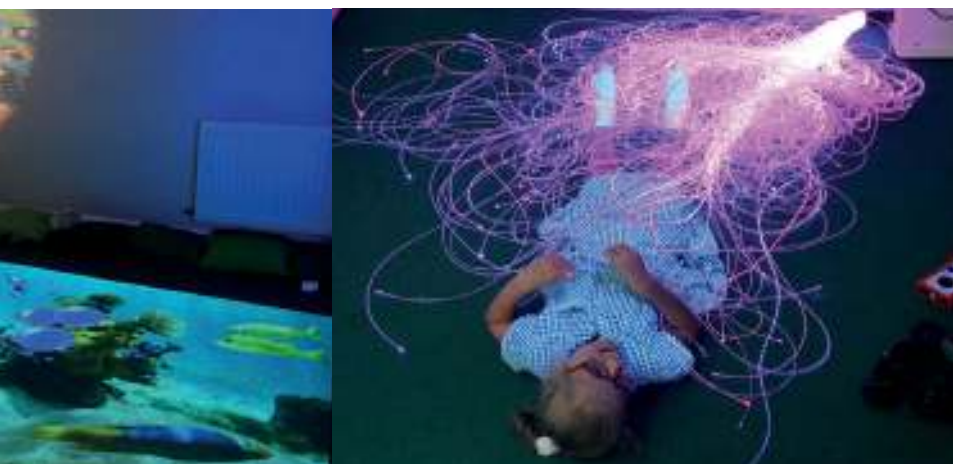
Immersive learning

The room is used for a wide range of activities, bringing vital lessons such as phonics and numbers to life with the aid of colourful and exciting interactive games. Among the room's many items of equipment are a set of glow in the dark letters, that work to make the process of learning spellings a thrilling one. The children can be tasked with searching for

the activities that take place in the room at all times, ensuring that the children are always developing important life skills. These might include taking turns, how to communicate with others or the importance of sharing; the school's co-operative values are being constantly reinforced.

As Rachel explains, "If we're teaching phonics, we might start outside of the sensory room by teaching pupils phase 2 letter sounds. Then, moving into the sensory room, we might have those letter sounds set up on the projector and urge children to share what they have learnt, reinforcing the lesson all the time.

"Another activity might be to hide those letters within the fibre optics. We can talk about these things outside of the sensory room, but put their new-found skills into practise once they're inside."



the correct letters to spell out words in the dark, or be set the challenge of identifying various colours.

When classes are studying topics such as the Egyptians, the room can be transformed to transport them to ancient Egypt. Using the room's floor and wall projector, the children can be surrounded by all manner of sights and sounds, helping them to become more immersed in what they're learning about.

There are also light-up bubble tubes, glowing fibre optic cabling and an interactive element to the aforementioned projector, which reacts to children's body movements against the projected images, making it possible to complete games and tasks on the floor and walls. While some of these games are played as a reward for good behaviour or completing a great piece of work, there's an academic programme underpinning

A big impact

The children might be excited to use the space, but measuring the impact of the £25,000 spend is vital to a school suffering the same budget constraints as everyone else.

"Child engagement is an obvious measure of the success of the sensory room," says Rachel. "For some pupils, engagement in the classroom can be a challenge. But by capturing their attention in the sensory room, the aim is to transfer that new skill back to the classroom. That's a very visual way of measuring the success. We can also look at the progress of our SEN children, and see how it compares to before and after the introduction of the sensory room."

The sensory room is also be used by other schools across town that belong to the Burnt Mill Academy

Whole school benefits

The school's SEN pupils are regularly timetabled to use the sensory room, but the facility is also open to use by all pupils and teachers. Whether it be as a reward for good behaviour, or to develop a child's social skills, teachers can book any individual pupil or small group into the sensory room for a session.

The school runs two social skills intervention groups called Time to Talk and Socially Speaking, which both employ the sensory room as a tool for helping pupils and encouraging vital skills through activities such as completing puzzles together or playing virtual football.

Rachel Grant, assistant headteacher for SEN, said: "Sessions can be set up by learning mentors, co-educators or myself to get the benefit of using the hugely engaging space to tackle a variety of issues on a different level."

Trust. Like many other schools, Cooks Spinney has been battling financial strain, yet the decision was still made to make the sensory room a priority. "We achieved this through very careful budgeting," says executive head, Stuart Pope. "We have been gradually moving the room up the priority list and scrimped and saved to achieve it. We haven't taken from the SEN budget, but have made money available from the main school budget. We've worked hard to make this happen.

"When we set this year's budget we looked at where was best to spend our money and what would have the biggest impact. It's about investing in physical resources, as well as human resources."



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School profile

Name: Meath School
Headteacher: Janet Dunn OBE
Location: Ottershaw, Surrey
Ofsted rating: Outstanding
Size: 54 pupils
Visit: meathschool.org.uk



“We want our children to be fit for secondary”

Callum Fauser finds out how the therapeutic programme and finely honed teaching approaches at Meath School are having a remarkable impact

Located in the village of Ottershaw, just outside Woking, Meath School has a very specific specialisation – primary age children with severe and complex speech, language and communication needs, including Asperger’s. It’s one of two schools run by the children’s communication charity I CAN, the other being Dawn House in Nottingham with a predominantly secondary intake.

It doesn’t take long to notice the things that set Meath Primary apart from similar settings. We’re greeted upon arrival by Simon Elliott, the school’s head of therapy. As his job title suggests, speech and language therapy is central to

life at the school. Each of the six classes include a speech and language therapist among its typically three-strong teaching teams, alongside a class teacher and one or two learning support assistants. There’s even a small room attached to every classroom where the SLTs will conduct specific therapy programmes for individual pupils or small groups.

Elliott proceeds to give us a tour of the school, moving from the main administrative building, past the school’s 15-bed residential facility and across to a separate teaching building, through an entrance that opens out into the main hall where a literacy class is taking place. We pass a small group of around



five pupils, all following a teacher's reading of a book while referring to a series of laminated visual supports.

Children at Meath are sorted into classes – Red, Blue, Purple, Orange, Yellow and Green – according to their comprehension levels, Red being the lowest and Green being the highest. This means that age variation within the same class can be common (though typically not by more than a year), and that pupils can switch between classes throughout the year.

The first classroom we visit is that used by Red class, though the space actually consists of two separate classrooms adjacent to each other. This way, the full Red cohort of eight to ten pupils can be taught more effectively in groups of two to four. The day of our visit is something of a special one, however, as we walk in on a birthday party, complete with cake. It's a celebration that warrants a larger than usual gathering of the class in one of the rooms, which helpfully shows the dynamics of the teacher/SLT/LSA teaching team in action.

I watch as the team ably serve the children cake and keep them focused and engaged, while at the same time attending to those using their 'Talkers' – encased tablet devices loaded

with custom AAC software. Elliott explains that these are deployed with care in the classroom (multiple talkers going off at once making for something of a cacophony), but can also be lent out for families to use at home.

The party allows us to get a good look at the space in the unused classroom. Somewhat sparsely decorated, Simon tells me that the wall displays will be gradually added to over the coming year, a careful balance needing to be struck between providing helpful visual supports and not distracting the children's attention. All being well, however, these walls will soon be adorned with pictures that serve as a visual record of places the children have visited and things that they've achieved, reflecting their development from one month to the next.

From there, we move on to Green class, where a lesson on plurals is underway. It's interesting to observe some of the key differences from what we've just seen. Here, the class of 10 is taught together via a more traditional form of delivery, albeit one with notable distinctions. For one thing, the teacher's spoken instructions are accompanied by sign-supported English. Also, whenever a question is asked of a child, the teacher makes a point of first securing their full, undivided attention.

As headteacher Janet Dunn notes, "Once you've said a child's name, you have to make eye contact in order to know that they're processing. You can't deliver instructions to their backs or the top of their heads, because they won't process them."

It's also readily apparent how the questions themselves are very carefully pitched and interspersed with explanations that are divided into bite-sized chunks. "We have grades of questioning," explains Dunn, "the easiest being 'What?', 'Who' and 'Where?' The hardest are 'Why?' and 'How?' It's not related to age, but rather the children's language development level."

Of Meath's general approach to classroom instruction, she adds, "Mainstream teachers will tend to give instructions in a clump – 'First you must...then I want you to...and after that...and then...'





Our children will retain the first bit and the last bit and be able to recall them. What they can't hold is the middle bit."

Given the classification of the children at Meath School – "They're able, but have special needs," as Dunn puts it – I ask how likely it is that similar children will be attending mainstream schools, and if so, how those schools might be able to identify them.

Dunn says, "We tell mainstream schools that if they have a child who appears very alert, gets really absorbed in experiential tasks and sometimes gives answers that seem surprising, then they may have language difficulties."

Deputy head Pam Cosh picks up the point. "They can be very good and well behaved, but they'll tend to be quiet and often watch what their friends are doing. If everyone's standing and lined up, ready to go out and play, they'll do that as well. Children are really good at hiding their difficulties, which can sometimes be hard to pick up on in a mainstream classroom."

Meath Primary frequently receives visitors and regularly organises 'professional visit days', where representatives from other schools and organisations are able to sit in on classes and, for a fee, attend afternoon sessions where they can receive tailored support, advice and guidance from Meath's leaders and practitioners.

One assumes that visiting SENCOs and inclusion leaders are likely to find the facilities at Meath somewhat enviable – something not lost on Simon Elliott. "Not all mainstream schools will have the high staff to pupil ratio that we have, or the small classes," he concedes, "but there are certain things that we can advise, demonstrate and train on. I think we have a certain responsibility to spread what we believe is best practice and what seems to work here."

Dunn sums up Meath's core mission by describing "The joy of seeing the children in Red class, then watching them four or five years later in Green class. In Red they can barely attend for more than a five-minute span. Their sessions are all 15 to 20 minutes max. In Green class, you'll see a 45-minute lesson with a proper classroom culture. That whole dynamic of a primary classroom is what we're aiming for, because we want our children to be fit for secondary."

PUPIL VOICE

What do you like about school?

Sean: The office ladies are nice.

Georgina: I like to do work with the grown ups in my class.

Sean: I like science and talking to my friends.

Sunil: I like PE and reading, and break time, and football club.

What have you been doing in class today?

Harry: Learning about time.

Angela: Plurals. One cat; lots of cats.

Kate: Times tables.

When you're having problems in school, who helps you?

Sunil: If I'm hurt I ask a buddy.

Harry: I'm a buddy and like to wear my buddy hat. I walk around and pick the things up at the end of play.

Angela: I like being a buddy, because I help all the children that are hurt or lonely. If they're in a corner or something I'll go up to them - 'Are you alright?...'

Georgina: When little children are fighting I try to pull them away and stop them fighting, and tell whatever adult is in the playground.

Names have been changed

Meet the staff



PAM COSH,
DEPUTY HEAD

"We have quite rigorous whole school CPD which covers broad issues such as safeguarding, but can also cover more specific areas, such as the levels of questioning we use with the children. We'll look at the type of questions that we ask of the children, and at how we can help them progress by asking better questions."



SIMON ELLIOTT,
HEAD OF THERAPY

"Here, you really get to see the big picture. Yes, the children make progress in their speech and language skills, but you see them developing in all sorts of other ways as well – their confidence grows while they're here. They develop friendships, where they might not have been able to do that previously."

IS IT BEHAVIOUR

– *or an inability to read?*

Beccie Hawes recalls how one school harnessed the canniness of two reluctant readers, and used it to unlock their latent literacy skills...

Often, it can be easy to spot pupils who are beginning to find reading a challenge and those at risk of developing a reading difficulty. We're all familiar with those pupils who struggle to secure a basic but reliable sight vocabulary, those who find it difficult to read fluently and accurately, or who become overly reliant on very few decoding strategies.

Careful questioning can help us identify those pupils able to read words on the page, but who find the process of making meaning from those words a mystery.

pupils, the surprise was two angry, non-compliant boys whose behaviour left a lot to be desired. They clearly didn't want to read *George's Marvellous Medicine*, and were instead busy disrupting the lesson with a series of behavioural challenges for the teacher.

The teacher was left frustrated by the constant display of poor behaviour, and her efforts to calm the situation down appeared to have no impact. It was evident that she was thoroughly fed up with these 'two naughty new boys', yet based what I saw, I wasn't so sure that the boys' behaviours were designed to annoy and upset.

from the classroom – which in turn would mean that they didn't have to read. To me, their avoidance strategies showed innovation and their swagger indicated confidence – both markers of potential success. We just needed to find the key that could unlock them. And I was convinced that the key was reading.

Early identification

To put that metaphorical key in the lock, we needed to explore where the pupils were 'at' with their reading, and where they needed to go next through robust assessment. For all pupils, a school's approach to reading assessment needs to be proactive, as opposed to reactive. Early identification and intervention are non-negotiable. We shouldn't be waiting for the pupils to fail before we act.

Consequently, it's essential that we're able to draw on a range of holistic assessment tools that explore all aspects of reading: attitudes, confidence levels, previous experiences, decoding strategies, accuracy, fluency, and the many aspects of comprehension. This toolkit should include a first layer of assessment that allows us to screen for potential difficulties, identify strengths to build upon and then track and monitor progress.

"I had a hunch that we were observing behaviour that served as a form of protection"

Yet some pupils can be very skilled at masking these difficulties, with the result that their reading difficulties can emerge suddenly, as an unexpected surprise.

September always seems to bring teachers surprises like this. In the case of one English lesson in which I was observing two new

I had a hunch that what we were observing was actually behaviour that served as a form of protection against the potential humiliation of being two boys who couldn't read aloud, since they weren't yet fully functioning readers.

As far as these pupils were concerned, behaving badly would result in their ejection



In this case, the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) provided us with valuable information that confirmed my initial hunch, signalling that it was time to delve deeper. The information that this form of proactive assessment provides gives us a valuable window of opportunity in which to make decisions about what to do next. It's a means of filtering, aimed at ensuring that those at risk of failure are spotted before it's too late.

To achieve this, it's important to keep a 'red flag' in mind. The form this takes will vary from school to school, but often a good starting point would be to flag those pupils with a standardised score of 86 or below, since they'll be just on the cusp of falling below the average range if their progress isn't sustained. Under the NGRT, scores below 90 can merit further investigation.

A second layer of assessment should then allow us to drill down further, to ensure that our interventions and approaches are tailored to exactly match the pupil's needs. This could include attitude and confidence surveys, observations of reading behaviours, miscue analysis and standardised assessments.

For my two 'surprises', this is where the York Assessment for Reading Comprehension (YARC) was able to give us even more detailed information. After administering this test, we were able to gain a standardised benchmark for accuracy and fluency. The breakdown of comprehension question-type successes and decoding error analysis provided us with rich information that we could use to target specific issues and assemble a clear picture of existing skills and strengths upon which to build. Coupled with the boys' negative

self-view and lack of confidence in themselves as readers, and the very limited experience of texts they'd enjoyed up to that point, we now had a wealth of information to utilise.

The feelgood factor

We decided to help our two misunderstood reluctant readers build a reliable sight vocabulary of words that they'd quickly recognise on sight. A positive experience was needed here, so a variety of winnable games and challenges were deployed that didn't involve opening any dreaded books...yet.

To build their comprehension skills, we decided to eliminate the words and start with picture comprehension tasks. Learning to 'read' the pictures became fun, as we used stills from their favourite cartoons to predict what might happen next and work on making inferences. Once their confidence had been sufficiently built up the feelgood factor truly kicked in, and we proceeded to explore graphic novels that had been carefully selected using the 'Goldilocks principle' – not too easy, not too hard, but just right!

Next came the development of a range of strategies for decoding, taught via lots of modelling, praise and the use of small and subtle strategies on prompt cards to act as reminders back in lessons. By this point, we all felt sure that the key had turned and that the door was opening...

Although we all felt that we could see tangible progress, it was important to have something to evidence what we believed to be happening. We repeated our earlier attitude and confidence surveys, which

showed a marked positive shift. Our observations and repeated miscue analysis showed a wider range of decoding strategies, a more fluent sound to the reading and greater levels of self-correction.

We also identified something exciting happening in the boys' personal records – a decrease in the number of consequences, especially in lessons that required lots of reading. To triangulate everything, we shall be repeating a standardised YARC measure next term.

Our findings ultimately showed us that the key had not only opened the door, but left it wide open for success to flood in!



Beccie Hawes is head of service at Rushall inclusion advisory support team, based at Rushall Primary School.

The school is one of GL Assessment's Centres of Assessment Excellence; further details about the New Group Reading Test (now available in a termly edition) and the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension can be found at gl-assessment.co.uk

What do you do when PUPILS GO TOO FAR?

Tracey Lawrence looks what methods and approaches teachers can draw on when dealing with cases of extreme behaviour

By thinking of how you deal with behaviour and your strategies, you'll be able to support more effectively. It's important to keep calm and level-headed during these times. Build your support networks, both in and out of school, so that you can 'switch off', as well as think strategically.

Extreme behaviours can bring about a whole host of different situations that you may have never seen before, such as behaviours that you've previously not been exposed to and physical restraint. These can cloud your judgements, as they aren't easy to deal with. However, in your job as a class teacher, you have that duty of care to support all of your children, as well as provide equal access to education for all.

Try to think of behaviour in the same way as you think of academia. If there's a gap in knowledge, you support children to achieve. If there's a gap in behaviour, you support

children to progress. 'Non-violent communication' is a communication process that was developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the 1960s. It looked at three different aspects of communication: self-empathy, empathy and honest self-expression. Self-empathy is a deep, compassionate awareness of your own inner experience; empathy is understanding and sharing an emotion with others; and honest self-expression is expressing yourself genuinely in a way that will inspire compassion within others.

It's based on the theory that all humans have the capacity for compassion and only resort to difficult behaviour when they cannot recognise more effective

strategies for meeting their needs. This links into the thought that behaviour is communication, and that we need to unlock the strategies to help children to communicate more effectively. There are ways of supporting yourself, and a range of methods that you may want to choose.

Alternative provision

There may be schools around your local area that help to provide support for your children, be it effective interventions, advice for support staff or support in deciphering targets. Don't

view alternative provision as a separate entity. Collaboration is powerful, so use their advice as proactively as you can. Have a conversation, seek their advice and listen to their experiences.

Some PRUs and special schools have free outreach services and can come and support you in your setting. Call your local specialist provision to see how to access this support. For some it is a telephone referral, and for others there may be a referral form. Other provisions offer advice via a panel, where a group of colleagues come together to share experiences and previously used strategies, which can help with clarity and progress with your child. Again, call your local provisions to discuss ways that you can refer.

Restorative approaches

Restorative practice centres around creating a sense of belonging for our children – increasing a child's ability to



develop social relationships with others, as well as restore these relationships when they go wrong. With children displaying these more extreme behaviours, our intervention is required even more. We need to be aware of relationships that are forming and support children during this time.

As a teacher, you need to know the benefits of an approach and the ways to implement it. As there are reams of evidence and information about this available, here's just a brief introduction.

The main benefits you will see if you implement this approach are based around relationships. You know that your relationships can support or have a negative impact on a situation, so in improving this area you can also improve the harmony within your classroom. You will head towards a relationship, rather than implementing sanctions as a way of managing behaviours. You'll work towards a community where children take responsibility and are more honest about their actions.

Most of all, you'll have built an environment where there are better relationships amongst staff and other children.

When there's been a behaviour incident within your classroom and you

embark on restorative practice, you may need to focus on some of the following through your facilitation:

- Effective communication within your class
- Friendships and other relationships
- Respect, empathy, repairing damage and even understanding the impact of your children's behaviour on others in the class

Although these elements are your focus for restoration, you may find that there's a sense of restoration within the individual, whether it be secure boundaries for the child, self-confidence or self-respect.

Practical steps to take

You are the facilitator, so you need to cultivate responses to the following key questions. What has happened? What has been the impact on those involved in the incident? What needs to happen to make things right? And how can this be avoided next time?

As a teacher, I'm sure these questions are familiar to you, but you do need to ensure that you're building a culture of restorative practice consistently. There will be times where you will not be facilitator, but you do need to ensure that other members of

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

If you want to implement these steps in your classroom, here are a couple of ideas for doing so consistently...

Lanyard card

Have the key questions on a card. If you have a school ID lanyard, these could fit on the back. If not, it should be something that can easily be carried around. This is another way of supporting your classroom staff. You or others may be coming into this restoration from somewhere else, and a little refresher on the key questions may be helpful.

Model

Your colleagues need to be clear on the process and knowledgeable about the principles. If you've had whole-school training, then continue this by modelling these restorative conversations. It's good practice to coach using this model so you've all had experience in observing others delivering the conversation. It keeps things fresh and allows opportunities for questions and discussions around difficult conversations.

staff who will take this on have the following qualities:

- A good rapport with pupils
- A calming influence over what could be a heated exchange
- Are able to sit back, not jump in/ interrupt and be an active listener
- Trustworthy
- Are able to encourage your children to express themselves honestly
- Are able to encourage your children to express

themselves honestly

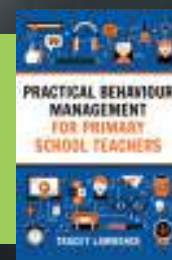
- Are able to appreciate the impact of a child's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and unmet needs on their behavioural choices.



Tracey Lawrence is an SEMH specialist leader for education and assistant

headteacher at a mainstream school in Leicestershire

*This article is based on an edited extract from the book **Practical Behaviour Management for Primary School Teachers** by Tracey Lawrence, published by Bloomsbury (bloomsbury.com)*



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“INCLUSION” ISN’T RIGHT AND DOESN’T WORK”

Nicole Dempsey makes the case for why ‘students’ and ‘SEND’ students aren’t two different things...

[@NDempseyDTA](#) [dixonsta.com](#)

At my school, we don’t do inclusion. There’s no inclusion department or SEND corridor. No TAs or alternative pathways. Students aren’t withdrawn from lesson for extra literacy or numeracy with a non-specialist (or non-teacher) into some other area of the school. Students aren’t excused from our values, exempt from expectations or from participation in the school community.

Now, don’t get me wrong – we do have students identified as having SEND. 16% of our students are on the SEN Register and 1% have EHCPs, and you can rest assured that we’re meeting their needs and observing all of our statutory duties. We’re rated Outstanding, and our 2016/17 Progress 8 score is 1.22 (1.03 for SEN Register / EHCP students and 1.37 for disadvantaged students), making us eighth in the country and the highest performing school in Leeds and Bradford.

We simply do things differently.

The truth about ‘inclusion’ is that it isn’t right and doesn’t work. It doesn’t lead to equitable adult outcomes for those with disabilities (see the stats at tinyurl.com/scope-figures), and in fact perpetuates and legitimises the discriminatory way in which we’re encouraged to view ‘ability diversity’ within wider society.

‘Inclusion’ amounts to all the ways we include children with SEND in an education system that wasn’t designed with them in mind. Our students are the next generation of employees, employers, parents and carers. What we teach them in schools matters, because we’re mixing the ingredients of tomorrow’s society. We can either perpetuate the problems we have now, or we can start to make things better.

Attitude is everything
So how do we do that? Create a school

where no teacher is waiting (and hoping!) that someone is going to come and sit with their SEND kids or take them out of their lesson. All teachers are teachers of SEND, and as long as you have a SEND or inclusion department, you’re perpetuating the received wisdom that SEND is something different and someone else’s responsibility.

Create a school where kindness, accountability, personalisation and high expectation apply equally to every child. Attitude is everything – stop seeing ‘students’ and ‘SEND’ students as two different things. If you design a school for the least able and most vulnerable children, it will work for everyone. If you have students who struggle with transitions, for example, or during breaks and lunchtimes, the solution isn’t to have TA-supported transitions or a ‘safe space’ for vulnerable students at social times – it’s to make your school safer.

‘Special needs’ are ultimately those human need to be safe, confident and facilitated to succeed. Teacher-supported transitions should be the norm. Breaks and lunchtimes should be contained and well-staffed. Assemblies at the start and end of each day will reduce issues relating to behaviour, punctuality, truancy and bullying. Your vulnerable learners can be independent and meet expectations alongside their peers.

Every student is a unique and complex individual, with needs that will only be best met once we stop trying to categorise and subdivide them. At my school, we have a holistic pastoral department that we call ‘Mountain Rescue’, based on the idea that every student is climbing a mountain en route to a destination that will enable them to thrive in a top job and have a great life.

Our approach is to meet the needs of every student when they need it and *because* they need it. This thinking doesn’t just replace our SEND/inclusion, but also the teams we would otherwise have for pastoral, behaviour, safeguarding, looked-after children and medical issues. Our year heads, SENCo, safeguarding leads, mentors, first aiders and other specialist staff all work together in a shared office to provide support that’s there for all students equally.

At my school, we do diversity and team spirit. We encourage high expectations, but we also nurture. We strive for equality, equity, fairness and justice. We do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes.

But we don’t do inclusion.

Nicole Dempsey is head of the Mountain Rescue team at Dixons Trinity Academy

How to MANAGE SEIZURES

Emma Hammett presents an overview of how schools can prepare their staff for dealing with fitting, seizures and convulsions...

In 20 people will experience some sort of a seizure during their lives. They tend to be more common – by up to 35% – among children with special educational needs.

A seizure (the medical term for a fit or convulsion) occurs when there's a sudden burst of electrical activity in the brain that temporarily interferes with normal messaging processes. The brain affects the whole body, so when seizures occur you can expect them to affect various areas. There are many different types of seizures, linked to numerous causes. Head injuries and stresses to the brain can cause fitting, as can brain tumours, meningitis, malaria, eclampsia in pregnancy, poisoning, lack of oxygen, raised body temperature, epilepsy, drug and alcohol use and withdrawal. To that list, you can add a huge range of additional conditions such as cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus, Lennox-Gestaut and microcephaly.

Epilepsy

A diagnosis of epilepsy will be made if an individual has one or more seizures without any known cause. The person

having the fit may experience an aura (a sound, taste, smell or sensation) in advance of the fit that they recognise as a sign they're about to have a seizure, which can give them sufficient warning to get themselves onto the floor and alert someone. The casualty will often be on anti-convulsant medication, and their seizures will tend to follow a similar pattern, which can make the fits a bit more predictable.

Fits, seizures or

convulsions can cause rigid, out of control movements. These can vary from absence seizures – where they become rigid and unresponsive – to the full thrashing that characterises tonic-clonic fits, or indeed anything in between.

Seizures at school

For many children, seizures or epilepsy may be an everyday part of their lives, which their school should help them to manage with

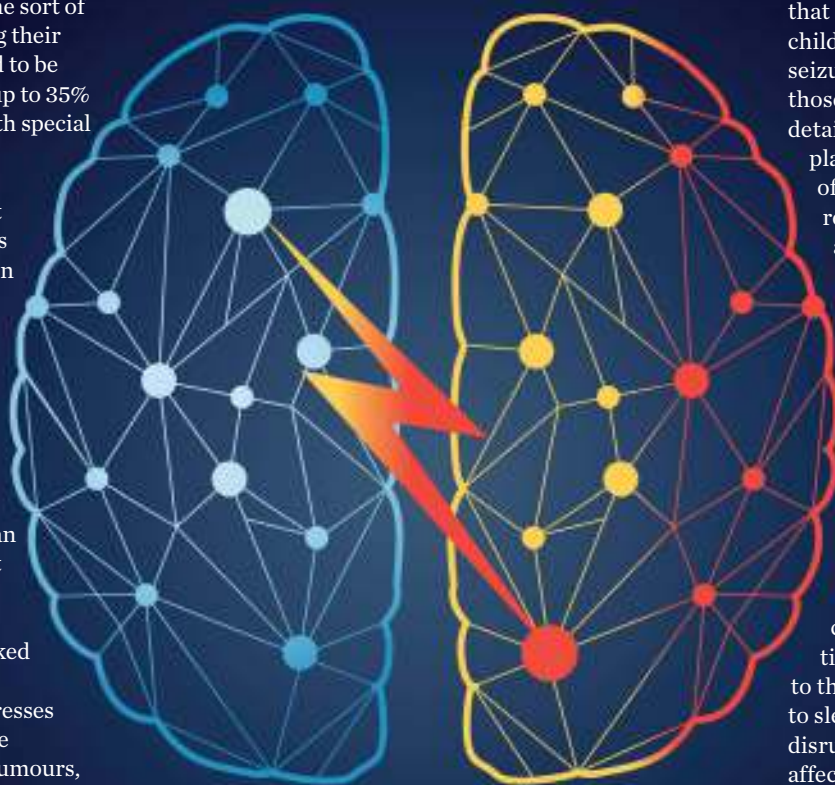
dignity. It's important that all staff know which children have a history of seizures, and that each of those children will have a detailed individual healthcare plan outlining the type of seizures in questions, recommended first aid and any medication they require. Seizures can be disrupting. Children with absence seizures, for example, might miss key points during lessons, making it extremely helpful for them to have additional support that can help them catch up. Seizures are exhausting, and children may require time to recover afterwards, to the point where they need to sleep. Seizures at night can disrupt sleep patterns and affect memory for some time afterwards.

Anti-epileptic drugs can cause further side effects, including tiredness, trouble with memory, an inability to concentrate, stomach cramps and diarrhoea.

Tonic-clonic fits and generalised seizures

The following might happen during a tonic-clonic seizure.

Tonic phase: They collapse to the ground as they lose consciousness. The body goes stiff and rigid and they may



cry out, as if in pain. This is due to an involuntary action, as the muscles force air out of the lungs. The casualty is in fact not in pain, and usually unaware of the noise they're making. They can begin to appear blue around their mouth and finger tips.

Clonic phase: They may rigidly jerk around as their muscles alternately relax and tighten. They may make a snoring noise, as the tongue flops to the back of the airway; they could become incontinent and may bite their tongue.

Post-Ictal phase (a medical term meaning 'after seizure'): Once the jerking stops they may be confused, sleepy, agitated or quite unresponsive. If you're worried about their airway, put them into the recovery position. They may not know who they, or you, are, and it could take a few minutes for them to piece everything back together.

Generalised seizures

In the event of a generalised seizure, make sure the casualty is safe and ease them to the ground if they're on a chair. Try to protect their head without restraining them.

Make a note of the time that the seizure starts and the different phases in as much detail as you can manage – this is extremely useful to the medical team when investigating causes and applying treatment. Specific information, such as whether one side of the body is more affected than the other, can give the clinician help with their diagnosis.

Loosen any tight clothes the casualty might be wearing and remove any nearby objects with which they could injure themselves. Ask any bystanders to move away and protect the casualty's dignity.

Once the seizure has stopped, check the casualty's

ACTIONS TO AVOID

- Never put your fingers – or anything else – in the casualty's mouth to prevent them from biting their tongue, since this will cause serious injury
- Don't try to move them unless they are in immediate danger
- Don't attempt to restrain their movements whilst they are fitting
- Don't give them anything to eat and drink until they're fully recovered



airway and breathing and place them in the recovery position if unresponsive. Stay with them and try to talk to them reassuringly throughout the seizure.

What to watch for

Common triggers for seizures can include a lack of sleep. If a person already has an underlying condition, sleeping in late can also act as a trigger. Similarly, emotional stress can induce seizures if there is an underlying predisposition.

Exposure to flickering lights can act as a trigger, but contrary to received wisdom, this type of trigger is actually comparatively rare. Fever, on the other hand is an extremely common trigger, particularly among infants and small children – 1 in 20 under 5s will convulse if their temperature rises.

It's strongly advised that your school's staff complete a practical first aid course, either in person or online, so that they understand what to do in a medical emergency. Further details about the online courses we offer at First Aid For Life can be

found at OnlineFirstAid.com, or by contacting 0208 675 4036.

First Aid for Life provides this information for guidance, and it is not in any way a substitute for medical advice. First Aid for Life is not responsible or liable for any diagnosis made or actions taken based on this information

Emma Hammett is a registered general nurse and the founder/CEO of the first aid training provider First Aid for Life

 @firstaidforlife

 firstaidforlife.org.uk

WHEN TO CALL 999

Call for an ambulance if any of the following apply:

- It is their first seizure
- The seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes
- The casualty has another seizure immediately after
- If the child becomes injured
- If the child is known to have a history of seizures, but this one is somehow different
- If the child appears unresponsive for more than five minutes following the seizure





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It's okay to say 'I'm not good at this'

Simon Knight discusses a new Whole School SEND initiative that aims to actively encourage self-improvement in SEND practice...

In education, it can sometimes be difficult to open up about the things that professionally we find most challenging. There can be risks associated with saying, 'I'm not very good at this and would like to get better.'

This can often be the case when thinking about how best to meet the requirements of children with SEND. There can be a confidence and competence deficit, due to teachers not necessarily being shown how to address complexity in the classroom, and therefore not always believing that they can.

And yet, the pedagogical knowledge necessary to be effective in addressing the educational requirements of children and young people with SEND isn't particularly complex. We just need to commit to exploring them and reflecting carefully on our own effectiveness, in order to develop the expertise

necessary to be effective for all children.

Shining a light

The Whole School SEND consortium, hosted by the London Leadership Strategy, comprises a range of schools, charities, professional development providers and educational organisations, including nasen and the Driver Youth Trust.

Part of its work is to shine a light on the SEND expertise that exists within the education system, and to that end it has produced a number of SEND Review documents. One of these resources, developed with the support of parents, schools, universities and young people is the 'SEND Reflection Framework', launched in November 2017 (SENDreflection.com).

It's intended to create a space where it's not just okay to acknowledge those areas where you may need to improve your SEND practice, but where doing so is actively encouraged. It's a non-judgemental documentary framework that should be used for professional development, rather than purely for appraisal.

It offers an opportunity to reflect on how effectively the requirements of all learners are being met, linking professional perceptions to examples of impact, and should be delivered as a coached programme of

ongoing critical reflection.

Aligning its implementation to the recommendations of the Standard for Teachers' Professional Development (see tinyurl.com/tpd-dfe) is likely to enhance the impact of the time invested.

It's also designed to be used flexibly. It could be used to support an individual or an entire school, or even by subject leads in order to look at interdepartmental variance, for example within a large secondary.

It also doesn't need to be worked through progressively from front to back, but can be used to focus on identified individual priorities or whole school collective ones. The document itself is broken down into seven sections, each made up of a range of aspirational statements against which evidence of current strengths or areas for improvement can be applied.

More than just an audit

A section on 'The Quality of Teaching and Learning', for example, contains the following:

- I integrate strategies from interventions into my teaching so that learners can sustain progress.
- I ensure that outcomes successfully achieved within interventions are transferred and embedded in wider classroom practice.
- I communicate the impact of interventions and their

effectiveness to those with defined responsibility for SEND, parents and carers and the learner.

- My planning and teaching reflects my knowledge of the agreed outcomes for individual learners.
- I proactively deploy additional adults in the classroom and their impact on the learner is monitored carefully, to ensure that progress is supported effectively.
- I make use of both quantitative and qualitative data to review accurately and report on pupil progress in relation to the learner's agreed outcomes.

It's important to reiterate that this isn't just a simplistic audit of competencies, but should be thought of as a framework to support ongoing professional development. If it's to be successful, then it needs to foster open and honest discussion, rather than simply lead to anecdotes or answers lacking evidence of impact.

It offers an opportunity to embrace that which we need to improve on so that every child, irrespective of the complexity of their requirements, gets access to the very best education possible.



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Let's treat our LEARNERS AS INDIVIDUALS

Post-P scales, what should an assessment system for pupils with autism and learning difficulties look like in practice? One trio of education professionals believe they may have the answer...

Teachers of children with autism, and severe and moderate learning difficulties would likely appreciate a crystal ball that could tell them how their teaching and goal-setting will affect a learner's development in the long term.

Instead, we have learning assessments, which have often constrained teachers by requiring that a learner's progress fit a standardised format so that it can be measured. As many will be aware, in reality these children's learning needs to fit with their development as and when it happens – something that can be very difficult to predict.

Dr. Liz Pellicano, a developmental cognitive scientist and former director of the Centre for Autism Education Research, has previously spoken of 'reverse transition' – a process based on the following:

- Researching first
- Applying and putting research into practice
- Listening to, and consulting with, ASD, MLD, SLD learners and their families

According to Dr Pellicano, families and individuals with these type of needs ought to be more involved in any consultation processes they must undergo, and that their input should be used to inform both future cognitive development research, and where support funding ought to be directed.

It's often been the case that families and their dependents are infrequently consulted with regards to the value of such research and its impact on their lives. So how can we do things differently?

Future steps

Taking on board this notion of 'reverse transition', we embarked on the process of developing something unique designed to meet the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder, including those with additional severe to moderate learning needs.

We call it PAGS – Profile Assessment and Goal Setting.

It's a framework intended for learners of all ages with autism and/or severe to moderate learning difficulties. It's skills-based, appropriate for all levels and provides information that can be used to inform personalised learning for progress, while also offering the potential for whole school improvement.

The PAGS framework aims to guide learners,



families, practitioners and professionals and show them their future steps in a practical way, while at the same time recognising the learner's achievements and gauging their progress.

Learners and adults working with PAGS will be given access to a visual representation of the progress the learner is making in five distinct areas: 'Communication and Interaction'; 'Cognition and Learning'; 'Emotional and Self Understanding'; 'Social Interaction and Social Awareness'; and 'Sensory Regulation and Physical Development'.

Individual progress

What set this particular framework apart is that it's built around a recognition that every learner is different. As previously noted, P scales have traditionally been limited in terms of the assessment information that they're able to provide. Under this older model, the curriculum was seen as 'separate', and wasn't supported by a good, qualitative assessment.

What we've attempted to do is devise an assessment that's relevant to the curriculum that individual learners need. The information PAGS provides can be used to set targets for developing skills that prepare those learners for adulthood. It's important to note that this is an assessment system which has a developmental structure, which tracks individual progress.

The basis for PAGS is Piaget's four stages of development, from infancy to adulthood (see 'Piaget's Progress'). What we've tried to do is consider these in relation to the impact of ASD and related neurological conditions on individuals' memories and capacity for learning and generalising, so that the opportunities for these

learners to acquire important skills are maximised.

We explored how skills in each of aforementioned assessment categories are typically developed from the age of 18 months onwards, removing the need for an upper age limit. What we've ultimately ended up with is an assessment format that's user friendly and practical, and which allows professionals to become involved in the learner's goal setting in consultation with parents and carers.

How it works

PAGS provides an overview of the concepts that a learner or adult has understood and mastered, while identifying potential steps available to them for further learning. The five areas covered by the assessment are laid out in developmental sections. The category 'friendships,' for example, would fall under 'Social Interaction and Social Awareness'. Each developmental section has three main stages – Interim, Concept Operational and Advanced. A set of questions is provided to help guide assessors in gauging the learner's unique profile.

This first part of the assessment then leads to a mapping process, in which any progress or regression is highlighted. This is also the point at which answers will be provided regarding what the learner needs and how practitioners can meet and support their acquisition of skills. Any goals and targets that are identified at this stage can then be fed into a child's annual EHCP review.

In this way, the PAGS framework is substantially different from the comparatively prescribed options for target setting and progress tracking typically

PIAGET'S PROGRESS

According to the Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, the four stages of intellectual development from birth through to adolescence consist of the following:



Sensorimotor: Birth, up to 18-24 months



Preoperational: Toddlerhood (18-24 months) through to early childhood (7 years)



Concrete operational: Ages 7 to 12



Formal operational: Adolescence through to adulthood

offered by the assessment systems that are used currently. It's a new format that enables practitioners to facilitate bridging between individuals' skillsets in different settings, be it at school, at home or within the wider community.

Workload benefits

What we want to see is learners with ASD and severe or moderate learning disabilities assigned their own suggested curriculum, complete with attached objectives, activities and resources appropriate to their assessed developmental level. The PAGS assessment furthermore employs a scoring system that can produce the kind of robust data that Ofsted inspectors will require.

We will be piloting the new PAGS framework assessment from December onwards, and are currently looking for pilot schools interested in getting involved.

For more details, contact us on 07756 265 545 or visit felserconsulting.com



Allison Hope-West is an independent autism consultant

and trainer, and a tutor based at the University of Birmingham



Carolyn Godden is head of a specialist provision for complex communication difficulties

at a mainstream secondary school



Feliciea Jibson is a former head of post-16 and 19-25 provision,

now working as an autism education consultant

GIVE YOUR PARENTS MORE INPUT

A lack of information, a lack of input and a lack of certainty on the part of parents and guardians is a sure-fire recipe for conflict, writes **Gareth D Morewood...**

The best outcomes are achieved when strong partnerships exist.

Put simply, pupils have better outcomes when parents or carers and the school are positively engaged. Effective collaboration between parents/carers and professionals regarding options and outcomes will lead to increased opportunities for families, pupils and the professionals who work with them.

It's no surprise to me, and should be no surprise to readers, that proper joint working and positive engagement with parents/carers can make significant differences in outcomes for young people. So why doesn't this happen in every school, area and region? The reality is that it can; if there's a

real desire to collaborate, then there's no reason why it can't be achieved.

However, it's important to note that there can be obstacles to doing so from both professionals and families. A recent meta-analysis of parental involvement in student academic achievement and learning outcomes indicated that the strongest associations are found when families have high expectations for their children, develop and maintain communication with them about school activities, and help them to develop positive habits with regard to learning and engagement (1).

It's important to explicitly set out the aims of the school when first meeting parents/carers, and ensure that each others' roles in the partnership

are clear. Uncertainty and misinformation is one of the biggest barriers to effective working.

When it works well, engaging positively with families allows for them to have direct and positive input into academic work, as well as other provision. Constant battling and fighting

for provision will leave little space for positive engagement with school activities. Working together creates a much stronger position from which to operate.

Working positively in partnership

Working positively with families' further makes a significant difference to what can be achieved with regards to individual pupils. The Parent/Carer Confidence Measure I developed with Caroline Bond a few years ago (see tinyurl.com/gdm-parental-confidence) highlighted the key areas when it comes to facilitating these positive partnerships:

- Keep parents/carers informed
- Ensure parents/carers know how to contact key staff
- Provide honest communication; there's no long-term benefit in providing anything but the truth
- Listen carefully to parents/carers and give them time to explain and discuss things
- Try to avoid any uncertainty/misinterpretation; receiving information repeatedly is better than assumptions resulting in details not being passed on

This isn't ground-breaking stuff, but it's important to explicitly consider the key elements of positive



co-production. You can download the confidence measure from my website (see tinyurl.com/gdm-confidence) and use the feedback as a baseline from which to develop more effective joint-working.

Considering the Assess-Plan-Do-Review model, it might look like this:

Assess: Use the Parent/Carer Confidence Measure

Plan: Choose two or three areas for improvement and work (co-produce) with a group of parents/carers

Do: Use resources to develop communication and add discussion groups/feedback opportunities

Review: Use the confidence measure again one year on and compare the results

This has been proven to be an extremely effective means of targeting specific areas that require improvement. Creating an action plan that meets the needs highlighted by parents/carers is an important foundation upon which improved working can be built.

Addressing Concerns

Conflict isn't good for anyone. When asked by Tucker and Schwartz (2) about whether they'd experienced any conflict with school teams, parents/carers overwhelmingly reported 'yes' (83%).

The main area of conflict identified in the research was around service provision, goals and objectives (66%), followed by placement decisions (56%), and disagreements over curricula or instructional approaches (52%).

This study notes that when conflict arose, one of the reported reasons was parent/carers not perceiving opportunities to provide input and participate fully in

decision making. Indeed, when parents/carers pushed to have their input included during times of conflict, they often found themselves becoming even more peripheral to their child's team and 'making things worse'.

It's therefore vital that schools carefully consider how they engage with parents/carers and that they address these important areas of concern. Not doing so risks poorer outcomes for pupils, and in the worst cases, significant acrimony. Ensuring that there are clearly established processes through which parents/carers can address their concerns is essential for creating effective partnerships.

Reporting and Communicating

I've delivered many conference addresses and INSETs about communication being a key element in effective SEND provision. How we communicate will vary (face-to-face meetings, phone calls, emails, etc.), but one thing I'm sure of is that making our communication inclusive is an important element in engaging positively with parents/carers.

I'm a fan of the 'What went well' and 'Even better if' approach, where parents/carers can highlight good things and draw attention to areas for improvement. I advocate using this system at public events such as parent/carer evenings, school concerts, sports events and so forth. A simple box with postcards where parents/carers can highlight good areas and those that could be better can allow for both anonymous or identified responses. It could even form part of the school's website. Encouraging open discussions and information sharing can

have a powerful impact.

On a similar note, how inclusively does your school report progress? Are your reports and progress updates sufficiently accessible to the parents/carers of the pupils you work with? Have you ever asked parents/carers how things could be improved?

I often think more frequent, shorter reporting is more effective than the traditional sole end-of-year summary. Half-termly updates with shorter, more accessible actions can be extremely effective and help to support positive engagement. Again, consider how often you ask parents/carers about how things can be improved, and what might be best for them.

Concluding Thoughts

Anything that involves working with others will always have areas that can be improved on. However, any changes you make should always be part of an informed response to an area of need identified through open and honest communication. Many


of the aforementioned ideas and suggestions may seem like 'common sense', but in the busy world of the SENCo, one of the most valuable things we can do is to take a step back and think a little more strategically.

So take a moment, think about your current systems and consider how you can engage with parents/carers in jointly improving the outcomes of the young people with whom you work.



Gareth D Morewood is director of curriculum support (SENCo) and specialist leader of education at Priestnall School, Stockport and Honorary Research Fellow in Education at the University of Manchester.

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 neu.org.uk

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WHERE WILL YOUR SCHOOL'S next SENCo come from?

Anne Heavey suggests some ways in which schools can do more to spot and nurture the burgeoning talents of would-be SENCos...

Right now at the NEU, we're hearing a lot from our members about two key trends. One is that there's been a year-on-year increase in the numbers of children arriving in Reception, or even nursery, with complex needs and requiring additional support to settle in to the school environment.

At the same time, there's also been a growing awareness of autism. We're getting more children coming through the school system now who our members suspect have autism, and are waiting for their assessments to be done and the education, health and care plans to follow.

In terms of the impact this is likely to have on schools, within the last few years attempts have been made to

try and increase the quality and quantity of SEND training during ITT. The steps we've seen so far have included the addition of learning about specific learning difficulties, the processes by which it's possible to secure an assessment and how to support learners with SEND in the classroom.

However, there's also a need for more TAs to be trained in the specific needs of the individual children they're working with, so that the class teacher is able to draw on additional support when they need it.

Every teacher a teacher of SEND

Since 2014, there's been an expectation that every teacher be a teacher of SEND. We've

surveyed our members on this, and that's certainly what they want to be. Whether they're support staff, teachers or leaders, they want to do right by their children and offer SEND support where it's needed, but they feel that their workload is a barrier.

Often they simply don't have the time to properly understand a child's needs, prepare the necessary resources, attend all the meetings and everything else that goes with the territory. They don't always possess the relevant specialist knowledge, and therefore don't fully understand the barriers to learning that some of these children have. In some cases, schools won't be able to provide those resources internally, or even draw on

them externally where that might be beneficial, such as with speech and language therapy.

Addressing those issues of workload, resources and training is where the SENCo comes in. They need to be a qualified teacher, and will typically have entered the role via one of two routes. There will be those who have decided they want to become a SENCo specifically to work with children who have SEND, and others who'll be looking for that next opportunity to progress – in some cases they might have been offered the role to help prepare them for senior leadership.

Particularly in primary schools, where there usually won't be as many teachers compared with secondary,

someone may be asked to assume the (statutory) role of SENCo when they haven't initially put themselves forward.

What makes a good SENCo?

In any case, a would-be SENCo needs to demonstrate three core attributes. First and foremost, they must be someone who's really good at maintaining relationships with colleagues, pupils and parents. They have to be exceptionally good at speaking to people, have an optimistic outlook, be patient and able to see the best in every situation.

Secondly, the role of SENCo needs to be filled by someone who's extremely organised, since there's a great deal of information, deadlines and processes that they'll need to stay on top of. As well as guiding the school through those, the SENCo will need to liaise regularly with parents, NHS professionals, LA representatives and others, which will require considerable planning, prioritising and communication skills.

Finally, a SENCo has to have a real eye for detail. They need to be able to study long and complex documents such as the SEND Code of Practice, synthesise what they need to know and do and disseminate that information clearly to staff and members of the school community.

So how should you go about spotting potential SENCo talent among your staff and nurturing it?

Realise that potential

You can begin by setting up a meeting between the staff in question and your existing

SENCo – or even a SENCo at a different school – and arranging for the staff to experience what the role involves over the course of a typical day.

From speaking to some of our younger members with ambitions to become SENCos, many of them envisage that they'll be spending most of their time working directly with vulnerable pupils. In reality, they might not end up spending all that much time directly with the pupils themselves, but rather facilitating the support that needs to be put in place around the pupils.

Encourage your would-be SENCos to sign up with online groups and forums such as the DfE's SENCo forum (see tinyurl.com/dfe-senco-forum) and look into what the highs and lows of the role involve. Where are the flashpoints? If your school can support an assistant SENCo role, try appointing them, perhaps on a trial basis.

In my view, we would benefit as a profession by sharing talent across schools. If somebody on your staff has the potential to thrive as a SENCo, how prepared would you be to share that person with another school? Would you be willing to tell them, 'We don't have any opportunities here right now, but a school nearby does'?

We need to become more collegiate in how we develop our staff. That doesn't have to mean telling staff they need to leave and transfer elsewhere. Instead, we could perhaps encourage them to look at the bigger picture when considering the next stage of their career, and not limit their ambitions to working within just one school, but multiple schools within a larger area.

WHAT THE MEMBERS SAY

Some of the headline figures from a survey on SEND provision conducted by the NEU among its members earlier this year:



Within the last year, have you received SEND training that was arranged by your employer?

YES 42%
NO 58%

Do you feel that the training/development you've had around SEND is sufficient?

Yes 28%
No 72%

Do you feel that you have the training and resources needed to meet the needs of the SEND pupils with whom you work?

Yes 36%
No 64%

Survey conducted among 609 NEU members

Build in time

Ultimately, we want to be in a position where we have staff who are confident in supporting pupils with the most challenging needs in the classroom, working alongside trained support staff.

Leaders have to give SEND training the priority it deserves in schools, but doing so is hard with so many demands on INSET training time. However, nobody loses out from learning SEND-related skills, how to support vulnerable learners, how to recognise the signs of developmental conditions such as dyslexia and knowing how to obtain additional support for children who need it.

What leaders need to do is proactively carve out time for their staff to develop

such skills, and look into exploring avenues such as online training, in-house CPD and work shadowing. Leaders then need to ask themselves what they can do to help teachers and support staff work together more effectively in terms of planning and reflecting on their practice.

If we want staff to properly reflect on how things are generally going for each child, time will need to be built in to the school culture for that to happen.



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CANINES IN THE CLASSROOM

Dr Helen Lewis explores whether dogs can have a role to play in shaping pupils' attitudes to learning and level of engagement

The relationship between humans and dogs has endured for many thousands of years. The benefits of this partnership have long been recognised – psychologist Sigmund Freud, for instance, noted that his dog Jofi helped patients relax during therapy sessions. The 19th century poet Shelly once wrote that, “The psychological and moral comfort of a presence at once humble and understanding – this is the greatest benefit that the dog has bestowed upon man.”

The community-based reading with dogs scheme ‘Burns By Your Side’ (BBYS) is based on the premise that dogs can act as calm, patient and non-judgemental listeners, providing a comforting presence to children who are facing particular challenges with learning. Around 20 educational settings in South

Wales are currently taking part in the scheme, spanning nurseries, primary and secondary schools, further education colleges and libraries, and nearly 30 trained volunteers and dogs are involved.

Children with a wide range of needs – cognitive, personal, social, emotional or behavioural – are selected by their schools to

take part, and proceed to work with the same dog and owner on a regular basis. In evaluating the scheme, it’s worth looking at the impact that reading with dogs has had on pupils’ enjoyment of reading, their attitudes to learning and their view of themselves as successful learners.

Teachers, children, parents and volunteers were asked to reflect on their perceptions of BBYS. In all cases, the children who read to the dogs gave positive feedback, and every school reported its pupils showing great interest in taking part. Teachers stated that children responded positively to the presence of the dogs and looked forward to the sessions,

while the volunteers noticed improvements in the children’s attitudes and engagement, with positive changes in their confidence, enjoyment, engagement and oracy figuring highly.

Here, I’m going to examine how five different settings went about implementing the scheme and how their learners were able to benefit.

Frankie

Stepaside Primary school has around 140 pupils on roll and is visited weekly by Michelle and her dog Frankie. Frankie works with four targeted children every week, selected because they find reading a challenge and are lacking in confidence as learners. Headteacher Paul Harries says that the children are more relaxed when they read with Frankie, and enjoy the opportunity to “Read without interruption and correction.” The result has been improvements in

“The impact it has had on our children is a joy to see. When children know it’s their turn to read, their faces light up.”



both their self-confidence and enthusiasm for reading.

Frankie also works with a further four pupils during each visit on a rota basis. Paul had previously noticed that children throughout the school met Frankie with great delight during his visits. He and the staff therefore decided to allow everyone in school the chance to engage with Frankie, so that over the course of year everyone was able to feel part of the initiative.

Beau

Emma and her cockapoo Beau make weekly visits to St Florence Church in Wales VC School, Tenby. They read with selected children in Years 3 and 4 who have low self-esteem and find it hard to enjoy reading.

Headteacher Julie Davies is positive about the impact Beau is having, noting that the whole school is very enthusiastic about Beau's visits, and that the children's confidence and enthusiasm for reading has improved. Indeed, Julie's seen Beau's impact first hand: "I have observed Beau listen to the children read on many occasions, and I always have a lump in my throat when I see him move closer or place his paw next to the child to reassure them."

The children agree, with one pupil stating that she feels "Very excited" when Beau arrives, and that that he really helps her to learn to read.

Sally

Myrddin Special Needs Unit

caters for 30 pupils aged 3 to 11 years with profound and severe learning difficulties, some of whom are on the ASD continuum. For two years Carole and her rescued retriever Sally have made weekly visits. Sally works with all the children on a rota basis, with the nature of the activities depending on a child's individual needs. Some children may just look at or touch Sally, while others groom or read to her. One pupil, 10-year old Lucas, previously found that Sally seemed to enjoy listening to him read the first chapter of *The Hobbit*.

Some of the children carry out simple training routines with Sally, in which they're required to listen to simple instructions and repeat them so that Sally can earn a treat, thus encouraging their communication skills.

Children who are otherwise reluctant to interact with other people will happily interact with Sally. This may take subtle forms, such as making eye contact with her, but it marks a big step forward for them. One of the unit's teachers, Llinos Thomas, notes that discussion of Sally and her imminent arrival can serve as an incentive for the children to communicate with the teaching staff.

In conclusion

Our study indicates that having the chance to read regularly to a dog can be of benefit to certain children, particularly those with

additional learning needs. These benefits are seen across a range of skills and attitudes beyond enjoyment of reading. Communication skills, confidence and attitudes towards learning often show improvements.

Feedback from schools, pupils and volunteers is overwhelmingly positive.

When asked whether they would recommend the initiative, one head wrote 'Absolutely and without hesitation. The impact it has had on our children is a joy to see. When children know it's their turn to read, their faces light up.'

Dogs, it seems, really can make a difference.

SAFETY STEPS



- Dog interventions must be carefully planned, monitored and regulated, and must view the animal as a sentient being – not a teaching tool or educational fad.
- BBYS carefully considers legal, ethical and risk factors, and ensures that the welfare needs of the dog are paramount. It wouldn't be appropriate to assume that all dogs will enjoy the experience – or indeed that all children will.
- Only after rigorous training and assessment by BBYS are the dogs allowed into school. An initial meeting is held with senior managers, parents are informed and insurance/risk assessment procedures are followed.
- The children are taught how to approach a dog safely and how to behave in their presence. The dogs are closely monitored at all times when on school premises, and always kept under the supervision of their owners.

Images courtesy of Grace Vobe / BBYS / Carole Hussein



Dr Helen Lewis is PGCE Programme Lead at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Further details about the Burns By Your Side scheme are available at burnsbyyourside.org; schools interested in getting involved can email Carol Lincoln at carol@burnspet.co.uk



A red background with white letter tiles scattered around the edges. The tiles are in various orientations and some are overlapping. The main title is in a large, yellow, cursive font.

“Sometimes I think, I’m dyslexic. Yay!”

What does it feel like to attend school as a child with dyslexia? That’s what **Margaret Rooke** set about finding out – and here are some of the answers...

For all the frequency with which dyslexia in children is discussed among education professionals and policymakers, it can often seem as though the voices of one group are rarely heard – the children themselves.

The latest book by author and writer Margaret Rooke aims to provide something of a corrective. Titled *Dyslexia is My Superpower*, it draws on over a hundred interviews Rooke conducted with children across the world – including the USA, the Caribbean and India, as well as the UK and Ireland, all of whom have dyslexia and were willing to discuss what their everyday experiences of living with the condition are actually like.

There’s a good chance that SENCos and teaching staff will find much in the book that provides some useful insights, and perhaps prompts some difficult questions. Here, we present some excerpts that caught our attention...

Oliver 8, Manchester

“Dyslexia makes you special. It makes you different from other people.

I want to be a footballer for Manchester United. Without dyslexia I don’t think I would be so good at football because I am good at knowing where to be on the pitch. Some people are greedy and never pass. If you are greedy you will never get a goal. I am able to look at the bigger picture and tell people if you don’t pass the ball in time you will never score.

At school I find work is difficult but they help you learn. I have got stuff that helps me with my learning, like Post-it notes and a whiteboard. There are always sheets that I can learn from. I need to segment and blend: that means break the word apart then join it up together again. Sometimes I get help from the others in the class.

I’m quite good at maths but spelling is kind of difficult. My teacher helps me. I said to her the other day, ‘That’s the nicest thing anyone’s done for me.’”

Beatrice 9, London

“Sometimes I think, ‘I’m dyslexic. Yay!’ I’m good at making up stories and drawing pictures and I have a great vocabulary – but I can’t spell and I find writing and reading difficult. I think my vocabulary is good because I have seen a lot of movies and they say a lot of long words in those. I used a great word today – ‘quivered’ – and I spelt it right.

We tested me for dyslexia about two years ago. I felt relieved to find out and I feel as if I have different abilities to everybody than just being normal and the same. I’m very creative. I can make a stick and a few leaves into a pretty flower. All I need is that and, if I want to make it pretty, I use different coloured leaves. I see things and think, ‘That could be of some use’, and then I sit and make something with it.

I have very bad spelling. It’s annoying if teachers say, ‘The point is made but can’t you spell it correctly?’ For example, I spell melon ‘meleon’. Sometimes the teacher says, ‘It doesn’t matter about the spelling’ and I say, ‘Yay!’”

Reggie 9, Buckinghamshire

“I felt a bit relieved when I found out I was dyslexic because I was hoping I wasn’t just thick. Before this I thought I was just not that smart. Also I’m pleased I didn’t go through all those tests for nothing and I think I’ve become a little bit more confident. I think the school might understand me more now, but I still find things difficult.

Numbers are my strength. I can see problems in a 3D way. It’s like looking at a road map that makes perfect sense.

Mum told me life’s not all about doing well at school. She said that lots of dyslexic people are talented and I like that fact. I think if I wasn’t dyslexic I would be more worried about how I was doing. I work hard at literacy and maths and I still do as



“I felt a bit relieved when I found out I was dyslexic because I was hoping I wasn’t just thick. Before this I thought I was just not that smart.”

much as I can in pottery and art. I like making things in 3D. Pottery – that’s fun. I am trying to do my best so I do well in my life. The one thing I’m trying not to be is a plumber because I don’t want to be scooping out poo.”

Luke 10, Manchester

“The best thing for me about dyslexia is that I have to try harder. People who think they are good at things might choose the easiest route,

but even the easiest thing is quite difficult for me. Determination keeps me learning. I never give up. I always keep trying. We just need to try harder; we need to take different routes to get where other people get to.

My spelling and my reading were tough. I used to read really thin books back in Year 5. Now I’m in Year 6 I read really thick books so hard work really helps. Overlays help me with my reading. I use coloured see-through card, buffed paper and word searches. I feel proud of myself at how much I have progressed.

I think dyslexia is good because no one is normal and no one is the same. Everyone’s different.”

WHAT TEACHERS SHOULDN’T DO

Rachel, 11, London, England

“They do this thing called ‘popcorn reading’. One person starts reading and once they have read something they say ‘popcorn’ and say someone else’s name and that person has to carry on. I don’t like it if it’s my turn because I get something wrong or I skip a line or two.”

Fiona, 9, County Kildare, Ireland

“I find it embarrassing when the teacher asks me questions in front of the class and I can’t answer. Sometimes she asks me to read in front of the class and I find this embarrassing too.”

Callum, 9, Renfrewshire, Scotland

“The worst thing a teacher can do is shout, ‘I don’t want any spelling mistakes. I want you to get these words all right.’”

Lucy, 11, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

“The worst thing a teacher can do is help you too much. You know how to do it and then your teacher tells you how to do it. I think they underestimate me.”



*This article is based on edited extracts from **Dyslexia is My Superpower (Most of the Time)** by Margaret Rooke, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers*

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range of other valuable life skills such as cause and effect understanding, recognition and response, co-ordination, and communication skills. To take this a stage further, Experia's Multisensory Interactive Learning Environment (M.I.L.E.) technology enables you to create your own sensory experiences, tailored to the abilities, interests and needs of your individual users and can aid with educational and sensory development, helping students progress and develop their movement, vision, balance and understanding of touch.

Is multisensory equipment only for special education settings?

Every school, whether mainstream or special education, can support their students through a range of specialist sensory equipment. More than one in every 100 people are on the autism spectrum and more than 350,000 children in the UK have some form of learning disability.

According to the National Autistic Society, 63% of children on the autistic spectrum are not in the kind of school their parents believe would best support them.

What effect does multisensory equipment have on these students?

For the hundreds of thousands of children in the UK who have additional educational needs, sensory products are an engaging way of encouraging development in a range of sensory skills, as well as promoting relaxation and de-escalation to improve a distressed or overstimulated child's state of mind, helping them to relax and focus, and preventing the distraction of classmates and disruption of lessons.

What experience does Experia have in this area?

Sensory equipment can change a child's life, but for that to happen it needs to be right – right for your facilities, right for your teaching resources, right for your budget and most importantly, right for your users. Finding a supplier that listens to your needs and goes out of their way to support you throughout every step of the process can make all the difference. Experia works with some of the most experienced professionals in the UK and abroad in order to understand exactly what sensory facilities will best support the end users of their equipment, whatever their abilities.

What kind of equipment is available nowadays?

As well as the traditional calming use of sensory equipment, Experia pushes the boundaries to create the most innovative, creative and intuitive environments for all users. Dynamic and interactive sensory equipment, such as Experia's IRiS system, uses interactive wireless technology to coordinate all the equipment in a sensory room, promoting independence, confidence and a wide

What makes Experia special?

Whatever you need from your multisensory equipment, you can trust that Experia's sensory specialists will go out of their way to ensure you get what's right for your school's facilities, your budget, and of course your pupils' needs. Experia prides itself on listening to its customers and having the technology and expertise to exceed expectations, all the way from initial idea, through to ongoing support.

When is the best time to teach staff to use the equipment?

There's no better time than summer to think about creating or upgrading sensory facilities at your school. As well as the benefit of allowing installation to take place while your children are on holiday, summer provides time for all staff to learn about the equipment and plan its use in or around lessons, ready for maximum impact when the children return for the new school year.

Contact Experia by calling 0800 612 6077,
email schools@experia-innovations.co.uk or visit experia-innovations.co.uk



High ability, low handwriting?

Diane Montgomery looks at why high ability learners can struggle with the demands of handwriting and suggests some possible interventions...

PROFESSOR DIANE MONTGOMERY

Ellie is a new teacher with a Year 3 class. She's been told that although the catchment has high levels of disadvantage, there are some bright and very able pupils in her class. Yet while these pupils are very good orally, they seem unable to write their ideas down in ways that demonstrate their ability. Several avoid writing whenever possible, employing all sorts of tactics to do so.

This scenario illustrates a common, yet often neglected problem. Difficulties with handwriting, arising from a variety of causes, can lead to more able learners experiencing low self-esteem, frustration, boredom, alienation and behavioural and emotional difficulties – while also severely limiting their achievements in formal assessments and their future prospects.

Dysgraphia may occur on its own as a handwriting problem, but will more frequently present as part of the

condition DCD (developmental coordination disorder), which causes difficulties in learning gross motor and fine motor skills. There may sometimes also be visuospatial and visuomotor skills in the DCD mix, giving rise to problems in learning navigation and orientation skills, ball skills, knot tying and so forth. Once a skill's been learnt, however, children can perform it just as well as their peers without DCD. The problems come in the learning process.

Armed with some research and case studies, Ellie and her SENCo are thus ready to test some interventions aimed at increasing the speed and legibility of the pupils' handwriting.

Day 1

Assessment & diagnosis

Up first is a 10-minute test of handwriting speed. The children are given two minutes to compose and think about a given topic – in this case, 'My favourite...' Their task is write as much as they can about the topic as quickly as possible, while not worrying about their spelling.

The children then count the number of words they have written, check a buddy's paper and finally place the manuscript in their new writing folder. Any pick-up in speed can be checked after a term.

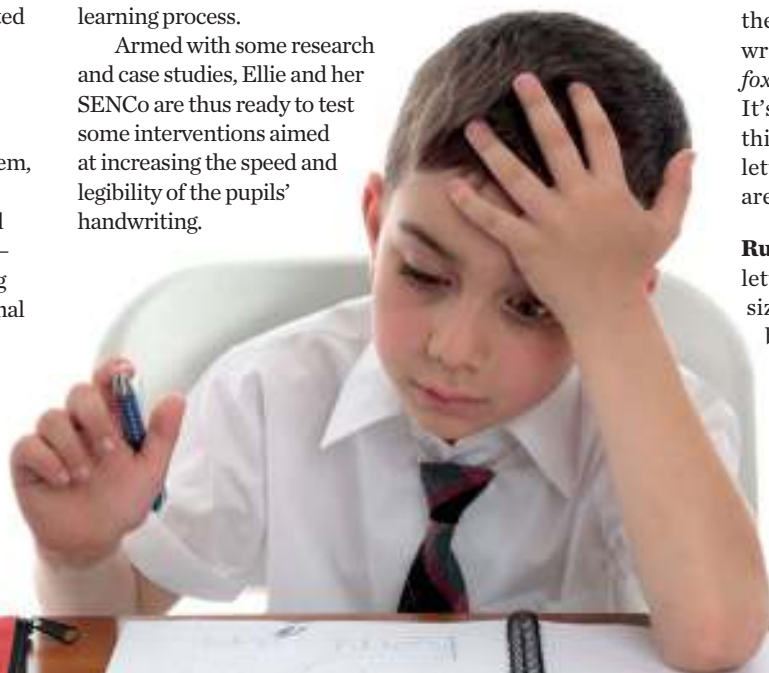
Day 2

Legibility

Treble-lined paper is handed out for writing practice. The children are asked to write the following sentence on the bottom line in joined up writing: 'The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.' It's explained to them that this sentence contains all the letters of the alphabet. They are then given two rules:

Rule 1: all the bodies of the letters must be the same size and fit between the two bottom lines.

Rule 2: all the ascenders and descenders (sticks and tails) must slope in the same direction (ie. be parallel). Their writing may lean forward, backward or be upright.



Left-handers will more often use a backward-leaning slope.

The children now copy the sentence again while trying to follow both rules. Afterwards, the children evaluate the results with their buddies and the teacher to consider whether it looks better, is easier to read and if any improvements are needed.

Days 3 - 10

Joining and practice

Over the next week, the children spend 5 to 10 minutes each day writing between the lines. No longer confined to the 'fox' sentence, the words they write are now related to the other work they're doing in class.

Now is also the time when the pupils are encouraged to join their writing. Not always taught from the outset, joining is harder to learn after grasping print or semi-joined handwriting. The change is particularly difficult for children with dysgraphia and similar conditions, but highly beneficial if they make the effort. The earlier this transition can begin, the easier it will be. For some, it can take six months of sustained effort; others might be able to achieve good results within a fortnight.

The children are then given copies of a joined letterform downloaded from the Learning Difficulties Research Project (an initiative I run – see ldrp.org.uk) for their writing folders. The teacher returns to the earlier 'fox' sentence task, only this time she asks the children to write it fully joined-up, between the three lines, with lead-ins or ghost lines according to their preference.

What does this mean? All single letters and words begin on the line with a 'lead-in' stroke, since this helps with the orientation and placing of letters that many early writers and dysgraphics find difficult. Alternatively, a child might prefer to use 'ghost in-lines', where the pen points at the line and moves to the letter before making contact. This way, all letters can still begin at the same point, rather than four different ones.

There are also 'lead-out' lines, which apply to the letters 'o', 'r', 'v', 'w' and 'x'. These all have lead-out lines from the top that must go straight across to the next letter and cannot start on the line. This can be easily internalised if sufficient practice time is spent on words and syllables, rather than single letters. Additionally, the sticks of all letters should all touch – or nearly touch – the top line, with the sole exception of 't'.

Day 11 onwards

Continuing practice and review

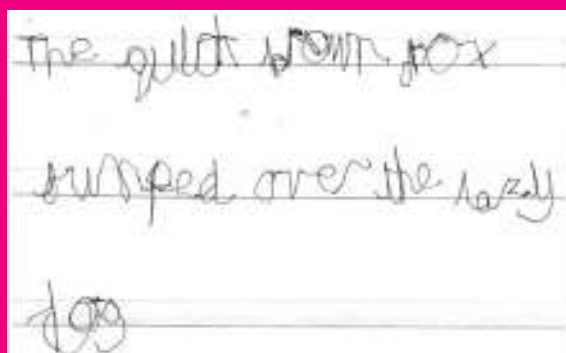
From then on, four common words or useful syllables are selected each day for the children to practice writing, such as 'and', 'the', 'what' and 'why', as well as '-ing' and '-tion'. The children write a whole line of each word in cursive on their three-line papers, and afterwards discuss and evaluate how they've done with reference to their writing folder.

How much progress have they made in speed and legibility? Who needs more time to practice? What do they need to practice? Some may need to continue with double lines, others

CASE STUDY - FREDDIE, 9

Freddie has a handwriting coordination difficulty, making it especially hard for him to change his style (pictured below). He requires considerably more basic training on sub-skills and pencil use to help him form letters in air before committing them to paper.

He also needs finger-strengthening activities, such as working with clay and dough, using eating utensils and tools, taking part in finger painting, playing musical instruments and so on – all of which should all have taken place much earlier in Reception and Year 1. He is therefore a candidate for use of a laptop and training in touch-typing.



may need help forming certain letters. It can be useful to organise a top-up, 'reminder-retraining' week every half term to ensure that their skills become well established.



Professor Diane Montgomery is professor emerita at Middlesex University and patron of the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE)

ldrp.org.uk | nace.co.uk

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- To what extent are children transferring the skills within the treble lines to the more typical structure, with just one writing line?
- What was the mean speed before and after intervention, compared with age norms?
- Can we pool our results to help other children, learn from these interventions and produce evidence-based practice to support existing case studies?

MAKE PE *a level playing field*

Adele Devine shares some advice for opening up gym classes and team games to students on the autism spectrum...

You arrive at work and are handed a dirty, smelly PE kit. “Get dressed and be on the field in five minutes!” You try to protest, but get shouted at. Maybe it’s rugby, rounders or hockey? It’s raining and your head’s starting to ache. You weren’t expecting this.

How would you feel?

The school day can be a social minefield for a student on the autism spectrum. Anxieties from noises, unexpected changes, smells and social pressures can all cause genuine pain, and adding a PE lesson may feel like we’re rubbing salt in the wound.

Just think of the obstacles that autistic learners can expect to face in PE. In addition to overwhelming anxiety, there will be the need to put on different clothes in the environment of a changing room, which can present issues with regards to their personal space and body confidence. Throughout the lesson, they may feel a near constant uncertainty over where to stand, what to do and what’s happening next.

Then, after all that, come the PE activities themselves and all that they entail – choosing teams, the way team games can highlight a child’s lack of coordination (which will be made even worse if the child has a tendency to perfectionism) and the general lack of order.



With that in mind, here are 10 supports that can go a long way towards making PE lessons more inclusive for students with autism.

First impressions

Set aside specific areas for warm-up activities. Seeing a big ball to bounce on, equipment for practising balance skills or a goal for shooting baskets will mean the student can immediately see there’s something they can go and do. Create an atmosphere where there’s clear order, and establish rules so that students know when it’s time to stop

and listen. Rules and order make things feel safe.

Changing rooms

Changing for PE may trigger anxieties. Providing a set space so that personal belongings can be kept in order can make a massive difference. Could changing be staggered to avoid the rush? A visual schedule may help prompt students on what to do next. Do they know why it’s important to change for PE? A Social Story (see carolgraysocialstories.com) may help explain this in a non-threatening, factual way.

Time

Sometimes all the autistic student needs is time to process and adjust to the environment. Allow some time at the start of the session before any demands are placed. Be aware that they may take a little longer to process when you speak to them. Use their name to gain their attention and keep language quite simple. A visual sand timer or clock display may help those who find PE activities difficult to endure.

Routine

The unexpected can trigger anxiety. A set routine will allow the student to know that there’s predictability and order to your session. Start with setting out fun things to explore, then have the same warm-up, followed by an activity and a similar cool-down at the end. The more the student with autism gets to know a pattern, the safer and happier they’ll feel.

Schedules

Providing a visual schedule to break down the stages of the session can make a huge difference. You don’t need to go cutting out pictures and laminating – try using large flipcharts or dry wipe boards and breaking the lesson down into three or four sections, with stick figures showing what students will do. Cross things out as you go. Think how we

count down the stops on the train. Knowing helps...

Visuals

A visual can let the students to see exactly what you're trying to explain. It's a point of reference they can refer back to if they don't process as quickly. Visuals reduce the need for lots of verbal instructions; it can be easier to tolerate instruction from a visual than from a teacher.

Space

When discussing this article with our PE specialist Amy Harwood, the first of her many useful suggestions was "Floor spots." She always carries multi-coloured rubber floor marking spots, since they help to show students exactly where they need to be, providing an instant visual for many different types of activity.

Support

Find out about the individual student. What are their motivators? What will they find challenging? Observe and set them up to succeed. Don't allow the choosing of teams – this is a cruel tradition which can only cause social discomfort. Why not select teams in different ways? Maybe one week do it by the benches the students have sat on; another week, number them '1, 2, 3, 4' or hand out differently coloured bibs.

Breaking things down

Providing a visual breakdown can make things less overwhelming. Skills develop in stages, so before playing tennis they must first learn to throw and catch, handle the racket and hit balls served to them. Set things up so that there are opportunities for students to practice discreet skills. Without a visual breakdown the student may feel frustrated that they're not instantly perfect and give up.



Praise

All students respond to praise. It's an essential and easy way of providing positive feedback, showing that the student is on track and building their self esteem. Look at what they're achieving and show them that you appreciate their efforts and that they're getting better all the time. Reward charts may help some students, but not all. Keep smiling, be overly patient and be predictable. Never, ever shout!

Final thoughts

As the retired pro basketball player Michael Jordan once pointed out, "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

We must set our learners with autism up to succeed by pre-empting and providing the supports they may require. Most importantly, we must build their self esteem and confidence so that they believe in themselves. Reveal their potential and praise them for having a go!

"I WAS ALWAYS PICKED LAST"

Scott James, a singer diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome who found fame through *The X Factor*, looks back in his own school PE lessons...

PE in school wasn't much fun for me. I lacked the ability to socialize properly with my peers, and the changing rooms were small and packed, which didn't do much for my senses. My co-ordination for sport was sorely lacking, and playing anything that involved a ball or tracking anything was often a big ask.

I was always picked last, made fun of and usually the one with the least amount of aptitude in any physical ability. In school I was somewhat on the larger side, which certainly didn't help matters, either with the other students or in terms of general mobility across our playing field.

Unfortunately this lasted through most of my school life, before my school finally began to understand that PE wasn't really for me, and offered to help me in other ways.

Extract from Colour Coding for Learners with Autism by Adele Devine, reprinted with permission from Jessica Kingsley publishers and Scott James.



Adele Devine is a special needs teacher and author; her book *Flying Starts for Unique Children* is available now from Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

 @AdeleDevine

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Lesson PLANS

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

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OUT OF THIS WORLD

Astronomy and emotions combine in this space-themed lesson, intended to help pupils better communicate their thoughts and feelings

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WRITING FOR A REASON

Give your pupils' learning around literacy greater clarity and purpose with these ideas from Kate Bradley

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LOOK WHAT I CAN DO!

Nikky Smedley looks at how pupils can be encouraged to explore what their bodies are capable of in terms of physical movement

p58



HOW LONG IS THIS?

Why measure objects in boring old centimetres when you can use... snowmen? Martin Saunders looks at how anything can be used as a scale

LESSON PLANS



**Even
more
ideas...**

Bear necessities



Positive Eye is a provider of teaching materials to support

children and young people with vision impairments, and has recently expanded its selection of free resources with some new additions – including some story bag suggestions and lesson ideas for multi-sensory teaching around the book *Peace at Last* by Jill Murphy. Find out more at positiveeye.co.uk/resources

Talking heads



The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families has made available a

Mental Health Animation & Teacher Toolkit. Designed to teach Y5 and Y6 learners about what mental health is and how to talk about it, the accompanying materials include assembly and lesson plans, cross-curricular activities and a leaflet for parents. Download it via tinyurl.com/af-mental-health

See what works



School leaders, teachers and practitioners may be interested in a new document

produced by The University of Coventry and ASK research, which brings together a wealth of academic research, school surveys and case studies relating to SEN support for the purposes of showing how different interventions and approaches have worked in good and outstanding settings across the country. PDF copies can be downloaded from nasen's SEND Gateway via tinyurl.com/sen-support-17

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

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Use of a range of relaxation and sensory techniques to experience a sense of calm and wellbeing
- Use art, craft and sensory materials to communicate thoughts, feelings and understanding about themselves and others
- Appreciate aspects of themselves and others

Out of this world



Help your pupils reflect on their feelings and emotions with this lesson plan themed around stars and planets from **Lucy Cree** and **Sarah Brogden**

 @bethejellyfish  bethejellyfish.com

Created by Be the Jellyfish, the 'Deep Space theme' is included in a series of classes designed to support children's social and emotional wellbeing. The classes help children to discover, explore, express, manage and develop feelings and emotions about themselves and their relationships.

The Deep Space theme facilitates this exploration of self and relationships with others – past, present and future – through the metaphor of planets and stars.



START HERE

Clear an area where children will be able to relax and create.

Create a calm, inviting, Deep Space-themed environment with a central focus point so that children may be seated in a circle.

Provide relaxing background music and lighting. Allow the children to bring cushions to sit on, if they're not already provided.

Gather a range of art and craft materials and prepare planet templates (cut out circles roughly the size of saucers and dinner plates) for each child. You may also wish to include some other space-related items, such as star stickers.



MAIN LESSON

1 | INITIAL GATHERING

Begin seated in a circle around the focus point, breathing deeply in through the nose and out through the mouth, slowly and purposefully. Invite children to share how they would like to feel during the class.

2 | EXPLORING THE THEME

Explain that the theme of the class is 'Deep Space', and that they'll be exploring this theme using a task and some 'massage'. Remain seated as you ask the children to suggest words linked to Deep Space – for example, 'stars', 'planets', 'comets',

'rockets' and so forth. This will help focus minds and provide inspiration to others.

3 | CREATING PLANETS

Give each child a planet template on which to create their own planet using colouring pens or similar, allowing 5 to 10 minutes. Ask them to also include their name somewhere on the planet. Once the children are ready, tell them that they are now going to form part of a Jellyfish solar system, with the focus point acting as the sun.

4 | SHARING

Ask each child to place their planet somewhere in the room or stand holding their planet in their chosen position.

“Talk to the children about their creative expression by asking them to explain their work as a whole, or elements of what they have produced”



Planets can be any distance from the sun and any distance from other planets. Once all the planets have been placed in the Jellyfish solar system, invite the children to explain why they have chosen that particular position for their planet. Then gather the planets together, place them on the focus point and return to the circle.

5 | MASSAGING

Explain that you're now going to do a massage activity to further help imagine other parts of Deep Space. At Be the Jellyfish, we use the word 'massage' to describe the action of drawing on the back of another person, using the fingers or the palm of the

hand. This form of massage is not a set of learnt strokes, but a form of free expression and creativity in response to a specific set of keywords, suggestions and instructions – in this case, the following:

- A universe with stars
- Full/half moon
- Planets
- Shooting stars
- Circling galaxies

Ask the children to remain in the circle, but turn to face the back of the person on their right. Tell them that they're not to touch another child until that child has given permission, and explain that they will only be 'drawing' on

their partners back using their hand or fingertips.

Encourage the children to keep drawing or going over their drawing until you move to the next bullet point. The children should then finish the massage activity with a gentle shoulder hug and a thank you.

6 | EXPRESSING CREATIVITY

The children should now leave the circle and be invited to select some art and craft materials for creating their own Deep Space-themed piece of artwork.

Continue to have the quiet music playing in the background and model a quiet speaking voice when speaking to the children. As the children create, the teacher should engage in creative chatter. The Be the Jellyfish process of doing this is to talk to the children about their creative expression by asking them to explain their work as a whole, or elements of what they have produced.

Children who have finished may wish to relax in the environment that has been created, create another piece of art or use sensory materials such as sand or dough to further explore and communicate the theme.

FINAL GATHERING

Ask the children to re-join the circle and invite them to bring their creations along with them. Praise the individuality and creativity of the pieces created and thank the children for sharing their creativity with the class.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Create a gallery or display of the work produced somewhere in the school. Include words and phrases to describe the feelings associated with the planets or other images
- Create a story or poem related to the Deep Space theme
- Revisit the Jellyfish Solar system
- Provide each child with a star from Deep Space, within which they are to write or draw all the qualities that make them an individual and special star

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why has your planet chosen that position?
- How does this planet feel today?
- What is happening in this picture?
- If you could change one thing in the picture what would it be and why?

Created by primary teachers Lucy Cree and Sarah Brogden and published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, The Be the Jellyfish programme consists of 30 class plans with photocopyable resources.

 @BethetheJellyfish
 bethethejellyfish.com

Writing for a reason



Give your pupils' literacy learning some added direction and purpose with these ideas and suggestions from **Kate Bradley**

 @Kate_Brads

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To record ideas
- To draft a piece of writing
- To publish in best

The lower KS2 National Curriculum for English writing includes many components. In the English lessons that take place every day in primary schools, we must consider how to meet the needs of learners with SEND so that they too can make progress.

The ability to read and write, and the possession of good speaking and listening skills, is crucial for children working below national curriculum expectations. Sometimes it will be most appropriate to pursue differentiation; on other occasions, it may be necessary to teach a different skillset altogether.



START HERE

When working with teachers, I'll typically suggest to them to consider where, developmentally, a child is working and plan work that is in, or just outside their comfort zone. This can be especially effective if the child is working alone in their stretch zone, having had high levels of teacher input. It's important to consider what skills the children might have gained prior to the lesson you're teaching – that way, you can identify what form of learning will be suitable for each individual child.



MAIN LESSON

1 | INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

The following activities can help to develop the reading and writing skills of children working at lower levels:

Reading

You'll need a book linked to the class topic and some Post-it notes. Before the lesson, go through the book and place Post-it notes over any character references or words that one or more of the children is currently learning about but struggling with. When story time starts, gather all the children together as normal and begin reading – but

then act surprised when you get to one of the hidden words.

Ask the child(ren) if they can guess the word. Have them then approach the front of the class and remove the Post-it note from the page. Then read the sentence again, this time inviting all the children to joining in the missing word.

Writing

For this activity, prepare an A4 writing frame for each child that's split into three sections – 'say it', 'spell it' and 'write it'. You'll also need a number of whiteboard pens and two baskets – one containing magnetic letters, and another magnetic picture labels showing familiar objects and items (eg. cats, cars, trains, people, etc.)



Give each child a writing frame and place the pens and both baskets within easy reach. Model taking a picture from the basket, placing it in the 'say it' section and saying the name out loud – for example, 'cat.' Then model searching in the basket of magnetic letters for the letters to spell 'cat' and place these in the 'spell it' section. Finally, model writing the word 'cat' in the 'write it' section.

Each child then takes it in turns to choose an item from the basket and repeat the same process. Set a 10-minute timer and see how many the child can do.

2 | PLANNING AND RECORDING

When a class is planning writing by discussing and recording their ideas, most children will be able to join in. In a traditional lesson, it may be that the children will each write out a list of possible ideas, or take part a shared brainstorming sessions. Other ways of recording ideas can involve children drawing pictures, using a voice recorder or perhaps even using an iPad to film short videos of themselves coming up with ideas. Remember that many children can benefit from using a range of strategies like this – not just children with SEN.

3 | DRAFTING

There are lots of ways to engage children with SEN in drafting – a writing frame with visuals could be provided, and an adult or another child could serve as a scribe. A laptop with word prediction, speech recognition and/or spoken feedback software installed (such as WordQ SpeakQ – see wordqspeakq.lgfl.net) will enable children to type – or even speak – rather than write, which can help with motivation.

4 | WRITING

Limiting the amount of writing a child has to do by providing them with smaller pieces of paper can help make the task seem less daunting. Clear visual steps to completing the task can be prepared beforehand and placed on the table. Below are some examples of what these could include:

- Start by writing 'Dear [person's name]'
- Write a sentence explaining why you are writing to them
- Ask two questions of the person
- Thank them for their time
- Finish the letter with 'Kind regards' and your name
- Check it for mistakes
- Put your hand up and wait for the teacher

5 | EDITING

If the child is able to follow an editing process, give them key points to focus on so that the process remains clear. Perhaps they can work through it with a partner, looking at their own work first and then at each other's, so that they experience the process twice.

Kate Bradley is head of autism and inclusion at Netley Primary School & Centre for Autism; She is also the co-author of 101 Inclusive and SEN English Lessons, due for publication by Jessica Kingsley Publishers on 21st December 2017

EXTENDING THE LESSON

• Tell the children that you'd like to publish their work by making it part of the class display. If you feel that their work may be better off being typed out and printed, give them that option. The iPad's Siri function can be useful here – open up the Notes app and have the child read the words out loud, adding in the punctuation as you go. Be sure to keep the child's motivation high, so that they feel success in their work.

• An important consideration is how to develop a child's handwriting and fine motor skills. I keep a kit that I hand out to teachers for precisely this purpose, which includes theraputty, instructions for finger exercises, stress balls, tweezers, and small film pot containers, into which the children have to try and squeeze as many pom-poms as possible before securing the lid!

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Where is the child developmentally?
- What adaptive equipment can I use to support the child in completing a lesson independently?
- Can they work at the same objective as the rest of the class, or do they need a different focus?

WHAT
THEY'LL
LEARN

- Exploration of the physical possibilities of their own and their classmates' bodies
- Observation from different perspectives for a specific purpose
- Giving each other respectful attention, and appreciation of one another's efforts
- Self-regulating with regard to turn-taking

Look what I can do!



Unlock your pupils' inner performer with this engaging movement and dance lesson from **Nikky Smedley**

[@howtospeakchild](https://twitter.com/howtospeakchild) [HowtoSpeakChild.com](https://www.howtospeakchild.com)

All our children need the challenge of connecting brain and body in a purposeful way. This simple framework provides an opportunity for everyone to join in at their own pace and at their own level.

Regardless of whatever particular issue any SEND child may be dealing with, it's important that they be given the chance to explore the physical invention they're capable of. We can support and model encouragement, to enable each child to enjoy the appreciation and applause of their peers, and to give them a true sense of achievement.



START HERE

This lesson is designed for small groups of children, ideally no more than 10. It's most successful when there's been some form of physical warm-up to help wake up the children's connection to their bodies.

Any activities incorporating short, isolated, repeated movements will be effective. Including warm-up, the lesson should take 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of children. Ensure that you have a camera or tablet device to hand so that you can record the children's movements. It can also be useful to spend some time in advance watching footage of individuals with any notable physical skills.



MAIN LESSON

Begin by designating a 'performing area' with the aid of a large vinyl non-slip mat, or by using tape to clearly mark out a 'stage' around which the audience will sit. Explain that you're all going to play a game called, "Look What I Can Do!" – and that although everyone will have the opportunity to take a turn, no-one will be forced to do so if they don't want to.

1 | MOVEMENT INVENTION

Each turn of the game consists of a child entering the performance area, assuming a starting position

of triumph appropriate to them (such as thrusting both arms up into the air) and declaring, "Look what I can do!", before executing one simple movement repeatedly, facing different directions – front, both sides, and back. After the child feels they have had enough, they should declare themselves all done by assuming the same triumphant position with which they started and proclaiming, "Ta-da!"

You may have an especially enthusiastic child who's willing to start proceedings, but it's as well to model the process yourself. It doesn't have to be anything too flamboyant – in fact, the simpler the better. An easy stamping pattern, a



sequence of claps and clicks or a single spin will suffice. Touching opposing elbows and knees is a good one, as is holding a single strong position, such as the trademark poses of Mo Farah or Usain Bolt. Repeat in each direction and then, “Ta-da!”

2 | PERFORMANCE AND APPRECIATION

Allow the children to indicate that they want a turn by a show of hands, or whatever system your school prefers. Some will instantly want more than one go, while others will be slower to take the risk of getting up in front of their friends. Don't pressurise the shyer children – it's often the ones who are slow to get going that are the hardest

to stop once they've started! Encourage everyone to lavish vigorous praise and applause after each child has completed a turn.

Make sure you film each child's turn, preferably facing different ways. In addition to the applause, showing off for the camera can be a strong motivator.

It's up to you whether or not you use accompaniment for the activity. If you choose to use music, make sure it's something with a very clear and even beat. Preparing a small selection of tunes that have very different moods – such as lyrical, robust, funky, whimsical – can help inspire your children.

Differentiation needs to be handled sensitively, but don't

underestimate how grounded in reality your children are. Faced with an equal and inclusive challenge, it may be the children you least expect who rise and shine.

If you have children who fail to engage with the activity at all first time round, don't worry. Often it takes one or two repeats of the session before certain children will choose to join in, but they will eventually. Also, it's not unusual for some children to go away and work up some material to perform next time round.

3 | SHARING AND ANALYSIS

After your group(s) have partaken in the active part of the process, you can then play back the footage you've taken to the whole class.

Discuss the skills and prowess that each child has shown and analyse the movements performed from all angles so that everyone has a full understanding of the physicality on display. Then encourage all the children to copy the movements they've seen to the best of their abilities. Having done so, there can then be further conversation about how they felt doing one another's movements and what they thought were the challenges and enjoyable elements of each piece of dance.

Use these discussions to draw out the children's vocabulary around their somatic learning. What did they find easy or difficult? What impressed them most? How did they manage to accomplish each move? What did they observe in one another's attempts to be accurate?

Nikky Smedley is a writer, storyteller, educator, public speaker and passionate advocate for the child, and heads up the How to Speak Child initiative – for more details, visit HowtoSpeakChild.com

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- The lesson can be repeated with developments and variations. For example, the children can get up and perform in pairs or trios, or you can concentrate on specific body parts.

- Use the video recordings to stimulate conversation about the body and physicality. Pay particular attention to areas of conjunction that often get forgotten – neck, wrist, ankle, shoulder, elbow.

- Create artworks around the movements the children have invented and study existing artworks, both abstract and figurative, that focus on the human body.

- Keep an eye out for dance performances in your area. Many companies will offer visits from dancers to your school.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Can you see...? Look at the amazing way ...

- How fast/slow/big/small can you do that? How about backwards?

- Do you want a turn? No? Don't worry, we'll come back to you later.

- What's special about that movement?

How long is this object – in snowmen?

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Measure using non-standard units
- Create a ruler based on any object
- Measure using body-based units of measurement
- Use teamwork and problem-solving to create giant shapes without a ruler



Help pupils understand how size relates to quantity with **Martin Saunders'** seasonally-themed measurements lesson

[@martingsaunders](#) martingsaunders.com

Measures are an area of maths that some people love and most pupils hate. We learn numbers as quantities of objects, parts of a sequence and as ways of working out number problems, but thinking of them as a size can be a difficult leap.

Using a ruler is a (relatively) simple process, but reading a size from a scale has no real connection to a sense of quantity. This lesson looks at how we can use objects to make measurements and help children develop an understanding of how size relates to quantity.

START HERE

Measure a range of objects in centimetres and record the results before posing the question, "Why is a centimetre a centimetre, and not any larger or smaller?" We know that there are 100 centimetres in a metre, and that a metre was originally defined in 1793 as one ten-millionth of the distance from the equator to the north pole. It probably wasn't that accurate a measurement in the beginning, but a much more reliable reference has since been agreed. Talk about centimetres being something that people invented, and that they can really be any size. What if we measured in conkers or mini snowmen instead?...



MAIN LESSON

1 | SNOWMAN RULERS

It doesn't really matter what objects pupils use to measure with, but ones that you can easily get a lot of, are regularly shaped and roughly 1 to 3cm wide work best. Raiding the maths cupboard should provide a plentiful supply of suitable items such as counters, play money, plastic dinosaurs, pebbles, cubes or rods. Depending on the time of year, you could easily add a seasonal theme using conkers, mini snowmen or Easter chicks.

Once pupils have their measuring equipment in order, get them started by

asking them to measure a simple shape and record their findings and chosen unit. The difficult idea here is that measuring using a scale represents a quantity. The fact that they can place seven mini snowmen side by side along a rectangle and record the width as '7 snowmen' closes that gap and hopefully helps to build a quantitative understanding of size.

Next, ask pupils to draw a mark representing their object's unit width. By repeating this and adding numerals to each mark they will have effectively created their very own snowman ruler (other rulers are available).

2 | CONCEPTUAL LEAP

Now we have measurement taking under control, add a level

“The difficult idea here is that measuring using a scale represents a quantity”



of complexity by asking pupils to apply their new skill. Ask the children to roll a dice to determine how many of their non-standard unit they must use when drawing a new shape. They must use their objects to draw the shape, adding labels to show that they've measured the width and height correctly – for

example, a rectangle that's three snowmen in width and five snowmen in height.

This challenge can easily be differentiated by asking pupils to draw a rectangle (easy), a different shape (medium) or a snowman or animal. There's a big conceptual leap from a rectangle to any other shape that fits inside rectangular

dimensions. With a few attempts, and clear modelling of how to create a rectangular frame to contain their other shape or animal, more able pupils should be able to draw within their own unit and dimension.

3 SUPERSIZE IT

The final step is to go outside and go large. Children will be using parts of their body to draw giant shapes on the playground in pairs.

Demonstrate a square, one pupil wide, to make sure they understand the task. Next, move on to a rectangle four of their feet wide by eight of their feet long and a triangle two paces wide and one pace long. Drawing a circle requires a bit more thought: how do we know how wide it should be all around? How do we plan to draw a circle? In this way, drawing a simple shape can become quite a challenging problem-solving task, but the children should eventually realise that they have to measure from the centre to create their circles.

To finish, ask pupils to evaluate the shapes other groups have drawn. Give them an allocation of five smiley faces and tell them they can draw as many as they like on any shape that isn't theirs.

Let groups add up the smiley faces they've been given and question pupils about who's shapes have impressed them and why, which shapes were most challenging to draw, and what tips they would give someone else trying to draw these shapes.

Martin Saunders is a primary school teacher and a co-founder of edtech startup Zammer.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- If you want to take the measurement aspect of this lesson further, set a similar task based on volume and capacity where pupils measure, for example, how many egg cups or thimbles a milk bottle contains.

- For KS2, the circle-drawing activity demonstrates very clearly why a radius exists and the connection between radius, diameter and circumference.

- Body measurements have a rich history, with many links to the Egyptians. The royal cubit is apparently the earliest known standard measure, which could be investigated as part of a wider topic.

- To take the outdoor activity further, why not design a more complex drawing, like a giraffe or Christmas tree, and see if groups of pupils can follow instructions to accurately draw the picture?

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What problems would we have if we used our hands or feet to measure everything?

- How do you know that rectangle isn't a square?

- What makes a triangle a triangle?



Why are we excluding SO MANY CHILDREN with SEND?

Jarlath O'Brien looks at why children with SEND are overrepresented in school exclusion statistics, and prompts leaders to start asking themselves some serious questions...



tinyurl.com/dfe-excl-1516.

This is backed up by the recent publication of 'Local area SEND inspections: one year on' by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (see tinyurl.com/ocqc-la-send). Unsurprisingly, we read that "Children and young people who have SEND were found to be excluded, absent or missing from school much more frequently than other pupils nationally..."

"School leaders had used unofficial exclusions too readily to cope with children and young people who have SEND. Across nearly all local areas inspected, an alarming number of parents said that some school leaders asked them to take their children home. This was in addition, or as an alternative, to fixed-term exclusions. It is illegal."

My biggest concern remains the fact that children with SEND are grossly overrepresented in both fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The DfE note that: "Pupils with identified special educational needs (SEN) accounted for **almost half** of all permanent exclusions and fixed period exclusions," and that pupils with SEN support furthermore, "had the highest permanent exclusion rate and were **almost 7 times more** likely to receive a permanent exclusion than pupils with

no SEN." (Emphases mine).

You could be forgiven for jumping to the conclusion that children with SEND are simply predisposed to behaving badly when compared with their peers without SEND. This cannot be right (I've worked in comprehensive, selective and special schools, and visited many more), so it's interesting to consider why these children feature heavily in exclusion statistics, and to think about what we can do to reduce this inequality.

Negative behaviour and unmet needs

This is fundamental to improving the behaviour of children with SEND in schools. It's enabled me personally to grow from the nervous NQT who once struggled with behaviour, to someone who has now developed a depth of confidence that this approach works.

Consider the research

by Geoff Lindsay and Julie Dockrell, for example, on the relationship between speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (see tinyurl.com/dfe-SLCN-behaviour). They found that children with SLCN are 35 to 50% more likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. That may well shock you or your colleagues – it shocked me when I first learned of it – but it will be blindingly obvious to anyone who has worked in Early Years.

Often, it's to do with the large amounts of verbal information they're having to process – think how much of our lessons are dominated by this – and/or frustrations they may have with communicating, such as the technical vocabulary they may need to be successful in different subjects.

"Children with SLCN are 35 to 50% more likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties"



I take great interest in the annual release of statistics from the Department for Education on the exclusion of children from school (see tinyurl.com/dfe-excl). In the last couple of years this has become something of a depressing exercise, with both fixed-term and permanent exclusions on the rise.

In addition, I've had more conversations with LAs about exclusions recently than I'm happy with; they've been asking me to work with their schools because exclusions in their areas are skyrocketing. The statistics provide fascinating detail, since they show significant regional variations in the levels of exclusion (though they may mask illegal exclusion, which isn't counted). I recommend taking a look to see how your area compares with your neighbours – they even provide maps, which you can find at

Questions for leaders:

- Are our teachers fully aware of the needs of our children with SEND?
- Do our teachers know how to meet those needs in their lessons?
- Do our teachers need further support and training in order to meet those needs?

Inflexible behaviour policies

In his book *Mindware*, psychologist Richard Nisbett writes about the common mistakes we make when considering our behaviour and that of others. He says that we “Should pay more attention to context,” adding that, “This will improve the odds that we’ll correctly identify situational factors [the environment and people

around us] that are influencing our behaviour and that of others... We should realise that situational factors usually influence our behaviour and that of others more than they seem to, whereas dispositional factors [innate to the child] are usually less influential than they seem.”

When thinking about situational factors, you might recognise a child’s behaviour as communicating “I’m scared!”, “I feel threatened!” or “I can’t do it!” In contrast, when seeing a child’s behaviour as due to dispositional factors, you may often be thinking, “She’s so naughty!”, “He’s an absolute nightmare!” or “She just can’t sit still!”

By definition, inflexible behaviour policies don’t allow

for context – such as when a child with sensory integration difficulties can’t bear to have their top button done up, chews on their cuffs or struggles to maintain eye contact.

Question for leaders:

Are we making reasonable adjustments with our behaviour policies, as required by law, for children with SEND?

Progress over time

Does your analysis show that you’re using fixed-term exclusion repeatedly for the same students, with no discernible improvement in their behaviour? If so, have you considered the effectiveness of fixed-term exclusion as a behaviour improvement strategy?

It might seem to communicate that the situation has been dealt with by doing ‘something tough’, but exclusion without

subsequent improvement is just respite. In practice, it implies that we’ve either run out of ideas, or simply expect the child to sort their life out. In either case, you’re going to be in for a long wait.

As teachers, we change tack if our teaching strategies don’t lead to learning, yet we don’t always take this approach when examining the effectiveness of our behaviour management strategies. Unless we take concerted action within schools to reduce the gross overrepresentation of children with SEND in fixed-term and permanent exclusion statistics, we’ll continue to mistakenly associate SEND with behavioural difficulties.

Question for leaders:

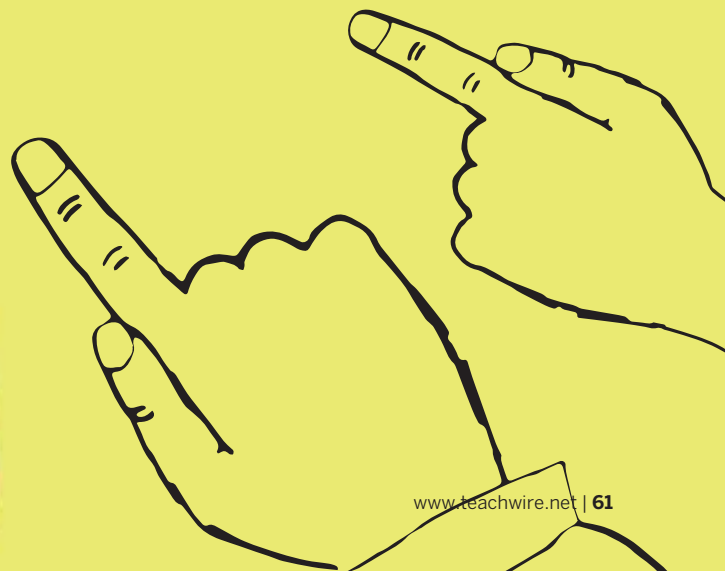
Are we persisting with sanctions for children who are continuing to struggle with their behaviour with no lasting improvement? If so, what are we going to do differently?



Jarlath O'Brien is director for schools at The Eden Academy. His new book

Better Behaviour – a Guide for Teachers will be published by SAGE in 2018

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- are not related to the National Curriculum, though the common language of the P Scales is occasionally used for ease of understanding.



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Care for the team you're in

Support your pupils' wellbeing, by all means – but don't neglect your own or that of your colleagues, advises **Susanna Pinkus...**

To work in the field of special education is a privilege. Knowing that a child's life and that of their family has been transformed through the specialist care of you and your team is simply unbeatable.

Yet in the drive to meet the needs of the children, it can be easy to overlook the wellbeing of the SEND team itself. Whilst intensely rewarding, the SENCo role is also demanding and finding time to care for your team may be not be at the top of your list of priorities. However, without conscious attention, you may find that burnout and exhaustion can easily set in.

Your school may already have a staff wellbeing policy, but if not, you can still develop

supportive ways of working in the SEND department. With some forethought and a small investment of time, there's a lot you can do to incorporate team wellbeing into your schedule. Here are some starting points for developing a team that feels genuinely supported, valued and happy in their roles.

Model self-care

Caring for others starts with being mindful of your own wellbeing. The importance of caring for your emotional health when times are good, as well as when you're under pressure, can't be understated. Days fly past quickly in school, so allocate times for a taking a walk or lunch with colleagues. If these appointments are diarised in advance you're more likely to keep them. Consider starting your day by using a meditation app such as Headspace (see [headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com)). Find a quiet spot and use it while wearing headphones to block out any residual noise. Encourage your colleagues to do the same.

Share and air

Rotate times for meeting with your team, both individually and together. Regular meetings where successes and concerns can be shared are essential. Encourage solution-based thinking, keeping a formal list of concerns along with proposed solutions, which can be very helpful in addressing and de-personalising difficulties. Also, by itemising 'Successes' as a standing item on your weekly agenda, you can collectively measure the team's progress, be it with an individual student, classroom strategy or engaging with a family. When forging forward, it can be easy to forget how far you've come.

Value home lives

Wherever possible, you'll want to support the work-life balance of your team by being flexible in how they manage their home and work commitments. You'll want people in your team who go the extra mile for the students, but these same people will most likely want to be available for their own children and families. If colleagues want to accompany a family member to a hospital appointment or attend their children's assemblies, enable that to happen. Providing systems are in place for giving sufficient notice, there are always ways of supporting staff in this way.

Appreciation counts

Take the time to notice efforts and say thank you – in writing, if you can. Appreciation counts for a lot. Consciously identify what colleagues are doing well and the difference they've made. Consider collecting feedback via questionnaires from students, parents and staff so that the team can hear directly from stakeholders how their efforts have had an impact, and provide team members with a record of their own positive feedback. Displaying anonymised comments on a noticeboard can also be a powerful way of reinforcing the team's good work and demonstrating to the rest of the school community the difference they're making.



*Dr Susanna Pinkus is the head of special needs at Harrow School, an educational consultant and the author of *How to Create A Parent Friendly School**

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[drsusannapinkus.com](https://www.drsusannapinkus.com)



GIVE YOUR TEAM A KNOWLEDGE BOOST

We use a graduated approach when addressing learners' needs, writes **Michael Surr** – so why not try doing the same with your SEND-related staff CPD?

We know that effective CPD for teachers is essential if we're to improve outcomes for children and young people. I'd argue that this is especially true where children and young people with SEND are concerned.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and subsequent SEND code of practice both emphasise the role that high quality teaching plays in meeting the needs of learners with SEND. Despite this, however, NQTs can leave initial teacher education feeling ill-equipped to meet the needs of this group. In a research report published by the DfE earlier this year, 'SEN Support: a survey of schools and colleges' (see tinyurl.com/dfe-SEN-17), it's stated that a third of teachers don't see the identification of SEND as their responsibility.

In addition, following publication of the Making a Statement (MAST) Study (see tinyurl.com/mast-study) and subsequent Special Educational Needs in Secondary Education (SENSE) study earlier this year (see tinyurl.com/sense-study), it would appear that support staff are still largely

responsible for in-class support. The DfE's Teachers' Standards (see tinyurl.com/teachers-standards) make clear that teachers have responsibility for all learners, and that they must be able

to adapt their teaching in order to be able to respond to the strengths and needs of those learners by using a range of approaches. It would therefore seem to make sense for CPD to be focussed on classroom practice. A study carried out by McKinsey in 2007, 'How the world's best performing school systems come out on top' (see tinyurl.com/mck-schools-07), attempted to identify why some systems succeeded and others didn't. They discovered that those which were successful "Maintained a strong focus on improving instruction, because of its direct impact on student achievement."

SENcos, in collaboration with the SLT, have a pivotal role to play in the planning, development and implementation of effective CPD – and it's vital to take a strategic approach to this in order to maximise effectiveness. The graduated approach of 'assess, plan, do and review' is the cycle used for addressing the needs of learners with SEND, but it can also be a useful approach to take where staff CPD is concerned.

Assess

In the context of CPD, we should

begin by identifying what the evidence is telling us about the development needs in our setting. We can do this by asking questions such as 'How well are learners with SEND achieving in my setting?' and 'How does this compare to learners without SEND?', and using data that's both quantitative (e.g. school tracking) and formative (e.g. observations, work scrutinies) to answer them.

The next step is to then look at those needs and prioritise them, taking into account the wider School Improvement Plan (SIP). It may be that the SIP doesn't specifically mention SEND, but it's highly likely that links can still be made to it. If, for example, the SIP references a development need in maths, consider what the implications for learners with SEND are. Linking to the SIP will help to ensure the 'buy in' of not only staff, but SLT too.

Finally in this stage, outcomes and success criteria for the resulting program of CPD need to be formulated.

Plan

At this stage it's worth considering the needs of individual staff, which is important for several reasons. Firstly, it's unlikely that all staff will need the same input. Where possible, you should therefore try to utilise a program of CPD that's flexible enough to be tailored to different needs.



Secondly, as well as development needs there will be areas of strength that can be used to encourage collaboration through coaching and mentoring – particularly where staff have the skill-set needed to be able to provide the necessary CPD themselves. Thirdly, by grouping staff according to need, you'll make the most efficient use of time and resources.

Most, if not all schools will have links with other settings, regardless of whether or not they're part of a multi academy trust. It's worth exploring if CPD needs can be addressed across settings. Beyond having the potential to save money, linking staff together from different settings can also offer a learning opportunity in its own right.

The final step in planning is to decide on the programme of CPD that will address the areas of priority and identified outcomes. One example of an effective program that focuses on developing teaching is nasen's 'Focus on SEND' training (see sidebar).

Do

While this is probably the most straightforward aspect of the 'assess, plan, do and review' cycle, it's important to consider the best approach to ensuring that the CPD stays on track.

One possibility is to include the program in the performance management cycle. Chapter 6.4 of the SEND code of practice states that, "The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN, and the progress made by pupils, should be a core part of the school's performance management arrangements and its approach to

professional development for all teaching and support staff."

This will not only help the SENCo, but also provide a safeguard for teachers too.

Review

It's at this point that a final review of the impact of the CPD should take place. In order to make a judgement, the agreed outcomes should be referred to and relevant information used to identify if they've been met. As with the 'assess' stage, both summative and formative information will be useful here.

As well as identifying whether or not the outcomes have been achieved, it's also useful to consider how delivery of the CPD went, as there could be useful learning here for subsequent programs. Were there particular barriers to delivery of the program? Was the planned timescale realistic? Which staff worked well together? Can the learning be shared with others?

By adopting a strategic approach to CPD for SEND, we will not only ensure that needs are being met effectively – thus having a positive impact on children and young people – but also raise the status of SEND by modelling a process that can be used across other areas of the school.



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nasen.org.uk



'FOCUS ON SEND' TRAINING

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To find out more, visit oln.nasen.org.uk.

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equals.co.uk



3

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magicoftheatre.com



5

Fun and games

Now available from Speech Link is a range of print and downloadable resources for speech and language work. Forming part of the company's Language Link package, they're well suited for use both in the classroom and for practising at home. They include multi-activity 'Pocket Packs', A3 board games and photocopiable language homework sheets, which combine to form a colourful and fun toolkit aimed at developing a child's language skills. A 5% discount is available to buyers of all five of Speech Link's language resources and the 'Creative Board Game' pack.

speechlink.info

Give your PUPILS A VOICE

Marie Gascoigne and **Victoria Riley-Hill** show how a wish to improve your SLCN provision can be turned into pupil-focused practice that delivers life-changing results...

Improving the speech, language and communication of every child in your school will improve their life chances, raise attainment, lead to better behaviour and contribute to positive inspection outcomes.

Those might seem to be ambitious claims, but we've seen the evidence for ourselves and presented it in a report for the Communication Trust (see tinyurl.com/talking-generation). Children with poor oral language skills at school entry have a significantly higher chance of later struggling with reading and academic attainment. They are also more likely to be excluded, develop social, emotional and mental health problems in later life and find employment more difficult to secure.

SLCN is the most frequently reported SEND category in primary schools, and numbers are rising. Two children in every classroom are likely to have developmental language disorder, and in areas of disadvantage many more will need additional support to achieve good outcomes. A whole school approach and improvement plan that addresses these needs can only have a positive impact.

As a SEND specialist, you can expect to be presented with an ever-growing range

of intervention and training packages to commission directly, as well as varying levels of support from external specialists, from speech and language therapists to specialist teachers.

Our own work in helping schools improve their SLCN provision uses the Balanced System accredited scheme for school improvement (thebalancedsystem.org), which tells us how important it is to have a framework to understand the needs of pupils in your own school, and see how the provision or training you access or commission can add value. It's crucial to ensure that scarce resources generate maximum impact.

Understand

We start by understanding the current picture of need, skills and provision at a universal, targeted and specialist level. The existing provision and any gaps are identified across family support, environment, workforce, identification and intervention.

Workforce development is at the core of the process, but only part of the story. By 'workforce', we mean everyone – governors, senior leadership, teachers, TAs, lunchtime and after school supervisors and even transport staff, where relevant.

Typical reflections from schools at the end of this initial 'understand phase'

can sometimes resemble the following: *"Pupils' SEN were not identified accurately, and their needs were not being met. Some pupils considered to have behaviour difficulties actually had SLCN."*

Schools will often notice that where support is in place, the quality can vary and impact upon progress. This variation will frequently be related to the confidence of a staff member, or other demands placed on staff



that limit their ability to deliver interventions as they have been trained to do.

In around 90% of schools, 'family support' for SLCN has emerged as a key area for development. This surprises many, but small changes in how parents and carers are given access to information and support can have a big impact when it comes to pupils' level of engagement and access to learning when in school.

Understanding the full range of existing provision and gaps will provide schools with a clear accountability framework. Provisions have to be linked to delivering outcomes, and outcomes require a whole system approach. The purpose of this 'Understand' phase analysis is to address schools' need to both target the support and training they commission, and to hold their providers to account.

Plan and do

With the baseline established, the next 'Plan and Do' phase uses the school's own analysis to establish a number of projects that will be outcome-focused. One example might be, *"Staff will have the skills and competences to deliver a rolling programme of targeted interventions."* This project will have been generated with the aid of the school's audit, be linked to senior leadership priorities to create a bespoke action plan and ideally referenced in the school development plan. Note that this is not a plan for the SENCo to deliver by themselves!

Review – so what?

Once those plans are implemented, we turn to gathering evidence of outcome and impact. This goes beyond showing what happened, who benefited and how good the provision was to a more demanding form of impact evidence – the 'So what?'

This 'So what?' question is challenging, but essential. It's about more than simply believing that something works; it's about being able to show *how* it's making a difference in *your* school for *your* pupils, as illustrated by the following examples:

- **So what** has changed at home for children where parents have had some support?
- **So what** learning are pupils able to access in class as a result of changes to the environment?
- **So what** has changed about how staff who have had training are interacting with pupils?

Schools tell us that they value this evidence framework because it enables them to demonstrate the effectiveness of SLCN provision and subsequent pupil progress.

The review phase goes on to compare baseline self-rating and audit with a review of process and practice using a 'theory of change' approach. These reflections are then used to inform further strategic planning.

The school is provided with an outline of what 'good' looks like, based on their own need and a provisional plan to maintain, develop and monitor – in this way, the improvement cycle can continue. Those who wish to can have the opportunity to gain an external accreditation for their work in supporting SLCN.

Schools that have completed the cycle using the Balanced System with mentor support have reported increased engagement with families around support for SLCN and being able to devise a workforce development strategy that includes training for all, as well as willingness among some staff to take on communication champion

FIVE STRANDS

Ensuring that a school can meet its SLCN need requires more than just staff training and intervention packages. To have the greatest impact, schools need to support the whole system. Our own Scheme for Schools uses the Balanced System's Five Strands, under which schools examine outcomes in the following areas:

1 FAMILY SUPPORT

Helping parents and carers build confidence so they can communicate more effectively at home

2 ENVIRONMENT

Ensuring the whole school and every classroom is a communication friendly, enabling environment for all pupils

3 WORKFORCE

Developing a skilled workforce that is able to support all children's speech, language and communication (SLC)

4 IDENTIFICATION

A process for identification and monitoring of SLCN

5 INTERVENTION

A range of appropriate interventions is available across the school

roles within the school. They also report seeing better use of external specialist support, in a way that adds value to the expertise of school staff, being able to measure outcomes for individuals and pupil groups engaged in specific interventions, increased confidence among school support teams and less pressure to seek EHCPs for some pupils.

Ultimately, we've seen how schools can be successfully challenged to become more ambitious, motivated and focused on raising the profile of SLCN. As one SENCo once tells us "There's much more of a shared ethos and clarity about what we all do across the school and throughout the day to support SLCN."



Better Communication CIC is a community interest company supporting change for children and young people with SLCN

Marie Gascoigne (left) is the company's director and Victoria Riley-Hill its school mentor for SLCN

@BetterCommCIC

bettercommunication.org.uk

Talking tech FOR ALL



Schools aren't short of options when it comes to assistive hardware and software for pupils with SLCN, but the choice can be overwhelming. **John Galloway** highlights some names worth looking out for...

The ability to communicate with others and make ourselves understood is critical to our relationships with others and how we function in our learning, which is why addressing SLCN among children and young people ought to be a priority in the classroom.

No matter how students are being addressed, be it through specialist interventions or everyday classroom activities, technology can prove very helpful.

Providing a voice

The issue for some learners will be having a voice and being able to speak – a concern that can arise irrespective of an individual's other abilities, as demonstrated by the likes of Professor Stephen Hawking. Technologies to help manage and support this can range from bespoke communication aids costing several thousand pounds, right down to gadgets

loaded with specific words or phrases that can be had for as little as under a tenner.

Fully functioning communication aids, such as the Indi tablet from Tobii Dynavox (£999.00 www.tobiidynavox.com) can be expensive and require considerable time and training to get the most out of them. Such machines have been challenged in recent years however, with the advent of tablets, particularly iPads, and apps that can turn them into fully functioning communication aids.

Examples of these include Proloquo2go from Assistiveware (£249.00, assistiveware.com) and Clicker Communicator from Crick Software (£199.99 cricksoft.com). As apps, both might appear to be expensive, but when combined with the cost of the iPad needed to

run them, the total cost still comes out as considerably less than a dedicated device.

Of course, they also provide all the other

functionality of an iPad, such as the ability to stay organised, entertained and educated just about anywhere. That said, many high-end, tailor-made machines are now built around Windows computer devices, and can therefore serve as powerful, multi-functional devices in themselves.

Grids and predictors

Other approaches to developing communication skills are based on recognised classroom practice, such as PECS (£79.99 www.pecs.com) – an electronic version of the well-established system based on communication books that's often used with pupils with autistic spectrum conditions.

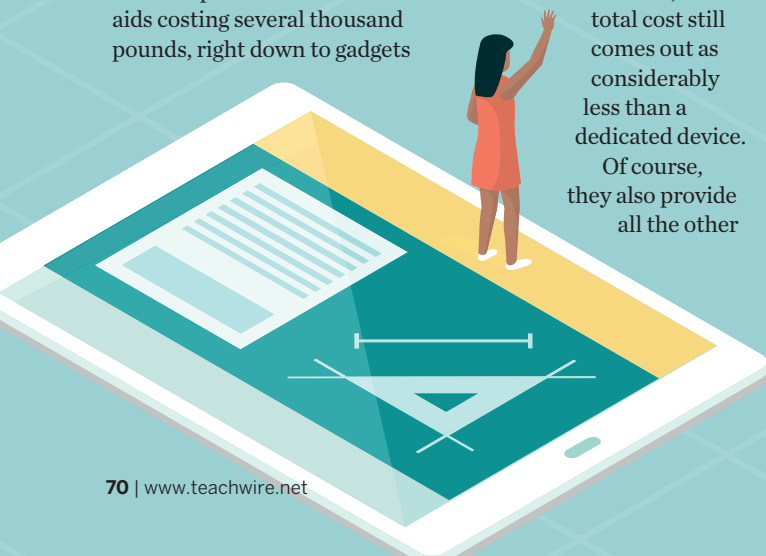
If some resources can seem costly, others are available at very little, or even no cost. Grid Player (thinksmartbox.com) is a free app spun off from Grid 3 – the £480 software used to power many high-spec communication devices. It contains a couple of symbol-supported communication sets, along with a text-based version that allows users to type with support from a predictor,

before speaking the words aloud. The drawback is that you can only create new

materials using the main PC-based, software, which are then exported to your iPad. A similar proposition is Widgit Go Basic (widgit.com), which is a free cut-down version of the full £54.99 Widgit Go iOS app.

For users who are comfortably literate, apps such as Verbally (free, verballyapp.com) can be effective. Users simply type or pick out words from the word bank, phrase bank or predictor, create a sentence and have it read aloud. Some might find a quicker system in the form of ClaroCom (free, claro-apps.com), which offers access to banks of phrases grouped into categories such as 'education', 'hygiene' and 'coffee shop'.

Some learners may not yet be at the stage of using text-based systems, even with symbol support, but there are a number of options for them too. Some might like the simplicity of iSpeakButton (£3.99, goatella.com) which provides a target area as large as the device's screen and speaks a recorded message when touched. Others might prefer to select from a grid such as TalkBoard (£16.99,



mashley.net) or ChoiceBoard (£1.99, technochipmunk.com), both of which offer a set of images on to which you can record speech for when they are touched. You can get a similar outcome for next to nothing by using the highly entertaining MadPad (£2.99, smule.com).

Low-tech approaches

It's not just high-grade technology such as tablets and touchscreen computers that can provide children with a voice. BIGmacks (£89, inclusive.co.uk) have been popular in classrooms for many years. The original version is essentially a large button that can record messages and play them back when pressed. Those messages might include "Good morning miss, good morning everyone," for registration, or "What's the time Mr. Wolf?" for joining in at reading time. Variations on the basic model include the BIG Step by Step (£122), which can play a series of different messages in sequence with each touch.

However, playback of simple recordings can also be done much more cheaply. For example, there's the 15cm x 10cm Chatterbox 10 (£15, inclusive.co.uk), which features multiple sections that can each contain a separate recording. Even smaller is the Talking Cube (£5.75, talkingproducts.com), which is around an inch in size and has a protruding button to trigger recordings of up to 20 seconds.

You could also look at some of the products from the Talk Time range, like the Talking Postcards from TTS (from £19.45 for three, tts-group.com) which feature wipe clean surfaces and a short recording capacity. The range also includes Talking Buttons, which can be used to experiment with different phrases by having each one

assigned to different words, shuffling them around and pressing them to create new sentences.

Experimentation and articulation

Some children and young people may need support to learn about their voices – perhaps because of their level of learning disability, or maybe following a medical episode such as a stroke. Here, an element of fun can prove helpful. Apps such as the popular Talking Tom and Talking Ben (free, outfit7.com), which echo and mimic what users say to them can be very amusing and engaging.

Alternatively, there's Fasteroid (£2.99, specialiapps.org) – a game where players control a spacecraft via the pitch and duration of their verbal utterances. Similarly, both Speak Up (free, sensoryapphouse.com) and Soundala Play (£1.99, soundala.com) display colourful patterns that change as different sounds are detected.

Reluctant communicators

Introducing an element of fun can be very helpful when

working with children and young people who are reluctant to communicate, such as those considered to be a 'selective mute' – they can speak, but choose not to.

One approach can be to offer playful experiences that require speech in order to enjoy them. The fun provided by the aforementioned Talking Tom or Club Caveman (free, App Store) can encourage some to speak in order to get a response, or in the case of Voice Changer (free, App Store) experiment with different sounds.

Another way of working could be to offer communication from a 'third party,' such as a talking image or an avatar. The first of these can be created using an app such as Morfo (free, sunsparklabs.com), where a photo is overlaid with animations to create facial expressions that can be played back accompanied by a voice recording. This may allow a user to express themselves through the image on screen, rather than directly. Similarly, the browser-based (Flash required) service available at voki.com allows users to create an avatar that can speak on their behalf.



FURTHER RESOURCES

Commmap

An online resource set up by speech therapists to provide classroom activities for use by non-specialists
commmap.org

AAC Scotland

Has a useful guide to iPad augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) apps for people with complex communication needs, presented as a 'wheel' of different categories that can be downloaded as a handy PDF
tinyurl.com/wheel-aac-apps

Speechlink

Provides access to online assessment and training delivered by experienced speech therapists
speechlink.info



John Galloway is a consultant and writer, specialising in the use of technology for the

educational inclusion of learners with SEND in schools

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[johngalloway.info](#)

SPEECH SUPPORT IS FOR EVERYONE

Henrietta McLachlan and **Alex Hall** take a look at what supporting the SLCN of all pupils actually involves in practice – and where schools have a tendency to get things wrong...

Staff in educational settings will be well of aware how fundamental speech, language and communication skills are to children's academic, social and emotional development, and the way in which vast numbers of children are being held back by delays and difficulties in this area. So what forms of training and staff awareness initiatives can make a difference?

Common pitfalls

We know from research previously commissioned by the government that as

many as 60% of teachers lack the confidence and ability to effectively focus on pupils' spoken language skills (see tinyurl.com/dfes-spld-07), which will inevitably have an impact on their level of achievement.

In 2008, a review of services for children and young people with SLCN led by John Bercow (see tinyurl.com/bercow-slc-08) found that staff development for adults working with these children on a daily basis would be needed to rectify this. However, despite the

number of initiatives and training programmes made available to schools in the years since, we've yet to see the widespread and long-term change in staff practice that's required.

Teachers and TAs may struggle to put new learning into practice after attending training course, or find that a new focus on children's communication isn't in tune with their school's current priorities. Some may move on, leaving their previous school without the necessary in-house expertise.

Consequently, even where key staff have had appropriate training, audits of school practice often don't demonstrate physical environments, lesson planning or staff-pupil interactions that support children's spoken language development.

Interventions vs. whole-school

Many initiatives intended to address SLCN seem to emphasise meeting the needs of the few, rather than the many. Examples of this can include referrals to speech and language therapists, or training individual school or early years staff to work with small groups of children separately from their class groups.

Whole school approaches to supporting children's speech and language have great merit because of how they're embedded within

curriculum delivery, with support provided by all staff throughout the school day.

A set of recent studies sought to evaluate the effectiveness of whole school approaches in terms of their effects on staff knowledge and confidence and impact on children of different ages. Elklan's 'Communication Friendly Settings' approach sees cost effective cascade training given to whole school staff and ongoing support provided for those on the front-lines. Having access to locally trained staff within a whole school environment audit and accreditation scheme ensures that changes are sustainable and are embedded in practice.

The first study, funded by the London Schools Excellence Fund, provided training to 66 teachers and TAs in five primary, secondary and special schools, who then cascaded this training to a further 260 staff in their respective schools. Support was provided by both the directly trained staff within each school and between the schools through a professional sharing network.

By providing this support and bringing their schools forward for audit and accreditation as Communication Friendly Settings, the directly trained staff were themselves able to achieve accredited qualifications.

'Before' and 'after' questionnaires, combined with



direct observations of staff in the schools involved in the project, found that knowledge of communication skills and use of appropriate teaching methods increased between the pre- and post- training stages by 22% to 32%.

A second study aimed at early years settings, Talking Matters (www.elklan.co.uk/talkingmatters), reported similarly positive impacts on staff knowledge, but also on the children.

Why it works

The Communication Friendly Setting approach is highly effective for the following reasons:

1. Senior leadership commitment

The approach requires an ongoing commitment to prioritising speech, language and communication, releasing staff to receive and deliver training and make changes regarding whole school policies and teaching methods.

2. Cascade training

Cost is a common barrier to accessing training for staff. Where a 'cascade training' approach can help is in its potential to increase the knowledge of *all school staff*, after just one or two have attended an external training course. This also gives schools flexibility in setting their own timetables for internal training, making it easier for staff to attend.

3. Accredited training

Under the Communication Friendly Setting approach, two teachers and two TAs will receive high quality,

face-to-face training from SLTs or specialist teaching advisors. The course covers a wide range of topics, exploring different aspects of language and communication development and providing simple and effective strategies to support all children, but particularly those with SLCN.

These members of staff – the Lead Communication Practitioners – achieve accreditation in the form of nine Credits at levels 2 or 3. This means that they have a sound knowledge of the area which they can share with the rest of their staff through a cascaded 'lighter' version of the course and ongoing on-site support.

Once they have developed the skills of other staff members, Lead Communication Practitioners are then able to achieve credits at Level 4, which not only provides substantial motivation for individuals to make progress, but also a built-in process for ensuring the quality of training and learning throughout the school.

4. Whole school or setting implementation

If a setting is to become 'Communication Friendly', every member of staff will be required to make changes for the benefit of all the children. Giving every member of staff some ownership of the new approach will help make it resilient should staff change or other new initiatives come along. Moreover, it will ensure that there's consistent support for children as they move through the school and



between staff.

5. Whole School or setting implementation

Practitioners welcome things they can get on and start doing immediately within everyday situations. These can include structuring the interior and exterior learning environment so that it promotes communication through play and learning, in a space that's comfortable and clutter-free.

Other changes to working might include a greater emphasis on modelling speech and language, simplifying spoken language and use of visual supports, as well as being more effective in the use of questioning and sensitive to how questions ought to be adapted for different children.

What staff development should you choose?

The Communication Trust's What Works in Training database (tinyurl.com/ct-what-works) is a good starting point when trying to identify an organisation who might be able to provide an appropriate whole school

SLCN training programme.

It's best to choose one that will support your staff whilst they implement their learning, and which has provision for sustainability built into it.

Whichever organisation or training programme you decide to use, commitment from the senior leadership team is crucial to support change throughout the school.



Henrietta McLachlan (left) is a qualified SLT, a trainer of school staff since 1990 and co-founder with Liz Elks of the SLT training consultancy Elklan. Alex Hall is a qualified SLT and has previously worked across the public, voluntary and commercial sectors with children who have SLCN and adults with learning disabilities.

 @elklanTraining

 elklan.co.uk

“Giving every member of staff some ownership of the new approach will help make it resilient”

IT'S TIME TO TURN THINGS AROUND

SLCN provision in schools is suffering from a deficit of knowledge and confidence – and as **Nicola Holmes** notes, it's up to teachers and leaders to start putting things right

As a speech and language therapist, my working life is both incredibly rewarding and incredibly challenging. One of the biggest challenges I face, on a near daily basis, is raising awareness of what I do and the importance of speech, language and communication skills, particularly for children.

As many SLTs will tell you, it's not unusual to be having a conversation with a taxi driver or new acquaintance and hear a series of familiar responses when the conversation moves on to my day job – *"Oh, I'd better make sure I speak PROPERLY then,"* for example. Either that, or the enquirer assumes the role is purely about helping children with lisps.

We'll often just shrug this off as part and parcel of the day job, but it hints at a genuine and serious issue. Consider that in some areas of the country up to 50% of children will start school without the speech, language and communication skills they need, and that nationally, around two children in every classroom

will have a developmental language disorder (DLD). It still surprises me that so many people still don't understand what I do for a living.

Major mismatch

With so many children arriving at school with poor language, teachers have a

language and communication during their ITT, while half of the respondents had yet to receive CPD in this area in their current role. Looking into what barriers might

preventing teachers from access such CPD, several common themes emerged. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most commonly cited barrier was lack of budget, closely followed by lack of time and staffing capacity.

Drilling down further, it soon became apparent that not only do some teachers lack learning around what constitutes typical development, but that there's also a distinct lack of confidence when it comes to identifying and supporting children with SLCN. Given how important speech, language and communication skills are for underpinning learning and the prevalence of SLCN, this is a cause for significant concern.

The identification of children with SLCN continues to be a huge issue across the country, with a major

key role to play in developing these skills – but are they sufficiently equipped to do so?

In 2016, The Communication Trust conducted a survey into the learning experiences of the school workforce around SLCN. The consultation received over 1,200 responses, and sought to explore both initial teacher training and the availability of CPD opportunities in subsequent teaching roles.

More than two thirds of teachers reported receiving little or no learning in speech,



WHAT IS DLD?

Developmental language disorder is a clinically significant language difficulty requiring specialist support and intervention

mismatch between the known prevalence and the numbers of children actually being identified and supported.

Training the workforce

The impact of failing to identify these children is well documented. Children with language difficulties are much less likely to do well and achieve expected levels in primary school, and are far more likely to have difficulties with learning to read. They are furthermore less likely to achieve formal qualifications at the end of schooling and are at greater risk of developing social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Early identification, interventions and timely referrals to specialist services can act as a protective measure against these longer term issues, minimising the impact of SLCN, maximising children's outcomes and in some cases, resolving the difficulties altogether.

The importance of training the workforce can't be underestimated. The SEN Code of Practice is clear that teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the pupils in their class, so it makes sense that they should be well-equipped to identify and support those with SLCN. The Communication Trust continues to advocate for the importance of embedding speech, language and communication into ITT, but in the meantime we've developed an online tool that can be used to analyse current skill levels across a school

workforce – identifying where the learning gaps are, and signposting to development opportunities that can plug them.

It's called the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF) and is free to use. It includes searchable databases for formal development opportunities, as well as learning resources such as handbooks, information sheets and other materials designed to support teachers (and NQTs) on their CPD journey – some of which may have the potential to overcome the issues of cost and budgets highlighted in the aforementioned consultation.

Wider workforce training enables schools to meet their responsibilities under the 2014 SEND reforms, ensuring high quality classroom teaching for all pupils with SLCN. Alongside this is effective commissioning across a three-tier model, starting at a universal level, maximising all children's speech, language and communication development, supporting those who aren't quite keeping up with their peers at a targeted level and then providing specialist intervention and expert help for those with more complex, long term needs.

A 5-point plan

The evidence of what works best to support children with SLCN is increasing. Here are five great things that schools can start doing right now.

1. Place SLCN at the heart of school planning

Prioritising SLCN at a senior

leadership level, and having a clear strategy in place, is for effecting change across the school. The Communication Commitment (tinyurl.com/ct-commitment) is a free, comprehensive resource produced by The Communication Trust that can support schools in transforming practice across their whole setting.

2. Empower staff

Staff need to be able to understand, identify and support children and young people. There are a wealth of resources out there for supporting workforce development, ranging from free online courses to accredited Level 3 qualifications for those hoping to develop more specialist skills.

3. Be 'communication friendly'

It's widely recognised that environments can make a big difference to children's communication. See to it that everyone in the school understands what constitutes a communication friendly environment, and see how 'communication friendly' your school is by using the Communication Trust's a free Communication Friendly Checklists (see tinyurl.com/comm-friendly).

4. Involve young people

Listening to young people, including those with SLCN, is crucial for making sure they get the support they need and want. The Communication Trust's Involving Children and Young People with

SLCN toolkit is specifically designed for education staff such as teachers, TAs and SENCos, and aims to help shape approaches to involving children and young people as part of everyday good practice.

5. Do what works

Schools want to be sure that they're using interventions and approaches that are effective, that they know and understand the latest evidence around SLCN, and that they can find this information quickly and easily. The What Works database (tinyurl.com/ct-what-works) is a free searchable tool that helps teachers find robust, evidence-informed interventions and approaches to supporting children and young people with SLCN.

DID YOU KNOW?...

DLD is seven times more prevalent than other childhood conditions such as autism and ADHD



Nicola Holmes is lead professional advisor at The Communication Trust



@Comm_nTrust



thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

BEST IN SHOW

Bett is one of the key events of the year for anyone with an interest in educational technology. Here, we take a look at some of the equipment and resources that might be of interest to those with a professional interest in SEND...



24-27 JANUARY 2018
EXCEL LONDON

EVENT DETAILS

Where:

ExCeL London, Royal
Victoria Dock

When:

Wed 24th January 2018 – 10am to 6pm
Thu 25th January – 10am to 6pm
Fri 26th January – 10am to 6pm
Sat 27th January – 10am to 3pm

Contact:

bettshow.com
[@bett_show](https://twitter.com/bett_show)
facebook.com/bettshowuk

FrontRow Juno

This soundfield amplification system can be set up in a matter of minutes, but is capable of evenly filling classrooms with the kind of clear, detailed and multi-layered stereo sound one might expect from a much larger installed system.

Juno's intelligent digital platform can furthermore connect teachers to a series of useful tools, including automated lesson capture, voice-command control of displays and playback of audio media via Bluetooth. Further details of how Juno has been proven to help teachers improve academic outcomes, foster participation, and boost attentiveness can be found at the company's BETT stand or by visiting the link below.

gofrontrow.com/juno



STAND A470

PC Werth

This supplier of classroom audio solutions will be demonstrating the portable and fixed soundfield systems from Lightspeed for use in classrooms and halls. Both systems work to evenly distribute teachers' voices throughout learning spaces with no dropouts or interference, resulting in less vocal strain on the part of practitioners while providing better clarity for students. PC Werth's range of bespoke PA systems are meanwhile ideal for school assemblies, presentations and plays, and the company can provide a free acoustic review of your school, identifying solutions that can create calmer learning environments.

pcwerth.co.uk



STAND A270

Hopspots

If you agree that physical activity combined with cognitive tasks makes for better learning, then you should investigate this new system of interactive stepping tiles. The Hopspots platform employs light-up, pressure sensitive and sound-emitting 'Spots' to build a range of learning games, in which pre-school and primary children can challenge each other. As well simply taking part, it's also possible for the children to programme the Spots and devise new learning games of their own, thus helping to teach an increasingly important 21st century skill.

hopspots.dk



STAND E63

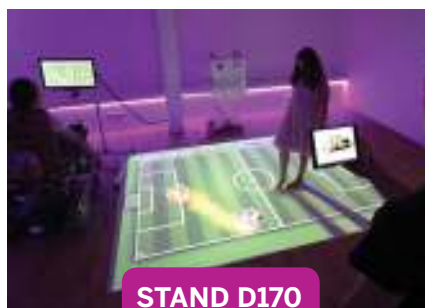
IDL

Developed by the education charity Ascentis (ascentis.co.uk), this simple and effective dyslexia intervention is currently used in over 1,500 primary and secondary schools nationwide. Accessed via a web browser or accompanying iPad app, it employs a multisensory approach, whereby sight, sound, touch, and voice are used to improve pupils' reading and spelling and establish links between the visual, auditory and tactile pathways.

idcloud.co.uk



STAND G399



STAND D170

Sensory Guru

This interactive learning technology specialist will be launching a range of products and solutions for enabling mixed access to the National Curriculum in exciting new ways, regardless of ability. These include Immersive Magic – a product that promises to redefine the boundaries between the virtual and physical environment, and enable subjects to be experienced like never before. Visitors to Sensory Guru's stand will also get to find out more about the recently launched app store to support its Magic Carpet interactive projection systems (itself a Bett Award 2018 Finalist) and the new Magic Mirror interactive wall projection system.

sensoryguru.com



STAND B310

HUE

HUE offers colourful and affordable technology aimed at inspiring creative teaching and learning. The HUE HD Pro visualiser can be used across the curriculum, allowing teachers to show experiments, share documents and showcase students' work. The HUE Animation Studio helps children of all abilities learn through creativity, collaboration and critical thinking, and meets the needs of kinesthetic, auditory, and visual learners. HUE's Flexible Tablet Stand, meanwhile, has an adjustable clamp that can be attached to a desk, bed or wheelchair and rotated through 360° in any direction. A 20% BETT discount will apply to any purchases made at the show.

huehd.com

Mighty Writer

Mighty Writer is a new and innovative multisensory resource that can quickly transform children's literacy. It teaches the whole process of learning to write – from speaking in simple sentences, through to planning and editing increasingly complex and sophisticated

stories. The core intended age range is 4 to 7 years, but it can be used with children of all abilities, from those who are reluctant to speak to the very able. Both fictional and non-fictional writing are covered, enabling children to become independent and competent writers. mightywriter.co.uk



JellyJames

Resource provider JellyJames will be showcasing its multiple award-winning offering Dynamo Maths. A specialist software resource designed to support children with developmental dyscalculia and maths delays, it draws on the NumberSenseMMR framework validated by the University of Oxford to enable a more targeted approach to interventions. The company will also be launching a new dyscalculia assessment for post-14 to adults by the name of Dynamo Profiler Pro and offering sign-ups for a free trial.

dynamomaths.co.uk



STAND A400

Sparkol

Engage and inspire your students with Sparkol's VideoScribe, which lets you quickly and easily create explainer videos on any subject. Explainer videos can increase learning by 15%. The combination of spoken word, animated hand-drawn images, music and sound effects boosts knowledge retention, inspires creativity, teaches storytelling and enables SEND students and teachers to create and learn together. Bett visitors will also be able to view a demonstration of StoryPix, the latest addition to Sparkol's creative tools for education, which can turn photos into engaging explainer videos in minutes from any device.

videoscribe.co

Actiphons

Actiphons is a new and innovative way of inspiring and engaging children to learn to read and write. The Actiphons themselves are a colourful cast of sporting characters who help to reinforce phonics to children while also teaching them fun sporting activities. This kinaesthetic approach helps children to develop their fine and gross motor skills, as well as learn their phonics through singing and movement-based activities.

actiphons.com

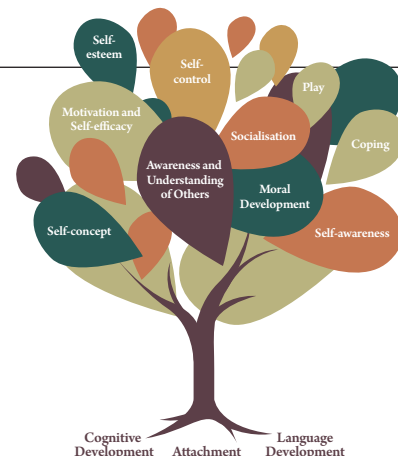


STAND C40B

EMOTIONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Fagus framework

A unique resource designed to help schools monitor, review and support children's emotional and social development



AT A GLANCE

- A developmentally sequenced framework that makes sense of challenging behaviours
- Fosters the needs of pupils who show delayed or impaired emotional and social functioning
- Supports teachers in measuring social and emotional development against chronological age, surveying progress and applying goals
- A highly practical programme for measuring the impact of interventions quantitatively
- Evidence-based and validated by the psychology team at Royal Holloway College, University of London.



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Children's wellbeing has never enjoyed such a high profile, yet finding a framework to support and measure the social and emotional development of vulnerable children with a range of needs is like looking for gold dust in the playground.

But there is help available, and it comes in the shape of Fagus – a distinctive resource originally developed for pupils with attachment and trauma-related difficulties at Beech Lodge School. Fagus is the Latin for 'beech', the tree of learning, and there's little doubting that this resource is full of wisdom and insight.

A developmental and holistic approach to learning is unequivocally essential for pupils who aren't functioning emotionally. Without appropriate insight, expertise and help, these children are unlikely to fulfil their potential. That's where Fagus comes in, by providing a superlative support system of developmental guides and an online tool for measuring progress.

The Fagus framework is made up of 13 concise, but punchy and comprehensive booklets, each containing an authoritative guide relating to a particular social and emotional domain. These are supported by an easy-to-use online survey tool which creates a developmental profile and allows you to recognise at what age range a child is functioning at in each domain, based on their key behaviours.

The guides are abundantly referenced throughout and come with intelligent introductions, sequenced descriptions of development and example objectives, goals and plans. It's easy to see why Fagus will be the 'vade mecum' of schools, because it's a toolkit that goes deep and wide while really clarifying a child's emotional and social functioning.

Having helped you secure a much richer understanding of the challenges faced by children, the tools can then produce a purposeful 'small-steps' pathway to support them in attaining the skills they need to help develop emotional resilience, tenacity and focus.

Making the social and emotional development of children integral to the DNA of every school might seem like an overwhelming task, but Fagus gives us tools with which to infuse the system with inclusive insight. It isn't a 'fix-it' solution, but rather helps to build caring, trusting relationships with a focus on strengths, not problems.

Teachers are change agents, but resources can be too – and Fagus is one of them. It's an inspired, coherent and comprehensive resource dedicated to supporting progress and making genuine, positive changes that can be analysed, mapped and monitored with direction and savoir-faire.

SENC

VERDICT

- ✓ A game-changing pedagogy for inclusion resource geared towards learner development
- ✓ Supports social and emotional development with meaningful and concrete data
- ✓ Compassionate, rich in vision and jam-packed with awareness
- ✓ Transparent and hands-on in a flexible and user-friendly format
- ✓ A superb resource for supporting the development of pupils with attachment, trauma and loss difficulties

UPGRADE IF...

You're fighting to find the right educational support for your pupils and wish to adopt a programme that offers real insight in order to truly improve outcomes for children with additional needs.

Flexible pricing options are available, 0845 565 1758, fagus.org.uk

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ➔

PC Werth Lightspeed

An innovative 'no installation' amplification system for sound and voice enhancement across the classroom



AT A GLANCE

- An audio solution that provides clarity of voice and even sound distribution class-wide
- A portable flatpanel speaker that can be mounted with two different wireless microphones
- A self-contained and cost-efficient system for an optimal learning environment
- Removes barriers to listening for whole class learning



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Making yourself heard isn't always easy in a busy classroom. Noise has increasingly become a problem in schools, with ever-louder background ambience meaning that children can sometimes miss out on certain sound frequencies and have difficulties following what's being said. It's important to be aware of how different noises and sound levels can affect different pupils, especially those with mild hearing loss. It's estimated that at any one time, up to 40% of children in a UK primary school class may have some form of hearing impairment.

It therefore makes sense to look into solutions that can improve the audibility of your lessons. Having teachers undergo speech and vocal training to protect their voices and reduce the risk of vocal strain is one way of doing this. Another is to adopt noise reduction strategies and to invest in voice amplification equipment.

The Lightspeed amplification systems developed in conjunction with PC Werth are clever soundfield devices that enable everyone to hear – and be heard – clearly, consistently and audibly. The company's Redcat product is a device that's ready for use out of the box, easy to use and employs 'Access Technology', enabling it to operate on a wireless bandwidth that avoids any interference from other classroom technologies. It's literally a case of simply plugging it in, turning it on and

speaking into the microphone. Bingo – the Redcat Access delivers unclouded audio to the whole room instantly.

Supplied as an all-in-one system, the package includes a stylish speaker that works at an impressively long distance, and can deliver enough exceptionally clear audio to fill any classroom with highly intelligible speech – great for assemblies and information evenings.

Also available is a lightweight handheld microphone that can be passed around class or else worn around the teacher's neck in the manner of a wearable 'fleximike'. It's also possible to amplify audio from directly connected external devices.

Redcat Access works by both amplifying and evenly distributing the user's voice, this overcoming the problems of high ambient noise levels, poor room acoustics and mild hearing loss, so that children can focus more on what you're saying. A teacher's voice must be highly intelligible to every child if maximum learning is to occur, which is where this classy system excels. Using it is straightforward, and it can make your classroom organisation significantly easier.

This is a top quality audio system that deserves to play a pivotal role in your everyday classroom operations. It's simplicity personified, and priced from £949 with a 5-year warranty.

SENCe

VERDICT

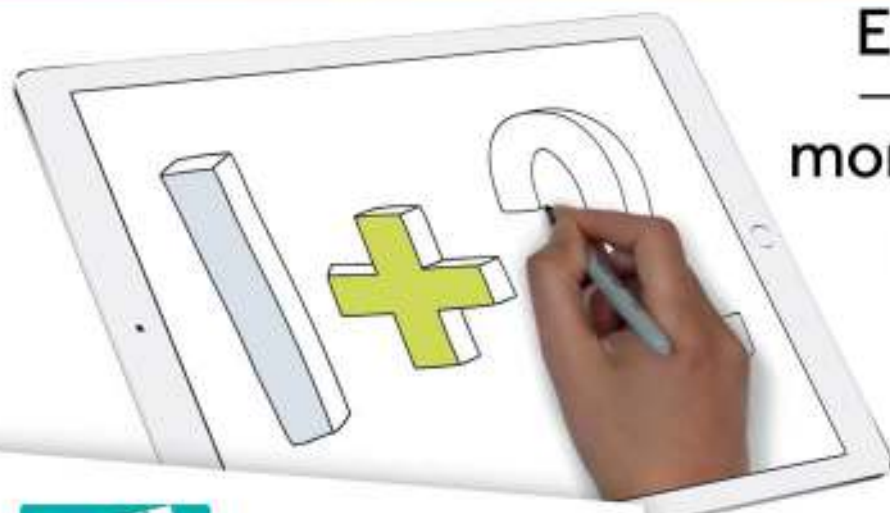
- ✓ Enables you to use a natural, conversational voice level
- ✓ Helps level the playing field so that all children can hear you
- ✓ Helps keep hearing-impaired children more engaged, while assisting those with quiet voices to be heard more clearly
- ✓ Enables you to capture pupils' attention and manage their sensitivity to unwanted sounds and movement when in class
- ✓ Leads to improvements in pupil motivation, participation and time on task

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to effectively enhance your listening and learning environment, put an auditory spotlight on what's most important and create a nurturing environment where every child can hear and learn effectively.

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more fun than drawing!



StoryPix

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22%

of SEN support pupils
have speech, language
and communication
as a primary need
(Department of Education)



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EDUQ&A

What can VideoScribe do to SUPPORT YOUR SEND provision?

We find out about the role that explainer videos can play in making your learning environment a more multi-sensory one...



What role can VideoScribe play in supporting teachers of pupils with SEN?

VideoScribe makes learning more fun, especially for pupils whose levels of engagement can be increased through access to multi-sensory learning experiences.

Providing information through an explainer video can help children understand more complicated subjects. Famed psychologist Dr Richard Wiseman has previously found that the retention of information presented through explainer videos was an average of 15% higher compared with talking head videos.

What practical utility does it have for supporting the work of SENCos?

With just a few clicks pupils can pull together their own animated videos with

background music, on-screen text and accompanying images. This not only makes learning more fun across a wide variety of subjects, but it's also a great way for them to learn new skills without even realising!

From a teaching perspective, it's easy to use VideoScribe in a collaborative way that will enable teachers, SEN assistants and parents to help children create content themselves. Scribes can also be used internally, for providing TAs with additional lesson and training materials, and parents with homework support and guidance.

What support and training is available for schools and teachers using your tools?

A range of support options come provided as part of the VideoScribe education licence package. Our support team is able to offer both on-site training and remote

support, and we have an ex-teacher on staff who is able to answer any queries and show teachers how VideoScribe can work for their school.

What do the costs of implementing the VideoScribe solution involve?

We can offer a range of multi-licence options for schools of all sizes, and also create custom packages. The best thing is to get in touch with us and find out how we can work for your school!

How easy is VideoScribe to use?

The best part about VideoScribe is just how easy it is to create a high-quality explainer video. One of our favourite Scribes to date was a brilliant one about Britain created by a pupil called Maisy when she was just eight years old (which can be viewed at tinyurl.com/vs-maisy). She drew everything herself and even performed the voiceover!

You can find plenty of videos on our YouTube channel (tinyurl.com/yt-videoscribe) to help explain the different elements involved in using VideoScribe, from getting started with your very first video through to more complicated animation techniques.



To find out more, call 0117 428 6117 and quote UKEDU for an exclusive discount, email ukedu@sparkol.com or visit videoscribe.co

Literacy affects everything

— so involve everyone

If we're to do right by SEND learners when it comes to literacy, a fully developed 'whole school' approach is the only viable option, writes **Nancy Gedge**...

A whole school approach' is something that's easy to talk about, but considerably less easy to implement – and no two people will be more aware of this than the SENCo and the literacy lead, especially if they work in a secondary school.

For a start, you have to get your colleagues to understand what you're talking about. Secondly, you have to get them on board and take on responsibility for the things you're asking them to do as part of their daily role, rather than an annoying add-on. Literacy and SEND can both easily fall prey to being seen as 'someone else's problem'. There's a long-held belief that SEND learners somehow 'belong' to the SENCo, and that literacy is the preserve of the English department.

In a primary school, where the focus on literacy is much greater and the same teacher teaches all (or most) of the curriculum, it would be easy to assume that these challenges aren't as great, but this couldn't be further from the truth. The challenge of shared responsibility is certainly there, but differently expressed. Working together, understanding who's responsible for what, what a whole school vision for inclusion actually looks like – these are issues that we all share, regardless of setting.

Room for improvement

The way forward is to get people away from the idea that sorting out literacy (or SEND, come to that) is simply a matter of sorting out a few displays that will soon become dusty and ignored, organising soon to be forgotten one-off training days or sticking lists in the front of children's books. If you want to get everyone on board and see changes made at a level that matters, you'll need a different approach that involves the whole school. This is important, because literacy affects



every aspect of teaching, all year groups and all subject areas.

This is why initiatives such as 'Drive for Literacy' (DfL), the Driver Youth Trust's flagship programme, are so useful to schools. By defining a whole school approach as one that includes all members of the school community – starting with school leaders and including parents and children – DfL presents schools with far more opportunities for improvement, going way beyond those offered by a single teacher or TA in a limited supportive role, or a visiting specialist (who, despite the wishes of school staff, will possess neither all the answers nor a magic wand).

Schools that sign up to the DfL programme get structured support and training that runs over the course of a whole year, allowing plenty of time for areas that are ripe for change to be identified, worked and reflected on.

The programme includes nine consultancy days, where a DfL consultant works with school leaders, such as the headteacher, SENCo and literacy lead,

on areas identified for action via a school audit, and up to six training workshops, which can be for the whole school or for particular groups of staff. Even if they don't sign up to the whole programme, schools can still buy in consultancy or training to suit their needs, or use the website and resources for free, simply by signing up.

Avoiding the cracks

By spending a year tightly focusing on where literacy and SEND meet, schools can finely tune their approaches and catch their 'at risk' learners before they fall through any educational cracks. Helping schools set up screening for dyslexic tendencies, for instance, will alert teachers to those pupils needing additional support. By giving teaching and support staff time to think about their shared vision, workplace practices (such as modes of communication), exactly who's responsible for what and who undertakes what role will make the school more efficient.

Being an inclusive teacher, and understanding what this actually means in practice, is key to ensuring that all children can achieve at school.

So focus on those children with literacy difficulties, who are likely to be in that group of SEND learners consistently ignored by, and invisible to, policy makers and leaders in the field of literacy. Adopt a whole school approach to literacy and inclusion. That way, you can improve outcomes not just for SEND learners, but for everyone.



Nancy Gedge is a consultant teacher at the Driver Youth Trust

 @nancygedge

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We transform gyms and dining halls into a magical theatrical experience, using state of the art sets, sound, lighting and special effects. Our Productions are renowned for their high quality and attention to detail, ensuring that children of all ages and abilities are equally engaged, educated and entertained.

"The actors are outstanding professionals and always make sure they understand the audience they are working with, ensuring children with learning needs are at ease throughout the performance"



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