

Teaching Tips

Strategies to Support Children with Additional Learning Needs in the Secondary School

Speaking Listening and Understanding

- Outline the structure of the session, then recap by going over key points using multi-sensory methods – show pictures rather than text, or run a short video.
- Any text or diagrams written on the board or on overhead projections or given in Power Point presentations should be read aloud.
- New or unusual vocabulary should be spelled out.
- Gain the pupil's attention before giving directions and say things more than once. Avoid calling instructions across the class or give them when the pupil is doing something else too.
- Ask for instructions to be repeated to ensure the pupil has understood. This is also a good indicator of how much information can be retained at once by the pupil.
- Use the child's name in a question or in the material being covered.
- Repeat and rephrase questions posed by others, and if appropriate, contextualise.
- Speak slower and in smaller phrases.
- Keep instructions short and precise, and make sure the first one's carried out before you move to the next.
- Permit the use of recording devices but do not draw attention to their use.
- Long sessions can be too much for pupils whose concentration is poor. Break the lesson up with an activity.
- Give the pupil more time to frame and answer questions.
- Establish a signal that indicates that someone is going to have to answer a question about what is being said.
- Frame questions as alternatives ("Do you think x or y?"), rather than as open questions ("What do you think?").
- Allow the pupil opportunities to get up and move if concentration is difficult.
- Allow the use of 'fiddle' objects as these can often aid concentration.

Reading

- Use a reading window or clear perspex ruler to aid reading.
- Avoid asking the pupil to read aloud without preparation.
- Do not expect the pupil to read an article at speed in order to discuss it.
- When providing handouts avoid using fonts, with their 'ticks' and 'tails' at the end. Sans-serif fonts are generally preferred (Verdana, Trebuchet MS, Arial, Tahoma). Use a minimum font size of 12. Avoid underlining or using block capital letters. Use bold or different colours for emphasis. Use simple sentence structures and steer clear of cub-clauses. Use numbers, headings, bullet points and boxes to break up text.
- If using an interactive white board, use off-white or cream backgrounds and a sans serif font such as arial or comic sans.



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- Ensure that handouts are not too cluttered, Leave as much blank space as possible between words, lines and paragraphs. The use of pastel coloured paper can also aid reading for handouts, worksheets (try blue and green). Highlight, or embolden key words and phrases so that the pupil can find these easily when re-reading text.
- Provide pupil with copy of reading material with main ideas underlined or highlighted.
- On handouts, consider using 1.5 or double line spacing.
- If using a laptop or computer, consider setting computer icons to larger size and use a screen reader.
- Support and develop study skills such as skimming, scanning, selecting key words.
- Teach unfamiliar subject words.
- Use a screen reading facility if using a computer.

Writing and Recording

- Provide alternative means of recording such as:
 - Underline/ring correct answers
 - Use oracy techniques such as, hot seats, listening triangles, mini presentations
 - True/false answers
 - Story boards
 - Bullet points
 - Idea mapping/ spider/spidergrams
 - Design a poster/advert or have a graffiti wall (on paper)
 - Create photo essays.
- Consider the use of technology to support writing.
- Allow for shorter assignments (quality vs. quantity).
- Use a story/ideas generator cube if the pupil needs help to come up with ideas for an extended piece of work.
- Divide writing paper into sections to indicate amount or writing required.
- Keep copying to a minimum.
- Give all pupils a list of subject specific words to be stuck into their exercise books for reference.
- Have lists of subject specific words on display in teaching rooms.
- Pace any dictation appropriately, include repetition and ensure vocabulary is understood.
- If the pupil makes frequent crossings out in work book try using erasable pens.
- Consider 'whose eyes is the writing for' i.e. the purpose of the task, if it just the pupil and he/she can read it does it matter?
- Some pupils lack the fine motor control or cursive script or have established poor handwriting patterns. Allow them to use printed script as this may be more productive.
- Allow pupil to write on every other line rather than every line.
- Offer information to be copied at desk top level rather than from the board to reduce eye movements and visual recall time.
- Provide a writing passport for the pupil to use if working with new or supply teachers. The passport can be shown to the teacher which indicates any difficulties with recording and how best this can be accommodated in that lesson.



- Be aware of commercially available pens which offer integral grips rather than 'special grips' which pupils may feel, makes them look different.
- Some pupils benefit from writing on a sloped surface. A lever arch file turned on its side is a useful for this if they feel conscientious about using a more specialised writing slope.

Using Tools and Apparatus

- If practical work is involved in a session, ensure the pupil can handle the equipment safely.
- To minimize pupil anxiety, provide an individual orientation to the laboratory and equipment and give extra practice with tasks and equipment.
- Demonstrate procedures several times.
- Use accessibility tools on Microsoft Word if using ICT e.g. slow down the speed of the cursor.



- Use larger mouse or keyboard when using the computer.
- Use calculators with larger keys.
- Use rulers which have an integral grip (commercially available from stationers).
- Check sitting balance if needing to sit on high stools. For some pupil's it may be easier to stand.
- Ensure adequate space if using tools to accommodate for any un-coordinated movements.
- Carry out a risk assessment.
- Use G clamps or non-slip mats to help secure tools

and apparatus.

- Use commercially available stencils for relevant subjects.
- If needing to re-demonstrate a task in a practical subject, work parallel to the pupil.
- Consider the suitability of the media being used in subjects such as technology or art.
- Draw thicker lines/darker lines if needing to aid accuracy if cutting out.

Working in Groups or Pairs

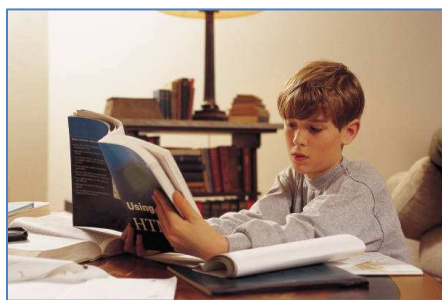
- When dividing pupils into groups for task, project work or presentations, check that the pupil is placed within a supportive group.
- When working in small groups/pairs employ a designated writer to free pupil with handwriting issues to contribute verbally.
- Work in small groups for practical tasks.
- Allocate roles when working in groups which plays to the pupil's strengths.

Working Independently

- Give the big picture first as it may be hard for some pupils to apply the steps needed for the task. It may be easier for them to know what the whole picture will look like. Using a mind mapping tools can therefore be helpful.
- Use a task checklist which can be ticked off as components are completed.
- Use flow charts to illustrate task procedure.
- Assist the pupil to keep materials in a specific place in order aid organisation.
- Use an agreed reminder cue e.g. a hand signal to bring the pupil back on task rather than calling out the name.
- Use self evaluation approach to set goals for task completion.
- If an interactive white board is available use a visible timekeeper whilst the class is working.
- Regular questions like, “What are you going to do next?” help with planning and organising movement responses and prompting “ First I will.... and then I am going to....” type answers.
- If the pupil struggles with concentration, consider the benefits of using earphones/plugs, and/or a study carrel, quiet place, or preferential seating.
- Prepare the pupil for transitions. Give advance warning of when a transition is going to take place (now we are completing the worksheet, next we will ...) and the expectation for the transition (and you will need...)
- Offer desk with additional surface space to aid organisation.
- Use ‘Post It Notes™ to enable the pupil to write his ideas for the task and then encourage him/her to organise them in order. The Post Its can then be removed as the elements are complete.
- Set up small information cards detailing key words, spellings, formulas etc which the pupil can refer to for relevant subjects.
- Teach study skills early.
- Devise mnemonics to aid sequences/organisation of tasks.

Homework

- Set homework at the beginning of the lesson rather than at the end.
- Encourage the pupil to write down in front of the homework book telephone numbers of a of friends/learning buddy. Then, if there is any doubt over homework, they can ring up and check, rather than worry or spend time doing the wrong work.
- Discuss strategies with the parents, such as breaking homework into blocks and having some ‘letting off steam’ time in between.
- Only set homework that is of real benefit.



PE/Games



- Discuss with parents/carers alternative/adaption to clothing to help any difficulties with changing for PE.
- Alter or change the resource/equipment being used.
- Eliminate a stage of the activity.
- Change the individuals method of doing the activity – groups to pairs.
- Change the teaching method.
- Change the environment e.g. the set up of the room, space being used.
- Change the speed of the activity.
- When using continuous activities be mindful that individual differences can become more noticeable.
- Check for exercise tolerance. Use alternate active and passive involvement.
- Be mindful of the implications of using competition in activities.
- Be aware of pupil groupings.
- Use 'learning gardens' where pupils can demonstrate skills in small groups rather than expose to a whole class.
- Use peer teaching/coaching to support skill acquisition/mastery.
- Consider alternative PE options.

Social and Personal Well-being

- Teach the pupil where to go for help if he/she is finding things difficult.
- Encourage clear labelling of all the pupil's property, and weekly checks in school Lost Property.
- Color code subjects and link to the timetable.
- Use visual icons/images on the timetable instead of words.
- Allow the pupil to store books and belongings in a designated place. Equipment/books can be collected for relevant lessons.
- Facilitate lunch-time/break-time clubs for the pupil to use if these times prove difficult from a social perspective.
- Facilitate study buddy's or peer learning mentors/coaches.

Teaching Style and Learning Environment

- Review the learning outcomes to ensure that they are as inclusive as possible.
- Check your classroom layout: For example:
 - Is there space to manoeuvre around the room?
 - Are all visual aids positioned where they can be viewed in comfort?
 - Is mains power available for specialist equipment?
 - Is the furniture where possible for maximum effect?
- Leave the writing on the whiteboard long enough to ensure the child doesn't rush, or that the work is not erased from the board before the child has finished copying.

- Use structural indicators in lessons to assist with the sequence and flow e.g. use concepts such as 'firstly' and 'lastly' to conclude. Use timetables, flow charts, mind-maps and handouts will all support poor memory and organisation skills.
- Write legibly, use large script and avoid cluttering the board with non-current / non-relevant information.
- Use props to make narrative situations more vivid and clear.
- Teach new skills using a variety of methods and materials and in a wide range of contexts.
- Investigate any inappropriate behaviour, by reflecting on why the pupil is acting so. For example:
 - Is the task too hard or too easy?
 - Is the task too long?
 - Is the work suitably differentiated?
 - Does the pupil understand what is expected?
- Consider your assessment methods. Allow for alternative approaches for completing assignments such as oral presentation, taped report, visual presentation, graphs, maps, pictures, etc. with reduced written requirements).
- Share teaching strategies with colleagues across the curriculum areas.
- Reflect on teaching style and approaches.



Effective Use of In-Class Support Staff

Before the lesson

- Give staff the scheme of work in advance
- Tell staff what will happen in the lesson in advance
- Write learning objective on the board so they can encourage pupils in the right direction even if you haven't had time to talk about it
- Discuss problems with them – they might have noticed a pattern or been in the previous lesson
- Use their ideas for differentiation
- Pass on resource material that will be used in advance. The support staff can then adapt it to fit individual need if necessary.

During the lesson, support staff could be asked to:

- Be a partner to a child.
- Ensure resources that are needed for the lesson are available in order to support targeted children.
- Support children to aid their understanding/answering of oral questions.
- Provide amanuensis – e.g. reader.
- Guide/support children through the reading/explanation of a text/worksheet.
- Take a proactive role and use initiative within the classroom.
- Implement action written in IEP's and support staff through discussion of children's individual needs with regard to their IEP's.
- Further adapt/differentiate/extend/modify specific tasks/activities for SEN children in order for them to achieve success and meet their needs.
- Support an individual or group of statemented/SEN registered children to achieve the task/objective set, but being mindful not to entirely 'do' for the children.

- Team-teach alongside the teacher.
- Use practical activities with small groups of children with a particular need outside of the classroom.
- Aid children with organisational problems to become more organised and begin the task more quickly.
- Promote independent working.

Include support staff in the lesson – ensure they feel part of the class. Greet them and ask their opinion in front of the pupils to show that you respect them and therefore so should the class.

If there is time, ask the support staff to feed back on how the lesson went and how their target pupil/s got on.

Useful Web Site Resource

www.spldtransitions.co.uk

Useful Book Resource

Occupational Therapy Approaches for Secondary Special needs: practical classroom strategies by Jill Jenkinson, Tessa Hyde and Saffia Ahmad (Wiley Publishing)