SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Guidance Report

Education
Endowment
Foundation

About the Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity supporting teachers and school leaders to use evidence of what works—and what doesn't—to improve educational outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and young people.

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FOREWORD

Education professionals are usually driven by the desire to provide each and every young person with the best chance to succeed in life, no matter who they are or where they come from. Our aim at the EEF is to support professionals by arming them with the tools needed to make the biggest possible impact in achieving this. This is especially crucial for those pupils that need the most support.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) have the greatest need for excellent teaching and are entitled to provision that supports achievement at, and enjoyment of, school. The attainment gap between pupils with SEND and their peers is twice as big as the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers. However, pupils with SEND are also more than twice as likely to be eligible for free school meals.

"Closing the disadvantage gap means finding better ways to support pupils with SEND."

So for us, closing the disadvantage gap means finding better ways to support pupils with SEND. The challenge is compounded by the complexity of the system of which schools are only one part. The best provision for pupils with SEND requires coordination across multiple organisations and individuals—made harder in recent years by spending pressures. The professional challenge of supporting pupils with SEND is both practical and principled.
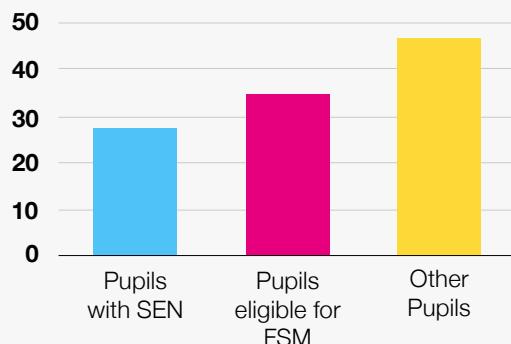
This is why we've developed this guidance report. It offers five evidence-based recommendations to support pupils with SEND, providing a starting point for schools to review their current approach and practical ideas they can implement. To develop the recommendations in this report, we reviewed the best available international research and consulted with teachers and other experts.

The overriding message from the report is a positive one. 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 everyday, high-quality classroom teaching—being inclusive by design not as an afterthought.

It also means using carefully implemented interventions and working effectively with teaching assistants to offer additional support where needed.

As with all our guidance reports, this publication is just the start. We will now be working with the sector, including through our colleagues in the Research Schools Network, to build on the recommendations with further training, resources, and guidance. By engaging with professionals to deliver a research-led approach we can realise our mutual aim to support the attainment and life-chances of some of our most vulnerable pupils.

Average Attainment 8 score per pupil

Professor Becky Francis
Chief Executive
Education Endowment Foundation

What does this guidance cover?

This report presents five recommendations for mainstream primary and secondary schools seeking to improve their provision for pupils with SEND. Some of the recommendations included here will also be helpful for pupils in special schools, although we recognise that the approaches might need to be adapted and supplemented with specialist support for pupils with profound learning needs. The EEF is currently considering how it can support special schools in the future with tailored guidance and resources.

The term 'SEND' is used throughout the report in order to be inclusive of all pupils with these needs and in recognition of the fact that a disability will often overlap with special educational needs. However, this report is about special educational needs and provision rather than any adaptations schools may need to make for pupils with a physical disability or a long-term health condition.

The focus is on improving the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream classrooms and ensuring pupils are full members of the school community who have a rich and positive experience. We have taken a pragmatic approach—not every issue relevant to pupils with SEND will be covered in detail. The guidance does not address the complexities around funding or availability of specialist provision, nor does it focus on types of need or conditions. Those issues are of course important, but beyond the scope of this report.

Instead, we have focused on five key recommendations that should be the focus for school improvement. The aim is to give an overview of some key 'best bets' for improving special educational provision. In many cases, the advice here overlaps with other EEF guidance reports such as *Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning*. We strongly recommend that schools consider other EEF guidance reports when planning their SEND provision.

This guidance is based on a focused review of the best available evidence on improving outcomes for pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. The review focused on research related to pupils aged 5–16. It was undertaken by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Warwick.[1]

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for school leaders, including the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and classroom teachers across mainstream primary and secondary schools. This guidance challenges the idea that responsibility for Special Educational Needs is solely the job of the SENCo. The SENCo has an important role in the development of a school's approach, but ensuring all pupils achieve—including those with SEND—is everyone's responsibility. If the SENCo takes sole responsibility, there is a risk of de-skilling school leaders and classroom teachers who can subsequently lose confidence in supporting pupils with SEND. We hope that this guidance can empower the classroom teacher by demonstrating that many of the skills required are those they are already developing in their teaching for all pupils.

There are additional audiences who might find this guidance useful.

- School governors can use the guidance to support and challenge their school leadership on SEND.

- Parents, carers, and families may find the guidance useful to inform their interactions with schools.

- The strategies recommended in this guidance are highly relevant to the work of teaching assistants. Schools can find additional resources on the EEF site.

- Educational researchers can work to fill in the gaps in the evidence base identified in this report and the associated evidence review.[1]

- Programme developers can use the evidence in this guidance to develop more effective programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Acting on this guidance

Major decisions about your school's approach to Special Educational Needs are likely to be most effective if made in conjunction with a range of stakeholders including parents, carers and families, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, and specialist outside agencies. To maximise its impact, this report should be read in conjunction with other EEF guidance, including *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation.*

This report is designed to complement the statutory guidance on SEND as set out in *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 years*.

Schools may also want to seek support from our Research Schools at researchschool.org.uk a national network of schools funded by the EEF and the Institute for Effective Education to support teachers to implement the evidence-based recommendations contained in our guidance reports and keep them in touch with the latest research. In addition, the EEF has six regional teams across the country that help foster and coordinate school improvement partnerships with local authorities, multi-academy trusts, Teaching School Alliances, and informal groups of schools.

The EEF is always looking for practical examples that help bring evidence-based recommendations to life. If you have examples of a recommendation that has been effectively implemented in your school, then please get in touch: info@eefoundation.org.uk

An introduction to SEND

The starting points for educating all pupils are the same: an acceptance of diversity, pupils' rights, and the knowledge that all pupils can learn if they receive good teaching. All pupils have a right to effective teaching and full participation in the community of a school as set out in international agreements (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) and education law in England (the Equality Act, 2010 and the Children and Families Act, 2014).[2] The SEND Code of Practice is clear: 'The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN, and the progress made by pupils, should be a core part of the school's performance management arrangements and its approach to professional development for all teaching and support staff.'[3]

According to the Code of Practice, 'a child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability' that calls for 'provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools.'[4] In 2019, 14.9% of all pupils in England were categorised as having SEND with 3.1% of all pupils having an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.[5] An EHC plan 'is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support. EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.'[6]

Across all schools, the number of pupils with SEND has risen for the third consecutive year. Pupils with SEND are more likely to be eligible for free school meals (28% compared to 13% of pupils without SEND),[7] and may have lower levels of wellbeing: a report which examined the wellbeing of secondary school pupils with Special Educational Needs found that pupils with SEND reported an increased unhappiness score in relation to their school work, compared to their peers without SEND.[8]

Needs will vary substantially across schools and classes. **Box 1** gives one example of a teacher describing the needs in their class.

Box 1: A teachers' view of needs in their classroom

'In my class of thirty, one pupil has an EHC plan and four pupils are on SEND Support. We are monitoring a further two pupils as the gap between them and their peers seems to be widening in our measures of reading, although this could be related to attendance. The pupil with autism on an EHC plan has targeted outcomes in relation to his communication, interaction, and sensory needs. Some reasonable adjustments are made around uniform worn and routines in the school day but generally he takes part in all lessons with some targeted interventions with a trained TA. Two pupils with SEND Support have occasional speech and language provision with an outside specialist and take part in focused vocabulary work in small groups. Parents are involved in regular reading and talk activities at home. The other two SEND Support pupils have provision made for a moderate learning difficulty and the other for their social, emotional, and mental health needs.'

Language matters—talking about SEND

'Pupils are SEND'

It is not helpful to say that a pupil 'is SEND' or 'there are SEND pupils in our class', and this language may undermine efforts to establish and maintain high expectations for the learning of all pupils. It is more helpful to say pupils 'have SEND' or 'there are pupils with SEND' within a class. SEND is not a fixed or permanent characteristic; it is a recognition that at a specific time a child has additional learning needs. At times, many pupils will require tailored or additional support to fully participate in everything the school has to offer.

Challenging the view that 'a pupil with SEND will always have SEND'

Pupils' development is not linear. As pupils age, the complexity of their needs will change. Some pupils might not have SEND to begin with but will develop SEND as they mature. Others who are considered to have SEND at the beginning of their lives may no longer have these needs later in life. Recent research has indicated that this change happens for significant proportions of pupils with SEND.[7] By the end of Year 11, 44% of pupils had been classified as having SEND at some point in their schooling but only around 15% of pupils are considered to have had SEND at any one time.[9]
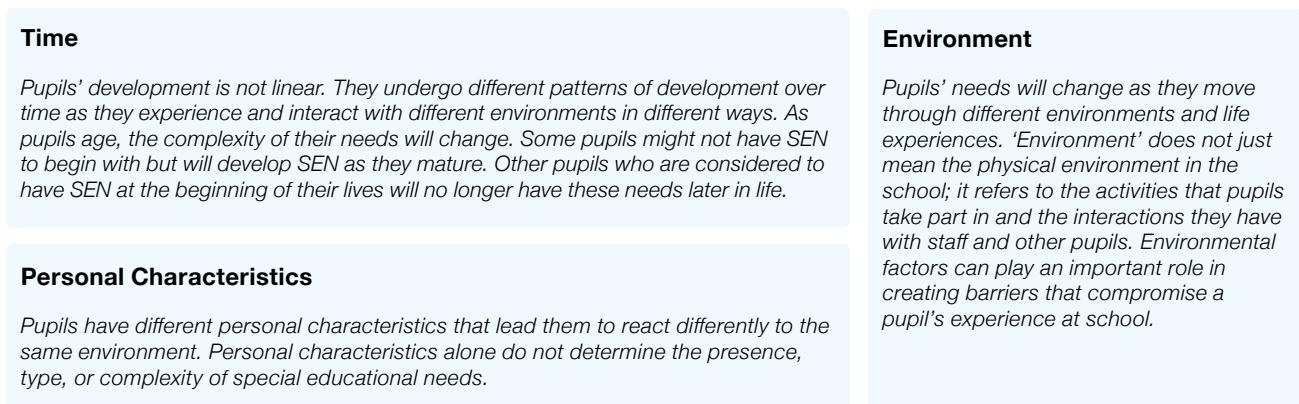
Supporting pupils with SEND

Every pupils' development is driven by the progressively more complex everyday activities and interactions with the people, objects, and symbols they experience in their immediate environment ('processes'). At school, teachers routinely plan and organise these 'processes' to enhance development for their classes. This happens, for example, through direct teaching, group or individual learning, peer-to-peer activities, reading, learning a new skill, and so on. The quality of teachers' planning and of their delivery of teaching and learning therefore has a major impact on every pupil's development.
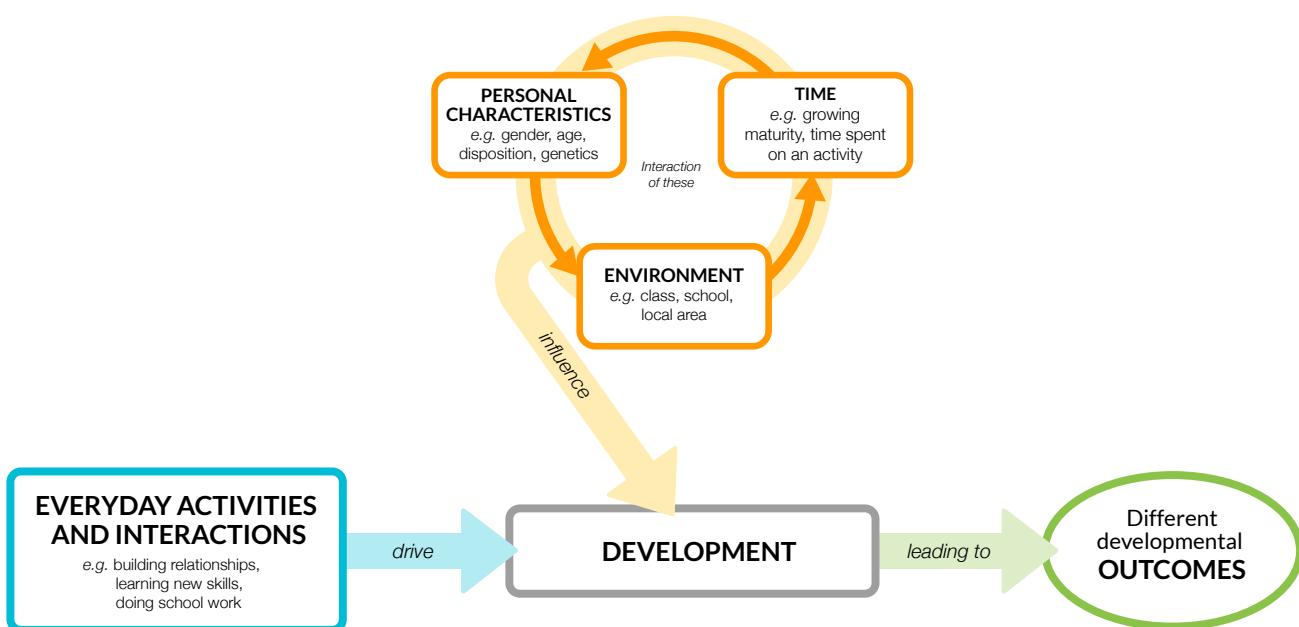
However, individual pupils' development is also influenced by the interaction of 'what happens in class every day' with their personal characteristics, wider environmental influences, and time[10] (see **Figure 2:** The Bronfenbrenner diagram). This approach helps to highlight that special educational needs are not something the pupil needs to change about themselves; rather, the school needs to consider how to change the quality of what happens in the immediate environment to best support the pupil's learning, taking into account the individual, the home and wider community, and time.

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: The key influences that interactively affect pupils' learning and development[9]

Time

Pupils' development is not linear. They undergo different patterns of development over time as they experience and interact with different environments in different ways. As pupils age, the complexity of their needs will change. Some pupils might not have SEN to begin with but will develop SEN as they mature. Other pupils who are considered to have SEN at the beginning of their lives will no longer have these needs later in life.

Personal Characteristics

Pupils have different personal characteristics that lead them to react differently to the same environment. Personal characteristics alone do not determine the presence, type, or complexity of special educational needs.

Environment

Pupils' needs will change as they move through different environments and life experiences. 'Environment' does not just mean the physical environment in the school; it refers to the activities that pupils take part in and the interactions they have with staff and other pupils. Environmental factors can play an important role in creating barriers that compromise a pupil's experience at school.

Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner diagram

Beyond simple classification
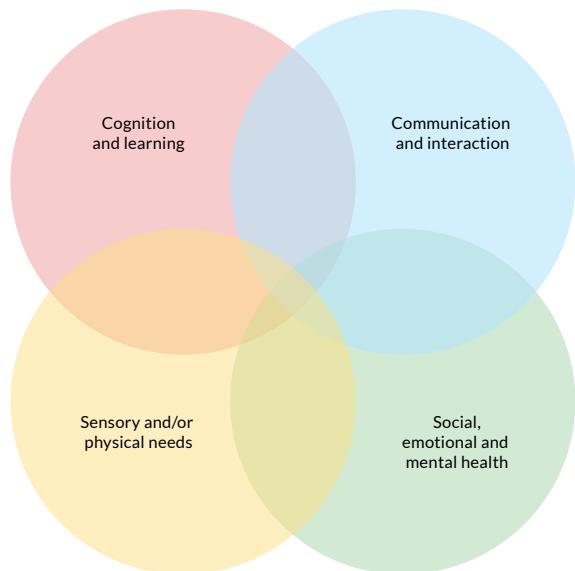
The SEND Code of Practice groups needs into four broad areas to support schools to plan the provision that they offer:

- cognition and learning;

- communication and interaction;

- social, emotional, and mental health; and

- sensory and physical needs.[11]

Considering these primary needs is a useful first step, but a more detailed understanding of an individual child is required for action to be beneficial. Teachers should understand the individual characteristics of pupils' needs, and how these relate to their classroom environment and the content that they are teaching.

There is variation within each of the four categories in the Code of Practice. For example, two pupils who both have needs related to communication and interaction could have quite different individual needs; one might have difficulty producing or understanding the sounds of spoken language while the other might struggle to understand conventions of social interaction, such as turn-taking in conversations. In some cases, difficulties in one area will lead to difficulties in another. For example, a child with Speech, Language, and Communications Needs (SLCN) may also present with literacy learning difficulties as a result of the SLCN.

In other cases, it may be that needs co-occur. A child with a physical disability may also have a learning disability, but of course this will not necessarily be

caused by the physical disability. The model of SEND described above shifts our focus from a condition or diagnosis that a pupil might have to their individual learning needs. The key question is not, 'What is most effective for pupils with dyslexia?' The key question becomes, 'What does this individual pupil need in order to thrive?'

Supporting pupils with special educational needs should be part of a proactive approach to supporting all pupils—it is not an 'add on'. It means understanding the specific barriers pupils face to learning and what they need in order to thrive so that they can be included in all that the school has to offer.

We now consider five strategies aimed at supporting pupils with SEND.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Sections are colour coded for ease of reference

1

Create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils without exception

- An inclusive school removes barriers to learning and participation, provides an education that is appropriate to pupils' needs, and promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential for all pupils. Schools should:

  — promote positive relationships, active engagement, and wellbeing for all pupils;

  — ensure all pupils can access the best possible teaching; and

  — adopt a positive and proactive approach to behaviour, as described in the EEF's Improving Behaviour in Schools guidance report.

2

Build an ongoing, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs

- Schools should aim to understand individual pupil's learning needs using the graduated approach of the 'assess, plan, do, review' approach.

- Assessment should be regular and purposeful rather than a one-off event, and should seek input from parents and carers as well as the pupil themselves and specialist professionals.

- Teachers need to feel empowered and trusted to use the information they collect to make a decision about the next steps for teaching that child.

3

Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching

- To a great extent, good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all.

- Searching for a 'magic bullet' can distract teachers from the powerful strategies they often already possess.

- The research suggests a group of teaching strategies that teachers should consider emphasising for pupils with SEND. Teachers should develop a repertoire of these strategies they can use flexibly in response to the needs of all pupils.

  — flexible grouping;

  — cognitive and metacognitive strategies;

  — explicit instruction;

  — using technology to support pupils with SEND; and

  — scaffolding.

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4

Complement high quality teaching with carefully selected small-group and one-to-one interventions

- Small-group and one-to-one interventions can be a powerful tool but must be used carefully. Ineffective use of interventions can create a barrier to the inclusion of pupils with SEND.

- High quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support, but it is likely that some pupils will require high quality, structured, targeted interventions to make progress.

- The intensity of intervention (from universal to targeted to specialist) should increase with need.

- Interventions should be carefully targeted through identification and assessment of need.

- Interventions should be applied using the principles of effective implementation described in the EEF's guidance report *Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation*.

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5

Work effectively with teaching assistants

- Effective deployment of teaching assistants (TAs) is critical. School leaders should pay careful attention to the roles of TAs and ensure they have a positive impact on pupils with SEND.

- TAs should supplement, not replace, teaching from the classroom teacher.

- The EEF's guidance report *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants* provides detailed recommendations.

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1 Create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils without exception

Maria is a headteacher in a new role in September. Her new school has a much higher number of students with special educational needs than her previous school and she knows that supporting these children is a priority.

Her first instinct is to speak to the SENCo and understand the interventions and additional support in place for pupils with SEND; however, she doesn't want to limit her attention to interventions and extras. How can she ensure inclusivity runs through every part of the school?

Discussion questions:

Who is responsible for creating an inclusive environment for all pupils?

'Good teaching for pupils with SEND is no different from good teaching full stop.' Do you agree?

In what ways might teachers adapt their interactions with pupils with SEND to best support them?

Creating a positive and supportive environment for all pupils means placing support for pupils with SEND at the heart of school priorities—being inclusive by design. This approach to pupils with SEND should be reinforced in the language, activities, routines, and strategies across the classroom as well as whole-school settings. This chapter explores how to create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils with SEND by promoting positive relationships and active engagement for all pupils—by including all pupils in the best teaching you can offer and adopting a positive and proactive approach to behaviour for learning.

Box 2: An inclusive environment

'Creating an inclusive environment is the most important thing a school can do. An inclusive culture is a prerequisite for an effective school: it brings happiness, a feeling of safety and being part of the community, and, of course, it impacts positively on learning, both in the classroom and beyond. It is our job to prepare pupils to flourish and feel truly included in society.

An inclusive environment does not come by accident, it is achieved through design. Furthermore, it is imperative that leaders embed this culture proactively.

For example, we noticed that a few Year 7 pupils last year needed support with developing friendships with their peers. As a result, we set up some key forums for this: Fun Football, Games Club in the Library, UNO Club, Lunchtime Trampolining, Breakfast Club, Social Skills Intervention (groups during lessons and tutor time), and—the most surprising group that developed—skipping group at lunchtime! All of these became adult-supervised safe-spaces for the pupils to go to, particularly during unstructured time (break and lunch), which can be very challenging for some.

The impact was palpable as we saw friendships develop, confidence grow, and pupils' happiness levels increase. Now our Year 8s are taking part less and less regularly as their independence grows but our new Year 7 cohort are taking advantage of all the opportunities available. All of these, alongside academic support and initiatives such as daily homework club, have seen a positive impact on attendance rates amongst SEND pupils as well as academic achievement.'

Frances Steel, Assistant Principal and SENCo, Totteridge Academy.

The introduction to this report described how the everyday activities and interactions with people, objects, and symbols that a pupil experiences in the school environment are important drivers of their learning and development. To create an environment that is genuinely positive and supportive for all pupils, without exception, school leaders and teachers should seek to understand the activities and interactions driving pupil development in each 'microsystem' within the school—the classes that pupils attend as well as the corridors and outside areas.

For example, giving a pupil with communication and interaction difficulties a locker at the end of the row and at eye level enables access to the locker whilst reducing anxiety created by physical proximity and noise. The pupils' interaction with the object (the locker) is therefore developmentally supportive rather than inhibitive and increases the likelihood of arriving in class ready to engage in learning activities. The box below gives another example of a school's approach to seating.

Promote positive relationships and active engagement for all pupils

Effective teaching and learning requires positive relationships and interactions between teachers and pupils.[12] Research has suggested that teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with SEND are reflected in the quality of their interactions with pupils. A systematic review exploring approaches to effectively including children with SEND in mainstream classrooms found that teachers with positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEND had better quality interactions with pupils.[11] These teachers saw themselves as responsible for the

learning of all pupils and had longer interactions with pupils with SEND, using this time to ensure they fully participated in the class.

An inclusive school environment for pupils with SEND is also beneficial for all pupils. One recent meta-analysis explored the impact of inclusion on pupils *without* SEND and concluded that such an inclusion policy resulted in a weak but positive impact on their academic outcomes.[1]

Box 3: Seating plans

At North Ormesby Primary Academy the key focus has been on creating environments that meet the needs of all pupils, but which are likely to be especially important for pupils with SEND. The school has paid careful consideration to seating. Considerations for seating include:

- Make sure the pupil can hear instructions clearly, without interference;

- If hearing is better in one ear than the other, sit them with that ear towards the teacher;

- Ensure pupils can see your face—even when you move position;

- Check pupils have a clear view of the board, worksheets, and visual aids; and

- Ensure lighting is adequate and minimizing glare and reflections.

Include all pupils in the best teaching you can offer

Pupils with SEND can be in a mainstream school but still not be included in high quality teaching (see Box 4). In an inclusive school, pupils with SEND are not just *in* the school, they are *part of* the school—they have the same opportunity as their peers to benefit from the highest quality teaching the school can provide. A school that is considering its approach to inclusion should ask, 'How can we maximise access to high quality teaching for all pupils, especially those with SEND?'

Adopting inclusive practice requires distributed responsibility for SEND. The SEND Code of Practice is clear: 'Every teacher is a teacher of special educational needs.' Gary Aubin, Director of SEND at Future Academies, describes a task that could support all pupils to be active participants in lessons, even for a pupil who finds it uncomfortable to share their view with a whole class:

> *'Asking children to "share what their partner said" allows quieter children to have their answers shared without needing to feel exposed by having to share it themselves. Similarly, allowing a child the chance to write their answer instead of voicing it, or giving them warning time before sharing an answer, supports maximum participation.'*

Other approaches schools could consider include:

- cards with questions stems as scaffolds;

- non-verbal answers to questions—pupils can stand and sit, or give a thumbs up or thumbs down, to agree or disagree with an answer; and

- using post-it notes to encourage pupils to add their views to topics.

The approach to Special Educational Needs outlined in this guidance report should be part of every teacher's toolbox. The good news is that this does not require a comprehensive understanding of every type of SEND found in classrooms. Effective teachers of pupils with SEND are focused on learning more about the individual profiles of the pupils they teach and maximising the effectiveness of their teaching.

Box 4: Including pupils with SEND in high quality teaching—a non-example

The largest observational research project conducted on U.K. pupils with SEND found that, in primary schools, pupils with EHC plans experienced a high degree of separation from the classroom, teacher, and peers.[13] (It should be noted that the majority of the pupils in the study outlined here had a primary need related to cognition and learning, and the results, therefore, do not claim to be representative of other types of SEND.)

The research project found that, in Year 5, these pupils spent over a quarter of their time away from the mainstream class, most often with other pupils identified as 'low-attaining' or as having SEND. In secondary settings, pupils with SEND experienced a form of 'streaming' where lower-attaining pupils and those with SEND were taught alongside each other away from their average- and higher-attaining peers.[12] This situation could lead to pupils with SEND experiencing a lower quality of teaching, especially if provided by a less-experienced or less-qualified member of staff (see Recommendation 5).

Wider evidence from the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit also shows that, on average, streaming (or setting) has a negative impact for low-attaining pupils.[14]

Adopt a positive and proactive approach to behaviour for learning

There is strong evidence that a proactive, positive, and supportive approach to behaviour will benefit all pupils and can reduce the amount of challenging behaviour they exhibit.[15] The evidence suggests several considerations:

- Encourage and reward positive behaviour.[16] Putting in place clear reward systems can improve pupil behaviour in the classroom when used as part of a broader classroom management strategy.

- Explicitly prompt, model, and reinforce positive behaviours.[17] Teachers can proactively support behaviour that supports learning, such as paying attention to the teacher or persevering with a difficult task.[18]

- If a pupil requires individualised support, a good first step is to understand the reasons behind the pupil's behaviour and what the school could do to address these.[19] For example, disruption to a lesson could indicate that a pupil struggles to communicate when a lesson has become difficult to understand. In this situation, the pupil might benefit if the teacher was to break down a task into smaller steps using clear, unambiguous language (see Recommendation 3).

The EEF guidance report, *Improving Behaviour in Schools*, makes six recommendations that are relevant to all pupils, including those with SEND.

Improving behaviour in schools—Recommendations

1. Know and understand your pupils and their influences

2. Teach learning behaviours alongside managing misbehaviour

3. Use classroom management strategies to support good classroom behaviour

4. Use simple approaches as part of your regular routine

5. Use targeted approaches to meet the needs of individuals in your school

6. Consistency is key

2 Build an ongoing, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs

Mark is preparing to welcome his class for the year. It is a class with diverse needs: some of the pupils have an autism diagnosis, others have a speech and language difficulty, and there is one pupil with moderate learning difficulties.

Mark knows that some of his pupils will need additional support but is unsure how to interpret the general information he has in order to meet their individual needs effectively. He has looked at the guidance provided centrally by the school SENCo but is struggling to convert this knowledge into practical steps.

Discussion questions:

How might the diagnostic labels of some pupils alter approaches to teaching?

How should schools build a holistic picture of learning needs for pupils with SEND?

Who should be consulted when assessing learning needs, within the school and beyond?

Understanding pupils and their learning needs is essential if schools are to effectively support pupils to make progress, and is especially important for pupils with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice recommends that schools use a graduated approach, incorporating cycles of 'assess, plan, do, review', to best understand and respond to the learning needs of pupils with SEND. This chapter outlines the difference between needs and diagnosis, and then outlines the graduated approach to assessment and the importance of including multiple stakeholders—including parents and carers, and the pupils themselves—in the assessment process.

Needs and diagnosis

It is important to acknowledge that there is so much to know about SEND that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to become experts in every aspect of such a broad and varied field. The focus, instead, should be on learning the skills required to understand pupils and their learning needs, gaining the confidence to make decisions based on observations and experience, and knowing when to seek specialist support. Learning needs can be thought of in three ways:

1. all children have *common* needs—for example, the need to receive effective teaching;

2. some children have *specific* needs that are shared with a similar group—for example, pupils with a hearing impairment need access to means of audiological support; and

3. all children have *individual* needs—for example, pupils with a Speech and Language Disorder may benefit from pre-teaching of vocabulary and scaffolded talk opportunities.[20]

Special educational needs are defined in relation to learning in school, whereas a 'diagnosis' is the term used by medical and allied professionals in relation to identifying particular physical or mental health conditions with defined characteristics.

Diagnostic labels have benefits, especially for certain conditions such as hearing or visual impairment. A diagnosis can provide a general indication of what a pupil's educational needs are likely to be and support a young person to understand why they might experience the world differently to their peers. However, a diagnosis can be less helpful for making day-to-day decisions about teaching because:

- diagnostic categories are not discrete—for example, pupils diagnosed with autism and pupils with Speech, Language, and Communications Needs (SLCN) could have similar educational needs relating to language and communication;[21]

- diagnoses provide general, not specific, indicators for teaching and learning—diagnosis can provide some information about what a pupil's educational needs might be but does not provide the whole picture, for example, the severity or the types of challenges faced;

- not all pupils with SEND will have a formal diagnosis; and

- two children with the same diagnosis can have very different educational needs as individuals.

For the majority of pupils with SEND, diagnosis is less helpful for teaching and learning than determining the pupils' educational *needs*. Better understanding of a pupil's experience of school can provide information about their individual needs that can inform the next steps for teaching. Pupils' development is driven by the everyday activities and interactions experienced in their immediate environment—that is, they interact with their wider environment and, as a result, their personal characteristics develop over time.[9]

This highlights the developmental importance of not only the pupil's classroom experience but of what happens at breaktimes, in extra-curricular activities, and moving around the school. For example, if a pupil is anxious in class, an important first step would be to understand why: are they having difficulties understanding the task, do they find the classroom social situation overwhelming, or are they worrying about events outside the classroom? The quadrant below offers examples of some key questions schools could consider when planning what to do next in this scenario.

What are the barriers to learning that the pupil is experiencing and in which subjects?	What are their strengths, interests, and aspirations?
What support do they need to access the curriculum?	How can the school's provision be improved to support this pupil to learn?

When looking to understand and respond to a pupil's learning needs, teachers should follow the graduated approach outlined in **Box 5**.[22] Although the review of the evidence found no systematic reviews of the graduated approach used in England, it did find some evidence from studies of the American approach to graduated assessment (which is called 'response to intervention')—that the approach had a positive impact on academic outcomes for pupils with SEND.[1] There is a strong consensus across America and England that a structured process of formative assessment is a sound logic model for identifying, and then addressing, learning needs. The process needs to be repeated regularly as pupils' development is not linear and pupils' needs will vary in patterns of development over time.[9] If progress is not sufficient, further measures such as a statutory assessment could be considered. **Box 5** and the comic strip overleaf are two examples of the graduated approach in practice.

Box 5: The graduated approach—an example

Assess—build a holistic picture of the pupil's learning needs by gathering information from several sources, such as the pupil, parents and carers, colleagues, and external professionals.

Sam's primary and secondary SENCos and Year 6 teacher met to share information at transition from Year 6 to Year 7. They discussed data, specialist involvement, interventions, high quality teaching strategies, and attendance. Sam and his parents completed a Learning Plan identifying his strengths, interests, aspirations, learning challenges, and supports related to his diagnosis of autism. His educational psychologist's recommendations were shared and built into his Learning Plan with a timeline for review in place. During the first half-term, Sam's teachers were asked for comments on progress towards his agreed outcomes.

Plan—using the kind of information gathered above, generate a hypothesis about the type of support that could work; this decision should consider the research evidence about effective classroom teaching strategies and targeted interventions (see Recommendations 3 and 4) as well as evidence-based strategies suggested by an external professional.

Outcomes for Sam were agreed for the first half-term:

1. Sam will have completed a successful transfer to his secondary school—including moving independently around the school, finding a safe space at break time, and building good relationships with key adults.

2. Sam's reading age and engagement with reading will increase by improving his recall and comprehension strategies.

3. Sam will find ways to manage his anxieties; communicate these strategies to parents.

**Do—implement the planned support.**
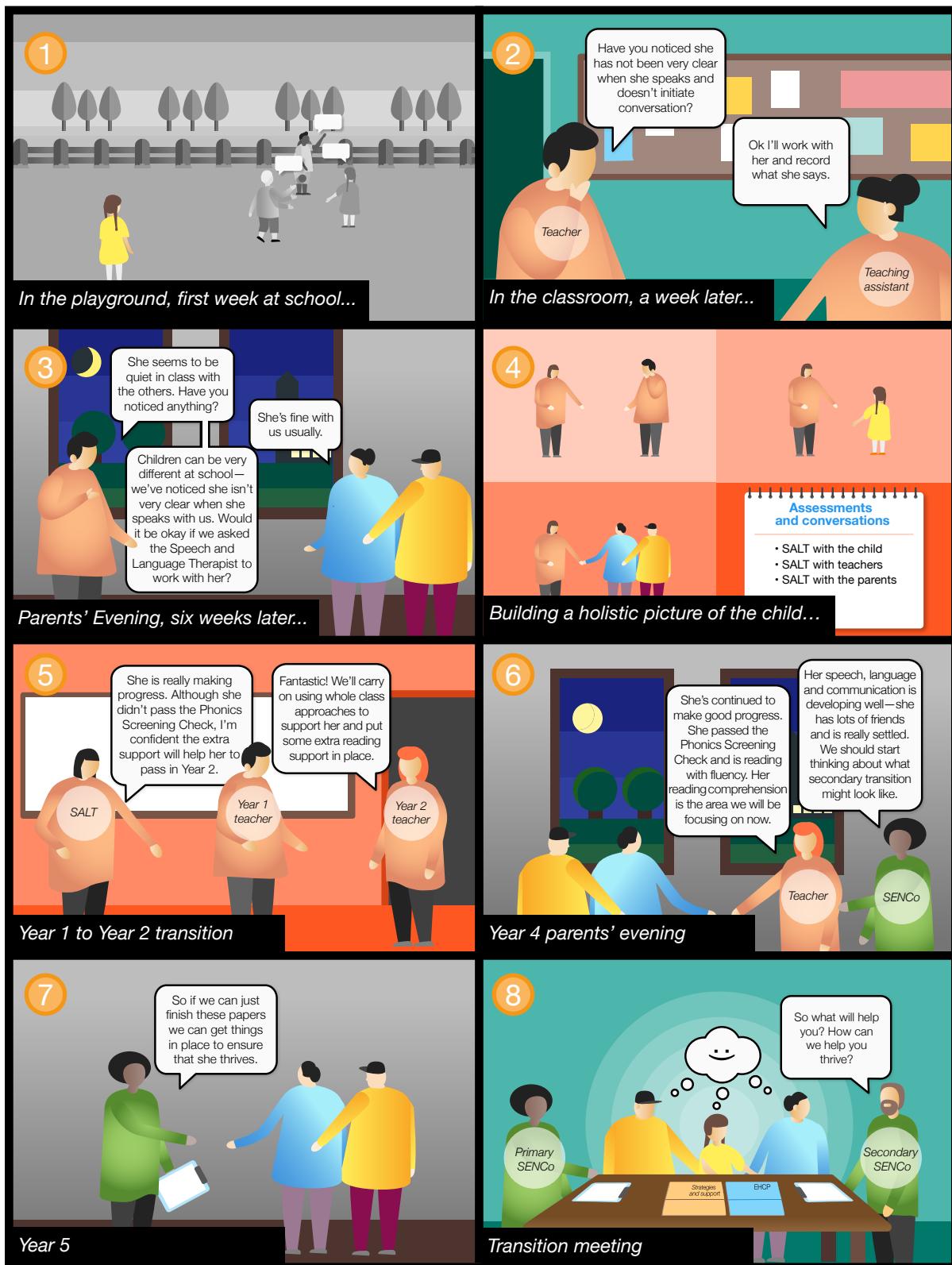
Sam will:
- be able to leave class one minute before his peers to enable him to get to the next class and avoid the noisy rush;

- use the personalised learning area as his safe space during social time; structured break-time activities will help build positive peer relationships modelled by key worker adults;

- take part in group reading interventions, timetabled in registration time, twice per week to use reciprocal reading strategies of 'question, clarify, summarise, and predict'; and

- improve his spoken vocabulary to describe his emotions—with teacher and TA support—to be more specific rather than simply saying 'I'm bored'; direct vocabulary instruction and work on social stories will enable emotional expression.

Review—did the support work? Any information gathered in response to the testing of a hypothesis is useful: a successful response to support helps identify a strategy that works while a non-response helps to refine our understanding of a pupils' needs and inform a new hypothesis.

Outcome 1: met. Sam can now move round the school independently and continue to meet his small group of friends at break. New outcome of initiating conversations with peers.

Outcome 2: partially met. Sam is now engaged with reading at school and at home but still struggles to comprehend accurately. The school will continue this intervention but also consider some one-to-one comprehension strategies including using visual prompts.

Figure 3: Comic strip—an holistic approach to 'assess, plan, do, review'
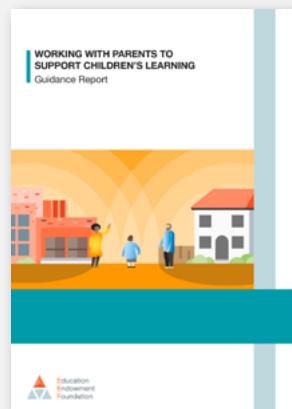
Including parents and carers

The SEND Code of Practice makes it clear that pupils, parents, and carers must be actively involved in the assessment and decision-making process for pupils with SEND at all stages. In particular, schools must make sure that:

- *'Information gathering should include an early discussion with the pupil and their parents. These early discussions with parents should be structured in such a way that they develop a good understanding of the pupil's areas of strength and difficulty, the parents' concerns, the agreed outcomes sought for the child and the next steps.'*

- *'Where a pupil is receiving SEN support, schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss the activities and support that will help achieve them, and identify the responsibilities of the parent, the pupil and the school. Schools should meet parents at least three times each year. These discussions can build confidence in the actions being taken by the school, but they can also strengthen the impact of SEN support by increasing parental engagement in the approaches and teaching strategies that are being used. Finally, they can provide essential information on the impact of SEN support outside school and any changes in the pupil's needs.'*[23]

From the broader evidence base, we know that parental engagement can be a highly supportive strategy to enhance learning: evidence from the Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that effective parental engagement can lead to learning gains of three months over the course of a year. However, it can be difficult to involve all parents in ways that support children's learning. The EEF guidance report, *Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning*, has four key recommendations for schools:

Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning—Recommendations

1. Critically review how you work with parents.

2. Provide practical strategies to support learning at home.

3. Tailor school communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning.

4. Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed.

For parents and carers of pupils with SEND, the evidence review that supports this guidance report found relatively little evidence regarding schools' approaches to engagement.[1] The existing evidence paints a largely negative picture about parents' and carers' interactions with schools, and effective relationships between parents, carers, and schools are considered important but are seen to be an 'exception to the norm'.[24] There is some evidence that parents and carers can have quite different perceptions of the effectiveness of their interactions than schools: parents and carers believed they received little help or information, whereas schools reported that they did communicate effectively.[25]

The research does suggest some considerations for schools planning parental engagement activities or seeking to involve parents and carers in the 'assess, plan, do, review' process:

• Ask parents and carers how the school could communicate more effectively with them, and what type of information they would find most helpful.

• Begin from an understanding that home and school are different environments in which the pupil may behave differently. Comments like 'we don't see that behaviour at school' are counter-productive and may imply deficient parenting skills rather than considering that the pupil may act up at home, rather than at school, because they consider it a safe environment. Be willing to listen to, hear, and learn from parents' and carers' accounts of how the pupil behaves at home. Also, remember that parents and carers may not know much about what happens at school or what a classroom looks or feels like.

• How can you be proactive about contacting the pupils' parents and carers to share positive information? Try to include positive contact.

• Engage in genuine two-way conversations to avoid parents and carers feeling that they are being told what to do or that the school is expecting them to 'solve' issues occurring in school, with no discussion or experience of being listened to.

• Be open to learning from parents' and carers' knowledge about the pupil's needs and strengths. Use this to develop knowledge and expertise around the pupil's SEND and share that with colleagues in the school.

• Be proactive about agreeing strategies with the pupil, in consultation with the parents and carers, to support pupils to succeed in school, for example, by including the SENCo in parents' evenings.

The SEND Code of Practice also states: 'SEN support should include planning and preparation for the transitions between phases of education and preparation for adult life.'[26] This could include schools arranging a series of visits for pupils with SEND and their parents and carers to their new school, facilitated by their current school, to ease pupils into their new environment and ensure that understanding of their learning needs is passed on to their new school.

3 Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching

A newly qualified teacher, Binda, only received limited information about supporting pupils with SEND in her initial teacher training. She is conscious that she needs to learn more but a lot of the information on offer is contradictory. Binda starts exploring particular interventions and strategies commonly associated with different diagnostic labels but it is difficult to work out what is likely to be effective.

There seem to be many strategies recommended for common conditions, like dyslexia or autism, but it is not clear how much these should be emphasised relative to strategies Binda is already using to teach all the pupils in her class.

Discussion questions:

Is there a special pedagogy for special educational needs?

Is 'what works' for one pupil likely to be applicable to other pupils with the same identified need?

What other key factors should be taken into consideration when selecting a strategy to try?

The evidence review for this guidance report found strong evidence that high quality teaching for pupils with SEND is firmly based on strategies that will either already be in the repertoire of every mainstream teacher or can be relatively easily added to it.[1] Teachers should develop a repertoire of these strategies that can be used flexibly in response to individual needs and use them as the starting point for classroom teaching for all pupils.[27] The five strategies outlined in this chapter were identified as having relatively strong evidence for their effectiveness for supporting pupils with SEND.

Although a focus on effective classroom teaching is the starting point, some pupils will require specialist support—including specific teaching methods, equipment, or curriculum—delivered by a trained professional either directly or in a consultancy role. Decisions about which specialist interventions or strategies to use will be informed by discussions with the SENCo, parents and carers, and—especially if the pupil has an EHC plan—relevant external professionals. More guidance on specialist intervention is provided in Recommendation 4.

Box 6: A view from a SENCo...

Rachel Rossiter, an assistant head and SENCo in a Unity Research School, explains how a focus on effective teaching has supported her pupils with SEND.

'In 2010, Ofsted published 'The Special Educational Needs and Disability Review—A Statement is not Enough'. This report aimed to evaluate how well the legislative framework served children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The findings chimed with my own experiences. It concluded that many pupils identified as having SEND were underachieving, but this was sometimes simply because the school's mainstream teaching provision was not good enough.

A decade on, I really don't think that things have changed much for some children with SEND. All too often, children who are 'working below' national expectations are given arbitrary labels without a precise assessment. There is a risk that we respond with flimsy interventions (they provide a nice paper trail) but don't stop to consider the quality of our teaching. Any additional interventions and strategies must supplement high quality teaching and learning and not replace it. The Code of Practice is clear on this: high quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEND. Additional support cannot compensate for a lack of good teaching.

As a SENCo, I have embraced the current interest in cognitive science and how we learn. Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction' is a helpful summary of this research. Working memory, dual-coding, retrieval practice—these should all be familiar concepts to teachers of children with SEND and form the bedrock of our practice. They also form the recommendations of many a good Ed Psych report (which sometimes feels to me like closing the door after the horse has bolted!).

Good teaching for children with SEND is good teaching for all.'

Flexible grouping

Recent research on the experience of pupils with an EHC plan found that they are often grouped together in classes with other pupils identified with SEND or considered as low-attaining and are segregated from the rest of their peers.[12] This situation equates to a form of streaming where pupils are grouped together based on an understanding of their overall attainment regardless of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Research has suggested that streaming can be detrimental to some pupils' learning and may have longer term negative effects on attitudes and engagement with education.[13]

An example of flexible grouping

An alternative approach might be to allocate pupils to groups flexibly based on the individual needs that they currently share with other pupils. Such groups can be formed for an explicit purpose and disbanded when that purpose is met. It may be that a small group of pupils share the need for more explicit instruction to independently carry out a skill, remember a fact, or understand a concept. Allocating pupils to temporary groups can also allow teachers to set up opportunities for collaborative learning; research has indicated, for example, that collaborative learning can be effective in helping pupils to read history texts.[28] Teachers may also set up groups for pupils to work collaboratively on tasks such as reviewing background information, reading and analysing source documents, and completing graphic organisers.

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies

Cognition is the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning. Cognitive strategies are skills like memorisation techniques or subject-specific strategies like methods to solve problems in maths. Cognitive strategies are fundamental to learning and are the 'bread and butter' of effective teaching.[29]

Metacognition refers to the ways in which pupils monitor and purposefully direct their thinking and learning. Metacognitive strategies are strategies we use to monitor or control our cognition, such as checking whether our approach to solving a mathematics problem worked or considering which cognitive strategy is the best fit for a task. The EEF guidance report, *Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning*, has seven recommendations:

Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning—Recommendations
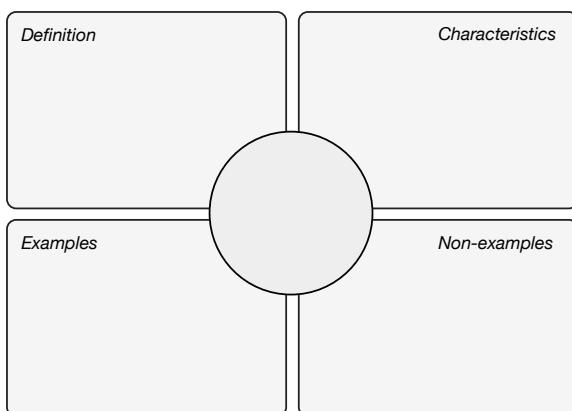
1. Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge.

2. Explicitly teach pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning.

3. Model your own thinking to help pupils develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills.

4. Set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition.

5. Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom.

6. Explicitly teach pupils how to organise and effectively manage their learning independently.

7. Schools should support teachers to develop knowledge of those approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately.
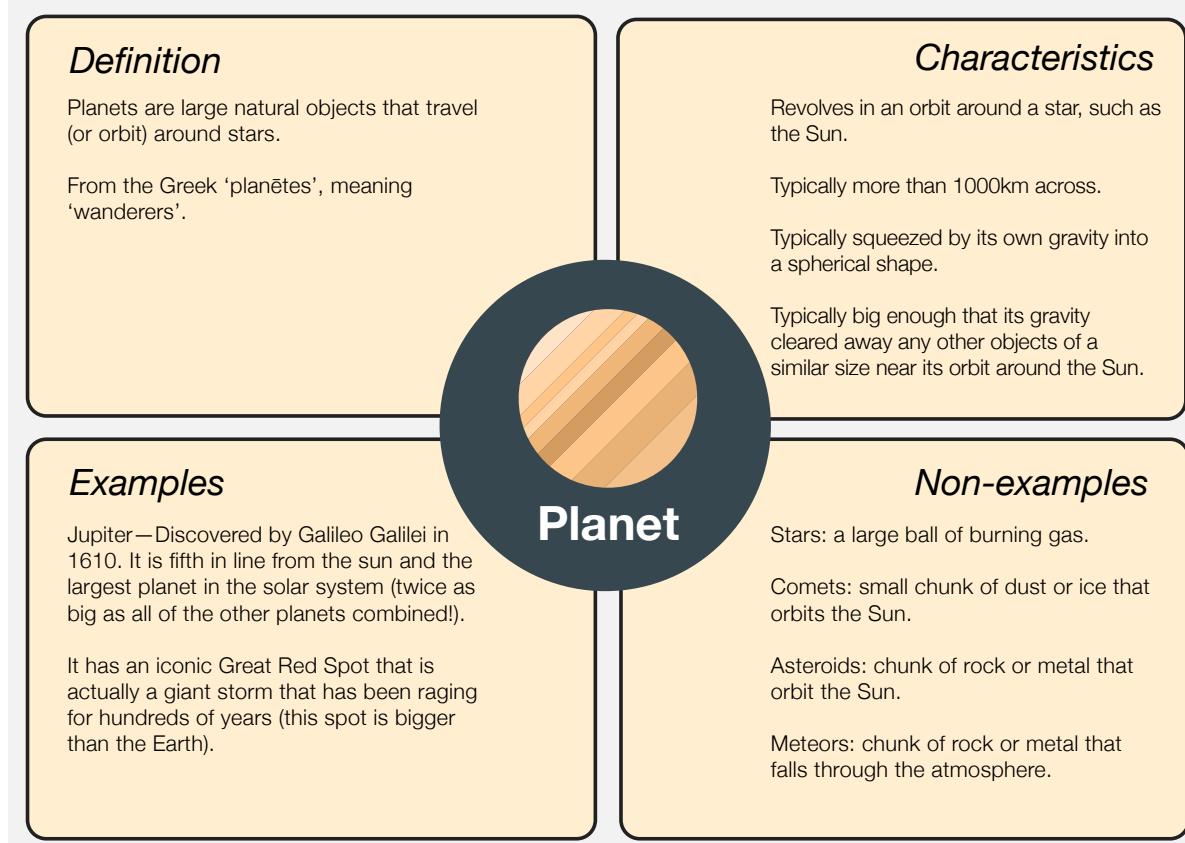
An example: graphic organisers

Graphic organisers represent a cognitive strategy that has been extensively researched with pupils with SEND.[30] Graphic organisers are used to organise knowledge, concepts, and ideas. Examples include Venn diagrams—for example, the Venn diagram illustrating the overlap between the two concepts 'SEN' and 'disability' in English law—T-charts of pros and cons, mind-maps, cognitive maps, semantic maps, and chronologies or event chains. They can be effective tools for supporting learning. For example, a teacher might notice that a pupil is struggling to precisely define and understand what a 'planet' is. A type of graphic organiser called the Frayer model is a flexible tool that could be used here (see **Box 7** for a worked example).

Figure 4: The Frayer model—an outline

Definition	Characteristics
Examples	Non-examples

Box 7: The Frayer model—worked example

Definition

Planets are large natural objects that travel (or orbit) around stars.

From the Greek 'planētes', meaning 'wanderers'.

Characteristics

Revolves in an orbit around a star, such as the Sun.

Typically more than 1000km across.

Typically squeezed by its own gravity into a spherical shape.

Typically big enough that its gravity cleared away any other objects of a similar size near its orbit around the Sun.

Planet

Examples

Jupiter—Discovered by Galileo Galilei in 1610. It is fifth in line from the sun and the largest planet in the solar system (twice as big as all of the other planets combined!).

It has an iconic Great Red Spot that is actually a giant storm that has been raging for hundreds of years (this spot is bigger than the Earth).

Non-examples

Stars: a large ball of burning gas.

Comets: small chunk of dust or ice that orbits the Sun.

Asteroids: chunk of rock or metal that orbit the Sun.

Meteors: chunk of rock or metal that falls through the atmosphere.

Explicit instruction

Explicit instruction refers to a range of teacher-led approaches focused on teacher demonstration followed by guided practice and independent practice. Several reviews of the research on effective support for pupils in mathematics and reading have provided support for explicit instruction.[11,31] One popular approach to explicit instruction is Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction'.

Explicit instruction is not just 'lecturing', 'teaching by telling', or 'transmission teaching'; it usually begins with detailed teacher explanations, followed by extensive practice of routine exercises, and later moves on to independent work.[32] Common aspects of explicit instruction include:

- teaching skills and concepts in small steps;

- using examples and non-examples;

- using clear and unambiguous language;

- anticipating and planning for common misconceptions; and

- highlighting essential content and removing distracting information.

Example: summarising a paragraph

A teacher might teach a pupil a strategy for summarising a paragraph by breaking up the strategy into small steps.[33] The teacher would initially 'think aloud' while identifying the topic of the paragraph to model this process to the pupil. They would then give the pupil the opportunity to practice this skill, perhaps giving the pupil one paragraph at a time to support them to focus on the information that is essential to the task. Then the teacher would model the skill of finding the main idea in a paragraph and guide the pupil to practise finding both the topic and the main idea. The teacher could anticipate potential misconceptions—that, for example, paragraphs always contain the main idea in the first sentence—by providing counter-examples: in this case, paragraphs that contain the main idea at different points. **Box 8** and **Box 9** show further examples of explicit instruction.

Box 8: Using non-examples as part of explicit instruction

'One important plank of strong, explicit instruction is the use of non-examples. Non-examples test the limits and boundaries of a concept as well as helping pupils to think deeply about it. When teaching pupils how to draw particle diagrams in science, for example, rather than just giving pupils the correct diagram, it is worth showing a series of incorrect images where each of which only has one error in it. This will allow pupils to identify the disqualifying condition with clarity, refine their mental model of what a good particle diagram looks like, and develop the ability to distinguish between different diagrams.'

Adam Boxer, Head of Science, The Totteridge Academy

Box 9: Misconceptions in maths

A misconception is an understanding that leads to a 'systematic pattern of errors'. Misconceptions are often formed when knowledge has been applied outside of the context in which it is useful. For example, the idea that 'multiplication makes bigger and division makes smaller' applies to positive, whole numbers that are greater than one. However, when other mathematical concepts appear (for example, numbers less than or equal to one), this idea, extended beyond its useful context, becomes a *mis*conception.

Pupils will often defend their misconceptions, especially if they are based on sound, albeit limited, ideas. In this situation, teachers could think about how a misconception might have arisen and explore with pupils the 'partial truth' that it is built on and the circumstances within which it no longer applies. Pupils may need time and support to develop richer and more robust conceptions. The EEF guidance report, *Improving Mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3*, contains further information.

Using technology to support pupils with SEND

The evidence review for this guidance report found evidence that, for pupils with SEND, technology can be a useful tool for supporting teaching.[1] Successful approaches could include using:[34]

- instructional apps—apps that provide instruction, modelling, or practice opportunities for a wide range of skills;

- non-instructional apps—apps that provide tools to aid learning, such as note-taking apps; and

- speech-generating apps to augment the communication skills of pupils with communication difficulties.

More guidance on the successful use of technology can be found in the EEF guidance report, *Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning*.

USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE LEARNING
Guidance Report

Education Endowment Foundation

Scaffolding

'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. Initially, a teacher would provide enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently.[35] This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the pupil's current capabilities. Support could be visual, verbal, or written. The teacher will gradually remove the support (the scaffold) as the pupil becomes able to complete the task independently. If the teacher is supporting a pupil with SEND, that scaffold may be in place for longer to promote confidence and competence that can be sustained once the scaffold is removed.

Example: using scaffolding

A teacher might initially scaffold for a whole class by providing a writing frame for all pupils to work from. Over time, writing frame headings are written on the board for pupils to use as a scaffold if they choose to with an expectation that they are also considering their own structure. Eventually, a teacher would use their questioning to ensure that pupils with SEND are structuring their work appropriately, perhaps formulating a structure together based on the pupil's spoken ideas.

At St Mary's Church of England Primary School in Barnet, teachers have used task checklists as a visual scaffold to support pupils to independently complete a task (see **Figure 5**). Teachers have created task

Figure 5: Task checklists—a visual scaffold

checklists for tasks like entering the classroom at the beginning of the day and settling down to independent reading. This tool provides specific instruction on the small steps to achieve in order to complete the task.

Applying these strategies

Depending on the individual needs presented by a pupil, it is also sensible to consider the wider range of evidence-based teaching strategies available. Other subject-specific EEF guidance reports will be useful here. For example, all pupils who require more support with their understanding of number might benefit from focused teaching with concrete manipulatives or other mathematical representations, as recommended by the EEF's mathematics guidance.[36] A useful distinction can be made between the teaching strategy used and how it is applied.[37] Addressing SEND may require additional consideration of individual needs, intensity and time, and the need for flexibility:

- **Response to need:** It is important that these strategies are deployed in response to individual learning needs and barriers. What is the pupil struggling with? What are you trying to teach? Many of these strategies provide the opportunity to update your knowledge of the pupil's needs as you teach. How will you adjust the strategy as you develop this fuller understanding? See Recommendation 2 for more guidance on understanding pupils' needs.

- **Intensity and time:** Pupils might require the application of strategies over a longer period of time or a more intense focus on a small number of important, clearly-defined skills or concepts.

- **Flexibility:** These strategies are good starting points but there is no guarantee that they will work well for all pupils all the time. If an approach does not appear to be working for a pupil, teachers need to consider what is not working and how it could be changed.

Complement high quality teaching with carefully selected small-group and one-to-one interventions

Ellie, a deputy head, is reviewing the interventions provided by the school. The school has many pupils with SEND and uses an extensive list of interventions that has grown over time.

Ellie conducts an audit of the time that pupils are spending in intervention groups. This reveals that some pupils are spending a large amount of time in interventions. Some pupils are spending as much as a day a week away from whole-class teaching.

Ellie wonders about the impact of the school's approach. She wants to make sure that pupils with SEND are given the best possible opportunities to make good progress. How can she ensure that they benefit from targeted support while at the same time minimising the time separated from the class?

Discussion questions:

How should schools balance the use of an intervention with whole-class teaching?

How can we ensure that pupils with the greatest needs are supported by the most experienced teachers?

Are there situations in which interventions can be detrimental to pupils' progress?

High quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support for all pupils. Nevertheless, it is likely that some pupils will require additional support in the form of high quality, structured interventions to make progress. This chapter suggests that schools adopt a tiered approach to support and carefully consider when targeted interventions might be appropriate and when they may want to seek additional specialist support.
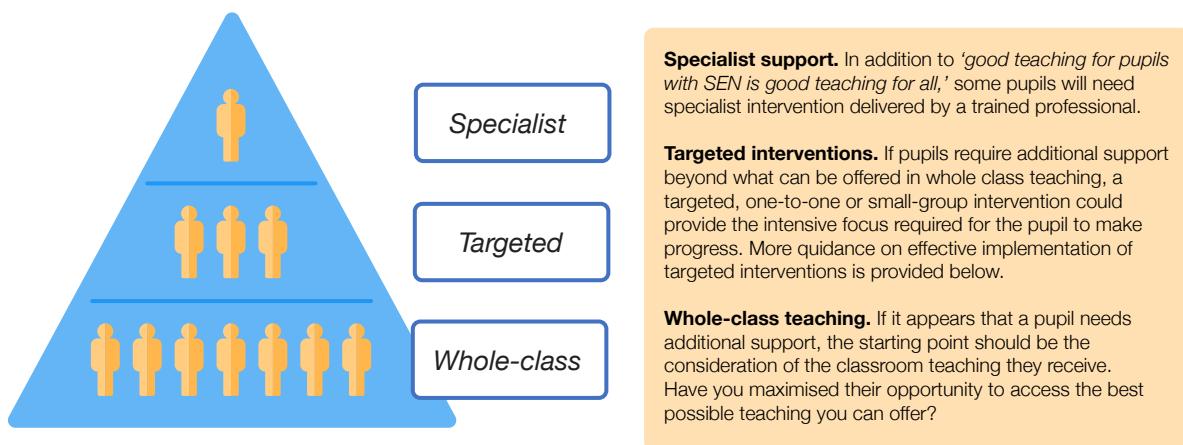
Tiers of support

Small-group and one-to-one interventions provide the opportunity to apply effective teaching strategies with a more intense focus on a smaller number of learning goals. They can be powerful tools but must be used carefully: they should not replace general efforts to improve the overall quality of teaching in the classroom. It is recommended that schools adopt a strategy that offers tiers of increasingly intense support to pupils as required, as outlined in **Figure 6**.[38] This approach is also used in the EEF's Pupil Premium Guide, which recommends a tiered approach to Pupil Premium funding to help schools to balance spending across approaches to improving teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies.

Figure 6: A tiered approach to educational support

Specialist support. In addition to *'good teaching for pupils with SEN is good teaching for all,'* some pupils will need specialist intervention delivered by a trained professional.

Targeted interventions. If pupils require additional support beyond what can be offered in whole class teaching, a targeted, one-to-one or small-group intervention could provide the intensive focus required for the pupil to make progress. More guidance on effective implementation of targeted interventions is provided below.

Whole-class teaching. If it appears that a pupil needs additional support, the starting point should be the consideration of the classroom teaching they receive. Have you maximised their opportunity to access the best possible teaching you can offer?

As discussed in Recommendation 1, the largest observational study of pupils with EHC plans in English schools found that such pupils often spend a large amount of time separated from whole-class teaching. This study suggests some further considerations for the use of targeted interventions.

What are pupils missing by spending time away from the class? Pupils are often withdrawn from their usual classroom teaching for interventions, so it should be a prerequisite of any intervention programme that it at least compensates for time spent away from class. It is also important to consider whether the pupil might be missing subjects they enjoy and the social impact of not participating in the whole class.

How does a pupil's experience in an intervention relate to whole-class teaching? It should not be left to the pupil to make links between the content of the intervention and the curriculum covered back in the classroom. Given that supported pupils are often those who find accessing learning difficult in the first place, this would present a huge additional challenge. The integration of the intervention with the mainstream curriculum is, therefore, vital. It can be difficult to find time in the busy school day to make this work. Schools have tried several approaches, such as:

- setting aside regular times for staff delivering interventions to meet and plan with main class teachers;

- using assembly time to meet and discuss intervention delivery; and

- the Senior Leadership Team being clear about how such liaison time is used.

Targeted interventions

A large amount of research has examined the use of interventions to support pupils with SEND. The evidence review for this guidance report focused on the factors that make interventions more, or less, effective. The key finding was that teachers can increase the chances of the intervention working well by checking that it is a good fit for their context.[1] Questions to ask before adopting an intervention include:

Is this the right intervention for the pupil?
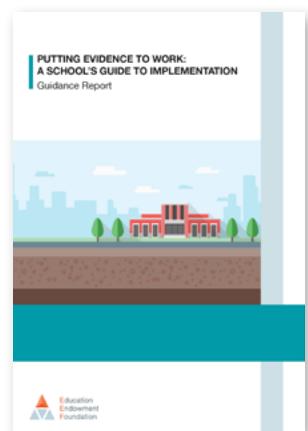
● Does the pupil really need this intervention? Targeted support has the potential to be detrimental if a pupil has been misallocated to an intervention they do not actually need and, as a result, miss out on whole-class activity.

● Do we have a good understanding of pupils' needs so that the support is well-targeted? Unless interventions are well-matched to address the barriers that pupils are experiencing in their learning, they are unlikely to be effective. For example, knowing that a pupil's primary need is a specific learning difficulty in literacy is unlikely to be enough to shape an effective intervention. It is far more useful to understand the specific nature of the pupil's difficulty. Do they, for example, appear to struggle with reading and pronouncing individual words or with understanding the meaning of text? If they appear to be struggling to pronounce words, are there particular letters and sounds that are causing difficulty?

Can we provide the support required for our staff to deliver the intervention well?

● Do the staff have a good understanding of the teaching strategies required in the intervention? Would additional training be useful?

● Are we ensuring that pupils with the greatest needs have access to teaching from our most experienced staff?

● Schools' deployment of trained teaching assistants is a critical issue in providing effective education of pupils with SEND. See Recommendation 5 for more detail.

Are we able to dedicate the time and resources required to implement the intervention well?

● Even the most promising intervention will fail with poor implementation. Once an approach has been identified, it is important to take the time to train the staff involved, monitor the delivery of the approach, and consider how to sustain it over time. More information about effective implementation can be found in the EEF's guidance report: *Putting Evidence To Work: A School's Guide To Implementation*.

Box 10: Case study—how does Millfield Secondary School allocate staff?

Millfield secondary school arrange timetables so that the head of the English department can always work with the groups with the greatest learning needs in English. This means the pupils who need the most support get the most intensive input (as these groups are smaller) from the most senior and experienced member of staff delivering high quality teaching.[39]

Box 11: Evidence-based programmes

Many intervention programmes claim to be supported by evidence but it can be challenging to assess these claims or make comparisons between different programmes. The following free online resources provide a good starting point for assessing claims by summarising the available evidence:

- the EEF's 'Promising Projects' includes a range of high-quality interventions;

- the Institute of Effective Education's 'Evidence for Impact' database provides a similar resource; and

- the 'What Works?' database for pupils with speech, language, and communication needs is available from the Communication Trust, https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/whatworks.[7]

As each of these summaries show, relatively few programmes currently available in the U.K. have robust evidence of effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to consider carefully how well-aligned a programme is to the recommendations in this report.

Seeking specialist support

In addition to good teaching for all pupils, some pupils will need specialist intervention, often delivered by a trained professional.[40] The SEND Code of Practice advises that when *'a pupil continues to make less than expected progress, despite evidence-based support and interventions that are matched to the pupil's area of need, the school should consider involving specialists, including those secured by the school itself or from outside agencies.'* [41]

Such specialist support could include, but is not limited to:

- Braille and orientation and mobility training for pupils with visual impairment;

- total communication (such as signing), sound systems, and assistance with hearing aids for some pupils with hearing impairment;

- speech and language therapy and the use of augmentative and alternative communication methods;

- assistance with positioning and movement—normally provided by physiotherapists and occupational therapists—or with personal care might be required by pupils with physical disabilities; and

- support from local mental health services or charities.

The case study in **Box 12** describes how one school works closely with a speech and language therapist to support students with speech, language, and communication needs.

Box 12: A view from a speech and language therapist

Alma Williamson, a speech and language therapist, describes an effective partnership she has built with Ash Grove Academy. The school works with Alma to access specialist intervention and to support staff to develop their understanding of speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN).

'There are many advantages to cross-sector collaborations to support children with SEND. It's a win-win scenario. The school has developed a partnership with the commissioned speech, language, and therapy service from the local health care trust. The partnership provides a lead speech and language therapist (SALT) working for one day a week, followed by three days of support by a speech and language therapy assistant.

One of the main benefits of the partnership is the opportunity for an integrated approach. Classroom observations and increased availability for direct, one-to-one discussions with the SENCos, teaching staff, and the specialist intervention teacher enhance the targeted Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessments and provide a more comprehensive picture of a child's language, social, and educational needs. The available speech and language therapist support is targeted towards the highest priority cases and is delivered in the place most appropriate for the child's learning and involves those who spend the most time with the child. Interventions can be delivered flexibly, responding to needs of each child, resulting in accelerated progress. There has been an increase in early and appropriate referrals to a SALT resulting in effective, timely intervention for children who are likely to have difficulties and closer, supportive dialogue with parents and carers.

The links with the local community, including parents and carers, have been of great benefit. The school hosts drop-in sessions, joint SALT sessions, and other support such as SEND breakfast meetings. This integrated approach directly impacts on outcomes, not only for the child but the entire Ash Grove School and the community it serves.'

There is a pupil on SEND support and the SENCo, Vishal, is considering how best to support him. Currently, the pupil is mainly supported by a teaching assistant, but Vishal is worried about the amount of time he is spending away from the rest of the class. He is conscious of the need for the pupil to receive high quality, whole-class teaching alongside his peers. Vishal begins to explore the research evidence on how to work with TAs to maximise their effectiveness.

Discussion questions:

How can TAs and teachers work together to maximise their impact?

Are there any risks with TAs working one-to-one with pupils? How can these be managed?

What are the most effective ways of deploying TAs to secure the best outcomes for pupils?

Between 2003 and 2008, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project surveyed nearly 18,000 school leaders, support staff, and teachers to obtain reliable data on the deployment and characteristics of support staff and their impact on pupil outcomes and teacher workloads. DISS found that the vast majority of support provided by teaching assistants (TAs), both in and out of the classroom, was for low-attaining pupils and those with SEND.[42] Furthermore, individual or small-group support—often provided by a TA—may also be recommended for some pupils as part of their EHC plan.

The effective deployment of TAs is, therefore, critical for securing a good education for pupils with SEND. When well-trained and properly supported, TAs can have a positive impact: many of the EEF's most successful programmes have involved TAs. Unfortunately, where the deployment of TAs is not carefully considered by school leadership, it can have negative impacts on pupils' learning and wellbeing.[43] **Box 13** describes some examples of ineffective TA deployment.

Box 13: What does ineffective teaching assistant deployment look like?[44]

TAs take responsibility for planning, and delivering, the teaching for pupils with SEND. TAs are taking on a primary teaching role but have not been trained or supported to provide effective teaching.

Pupils with SEND are often segregated from the rest of the class at an individual table with a TA. TAs conduct 'stereo-teaching' where their interactions with the pupil cut across the teacher's whole class delivery.

Pupils with SEND receive a very different classroom experience when working with a TA. Tasks can be inappropriately targeted, repetitive, or undemanding. TAs might decide what to do based on what they think the pupil can do or understand. This is well-intentioned but may not provide appropriate challenge.

The classroom teacher is not confident in addressing the sometimes complex and challenging needs of the pupils in their class. They might not have received training on teaching pupils with SEND. Their lesson planning is not sufficiently addressing the needs of pupils with SEND and this has become the responsibility of the TA.

Adopting an evidence-based approach

Before attempting to implement an evidence-based approach to working with TAs, it is useful to understand the impact of an ineffective approach. A series of studies from 2003 to 2017 investigated the typical deployment of TAs in English schools. A striking finding was that the majority of TAs spent most of their time working in a direct, but informal, instructional role with pupils on a small-group or one-to-one basis (both inside and outside of the classroom). TAs were principally working with pupils with SEND or pupils not making expected levels of progress. As a result of high levels of TA support, pupils with the most complex needs spent less time in whole-class teaching, less time with the teacher, and had fewer opportunities for peer interaction compared with their classmates. The net result of this approach results in TAs in mainstream schools regularly adopting the status of 'primary educator' for pupils in most need. Although this arrangement is often seen as beneficial for the pupils and the teacher—because the pupils in need receive more attention while the teacher can concentrate on the rest of the class—it causes a 'separation' effect. **Box 14** presents a case study describing an alternative approach.

Box 14: Case study—implementing an evidence-based policy for TA deployment

Heather Lacey, headteacher of Shirley Manor, a single-entry primary school in Bradford, undertook a whole-school project to reform the deployment and practice of teaching assistants. Drawing on the EEF's *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants* Guidance Report, TAs were trained and supported to use techniques to help pupils scaffold their own learning. Teachers were supported to rethink how they deployed TAs in classrooms so that they could spend more time teaching pupils with SEND and getting to know their needs.

Moving to the new model of support was a challenge for some parents of children with SEND who were concerned that their child would not receive the individualised support they were used to. In response, Heather and her team worked with parents to ensure a smooth transition to the new approach. She reports: 'We spoke to them and explained that the support from the TA was still there, but we were encouraging and supporting the children to see what they could do independently.'

Practice has become consistent across the school and is beginning to show impact. 'None of our children with an EHC plan relies on one-to-one support 100% of the time and the change in those children has been dramatic', says Heather. 'Their independence, self-esteem, and confidence is improving greatly. My internal results for children with SEND show a significant increase in progress.'

Not only that, but Heather says the TAs themselves are a transformed workforce: 'They feel valued and their confidence has soared.'

Making the best use of teaching assistants is a leadership issue; a lack of proper support and training is not the fault of TAs themselves. In 2015, the EEF published the report Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants. Drawing on a strong research base, this report sets out to demonstrate that TAs can have a positive impact on pupil achievement—but that this only happens when they are strategically deployed, prepared, supported, and resourced. The key recommendations from the guidance report on working effectively with teaching assistants are summarised below.
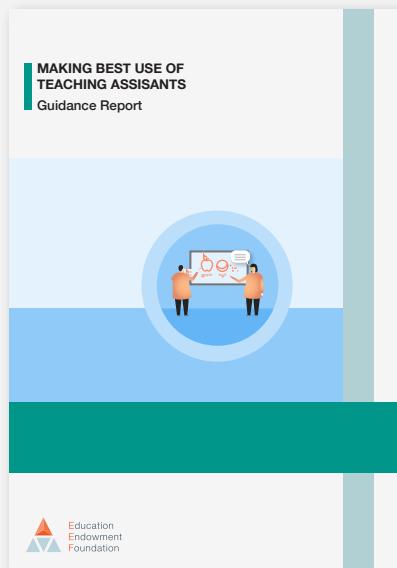
Teaching assistants should supplement, not replace, the teacher

Ensuring that TAs have a positive impact requires careful consideration of how they are deployed. School leaders should rigorously define the roles of both TAs and teachers and specifically how they can best support children with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice makes it clear that 'teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants'.

Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants—Recommendations

1. TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils.

2. Use TAs to add value to what teachers do, not to replace them.

3. Use TAs to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning.

4. Ensure TAs are fully prepared for their role in the classroom.

5. Use TAs to deliver high quality one-to-one and small group support using structured interventions.

6. Adopt evidence-based interventions to support TAs in their small-group and one-to-one instruction.

7. Ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions.

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Additional resources to support effective TA deployment

There are a range of supporting resources to enable schools to adopt a more evidence-informed deployment of teaching assistants. These includes:

- a draft agreement for teacher-TA interactions;

- a self-assessment guide for schools looking to improve their deployment of TAs;

- a draft TA policy template; and

- an online course.

The Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants website (http://maximisingtas.co.uk) is a rich source of free resources to support evidence-based TA deployment, including:

- professional standards for TAs;

- the Teaching Assistant Deployment Review Guide; and

- guidance for leaders and managers in the further education and training sector of effective TA deployment created by the EEF and the Education and Training Foundation.

Box 15: A view from an assistant headteacher–Supporting effective TA-pupil interaction

Rebecca Pentney, Research Lead at Littleport Community Primary School, explains how her school has worked to improve TA-pupil interactions.

'We used the scaffolding framework contained in the EEF's TA guidance to support TAs' interactions with pupils. This practical framework is designed to help TAs scaffold pupils' learning and support the development of independence. We made the framework a key feature of our approach to deploying and supporting TAs. By training TAs to consider and use the framework, we enabled them to provide the right level of support at the right time.'

The framework is shown below. The initial expectation is that pupils work independently while the TA observes their performance. TAs should then only intervene appropriately when pupils demonstrate they are unable to proceed. The aim is to provide opportunities for pupils to experience and develop independence while giving structure and consistency to TAs' talk.
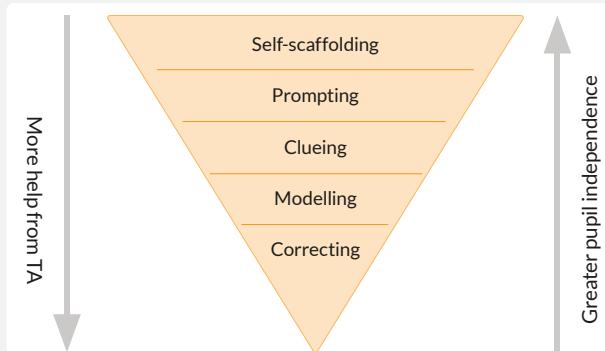
Self-scaffolding: TA observes that the pupil is working independently and does not intervene.

Prompting: TA uses wait time (10 secs) to see if the pupil can get started, asks a prompt question such as 'Can you remember what Mr T said you need to do first?', or gestures to a useful resource such as a model on an interactive white board or a word-bank on a table.

Clueing: TA uses a statement, 'The ruler will help you', or question, 'How could the ruler help you?', to give one piece of information at a time to support accessing the task. Several clues may be needed.

Modelling: TA demonstrates the next step the child needs to complete and then asks the child to take this step. 'I am using the word-bank to find a word to help me describe my character …'

Correcting: The TA provides answers and requires no independent thinking. Occasionally it is appropriate to do this, however, TAs should always aim instead to model and encourage pupils to apply new skills or knowledge first.

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HOW WAS THIS GUIDANCE COMPILED?

This guidance report draws on the best available evidence regarding supporting pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. It is based on a review conducted by a team from CEDAR at the University of Warwick led by Mairi Ann Cullen, Geoff Lindsay, Richard Hastings, and Louise Denne.[1]

The guidance report was created over several stages:

- **Scoping.** The EEF consulted with teachers, academics, parents and carers, and other stakeholders about the scope of the report. We then appointed an advisory panel and the review team and agreed research questions for the review.

- **Evidence review.** The review team conducted searches for the best available international evidence using a range of databases.

- **Writing recommendations.** The EEF worked with the advisory panel, evidence review team, and others to draft the guidance report and recommendations. The final guidance report was written by Kath Davies and Peter Henderson with input and feedback from many others. We have taken a pragmatic approach—not every issue relevant to pupils with SEND will be covered in detail. Instead, we have aimed to create a manageable introduction focusing on five key recommendations that should be the focus for school improvement.

The advisory panel included Adam Boddison, Julia Carroll, Maria Constantinou, Mairi-Ann Cullen, Geoff Lindsay, Margaret Mulholland, Christine Oliver, and Rebecca Pentney. We would like to thank them for the support, challenge, and input they provided throughout the process.

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