Special educational needs and/or disabilities
Training toolkit

Materials for newly qualified teachers

Removing barriers: moderate learning difficulties (MLD)

Taught session 3

tda

developing people, improving young lives

Core standards addressed

C10 Have a good, up-to-date working knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning to provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.

C19 Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.

C26 Plan for progression across the age and ability range they teach, designing effective learning sequences within lessons and across series of lessons informed by secure subject/curriculum knowledge.

C29 Teach challenging, well-organised lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range they teach in which they:

(a) use an appropriate range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, which meet learners' needs and take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion

(b) build on the prior knowledge and attainment of those they teach in order that learners meet learning objectives and make sustained progress

(c) develop concepts and processes which enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills

(d) adapt their language to suit the learners they teach, introducing new ideas and concepts clearly, and using explanations, questions, discussions and plenaries effectively

(e) manage the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes effectively, modifying their teaching appropriately to suit the stage of the lesson and the needs of the learners.

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Taught session 3

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Learning outcome

Participants will understand how barriers to participation and learning can be removed for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD).[1]

Approximate timing: **1 hour 15 minutes**

1 hr 15 mins

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1 'Moderate learning difficulties' is the term used in the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and the Annual School Census (ASC) each year. The terms 'general learning difficulties', 'generalised learning difficulties' and 'global learning difficulties' are frequently used to refer to the same group.

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Required resources

Slide	**Slide presentation**	Taught session 3
	Handout 1	Moderate learning difficulties
	Handout 2	Issues, strategies and implications: 1
	Handout 3	Issues, strategies and implications: 2
	Handout 4	Two pupils
	Handout 5	Lesson plans
	Handout 6	Planning for a specific pupil with MLD: response form
	Handout 7	Effective approaches for pupils with learning difficulties
	Handout 8	Reflection questions
	Handout 9	Points for action
	Handout 10	Self-study tasks

Film clips	'Batheaston C of E Primary School: Katie' (ESV.15) (primary)	**51 seconds**
	'Billesley Primary School' (ESV.16) (primary)	**38 seconds**
	'Fulford School: David' (ESV.09) (secondary)	**55 seconds**
	'Brigshaw High School: Catherine' (ESV.13) (secondary)	**19 seconds**

'Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings', DfES, 2006: disc one.

To view these film clips, select 'Essential viewing' from the main menu. The film clips are part of a sequence of clips, so you need to skip through until you reach the relevant ones.

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Activities		Timings
Activity 1	Cognition and learning: range of needs	15 minutes
Activity 2	Removing barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD	30 minutes
Activity 3	Planning for pupils with MLD	25 minutes
Activity 4	Review and reflection	5 minutes

Prior learning

Everyone attending this session should have completed the following pre-session tasks.

Pre-session tasks

Task 1

Remind yourself of the statutory inclusion statement in the National Curriculum.

Task 2

Collect a few samples of work from a pupil identified as having moderate learning difficulties – your focus pupil – and a lesson plan for his or her group. Bring these to the taught session. The pupil's name should be removed to ensure anonymity during the workshop activities.

Task 3

Explore the definitions of the range of cognition and learning needs at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/Cognitionlearningneeds

Note any issues that the definitions raise for you and bring your notes to the taught session.

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Introduction

Show slide 1 to introduce the session.

Show slide 2 and introduce participants to the learning outcome for the session as a whole.

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Activity 1

Cognition and learning: range of needs

Learning outcome

Participants will understand the range of needs included in the SEN Code of Practice under 'cognition and learning'.

Approximate timing: 15 minutes

15 mins

Task

Show slide 3 to outline the learning outcome for activity 1.

3

Slide

Activity 1

Learning outcome

You will understand the range of needs included in 'cognition and learning'

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Show slide 4 and remind participants that four areas of need are set out in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001):

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- behavioural, emotional and social development, and
- sensory and/or physical.

Explain that many pupils with SEN will have needs that span two or more areas, and some may also be disabled.

Tell participants that this taught session and taught session 4 – 'Removing barriers: dyslexia and specific learning difficulties' – examine the barriers to participation and learning faced by pupils whose areas of need fall within the broad heading 'cognition and learning'.

Now tell participants to work in groups of four.

Ask them to think about the pupils with cognition and learning difficulties that they have encountered during their practice so far, and to identify similarities and differences in their learning characteristics and the barriers to participation and learning that they face.

Take brief feedback and emphasise that the 'cognition and learning' area in the SEN Code of Practice includes a very wide range of needs.

Explain that the most effective approach to teaching pupils with cognition and learning needs will be based on assessment and observation of their individual learning strengths and needs, rather than too much reliance on 'category'-related strategies.

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Activity 2

Removing barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD

Learning outcomes

Participants will understand the:

- range of needs covered by the term 'moderate learning difficulties'
- approaches that support participation and learning for pupils with MLD, and
- importance of a collaborative approach.

Approximate timing: 30 minutes

30 mins

Required resources

Handout 1	Moderate learning difficulties	
Handout 2	Issues, strategies and implications: 1 (copy at A3 size)	
Handout 3	Issues, strategies and implications: 2	
Film clips	'Batheaston C of E Primary School: Katie' (ESV.15) (primary)	**51 seconds**
	'Billesley Primary School' (ESV.16) (primary)	**38 seconds**
	'Fulford School: David' (ESV.09) (secondary)	**55 seconds**
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'Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings', DfES, 2006: disc one.

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Task

Show slide 5 to outline the learning outcomes for activity 2.

5
Slide

Activity 2

Learning outcomes

You will understand the:
- range of needs covered by MLD
- approaches that support participation and learning for pupils with MLD
- importance of a collaborative approach

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Part 1: Characteristics of pupils with MLD

Show slide 6 and describe the typical characteristics of pupils with MLD.

6
Slide

Characteristics of pupils with MLD

Pupils with MLD:
- will have attainment well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum
- will have much greater difficulty in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts
- may have speech and language delay, low self-esteem, and poor concentration and social skills

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Explain that pupils with MLD will have:

- attainment well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions, and

- much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and understanding concepts.

Tell participants that pupils with MLD may also have:

- associated speech and language delay

- low self-esteem

- poor concentration, and

- underdeveloped social skills.

Emphasise that a particular pupil may show all or some of these characteristics to **varying** extents.

Show slide 7 and tell participants that planned teaching approaches and support can address barriers to participation and learning for this group.

7
Slide

Pupils with MLD may have difficulty with:

- understanding instructions and tasks
- sequencing
- coordination
- organisation
- memory

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Explain that pupils with MLD may need support with:

- understanding instructions and the requirements of tasks

- acquiring sequencing skills

- coordination and how they affect and relate to their immediate surroundings

- personal organisation over the short, medium and long term, and

- improving their visual and auditory memory for information, processes and instructions.

Explain that the **range** and **nature** of pupils' needs and the barriers to participation and/or learning they face should always be ascertained by observing pupils in their environment.

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Now show slide 8 and leave it on the screen.

Make a note of the:

– characteristics of the learning difficulty
– areas for support
– strategies used to remove barriers

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Ask participants to think about the pupil whose work they collected during pre-session task 2.

Tell them to note:

- the characteristics of the pupil's learning difficulty

- the areas where support is needed, and

- strategies that they and/or others use to remove barriers to the pupil's participation and/or learning.

Distribute Handout 1 and explain that it summarises the content from this part of the activity. Tell participants that the next part of the activity will help them add more strategies that they can use to address particular needs.

Part 2: Issues and strategies

Ask participants to form pairs and give each pair an A3-size copy of Handout 2. Tell participants to work together in their pairs to link the learning issues to possible approaches on Handout 2, using a straight line. Explain that approaches can be used as often as they wish. When they have finished, give out Handout 3 so that participants can compare the links they made with the examples in the handout.

When they have finished this, tell participants to join up with another pair to compare their work.

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Part 3: Film clips

Explain that you are going to show two film clips to illustrate approaches to removing barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD.

Show participants the two film clips appropriate to their phase from the following:

- **Primary**

    ESV.15   'Batheaston C of E Primary School: Katie'

    ESV.16   'Billesley Primary School'

- **Secondary**

    ESV.09   'Fulford School: David'

    ESV.13   'Brigshaw High School: Catherine'

After you have shown the film clips, give participants five minutes to discuss in pairs:

- whether the approaches used benefit one pupil alone or are generally useful to all pupils

- how the approaches might be reflected in individual and group learning objectives.

Take brief feedback.

Emphasise that many strategies/reasonable adjustments introduced for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities benefit all pupils. Offer the following examples:

- high-quality acoustic treatment of spaces is now expected in all new schools, whereas it was only specified provision for deaf pupils five years ago

- visual timetables, using symbols or pictures, are popular in many schools for all pupils to reinforce the sequence of the day's activities.

Ask participants to return to their pairs and to spend a few minutes updating the charts they completed in part 2 of this activity, to include any new approaches arising from the film clips.

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Activity 3

Planning for pupils with MLD

Learning outcome

Participants will understand how to apply approaches for supporting pupils with MLD to planning for a specific pupil.

Approximate timing: 25 minutes

25 mins

Required resources

Handout 4	Two pupils (use for any participants that have not brought a pupil description – see pre-session task 2)
Handout 5	Lesson plans (use for any participants that have not brought a lesson plan)
Handout 6	Planning for a specific pupil with MLD: response form
Handout 7	Effective approaches for pupils with learning difficulties

Note to trainers

This activity requires participants to refer to the materials they have brought with them to the session – see pre-session task 2.

Task

Show slide 9 to outline the learning outcome for activity 3.

9
Slide

> ## Activity 3
>
> ## Learning outcome
>
> You will understand how to apply approaches for supporting pupils with MLD to planning for a specific pupil
>
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Explain that this exercise is designed to extend participants' repertoire of available strategies and to help them to tailor approaches to meet the needs of particular pupils.

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Tell participants, working in pairs, to look at the notes on pupils and the lesson plans that they and their partner have brought with them. If any participants have not brought these notes, give them Handouts 4 (Two pupils) and/or 5 (Lesson plans), as appropriate.

Now distribute Handout 7, which outlines some approaches that can be effective for pupils with MLD. Draw participants' attention, particularly, to the first section on learning outcomes, as this is the area that many teachers find particularly useful, especially if they are not aware of the flexibility inherent in the statutory inclusion statement in the National Curriculum.

Ask participants, working together in their pairs, to use their notes from earlier in this session and the suggestions on Handout 7 to complete Handout 6 for their focus pupils and lessons. Tell them that they can assume the support of a teaching assistant and the presence of a buddy for the pupil. Remind them to record ideas about learning outcomes and the way pupils are grouped, as well as the approaches themselves.

When they have finished, ask each partnership to report to the whole group one strategy that they feel would be particularly valuable. Record their suggestions on a flip chart and then summarise them to the group.

During the summary, emphasise the importance of:

- pre-tutoring
- multi-sensory strategies
- readiness to 'track back' to earlier learning outcomes and to focus on parts of content being studied by the class, using the flexibility of the statutory inclusion statement in the National Curriculum
- 'scaffolding' – ie support for pupils, with the support gradually being withdrawn as their confidence and competence grows.

Show slide 10.

10
Slide

Key strategies

– Pre-tutoring
– Multi-sensory approaches
– 'Tracking back' to appropriate learning outcomes and/or focusing on relevant content
– Scaffolding support

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Allow time at the end for participants to raise any issues they feel have not been resolved in relation to support for their focus pupil and to seek further ideas/information on possible approaches, if required.

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Activity 4

Review and reflection

Learning outcomes

Participants will:

- reflect on key learning points from the session, and
- identify key points of action for their own practice.

Approximate timing: 5 minutes

5 mins

Required resources

Handout 8   Reflection questions

Handout 9   Points for action

Handout 10   Self-study tasks

Task

Show slide 11 to outline the learning outcomes for activity 4.

11
Slide

> ## Activity 4
>
> ### Learning outcomes
>
> You will:
> - reflect on key learning points from the session
> - identify key points of action for your own practice
>
> Session 3
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Summarise the key learning points from the session.

Distribute Handout 8 and ask participants to take this away with them to complete, perhaps along with their mentor or a colleague, after the session.

Distribute Handout 9 and ask participants to review what they have learnt in this session and how it links to their practice. Tell participants to identify some personal points for action and to note them on the handout.

Finally, distribute Handout 10, which lists the range of self-study material available to participants. Explain that each task takes about two hours, plus some observation/research time, and each one has at the end two extension tasks to be completed.

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Moderate learning difficulties

The area of 'cognition and learning' includes moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and developmental coordination disorder (dyspraxia).

Pupils with MLD will have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. They will have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and underdeveloped social skills. See:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/Cognitionlearningneeds

The school environment/curriculum can present a range of barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD. The SEN Code of Practice says that pupils who demonstrate features of MLD, SLD, PMLD or specific learning difficulties require specific programmes to aid progress in cognition and learning.

In particular, pupils with MLD may need support with:

- understanding instructions and the requirements of tasks

- acquiring sequencing skills – for example, when following a recipe or science experiment

- understanding how they affect and relate to their immediate surroundings

- personal organisation over the short, medium and long term, and

- visual and auditory memory for information, processes and instructions.

Careful assessment of baselines and monitoring of progress will help ensure that their progress can be recognised and built upon.

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Issues, strategies and implications: 1

Strategies		
Learning issue	**Possible links**	**Approaches**
Maintaining an inclusive learning environment		Use drama and role-play
		Give pupils time to consider questions
		Plan self-checks at each stage of a task – eg a self-tick flow chart on laptop
Multi-sensory approaches, including ICT		Use visual timetables, prompt cards with pictures to remind pupils what to do
		Target praise
		Use browsers that simplify website presentation (eg cut down the number of pictures)
Working with additional adults		Word banks
		Writing frames
		Put up writing/symbol/picture posters showing ways to behave/tackle a learning task
Managing peer relationships effectively		Enlarge print
		Work with teaching assistant to check pupils' understanding of questions and tasks
		Structured questioning with teacher support/scaffolding of response
Adult-pupil communication		Make a mind map or other visual representation of what pupils already know
		Make an audio recording to record steps in the task
		Use presentation or simulation software to help pupils work through a sequence of behaviour they find hard – eg working in a group
Formative assessment/ assessment for learning		Minimise writing to concentrate on physical activity
		Use buddying to support the pupil
		Store resources where all pupils have access to them
Motivation		Teaching assistant goes over key vocabulary and ideas with the pupil before the lesson
		Display key words on the wall, with pictures/symbols
Memory/ consolidation		Physically demonstrate tasks
		Repeat information in different ways
		Use 'concrete', visual or audio materials to support pupils' understanding

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Issues, strategies and implications: 2

Strategies		
Learning issue	**Possible links**	**Approaches**
Maintaining an inclusive learning environment		Use drama and role-play
		Give pupils time to consider questions
		Plan self-checks at each stage of a task – eg a self-tick flow chart on laptop
		Use visual timetables, prompt cards with pictures to remind pupils what to do
		Target praise
Multi-sensory approaches, including ICT		Use browsers that simplify website presentation (eg cut down the number of pictures)
		Word banks
		Writing frames
		Put up writing/symbol/picture posters showing ways to behave/tackle a learning task
		Enlarge print
Working with additional adults		Work with teaching assistant to check pupils' understanding of questions and tasks
		Structured questioning with teacher support/scaffolding of response
		Make a mind map or other visual representation of what pupils already know
Managing peer relationships effectively		Make an audio recording to record steps in the task
		Use presentation or simulation software to help pupils work through a sequence of behaviour they find hard – eg working in a group
Adult-pupil communication		Minimise writing to concentrate on physical activity
		Use buddying to support the pupil
Formative assessment/ assessment for learning		Store resources where all pupils have access to them
		Teaching assistant goes over key vocabulary and ideas with the pupil before the lesson
Motivation		Display key words on the wall, with pictures/symbols
		Physically demonstrate tasks
Memory/ consolidation		Repeat information in different ways
		Use 'concrete', visual or audio materials to support pupils' understanding

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Two pupils

A primary pupil

Lewis

Lewis is in year 3 of his mainstream primary school.

He greatly enjoys sequencing exercises and games that involve making patterns. His coordination is relatively good and he enjoys football and likes his Arsenal shirt very much. He has an excellent relationship with his teaching assistant, Maxine.

His reading age is three years below his chronological age. He finds spoken instructions difficult and does not enjoy speaking in a large group.

A secondary student

Anita

Anita is in year 8 of her mainstream secondary school.

She has excellent relationships with her teaching assistant, Maxine, and her regular buddy, Zoe. She will chat readily to the small group of friends and adults she knows. She greatly enjoys an Australian soap opera on TV.

Her reading age is three years below her chronological age. Her writing is slow, even on a laptop, and her coordination is not very good. She has a poor memory for adult instructions and has problems with personal organisation.

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Handout 5

Lesson plans

Brief details of a primary lesson plan: literacy	
Area	• The group is working on glossaries and how to look up words in dictionaries
Whole group	• Presentation of learning outcomes • Whole-class demonstration: alphabetical order – pupils at the front of the class move into alphabetical order following suggestions from those in the rest of the class • Whole-class exercise led by teacher and teaching assistant (modelling): defining a word • Introduction to tasks
Small group	• Class works in small groups to define a word, record their definition and then check it in the dictionary
Plenary	• Whole-class discussion of results • Evaluation against learning outcomes

Brief details of a secondary lesson plan: English	
Area	• The group is learning to analyse the presentation of information on posters, websites etc
Whole group	• Presentation of learning outcomes • Whole-class discussion: points to look for in a poster or website page • Introduction to task
Small group	• Small group work: analysis of the messages on a poster • Groups move to tell other groups of their conclusions
Plenary	• Whole-class discussion of conclusions • Evaluation against learning outcomes

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Planning for a specific pupil with MLD: response form

Record your suggestions for support for a chosen pupil in the lesson for which you have the plan.

Suggested support		Time implemented • before the lesson • during lesson • after the lesson
Learning outcomes		
Pupil grouping		
Teaching assistant support		
'Buddying'		
Teaching styles and approaches		
Access strategies/ reasonable adjustments		

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Effective approaches for pupils with learning difficulties

Learning outcomes

- Pupils with generalised learning difficulties need learning outcomes that are closely matched to the stage they have reached, and which build on what they already know, understand and can do.

- Outcomes should offer just enough challenge to move pupils on, but not so much as to render tasks unachievable.

- When pupils are struggling with new learning, it can be useful to break the task down into small steps. This will help identify any gaps in essential prior learning and pinpoint the next step towards mastery.

- The statutory inclusion statement in the National Curriculum makes clear that it is good practice to:

  - 'track back' to earlier sections of the programmes of study/strategy document to find material/outcomes at an appropriate level for a pupil with learning difficulties

  - leave out parts of sections from the programmes of study/strategy and concentrate on those parts that are particularly important or relevant for the pupil.

Teachers that successfully include pupils with learning difficulties typically modify the curriculum in this way, while retaining the pupil's involvement in the areas the rest of the class is working on.

Effective teaching approaches include:

- encouragement

- peer support

- multi-sensory teaching styles

- providing lots of examples to help the pupil learn concepts

- linking learning to the pupil's everyday experience – using real-life examples

- scaffolding – putting in support (like doing part of the task for the pupil or doing it with them) that is slowly withdrawn

- repetition, reinforcement and opportunities to practise.

We know from our own experience how much we need encouragement and support when learning is difficult. Often it feels more comfortable if a peer provides that support. Finding ways in which pupils can help each other, when appropriate, releases the teacher to work with other pupils.

When working with the whole class, active and interactive teaching that gives pupils opportunities to handle objects, see pictures and use movement will engage pupils with learning difficulties more than unbroken teacher talk. It is important to provide multiple examples of new concepts and, where possible, to take these examples from pupils' own real-life experience rather than talking in abstract terms.

Pupils will often benefit from 'scaffolding' – having a peer or adult work alongside them at first, who gradually withdraws as the pupil's confidence grows – or finishing a task that has already been partly done for them. Once they have learnt something new, they will need many opportunities to practise. Problems often arise for pupils with MLD when the teacher moves on too quickly, before they have had a chance to consolidate what they know.

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Access strategies include:

- clear instructions
- pre-tutoring
- use of real objects
- explicitly teaching the vocabulary the pupil will need
- alternatives to written recording
- use of pre-prepared frameworks to support recording.

Adults' language can often be a barrier to learning. Pupils with MLD need short, clear instructions, repeated if necessary. They can often benefit from 'pre-tutoring' – preparation for a task so that they come to it already knowing the key vocabulary and concepts. Using a teaching assistant to pre-tutor a group of pupils can be more useful than having the assistant support them with the work the class have been set. It promotes independence and may enable the pupils to take a fuller part in the lesson. Similarly, putting up lists of key vocabulary for a particular topic or lesson and teaching the meaning of each word will give pupils a head start with their subject learning.

Finally, it is important to remember how difficult it is for some pupils to extract the salient points from information they are given, and to record their ideas using conventional written recording. Inclusive teachers use a range of alternatives to writing and make regular use of support systems such as writing frames and other visual approaches.

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Reflection questions

Consider these questions in relation to your focus pupil with your mentor or a colleague.

How can you extend the range of strategies you currently use to support your pupil?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are the implications of using these additional strategies for resources, teachers and teaching assistants?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How might you choose appropriate learning objectives for this pupil if those set out in the scheme of work you are using are not suitable?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How might you evaluate the effectiveness of these new strategies?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Handout 9

Points for action

What do I want to do next to develop my practice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How will I do this?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is my timescale for this to happen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How will I know if I have been successful?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Self-study tasks

Every Child Matters

- Inclusion and Every Child Matters (SST 1)

- SEN and disability legislation (SST 2)

- English as an additional language and SEN (SST 3)

- Children's needs and development (SST 4)

- ICT and SEN (SST 5)

Cognition and learning

- Moderate learning difficulties (SST 6)

- Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties (SST 7)

- Working memory (SST 8)

Behavioural, emotional and social needs

- Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (SST 9)

Communication and interaction

- Speech, language and communication needs (SST 10)

- Autistic spectrum disorders (SST 11)

Physical and sensory impairment

- Visual impairment (SST 12)

- Hearing impairment (SST 13)

- Handwriting (SST 14)

- Developmental coordination disorder/dyspraxia (SST 15)

Working in partnership

- Working with colleagues in school (SST 16)

- Working with parents/carers and other professionals (SST 17)

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