

Inclusion

English



Quality Inclusive Pedagogy

Everybody learning!

When we use the phrase 'Quality First Teaching', we refer to key principles that underpin best practice. In this section, we will focus on the principle of **inclusive pedagogy**, addressing the values, attitudes and approaches that ensure mainstream classrooms are geared towards supporting those who find learning difficult.

Inclusive pedagogy is an approach to whole-class teaching that is accessible to **all learners**. It should enable learners to keep up, feel included, progress and be successful. This approach should foster an open-ended view of each individual's potential to learn and recognises the difference between individuals as a given and a strength. It challenges deterministic approaches that exclude certain learners from a positive classroom experience because of adverse labelling by ability, or by diagnosis.

As teachers we can feel disempowered by the expectation to teach learners with such a variety of needs.

However, we do not need to become experts in every SEND diagnosis to succeed. We do need to seek to know each learner, to find out how they learn best, and then seek to create classroom strategies that maximise their learning. By thinking about quality in this way, mainstream classrooms can become environments where teachers can plan, teach and assess for **all** their learners with equal confidence.

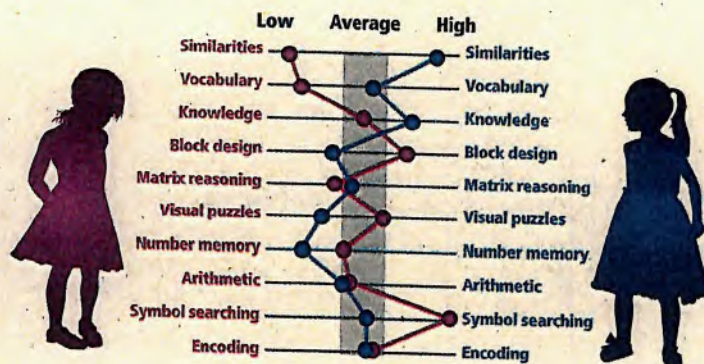
The notion of inclusive pedagogy is not a call for a return to a model of whole-class teaching where equality is notionally addressed by providing identical experiences for all. Instead, it advocates an approach whereby the teacher provides a range of options which are available to everybody. Human diversity is seen within the model of inclusive pedagogy as a strength, rather than a problem, as children work together, sharing ideas and learning from their interactions with each other. The inclusive pedagogical approach fosters an open-ended view of each child's potential to learn.¹

Why Inclusive Pedagogy is prerequisite for Quality First Teaching

We are moving away from an approach that views learners with SEND as outliers that always need to be catered for and taught differently. Separating learners with SEND out for numerous interventions or over-relying on teaching assistants to deliver teaching to a group of learners with identified SEND, can in fact be detrimental. Evidence tells us the most important contribution to improved outcomes for learners with SEND is quality teaching.²

We are also seeing an increase in the co-occurrence of needs exhibited by children and young people. Research tells us there are increasing numbers of learners in mainstream who demonstrate complex SEND profiles due to a number of factors (e.g., better neonatal care and more complex conditions affecting neurodevelopment).³ More and more learners have what might have been described as spiky or jagged-learning profiles.

The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) reflects this shift too. It no longer looks at SEND as a department or additional provision within the school, but reviews teaching of learners with identified SEND within each subject area and every classroom. It requires evidence of SEND teaching that permeates curriculum delivery, 'built in' not bolted on.



There is a new generation of children with complex learning needs, who do not fit neatly into an understandable category.⁴

Professor Barry Carpenter

What do we need to change?

We need to focus on academic engagement for learners with SEND to achieve genuine inclusion and strengthen learner achievement. Learners with SEND need access to the best teachers and the strongest teaching. Currently, many mainstream school processes focus on the social and emotional aspects of inclusivity rather than zooming in on the teaching and learning process.

Inclusive pedagogy can improve this. Responsibility for effective teaching and assessment of learners with SEND should not be the isolated preserve of the SENCO. Teachers are the key to progress. Teachers are generally supportive of the principles of inclusion, yet anxious about working with an increasingly diverse range of learners. Adopting an inclusive pedagogy offers a way of thinking about effective whole class teaching and meeting the needs of individual learners. Research has helped highlight the reliance on planning and teaching for the majority of learners who learn typically, and then doing something slightly different for the outliers: those at the top or bottom of the distribution curve (who are sometimes described as lower or higher attainers). Inclusive pedagogy highlights the flaws in this teaching, that default thinking of planning for most of the class and then doing something additional or different for some. 'Most' and 'some' thinking risks limiting our belief in what young people can achieve. Inclusive pedagogies encourage us to build in, not bolt on.

Inclusive teaching and learning approaches

Let's move away from stereotyping and fixed-ability thinking about what learners with SEND can achieve. Where differentiated lesson planning leads to learners recognising, they are forever stuck on the red table for low prior attainers, or consistently given the bronze activities for in-class completion never the gold, (or the 'mild' never the 'spicy' or the 'hot') then we limit expectations of what these learners can achieve. Consideration of learners with SEND who find learning tricky must be core to planning and teaching, not peripheral.

It is tempting to talk about the challenge of SEND as a specific and distinct issue. Yet, far from creating new programmes, the evidence tells us that teachers should instead prioritise familiar but powerful strategies, like scaffolding and explicit instruction, to support their pupils with SEND. This means understanding the needs of individual pupils and weaving specific approaches into every-day, high-quality classroom teaching – being inclusive by design not as an after-thought.⁵

1. Ban the average

Banning the idea of 'average' is an important step towards adopting a more inclusive approach to teaching. Instead of quickly categorising learners with SEND as 'below average', the successfully inclusive teacher realises the notion of an average, above average or below average learner **is not helpful**. The inclusive teacher challenges that mindset that seeks to predetermine the capacity of each learner, replacing it instead with a **curiosity** about what the learner can achieve.

As teachers we should approach teaching with a sense of openness, looking to be surprised by our learners and what they can achieve. We cannot develop quality teaching unless (and until) we challenge this oversimplification.

2. Think about transforming learners' lives as the job

Reframe how you approach your role as teacher. It is one that transforms lives, rather than simply 'topping up' knowledge. Plan and teach based on the belief that futures are not predetermined by innate ability, and that every learner can make progress given the opportunity. Work with learners as co-agents in learning. Commit to nurturing trust between you as the teacher and your learners.

'Success for all ...depends in large part on a belief that children learn to high levels'.⁶

3. Difficulties in pupil learning are a professional challenge

As teachers we can be influential change agents in transforming schools if we regularly reflect on our pedagogical practices. Look for improvements that will help all learners reach their full potential. Barriers to learning simply present an opportunity to develop new ways of working, rather than a 'problem with the learner'. A complex learner presents a professional opportunity to learn!

4. Learners are pilots, not passengers

A study of 4000 fighter pilots to identify the 'average size' for cockpit design discovered that on a ten-point criteria, not a single one was the same on every dimension. These 'jagged profiles' are applicable to learners in the classroom. Difficulty with maths does not mean a struggle in literacy; poor working memory might not mean poor articulation. When you recognise these spikey or jagged profiles, there is less risk of labelling and a greater opportunity to identify learner potential.

5. Less deficit labelling, more ability profiling

Good teaching requires adopting an individual, holistic view of each learner. Be wary of labelling learners with their diagnosis or behaviour trait, or by assumptions of what they cannot do, particularly learners with SEND. Such labels reinforce stereotypes and lower expectations of what they can achieve. Instead of describing learners with autism as having difficulties making friends, or dyslexic learners as reluctant writers, profile learners by what they **can achieve** and how they **can learn**.

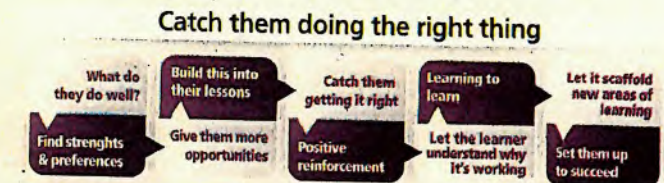
Catch yourself quietly if you label or limit a learner by the language you use, but positively reinforce yourself and your colleagues when remarks are made about what a learner can do (rather than what they cannot).

6. Ask better questions (be a detective in classroom)

Adopt an inquiry mind-set. This is about asking investigative questions around the learner. What do I know about how this particular child or young person learns? What are their strengths in maths and how do they differ in geography? What are successful hooks to get them interested? What motivates them to learn? What aspects of their learning behaviours need to be developed? This helps break the cycle of starting with questions about what we know about a learner's diagnosis or condition.

7. Catch your learners doing the right thing

Notice a learner's strengths and build on these, however small.



Phonics is key foundational knowledge. Phonics is one of the essential building blocks when teaching learners to read as well as spell. The study of phonics teaches learners that letters (graphemes) are a code for the sounds (phonemes) in spoken language. With the teaching of phonics, children are systematically taught:

- letter-sound correspondences (GPCs, or grapheme-phoneme correspondences)
- to read words by blending sounds from left to right
- to spell by identifying sounds in words (segmenting spoken words).

Phonics is taught from Reception to Year 2, providing an opportunity for learners to build on their skills and progress each year. It is vital that a school has a clear and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. A whole-school policy should clearly map out the teaching expectations and journey for each year group, allowing learners to build upon their knowledge each year. Changing the approach between teachers or year groups can lead to confusion and slow the learners' progress.

Throughout Reception and Key Stage 1, learners need consistent teaching of phonics through daily structured lessons, with additional opportunities across the school day to practise applying their learning in different curriculum areas so that their knowledge becomes secure and embedded. A learner's ability to independently apply their phonics knowledge facilitates independent reading and tasks across the curriculum. Phonics knowledge can also be applied to spelling. By hearing and segmenting the phonemes in a word, a learner can select the correct graphemes to write a desired word. In some instances, a phoneme will be represented by more than one grapheme. Over time, a learner's growing familiarity with language, reading and spelling will support them in selecting the correct grapheme.

There will be times that a learner incorrectly applies a previously taught grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC); this makes for a key teaching moment. The application of phonics knowledge should always be praised, however it is essential that we also reinforce the importance of accurate spelling. Take these opportunities to talk through the GPC selected with the learner and understand why they selected the particular GPC. Review the GPCs that the learner has been taught, and model to the learner how they can apply their phonics to accurately select the correct GPC in future opportunities. Be mindful of exception words that either contain an unusual GPC or one that has not been taught yet and be explicit in the teaching of these words. Learners should still use phonics to spell all of the known GPCs within the word but may refer to a word bank for the tricky GPC.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

Phonics is a precise and structured lesson that is taught discretely each day from Reception to Year 2. Before Reception, learners should be immersed in stories, rhymes, songs and poems to support their understanding of language.

From Reception onwards, the consistency of the rigorous pattern of phonics lends itself to being a highly inclusive lesson. The structure, pace and repetitive nature of lessons enables learners to apprehend the next steps and work within the clear boundaries. In order to maximise the learning potential and outcomes for all learners, there are a number of things that a teacher should consider.

How should a phonics lesson be structured?

Phonics is a systematic and structured lesson. Following the 'revise - teach - practise - apply' process for teaching a new grapheme-phoneme correspondence provides consistency and rigour. Learners can anticipate the next steps, providing clear and safe boundaries for their engagement and focus.

How do I plan an interactive phonics lesson?

Plan lots of opportunities for speaking, spelling words, and reading. Phonics is a very interactive lesson. Learners need opportunities to listen to phonemes, say phonemes and apply them to reading and spelling. The lesson lends itself to learners responding as a whole class (e.g., saying sounds together), working with partners (e.g., watching each other pronounce phonemes, or forming letters on each other's backs with a finger) or independent activities (e.g., letter formation in the air, reading captions etc.). Teachers should make efficient use of time so that all learners are involved for as much time as possible. Learners also need opportunities to test different strategies, in line with the school's chosen phonics programme.

How do I teach learners to enunciate the sounds?

Be aware that some learners may find it difficult to enunciate phonemes accurately. Plan for plenty of opportunities to model and practise enunciation. Describe the mouth and tongue movement to say the sound and consider providing mirrors to allow learners to watch themselves saying the sound. Where possible, adults can support learners to say and then hear the sounds in words when segmenting and blending. Provide opportunities to decode words of differing length to meet the needs of all learners, as well as words that contain the new phoneme in different positions.

Which words should be read or written?

Planning the words for reading and writing in a phonics lesson needs careful consideration. Plan opportunities for learners to apply their new GPC knowledge in different positions within words, e.g., owl, prowl, cow, and to words of different lengths. Learners should read words and/or sentences which contain only the taught GPCs or common exception words which have been planned and introduced. Similarly, learners should only write words which contain the taught phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Phonics provides a golden opportunity for teaching new vocabulary. Teachers should plan to use vocabulary that enriches the class's current topic or particular interests, where possible. Some learners may benefit from pre-teaching of the new vocabulary to help prepare them for the lesson. Teachers should also plan to apply new vocabulary at a sentence level where possible. It is important to model the application of words in context. Any word cards with new vocabulary can be easily added to a working wall after the lesson.

When considering vocabulary, it is also important to be aware of the precise terminology in phonics. When planning, teachers must ensure they are aware of the GPCs, alternative graphemes and alternative phonemes in order to plan accurate lessons. The nuanced learning must be explained accurately and modelled carefully.

What physical and contextual information needs considering?

Carefully consider the seating arrangement for the lesson. Teachers must consider how well learners can see the flashcards/word cards/whiteboard that display the graphemes and words. Having a smaller set of resources for an individual to use can be supportive. Learners also need to be able to clearly see the teacher's mouth and hear their voice when they are enunciating. Phonics require lots of accurate modelling. This will support learners to say the sound correctly when they are practising and applying. Some learners may take part in only some of the lesson; ensure that these learners can leave the carpet safely for their next input.



How are phonics lessons resourced?

The right resources are important in making sure learners get the quality and quantity of practice needed to secure their learning. Phonics is a fast-paced and interactive lesson. Teachers must carefully plan the resources that will help learners with the intended learning, e.g., phoneme frames, word cards, phoneme fans, whiteboards and pens etc., and match them carefully to the learning.

- Phoneme fans are great for revising previously learned sounds and providing AfL opportunities for grapheme-phoneme correspondence.
- Phoneme frames support segmenting to spell.
- Sound buttons support blending to reading. Teachers must be mindful of overreliance on pens and letter formation. Learners can still build and read words without writing them.
- Magnetic letters, letter cards, phoneme cubes etc., can be supportive of learners who find pen grip and handwriting challenging. Alleviating the pressure of letter formation allows learners to focus on applying their phonics knowledge. For these learners, it is critical they have discrete opportunities to practise handwriting at other points in the school day.
- Teachers may also choose to print some whiteboard slides for individuals so that they have an exact replica of the input in front of them for their own use.
- Teachers should also plan to use concrete resources in their phonics lessons as they would in a maths lesson. Concrete resources can be more meaningful than pictures and allow learners to learn new vocabulary, thus giving the application of phonics more purpose.
- It is good practice to make the resources available to the learners after the lesson, so that they have continued opportunities to practise applying their skills. This is particularly true in play-based settings where learners have independent learning time.

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Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Carefully consider the pace of the lesson. A fast-paced lesson will keep learners alert and active – but ensure they have the time and support needed to be accurate with enunciation or skills application.
- Interactive lessons provide opportunities for learners to engage in different ways. In phonics, learners will be vocal when practising saying sounds, decoding and reading. There will also be opportunities for letter formation and writing.
- Use specific, targeted questioning to challenge and support learners.

How can I support learners who are resistant to mark-making or who have poor fine motor skills?

Phonics is a tool for learning to read and spell. A reluctance to mark-make or form letters may not be indicative of difficulty with GPCs. Learners will be introduced to letters and mark-making opportunities. Opportunities to develop fine motor skills can be encouraged through play and targeted support:

- Include a finger gym or fine motor skills station in your classroom with activities such as pegging, threading, using tweezers to complete intricate objectives.
- Provide opportunities for mark-making on different scales and with different media.
- If a learner is reluctant to write, reduce the reliance on whiteboards and pens in phonics lessons and consider using magnetic letters or phoneme cubes to build words. However, learners will need to be taught how to form letters and use phonics for spelling.
- Provide specific targeted support with handwriting.
- Praise all attempts at mark-making and point out specific successes and next steps.



Case Study

A child in reception with ASD and vision impairment, who is largely non-verbal.

She worked with 1:2 support and benefitted from visuals, consistent routines, and repetition. To support phonics learning, the teacher developed provision that included:

- Joining in with revision and teaching sections of lessons on the carpet with support, as she enjoyed listening to the sounds with peers.
- Having access to a quiet, distraction-free space - this enabled her to accurately recall grapheme-phoneme correspondences with increased consistency.
- Using concrete resources to match initial sounds to graphemes.
- Using magnetic letters to build and read CVC words to match concrete resources.
- Taking part in sound hunts in the outdoor area.
- A focus on fine motor skills with peers to develop her pen grip.

Case Study

A child in Year 2 with ADHD.

He had excellent recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondence during specific phonics lessons and assessment but worked with such speed that errors were frequent when segmenting to spell and decoding to read. He became frustrated, distracted and even distressed by perceived inability to overcome a challenge.

To support him, his teacher ensured the following provision was in place:

- Structured, interactive lessons to support his attention needs.
- Increased opportunities to come forward to the interactive whiteboard to model success to the class. This is something he enjoyed and was important to raise his confidence in the subject.
- Tone of voice: he was confident to apply his knowledge when correcting errors, but only when errors were highlighted in a calming, light-hearted manner by a familiar adult, e.g., reading the misapplication of a grapheme in a funny voice so that they could spot the error and 'own it'.
- Personalised grapheme-phoneme correspondence table taped on the desk with a GPC to focus on each week.
- Personalised learning targets, with a focus on one phoneme to apply accurately during writing lessons.

Why is Reading so important?

The impact of being able to read extends beyond simply having a set of skills. The benefits of being able to read, and of being a reader (one who enjoys reading and chooses to do it) are far reaching, such as:

- **Neurological:** reading helps to develop the learner's brain and increases their memory function.
- **Educational:** as well as giving the learner access to text-based learning across all subject areas and in all lessons, reading improves attention spans and leads to better concentration.
- **Psychologically:** reading helps children to grow in self-confidence and independence. Reading offers a greater insight into human nature and decision-making; through the texts they read, learners develop a greater understanding of the world around them, and a better sense of self.
- **Socially:** being a reader increases the learner's social status among their peers as well as their self-image and self-confidence. Reading also develops a better understanding of other cultures and can lead to better community participation.
- **Linguistically:** learners develop richer vocabulary, correct grammar, improved writing, better spelling, and articulate verbal communication.

In their Literature Review, The Impact of Reading for Pleasure and Empowerment, The Reading Agency found that reading for pleasure can result in increased empathy, improved relationships with others, reductions in the symptoms of depression and dementia, and improved wellbeing.¹

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Within the classroom, there should be a range of texts which meet the needs of all learners. These should also be well organised to support learners with browsing and making choices. Teach learners, especially those who find it more challenging and feel less confident, how to navigate book areas/corners and where to find the texts they will be able to and will want to read.

Consider using your most qualified adults to work with the learners with the greatest need. In addition, ensure that they have daily reading with adult support. It is essential that they are reading matched books and/or with an adult as much as, if not more than, their peers. Where learners are having additional intervention to support with phonics, these should be in addition to daily reading, not in place of it.

Make modelled, shared and peer talk core to your reading. Talking through any important background knowledge necessary to understand the text, for example the historical and geographical setting for a story can help learners' comprehension.

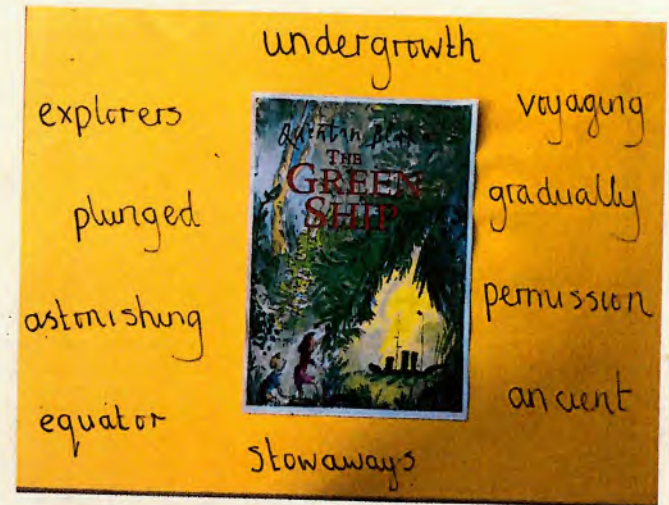
Consider the physical environment and making displayed print accessible to all learners. Ensure that print which forms part of classroom displays are words that learners have been taught to read or are words that will be taught. Print could be displayed through a key word wall which is built up as learners are explicitly taught new words. Topic-related vocabulary that has been taught displayed on a working wall will support learners with both reading and writing these words.

Ensure that print on display is decipherable by using dyslexia friendly fonts or handwriting, and by ensuring writing is appropriately sized. In addition, think about how words can be organised to support learners, for example using different colour backgrounds for different word classes, or organising words in alphabetical order.

Involve and give families regular feedback. Developing and extending independent practice at home is important to improving reading. Families may find it harder at home to support learners with additional needs; sharing information about strategies and approaches used in school will support them.

Teacher reading aloud

Plan for class 'read-alouds' and discussions that give learners with lower reading fluency access to age-appropriate texts. Hearing texts beyond their fluency level will also ensure that these learners are having opportunities to extend their vocabulary. Giving learners the opportunity to listen to a story without the printed text can support their engagement by freeing up their working memory.



Planning Inclusive Lessons

We read for a range of reasons: for fun, for excitement, for relaxation, for information, amongst many others. Enjoyment and purpose should be at the heart of learners' reading provision; we can achieve this through providing a range of reading activities which are fun, exciting, relaxing, informative experiences.

To become skilled readers, learners need to be explicitly taught the phonic code and practise applying it. Learners should develop all aspects of fluency, including the expression needed when reading aloud. In order to comprehend what they read, learners need to know about the content, i.e., the background knowledge, be familiar with any complex vocabulary and also know about the genre, e.g., if it is a mystery story. Learners also should be taught about the way different printed texts can be structured.

Throughout the primary phase, learners should be part of reading lessons which follow the sequence of 'teach, practise and then apply'. Teachers should share the learning objective or reading strategy. They should model this through reading out loud, but also through thinking out loud, explicitly modelling the reader's comprehension processes. Learners should have the opportunity to practise within a scaffolded and supported environment where they are able to receive feedback which supports them with achieving and progressing. Learners should then apply teaching through independent practice. Once learners have mastered the phonics code, allow them to frequently revisit texts that have been taught. Through the re-reading of familiar texts, learners will build sight vocabulary, develop reading fluency, and deepen their understanding.

These reading lessons should form part of a wide and varied reading diet which makes reading enjoyable and purposeful. This could include further activities such as listening to texts being read out loud, sharing texts with peers through paired or 'buddy' reading sessions, and opportunities for reading during other curriculum lessons.

Reading Motivation and Engagement

Learners will be motivated to read if they are successful in reading activities; reading texts which are too challenging is likely to result in reducing motivation. As such, it is essential that learners are accurately assessed and, during daily reading lessons, are reading texts which are closely matched to their phonic knowledge.

As well as reading books closely matched to their phonic knowledge, learners also need to have opportunities to self-select and be guided by a teacher to books that they are interested in or that will broaden their reading experience and expose them to different authors. These books can be read by an adult if they do not match with the learner's phonic knowledge. Ensure texts in the classroom will appeal to the learners' interests; a wish-list of topics, genres and authors could be created with the class.

Plan for activities which reinforce the content of reading and engage the learners: if learners have read a story about leaf-boats, consolidate this with an experience making leaf-boats; if they read an information book about making pasta, consolidate this with the experience of making pasta; if learners read a story about a panda, and want to know more about them, consolidate this by reading with them further information about pandas.

Paired or 'buddy' reading is an enjoyable experience and benefits both the least able (tutee) and the most able (tutor) within the pair. This strategy can be used to support learners with accessing whole class texts, such as during lessons in other areas of the curriculum. It can also be used to build confidence and deepen text understanding when the learner is able to take on the role of tutor within the group; this can be made possible through pairing learners with younger readers.

Research illustrates that it is not only children's cognitive skills (e.g., language, decoding skills) that are important for their reading attainment, children's motivation to read is additionally important... In other words, to become successful readers, children need the 'skill' and the 'will'.²

When struggling readers are not motivated to read, their opportunities to learn decrease significantly.³



Using assessment to identify barriers and target teaching and support

- Regular assessment is essential to ensure that learners are reading at the most appropriate level – a text which is too tricky can result in frustration and unwillingness, whilst one that is too easy means that learners are not developing through learning new words and concepts.
- Assessment should also be used as a tool to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. Running records can be used to assess fluency and decoding ability, and word reading strategies and comprehension can be assessed through verbal discussion around a text or using verbal or written questions during reading. Use assessment information to target teaching and focus support on the needs of the learner.
- If you are using other adults such as support staff or volunteers to extend learners' opportunities to read, ensure that they are made aware of the needs of the learners and are given training and specific strategies or lesson structures to use during interventions.



Case Study

At the end-of-year assessment point a Year 3 learner was assessed in reading at working significantly below age-related expectations. The learner appeared to be 'reading' by memorising the words using the repetitive patterns in the books she was accessing. The pupil was also very reluctant to participate in any reading-related activities. She had previously received an intensive daily 1:1 reading intervention where some progress had been made but had not resulted in her internalising key reading skills to support her progression towards fluency.

The reading lead worked with the class teacher to ensure provision was carefully informed by an assess-plan-do-review cycle. This involved a phonics assessment and a benchmarking reading assessment. The learner was assessed as reading at blue book band level (end of autumn Year 1 level) with relatively good sight vocabulary and comprehension, but with poor decoding skills. The phonics assessment identified she required additional teaching in phonics at phase 3 level (Letters and Sounds).

During the following year her teacher implemented several strategies:

- *Access to a range of appropriate books matched to her level.*
- *Phonics intervention at her phonics level three times a week.*
- *Access to the teaching part of whole class reading lessons at her year group level so that the learner could listen to a skilled reader modelling and continue to develop her listening comprehension and extend her vocabulary.*
- *During the independent part of the whole-class lesson, access to texts at her instructional level, regularly reading 1:1 with an adult.*

In addition, her teacher created a box of 'special books' for her. These were books at her reading level, including many she had previously read. She accessed these during the independent reading part of whole-class lessons and during 'reading for pleasure' time. Through reading at her level and through revisiting texts, she was able to improve her fluency and experience reading success. She also showed greater enthusiasm when participating in reading activities.

By the spring term in Year 4, she had progressed to reading at purple book band level (Year 2 autumn term level). Whilst she was still reading below age-related expectations, she had made significant progress in two terms.

When supporting learners in the early stages of reading, whatever their year group, it is essential to use strategies that are suitable to the learner's developmental stage to support them to make progress. Forensic assessment to understand the barriers to learning being experienced by a learner is the starting point of any provision. Working alongside colleagues with greater experience of strategies used to support early readers was empowering in the confident implementation of appropriate provision.

Using assessment to identify barriers and target teaching and support

- Regular assessment is essential to ensure that learners are reading at the most appropriate level – a text which is too tricky can result in frustration and unwillingness, whilst one that is too easy means that learners are not developing through learning new words and concepts.
- Assessment should also be used as a tool to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. Running records can be used to assess fluency and decoding ability, and word reading strategies and comprehension can be assessed through verbal discussion around a text or using verbal or written questions during reading. Use assessment information to target teaching and focus support on the needs of the learner.
- If you are using other adults such as support staff or volunteers to extend learners' opportunities to read, ensure that they are made aware of the needs of the learners and are given training and specific strategies or lesson structures to use during interventions.



Case Study

At the end-of-year assessment point a Year 3 learner was assessed in reading at working significantly below age-related expectations. The learner appeared to be 'reading' by memorising the words using the repetitive patterns in the books she was accessing. The pupil was also very reluctant to participate in any reading-related activities. She had previously received an intensive daily 1:1 reading intervention where some progress had been made but had not resulted in her internalising key reading skills to support her progression towards fluency.

The reading lead worked with the class teacher to ensure provision was carefully informed by an assess-plan-do-review cycle. This involved a phonics assessment and a benchmarking reading assessment. The learner was assessed as reading at blue book band level (end of autumn Year 1 level) with relatively good sight vocabulary and comprehension, but with poor decoding skills. The phonics assessment identified she required additional teaching in phonics at phase 3 level (Letters and Sounds).

During the following year her teacher implemented several strategies:

- *Access to a range of appropriate books matched to her level.*
- *Phonics intervention at her phonics level three times a week.*
- *Access to the teaching part of whole class reading lessons at her year group level so that the learner could listen to a skilled reader modelling and continue to develop her listening comprehension and extend her vocabulary.*
- *During the independent part of the whole-class lesson, access to texts at her instructional level, regularly reading 1:1 with an adult.*

In addition, her teacher created a box of 'special books' for her. These were books at her reading level, including many she had previously read. She accessed these during the independent reading part of whole-class lessons and during 'reading for pleasure' time. Through reading at her level and through revisiting texts, she was able to improve her fluency and experience reading success. She also showed greater enthusiasm when participating in reading activities.

By the spring term in Year 4, she had progressed to reading at purple book band level (Year 2 autumn term level). Whilst she was still reading below age-related expectations, she had made significant progress in two terms.

When supporting learners in the early stages of reading, whatever their year group, it is essential to use strategies that are suitable to the learner's developmental stage to support them to make progress. Forensic assessment to understand the barriers to learning being experienced by a learner is the starting point of any provision. Working alongside colleagues with greater experience of strategies used to support early readers was empowering in the confident implementation of appropriate provision.

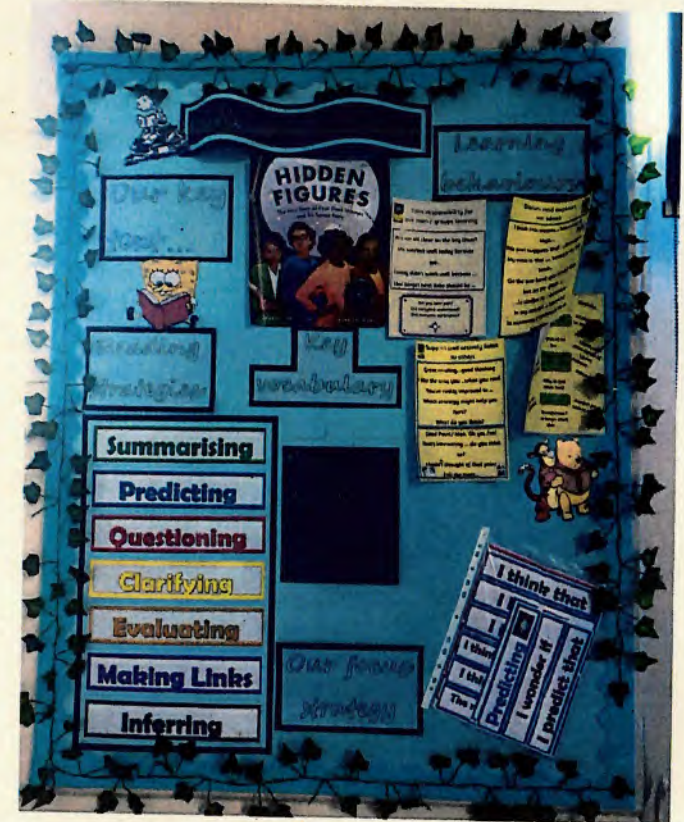
Primary Reading

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Wherever possible and practical, allow the learner choice in the reading material, e.g., choosing a text from a selection of texts.
- Use props or guides to support learners to focus on following the print in the text in front of them. This could be a lolly stick, cardboard pointing finger or a reading ruler.
- For younger learners, using story sacks or props representing characters or objects in the story can support with maintaining attention, as well as deepening understanding.
- Sharing the reading between the learner and the adult supporting, e.g., taking turns on alternate pages, will help if the learner has difficulties with reading stamina as well as maintaining focus.
- Timetable reading sessions so they are short and frequent; some learners may benefit from multiple shorter sessions each day.
- Where reading sessions are required to be longer, plan for regular movement breaks. This could be a palm press at the end of each page, a hand massage at the end of each double page, ten chair presses at the end of each chapter, etc.

How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- In advance of the lesson, show learners the book they will be reading; draw them in through reading the blurb, making real life connections or connections with texts they have already read.
- Always begin the lesson with a 'safe' activity – this could be listening to the teacher modelling reading, talking about a book together, or re-reading a familiar text that the learner feels confident with and can be successful with.
- Have a clear teach-practise-apply model to reading lessons and ensure that lessons always follow this structure; the learner will feel more confident if there is a familiar routine to lessons.
- With a fiction text, always finish the book, either within the lesson, or across a sequence of lessons. If the lesson is using an extract and the learners are engaged, make time to read the text outside of the lesson; it is frustrating for readers to not be able to complete a book, and find out what happens in the end. The reading for enjoyment is also lost if the text is not read completely.



Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who are reading below age-related expectations?

- Securing the basics of pen grip, letter formation and spelling allow learners to be able to focus on composing a piece of writing.
- For learners not secure with phonics, this should be a priority. Learners should have plenty of practice writing using the phoneme-grapheme correspondences they know and using the letter formation they have been taught. This can be most easily provided through dictation activities.
- Use picture and word banks of key vocabulary. When learners are doing extended writing, make sure that they have word banks of key topic words with pictures to match. This will support them to find and use adventurous and topic-related language. Ideally, the words for these word banks will be the ones you have generated together in skills lessons and added to your working wall, so they will be the ones learners have already begun to use and explore.
- Use the school marking code or symbols to remind learners of key skills, e.g., if they need to remember spaces between words, you could draw a little hand symbol at the top of their page to remind them or give them a simple reminder sheet of what makes a good sentence.
- Use story maps with actions. Story maps are an excellent way to develop early reading skills and support learners with oral rehearsal. If you draw your story map from top to bottom, left to write, learners can point at each symbol as they retell it. Use the same symbols and gestures to match each time, e.g., → for next, so that learners develop their independence and confidence retelling stories and using story language

Case Study

A learner in Year 6 with dyslexia, a very imaginative and enthusiastic writer, whose writing could not be read without mediation and who could not always read it back herself because she missed words, blended them together and made multiple letter substitutions, struggling to hear and write the dominant sounds in words.

The learner was encouraged to:

- *Identify key words that she would need to spell and then look them up in her spelling dictionary, when sharing ideas with a peer or adult.*
- *Use the working wall (with word and picture banks) to identify key topic words or phrases.*
- *Box up her ideas to help organise her thoughts into a clear beginning, middle and end, when beginning to write.*
- *Look at the first section of her writing and orally rehearse the first sentence, counting the words on her fingers.*
- *Write one word at a time. Midway through and at the end of the sentence, pausing and reading back from the beginning of the sentence, pointing at each word.*

To begin with, the adult would model these strategies, but independence increased over time.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Identify new, interesting or useful words in a text or topic together (e.g., in the plenary of the first lesson looking at a new text) and add them to the working wall together. Refer to these words and model using them in your teaching and encourage learners to use the working wall in their independent writing.
- Rehearse new words. Practise saying them together in a high voice, a low voice, a fast voice, and a slow voice. Come up with an action together (or use a Makaton action), then say the word and show the action to reinforce.
- New vocabulary should be planned for and taught in context. Model using new words in a sentence and give learners time to practise them in context. For example, give them time to answer a question and share their answer.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Pre-teach. For example, if you are starting a new text on a Monday and know a learner will need more time to process it, find time for them to read it (ideally with a peer or an adult) on the Friday before. This allows them to explore it in their own time, ask any questions they may have and then be the expert when the class reads it on Monday.
- Create links in learning in different areas. For example, if you are learning about the Antarctic in geography, read related texts, learn about a penguin's life cycle in science, write an explanation text about it in literacy, represent its life cycle through dance in PE. Also, make links to what learners have previously learnt – did they learn about the life cycle of a frog the previous year? This helps to embed learning.
- Make learning multi-sensory, e.g., if you are learning a new concept or piece of vocabulary, read it, draw it, write it, act it out.

Standard vs. Non-Standard English

By exploring a range of characters from different contexts, learners are given the opportunity to experiment with language and vary the 'quality and variety of language' that they are exposed to. For example, consider how the protagonist of Bertie Doherty's *Street Child*, Jim Jarvis, speaks in contrast to other characters within the text or perhaps to those in other texts the learners may have explored.

To ask learners who struggle with literacy what vocabulary is considered formal or informal, standard or non-standard can be very difficult, as some will require a great deal of support to identify meaning in the first instance, let alone the specific context within which certain words should be used. But, through an opportunity to play with language in a 'safe' and 'supportive' low-stakes environment, learners can be guided towards a consideration of how these can be appropriately applied to given situations and thus how to modify their own speech to meet the needs of varying contexts and for different audiences/purposes.

How can drama benefit learners who struggle to participate in social situations?

Drama is a natural part of life. Many learners engage in fictional/make-believe scenarios during play even before formalised schooling. This process provides learners with a way to explore their own sense of self in relation to others. Even when assuming a role different to themselves, learners consider morality, looking at what is wrong and what is right, as well as how to solve the 'problem' within their play. It is therefore important to consider how drama in school can be used to support learners in exploring difficult issues, express their emotions and develop lifelong skills such as self-reflection or empathy, in a structured and supportive environment.

Emotional Intelligence

Social stories and comic strip conversations are common tools utilised to support learners with SEND. Explorative strategies, such as the conscience corridor or forum theatre, can also be valuable methods for exploring situations in response to the social and emotional needs of learners who struggle to engage in social situations. Establishing a fictional scenario where learners have to consider how a character might be feeling and having them vocalise this in the conscience corridor can be a powerful tool for building empathy and/or understanding of how people behave or respond in a social situation, particularly as each child will find different ways to verbalise these emotions. Hearing these responses can have a positive impact on learners, as they may be able to associate these with their own experiences, or in some instances, the way it is phrased by a peer may resonate with them more than a conversation with an adult.

Alternatively, having learners act out the scenario in a forum theatre style, allowing them to pause the action, make adaptations to how characters react within the situation and see the impact these changes have, is an engaging way for teachers to address the concept of choice and consequence. As the scenario develops, the learners can see cause and effect and again make links with their own behaviours outside of the drama bubble.

Following up either of these models with a discussion allows the learners to support their choices with reasoning, whilst carefully considered questioning from the teacher will help them to see how this learning might be applied to their own lives. As well as developing social/emotional skills, activities such as these support the development of key skills such as listening, collaboration and mutual respect.

Confidence Building

The charity Scope identifies that learners with SEND can struggle to stay motivated in school for a variety of reasons, including frustration at their own progress or a lack of confidence and self-esteem. The study of drama can greatly support learners to combat these feelings and have positive experiences across their primary education. The development of skills such as diaphragmic breathing, vocal projection and enunciation supports learners in communicating clearly, but for some learners with SEND, this can lead to a feeling of self-assuredness as their opinions are heard, understood, and counted. In addition, the study of drama supports learners to consider their physicality and the way they hold themselves. Through a deeper understanding of this, e.g., posture and gait, learners can be encouraged to stand or sit taller which studies have shown can have a subliminal impact on a person's confidence.

Strategies provided in the secondary drama guidance can also be applied in the primary classroom to ensure learning is scaffolded to promote effective learning for all.