HELPING YOU TO SUPPORT EVERY CHILD

SENCo

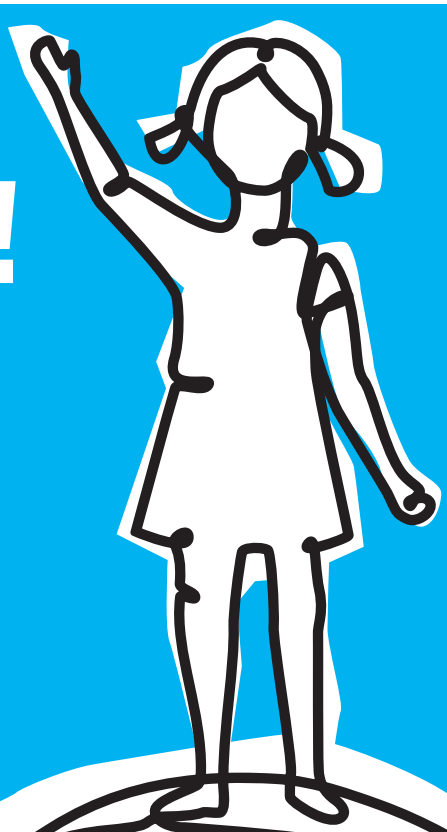
teach PRIMARY
VOL5 ISSUE1

LOST VOICE GUY

"I played a robot in the school show"

HELLO, WORLD!

How one school empowers its pupils



ADHD

Ditch the label

Find the child

OFF-ROLLING

Why it's time to take action

Supply & demand

Is the SEND system delivering?

Inclusive LESSON PLANS

IN THE KNOW

What we need from ITT

High needs funding

Are schools losing out?

EPILEPSY | MEMORY LOSS | VISIBLE DIFFERENCE
ACCESSIBILITY PLANS | INCLUSIVE SCHOOL TRIPS

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Welcome...

As we went to press with this issue, the House of Commons Education Committee was making headlines with a scathing report examining the 2014 SEND reforms – the dramatic shake-up that brought us EHCPs, sought to encourage inter-agency working and extend SEND provision from birth to the age of 25. While firmly of the belief that said reforms were 'the right ones', the Committee was rather less positive about their implementation, stating that they've "Resulted in confusion and at times unlawful practice, bureaucratic nightmares, buck-passing and a lack of accountability."

That may be a picture that some readers recognise all too well. Certainly, elements of the Committee's criticisms seem to chime with Professor Adam Boddison's views on p66 of what the 2014 reforms set out to do and what they've delivered since. Still, on the plus side, there's been the government's announcement of an extra £700 million in funding for pupils with SEND. Welcome news, surely?

Possibly, cautions Sue Birchall on p64 – though it seems unclear at this stage just how far that money will go towards addressing the high needs funding challenges LAs are currently having to contend with. Assuming said government is still in a position to make good on that pledge come 2020, of course...

For all the challenges and volatility, however, schools up and down the country are continuing to do inspiring work – whether it be fostering a love of reading among visually impaired pupils (p20) or even attempting to change perceptions of disability across an entire county (p22).

It remains the case that a SENCo's role is a tough one, and given the current state of play with regards to SEND training (p62), arguably undervalued. But as this issue's featured interviewee goes to show (p8), the learning, encouragement and level of expectation that children with SEND encounter at school can potentially shape the rest of their lives for the better.

Callum

Callum Fauser, Editor

@teachwire

POWERED BY...

FINTAN O'REGAN shares his advice on how to engage pupils with oppositional defiant disorder

"Focus your actions on changing the child's mood, not their behaviour."

p28

KAREN WESPIESER argues that the existing model of SEND training falls short of what's needed

"We need a systematic approach to imparting SEND knowledge"

p62

PROF ADAM BODDISON surveys how the SEND system has fared in the years since 2014

"The SEND reforms haven't yet delivered on their ambition"

p66

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Contents

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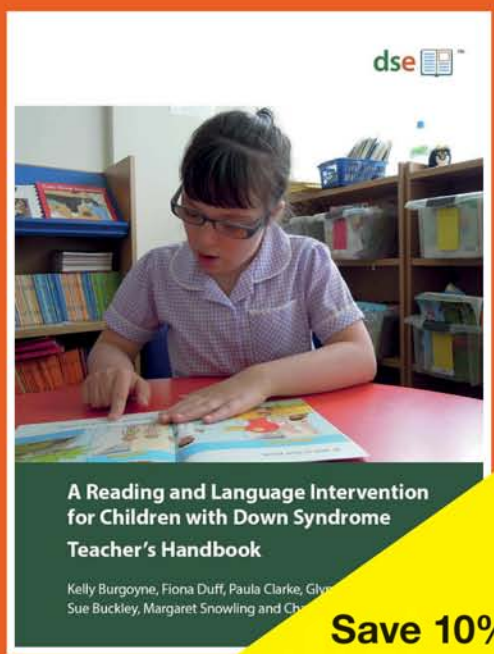

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ASK THE EXPERT

"Specific needs require targeted support"

Professor Sue Buckley OBE tells us how four decades of research and support has transformed opportunities for children with Down syndrome

What does research tell us about the learning needs of children with Down syndrome?

It used to be thought that the children had a general learning disability. Now we know the reality is more nuanced. We see a profile of specific difficulties and relative strengths that is common among children with Down syndrome. That said, although the children share this profile, they are still individuals and there is considerable variability in difficulties and in levels of achievement. Educators must understand the profile and be able to adapt for individual needs.

How can this knowledge inform better classroom practice?

The children have specific delays in developing spoken language, but understand more than they can say. They have limited verbal short-term memory, which means learning from listening is a challenge. Their visual short-term memory is a relative strength, so it is important to think of them as 'visual learners'. Using signs, pictures, print and apps to support learning and teaching at the language level they understand makes a difference.

How can school leaders provide effective support for a child with Down syndrome?

Most importantly, school leaders should ensure that staff working with a child with Down syndrome are properly informed about the child's needs and evidence-based teaching. The science tells us quite a lot about effective approaches and how they can be implemented. Second, monitor progress objectively – track things like vocabulary knowledge to target explicit language teaching, for example.

EXPERT PROFILE

Name: Sue Buckley

Job title: Research Director

Area of expertise: The developmental and learning needs of children with Down syndrome

Best part of my job: Seeing children with Down syndrome achieve more

How should schools best deploy TAs to support a child with Down syndrome?

There is increasing evidence that TAs can play a vital role in improving learning outcomes for children with special needs – if properly supported and trained in delivering evidence-based interventions and teaching approaches. Our charity led a large, randomised controlled trial which showed how, with the right support, TAs can deliver an intensive, targeted language and reading intervention to children with Down syndrome that improves outcomes.

How have the lives of young people with Down syndrome improved in recent years?

Today, many children with Down syndrome are learning to read, write and count, living and learning with non-disabled peers and going on to lead more independent and productive lives as a result. The outcomes we've seen show just how important getting education right for this population is.

With the government set to launch a major review of SEND support and services, the obvious question would seem to be, why now?

Rona Tutt

It was a surprise when the government announced in September this year that another SEND review was being planned. Though the DfE had previously indicated it would be reviewing the current SEND Code of Practice before the end of 2020, nothing had been said about a wider review, which raises the question of why this is being considered now, before the SEND reforms of 2014 have had time to become fully embedded.

Looking at how the reforms are working out in practice, however, one overriding reason for change stands out. The 2014 reforms saw the SEND support system expanded to cover individuals from birth until the age of 25, which was rightly applauded – but what seems to have been overlooked is the cost of providing this support to what's now a wider group of young people. With pupil numbers rising, the proportion of those pupils with SEND higher than ever and school resources finite, staff are coming under increasing pressure.

Involving young people and their families in the decisions that affect them, and joining up the services by changing statements into education, health and care plans was absolutely the right approach to take. Yet what happened was that LAs and educational psychologists had to cope with their usual volume of requests for new assessments, while also having to transfer all of their existing Statements to EHCPs. This led to some LAs adopting a 'cut and paste' approach to meet deadlines, resulting in EHCPs of poor quality.

Despite schools' and SENCos' best efforts, many have struggled to meet the needs of those on SEN support. Cutbacks in funding and staffing have been exacerbated by a reduction in specialist support services that schools can draw on, in turn prompting parents to seek the security of an EHCP for their children and driving demand for special school placements, which can be considerably more expensive than mainstream provision.

There's also been a significant rise in the volume of cases being dealt with by the SEND Tribunal, often due to dissatisfaction with the content of EHCPs and LAs' refusals to assess for them. As a result, scarce resources have been siphoned off from supporting pupils with SEND.

All in all, the reforms have piled pressure on a system lacking the capacity to meet increasing demand, and it's this which would appear to be driving the push for yet another review. What's encouraging, however, is that the DfE isn't seeking additional evidence, but is pulling together evidence they already have, including individual Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection results, the National Audit Office's recent report on support for pupils with SEND in England (see tinyurl.com/nao-send-19) and the Education Select Committee's report of its SEND inquiry.

The proposed new SEND review will evaluate the impact of the 2014 reforms in order to identify the actions needed to improve services for children and families. The areas under examination will include how to ensure that high quality support is available in all areas; the role of health and how specific conditions are driving demand; and the continuing need to balance an inclusive mainstream with specialist provision.

An interim report is expected by the end of the year, with a final report due in Spring 2020. Political turmoil notwithstanding, if this timetable is adhered to it will mean that only a limited amount of time will be spent on reviewing existing reviews before the government comes up with some answers.

Many of us had high hopes for the SEND reforms, but it has since become clear that not enough thought was given to the cost of putting them in place. A very careful eye will be required in future to ensure that in trying to make the SEND system viable, the quality of delivery doesn't go out of the window...

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

"We got up to OUR fair SHARE of MISCHIEF"

For stand-up comedian and *Britain's Got Talent* winner **Lee Ridley**, AKA Lost Voice Guy, 'slacking off' academically was never an option. But there was still time for hijinks...

Lee Ridley was born with cerebral palsy and has no speech, communicating for the most part via text-to-speech devices. He first began performing stand-up as 'Lost Voice Guy' in 2012, and proceeded to gig regularly thereafter, securing a support slot for Ross Noble early on in his career. In 2014 he won the BBC's New Comedy Award and in 2018 was crowned the winner of *Britain's Got Talent*.

Lee's subsequent career has included numerous festival dates, appearances on *Live at the Apollo* and *The Royal Variety Performance*, and co-writing the Radio 4 sitcom *Ability* with Katherine Jakeways. This year saw Lee publish his first book, *I'm Only In It for the Parking*, and embark on a UK tour that concludes at the end of November.

"**I attended Percy Hedley School in Newcastle until I was 12, then moved to Barbara Priestman School in Sunderland from 12 until 16.** While there, I also went to a mainstream school next door for some of my lessons, Thornhill School, which gave me the chance to integrate with kids from the mainstream school and challenge myself academically. It was nice to have both the support network of Barbara Priestman School while at the same time pushing my limits over at Thornhill.

I was a bit of a geek at school. I always handed my homework in on time and always knew the answers to most questions. I've always been very creative and liked to write, so my favourite subject was English, but I also liked history and IT. My least favourite subjects were the sciences and art. I just couldn't get my head around any science stuff, and I've always been rubbish at drawing. These hands just weren't made to paint a masterpiece.

My English teacher, Mr Pod, had such a big influence on me, and I'll always be grateful for that. He realised that I had real potential and didn't let me hand in any work that was just 'alright'. He knew that I could do better and really wanted to see me achieve my best. My form tutor, Mrs Fraser, was pretty much the same. She wouldn't let me slack off and mess around too much because she believed in me. The faith they both showed in me meant a great deal, and still does to this day.

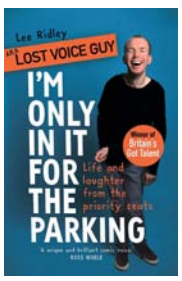
"Mr Pod gave me some great roles in the end of year show, such as a robot and a dog"

One of my favourite memories was appearing in the end-of-year school show. Mr Pod was always the director and it was hard work. He expected every performance to be perfect, so he made us rehearse for weeks beforehand. It was always so much fun on the night though. He gave me some great roles, such as a robot and a dog. I didn't realise it then, but it's probably what give me a taste for performing on stage.

The only career that ever interested me was becoming a journalist. I had my heart set on it, and luckily my English teacher was more than happy to encourage me. I wanted to learn how to use English correctly, and he loved teaching me. I don't think there was any doubt for either of us that I was going to be a journalist. And he helped me eventually achieve that goal. I studied journalism at university and I've been one ever since – well, until I decided that I could be funny too!

I've visited Percy Hedley since, and it's always nice to go back. I'm also still in touch with a few of my friends from there – the Paralympic athlete, Stephen Miller, was in my class at school (so it was a pretty successful year group!) and we catch up when we can. I also see Mr Pod and Mrs Fraser from time to time, too. Both came to my post-*BGT* celebration party at my family home. It was nice to have them there celebrating with me, after everything they'd done for me.

My time learning English made me into a great storyteller, which has helped in my comedy a lot. There's also so much funny stuff that happened during my school years, which has given me plenty of material. Like most groups of good friends, we got up to our fair share of mischief. Such as the time I went to the zoo with my mate, who had one arm, visited the lion enclosure and asked him to point out 'Which one of the lions had taken the other arm' in front of loads of children. And we used to love sending my blind friend really erotic letters from a pretend girlfriend, because we knew his mother would have to read them out to him..."



Less Ridley's book, I'm Only In It for the Parking (£14.99, Bantam Press), is on sale now

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Chart your PUPILS' GROWTH

Suzanne Farrell makes the case for why schools need a progression framework for young people on the autism spectrum

Recent legislative changes and reports relating to the education of pupils with SEND have focused on the need to consider their wider long-term outcomes and preparation for adulthood. The SEND Code of Practice cites the need to prepare young people for employment, independent living, community participation and health. Resources that support this aim, such as those from Preparing for Adulthood (see preparingforadulthood.org.uk) now place particular emphasis on the need to work towards these outcomes from the child's earliest years.

The assessment reforms introduced by the Commission on Assesssment Without Levels in 2015 highlighted the need to take a more holistic approach assessing pupils with SEND. More recently, Ofsted's new 'Quality of Education' judgement links a school's curriculum, in terms of how it's designed, taught and assessed, more closely with its impact on learners' outcomes in order to better prepare them for life after school.

For children and young people on the autism spectrum, support may be required in areas relating to the social and emotional aspects of learning. For some pupils, making progress in these areas will enable them to access learning in the academic curriculum. Improvements in a pupil's ability to regulate their own behaviour or sensory needs, for example, may lead to improved engagement which in turn may drive progress within National Curriculum subjects.

Many practitioners recognise the need to prioritise these aspects of learning, but may lack access to systems that support them in identifying priorities and tracking progress.

A new framework

In 2015, the Autism Education Trust, with funding from the DfE, commissioned a project to develop a progression framework and accompanying training module specific to the needs of pupils on the autism spectrum. This work involved a literature review and a wide-ranging consultation with practitioners, parents, pupils and adults on the autism spectrum (see tinyurl.com/aet-aa-15).

The resulting AET Autism Progression Framework was subsequently made freely available to schools and implemented widely across a range of mainstream and specialist services. An evaluation of the framework was then carried out, the findings of which were used to inform a revised Autism Progression Framework 2.0 and suite of accompanying resources. These have recently been launched and are now available as free downloads from the AET website.

The AET Progression Framework is designed to support staff in identifying learning priorities and measuring progress in areas that other tools and assessment materials may not cover. It's intended to be accessible to practitioners working with pupils across the autism spectrum, and can

"The Framework isn't a checklist of skills to be worked through"

be used in a range of formats according to a service's needs. The new materials recommend four key steps for using the Progression Framework that fit alongside the Code of Practice's 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle.

Extensive content

The Progression Framework provides an extensive 'bank' of learning intentions based on an understanding of autism and the challenges that young people may face within education settings. It aims to address skills and understanding that pupils might find difficult as a consequence of their autism, but also strives to recognise and build on their strengths and interests, and improve their overall wellbeing. Most importantly, it aims to alert practitioners to the fact that the progress of children may depend on support in these areas being available.

It's by no means exhaustive, however, and practitioners are encouraged to tailor or write their own personalised learning intentions according to each individual's needs.

The main areas of learning in the 2019 Progression Framework are as follows:

- Communication and Interaction
- Social Understanding and Relationships
- Sensory processing
- Interests, routines and processing
- Emotional understanding and self-awareness
- Learning and engagement
- Healthy living
- Independence and community participation

Each area is then sub-divided so that users can focus on the relevant learning for a particular pupil. 'Social Understanding and Relationships', for example, is divided into 'Being with others'; 'Interactive play'; 'Positive relationships (supporting adults)'; 'Positive relationships and friendships (peers)'; and 'Group activities'.

Those areas are then broken down further into more detailed outcome areas and learning intentions that identify small steps of learning. Practitioners are encouraged to select or personalise a small number of learning intentions relevant to an individual – potentially five or six per term. Progress towards these goals can then be measured against a four-point Progress Scale over a year or other specified time period.

Degrees of progress are celebrated as the development of skills, and understanding across contexts is recorded. The Framework isn't intended as a checklist of skills to be worked through, but rather provides evidence of progress in areas relevant to each pupil at specific points in their school career.

Why it's needed

The following quotes are taken from the Progression Framework consultation

"It's so challenging for schools to show progress, even when they're doing a really good job."
– Teacher's response to the schools survey

"My child is 'tracked' the same as neurologically typical children, which means he's always consistently scoring lower. I'd love to see SEN accounted for within the tracking"
– Parent's response to the families survey

"As I was academically able, I think people assumed I was able in other areas, but this wasn't the case – I'd have benefited from work on emotions and feelings, friendships and self-esteem."
– Individual's response to the survey of adults on the autism spectrum

Ways to engage

Schools have a number of options for ways in which the Framework might be used and different formats are available. They may:

- Draw on the content of the Framework contained in the free PDF document to inform existing procedures, such as EHCPs, IEPs or Provision Maps
- Use learning intentions with existing progress measures within their schools, or the sample Individual Learning Plan template provided in the free PDF document
- Use the free spreadsheet version (which includes a guidance document)
- Subscribe to an evidence-based online version powered by ShowProgress (see showprogress.co.uk)

One of the Framework's key aims is to provide a starting point for identifying individual priorities via 'learning conversations' between key people, including parents and the pupils themselves, as advocated in the Code of Practice. The new resources accompanying the revised materials include a questionnaire for pupils and/or parents and a two-page summary of the main outcome areas for use as a 'way in' or discussion tool. 'Mapping documents' are also available, which link AET Progression Framework outcomes with 'EYFS Areas of Learning' and 'Preparing for Adulthood' outcomes.

The AET Autism Progression Framework materials, accompanying guidance and information on training is available from autismeducationtrust.org.uk/pf-2.

Suzanne Farrell is the Project Lead for the AET Autism Progression Framework, developed for the AET by Autism Associates (autismassociates.co.uk)

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At a glance

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- **Since 1962, autistic people have turned to us at key moments in their lives**
- **Through MyWorld, we can offer you practical guidance to take straight to the classroom**

National Autistic Society

Step into MyWorld

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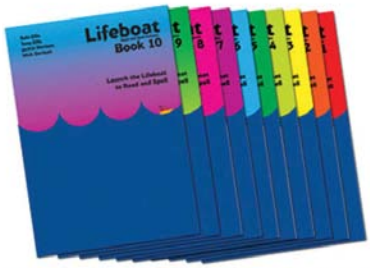

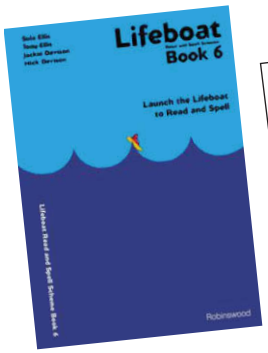

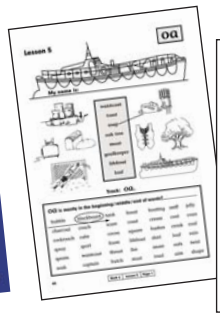

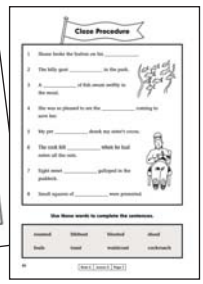

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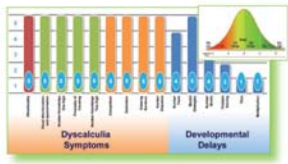

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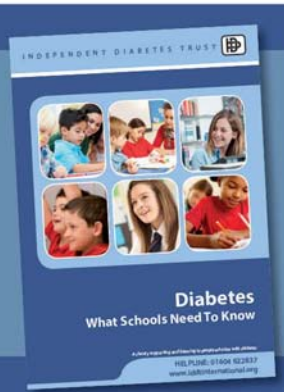

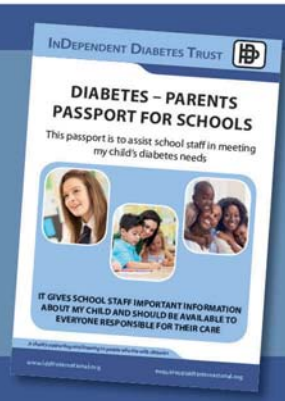

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"At present, many are insufficiently qualified"

Monika Jephcott outlines what the campaign for a new Child Mental Health Charter hopes to achieve

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Play Therapy UK is the largest governing body of play therapy in the United Kingdom. We manage the PSA-accredited Register of Play and Creative Arts Therapists and are the campaign leaders for the Child Mental Health Charter.

What is the Child Mental Health Charter?

The Child Mental Health Charter has emerged from two reports produced by experts in the All Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood. It calls upon the government to put children at the heart of reforming the Mental Health Act in 2019. The Charter has six principles, the application of which will make a positive difference to the lives of children and their families by addressing significant defects in current policies.

What are those six principles?

- Focus on the needs of children – their needs are different from young people
- Protect children by using registered therapists
- Invest in a properly qualified workforce and ensure that therapists are trained at level 7
- Ensure that policy is informed by the best available appropriate evidence
- Focus on the needs of parents and carers, and make services available in local schools
- Make policies work with the aid of adequate government funding and joined-up working

How is the Charter progressing?

The first goal is to include the principles in a Queen's Speech, followed by a Bill to enact legislation. So far, there has been major progress with the tabling of the Early Day Motion #2285, to date supported by 54 MPs. Many of these MPs are also raising questions and expressing concerns in the House of Commons over the current state of affairs.

As we wait for legislation to be passed, the principles are being voluntarily adopted in schools as the basis of good practice.

How will the Charter affect pupils' therapeutic support?

At present, there are many insufficiently qualified, unregistered persons working therapeutically with children, without clinical supervision and using interventions that are unproven and unsafe. This is often a waste of money and time because their work is ineffective, and in some cases even unsafe, exposing schools to the risk of serious complaints.

Applying the principles will ensure the provision of a high-quality service, with measured outcomes that can be compared to national baselines, for those 20% of pupils that need support.

ABOUT MONIKA:
Monika Jephcott is the chief executive of Play Therapy UK

Contact:
01825 761 143
contact@ptukorg.com
playtherapy.org.uk

How can I support the Charter?

By supporting the Charter you will increase the chances of obtaining more funding for your school, You can pledge your support by visiting childmentalhealthcharter.com and adding your name to the list of supporters. You can also ask your constituency MP to sign the aforementioned EDM 2285 – for more advice on how to do this, I can be contacted directly at mokijep@majemail.com

What's the difference?

+ Puts the needs of UK children at the centre of mental health reforms

+ Emphasises the importance of therapeutic help within schools for pupils requiring support

+ Promotes Mental Health Awareness training for all those who work with children, including teachers

Best in class

We take a closer look at what the practice followed by a 'SEN School of the Year' looks like in action...

Clive Lawrence became one of the youngest headteachers in the country when, just a few days short of his 28th birthday in 2014, he assumed his first headship at a community special school in Staffordshire.

Derby born and bred, Lawrence is now executive headteacher at St Giles School. It's the city's only special primary school – one rated Outstanding by Ofsted – and is currently preparing to join the Spencer Academy Trust. "This collaboration will allow skills, knowledge and expertise to be shared across the Trust," Lawrence says. "There are very few Academy structures like this, which will enable us to set the blueprint for creating aspirational opportunities for all children, regardless of needs and background."

A voice for all

Lawrence is keen to emphasise the contributions of the team that works alongside him in St Giles' recent success: "I'm fortunate to have a hard-working and committed team here, who go above and beyond to create an amazing environment for the children. Despite the complex needs of our pupils, we try our best to ensure that all of them are able to make substantial and sustained progress across the curriculum. We want them to thrive and be the best they can be."

Twelve months ago, St Giles became an Inclusive Teaching School Alliance with staff providing a range of communication training to both mainstream and special school settings in the area, upskilling their practitioners to support children with SEND and SLCN. Practitioners from other schools now regularly visit St Giles as part of their own CPD, spending time in classes and observing lessons, and later implementing what they've learned about the school's communication strategies into their own teaching and learning.

> *"St Giles has twice taken pupils and members of staff to Kenya"*

More recently, this work has helped St Giles attain national recognition. It's been accredited by both the National Autistic Society and the children's communication charity I CAN, and has earned the Inclusion Quality Mark at top 'Flagship School' level. In March of this year, St Giles was chosen as the 2019 'SEN School of the Year' at the Shine a Light Awards.

The school's stated mission is to 'provide pupils with effective strategies to communicate, promote independence and prepare pupils for life in the local and wider community'. As Clive Lawrence explains, "Here at St Giles, we do our best to ensure all children have a 'voice'. Early identification and targeting of all pupils is key at any school, and we work hard to ensure a smooth transition from the child's previous education establishment to St Giles School.

"Information is collected from those previous settings, and we will chat to parents and carers to achieve a greater understanding of the child, before individualised communication system support plans are put into place, while considering their EHCP targets. The latter can often be difficult, so the school will ensure that parents and children themselves are involved at all times, with school staff giving pupils the motivation and means to communicate their wants and wishes."

Growing in confidence

One can point to several examples of how this approach has successfully worked in practice. In September 2018, seven-year-old Issac Hogan joined St Giles. Issac had been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism. Following the death of his father when Issac was just three years old, he also developed selective mutism.

While he had initially attended mainstream school, a series of exclusions for behavioural issues led mum Lisa to believe that there was something more deep-rooted that needed addressing. "I knew when Issac was just 15 months old that something wasn't quite right, she says. "I had to keep taking him to see the doctor, and it wasn't until 2016 that he was diagnosed with ADHD. Seven months later, he was diagnosed with autism, too.

"My instinct told me that it wasn't just the 'terrible twos', that he wasn't just a 'naughty boy'. At first, Issac would be excluded from nursery for an afternoon. Then the periods of exclusion would be extended to five days. By December,

Executive headteacher, Clive Lawrence


Issac Hogan

three months after starting mainstream school, Issac had racked up over five exclusions. It was then that I contacted the Derby-based charity Umbrella, which advised me to get an EHCP for Issac, which ultimately took 10 months."

Staff at St Giles reassured Lisa that the school was the best place for Issac, who at that time was using a stuffed toy – a monkey he called 'Monk' – as a form of communication, holding him in front of his mouth when he needed to speak. Yet within just six months, staff at St Giles were able to help Issac rely less on Monk and grow in confidence.

Above and beyond

"From the moment we walked through the door, it just felt right for us." says Lisa. "Issac feels like he 'belongs' there. He can be himself and is accepted for who he is – a wonderful, caring little boy who has additional needs."

Every child at St Giles is assigned a team of staff to assist them when they join. "Issac was placed in a class with a TA call Jakk Capewell, and he's great," adds Lisa. "I believe Clive Lawrence thought that Issac needed a young, male role model in his life following the death of his dad – and Jakk's perfect for him."

St Giles staff have even been known to lend pupils support outside of school. "Issac had to go for an eye test a few weeks after starting school and was feeling very anxious about it," Lisa remembers. "Jakk came along with us to the appointment, to help him feel more at ease. He didn't have to do that, and that's why St Giles is so fantastic. They go above and beyond expectations."

School and home

St Giles' inclusive learning opportunities include sensory swimming lessons, horse riding sessions and art therapy, plus a hugely successful Forest School programme held at a nearby mainstream school.

The school has also sought to establish partnerships with local organisations. Together with the Derby County Community Trust – the charity arm of the championship football club – St Giles has twice taken pupils and three members of staff to the Ungana Academy in Kenya, so that they could experience what life is like for children living in the Rhonda Ward of Nakuru.

The school works closely with parents and carers by holding termly meetings to discuss targets, and by offering support as needed from the school's communication practitioner and speech and language therapist. The school's dedicated family support team, meanwhile, provides family workshop sessions where parents have the opportunity to learn Makaton, discover how to access various forms of visual and technical support, and find out more about the various ways in which they can support their child's communication needs both within school and at home.

Inclusive outreach

The school's communication practitioner and SLE is Karen Brownhill, who was previously a winner in the Teaching and Learning Support Staff category at the annual nasen Awards. One of her latest projects saw her volunteering to teach Makaton to staff at a nearby family-orientated pub, so that they could communicate with a family who have a child with Down syndrome – five-year-old St Giles pupil, Oliver Callis.

The Oaklands pub in Littleover, Derby, is now officially 'Makaton-friendly'. "This was another great example of St Giles in the community," adds Clive Lawrence. "For Oliver, it means he can transfer the Makaton skills he's learned at school directly into the community where he lives."

Staff at The Oaklands have since returned the favour by using their Makaton skills to perform songs for hundreds of well-wishers and TV crews during a fundraising event for St Giles, which managed to raise over £6,500.

stgiles.derby.sch.uk

"We can achieve the same as you"

We hear how staff at Craneswater Junior School endeavoured to level the academic and social playing field for a group of pupils with visual impairments

Sally Turner

Inclusion Manager (SENCO)

We currently have six visually impaired pupils at the school. When our first VI pupil arrived six years ago, we embraced the challenge of building up our provision, enhancing it over time and looking at how we could be more inclusive.

Our VI pupils include some who are in the process of learning Braille and others who require large print resources and enlargement facilities. Providing that kind of differentiated support isn't always easy, particularly when it comes to SATs papers and other test materials. It's a huge job that's overseen by our VI specialist TA, Caz Gilmore, with assistance from another full-time TA.

Our VI children each have their own classroom folders, into which are placed enlarged versions of every worksheet and resource they'll require for that day's lessons. They also all have their own iPads. These connect to our smartboards so that they can access whole class teaching during lessons, and be included in assembles when a presentation is being given or song lyrics are being displayed. Caz works closely with the teaching staff and will often take part in planning meetings, where upcoming learning content will be examined and decisions made as to how that material will need to be taught and delivered to our VI children.

Level playing field

Twice every half term we receive visits from a VI service linked to our local authority, Portsmouth City Council, which provides us with reports detailing the needs of each child. These are then shared with teachers as part of the children's individual education plans.

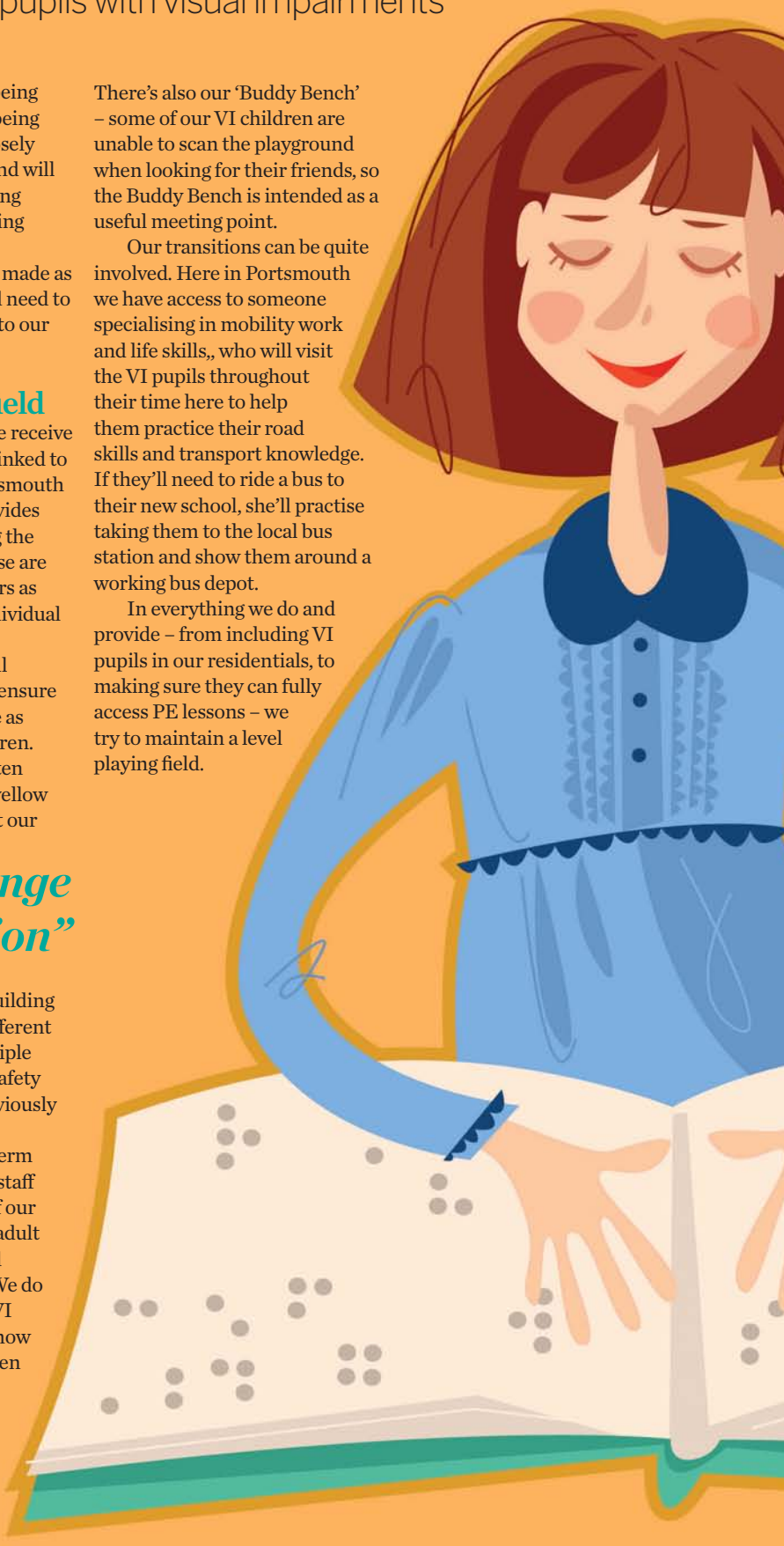
Each year the LA will conduct a site survey to ensure that everything is as safe as it can be for our VI children. Visitors to the school often notice the many bright yellow lines located throughout our interiors, because our building is constructed across different levels and includes multiple stairways. Getting that safety side of things right is obviously very important for us.

At the start of each term we'll update all support staff on the different needs of our VI children, so that our adult supervisors at break and lunch times are aware. We do the same with our non-VI children, letting them know that one of our VI children might bump into them by accident, not because they're being rude.

There's also our 'Buddy Bench' – some of our VI children are unable to scan the playground when looking for their friends, so the Buddy Bench is intended as a useful meeting point.

Our transitions can be quite involved. Here in Portsmouth we have access to someone specialising in mobility work and life skills,, who will visit the VI pupils throughout their time here to help them practice their road skills and transport knowledge. If they'll need to ride a bus to their new school, she'll practise taking them to the local bus station and show them around a working bus depot.

In everything we do and provide – from including VI pupils in our residentials, to making sure they can fully access PE lessons – we try to maintain a level playing field.



> *"We embraced the challenge of building up our provision"*

Caz Gilmore

TA and visual impairment specialist

When I arrived we had two children in the upper years with VI. I've now been here for four years, and my role has expanded as the number of VI children has increased. When we found ourselves with six VI children on roll last September, it made me think, *That sounds like a club...*

Craneswater is a big school. If you're the only VI child in your class or year group, there's a limit to the amount of peer support you'll receive. When I put the idea of forming a club to the children, they were very enthusiastic about it.

Our first session involved them talking about what they had in common and what resources they all used, so that they knew someone else in the school used big bold pens or a writing slope, or were learning Braille. I then asked them to come up with a name for the club – they chose MeteorEyes – and to design their own logo.

The club usually meets around once a month for a couple of hours in the afternoon. Initially, I'd organise various arts and sports activities, but as time's gone on we've gradually built up a number of community links outside the school.

For example, there's a local artist called Clarke Reynolds (@3dpointlism on Twitter) who's visually impaired and specialises in tactile art. He was doing a large community art project last year, and we asked if he'd be willing to work with our VI children. He ended up spending three afternoons with us, during which we made a huge tactile canvas that's now hanging in the school reception with a sign beside it saying 'Please do touch'. We've also visited other schools that have VI children to take part in sports events and Christmas parties.

Self-advocacy

The children have previously hosted whole school assemblies that have included PowerPoint presentations and short sketches that the children put together. The purpose of these is to teach the whole school, *'This is what it's like for us. We can achieve the same as you – we just might not see you when we're running about in the playground.'*

> ***"The advocacy work of our VI children has had a normalising effect"***

The club has had a big impact on the children's ability to advocate for themselves within the wider school community. They're now able to receive peer support from each other, with the older children having become really good peer leaders for the younger ones coming up through the school. They're able to share some of the things they do in MeteorEyes sessions with the wider school community, such as the aforementioned artwork, and are better prepared for answering questions from other pupils.

One of our activities involved MeteorEyes members placing a series of Braille stickers around the school. We revealed this during one of our hosted assemblies, and for the next few weeks had children running up to us whenever they found one on a bin, on a sign or on an office door. The education and advocacy work of our VI children has had a normalising effect on the rest of school – *'You've got pencils to write with, I've got pens. You all know why, now let's move on.'* I think they walk a little bit taller as a result.

CUSTOM EYES

Caz Gilmore describes how the MeteorEyes club has embraced the CustomEyes service available from Guide Dogs

For a while we'd use all the enlarged print resources we could get our hands on. However, our VI pupils' font requirements range from 18 all the way up to 48, while readily available large print books tend to be very much 'one size fits all'.

During World Book Day one year, we discovered that the CustomEyes service provided World Book Day tokens, making it the first year that our children were able to properly take part. CustomEyes books look just like standard books, aside from the fact that they're slightly larger. The font type, size, line spacing and paper colour can all be tailored to what each child needs.

We have class readers each term for every year group, which I can now source for our VI children so that they're able to have a book just like everybody else. Some of the children are really enthusiastic readers, so it's important that we can feed that hunger.

For more details about the CustomEyes range from Guide Dogs, visit guidedogs.org.uk/customeyes

“If they’re happy, they’ll learn”

Callum Fauser finds out how staff at Market Field School aren’t afraid to think big when it comes to improving SEND provision and overturning preconceptions…

Located in the small village of Elmstead Market just outside Colchester in Essex, Market Field School occupies a sizeable two-storey building, with seemingly all the facilities a KS1-4 special school for pupils with learning difficulties and autism might require.

During a tour of its corridors in the company of teacher Kierran Pearce, we look in on an attentive drama class taking place inside a dedicated studio space, before passing by a cooking class hard at work in a kitchen facility and a science lab, as well as two soft play rooms and two sensory rooms.

Yet Market Field’s 21st century appearances belie how well-established the school is. Originally opened on the same site in 1975, its prefab buildings were designed at the time to accommodate just 60 children. Over the following decades, additional structures were added to keep up with a steady growth in pupil numbers until the decision was eventually made to relocate the pupils for a year while a new building was constructed and eventually opened in 2015.

Growing demand

Market Field’s executive headteacher, Gary Smith, first joined the school in 1989, before being formally appointed as head five years later – at a time when the school’s future seemed to hang in the balance.

“In the 90s there was a drive to get all pupils into mainstream and close down schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties,” he recalls. “We chose at the time to simply carry on.”

In 2016 the school converted to an academy, though as Smith explains, the factors at play were somewhat different to the typical conversion story: “After the special schools were closed, LAs were prevented from opening new special schools to increase provision. Our situation’s a bit unusual – most schools become academies to get out of council control, whereas we became an academy because it’s what the LA needed.”

Market Field School presently has 290 pupils on roll, with years 1 to 9 based at the Elmstead Market site and years 10 and 11 attending a separate site, Market Field College in nearby Clacton, alongside a 16-19 cohort. A 3-19 special school in Witham, Southview School, was recently added to the Market Field family, while 2020 will see the opening of Chatten Free School – a 3-19 setting for children and young people with severe autism and complex learning difficulties. It’s fair to say that Smith has plenty to keep him occupied.

Smith observes that Market Field’s flurry of expansion activity is driven by a pressing need. “As a county, Essex is doing everything it can to expand specialist provision,” Smith explains. “But we also need to do what we can to improve provision in mainstream schools.”

When I ask Smith what he feels sets Market Field apart from other schools, I’m told “We see ourselves as a training school. We’ve grown our own teachers from individuals who joined us as support staff. There’s a willingness among everyone here to keep doing the best they can and see where it takes them. Our mantra has always been ‘*If they’re happy, they’ll learn.*’

Spreading the message

Playing an increasingly important part in those outreach efforts is an initiative set up by Kierran Pearce back in 2012 called the Multi Schools Council (multischoolscouncil.org.uk). As Pearce explains, “Our children felt that what was going on in special schools was fantastic, but that they never had the chance to tell other school pupils about it, or make friends outside of these walls. They were also aware that at some point they’d have to enter ‘mainstream society’ – and that if they were to be accepted, they’d need to build a better understanding of themselves among their school-age peers.”

Thus was born the first Multi School Council project – a sports event run by Market Field pupils linked with that

year's Olympic and Paralympic games, which was hosted by Market Field and three local mainstream schools. "The idea was that our children would lead these sports events and educate the mainstream children," says Pearce. "There's this perception that our children are the ones always needing support – when actually, it's possible for them to provide support to others."

The event proved to be a success, prompting Pearce and the pupils involved to look beyond sport and apply the same principles more widely. "We've touched on a range of different areas since then that have always been driven by the children," Pearce says. "We could sit with a group of adults and come up with ideas that will change perceptions of disability within mainstream schools and wider society – but I'm of the view that you should start by asking the children themselves. *They'll* come up with ideas and ways of expressing their differences."

The scope of the Multi Schools Council has grown considerably over the past seven years, to the extent that it now operates as a series of six clusters spread across Essex which meet regularly throughout the year. According to Pearce, "We've held community fairs and talent shows where children from special and mainstream schools have performed on the same stage. We've held further sports events and an 'inclusion week' where children from Market Field spent time in a mainstream school and children from a mainstream school came here."

More recently, the Council has embarked on two particularly ambitious projects – a resilience programme aimed at tackling mental health within schools, and an autism awareness programme that sees Market Field pupils visit other schools and talk openly about autism in assemblies and classrooms. At the time of our meeting, Pearce is on a year's secondment to focus on developing the Council further still. "Within five years we want to be engaged with every school in the County," says Pearce. "Currently we're working with 138."

Market Field School's executive headteacher, Gary Smith

No magic wand

As I near the end of my visit, I ask Smith and Pearce whether they can call to mind any erroneous assumptions held by mainstream schools and others regarding SEND provision. In Smith's view, "People think that special schools somehow have a magic wand. We haven't. We just want to make things better."

For Pearce, "It's about seeing each child individually. A teacher might observe something that worked for one child with autism last year not working this year. Why? Well, they're not the same child. That's not to blame teachers – during my own ITT there were perhaps two or three days spent on SEND. It's impossible to cover even the basics in that time, which is part of the problem."

For Smith, however, the main focus of everything at Market Field, from its continuing expansion to the Multi Schools Council, is employability. "We surveyed 120 of our former pupils and discovered that just 12 of them were in employment. That's simply not good enough. People say that your school days are supposed to be the happiest of your life – but they're not meant to be the *only* days."

A SCHOOL WITH A VIEW

Members of school staff who happen to have epilepsy supported in just the same way as pupils. In an employment context, staff have the right to reasonable adjustments under the Equalities Act. Epilepsy is a disability covered by said act, meaning that schools would be required to work with staff to decide what reasonable adjustments might needed for them to be sufficiently supported in their job.

You may need to put a plan in place for what happens if a member of staff has a seizure during the school day, implement an adjustment to the colleague's workload or make an accommodation for them to attend hospital appointments. Remember that epilepsy is something that affects people very individually, and that some members of staff with epilepsy may barely experience any regular seizures.

Be aware that as an employer, you have an obligation under the Equalities Act to make reasonable adjustments for any members of staff as required.

4 REASONS TO TRY... Equals

How the schemes of work of this semi-formal SLD/MLD curriculum can make a difference in your setting

1 CROSS-CURRICULAR

EQUALS' schemes of work are open to personalisation, beginning at the start of the individual pupil's learning journey and aiming for the highest level of independence possible. Pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) or moderate learning difficulties (MLD) learn differently, so it follows that the curriculum SoW used must be tailored to their specific needs.

2 SUITABLE FOR ALL AGES

They can be used from primary to FE level. Suitable for all ages and stages of education, from 2 to 25 and even beyond, they're not directly mapped to specific ages or Key Stages. Instead, learners fit into them where they will according to their individual abilities, interests and learning journey.

3 ESSENTIAL COMPANIONS

The schemes act as a series of 'recipes' that guide teachers but don't instruct. Unrelated to the National Curriculum, they're specifically written for pupils with SLD/MLD and focused on learning intentions, rather than objectives or targets – and shouldn't be concerned with SMART pre-determined outcomes.

4 EASY TO ACCESS

EQUALS' SoW are provided electronically and accessed via remote servers. Each licence covers an entire school or centre, thus affording all teachers easy access to these essential curriculum resources. Supported file formats include .PDF and .DOCX, making the SoW easy to adapt and customise as required.

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At a glance

- **Curriculum SoW for pupils with severe learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties**
- **Can be adapted to the needs of SLD/MLD pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning**
- **Suitable for use by pupils working below age-related expectations in both specialist and mainstream school settings**

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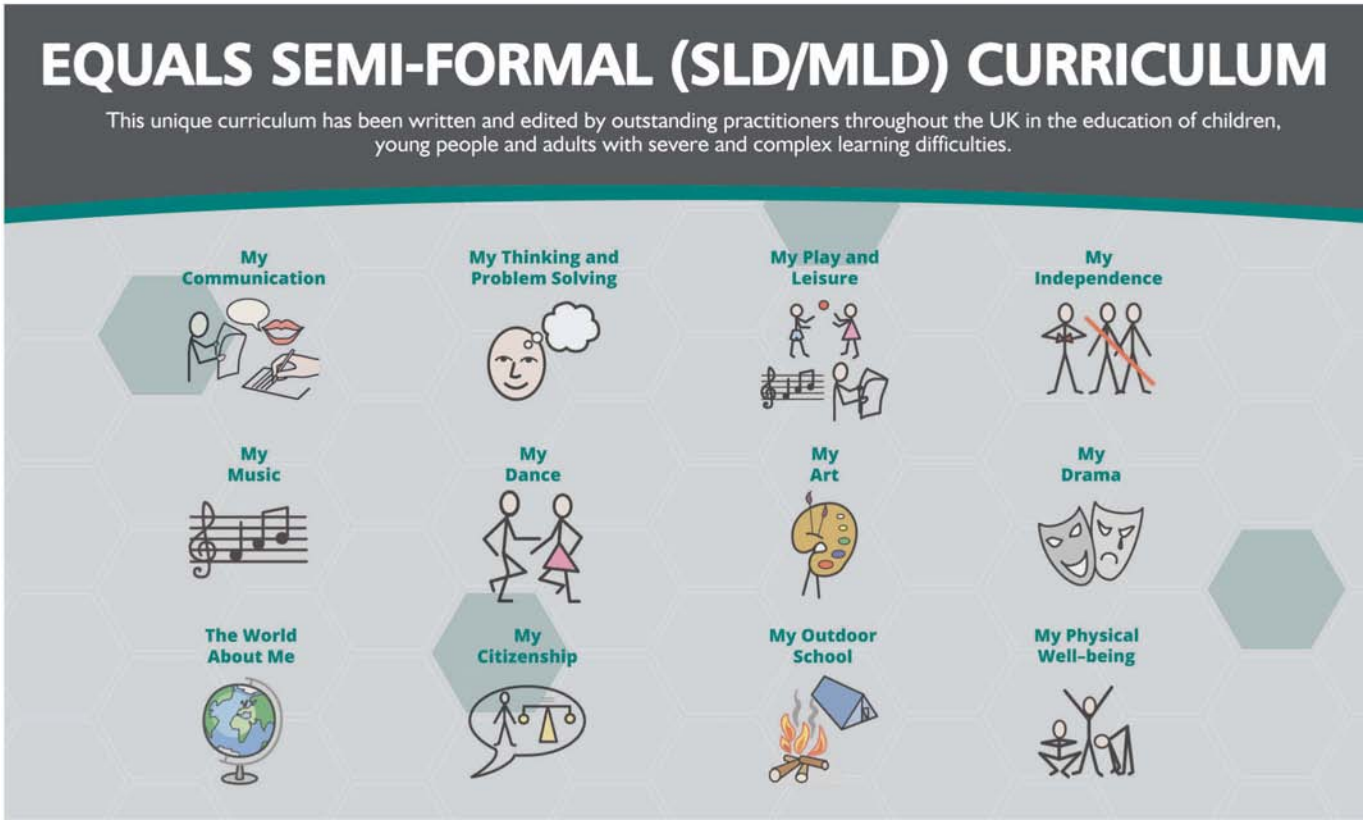

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AT A GLANCE

- **Provides regular, consistent and secure basic skills for reading, spelling and writing**
- **Simple steps learning linked to multisensory teaching**
- **Designed so that no children slip through the net**
- **Hekos supply baseline data for school records**

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

The quality of literacy interventions can vary greatly, from meticulously detailed to troublingly fallible, so it's imperative that we approach them with caution and a critical eye. We know that there are no magic wands, no quick-fixes, yet there are some interventions that simply do what they claim to and can really make a difference – especially if they're well targeted and well delivered.

The Five Minute Literacy Box is an excellent example of something that's been expertly designed to cover basic skills, and comes presented in a clear and easy to follow way. The level of teacher experience and approach will obviously have some impact on what pupils are able to get out of it, but the Five Minute Box is specifically designed with high quality instruction in mind, while requiring minimal training ahead of use. It comes with an instructional CD-ROM that includes some demonstrations of the Box in use and practical pointers for what to do. There's more detailed in-school training available too, covering background theory, as well as practical understanding of the intervention.

Conceived as an 'open and teach' all-in-one kit, it's well organised and contains a bundle of durable hands-on resources, including keyword cards and boards, a sounds board, 26 plastic letters, handwriting formation boards, a number formation board, whiteboard and pen, record of achievement booklets, an instruction guide and accompanying resource book with assessment sheets and keywords checklist.

The resource book is a slim, uncomplicated guide to using the Box that includes a step aside spelling programme, a spelling list, and individual record sheets for use with the keyword cards, as well as scripts for some supporting audiovisual material on the CD-ROM.

It all adds up to a programme that offers clearly focused intervention that's intentionally systematic and intensive, based around activities designed for short bursts of around five minutes. When subject teaching is structured in a cumulative and sequential way as it is here, you'll soon start to see rapid progress. It's therefore reassuring to see that small steps and milestones are an integral part of the Box. Ideally, daily use is key to getting the most out of it, since the consistency, frequency and intensity it can help provide will all contribute to a child's mastery of English skills. Practice that's distributed throughout the week is typically more effective than practice delivered in a single block.

While different interventions will, of course, be relevant to particular contexts and children's specific needs, I've used the Five Minute Literacy Box in a range of schools with great results, and would confidently recommend it.

SENCo

VERDICT

- ✔ A very easy to manage teaching system straight out of the box
- ✔ Perfect for screening children on school entry
- ✔ Ideal for consolidating basic skills, supporting dyslexic pupils and EAL learners
- ✔ Gives children ownership of their own learning and progress
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Control the mood, NOT THE CHILD

Fintan O'Regan outlines how schools should look to navigate the challenges presented by pupils with oppositional defiant disorder

Oppositional defiant disorder is a term that divides opinion because many don't consider it to be a 'real' condition – yet that the traits it refers to are very real indeed.

Children and young people with ODD argue with adults. They refuse and defy. They can be angry and defensive, spiteful and vindictive. All children will likely exhibit these traits at some point – indeed, we can all have bad days, however old we are – but it's the *intensity* with which these traits present themselves that might lead to an individual receiving a diagnosis or assessment of ODD.

In my experience, ODD tends to be a secondary outcome of some other underlying need – often features of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder that have yet to be recognised in the child, with the child's frustration manifesting itself in defiance. Where ODD overlaps with ADHD, it's worth noting that the latter is a condition centred on impulsivity, and that you'll therefore be dealing with behaviour that's not premeditated. Generally speaking, if the child does something wrong against someone, they'll feel empathy afterwards.

At the opposite end of the scale from ADHD is conduct disorder. The related actions and behaviours of children with conduct disorder will be very much premeditated – they know what they're doing and yet do it anyway, and they won't tend to demonstrate much in the way of empathy.

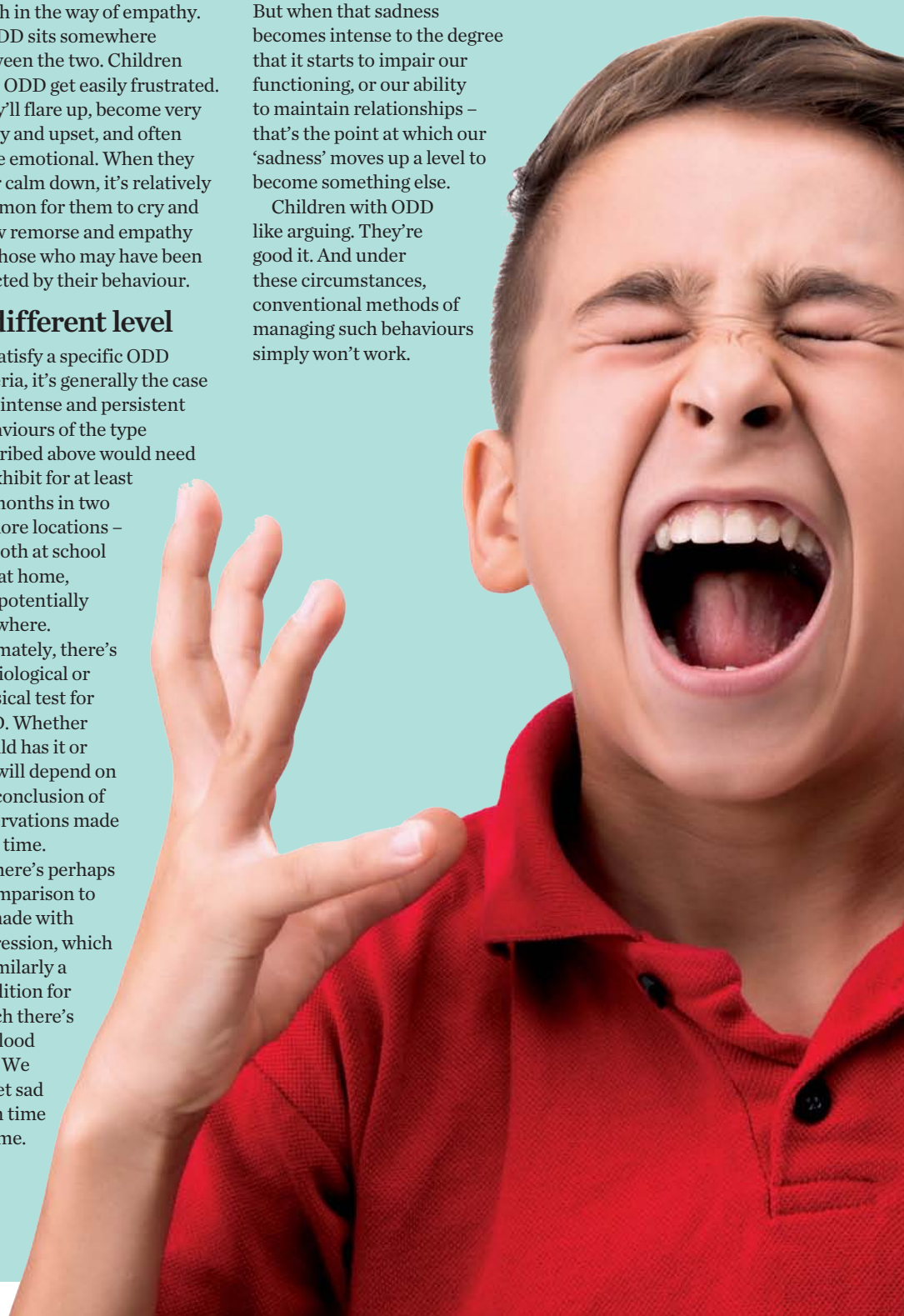
ODD sits somewhere between the two. Children with ODD get easily frustrated. They'll flare up, become very angry and upset, and often quite emotional. When they later calm down, it's relatively common for them to cry and show remorse and empathy for those who may have been affected by their behaviour.

A different level

To satisfy a specific ODD criteria, it's generally the case that intense and persistent behaviours of the type described above would need to exhibit for at least six months in two or more locations – i.e. both at school and at home, and potentially elsewhere. Ultimately, there's no biological or physical test for ODD. Whether a child has it or not will depend on the conclusion of observations made over time.

There's perhaps a comparison to be made with depression, which is similarly a condition for which there's no blood test. We all get sad from time to time. But when that sadness becomes intense to the degree that it starts to impair our functioning, or our ability to maintain relationships – that's the point at which our 'sadness' moves up a level to become something else.

Children with ODD like arguing. They're good it. And under these circumstances, conventional methods of managing such behaviours simply won't work.



Behavioural nudges

Teachers should navigate this not by controlling the child, but by controlling the mood and climate of the child's immediate environment. If that environment is structured, and yet open enough for the child to question certain situations and decisions, that can be helpful for them. If, however, the environment is very rigidly controlled, and subject to the will of someone who may themselves be somewhat egotistical, then the child's symptoms are more likely to manifest in a negative way.

The supervising adult in this scenario shouldn't simply tell the child what to do, but neither should they try to negotiate with them. What they should do is try nudging the child into making better decisions for themselves, since the mood of the child is central to being able to de-escalate the situation.

In the classroom, you may also need to watch out for the moods of other children. Every class will likely include kids who'll try and provoke the child into flaring up, because it's entertaining. To that end, this managing of mood over behaviour can be extended beyond children fitting the ODD criteria to the rest of the class.

Consistent, yet flexible

In every classroom there will always be a set of red lines, and some other areas where the rules can be a little more flexible. Non-negotiables will typically include health and safety considerations, bans on phones and chewing or similar. These are commonplace and will be required of all children, whether they present with ODD or otherwise.

Flexibility can be helpful when children become frustrated or exhibit a negative mood – perhaps because they've arrived at school without their usual equipment. You need to be able to demonstrate that flexibility, because fairness doesn't mean treating every child the same; it means giving every child what they need.

Schools can occasionally find this need to be consistent, yet flexible somewhat contradictory. Yes, it's possible for the lines to become blurred at times – but so long as some non-negotiables remain in place, it's an arrangement that everyone in the class will likely be happier with.

Don't take it personally

Some people have a natural ability to de-escalate individuals when they become anxious or frustrated, while others may need some additional advice in how to read such situations. The latter group may be able to call on certain communication tools, such as saying *'I need you to do this,'* in place of *'Will you do this?' 'Can you do that?'* or *'You should do this.'*

Staff training in de-escalation strategies can be hugely beneficial. I've previously seen staff needing some assistance in how to use their body language when addressing people who are anxious – fingers shouldn't be wagging, hands should be down by their sides.

A final point to note is that children with ODD will often make things personal. If staff appear to take what a child says personally, that can infuse the child and exacerbate the situation. By the same token, a child might take what you say to them personally, and resist the message you're trying to communicate – and yet willingly take that same message from one of your colleagues. The proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child' certainly applies here. Ultimately, it's about not being an island. **TP**

Fintan O'Regan is an associate lecturer at Leicester University

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Four strategies

My own advice for adults supervising children who have ODD would be this:

1 MANAGE MOODS

Focus your actions on changing the child's mood, not their behaviour, and consider any de-escalation and diversion strategies within that context.

2 IT TAKES TWO TO ARGUE

If there's one person trying to argue, that's not an argument. Jousting with children who have ODD is therefore not recommended, particularly in front of their peers. It will often be those peers that the child is playing to, and the child will be far more interested in what they think than what you think.

3 LET GO OF YOUR EGO

Addressing the child with a big '*I am...*' and following up with '*You should...*' is a red rag to a bull, and an approach that simply won't work for children with ODD traits. All it will do is send them into a higher level of anxiety.

4 REFER THE CHILD DOWN, NOT UP

If things progress to that point despite your best efforts, don't refer them to a more senior member of staff within the school hierarchy. Far from reducing the intensity of their behaviours, this will actually heighten them. Instead, send the child to someone *lower* in the hierarchy who will be better placed to get their mood down. When you pick things up with the child later on, it's you that will then be representing that more senior level.

The working memory conundrum

Dr. Tracy Packiam Alloway on why schools should examine whether their pupils' working memory may be holding them back

What is working memory? It's not the same as IQ. A child can have working memory issues and a very high IQ, or the other way round.

I tested a few hundred children in kindergarten [*5- to 6-year-olds*], tracked their school work over six years and found that if you have a strong working memory at kindergarten, it can help you do well in school even six years later. Supporting a child who has working memory issues, who may do less well in things like reading, writing, and maths, is very important.

The good news is that there is a lot that we can do, once we know what signs to look for. As we've begun to understand more about how working memory affects learning, we've discovered ways to support working memory.

Drawing a link

Here are some key findings from my government-funded projects on the links between working memory and education:

1 Learning success
Working memory is an accurate predictor of learning from kindergarten to college because it measures potential to learn, rather than what has already been learned. In contrast, other measurements like school tests and IQ tests measure knowledge that children have already learned. If students do well in one of these tests, it's because they know the information they are tested on. Likewise, many aspects of IQ tests also measure knowledge that we have built up.

A commonly used measure of IQ is a vocabulary test. If they know the definition of a word like 'bicycle' or 'police,' then they will likely get a higher IQ score. If they don't know the definitions of these words, or perhaps don't articulate them well, this will be reflected in a lower score. In this way, IQ tests essentially measure how much students know, and how well they can articulate this knowledge.

2 Extent of impact
Working memory is important for a variety of activities at school – from complex subjects such as reading comprehension, mental arithmetic and word problems, to simple tasks like copying from the board and navigating around school.

The importance of working memory in learning isn't just limited to children. A similar pattern can be seen at the university level as well, with working memory a better predictor of grades than college entrance exams.

3 Prevalence
In a government-funded study of over 3,000 students I found that 10% of students had working memory problems that led to learning difficulties in the classroom. That's around three children in a class of 30. Common working memory problems that children show in the classroom include forgetting instructions, losing their place in an activity and raising their hand but forgetting what they want to say.

> *"Working memory measures potential to learn, rather than what has already been learned"*

4 Progress comparisons
Without support, a student with working memory issues will struggle to catch up with their peers.

In a study with high schoolers [*14- to 18-year-olds*] I found that teenagers diagnosed with working memory problems were still performing very poorly in school compared to their peers two years later.

5 Brain training
Working memory can be trained. Brain training is a growing and exciting new area – there's much evidence of the brain's plasticity, that it can actually change depending on what we do.

Clinical trials with a working memory training program I co-developed called Jungle Memory (see junglememory.com) demonstrated improvements in working memory, IQ and learning outcomes.

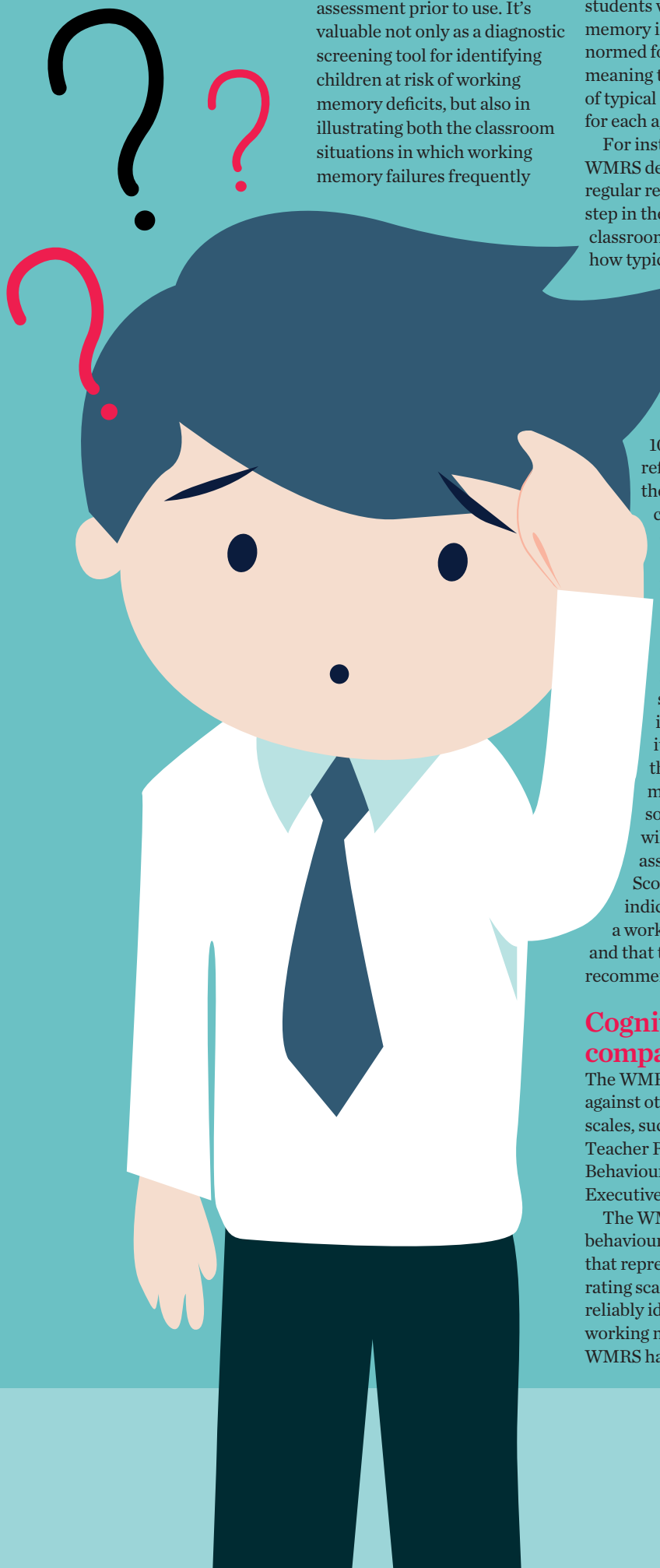
Testing for working memory

The Working Memory Rating Scale (WMRS) is a behavioural rating scale developed for educators to help easily identify students with working memory deficits. It consists of 20 descriptions of behaviours characteristic of children with working memory deficits. Teachers rate how typical each behaviour is of a particular child using a four-point scale from 0 (not typical at all) to 1 (occasionally), 2 (fairly typical) and 3 (very typical).

The starting point in developing the WMRS was an observational study of students with poor working memory, but typical scores in IQ tests.

Compared with classmates who had average working memory, the low memory students frequently forgot instructions, struggled to cope with tasks involving simultaneous processing and storage and lost track of their place in complex tasks. The most common consequence of these failures was that the students abandoned activities without completing them.

Since the WMRS focuses solely on working memory-related problems in a



single scale, it doesn't require any training in psychometric assessment prior to use. It's valuable not only as a diagnostic screening tool for identifying children at risk of working memory deficits, but also in illustrating both the classroom situations in which working memory failures frequently arise, and the profile of difficulties typically faced by students with working memory issues. The scores are normed for each age group, meaning they are representative of typical classroom behaviour for each age group.

For instance, one of the 20 WMRS descriptions is 'Needs regular reminders of each step in the written task.' The classroom teacher has to rate how typical this behavior is of the student and compare their score to the manual.

A 5-year-old needs more reminders than a 10-year- old, which is reflected in the scoring of the WMRS; the scoring is color-coded to make it easy to interpret.

A score in the green range, for example, will indicate that it's unlikely the student has a working memory impairment. If a student's score falls in the yellow range, it's possible that they have a working memory impairment, so the recommendation will be that further assessment is needed. Scores in the red range indicate the presence of a working memory deficit and that targeted support is recommended.

Cognitive comparisons

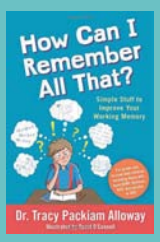
The WMRS has been validated against other behaviour rating scales, such as the Conners' Teacher Rating Scale and the Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF).

The WMRS measures behaviour that's different from that represented in these other rating scales, however, and thus reliably identifies students with working memory deficits. The WMRS has also been compared to cognitive tests of working memory, IQ, and academic attainment.

Note that the majority of students considered by their teachers to have problematic behaviours are more likely to have low working memory scores and hence achieve low grades. It's important to know that students who display problematic behaviour associated with working memory issues will not necessarily have low IQ scores – indeed, many can have average IQ scores.

It's working memory overload that leads to the behaviours discussed here, and their loss of focus in tasks can make them appear inattentive and distracted to others.

The WMRS enables teachers to use their knowledge of their students to produce an indicator of how likely it is that a child has a working memory problem. Thus, it provides a valuable first step in detecting possible working memory failures. For more details, see **tinyurl.com/senco-wmrs**.



Dr. Tracy Packiam Alloway is psychologist and author specialising in the research of working memory in the context of ADHD, dyslexia, autism, anxiety, and other difficulties affecting children's learning.

This article is an edited extract taken from the background notes of her book How Can I Remember All That? (£9.99 Jessica Kingsley Publishers) – an illustrated title that seeks to explain working memory concepts to children, and potentially prompt identification with the issues discussed, through the experiences of a boy called Tommy.

“Don’t make ASSUMPTIONS”

Alexis Camble and Susan Ross explore how schools can create an inclusive environment that values and respects pupils with a visible difference

When we ask young people with a visible difference what they want their teachers to know, a common answer is “Ask me – don’t make assumptions.”

Millions of people across the UK identify as having a visible difference, mark, scar or condition that affects their appearance (see tinyurl.com/cf-report-19), yet many teachers we speak to at Changing Faces feel unskilled and unprepared for supporting pupils who look different. Children like Marcus, who was born with a facial cleft and cleft palate and was bullied and taunted at school with the names ‘Scarface’ and ‘Joker’ (see panel).

As the UK’s leading charity for people with a visible difference, we know how important it is that teachers have access to advice and guidance that can help their classes recognise and challenge appearance-related stereotypes. We know that if we can get in early and get it right for children and young people, we can change lives.

Visible difference

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools in England and Wales to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which covers ‘severe disfigurements’ within the protected characteristic of disability. Schools must therefore be mindful that their policies and procedures don’t inadvertently disadvantage pupils with a visible difference, and be prepared to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of those pupils. This could include supporting a pupil to catch up with missed work due to absence for medical treatment, or talking to staff about the unconscious bias that can lead to teachers having lower behavioural or attainment expectations of pupils with a visible difference.

Teachers working within SEN provision will be used to taking a pupil-centred approach to inclusion, so ensuring that visible difference forms part of this practice should be a straightforward step to take. Changing Faces has developed age- and stage-appropriate Supporting Your Pupils Guides (see tinyurl.com/cf-support-pupils) to help school staff support pupils in developing the social skills and confidence needed thrive at school, as well as guidance on key areas such as transition and working in partnership with parents/guardians and other professionals.

CASE STUDY – MARCUS, 15

Marcus was born with an unusual facial cleft and cleft palate. In the years since he has had over 20 operations, the first when he was just four months old. Starting school seemed to go well, but when Marcus was eight his mum Sam became very worried about him: "he went from being this bright, bubbly little boy to being very quiet and I knew something was wrong." Marcus admitted that he was being bullied at school because of how he looked, and remembers it now as being a difficult time.

Sam says she didn't know what to do. "It was very hard, because the school were saying they were sorting it, and then Marcus would come home and tell me that a little boy had turned round to him and said, *'If I looked like you I'd have done away with myself.'* This little boy was eight years old. I was so shocked."

Sam got contacted Changing Faces, which began work with the family and the school. Gradually, these efforts started to make a difference, to the point where Marcus was able to make a short film to tell his class more about himself. As Marcus explains, "I just didn't want to be treated differently any more, so I made a DVD so that they could see that I'm just like them, and explain why I look the way I do."

Another issue that can have a significant impact on a pupil's experience of school is appearance-related bullying. Sadly, over half of children and young people with a visible difference experience negative or nasty comments, with 59% of these comments made by people in school (see tinyurl.com/cf-equal-18). Unfortunately, appearance-related bullying can sometimes be overlooked or written off as 'playground banter.'

Our advice to schools is to ensure that staff are vigilant and sensitive to signs of bullying behaviour targeting a pupil's appearance. Staff should support pupils in understanding the impact that appearance-related bullying has on their classmates, and ensure that any instances of it are addressed in the same way as any other bullying incident.

Inclusive environments

As well as tackling appearance-related bullying, teachers have a key role to play in encouraging all pupils to develop positive and respectful attitudes towards visible difference. Our research with young people shows that fewer than a third would be friends with someone with a disfigurement, which is why we'd encourage teachers to not shy away from talking about appearance in the classroom, and to demonstrate the use of appropriate, respectful language.

By using matter-of-fact language to describe aspects of someone's appearance – such as 'burns survivor' or 'a large scar' – it's possible to clearly convey how someone looks without attaching a judgement, as terms such as 'horribly scarred' might do. This approach also works when responding to questions from other pupils about a classmate's appearance: *"Mo has a scar from an operation, but he's fine now. Why don't you see if he wants to play with you at break?"* That's an example of how to provide enough information to answer a pupil's question, whilst moving the conversation on and bringing it to a natural end.

Encouraging pupils to identify and discuss similarities and differences within the class is another way of facilitating discussion around the need to respect difference while treating everyone equally and fairly. If you require support in doing this, Changing Faces has produced a range of 15- to 35-minute classroom activities (see tinyurl.com/cf-class-act) to help children to get to know their classmates better, discuss what makes them unique as people and together identify ways in which they can help tackle appearance-related bullying.

Challenging stereotypes

The images pupils see in school will play an important role when it comes to creating an inclusive learning environment that encourages everyone to respect and value difference. Incorporating images that reflect a wide range of appearances in lessons and assemblies is a great way of challenging the idea that there's a 'right' way to look. Unfortunately, persistent negative stereotypes of visible difference in popular culture work to reinforce the idea that looking different is somehow 'wrong'. Films and TV shows that rely on the stereotype of the 'scarred baddie' in particular can often be a child's only experience of seeing someone with a visible difference.

Studying books or films that represent visible difference in a positive, realistic way can help challenge negative associations of visible difference that pupils may have unconsciously developed. The novel *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio, tells the story of a boy with a craniofacial condition starting a new school, and has often been used successfully in many KS2 classes alongside a 2017 film adaptation. For younger pupils, the illustrated book *Something Else* by Kathryn Cave explores similar themes of belonging, tolerance and understanding in an accessible way.

Children and young people are under immense amounts of pressure to look a certain way; talking about visible difference in schools will help ensure that the next generation truly values difference and understands the importance of treating people equally and fairly.

Providing the right support at the right time for pupils who have a visible difference is vital if we're to ensure that such pupils are able to thrive at school and go on to lead successful and happy lives. Teachers, SENCos and other school staff all have vital roles to play in supporting both individual pupils and the wider school community. When we get it right, it can truly be transformative. **TP**

Alexis Camble is education project leader and Susan Ross head of education at Changing Faces for advice or support, contact 0345 450 0275

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5 REASONS TO TRY... SNAP-Behaviour

Dr Rob Long considers how this assessment and reporting tool can help support your school's behaviour strategies

30 SECOND BRIEFING

SNAP-B is an online diagnostic assessment that profiles 17 social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBDs), which without identification may limit a pupil's potential to learn. Focusing on a pupil's strengths, as well as weaknesses, SNAP-B offers a rounded approach by suggesting interventions and strategies for use both in school and at home.

1 THREE DOMAINS

In school, children and young people have three main relationships: how they relate to themselves, to their peers and to adults. SNAP-B profiles across all of these behavioural strands by gathering data from pupils, teachers and parents/carers. For example, where anger, depression and anxiety are assessed in the 'relationships with self' section, the 'relationships with adults' section will look at defiance and needing attention. By highlighting strengths and areas of concern across the three domains, SNAP-B will produce a fully rounded profile of the young person.

2 ASSESS – PLAN – DO – REVIEW

SNAP-B was designed to follow the Assess – Plan – Do – Review model, as set out in the 2014 SEND Code of Practice. After the initial questionnaires have been completed, the strategies suggested by SNAP-B can help teachers to plan by suggesting targeted interventions that address a pupil's specific needs. These can then be monitored over time. This format also allows teachers to work collaboratively with both parents/carers and individual pupils, in order to gain a rounded perspective of a child's behaviour at each stage of the process.

3 PUPIL INVOLVEMENT

A definite strength of SNAP-B is that it does not rely solely on adult input. Pupils may have different priorities from those of adults, so SNAP-B offers an opportunity for the young person to be actively involved with discussions about their strengths and areas to develop. The 'What I Feel' questionnaire assesses a pupil's academic and social self-esteem to give an insight into their perception of themselves as a learner, while a 'Pupil Voice Record' function allows the pupil's voice to be captured and recorded more informally as a conversation.

Contact:
01235 400 555
onlinesupport@rsassessment.com
risingstars-uk.com/snap-new

SNAP-B is developed by the award-winning publisher and resource specialist, RS Assessment from Hodder Education. The company's products are all created in collaboration with teachers and learners – if you would like to get involved, consider joining its teacher team.

4 INTERVENTION TRACKING

Early intervention is beneficial, not least because many of the SEBDs faced by children can lead to serious difficulties when they reach adulthood. SNAP-B includes a resource bank of practical interventions that can work alongside ideas, resources and approaches already in use in your school to help reduce these barriers to learning. Once the relevant interventions have been selected, a summary of what's being implemented will be automatically added to SNAP-B's School and Home Reports for sharing with class teachers and parents/carers.

5 REPEAT TESTING

To help demonstrate the effectiveness of any given plan of action, SNAP-B allows you to create multiple assessments for each pupil. The option to re-assess pupils throughout the year means you can explore whether an intervention should be continued, expanded on, replaced with something else or stopped altogether. At a glance progress monitoring is also possible, with SNAP-B letting you select and compare up to three previous Core Profiles within one report.

KEY POINTS

Multiple users can be granted access to SNAP-B, thus ensuring that its questionnaires are completed by those teachers and/or support staff that know the pupil best.

There is no limit to the number of pupils that can be assessed on SNAP-B. Each pupil can also be assessed multiple times in order to track progress.

Generate customisable School and Home Reports that can be shared with teachers and parents/carers, with further information about the interventions that have been implemented.

Notes can be added to a pupil's profile within SNAP-B, making it possible to track intervention start dates and any parent/carer observations in one place.

COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

GL Assessment WellComm Primary

A speech and language toolkit for screening and intervention

AT A GLANCE

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REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

To help accurately detect speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in your school, it's essential to use structured identification tools that focus on screening and intervention. One resource certainly worth knowing about comes from GL Assessment's ready-made WellComm Primary toolkit, created in conjunction with speech and language therapists at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

This is a truly professional package crammed with high-level support and top tips. It's richly referenced throughout, linking to best practice, quality evidence and current policies in education and health. It's a real lifeline.

The toolkit is made up of screening, intervention and measuring-progress resources, and uses a traffic light system to pinpoint any gaps and difficulties.

It comes with a practitioner handbook, which is a proficient source of information, guidance and strategies. It also provides descriptors of crucial language skills and pointers on what to look out for when assessing skills and using different approaches. This book, with its finger on the pulse, concisely brings together key policy, research and development issues and how they interact in educational contexts.

The screening tool assesses understanding, grammar, vocabulary, narrative and social skills with questions requiring direct assessment or observations of children's interpretation of cartoon images found in a picture book. Detailed instructions on what to do are outlined in 'The Little Book of Score Sheets and Rules' – a brilliant resource for carrying out observations, scoring and interpreting results.

A clever Report Wizard is also available, which allows scores to be calculated speedily and precisely, and instantly generates individual, group and cluster reports that are perfect for monitoring progress over time.

When a profile has been drawn up it's time to access the 'Big Book of Ideas'. This certainly lives up to its name, as it provides around 50 fun and practical intervention strategies and outlines ideas for each area covered in the score sheets.

There are specific colour-coded activities, clearly presented with accessible aims, simple-to-follow ideas and built-in differentiation through step-up and step-down guidance. Activities for improving memory and organisation skills, as well as social skills, are included, along with posters for classroom use.

This highly practical, intelligent and versatile toolkit is ideal for filling the huge gaps in post-Early Years assessment of speaking and listening. It provides a quick and thorough insight of language and communication skills, and proactively addresses many of the areas of concern highlighted in the report Bercow: Ten Years On.

SENCo

VERDICT

- ✔ Impressively supports early identification of children at risk of developing delayed communication skills
- ✔ A multi-faceted tool that feeds into and impacts positively on social, emotional and mental health
- ✔ Easy to use for immediate intervention and no expertise required
- ✔ Promotes collaborative working and joined-up thinking between professionals and parents
- ✔ Swiftly and effortlessly detects children needing speech and language support

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking to identify needs at the earliest point and make effective provision to improve long-term outcomes for children with developmental language disorder.

WellComm Primary £449, gl-assessment.co.uk/WellCommPrimary

Could it be DLD?

When uncovering and addressing difficulties with developmental language disorder in primary school, speed is of the essence, writes **Naomi Reed**...

In the average class of 30 children having started primary school this autumn, two children will be affected by developmental language disorder.

Despite this disorder's prevalence – it affects seven times more children than autism – it's likely that many in the teaching profession will have never heard of it. Yet its impact can be both extensive and long-term, affecting the way in which children use and understand spoken language.

Easy to misinterpret

DLD is a hidden disability like dyslexia, and as such can often go unidentified or be misinterpreted. As a new cohort of children embark on the study of a new curriculum, accurately identifying their needs will be key to helping them be both understood and supported.

Take the child who often seems to have their head in the clouds, or doesn't follow instructions in class. Perhaps this isn't down to a lack of attention and concentration on their part. It's possible that they're not purposefully ignoring the teacher. If DLD is the issue, they may not actually understand what the teacher is asking and struggle to follow the flow of information.

What about the child who isn't interacting well with other children in the class? There's a chance that this may not be shyness, but rather a symptom of DLD that can manifest as a difficulty in joining in conversations, understanding jokes and comprehending non-literal language.

Communication issues such as these can cause children to miss the usual conversational cues and conventions that form the very essence of social interactions. Making friends – one of the cornerstones of a happy and settled school life – thus becomes a much more complex process.

> *"Left unidentified, the challenges faced by children with DLD will be far-reaching."*

As a consequence, DLD can be commonly misinterpreted as a form of challenging behaviour, with a child left confused by day-to-day school rules and structures and isolated within the playground. According to the 'Bercow: Ten Years On' report (see bercow10yearson.com), 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders also have significant unidentified communication needs.

Long-lasting effects

Left unidentified, the challenges faced by children with DLD will be far-reaching. Language skills are crucial for accessing higher level, more abstract learning concepts. If a child doesn't have an effective internal dialogue, for example, then they'll struggle to work out a maths problem by talking it through in their head.

Planning and compiling a narrative becomes similarly problematic, causing children to struggle at the very first step of a literacy task. Research by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists bears this out, showing that pupils with DLD obtain lower academic and vocational qualifications, and leave education significantly earlier than their peers (see tinyurl.com/rcslt-facts).

If DLD isn't addressed at primary school then these issues will follow the child into adulthood, impacting upon their mental health and wellbeing. The Royal College has further found that a third of children with untreated communication needs will go on to develop subsequent mental health problems.

Suspect DLD?

Despite its prevalence and impact, DLD can be tough to identify by teaching staff and SENCos, but there are definite clues. If a child demonstrates some of the behaviours described above, and tends towards using more functional language over sophisticated concepts, there may be an issue. Think of the child who might say, *'Doing the thing with the water,'* rather than *'Pouring the water'* or *'Using the watering can.'*

In other cases, children with DLD may find it difficult to retell a simple narrative. The pupil who often can't describe what they did at the weekend, or what they got up to during the school holidays could potentially have DLD.

Providing help straight away

The waiting time to access speech and language therapy services can vary across the UK, but early identification and intervention is a key predictor in closing the gap for pupils with DLD.

That's one of the reasons why we've teamed up with GL Assessment to develop a simple screening tool and interventions resource book called WellComm Primary, which can be used with all children in a class to identify those at risk of having DLD. It ensures that if there are any suspicions, work can begin immediately on helping struggling students develop their vocabulary, grammar, narrative and social skills while a referral is processed.

Using prompts and visual material, such as word webs, can help a child get the name of something right and then start building the new word into their conversations. Use of symbols, task plans and

THE WELLCOMM PRIMARY TOOLKIT

The WellComm Primary Toolkit helps schools quickly identify children aged six to 11 who may be struggling with their speech and language development and offers ideas for immediate support. It requires no specialist speech or language expertise to use, making it suitable for anyone working with children in school.

The assessment only takes 15 to 20 minutes per child, and once the screening is complete, interventions can be put in place immediately.

The Big Book of Ideas, which forms part of the WellComm Primary package, contains a series of fun activities and strategies that can be used to support children in their speech and language development.

The WellComm Primary Toolkit is priced at £449

gl-assessment.co.uk/WellCommPrimary

visual timetables can further support pupils who experience difficulty with following instructions and retaining verbal information.

We've found that giving pupils choices when asking them to narrate something can also help, as it's a useful way of demonstrating the language a pupil might need if they get stuck. If a child struggles to explain what they did at the weekend or during an activity, teachers can provide them with suggestions and options: *'Did you stay in or did you go out this weekend?' 'Did you complete the worksheet about telling the time, or the worksheet about days of the week?'* This gives the child a chance to get started with their story and structure their ideas.

Another way of offering support to children with DLD is to pre-teach the vocabulary they'll need before starting an activity. Word webs work well here, as DLD sufferers often find it demanding to listen to new vocabulary, remember it and store it efficiently in their memory. This can result in the pupil missing out on the learning that follows, since they'll require longer to grasp the basic vocabulary making up a new topic or lesson. Using word webs or mind maps in this way, and devoting time to teaching the new vocabulary for a topic or lesson beforehand, will make a vast difference to a pupil's learning.

Addressing DLD early on can ease pupils' transition to primary school, help them catch up with their peers, equip them with the tools they'll need to make friends and seriously improve their future life chances.

Naomi Reed is a speech and language therapist at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, and one of the authors of GL Assessment's new WellComm Primary Toolkit

@GL_Assessment

gl-assessment.co.uk

Learning on LOCATION

Multisensory learning outside the classroom can do much to enhance children's engagement, says Neil Mears – particularly when they have additional needs

Awe. It's a very little word for a very big emotion. When you see it ripple across children's faces as they lie on the cool floor of a Tudor hall, gazing up at the impressive works of art all around them and soaking up the hushed atmosphere, it's a sight to behold.

Being on location and surrounded by history is a transformative learning experience for anyone, but for students working towards or at Entry Level 1, it takes on a special resonance. Interactive approaches to learning will expose children to sights, smells and events they may not have encountered before. It offers chances to bring learning to life, experience new places and people, and grasp new opportunities for engaging in the world.

The multisensory approach

One of the best things about taking a multisensory approach to teaching and learning is that it allows us to cater for our students' different processing styles. Some students like to listen or watch demonstrations, whilst others have trouble with visual or auditory processing and benefit from kinaesthetic learning and using physical movement to aid their memory.

Traditional learning inside the four walls of a classroom tends to focus more heavily on the former two, whereas a trip to a new location allows for multiple types of learning to take place. The more frequently different senses are stimulated, the more information children are able to retain. After all, it's one thing to learn about historical figures from books, but another entirely to know that you're standing right where King George II stood 300 years ago.

In the same vein, it's interesting to see the kind of clothes people wore in the time of Henry VIII from books, but being able to actually dress up, feel the fabric and see what you look like in them draws children into a whole new world. We've watched children's confidence grow exponentially as they collaborate and role-play with friends, while managing the physical operation of putting on new and strange clothes.

Imagine having the chance to breathe in the same scent of seasonal kitchen garden herbs that would have been used 300 years ago. The smell response is extremely evocative and a great memory aid, but little used in traditional education. It brings in another element of imagination and encourages even deeper engagement with learning.

> ***"They have to be more then simply fun days spent away from the classroom"***

Planning the day

Taking a school trip to a new place always requires some planning, but this preparation will be particularly important for any students with SEND. There are many aspects of the day to consider, from access to public spaces to being out in the community.

We take the view that every stage is an opportunity for teaching and learning to occur, starting with important life skills such as dealing with public transport and handling money. All logistics are carefully considered and we'll use the occasion to develop important social skills and show students how to contend with unexpected situations.

A good place to start is to make sure each child knows what to expect from the day, from travel arrangements to the timing of events. We've found that taking smallish groups of around seven students is a manageable number, since some children can feel anxious and overwhelmed when everything is so different from an average school day.

Expert advice

It can also really help when learning specialists at the places you visit are trained to help the day go smoothly. Before a recent visit to Hampton Court Palace, for example, the team from Historic Royal Palaces sent a detailed Visual Story PowerPoint presentation for our group, as well as teacher support notes and images to help us prepare for the visit.

The slides introduced what the children might learn from an historic point of view, outlining the key people who lived at the palace and flagging up some important themes we could look at before we went, such as Georgian life.

More relevant for our group,

OUT AND ABOUT

Tips for taking multisensory learning out of the classroom

- Choose opportunities that allow children to collect information via each of their five senses in ways that are out of the ordinary, such as lying on the floor of a public space.
- Plan the day carefully to include ways of practising essential life skills, such as how to handle money in a coffee shop or asking where the toilets are.
- Clearly communicate plans in advance with students, outlining timings, proposed activities and people they might encounter.
- Find places with an experienced team on hand that can help with the preparations and ensure the day runs smoothly.
- Look for creative ways of extending learning afterwards. Our students enjoyed taking photographs, making paintings and composing music inspired by our day at Hampton Court

however, was how the resources helped us prepare for things that were likely to happen. We were able to show pictures of the Warders (staff) who could help them during the day, and allow our students to anticipate how they might handle new events, such as being given coloured stickers when we first arrived.

We were also able to discuss how the children might feel when moving around the palace – for example, if they encountered areas that were dark, busy or noisy. The provision of a timetable for the day with Makaton signs and symbols, designed to support spoken language, allowed us to thoroughly talk through our plans ahead of the trip.

Getting creative

The team's knowledge of the location, combined with an understanding of how to bring the surroundings to life for students with SEND, made for an enjoyable, safe and fulfilling learning experience. Their attention to detail meant that our visit was a resounding success.

But for children to really reap rewards from visits like this, they have to be more than simply fun days spent away from the classroom. The follow-up work students carry out back at school is a key part of their learning, For some students this might take the form of a piece of writing, but we also encourage the children to build sensory experiences into the project work they create. For instance, some students enjoy taking their own photos when we're visiting a location, before printing these off at school and using them as the basis for a discussion. Others like to express their learning through art, by painting objects, scenes or events from the day. One student was even moved to compose his own piece of music based on our visit.

We've found that the feedback from parents and students following these types of trip has been extremely positive. A huge amount of learning goes on, which starts by setting clear objectives before we go and extending these into the weeks afterwards, with focused lesson planning covering a mix of new work and consolidation at a pace that suits our students.

As a result of our multisensory approach, we've seen increased levels of classroom engagement and motivation. We also know we're creating independent, resilient learners who are better prepared to rise to life's challenges. This is what we consider to be the heart of a high quality and meaningful education.

Neil Mears is a KS4 teacher at St Philip's School – a special educational needs school for young people aged 11-19; further details about Historic Royal Palaces' learning resources can be found at bit.ly/2QTPSrB

How equal is YOUR ACCESS?

Rebecca Parker highlights what schools can sometimes overlook when it comes to drawing up their accessibility plans...

All schools must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have an accessibility plan. The latter details how a school will ensure that equal access is extended to all staff, visitors and pupils, and must also show how access can be improved for users with disabilities within a given timeframe by undertaking 'reasonable adjustments' where possible.

According to the wording of the Act, schools have a duty to "To take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the substantial disadvantage to a disabled person caused by a provision, criterion or practice applied by, or on behalf of a school, or by the absence of an auxiliary aid."

The funding context

The National Audit Office has stated that increasing pupil numbers and staff costs will force schools to cut their per-pupil spending by 8% during the 2019/2020 school year – a significant reduction that virtually all schools will struggle to implement. Schools as a whole may be in receipt of more government funding than they were five years ago, but rising costs in areas such as staffing and pensions has made it hard for them to keep up.

Assuming this 8% reduction in per pupil spending comes to pass, schools will be under significant pressure to make cuts. We saw some evidence of that in the summer of this year, when a Norwich junior school sought 'volunteer painters, gardeners and decorators' to help staff prepare for the new school year (see tinyurl.com/njs-volunteers).

In September, it was then reported that 20 schools in Birmingham were planning to close for half a day each week to reduce costs (see tinyurl.com/bham-half-days).

Schools are effectively being forced to make redundancies, close early, and in some cases even drop curriculum subjects. With teachers' salaries continuing to make up the vast proportion of budgets, it's hardly a surprise that schools are consequently trying to manage with fewer members of staff.

Unfortunately, schools' accessibility planning seems to be one of those spending areas that's liable to get pushed to the bottom of the priority pile, despite its increasing importance. That's perhaps because a school's lack of accessibility planning only crops up when a specific issue comes to light, such as the arrival of a disabled visitor or a pupil with SEND.

Headteachers who are under vast amounts of pressure and constantly having to juggle many competing demands on their time will be keenly aware of their need to have an accessibility plan – but due to lack of resources, the plans they produce will often be insufficiently comprehensive, lacking in detail and neglect to cover some important areas.

The 'tick box' approach

There are numerous checklists available online that will provide a superficial 'tick box' approach to evaluating a school's physical accessibility, yet too often this will be an avenue pursued by many in order to try and save money. The school SENCo or site manager will typically be the one given the task of carrying out school access audits and writing an accessibility plan based on such a checklist, but there can be two big problems with this.

The first is that an online checklist will usually just refer to physical access, compounding the regrettably common misconception that accessibility plans need only address physical issues. In actual fact, physical access should account for around a third of a school's accessibility plan, with the remaining two thirds considering access to the school's curriculum and access to information.

The second issue can be that the SENCo or site manager may lack the knowledge to discern what can and can't be considered a 'reasonable adjustment' – a

common stumbling block for many organisations trying to undertake their own access audits. One the other hand, an experienced access consultant – one sensitive to the budgetary issues at play within school settings – will be able to suggest practical ways of ensuring compliance with equality legislation without recourse to costly works.

Complicating matters further, the Equality Act 2010 itself doesn't specifically state what should be considered 'reasonable'. This may seem confusing, but it actually stems from a desire to make the legislation flexible. After all, what might be considered reasonable in one circumstance may well not be reasonable in another.

It's obviously impossible to say what measures would or wouldn't be reasonable in any given situation without an understanding of the relevant context. However, there are some factors which may help schools to decide – namely the financial cost of making an adjustment, the practicality of the adjustment in question, the resources available to the school and the adjustment's subsequent impact on other pupils.

Erroneous assumptions

Many of the schools we've advised in the past have originally tried to take on the work themselves following the kind of thought process outlined above, but in virtually all cases this has proved more expensive. Not only does it take up the precious time of those involved, it can also result in unnecessary and costly building works, owing to the lack of accessibility training on the part of those undertaking the work.

For instance, simply by ensuring that all classes for a pupil using a wheelchair are situated at ground level, a school will have demonstrated that they've made a 'reasonable adjustment' that grants the pupil access to both the building and the school's curriculum. This would be deemed perfectly reasonable and cost nothing; contrast that to the expense of installing a stair lift.

Also, bear in mind that pupils with the same disability may still need different adjustments to overcome certain barriers. It's important not to make any assumptions about a disabled pupil's particular needs, as this may cause a school to make an adjustment that's completely ineffective for what's required. Again, this is something we see far too often when schools attempt to undertake access audits of their own.

For example, consider an incoming school starter who is deaf. The school's SENCo undertakes an access audit and concludes that induction loops must be installed in all teaching rooms – yet the school doesn't consult with the pupil first. It later emerges that the pupil doesn't actually use a hearing aid, and is therefore unable to benefit from the induction loop. Instead, the pupil reads lips. In this instance, a better reasonable adjustment would have been to instruct all staff to ensure they face the pupil when speaking to him.

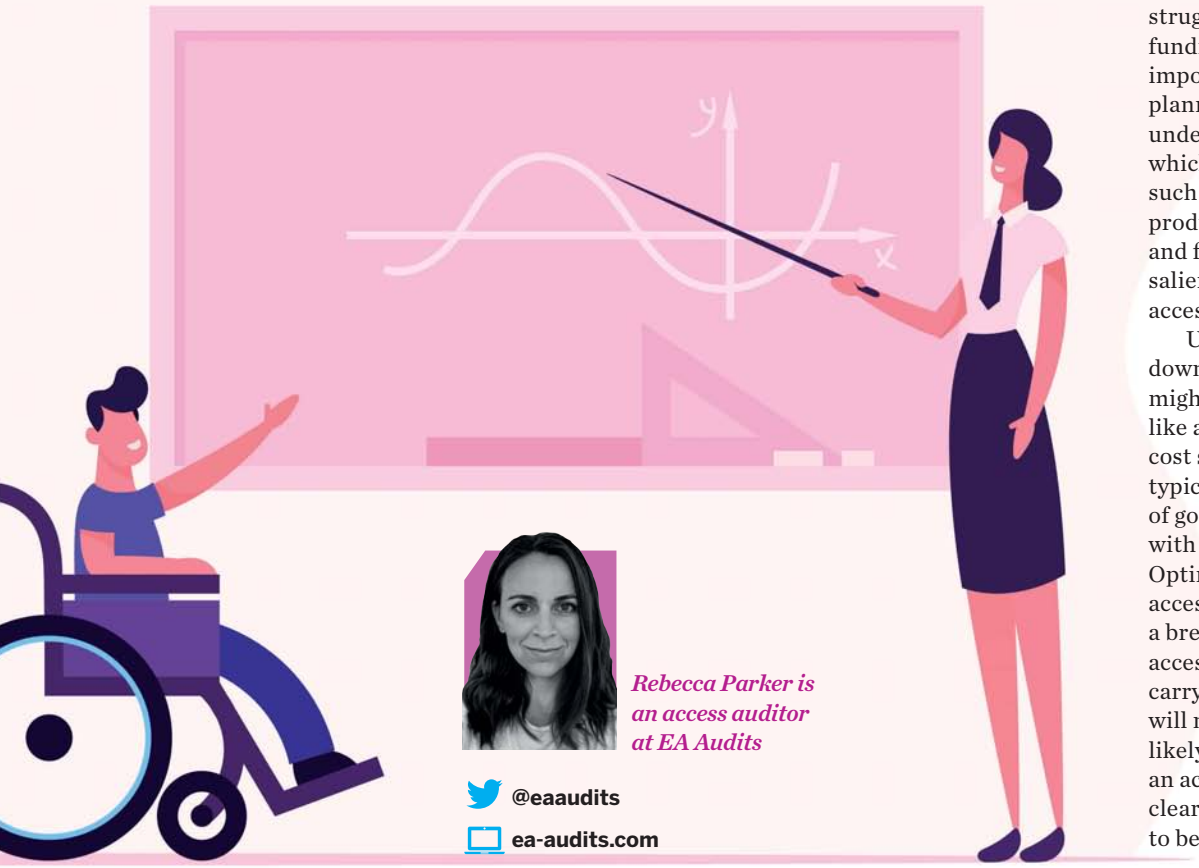
Savings versus outcomes

As previously noted, the considerations in a school's accessibility plan mustn't be limited to only those with physical impairments; pupils with sensory impairments, cognitive impairments, intellectual impairments and those affected by mental illness will require adjustments of their own. Needless to say, it can be extremely difficult for an untrained eye to deem exactly what can be considered reasonable in any given circumstance.

Consider, for example, an independent school that provides extra sessions with a specialist teacher for a dyslexic disabled pupil, but adds the cost of these to the pupil's fees. This would amount to discrimination.

It's no secret that schools are under significant budget constraints, and desperately struggling to cope with funding cuts – yet the importance of accessibility planning shouldn't be underestimated. Schools which resort to undertaking such work themselves risk producing ineffective results and failing to capture all salient aspects of a pupil's accessibility needs.

Using a checklist downloaded from the internet might seem at first glance like a convenient time and cost saving, but it's one that typically comes at the expense of good outcomes for those with accessibility needs. Opting to instead enlist an access consultant possessing a breadth and depth of accessibility expertise needn't carry a significant cost, and will make it that much more likely that your school obtains an accessibility plan which clearly demonstrates its desire to be inclusive to all.



Rebecca Parker is an access auditor at EA Audits

@eaaudits

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4 REASONS TO TRY... Special Yoga

Discover how using yoga to calm the classroom is as beneficial for teachers as it is for children.

1 ALL INCLUSIVE

Many children with SEN have sensory processing or integration needs that impact upon their ability to concentrate, engage socially and maintain their emotional well-being. Special Yoga methodology provides children with a balancing sensory diet while teaching self regulation, improving functionality and building their self-esteem. It can be adapted to suit all children, including those with SLD, ASD, and high anxiety.

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massage and relaxation to calm the nervous system. These tools can be used throughout the day to reduce pupils' reactivity and bring more peace to your classroom. By simply learning how to regulate their breath, a person can change their state in a matter of minutes.

3 MENTAL HEALTH

There's a mental health crisis in schools. Special Yoga can provide practitioners with a set of accessible tools for building resilience and pupils with various coping strategies. Recognising the immense pressures that schools are under, we are committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school – staff, as well as pupils.

4 SKILLS FOR LIFE

Special Yoga helps children develop the skills they'll need to become enabled learners. Having gained increased levels of independence and empowerment, these children will be more relaxed and better able to communicate their needs and wishes.

Special Yoga

Contact:
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specialyoga.org.uk

At a glance

- **Special Yoga provides bespoke training programmes that can be adapted to a school's specific needs and requirements**
- **The Special Yoga methodology creates a calm environment conducive to learning and wellbeing**
- **A child's physiological and emotional readiness to learn is fundamental to all areas of their development**

Think ability – not disability

When considering SEND within the design of a playground, safety risks are the most important consideration, right? Not necessarily, says the Association of Play Industries...

Success in outdoor learning and play lies not in concentrating on the restrictions presented by special educational needs, but by considering all educational needs and providing challenge for every child.

Yes, safety is important – but when we think in terms of ability, rather than disability, children with SEND will no longer be left out. So how can you ensure your playground is an inclusive environment that can engage all of your pupils, no matter what their needs? Here are our tips for getting it right...

Embrace challenge

There may be a range of abilities among your pupils, but it's important to provide them with opportunities for challenging themselves. If children aren't challenged they won't experiment, and therefore be less likely to improve their skills. Children of all abilities should be able to explore new things and make mistakes, as both are vital parts of the learning process.

It's important that things aren't made too easy for the children. Make them feel able to move on to the next challenge without restrictions. Providing different versions of the same activity in the same area, with easier and more difficult options, will allow children to play side by side with their classmates regardless of ability, while simultaneously providing them with opportunities for progression.

Give your pupils purpose

All children need positive reasons for being active. Providing them with this will improve their general levels of health and fitness, give them a constructive outlet for their energy, lend purpose to their play and potentially lead to a reduction in behaviour-related playground incidents and accidents.

Stimulate the senses

Try to incorporate a few features that encourage children to explore their

senses. Sensory play is often recommended for pupils with complex needs to help them to cope with the different sensory stimuli present in daily life, but all children can benefit from experiencing different colours, textures, sounds and movements during play – particularly if the school playground is one of the few outdoor spaces accessible to them.

Be mindful, however, of how much the specific needs of pupils in your setting can vary. To avoid sensory overload, try balancing those sensory items with some calmer, natural spaces where children can opt to spend time if needed.

Provide variety

Sometimes children may happily play and interact alongside others with gusto; at other times, those same children may want to relax outside of the formal classroom environment, or play entirely independently. You need to provide them with that choice.

For pupils easily overwhelmed by certain activities, consider creating a space where they can observe different activities and items of equipment from a distance, so that they can engage on their own terms and have control over their experience. Partially enclosed spaces, such as 'secret gardens' or play houses situated away from busy areas of the playground, can be positioned in a way that facilitates close supervision while also creating a space in which children can feel safe and secure.

Consult with experts

Discuss your plans with colleagues, the children and their parents. Look for a contractor with prior experience of creating inclusive play spaces that can share case studies of how their approach has worked at other schools in the past. Most should be willing to help put you in touch with said schools, so that you can learn from the impact their projects have had and pick up some practical tips.

Make your intended outcomes clear to your chosen contractor, and ensure that they adhere to the relevant playground standards (EN1176 and EN1177). Needless to say, they should also be covered by the relevant insurance and hold all necessary accreditations and memberships. Make sure you fully understand what will be involved in maintaining your new playground area, so that it continues to be a safe and engaging space for years to come.

API Supporting the UK Play Industry

The Association of Play Industries (API) is the play sector's lead trade body, representing manufacturers, installers, designers and distributors of outdoor and indoor play equipment and safer surfacing; further details about the association's Play Must Stay campaign for greater investment in public play provision can be found at tinyurl.com/api-play

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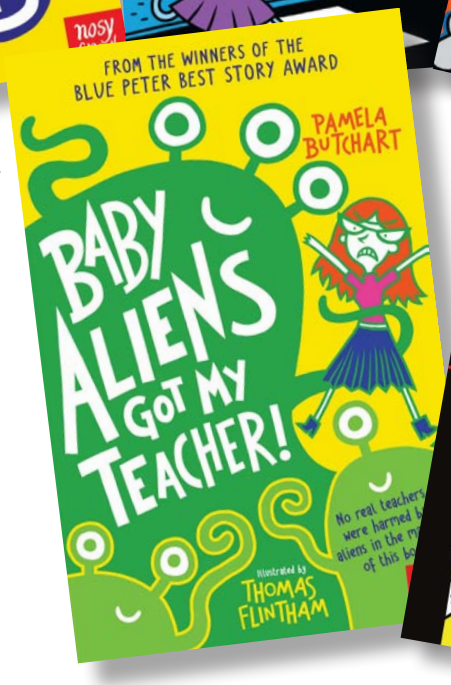

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“A child’s learning journey can follow its own unique path”

Stephen Kilgour, SEND Advisor and Outreach Teacher at Tapestry, tells us about the company’s brand new, unique assessment tool for children with significant learning difficulties

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Cherry Garden Branch Maps is a new assessment tool developed by an Outstanding special school in London for children with severe and complex learning needs. The maps organise key milestones that you would expect to find in very young, typically developing children from birth to 5 years, with the aim of providing practitioners with an overview of a child’s current level.

What makes the Branch Maps different to existing assessment models?

The maps are intended to be child-centred documents that allow for a flexible approach to assessment – moving away from previous models where the expectation would be that a child makes typical ‘linear’ progress. A child’s learning journey can follow its own unique path, and the straightforward organisation of milestones means that adults can see if a child has missed a key step that is holding them back from moving forward.

How can they be used to enhance parental engagement?

Cherry Garden School’s initial concept for its assessment system was based around an interactive ‘Cherry Orchard’ that parents/carers could explore to investigate the learning of their child. Once the school had completed writing the developmental documents, it joined forces with Tapestry to make this idea a reality. Tapestry has brought the concept to life, creating an attractive, interactive orchard that shows multimedia evidence of a child’s learning.

How does the Cherry Orchard show progress to parents?

There are two key visualisations in the Orchard. For a child whose needs are less complex or severe, their ‘cherry tree’ grows and leaves are added as they secure understanding. A parent can click on each leaf to see evidence of learning. The tool allows users to take snapshots at any time to make comparisons in the future. A child will have their own learning tree for each main curriculum area.

What about progress for children with the most profound needs?

The second visualisation type in the Orchard is a ‘flower’. The flower’s interactive petals grow as a child gains understanding, but they also deepen in colour as a child generalises skills. It is important for learners with the most significant needs that we celebrate this ‘lateral’ progress and help parents understand it more clearly. Parents can therefore see evidence of the learning that has taken place by simply clicking on any of the petals.

ABOUT STEPHEN: Stephen Kilgour worked at Cherry Garden School for 11 years, seven of those as deputy Headteacher. He is now a SEND advisor and outreach teacher at Tapestry.

Contact: tapestry.support@eyfs.info

Follow: @MapsCherry

TAPESTRY ONLINE LEARNING JOURNAL

What sets Cherry Garden Branch Maps apart?

+ They provide teachers and support staff with key milestones in a typically developing very young child
+ They demonstrate both linear and lateral progress – perfect for children with complex needs
+ Parents can explore and understand their child’s learning through Tapestry’s unique visualisation system

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support with the Graduated Approach Cycle, Safeguarding and Digital Safety.

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It's easy to stay up to date with sector news when it's all in one place! Every week we publish a round-up of the latest news from across care, health and education to help you stay current. Short summaries of each article are available as 'one page' documents with links to full articles from all referenced news sources, in case you want to read more.

4 CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY INFORMATION

Looking for progression or a new job role can be difficult, especially when the search takes place alongside full-time work. Our careers resources offer support with everything from identifying how you'd like to progress, to choosing a role and creating a suitable covering letter. Our unique CV builder tool asks the right questions to help you really show off your skills, and our team are always happy to answer any member questions by email.

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At a glance

- **FREE CPD for childcare practitioners**
- **Designed to make the process of keeping knowledge and skills up to date quick and easy**
- **Members receive quality careers guidance from a range of sector experts**

Relationships readiness

Prepare for the roll-out of the government's new relationships education requirements, with these group work and behaviour activities from **Kate Bradley**

@Kate_Brads

As of September 2020, schools will be required to follow new statutory guidance concerning the teaching of relationships education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools. In the meantime, school leaders and staff are being encouraged to make a 'soft start' by implementing the new guidance into their teaching – something that the following lessons will be able to help you with.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to maintain interactions within a small group
- Taking turns
- Collaborative working
- Understanding agreed codes of behaviour

START HERE

The DfE recommends that by the end of primary school, children should have experienced a range of learning experiences themed around 'families and people who care for me', 'caring friendships', 'respectful relationships', 'online relationships' and 'being safe' (the statutory guidance can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/dfe-rse-20).

This set of lessons focuses on 'caring friendships' and suggests some ideas for how to include all learners within your class. You may wish to use them as a starter, main and plenary, or extend them so they're completed over separate lessons. Play to the children's strengths and adapt the stimulus to meet their interests where possible.

MAIN LESSON

1|EMERGING

(For children working considerably below KS1)

Learning objective
Pupils maintain interactions and take turns in a small group with support.

Resources:
Games (Buckaroo, Crocodile Dentist, Kerplunk etc.). Visual card for 'waiting'.

Additional skills:
1 In-hand manipulation
2 Using simple communication to request a turn
3 Listening to verbal prompts

Popular games for children at this level are ones with very simple rules that build anticipation and are based on the principle of cause and effect. To build towards this target, start off with a game involving just the adult and one child. Use the language 'your turn, my turn.'

Once the child has learnt to wait their turn, you can step out and introduce another child as the second player, staying close to support. Use "[Child A]'s turn, [Child B]'s turn" as the only language and use a visual of 'Waiting' to support. Allow the children to take a few rounds of the game. When it looks like one of them has had enough, count down and finish the activity.

2|DEVELOPING

(For children working below KS1)

Learning objective
Pupils work in a small group collaboratively.

Resources:
Art straws. Tape. Scissors. A timer.

Additional skills:
1 Understanding roles and working together
2 Sustaining attention for around 10 minutes

Group the children either in threes, or in a two with a supporting adult for those children who would benefit from this. Tell the children that we're going to have a competition – but that one of the rules is that you can only do one job for your team. The competition is to build the tallest art straws tower.

Give each person in the group a role. The distributor holds the art straws. The builder takes the art straws from the distributor and puts them in place. The fixer uses tape to attach the art straws. Have the adults in the group model the roles before you begin. Set the timer for five minutes and encourage the children to start working together.

3 | SECURING

(For children working towards KS1)

Learning objective
Pupils work towards understanding agreed codes of behaviour and how they help groups of people work together.

Resources:
Pictures of areas within the school on interactive whiteboard slides (e.g. the dinner hall, playground, corridor, toilets). Paper. Pencil crayons. Pencils.

Additional skills:
1 focusing for 20 minutes
2 Discussing key ideas

In small groups, walk around the school stopping at different key areas, such as the dinner hall, playground and classrooms. Ask the children to explain the rules for each area and encourage them to phrase these positively (i.e. for 'No running', suggest 'We walk in the corridors'). Once all groups have toured the school, come back together as a class.

The lead adult then shows a picture of one of the areas visited on the IWB, and asks for suggestions as to behaviour expectations in this area. Write these around the picture and repeat the process. Then have all the children each choose an area that they'd like to create a poster for. Encourage them to draw it and include a clear, positive written behaviour expectation. Everyone then goes and places their respective posters around the school.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

Sit in a circle so that everyone can reach the back of another child. Calmly read out a simple massage story and have everyone massage the person in front of them, as in the following examples:

- In summer, the sun shines (draw circles on backs).
- In autumn, the wind blows (swirly motion with flat hands on backs).
- In winter, the snow falls (tap with fingers on backs).
- In spring, the rain falls (flat hand sweeps down on backs).
- Support the children to turn to their masseur and thank them.

Kate Bradley is Programme Leader: Inclusive Education at the Centre for Inclusive Education, UCL and co-author of Jessica Kingsley Publishers' '101 Inclusive & SEN lesson' series. 101 Inclusive and SEN Citizenship, PSHE and Religious Education Lessons is available now via tinyurl.com/101-sen-pshe

TOP TIPS

- Repeat lessons and tasks so that the children can build and consolidate their new skills.
- Identify opportunities across the day (playtime, lunchtime, after school clubs) where you can encourage group work and develop relationships with peers.

A problem shared

Help your autistic pupils tackle problem solving tasks in maths and science more effectively with these suggestions from **Lynn McCann**

@ReachoutASC

It's a myth that autistic people do not have imagination. The children we work with are just as interested and curious about the world as anyone, but this may be in seen in very specific areas and topics. The challenge to them is when there's a problem that needs solving in a topic they're neither interested in, nor have any experience of. We can, however, differentiate problem solving tasks in maths and science by understanding how the autistic child in your class learns best.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to recognise key words in the language of maths problems
- The process of breaking more complex questions down into manageable chunks
- The purpose and principles of scientific experimentation

START HERE

Autistic children can struggle with problem solving in maths, firstly because of the language we use. There can be a lot of ambiguity and assumptions made around what the child understands from the question itself.

Science problem solving works best when it makes sense to an autistic child. They may need more specific conclusions to look for rather than open-ended experiments. Understanding data and results may need a clearly set out mind-map to show how things are linked and how you come to the conclusion.

MAIN LESSON

1 | MATHS

Consider the following example:

Matthew had 91 pencils.
He found 78 more.
How many pencils does he have now?

For this simple problem, you first have to be able to read and understand where the key words are. 'Matthew' and 'pencils' are actually immaterial to the problem we're being asked to solve. The key information is '91' and '78 more'.

From that, a child has to know they're being asked to add 78 to 91 and say what the total is. This process of problem solving can be difficult for an autistic child, because who on earth is Matthew and why does he need so many pencils? They need to have a good understanding of the key word 'more', and how it's being used in amongst all the other language.

As we teach mathematical problem solving, autistic children need to have a good grounding in key mathematical vocabulary. Some, however, can struggle to embed such words and the core concepts of mathematical language. Before expecting them to be able to understand what a word problem is asking of them, you may need to give them more direct teaching and visual reminders to help them find the key mathematical language in the problem. Once that language is established, teach them how to identify key mathematical language using a highlighter in future word problems.

Careful structuring always works well. As you introduce problems containing more complex steps, they need to be accompanied by a step-by-step structure. Highlighting the key vocabulary and numbers will still help, but breaking the problem down into chunks line by line will enable the child to see how the task can progress. Using 'first, next and last' language is always helpful for communicating the structure and organisation of a problem.

2|SCIENCE

I recently came across an autistic child who became very upset during a classroom experiment examining what plants needed in order to grow. Each child had been given a plant and assigned one of three areas to put it in: one with light and water, one with light but no water, and one darkened area. They were then told to wait several days for the results.

This became a huge issue for the autistic child, because he already knew the answer and struggled to see the point of the experiment. Some autistic pupils who are really interested in science may not yet realise that scientists don't approach problems already knowing the answer, but instead have to work it out through the process of experimentation.

You can therefore teach the autistic child about scientists and how they go about their work, and help the child understand that it can take time for them to arrive at their answers. This will give them a point of reference.

Try to then match future experiments to their interests and use what knowledge they have to extend their curiosity about how and why things work. '*What happens if...?*' is a great way to introduce an experiment. If the child does already know something, introduce the concept of proving it by setting up a controlled experiment. A keen interest in trains, for example, can lead to all kinds of work on traction, friction, speed and energy.

Some autistic children are very good at scientific investigations and experiments, but can still be confused by ambiguous language. Be clear, be structured and link the problem to something that's meaningful to them. Make sure that the steps of the task are broken down and given to them visually, and in a clear list that they can check off as they complete each step.

Be aware that working with others presents an even bigger challenge for many autistic pupils. Working with a partner, rather than in a group, can be much more successful, since managing their social communication may be a huge challenge on top of trying to carry out the task as well. Some autistic pupils will learn more by completing the whole process on their own, so that they can fully understand the purpose of the experiment.

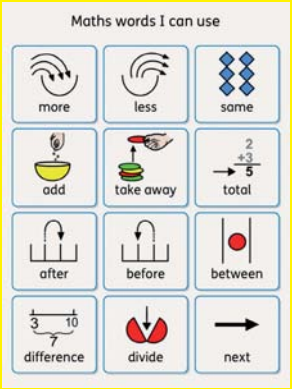
A set of 'Super Science Pupil Symbol Experiments and Cards' developed by the British Science Association and Widgit can be downloaded for free via tinyurl.com/widgit-science.

Lynn McCann has previously worked as a mainstream class teacher, an early years lecturer and a SENCo, and currently heads up Reachout ASC – a consultancy providing autism advice, education and training to schools and other organisations across Lancashire and South Cumbria

MAKE IT VISUAL

Below is a visual we use that shows key mathematical concept words alongside symbols to remind the child of what each one means. We will use this in maths lessons, asking the child to show us the word that describes the maths they're using.

When working on addition task, for example, they will be 'adding' 'more' and finding the 'total'.



TOP TIP

Try posing problems that make sense to the child. Working with one child recently, we read a maths problem that asked us to work out what it would cost for 'three rats to visit a monkey sanctuary.' The child couldn't get past the fact that rats don't use money – which is a good point!

The child's mum is a truck driver, so instead I posed this: 'Last week she drove **123km** on Monday, **234km** on Wednesday and **93km** on Friday. This week she drove **292km** in **total**. What's the **difference** in her mileage **between this week and last week?**

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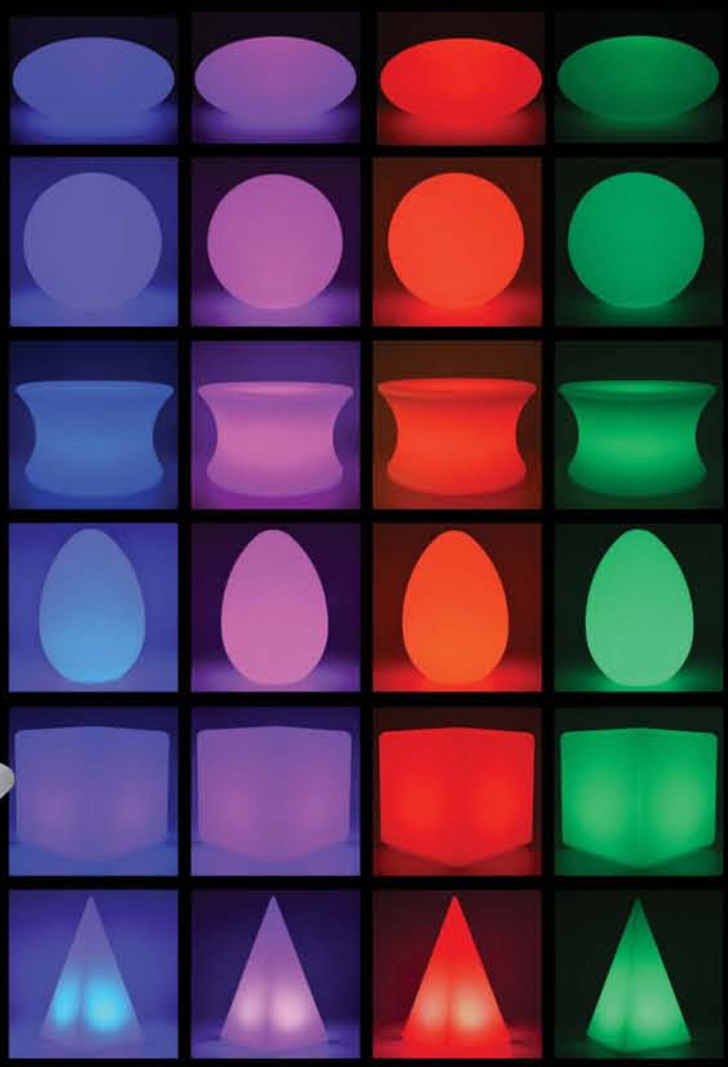

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The wrongs of writing-off

Karen McCaul examines the pressures that have led some schools to inappropriately 'off-roll' pupils and where those pressures stem from...

The practice of 'off-rolling' students has spent some time in the spotlight, particularly over the last year. Removals of pupils from school rolls inappropriately still take place for a number of reasons, though the process of 'off-rolling' students can actually be the correct course of action in certain instances – such as when pupils have been transferred or moved to another appropriate education provider.

We've seen intense debates over how to ensure children are able to access education that's appropriate to them and how to improve outcomes, alongside the publication of numerous reports and frameworks exploring how these goals can be achieved. Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, has announced that the regulator intends to find out more about behaviour management.

When we get down to it, however, the reality for many schools is that they have to manage their budgets whilst at the same time being judged on their number of exclusions, pupil attendance data and academic outcomes. If this is the method by which success is determined, then why *wouldn't* a school want to appear as continually improving in all those areas?

The practice of off-rolling students has the potential to dramatically shape the data upon which a school will be judged. The key question to ask, therefore, is whether in some instances, the incentive to off-roll a particular student might be inappropriate.

Total cohesion

Our schools contain wonderfully diverse, changing and transient populations that require accommodating many different individual and cultural differences. However, by their very nature these cohorts can make it difficult to track individual students' movements, ensure that they're receiving appropriate education and that appropriate safeguarding has been put in place.

Communications between families, LAs and the various organisations responsible for children's education and health can be highly inconsistent and bureaucratic. Rather than a system that's unified, collaborative and responsive to children's needs, we have one that makes it possible for children to become lost and fall through the cracks, be it by intention or by default.

The practices of every LA and governing body will vary to a degree, but no child should be allowed to simply disappear – there must be total cohesion at a local and national level. The off-rolling of students without due care directly threatens this, and can have a dramatic impact on an individual's life.

Across many years of experience I've seen practices that can at best be described as questionable, and at worst, illegal and unsafe. In an age where parents have more choice as to how they'd like to see their children educated, should we not be addressing the issue of how we can support schools' diversity more effectively, rather than simply ensuring that children's education complies with a single, established system?

Granted, children who may need directed and specialist support can be costly, but the priority must surely be to ensure they're able to access the education that's appropriate for them – not what we can afford. Schools are under immense pressure with respect to funding, resource shortages and the need to meet targets.

It takes a strong headteacher and a financially savvy business manager working in partnership

to ensure that additional funding streams are accessed and utilised appropriately for those students who need them, rather than looking at how much one individual has impacted on the school's budget and deciding where the line should be drawn.

Due process

Unfortunately, one of the situations where pupils can be off-rolled inappropriately is in the context of permanent exclusions. I've seen for myself occasions where due process hasn't been followed and students have been removed from roll on the first day of their permanent exclusion. The school can tell itself that it has no further responsibility, while saving money and avoiding any impact on their attendance figures and academic results in the process. Yet these processes must be correctly adhered to, with the school shouldering responsibility for exploring all possible options until a case is fully concluded.

I've previously heard it said that a school has 'Spent enough on a student,' that they can't afford further costs for additional behaviour support and that the relevant pupil therefore needs to be excluded in order to free up resources. Is this really the best way to support our young people? Bear in mind that these are just the stories we know about – of those removed from their school's roll without due process, we know nothing at all.

"No child should be allowed to simply disappear"

One practice seen in previous years, thankfully less common now, was the drafting by schools of letters for parents to sign, stating the parents' intention to withdraw the pupil and educate them at home, as an alternative to a permanent exclusion. This would result in pupils being removed from school rolls immediately, and was a practice that became particularly prevalent just prior to exam periods.

Another method would involve students absent from school for unspecified reasons. Some schools, conceivably operating within local guidelines, would opt to immediately remove a pupil from their roll and, in the majority of cases, refer them to the LA as Children Missing Education (CMEs). In the minority of cases, I wonder if the communications and information sharing between some establishments and their LAs were as efficient as they could have been, given that the upshot would be for some young people to remain unaccounted for.

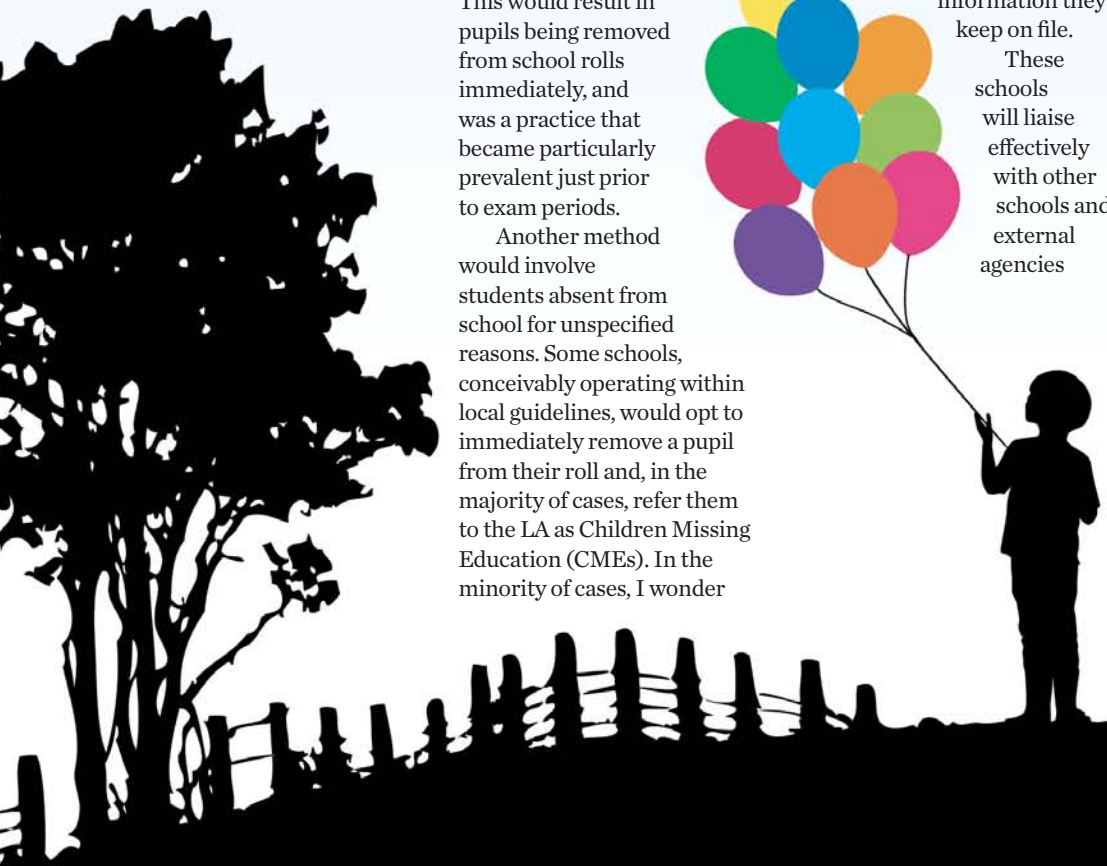
Community involvement

Happily, I've worked also with many schools who will utilise knowledge of their culturally diverse populations to ensure they're aware of where all students are at all times. There are numerous schools that follow excellent practice when it comes to arranging home visits at different times, communicating consistently via letters and emails and regularly updating the contact information they keep on file.

These schools will liaise effectively with other schools and external agencies regarding housing, police and social care matters, and attempt to gather as much information as possible before referring pupils as a CME. This good practice and due diligence can sometimes cause problems of its own, however – schools which don't amend their roll until they're fully satisfied that a pupil has been located or the correct agency has been notified can't be faulted in terms of their safeguarding, but can end up being penalised for carrying unauthorised absences.

If that applies to you, try keeping an up-to-date record of why a pupil has remained on roll, how this has affected your attendance figures and how pupils with additional needs (even if these have yet to be officially identified) have affected your results. These can't always be reflected in your data, but you'll at least have the story behind the figures to discuss with Ofsted and present to stakeholders. Your school may not academically be at the top of the tables, but your safeguarding and practices with respect to inclusion, diversity, individual respect and community involvement will be second to none. I'd suggest that these are the schools that should be rated as Outstanding by their community.

We're currently moving in the right direction in terms of how we should address pupils' individual needs and fund resources, but until schools' exchange of information with families and external agencies is consistent, fluid and efficient, there will still be pupils left vulnerable by inappropriate off-rolling. Schools pursuing any poor practices need to be held to account for them.



Karen McCaul is Team Leader, Education Welfare and Safeguarding at One Education, having worked in the education sector for over 30 years

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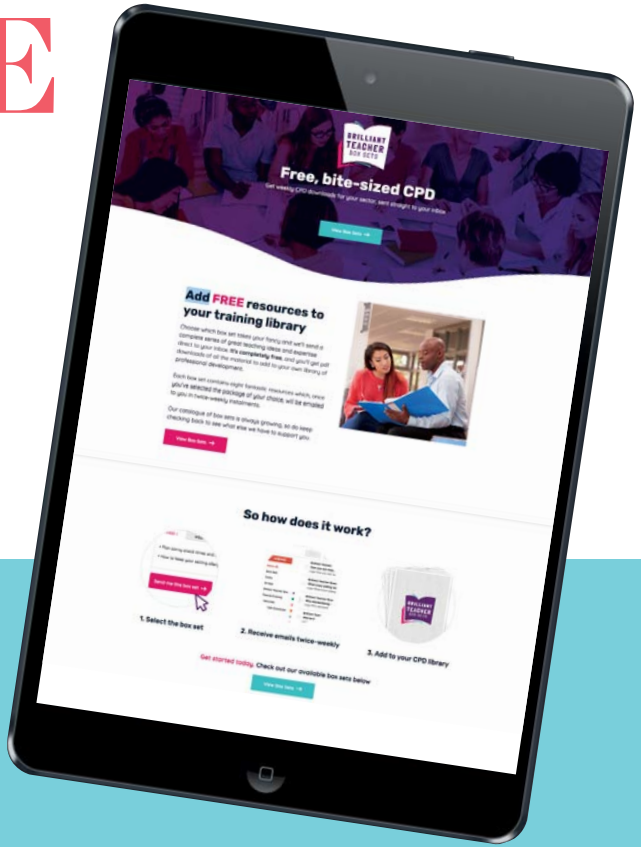

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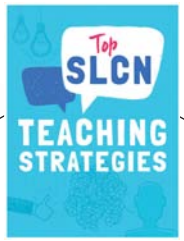

Discover creative ways to tackle SLCN from SEN experts, packed with accessible advice delivered straight to your inbox.

"Something has to give"

It's somehow undervalued, oversubscribed, inconsistent and demanded by everyone – Karen Wespieser asks what it will take to improve standards of SEND teacher training...

The OECD's latest data on teacher working conditions and learning environments (see tinyurl.com/oecd-talis-18) includes one figure that sticks out like a sore thumb. Just 6% of teachers in England recognised "A high level of need for professional development in teaching students with special needs." That figure was the lowest proportion of teachers among all participating OECD countries.

Should we take this to mean that our teachers are clearly great at SEND provision? Possibly not, since the OECD figure appears to contradict an array of other relevant data collected previously. DfE research has consistently shown that 'teaching pupils with SEND' and 'assessing pupils with SEND' come top among those areas that NQTs feel least confident in. (see tinyurl.com/dfe-nqt-17). A DfE snap poll of teachers last year further revealed that 25% say there's no appropriate training in place for teachers requiring assistance in supporting pupils with SEND (tinyurl.com/dfe-snapshot-18). A TeacherTapp poll this summer meanwhile found that nearly one in five teachers don't feel confident teaching learners with an identified SEND, and that over a third hadn't received any SEND CPD within the past year.

Undervaluing SEND

Let's track back slightly and start at the beginning. Is there enough coverage of SEND currently included within initial teacher training courses?

With so many different ITT providers and courses out there, it's hard to say for sure what the extent of existing SEND course content actually is. However, if we analyse Ofsted inspections of ITT providers over the past 10 years, we find that one in seven don't mention SEN at all (see tinyurl.com/literacy-dyt-pos). Granted, this doesn't necessarily mean that those providers aren't offering any SEND training whatsoever – but it does indicate that they aren't being held accountable, should that prove to be the case.

Another study by UCL reviewed 193 ITT websites in order to establish how well SEND was being incorporated into their training programmes. It found that 54% of school-centred ITT courses and 38% of higher education institutions similarly failed to include any mention of SEND. Again, it doesn't follow that support for learners with SEND wasn't being taught at all during these ITT courses, but there is the strong suggestion that SEND support is something that's not valued by providers.

If SEND doesn't appear to be an

2
THE NUMBER OF 'SEN' MENTIONS IN THE NEW EARLY CAREER FRAMEWORK

1 in 4
TEACHERS SAY THERE'S NOT APPROPRIATE TRAINING IN PLACE FOR SUPPORTING SEN LEARNERS

79%
Proportion of SEN CPD currently delivered within schools solely by SENCOs

1 in 5 TEACHERS
DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT TEACHING LEARNERS WITH AN IDENTIFIED SEND

1 in 3
PROPORTION OF CURRENTLY APPOINTED SENCOS WHO DON'T HOLD THE NATIONAL AWARD FOR SENCO QUALIFICATION

especially high priority within ITT, then what about the Early Career Framework? Is it any more prominent there? Last year, the government announced that beginning in autumn 2021, early career teachers undergoing induction will receive two years of professional development and support underpinned by the ECF (see tinyurl.com/dfe-ecframework). Search through the explanatory ECF documentation, however, and you'll find just two mentions SEND – both of which place responsibility for supporting early career teachers firmly at the door of SENCos.

Time pressures

The problem here is that we all know SENCos are already incredibly busy people. Separate research by UCL suggests that 79% of SEND-themed CPD is presently delivered within schools solely by SENCos (see tinyurl.com/nasenco-research). Contrast that with a 2017 evaluation carried out by the University of Plymouth into the impact and effectiveness of SENCo-delivered training, which revealed how four in ten teachers believed their SENCo didn't model effective practice of teaching pupils with SEND to their colleagues (see tinyurl.com/plymouth-senco-qual).

In 2018, a survey of SENCos' workload commissioned by the NEU and nasen saw 74% of SENCos state that they didn't have enough time to ensure pupils receiving SEND support were able to access the provision they needed (tinyurl.com/bathspa-sencos). If the SENCo workforce is already lacking the time needed to properly support pupils, it's likely that finding even more time to support their colleagues as well will present quite a challenge.

SENCo training

To serve as qualified SENCos, teaching staff must undertake the National Award for SENCO (NASENCO) within two years of being appointed to the role. Yet polling data suggests that only half of the current SENCo workforce presently hold said award. Of the remainder, 17% are currently 'working towards the Award' while a third don't seem to be even planning to qualify.

The National Award itself is worth looking at more closely. The aforementioned Plymouth University study found that the Award focuses on theoretical and/or historical issues over practical information that would be more immediately applicable to participants' school settings.

As one participant in the study said of the Award, "It has developed my knowledge about what researchers and psychologists have to say about SEND, but it would have been nice to have more a realistic approach to what being a SENCo means in a school."

Areas identified by the researchers as not covered within the Award but potentially useful for practitioners included the following:

- Information on how to manage workload
- Ways of improving quality first teaching
- The process of selecting from different interventions
- Identifying SEND in the first instance
- More detailed information regarding a SENCo's daily tasks and responsibilities

More results, fewer resources

In a system where CPD of all types is already often treated as an afterthought, SEND professional development frequently comes bottom of the pile. The government's recently established ITT review group has confirmed that SEND won't form part of its terms of reference, which means that responsibility for SEND training will continue to fall on school SENCos, as per the Early Career Framework. And yet we know that SENCos currently possess neither the time, nor the training to take on this task and manage it effectively by themselves.

Something ultimately has to give, because we can't keep expecting more in the way of results while investing less in the way of resources. SEND CPD has to be prioritised. We need a systematic approach to imparting SEND knowledge and skills that starts with ITT providers and runs right through to schools' ongoing CPD arrangements. Only then will we really begin to see the spread of great SEND provision across the country.

ACTION POINTS

- DfE should revisit the Carter Review of ITT, examine the progress made and identify ways in which trainee teacher support in SEND can be improved
- Ofsted should judge ITT providers on the quality of their SEND-related training
- Teacher educators should develop National Professional Qualifications in SEND, as part of new plans to support teachers in developing and progressing their careers
- School leaders should ensure their SENCos are qualified, or at least in the process of qualifying for the NASENCO Award
- SENCOs should target their support at NQTs, since this group will likely see supporting pupils with SEND as a particular challenge
- Teachers should make use of the supporting resources available from senhub.org.uk, sendgateway.org.uk and elsewhere

Karen Wespieser is director of operations at the Driver Youth Trust

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The funding gap

Amid promises of government cash, will schools and LAs now be able to to cover the costs of their SEND provision?

The news that central government is planning to inject an additional £700 million into funding our students with SEND will no doubt be gratefully received by education professionals at all levels.

Since the SEND reforms of 2014, education health and care plans have been used to ensure that students are able to access high needs funding and the support that they need. Until 2015, the proportion of pupils recognised having SEND who also had a Statement or EHCP remained stable at around 2.7%. As of January 2019, this figure had risen to 3.1% – a noticeable rise that's expected to increase further still, which will of course apply even more pressure on LA budgets.

So whilst the extra funding is welcome, the question we have to ask at this stage is whether it's going to be enough.

Huge strain

The obvious response to that is, when is there ever enough? Existing regulations give parents choice as to how their student's educational needs should be met, which inevitably places a huge strain on education budgets. There might have been some additional funds awarded to LAs, but this has barely even scratched the surface of the problem (see tinyurl.com/hnf-2019-20).

By April 2019, the combined deficit for LAs stood at circa £300 million – a figure that's set to increase even further. As a member of our county school funding forum, I've been party to discussions concerning the high needs funding block and how unsustainable it currently is. LAs have had to make some difficult decisions around the HNF, often dipping into the designated schools block for extra financial support in order to help 'balance the books'.

So while that £700 million announcement will have been broadly welcomed, it will perhaps have been tempered by a degree of dismay that it's intended as a one-year increase only. There may, however, be a mitigating factor in that additional money going into schools block could potentially include a further SEND allocation within it.

> *"By April 2019, the combined deficit for LAs stood at circa £300 million – a figure that's set to increase even further"*

Volatile forecasting

For special schools and specialist resource provisions, there may be some relief from the announcement. Given the way that Place Plus is funded, it would require an increase in the basic levels of Element 1 and 2 to provide any secure income boost. Special schools and specialist resource provisions will both include a number of places commissioned by their LAs, thus providing operating revenue for the setting. There is, however, a significant difference between the two when it comes to the risks involved with managing places.

Special schools will receive Place Plus funding for their commissioned places, but will often include a cohort that have extreme and complex needs. Any high needs funding they receive will accompany the admission of each student to whom that applies via their EHCP and assessment of need.

This can often increase demand for staff support and specialist resources, some of which the school may already have. The issue for the school is that while Place Plus funding stays in place, HNF will travel with students to wherever they end up going. Without careful planning, this can result in overstaffing or excessive resourcing.

Forecasting a special school's budgetary requirements therefore becomes challenging due to the volatile nature of the funding involved and the school's fulfilment of places. Monthly monitoring and forecasting becomes essential, with special school leaders having to ensure that any decisions they make give due consideration to what can be a highly unpredictable budget situation.

Mainstream schools will be used to making educated estimates of their future student numbers, but for special schools, the key concern is less to do with overall pupil numbers and far more with what the particular nature of those pupils' needs might be. Not only that, but a typical special school will be facing a huge demand for places that they may or may not be able to cater for.

Holistic advantages

The outlook is slightly different for special resource provisions (SRPs). These receive the same Place Plus funding per student place as special schools, and will similarly have a set number of their places regularly commissioned by their LA, via funding that should be secure for at least a year. HNF will again travel with students, but the financial risk this presents to SRPs will be fairly low, since most will offer a fairly small provision in relation to their overall cohort.

There are exceptions, of

NEED TO KNOW

- Audit your school's level of required SEND provision in consultation with your SENCo. This might include examining census returns and recording any high needs funding awarded to specific pupils.
- Stay ahead of the game by monitoring the minutes of your local Schools Forum meetings. All HNF decisions will be approved here, so make sure you're ready in the event of any changes.
- Have your SENCo regularly brief SLT on any HNF-related developments, and keep them updated on the school's access to additional financial support.
- Engage with any national or local SEND-related government consultations, taking input from leaders, SBMs and SENCos.
- Share best practice, advice and guidance through, for example, your nearest school business professional network or nasen's Advisory Groups (see tinyurl.com/nasen-advisory)

course. The school I currently support has the largest SRP in the county and one of the largest in the country. It currently offers 120 places for pupils with everything from speech and language needs to severe physical disabilities. We've found that there are numerous holistic advantages to having an SRP as part of our school. We follow a policy of integration that extends far beyond having students share the same curriculum, classrooms and resources. Aside from the obvious benefits that come with designing a school around principles of inclusion, the integration we encourage also helps mitigate some of the financial pressures and concerns that we face.

As a PFI school, the Place Plus system works very well for us. We don't have the ability to make savings on our core operational processes, simply because we have no control over them. Consequently, the system gives us certain guarantees and assurances that at least some of our income will be consistent. This doesn't come without a cost of course; the provision currently has an excellent reputation, which it needs to keep in order to ensure full cohorts in the years ahead.

Bird's-eye-view

Our ability to share staffing between both elements of our very busy school is extremely useful, and a constant consideration when it comes to our curriculum planning. Similar to a special school, the percentage spend of our budget on staffing is higher due to the needs of our students, allowing us to be a little more dynamic with our delivery. Indeed, we've found that having an SRP that has oversight of our SEND provision has been an extremely supportive and positive model.

I make sure that I'm fully aware of all aspects regarding the SRP, so that my own level of oversight is equivalent to that of someone in my position at a special school. This 'bird's-eye view', seen through a business-focussed lens, feeds into all decisions taken within the provision and ensures they all have a financial dimension. Budgets can be spent quickly but making savings takes far longer, which is why having a dynamic and proactive SBM in such settings is so vital.

So, is that extra funding going to be enough? Well, if the amount proposed successfully makes its way into our schools, then the pressures I describe here could be greatly reduced – though the precise impact will differ, depending on its use.

It could be that those additional funds go some way towards making up the shortfalls currently being experienced by a number of LAs. If that's where they end up, then expect to see little or no benefits at an operational level; we'll simply continue to face the same pressures. That said, there's another side to consider in that cuts to high needs funding won't be as severe – something that would likely benefit all schools.

Perhaps what's really needed is a fundamental reform of the whole system...

Sue Birchall is a consultant, speaker, writer, trainer and business

Fit for purpose?

Following the far-reaching reforms of recent years, is the SEND system succeeding in what it's supposed do? Dr Adam Boddison surveys the evidence...

The Children and Families Act 2014 set out a radical reform of the SEND system in England designed to put children, young people and their families at the centre. In January 2015, a new SEND Code of Practice provided statutory guidance for those organisations with responsibility for implementing the reforms.

The following March, the DfE published a policy paper titled 'Special Educational Needs and Disability: supporting local and national accountability' (see tinyurl.com/dfe-send-15), which outlined how the success of the reforms would be measured across three key areas – positive experiences, positive outcomes and effective preparation for adulthood.

EHCP delays

2019 data from government analysis of Statements of SEN and education, health and care plans in England (see tinyurl.com/sen-ehc-2019) shows that the percentage of EHCPs issued on time (i.e. within 20 weeks, excluding exception cases) was 60.1% for 2018, down from 64.9% in 2017. That 2018 percentage is also below the mean average of 61.4% since EHCPs were introduced.

At first glance it may appear that no progress is being made in this area, but an analysis of 3-year moving averages shows a slow, accelerating progress of 60.7%, 60.9% and 61.2%.

The raw data is also revealing in that it shows how the number of EHCPs issued has risen sharply every year, from 19,712 in 2015 to 45,145 in 2018. Given how pupil numbers have been rising and complexity of need has been increasing, I'd argue that slow progress is better than no progress. However, I remain concerned that we're re still in a position where more than one in three EHCPs aren't being issued on time.

Registered appeals

The DfE's aforementioned 2015 accountability document suggests we should consider 'SEN appeals and outcomes' (tribunal) data. This shows that the number of registered appeals has increased steadily from 3,147 in 2014/15, to 5,679 in 2017/18. However, if we consider the number of registered appeals relative to the number of EHCPs issued, we find that this has remained constant for the past three years at 12% to 13%.

Another figure that's remained constant over the same period is the proportion of registered appeals with outcomes decided in favour of the appellant – namely 88% to 89%. The conclusion I draw from this is that whilst the majority of decisions in relation to EHCPs have appropriate outcomes, it's consistently the case that too many children and young people are being denied access to EHCPs that they're entitled to.

When considering data from parents, it makes sense to look at what the National Network of Parent Carer Forums are hearing through their networks. The NNPCF's 'State of the Nation Report 2019' (see tinyurl.com/nnpcf-state-19) states that 94% of parent carer forums don't think there's enough funding in the high needs funding block to meet local needs.

The same survey further reveals that two thirds of forums believe their local area's understanding of local need to be fair or poor. The report goes on to note that only 12% of parent carer forums feel the distribution of funding to meet local need is excellent or good.

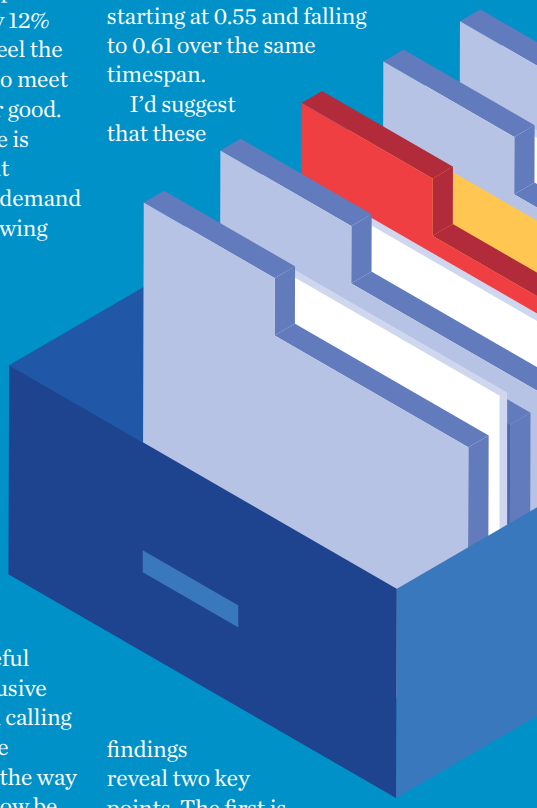
When all this evidence is considered holistically, it becomes very clear that demand for SEND services is growing rapidly, but financial support to sustain these services hasn't grown at the same rate.

Progress measures

With regards to accountability, I remain optimistic that Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework will be a useful driver in rewarding inclusive provision in schools and calling out poor provision. If the framework is applied in the way it's intended, it should now be the case that no school can be Outstanding unless they're able to demonstrate that they're also inclusive.

The first element of the success criteria, in relation to positive outcomes, is improved progression. One source of evidence for this is the government's own preferred measure of progress at KS4, known as Progress 8. Progress 8 data cited by the National Audit Office (see tinyurl.com/nao-send-19) shows a year-on-year increase in Progress 8 scores among pupils with no identified SEND, from 0.06 in 2015/16 to 0.08 in 2017/18. Conversely, pupils with SEND have seen year-on-year decreases in their scores, starting at 0.55 and falling to 0.61 over the same timespan.

I'd suggest that these findings reveal two key points. The first is that the government's overall approach to education has advantaged many pupils, but has had the unintended consequence of disadvantaging pupils with SEND. I use the term 'unintended' advisedly here, because I don't believe anybody working in education intentionally sets out to provide a poor offer to any groups of



"Demand for SEND services is growing rapidly, but financial support to sustain these services hasn't grown at the same rate"

students, let alone vulnerable groups.

The second point is that those results raise the question of whether Progress 8 is an appropriate mechanism for measuring progress. The academic skewing of Progress 8 is such that too many schools have subsequently narrowed their curriculum in order to game the system, which has had a disproportionate impact on pupils with SEND.

Just one pupil with a significantly negative Progress 8 score can have a marked effect on a school's overall Progress 8 score – perhaps indicating that the curriculum currently focuses on those things that are easily measured, rather than those things that matter. It's important that we value a much broader notion of outcomes, which seems to be a principle that Ofsted supports via its Education Inspection Framework.

Attainment gaps

If we examine the national Attainment 8 scores set out in latest Whole School SEND Index (see tinyurl.com/wss-index-19), we find that in regions where outcomes are highest for pupils with SEND they also tend to be highest for pupils with no identified SEND. This reinforces the message that high quality teaching for pupils with SEND is high quality teaching for all pupils.

The provisional KS2 results published in September 2019 also highlight a significant attainment gap between pupils with and without SEN. Whilst it's not a like-for-like comparison, it's notable that differences in outcomes at KS4 appear less stark than they are at KS2.

Turning to the matter of destinations after KS4 and KS5, the Whole School SEND Index reports that after KS4, 90% of pupils with an EHCP were in a sustained education or employment destination, compared to 88% of pupils on SEN support and 95% of pupils without SEN.

The lower destination rates for those on SEN support at KS4 demonstrates that more needs to be done in schools to support pupils with SEND but who don't qualify for an EHCP.

Permanent exclusions

With respect to exclusions, there's currently a significant tension in education policy between the obligation to meet pupils' needs and the need to tackle challenging behaviour. Rather than focusing on the former to achieve a positive change in the latter, the existing accountability system has instead incentivised too many schools to introduce zero-tolerance behaviour policies and exclude learners with SEND.

The 2019 NNPCF report cited above states that 95% of parent carer forums were aware of exclusions involving learners with SEND. Similarly, the Timpson Review of School Exclusion published in May this year (see tinyurl.com/timpson-review-19) reported that 78% of permanent exclusions were issued to pupils who had SEN, were classified as in need or eligible for free school meals, with 11% of excluded pupils belonging to all three of these categories.

The SEND reforms haven't yet delivered on their ambition – but that doesn't mean we should stop trying.

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Managing EPILEPSY

If a pupil were to have an epileptic seizure in your classroom, would you know what to do? **Louise Cousins** offers some advice...

Epilepsy affects approximately 600,000 people in the UK – almost 1 in every 100 – including 63,000 children and young people. On average, that means there'll be one child with epilepsy in every primary school and five in every secondary school.

People with epilepsy have a tendency to have seizures caused by sudden bursts of intense electrical activity in the brain. There around 60 different types of epileptic seizure, and it's possible for people to experience more than one type. What actually happens to someone during a seizure depends on which part of their brain is affected and how far the aforementioned electrical activity spreads.

Epilepsy can start at any age and any time of life. Some children may develop epilepsy before starting school, while others might develop the condition during their time there. It can be a complex and difficult condition to plan for, given the sheer number of different seizure types, yet it's important for teachers to at least have an awareness of what epilepsy is and the different ways in which it might present.

Seizure types

During certain types of seizure a person can remain completely alert and aware of what's going on around them, while other types may cause someone to lose consciousness. Tonic clonic seizures are the type that people most often call to mind when they think of epilepsy, which is where a child might go stiff, fall to the floor and jerk.

Another type quite common among children – and frequently missed – are absence seizures. These cause a person to lose consciousness, but only for a couple of seconds; from the outside, they may seem to suddenly adopt a blank expression, or appear to not be paying attention. Some children affected by absence seizures have been known to have them over a hundred times within one day.

The general rule when responding to somebody who's having a seizure is to stay with them and protect them from anything dangerous in their surroundings. Tonic clonic seizures are usually the only type where it will be necessary to apply first aid, which might include placing something soft under the child's head to prevent them from injuring themselves.

Don't restrain the person, or place anything in their mouth during a seizure. Note that children affected by tonic clonic seizures may also require emergency medication in the event of such a seizure. Schools should therefore liaise with a pupil's medical professionals and familiarise themselves with the pupil's specific needs.

Practical steps

There are also some practical and proactive steps that schools can take. Draw up individual healthcare plans (IHPs) for any pupils with epilepsy, and ensure that these contain details about the nature of the pupil's epilepsy and their needs. Make it clear exactly what specific support a child might need, when they're likely to need it and who will be responsible for making sure that support is provided.

For example, a child might have a seizure that results in them needing time to recover afterwards. They might be tired and in need of rest, so the plan in this case could be to provide them with a safe space in which they can rest and recover. Other children might need to go home, which should be similarly planned for. Class teachers will obviously need to be informed ahead of time about any children whose epilepsy might require them to take emergency medication.

It's important that the process of drawing up a pupil's IHP involves everybody who will contribute to the child's care during school hours – not just the headteacher and class teacher, but also support staff.

It's possible for some children to receive a diagnosis of epilepsy seemingly out of the blue, and subsequently feel self-conscious. A child affected by tonic clonic seizures could conceivably lose control of their bodily functions at a moment's notice, thereby prompting concerns and feelings of embarrassment that they may need help in managing.

Do what you can to inform other students of what they can do to help any peers with epilepsy, and the importance of informing staff, should the need arise. Consider the social and emotional aspects that may be involved. Is the child at a higher risk of being bullied by peers? Are they likely to be absent from school more often?

Full inclusion

Schools should also be sensitive to the impact epilepsy can have on a child's learning. Seizure symptoms and the side effects of medication needed to control them can leave children feeling fatigued. They might develop memory problems or additional behaviour challenges. It may be that reasonable adjustments need to be put in place, such as alternative arrangements for homework deadlines or adjustments to the pupil's timetable. Older pupils might require extra time during formal tests.

Above all, ensure that pupils with epilepsy are properly integrated into every aspect of school life. We've often heard of pupils being told they can't partake in PE or join school trips – in fact, those activities are perfectly appropriate for children with epilepsy, so long as due care is taken in terms of the response plan in the event of a seizure.

With that in mind, what should a teacher do if a child has a tonic clonic seizure during their class?

"It can be a complex and difficult condition to plan for, given the number of different seizure types"

1 Create space

Move the child out of danger if it looks like they're about to fall off their chair or hit their head. Create space around them and cushion their head so that they don't injure themselves.

2 Time it

If possible, time the seizure. The longer it lasts, the harder it will be for the child to recover, and the more likely it is that they'll require emergency medical assistance. We're aware of some schools that keep a stopwatch in the classroom for timing seizure durations.

3 Be present

It's then largely a case of waiting. Once the seizure is over, the teacher should place the pupil in the recovery position and avoid restraining them. Don't put anything in their mouth or give them any food or drink. Stay with them.

If a seizure lasts for more than five minutes, an ambulance should be called. Seizures with a lengthy duration are dangerous –if there's a possibility that these may occur, it should be clearly recorded in the pupil's IHP.

Plan ahead

It's our belief that all schools should have a medical conditions policy – ideally one containing a section on epilepsy – that's made available to parents and staff. We appreciate that teaching staff are increasingly overworked, but it's far better to develop your epilepsy response plans ahead of time, than to do so reactively if a child happens to develop epilepsy while attending your setting. There should already be a policy in place if that happens.

We'd also recommend that schools regularly review any policies of this type, and that they maintain frequent communications with parents/carers of children with epilepsy. It's a fluctuating condition that can and will change over time.

Our preference would be to see formal policies like this be implemented and then reviewed annually, accompanied by staff refresher training. This is would be a best practice scenario – one that we know isn't realistic for some settings now, but certainly what we should be aiming towards.

The staff question

Members of school staff who happen to have epilepsy need to be supported in just the same way as pupils. Epilepsy is a disability covered under the Equalities Act, which means that schools will be required to work with staff to decide what reasonable adjustments might needed for them to be sufficiently supported in their job.

You may need to put a plan in place for what happens if a member of staff has a seizure during the school day, implement an adjustment to the colleague's workload or make an accommodation for them to attend hospital appointments.

Remember that epilepsy is something that affects people very individually, and that some members of staff with epilepsy may barely experience any regular seizures. Be aware that as an employer you have an obligation under the Equalities Act to make reasonable adjustments for any members of staff as and when required.

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How to spot the 'sleeper effect'

Louise Wilkinson examines how KS2 to KS3 transitions can be complicated by the symptoms of acquired brain injury

The transition from KS2 to KS3 is a challenging time for many children, but can be especially difficult for those who have an acquired brain injury.

An ABI is an injury to the brain that takes place after birth, and after a period of normal development. The injury can be acquired by accident, through illness (such as meningitis, encephalitis or hydrocephalus), a childhood stroke, a tumour, oxygen deprivation, non-accidental injury (when a baby is shaken, for instance) or poisoning.

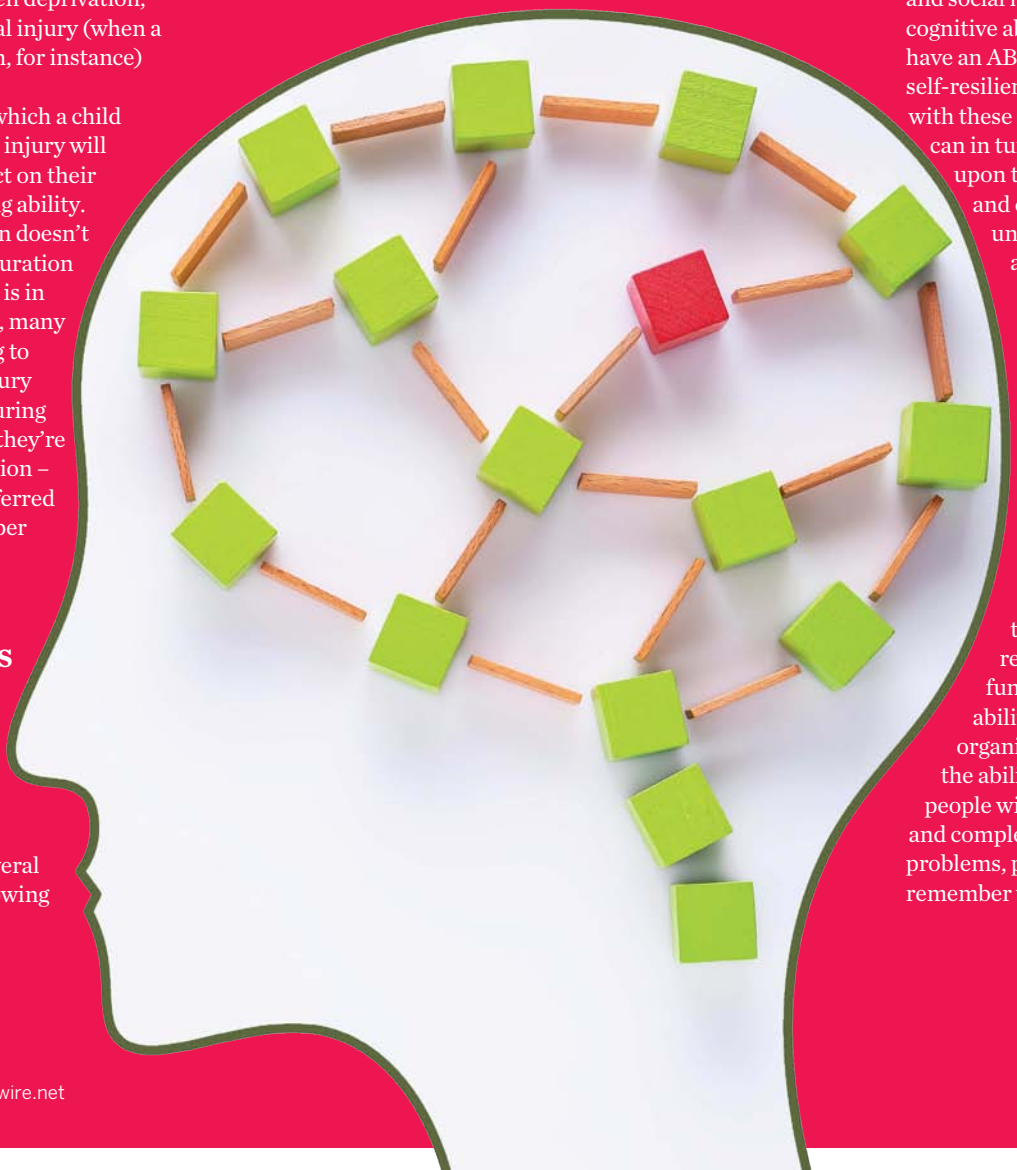
The age at which a child acquires their injury will have an impact on their future learning ability. Since the brain doesn't complete maturation until a person is in their mid-20s, many issues relating to their prior injury may unfold during the time that they're in KS3 education – something referred to as the 'sleeper effect'.

Unseen diagnosis

The nature and extent of injuries to children's brains may not always be known for several reasons. Following admission to hospital for an accident or illness, families may be advised that the child has made a 'full recovery'. This may be true clinically, yet due to the sleeper effect, how do we know at this point what, if any, neurological injury might have occurred? Many children with ABIs aren't diagnosed as having one, since parents aren't always informed about the possibility of them occurring after head injuries (even mild concussion) or illness. Difficulties that do later emerge can often be misdiagnosed as traits of autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia or some other neurological condition.

By their nature, primary schools tend to more pastoral and less demanding than secondary schools (see 'KS3 complications'). Many of the issues a child might experience following an ABI can therefore be potentially masked during their KS2 years. These might include cognitive and executive functioning (in terms of the speed and ease with which they can process information), basic problem solving, social play and relationship building.

A child's transition to KS3 will necessarily involve them having to plan more, as they acquire greater levels of independence and responsibility. They will also soon start to become conscious of differences throughout their peer group in terms of physical and social maturity, as well as cognitive ability. Children who have an ABI will not always be self-resilient enough to cope with these differences, which can in turn negatively impact upon their self-esteem and confidence. It's not unusual for children as young as 11 or 12 to be treated for depression following an ABI.



Executive functioning

One key neurological development occurring around the time of transition to KS3 relates to executive functioning – a child's ability to plan and organise. This can impede the ability of many young people with an ABI to plan and complete homework, solve problems, prioritise tasks and remember which books and

"Many of the issues a child might experience following an ABI can be potentially masked during their KS2 years."

PRIMARY	KS3
Small contained site	Typically larger, multi-storey, multi-building or even multi-site locations
One key teacher	One form tutor, many subject tutors
Child based in one classroom across each academic year	Child regularly visits various classrooms over the course of the year
Items required for lessons typically kept in classroom	Students responsible for bringing stationery and other learning resources to lessons
Teacher gets to know pupils as individuals	More limited time for teachers to get to know pupils
Learning focused around acquisition of foundation skills	Increased complexity and quantity of learning Increased complexity and quantity of learning
Security of friendships forged at a young age	Common requirement to socially 'start over' and establish new friendships with peers

equipment they'll need for a given school day. When at school, these issues can then extend to the child's ability to navigate their way around the building and assess how long it will take them to complete certain tasks.

In many settings, non-compliance with policies relating to classroom punctuality and completion of classwork will lead to sanctions, including detentions. This may in turn cause frustration and potentially provoke anger and aggressive behaviour; as far as the child is concerned, they're trying just as hard as they always have, yet for reasons they don't realise or comprehend, they're being admonished more frequently than before.

In some cases, this can lead to a downward spiral of defensive and oppositional behaviours for which the school may have to subsequently exclude the child. Other areas of difficulty likely to be encountered during transition by children with an ABI include the following:

Social skills
The child may only be able to see and engage with existing friends at break times, rather than during class, and some friends that previously knew and understood the child may now attend different schools. ABIs can also drive changes in personality that make it harder for children to forge new friendships.

Attention and concentration
There are more opportunities at KS3 for children to become distracted by their environment and other students. A child may also receive less support with staying on task and less detailed explanations as to what's expected of them.

There will be a large amount of new learning to focus on and many new subjects, the combination of which may overload the child and cause them to simply 'shut off' from lessons.

Fatigue
Following an ABI, a child's brain may have to route signals around the injured area in order to reliably process tasks and complete activities. The size and layout of their new secondary school will require the child to navigate a more complex space, with the act of walking around this physically larger environment likely to increase their levels of fatigue.

There may also be less acceptance and understanding of these fatigue issues at KS3 than in the more pastoral environment the child will previously have been accustomed to.

Memory
Many children with an ABI will have memory difficulties, which makes remembering names a huge issue – to say nothing of the large volume of new information and details the child will have to remember while studying various new subjects.

Communications
Because of how their neurological pathways will have undergone a degree of 'rewiring', it will typically take longer for a child with an ABI to process information than the rest of the class. The upshot can be that they won't understand what they have to do and feel reluctant to ask for help.

Behaviour
Displays of frustration at these new challenges can be perceived by unaware teaching professionals as negative behaviours that will need to be addressed through standard school sanctions. It should be noted that any such sanctions ought to be applied in line with the child, rather than the level of misdemeanour. The behaviour of a child affected by an ABI will be their way of telling you that they're struggling.

The Child brain Injury Trust offers many short e-learning sessions that will provide school staff with further information and strategies for supporting children and young people, all of which are free of charge

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GET INFORMED

The Child Brain Injury trust, in partnership with nasen, has produced a free ABI mini guide titled 'Childhood Acquired Brain Injury: The hidden disability.' Aimed at the education profession, this 24-page document contains practical school-based support strategies, insights from young people and parents and details of recent academic research. The guide can be downloaded via tinyurl.com/cbit-abi-schools

At your service

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

1

Tailor-made learning

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

It is our aim that students leave the College with friendships that will last a lifetime, skills that prepare them for the world and academic qualifications that will enable them to fly.

ncw.co.uk

3

Express delivery

Visit The Postal Museum and discover how the post changed the way we live. Explore interactive exhibition galleries and get hands on with history. Ride Mail Rail and travel on a tiny train through the tunnels of London's hidden postal railway. Take on the job of postal workers in a mini mail town and learn through play in 'Sorted!'

The Postal Museum's sensory sessions, meanwhile, explore communication stories across the curriculum. Sessions are flexible, offering a tailored and enriching learning experience for students with a wide range of needs. Visit our website to find out more and book a tailored trip for your school.

postalmuseum.org/for-schools

Transforming lives

Autism is a lifelong disability that affects how people communicate and interact with the world. There are around 700,000 people, including children, in the UK living with autism – that's more than 1 in 100. An estimated 140,000 school children in the UK are on the autism spectrum, which affects each child differently and can make school life very difficult.

Without the right support or understanding, autistic people can miss out on an education, struggle to find work and become extremely isolated. The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people. For more information and advice, contact The National Autistic Society on **0808 800 1050**, email **nas@nas.org.uk** or visit **autism.org.uk**

4

National Autistic Society

Sports Premium inspiration

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

enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk

2

Learning in action

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

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

deafbooks.co.uk

5

Inclusion on the move

At Red Kite we provide safe, reliable and fully compliant wheelchair accessible minibuses, offering 1-6 wheelchair positions, complemented by flexible seating plans to suit your organisation's particular requirements. Our specialist mobility options include wheelchair tail lifts, ramps, lowering suspension, individual wheelchair/seat track and securing systems, high visibility trim and quick release seat systems, plus secure storage for medication and respiratory equipment.

When you choose Red Kite you buy with confidence. All new and used vehicles meet approved standards and UK regulations for the transportation of wheelchair passengers, and we offer a choice of flexible finance options, including contract hire and leasing, to suit all budgets. For a quotation, free demonstration or to talk through your particular requirements with the team, contact **01202 827 678** or email **sales@redkite-minibuses.com**.
redkite-minibuses.com

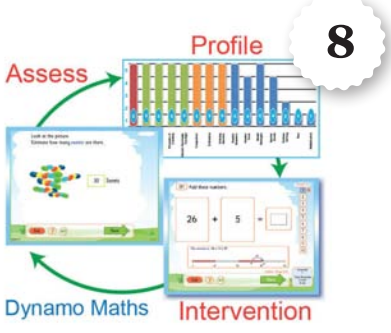
Trauma informed

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

Access to maths

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

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



Meeting the reading challenge

20 years ago Robinswood Press introduced the Lifeboat Read and Spell Scheme. While immediately recognised as an excellent reading scheme for all children, it was also seen as particularly well-suited to pupils with dyslexia and SEND, due to its practical handwriting requirement, multisensory exercises and incorporation of repetition. Since then, many thousands of schools around the world have made use of the Scheme – not just in English-speaking countries, but in many cases as an EFL resource. The resources making up the Lifeboat Read and Spell Scheme are among a range of products from Robinswood Press that have helped many children with a variety of challenges. For more information, contact **01684 899 419** or email **ops@robinswoodpress.com**.
robinswood.co.uk

BSL for beginners

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

Lose the label, find the child

For children and adults alike, an 'ADHD label' can serve to conceal who someone really is, says **Victoria Williamson**

When I trained as a primary school teacher 15 years ago, these were some of the words used to describe children with ADHD: 'Difficult.' 'Challenging.' 'Disruptive.' There were others, whispered by harassed-looking teachers in the staffroom or concerned parents at the school gates, but none seemed to be positive. When I got my first 'real' class to teach, and saw that some of the children came with the dreaded 'ADHD' label attached, I approached the new term with butterflies the size of dragons in my stomach. But here's what it took me a few more years to learn...

Michael wasn't 'difficult'

He struggled with impulsiveness, often shouting out in class, talking over other children and getting into arguments during games when he found it hard to wait his turn. But when it came to science, he had all the patience in the world. He could sit for hours watching the colour changes in a chromatography experiment, or waiting for crystals to form from a cooling liquid.

Chloe wasn't 'challenging'

When she became defiant – refusing to carry out a task or start on class work – a quick check was often all that was needed to discover she'd been distracted when the instructions were issued and didn't understand what she had to do. Her lack of focus led to mislaid books, incomplete homework and a tidal wave of mess that seemed to follow in her wake everywhere she went. She wore an almost permanent scowl, formed through years of telling-offs from teachers and bullying by peers, but her frown would vanish during music lessons. Chloe wasn't exactly Sarah Brightman, but the joy and enthusiasm on her face when she sang more than made up for any false notes.

Saleem wasn't 'disruptive'

His fidgeting and muttering during quiet work time was his way of trying to stay focused on the task, but his habit of constantly leaving his seat and wandering the class in search of a chat, a sharpener to borrow or a new pencil case to explore often drove the other children to distraction. His restless energy was forgiven when it came to PE, though. Classmates who'd been complaining about him only minutes before now demanded to have him in their team, knowing that his fast legs and endless reserves of energy would carry them to victory, regardless of the game being played.

Change perceptions

Three very different children, with very different personalities and passions, but all with two things in common – their 'ADHD' labels and lack of self-esteem. Desperate for answers, support and the increasingly rare additional funding that an official diagnosis will bring, parents and teachers can often push hard for a label. Yet we often forget that these children will have been repeatedly told that their behaviour is problematic. Just like those parents and teachers I met during my training, the children themselves will often associate an ADHD label with words like 'difficult', 'challenging' and 'disruptive'.

Teachers can, however, influence how that label is perceived by focussing attention on the child's strengths. One way of doing this in the classroom is to write every child's name on a piece of paper and hand them out to the class. Ask everyone to think of the nicest thing they can say about the person on their paper and have them write a compliment – something they're good at, an admirable personality trait or anything praiseworthy that they've done. Everyone then passes their paper on and writes a compliment for the next name they're given, continuing until everyone's written one nice thing about each child in the class.

Collect the papers in, type the comments up and then present every child with their own personal list of positive labels. What if, instead of 'ADHD' or 'difficult', Michael had been able to wear the labels 'clever' or 'good at science'? If Chloe had instead been able to wear the title 'keen singer' as a badge of pride? What if Saleem had seen himself as 'sporty' rather than 'disruptive'?

An ADHD label needn't be negative. If parents and teachers can help children find their passions and focus on their strengths – such as the potential for boundless energy and creative thinking that ADHD can bring – then children with ADHD will be able to see themselves in a positive light. Labels matter, so let's help children lose those that describe behaviours often outside their control and find ones that describe who they really are.

Victoria Williamson is a primary school teacher with a Master's degree in special needs education; her second novel, The Boy with the Butterfly Mind is available now, published by Floris Books

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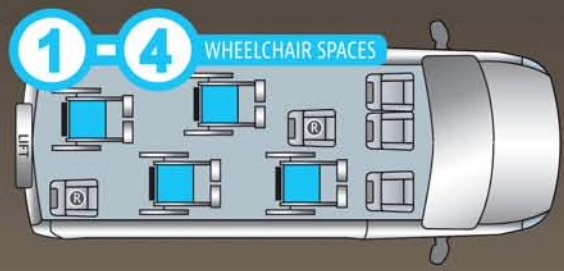

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