Ten strategies that support learning for all with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) indicate a range of barriers to learning that can include those related to:
1. Communication and interaction;
2. Cognition and learning;
3. Social, mental and emotional health;
4. Sensory and/or physical.
However, meeting the individual and personal needs of each pupil, although an expectation, can be an impossible ask for a classroom teacher. This information identifies the action that schools can deliver to ensure that all staff are enabled to make their teaching accessible to the great majority of pupils.

Strategic
1) Being aware of all issues that could impact on learning
There comes a point where we need to stop pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in. Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
Do schools have a process that **asks questions of families** that aim to identify information that might have an impact on learning. This could include:
- Was the child born prematurely?
- Has the child ever had a significant illness or injury?
- Has there ever been any involvement between the family/child and any other agency e.g. health (Speech and Language therapist, Occupational therapist etc) or social care?
- Does the child have a medical condition or disability that might impact on learning?
- Has the child had a recent eye test?
- Is there a history of hearing difficulties that might include glue ear when younger?
- Does the home environment suggest any Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that school might need to be aware of?
- What is the school history of absence or punctuality?
- What information is collated on parental perceptions of their child's learning strengths and areas for concern?

2) Ensuring that school practices and policies are inclusive
Our job is to teach the children we have. Not the ones we would like to have. Not the ones we used to have. Those we have right now. All of them. Dr Kevin Maxwell
- **Practices:** Do school practices ensure that pupils who may be hungry, thirsty, cold, tired, stressed, fearful, etc have their needs met? If schools do not respond to these needs, the following suggestions are often irrelevant.
- **Policies:** How effective are school policies in responding to pupils' **social, emotional and medical** needs? Is there a **hierarchy of pastoral support** within the school that can offer guidance to both families and pupils regarding meeting pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs? Is the **behaviour policy** effective in supporting inclusion i.e. Is it **relationship-led** and does it see **behaviour as a symptom** of the problem, not the problem? What "**reasonable adjustments**" are made? How effectively does the **safeguarding policy** encourage **disclosure**? Are pupils' **medical needs supported** in a way that is acceptable to them and promotes inclusion, discretion and privacy?

- **Curriculum:** Does the school monitor how the curriculum areas contribute to better outcomes for pupils with SEND? e.g. **PE** (dyspraxia) linked to motor control? Are additional **school opportunities** e.g. before and after school events, visits etc, equally **accessible** to all pupils or are there unaddressed barriers for those with SEND? Does **the curriculum move the pupil towards goals that they value.** What evidence is there that **communication** between staff supports pupils with SEND needs? e.g. **Pupil Profile** that lists over time strategies that have been successful or not?
- **External support:** Is the school making sufficient use of **shared, community** and **national charities** to support pupils with SEND?
- **Resources:** Is there a **sufficiency** of resources to support learning i.e. adapted seating arrangements, IT support, accessible and inclusive out of classroom areas? Is the impact of **teaching assistants** measured on increasing pupil learning and independence?

3) Valuing parent and pupil voice
If kids come to us from strong healthy functioning families, it makes our job easier. If they don't, it makes our job more important. Barbara Colorose.
- Is **parent and pupil voice** a valued and **collaborative** part of assessing and deciding provision for pupils with SEND? Do Pupil Profiles/Passports **share the strategies the parents/pupil feels need providing to ensure success?**
- Is information collected at **transition** and other key points on learning, social and medical needs?
- Does **feedback from stakeholders** measurably influence **school policy and practice**?
- Are there **home-school arrangements** that **enhance the ability of families** to support the success of their pupil with SEND?
- Does the **school website** provide links to **external agencies, charities** and **support organisations** that can offer practical support for struggling families?
- Does the school have a welcoming and **non-judgemental ethos** that encourages parent disclosure of factors that may impact on pupils' inclusion e.g. parental separation, imprisonment, ill-health or changes in economic situation?

In the classroom
4) Getting relationships right
Kids with a trauma history don't need punishment, and quite frankly, they don't need any stickers. Dr Ross Greene
- Never taking negative behaviours personally.
- Understanding that winning requires de-escalation – **connect, regulate, correct**
- Ignore secondary behaviours - be content with the second to last word.
- Self-regulation will always need to be provided for vulnerable pupils.
- Making sure that the black spot is not all you see. Start each day anew.
- Private is better than public.

5) Making sure all pupils feel safe
There is no more effective neurobiological intervention than a safe relationship. The relationship works to bring the brain back into regulation. Bruce Perry
- Are all classrooms viewed by pupils as providing **places of safety where risks can be taken** in learning? Is this demonstrated for instance through errors in thinking being viewed as a valuable part of the learning process?

- Are deficits in pupils' **emotional and social skills** responded to in the same way as difficulties in learning skills, i.e. requiring targeted teaching to enable development?
- Are **restorative practices** utilised to encourage pupils to take responsibility for changing their behaviours?
- Is the schools' **anti-bullying policy effective** in stopping pupils intimidatory behaviour towards others, especially for those with SEND? Is it based on the empowering of Bystanders?

6) Being on top of listening and speaking
A very little key will open a very heavy door. Charles Dickens
28.2% of pupils with an EHCP have **Autistic Spectrum Disorder** as a primary need, followed by **Speech, Language and Communication Needs** at 14.6%.
24% of pupils on SEN support have **Moderate Learning Difficulty** as a primary need followed by **Speech, Language and Communication Needs** at 22.8%
SEN in England – Jan 2018 (July 2018) DfE https://preview.tinyurl.com/yajgkby6
- Check seating arrangements enhance pupils' listening and speaking opportunities. Can pupils clearly see the teacher and can the teacher can see them to assess understanding and engagement? Are pupils paired with a good SLCN role model?
- Is there reflection upon **adult talk**? Is it **succinct, clear and repetitive** with all **abstract concepts demonstrated through concrete resources** and modelling? Is **new vocabulary** explicitly linked to prior knowledge? Is **questioning** used to **identify individual gaps in learning** and address these? Are correct responses **modelled** back to pupils rather than corrected? Are **inferred, non-literal and ambiguous** phrasing avoided?
- Do staff allow **sufficient waiting time** to encourage communication?
- Are **verbal instructions provided sequentially** and supported by **visual prompts?**
- **Are tasks** broken down into **small achievable steps**?

7) Teaching reading
Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. Kofi Anan
Teaching Standards: "…*demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy…whatever the teacher's specialist subject.*"
**Pre-reading activities**: These include:
- **Introducing new vocabulary in a structured way** including repetition through quizzes, games etc and by linking new knowledge to something pupils already know.
- **Modelling and sharing skimming and scanning techniques**. Strategies might include:
  o Supporting pupils to **generate their own questions** and to answer them from the text.
  o Summarising, using techniques such as "**Minute Comprehension**" where pupils read text for one minute and then record for **30 seconds** a headline or key idea.   This can support recall and help make connections between ideas later.
  o Increase pupils verbally **retelling** the text content supported by; notetaking of key points/words e.g. linear or concept mapping, stick-it notes on shared feedback or illustration/graphic explanation.
During reading.
Ensure all staff are aware of the **readability statistics** relating to text difficulty and use these to provide text matched to pupils' readability level. (Further information: Article on readability on snip website **www.snip-newsletter.co.uk**)

Readability
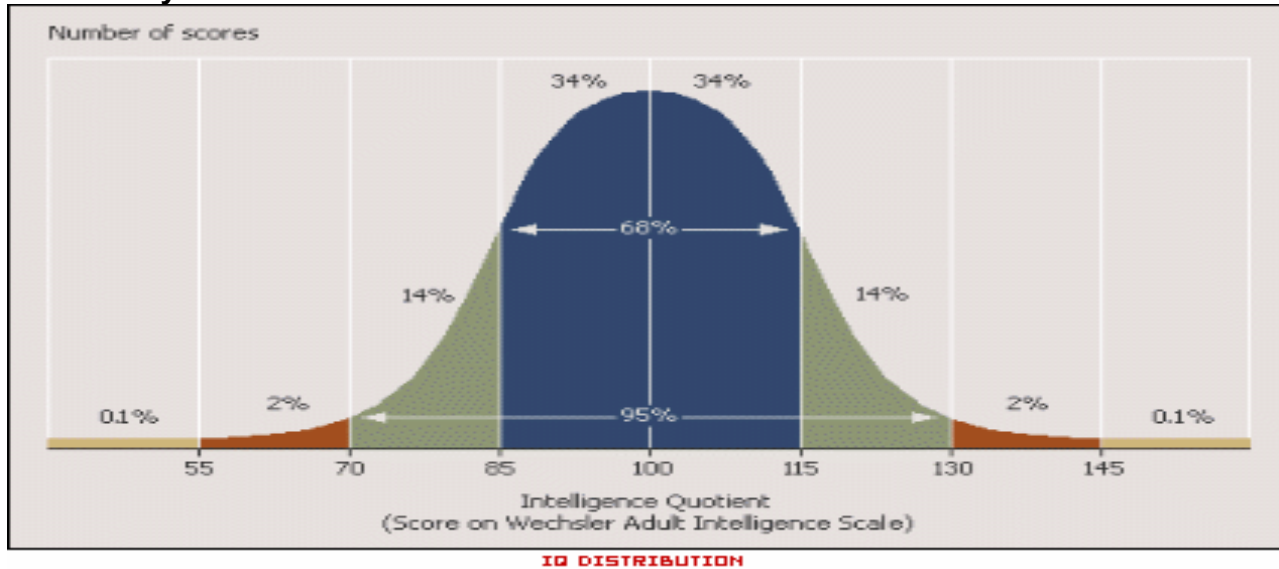
Accessible text

Ensure all staff are confident in selecting lesson materials that are accessible to as wide a range of pupil ability as possible. The MS **Flesch Kincaid Readability Statistics** facility is provided on all computers that have MS Word but needs to be enabled. To do this:

- Open MS Word, Click on File, Click on Options, Click on Proofing,
- Under the column "*When correcting spelling and grammar in Word*", tick the box that says "*Show readability statistics.*"
- Tick OK.

From this point on, whenever a document is reviewed for spelling and grammar, the readability statistics will be displayed at the end. The two of main interest are **Reading Ease** where schools should aim for **a score of 60 or more** and **Flesch Kincaid Grade Level** (FKGL). These are American grade (class) levels, which are a year below UK equivalents i.e. Grade 4 = Y5. This means that if the statistics state that the text has a FKGL of 7.2, it would be accessible to the majority of pupils in Y8.

(Sample texts on **www.snip-newsletter.co.uk**) **The boy who cried wolf**

There was a boy who did not like to get out of his bed and go to school. His Mum and Dad made him go. The boy said that a mad wolf was going to kill the sheep. All the people ran up the hill to kill the wolf. When they got there, they saw it was a trick and were very cross. The next day the boy did see a wolf but no one came to help when he told them. The sheep ran away over the hill and the boy had to run all day to find them.   FKGL level 2.2

NB Pupils indicate reading abilities that fall within an expected range. Johnson K (2000) **https://preview.tinyurl.com/yb7glf4n** suggests that a useful rule of thumb is to remember the **two thirds rule**. This states that in an unstreamed class of 12 year olds, **the *average* reading range will begin with those with a reading age of 8 yrs** (two thirds of 12) with some pupils with reading abilities below this level. Using Johnson's general rule allows staff to provide text material that is at independent level for the majority of the class. However, it may be that for most curriculum **tasks aiming for a readability level two years below the average of the class** will provide text at **instructional level** i.e. at least half of the class can access the text independently, a proportion will require some limited support and there will be a very small number who will need IT or adult support or further differentiation to decode and understand the information.

- **Use text ladders**. Begin with shorter, easier texts (**Independent level 100-95%** accuracy; or **Instructional level: 95-90% accuracy**) in the topic and gradually increase complexity to more difficult texts on the same topic. This supports familiarity with vocabulary and pupils' increasing confidence in their ability to decode and understand.
- **Repeated re-reading** of the same piece of text takes the **pressure away from decoding**. The words become familiar and **focus can be placed on fluency and understanding**. Research indicates **four re-readings** are enough for most pupils.

Post-reading activities to **establish and revisit vocabulary** and therefore improve fluency and comprehension could include:

- The following day/week, pupils in small **groups discuss and then record one key point** from the text that is shared via a stick-it, having a **multiple-choice quiz** to begin the next lesson or using **home-learning** activity to revisit vocabulary and assess understanding.

8) Apply evidence-based research to ensure good retention of taught information e.g. Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction

Children should experience success and failure not as reward and punishment, but as information. Jerome Brunner

1. **Daily review** of previous learning.
2. **New materials introduced in small steps** to reduce load on working memory.
3. **Ask many questions** to encourage rehearsal and over learning.
4. **Provide modelling** (where staff talk through the process) and **worked examples**.
5. Provide **regular guided practice opportunities** to ensure learning is transferred to long term memory.
6. Check **pupils' understanding** to limit the development of misconceptions
7. Ensure pupils **attain high success** rate (At least 80%).
8. Provide **scaffolding for complex tasks** – breaking tasks down into smaller chunks, teacher thinking aloud, cue cards, etc
9. Have systems that **prompt independent practice** to revisit taught information.
10. Undertake a **weekly and monthly review**.

9) Make the learning environment part of the solution and not part of the problem

Every brick in the middle of a strong wall has six other bricks around it, supporting it, holding it up. Without it the wall is weak and collapses. All Things Pastoral Oct 2018

- Whole school environment: Evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of **support available to all members of staff** to enable the success of every pupil.
- Ask pupils to identify on a **school map,** areas where **learning and inclusion** is difficult and take action to change this.
- Consider auditing the classroom environment against a communication friendly checklist **https://preview.tinyurl.com/ybg9uja2** or a sensory audit for schools and classrooms **https://preview.tinyurl.com/jalj36l**
- Consider how the classroom environment contributes to improved learning by all pupils. Effective learning walls? Easy access to additional resources and apparatus? Never make a fuss about a pupil not having the right resources. Provide them via a swap box – they take a pen and replace it with something that has value for them.

Cause I ain't got a pencil
By Joshua T. Dickerson
I woke myself up
Because we ain't got an alarm clock
Dug in the dirty clothes basket,
Cause ain't nobody washed my uniform
Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,
Cause the lights ain't on
Even got my baby sister ready
Cause my mama wasn't home.
Got us both to school on time,
To eat us a good breakfast.
Then when I got to class the teacher fussed
Cause I ain't got a pencil.

10)Support recording

Children have three key needs for development – to feel competent, autonomous and have a sense of belonging. If we can support these three needs in our education system, we don't need to have an add on programme or strategy or a prize. Dr Street.

- Provide **the steps needed to complete a task** in visual as well as auditory formats.
- Give **support with planning structures** e.g. word lists, proformas that identify sequence to recording work.
- Provide organisational tools to **reduce the multi-tasking** required when completing written work and provide choice in recording learning i.e. lists, mind-maps, word-frames etc.
- **Allow choice** in ways of recording information.
- Give **extra time** to take account of slower rate of writing and information processing.
- Teach subject spelling through mnemonics at **http://preview.tinyurl.com/y74hu5xx** and school subject specific mnemonics at **http://preview.tinyurl.com/y8fa7nxx**
- Always step back to encourage independence.