

Special Children

Meeting Children's Additional Educational Needs

- Supporting children with hearing impairments
- Taking communication to a new level
- The reality of living with ADHD
- BETT Show preview



Challenging behaviour

Strategies to promote behaviour modification

PULL-OUT RESOURCES
Understanding and managing ADHD

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Practical strategies to deliver a holistic, broad and balanced education to build resilience and prepare pupils for success outside of school

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Hockerill Anglo-European College

Bradley Busch

Director, InnerDrive

KEY BENEFITS

VISION AND ETHOS

Develop a whole school
strategy for wellbeing
and resilience

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Encourage student
voice and develop
pupil autonomy

CURRICULUM

Develop a rich, broad
and engaging
curriculum

Understanding and supporting SEND

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A recent investigation by *BBC Breakfast* into home education shows a 57% increase in the number of children with a statement or EHCP being educated at home. The same issue is highlighted by Amanda Spielman in her first annual report as chief inspector for schools.

Confused and overwhelmed

To illustrate what might lie behind this, the *BBC* cites the experience of Lorna Lynch whose 11-year-old daughter Emily has autism and ADHD and is on medication to manage anxiety. 'I couldn't cope with her coming back [from school] so stressed out, so angry at me,' Ms Lynch recounts, while Emily describes how she wanted to learn, 'but it's like I can't learn anything because I don't know how and they don't tell me how.' Confused and overwhelmed, she would lash out at other children, while at home her meltdowns were unmanageable. Her mother tried three different schools before deciding to home educate.

Whether or not parents resort to this option, there are lots of Emilys around the country who are not receiving the support they desperately need. On pages 18-20, we summarise the findings of a UK-wide report on ADHD which reveals widespread lack of understanding of the condition and serious deficiencies in provision. This is followed on pages 21-22 by an insightful personal account from a ten-year-old with ADHD coupled with autism, while the pull-out resource (pages 23-26) offers advice on identifying and supporting children with the disorder.

Learning to behave differently

Another point picked up in the Ofsted annual report is the challenging behaviour that children with SEND often display, which, of course, ties in with the issues explored above.

Getting children to think about their behaviour and how they might do things differently is the theme of three articles on positive behaviour management. The first features a post-incident learning app which has proved effective in a wide variety of contexts (pages 27-28). Next comes the account of how a primary school for children with SEMH difficulties has replaced systems that control their behaviour externally with a school-wide culture of supporting them to come up with their own solutions (pages 29-31). Finally, the leaders of a secondary SEMH school explain the rationale behind a compassionate, non-confrontational approach, where good behaviour is rewarded and bad behaviour is unpicked

and addressed rather than punished (pages 32-35).

Mental health and SLCN

Also highly relevant in the context of ADHD and other SEND is the question of mental health, with high levels of anxiety a common feature dominating the lives of these children. The government's green paper on mental health is therefore welcome, if long overdue, with its proposals to introduce a four-week waiting time for young people needing specialist support and new mental health support teams in schools.

As the writers of the articles on behaviour all point out, however, behaviour is a form of communication, and studies confirm a strong correlation between communication difficulties and poor mental health. Identifying and supporting children with SLCN is therefore crucial to enable them to understand and express their feelings, and build and maintain relationships, so fundamental to the development of self-worth and wellbeing.

In *Special Children* 239 we profiled two mainstream Shine a Light award winners who are proactive in addressing language and communication difficulties. This edition puts the spotlight on two special schools that are doing all in their power to enable children with more complex needs, including AAC users, to communicate effectively, not only in school but in the wider community (pages 8-12).

Hearing loss and communication

Another impairment that affects the development of language and communication skills is hearing loss, and the condition doesn't need to be severe to have an impact. A recent study showed that children who experienced repeated ear infections in early childhood had reading difficulties at the age of nine (<http://bit.ly/sc240-21>). On pages 15-17, Natalie Packer outlines the fundamentals of good classroom practice, including how to support communication during whole-class instruction and group work, and strategies to develop phonic awareness.

And finally, what more powerful way to communicate than through music? *Talking point* (pages 46-48) features a programme that enables disabled young people to not only participate in music but to excel. If you want something to lift your spirits at the start of a new term, watch the South West Open Youth Orchestra perform at <http://bit.ly/sc240-22> and enjoy.

Alison Thomas

Sophie C.

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SLCN

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A primary school for children with SEMH has replaced traditional methods of controlling behaviour externally with strategies that help the children to self-regulate

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Cover picture:

Lighting fires and whittling wood might seem high-risk activities, but the children behave extremely responsibly



Personalised books could boost early literacy skills

The National Literacy Trust has published a research review which shows that reading personalised print books with young children could help them develop their early literacy, language and communication skills.

The review includes studies which have found that giving children the opportunity to see themselves in a published book can boost their confidence, aspiration and educational outcomes, and that reading a personalised book with a parent motivates children to read more.

(<http://bit.ly/sc240-13>)

Other findings include the following.

- Children are encouraged to speak more, and for longer, boosting their vocabulary, improving listening and comprehension skills, and expanding



Vocabulary recall improves when questions relate a word to an individual

their knowledge of the world.

- Children start to see themselves as readers from an early age which, if maintained, can put them three years ahead of their peers in reading by age 14.
- Talk between a parent and a child during shared reading has a positive

impact on children's motivation to read on starting school.

- Children's learning during shared reading depends on how well parents are able to 'bridge the child's world and the world of the book' (Bus, 2003). This 'bridging' may be facilitated by personalised books, which, by featuring the child within the text itself, bring the worlds of the book and the child together.
- Memory is enhanced when people are able to categorise stimuli in relation to themselves (Sui and Humphries, 2015). A study of word acquisition in pre-school children found they 'showed significantly better knowledge' of words featuring in personalised sections of books compared to words appearing in non-personalised sections (Kucirkova et al, 2014a).

School system failing children with SEND

School leaders across England have raised concerns that the current 'rigid and discriminatory' school system prevents some pupils from reaching their full potential.

Of the 1,200 school leaders who completed the survey, many cited more funding, more flexibility in the curriculum and assessments, and additional specialist teaching assistants as possible solutions that would enable them to deliver better results for these pupils.

79% of school leaders say the current curriculum requirements are not providing the best outcomes for all their pupils, according to a new report from The Key – an organisation providing leadership and management support to schools.

68% of school leaders say that they lack support to deliver the best outcomes for pupils with SEND, and 56% for pupils with English as an additional language. 43% also feel that those with an aptitude for vocational subjects are being held back.

One deputy head in the South East said: 'For pupils with EAL and SEND, the new curriculum is too difficult for some of them to make sufficient progress that is measurable.' Another commented: 'Both gifted and talented pupils and pupils with SEN are restricted by the "one size fits all" mentality of the new curriculum and

assessment without levels.'

These findings come just a few months after a recent government report revealed that some local authorities do not have procedures in place to collect and review the outcomes of pupils with SEND.

Over the next two years, 46% of primary leaders and 44% of secondary leaders feel that they are not confident in their school's ability to sufficiently provide for pupils with SEND. Speaking about support for children, one primary school leader from London said: 'We used to have teaching assistants specifically trained to deliver interventions [for pupils with EAL] but this no longer happens.' Another said: 'The funding for pupils with SEND is not adequate and the referral system for top-up funding is too difficult.'

Sonia Blandford, CEO, Achievement for All, commented on the findings. 'Pupils who have barriers put before them will never succeed. The school curriculum needs to be relevant and attainable, not divisive. The vulnerable and disadvantaged continue to be left behind. To be socially mobile, every child needs to be included. A considered, realistic approach to improving outcomes for all pupils is needed, using evidence-based programmes to provide support for leaders and teachers at this critical time. The gap has been closed where this support has been embedded.'

World Book Day reading challenge



Pupils in search of a good read

Achievement for All's 10 Million Minutes Reading Challenge in March 2017 saw 125,000 pupils in 200 schools read over 15 million minutes in one week. This year's challenge? 100 million minutes.

From 1 March (World Book Day) until Friday 9 March 2018, pupils across the country can log their reading minutes in class and at home. There are prizes for schools or settings who achieve the highest average number of reading minutes per pupil, and certificates will be available to the individuals who reach key reading targets throughout the week.

Register at www.100millionminutes.org

Impact of apps on language development

Watching television or playing with smart phone apps do not appear to have any effect on children's language development, providing they still spend time reading, researchers have found.

A study from the University of Salford and ESRC International Centre for Language and Cognitive Development (LuCiD) at Lancaster University, published in the *Journal of Children and Media* (<http://bit.ly/sc240-06>), found that as long as parents or carers spend time reading with young children, and this time is not reduced to make way for television or touchscreen devices, children's exposure to these media should have no effect on the size of their vocabulary.

The researchers used online questionnaires to get data from 131 parents of children aged six to 36 months.

The parents were asked about the amount of time their children spend



Scrolling across the screen of a tablet is as natural for a three-year-old as flicking through a picture book

watching TV, using devices such as smart phones or tablets, and either reading or having stories read to them. They were also asked to complete a detailed checklist of words from different categories, such as animals, household items and food and drink, which their children were able to say and understand.

In the families surveyed, 99% of children were read to daily, 82% watched television and 49% used mobile touchscreen devices. The researchers found a positive relationship between the amount of time children spent reading or being read to and their vocabulary size, but time spent watching television or using mobile devices made no difference.

Professor Padraic Monaghan, co-director of LuCiD, says: 'This study confirms that reading a book with a young child is one of the most important ways in which language learning can be supported. Although the way in which we communicate is changing with new media, there is still no better way to promote children's communication than reading books together.'

It is important to note that the sample of parents was made up of highly educated families, and in order to study this issue more broadly the researchers would need to look at a much larger group of parents.

New app supports self-harmers

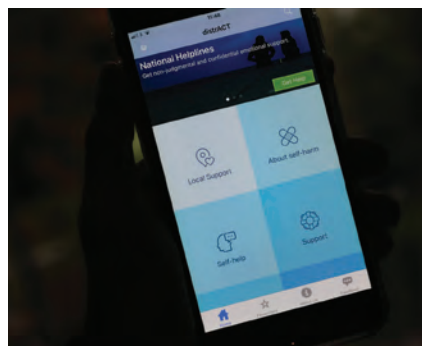
A new free app called distrACT has been launched to help young people who self-harm or feel suicidal.

Created by doctors and psychologists, together with young adults and experts in self-harm and suicide prevention, the content, aimed at 16- to 24-year-olds, is divided into six areas.

- About self-harm – facts and figures, dangers and warning signs.
- Self-help – dealing with feelings, managing the urge, distracting yourself, safer alternatives to self-harm.
- Support – talking to family, healthcare, national helplines.
- Local support – sending an email to get links to local information.
- Emergency – first aid, feeling suicidal, A&E.
- Chill zone – art, videos, music and other creative media which help people get new perspectives and insights.

Every year, accident and emergency departments report 200,000 cases of self-harming; 25,000 in Bristol alone. Research shows that those who self-harm are 35 times more likely to end their own life than others.

A national advisory group was set up to address the issue, and included Bristol Health Partners, Bristol GP Dr Knut



The app points young people to sources of advice

Schroeder, founder and director of Expert Self Care Limited, and Dr Asha Patel, CEO and clinical psychologist at Innovating Minds, which works with young people, schools and community groups. Together with other partners, they set out to consider alternative forms of support for young people who have self-harmed or are on the point of self-harming.

'When we asked ourselves how we could make it easy and convenient for young people to access information and support about self-harm, the idea for an app was born,' says Dr Schroeder. 'An app is better than a website, in that it can work offline, loads faster and does not leave a search trail.'

The app is available at both the App Store and Google Play.

Guidance on medical conditions

A parent of a child with a medical condition, type 1 diabetes, started a petition which was later delivered to the minister of state for children and families, following an incident which caused her daughter to suffer a dangerous hypo during a school activity.

Her child's school did not have a medical conditions policy in place. If it had, the school would have been aware of the support her daughter needed to stay safe in school and the incident would have been avoided.

The Health Conditions in School Alliance is offering guidance and tools to schools for children who have health conditions. This includes:

- a template medical conditions policy
- a sample individual healthcare plan and advice on what it should contain
- guidance on the legal situation across the UK
- a process for children who receive education in different settings.

<http://medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk>



Leading Parent Partnership Award

Implement strategies to engage all groups of parents in supporting their children's learning and development, from early years to post-16.

"We are so pleased to receive the LPPA as recognition for the hard work our staff, governors, parents and pupils have put in to ensuring our school has an effective home school relationship."

Mr Alan Chaffey
Biggin Hill Primary School

Diabetic children denied school support funding

Imogen Jolley, head of education at law firm Simpson Millar, is criticising a number of local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) who have begun passing the buck on funding support for young people with type 1 diabetes to schools.

10 families in Hertfordshire (not all clients of Simpson Millar) are affected – all are treated at the same hospital. Similar problems are being experienced in Kent and Surrey.

Type 1 diabetes creates special educational needs under the definition set out in the Children and Families Act. Parents of children with the condition are legally entitled to additional funding either through the CCG or by getting



Testing for blood sugar levels

their child an EHCP. Until recently, most local authorities accepted this. However, a number of them are arguing that the Children and Families Act places the responsibility of supporting children with medical conditions on schools.

Ms Jolley says: 'Support for children

with diabetes which was previously in place is now at risk across the country. We are receiving a growing number of calls for help from parents who have been told by their local authority that their child no longer qualifies for extra funding. The disease can have a devastating impact on a person's ability to concentrate and learn. Claiming that it is purely a medical issue and refusing a child a statutory assessment for an EHCP is neither fair nor lawful.'

She continues: 'Type 1 diabetes is classed as a disability and if a young person is unable to take advantage of the facilities available at school because of their medical condition, then they fulfil the definition of having special educational needs.'

EHCPs – what's going wrong?

A new report by the local government and social care ombudsman explores the first 100 investigations into complaints about the EHCP process.

EHCPs were introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014 to provide joined-up support for children with SEND from birth to 25 years. Common issues include the following.

- Delay – an overriding feature in most complaints. Less than 59% of new EHCPs were issued within the 20-week limit last year; in a few cases families waited over a year.
- Failure to consult with families about what evidence should be gathered to inform an EHCP assessment. In addition, some councils did not obtain professional advice within the six-week time frame, or failed to give professionals clear instructions, so the advice they received was not detailed or specific

enough to write a clear EHCP. In some cases, councils seemed to be unaware that it was their duty to gather evidence.

- Pressuring parents. A common fault involved councils realising at the end of the EHCP process that no meeting had been held, and then pressuring parents to hold it at short notice (in one case, 24 hours) or by telephone so that the council could meet its statutory deadlines.
- Inadequate or incomplete 'final' EHCPs being issued to meet a timetable, although further work was needed, which led to subsequent 'final' EHCPs or unnecessary appeals. This undermined the intention to reduce the administrative burden on families and often caused unnecessary distress and confusion.
- Council officers sometimes lacked the necessary financial information to be able to make valid judgements regarding

parental preferences or requests for personal budgets. In particular, social care and transport costs are frequently not factored in when comparing the costs of placement. Sometimes this means councils were refusing the parents' preferred placement even when it was no more expensive in real terms and should have been agreed.

Other problems included the use of panels to make decisions about SEND placements which were never discussed with the family, and did not appear to take their views into account; failure to keep minutes of discussions or record reasons for decisions, leaving families, and in some instances SEND officers, unable to understand how decisions had been reached; and suggesting placements that were not compatible with professional advice in EHCP assessments. Read the full report here: <http://bit.ly/sc240-07>

Identifying speech and language difficulties

The Communication Trust has added a new page on identifying speech, language and communication needs to its website.

The page brings together a suite of tools and resources that support practitioners to identify speech, language

and communication needs, make quality referrals and effective decisions to support children and young people's speech, language and communication (<http://bit.ly/sc240-08>). Resources include:

- guidance on what to consider when making a referral

- commissioning guidance for early years settings
- additions to the Cracking the Code poster series for primary and secondary staff, as well as a poster which outlines the rights of parents as set out in the SEND reforms.

Local area SEND inspections

Ofsted and The Care Quality Commission have just published a report on the first tranche of local area SEND inspections (<http://bit.ly/sc240-09>).

Inspectors found some level of parental dissatisfaction in nearly all local area inspections.

- Children with SEND had a much poorer experience of the education system than their peers.
- They were excluded, absent or missing from school much more frequently than other pupils nationally.
- School leaders had used unofficial

exclusions too readily to cope with children and young people who have SEND.

- Access to therapy services was weak in half of the local areas inspected, and access to CAMHS was poor in over a third of local areas.
- There had not been enough progress in implementing a coordinated 0-25 service for children and young people who have SEND.
- A large proportion of parents in the local areas inspected lacked confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to meet their child's needs.

The impact of teacher observation on pupil outcomes

Introducing more frequent and structured lesson observations made no difference to pupils' GCSE maths and English results.

While this was the key finding of an independent evaluation of an Education Endowment Foundation trial involving 14,100 pupils in 82 English secondary schools, it is important to note that many of the comparison schools were already doing lesson observations of some sort. What these results suggest is that this structured observation programme does not have any benefits over existing levels of peer observation. <http://bit.ly/sc240-15>.

In the evaluation, maths and English

teachers in the intervention schools were asked to take part in a minimum of six structured 20-minute peer observations over a two-year period, with a recommended number of between 12 and 24. Teachers rated each other on specific elements of a lesson, such as how well they managed behaviour, engaged students in learning or used discussion techniques.

Many teachers failed to complete the recommended number of observations. Some had difficulty fitting these into their timetable, while others felt uncomfortable taking time out of teaching, and said that the level of expected observations was unsustainable.

Flipped learning accelerates progress

MathsFlip is an online flipped learning programme in which pupils learn core content outside class before participating in classroom activities to reinforce their learning.

The aim is to improve attainment by allowing pupils to be better prepared for lessons, and provide teachers with more information about their pupils and more classroom time to devote to in-depth, complex learning activities. Before a recent trial, however, there was no robust evidence of its effectiveness in the UK.

The project was a randomised controlled trial involving 24 schools: 12 schools received the intervention from April 2014 until April 2015. Children in MathsFlip schools made the equivalent

of one additional month's progress on average compared to children in control schools. The impact was slightly higher for children eligible for the pupil premium (these results are less secure than the overall findings because of the smaller number of pupils).

Most teachers in the trial were very positive about the approach and the technical and professional support they received. The process evaluation suggests that the technical support was necessary for successful implementation. Some pupils did not have internet access at home, so some schools set up homework clubs to provide access in school.

Download the full report: <http://bit.ly/sc240-03>

And finally...

Prospects Group and Shaw Trust

The Prospects Group (owners of Optimus Education, which publishes *Special Children*) has merged with the Shaw Trust, a national charity that provides employment services, skills development training, and health and wellbeing support to 50,000 people across the UK each year.

How I see

93% of registered blind and partially sighted people have some level of vision. A new three-minute film from the Royal National Institute of Blind People explores how six blind or partially sighted people see the world in six completely different ways. <http://bit.ly/sc240-12>

Free online CPD in SLCN

The Communication Trust has launched an improved version of its free, short online CPD course, An Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication. This offers four pathways – early years, primary, secondary or further education, and a number of activities and resources to support learning. The course is aimed at anyone working with children and young people. Topics include understanding typical speech, language and communication, and strategies to support its development. <http://bit.ly/sc240-17>

Understanding autism

Two events from the National Autistic Society. The Autism and Anxiety Conference will help professionals develop their knowledge and understanding of anxiety and how best to support autistic children and adults experiencing mental health difficulties. 1 February 2018, Bristol. <http://bit.ly/sc240-04>

The Sensory Considerations Training Course is designed to help professionals better understand how sensory differences may affect behaviour. 20 February 2018, London. <http://bit.ly/sc240-05>

Sensory Integration and Trauma in Children

This one-day course will provide an insight into sensory integration and its application and links to developmental or early childhood trauma and attachment issues, which can include early loss or lack of a consistent caregiver, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, various forms of neglect and medical or life-saving procedures. 30 April, High Wycombe. <http://bit.ly/sc240-10>

Taking communication to a new level

Three schools show how their strategies have made a difference to children with speech, language and communication needs



Students are taught how to locate vocabulary in a classroom setting

AAC – a subject in its own right

Hazel Darby and **Becky Ffrench** extol the benefits of making AAC a curriculum subject

Most pupils at Ingfield Manor School, West Sussex, have communication difficulties, and many are non-verbal communicators who use augmentative alternative communication (AAC). Four years ago, after reviewing speech and language outcomes, we decided to reinvent the way AAC was taught here. The impact of this decision has made a profound difference to our pupils.

Ingfield Manor is a Scope school for pupils aged three to 19 with neurological motor impairment. While all have physical difficulties such as cerebral

palsy that impair their communication and access to the National Curriculum, they do not necessarily have learning difficulties. The school specialises in conductive education – teaching children to develop control of movement and use it in a purposeful way.

A timetabled subject

Back in 2013, we realised that many AAC-user students had become passive communicators and relied on adult support to initiate communication. We were not giving them enough opportunity to learn to use their communication devices effectively.

The AAC team's response was to turn AAC into a curriculum subject in its own right, giving AAC-user students timetabled, structured opportunities to explore language in a safe environment on their high- and low-tech devices through aided language stimulation and modelling. This has enabled them to develop both their language and social interaction skills as well as their fluency in AAC.

Having motor impairment, some students cannot always access voice output communication aids through direct (finger) access or keyboards and a mouse. So they may need to be set up with alternatives, such as switches or eye gaze.

We now teach AAC in the same way that typically developing students might be taught another language. From their earliest years, students systematically learn new words and phrases, the symbols for these and how to find them on their device. In addition, they are given lots of opportunities for group interaction. In the residential provision, for instance, AAC practice continues into the evenings.

In parallel with turning AAC into a timetabled subject, we introduced the City & Guilds Effective AAC qualification, which gives students accreditation for their newly acquired skills. This enables students to measure their own success and achievements, and matches formal qualifications achieved by their verbal peers.

The outcome has been an improvement in the way students communicate. They have become more independent and are now confident to take part in social activities in a whole-school environment, such as presenting in assemblies.

Managing new vocabulary

Alongside AAC, students study National Curriculum subjects, albeit modified to meet their needs, including maths, ICT and English. Consequently, a lot of time is spent updating their communication systems with subject-specific or age-appropriate language. In geography, for instance, students need to know how to find symbols for tectonic plates or precipitation. At a social level, one student wanted to be able to say: 'It's all gone Pete Tong,' instead of 'It's all gone wrong.'

Teachers model language and sentence structure using the students' AAC systems and encourage them to respond in full sentences with a sentence starter and the correct grammar. Staff also use aided language stimulation, which is similar to modelling. For example, if a student says: 'I'm sad,' the teacher will point to the symbol on their communication device and acknowledge what they said by repeating it back to them: 'You're sad. You said: "sad". Why are you sad?'

Even if students use a word out of context, it is important to acknowledge that they have said a word at all, and then maybe explain that it is not right in this context and giving another context where it would be. In this way staff recognise all the student contributions, and try to give meaning and context to what students are saying. It's all about stimulating and guiding their independence using language.

Meanwhile, children are not always removed from lessons for therapy.



A student uses his device to share his music with a team member

Rather, therapies are delivered during whatever lesson happens to be taking place at the time. In this way, the teacher may be supported by physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, technologists and conductive teachers, all working to improve students' ability to communicate.

We now teach AAC in the same way that students might be taught another language

This is because a student will never be working on language alone, but will have issues around posture, seating and switch access, among other things – it requires a bank of specialist skills to enable our pupils to communicate.

The school also works closely with outside agencies such as Chailey Clinical Services, which offers specialist services, advice and equipment for children and young people with complex neurodisability.



Language acquisition need not all be serious

Training

All this requires a lot of specialist knowledge from staff, who learn AAC on the job. The school has a strong core team, many of whom have relevant qualifications. For example, Miss Ffrench has a Level 7 Post Graduate Certificate in Assistive Technology from the ACE Centre and Manchester Metropolitan University, giving credits towards her Masters.

Otherwise, AAC acquisition is down to regular training, not only for teachers, but for support staff, in-house and external therapists and people from other agencies, such as respite care and holiday clubs. Like every school, Ingfield Manor has Inset days, and every year one of these is dedicated to working on ICT, a big chunk of which focuses on developing skills in assistive technology.

The school also provides the opportunity for families and carers to attend AAC lessons and/or take part in one-to-one training sessions with the team.

To support the induction of new members of staff, the AAC team has created a list of core competencies which need to be acquired before starting to work with students. For example, support staff shadow the speech and language therapist and technologist to develop their understanding of how students access their communication systems through switches, auditory scanning and eye gaze. New staff also receive induction training in AAC and ICT, and, for the first half term, shadow experienced staff to observe how they interact with students. Simple things make a huge difference, such as knowing how each student says yes or no – this is individual for every student.

With the introduction of AAC as a curriculum subject, students are better equipped to move on to college at 19, where they can gain further City and Guilds qualifications, as well as studying vocational skills, thanks to their ability to communicate more effectively. To assist smooth transitions, the school ensures that, even when students go for a provisional visit, all their communication systems are up to date, and that the college has all the necessary details about how they access these.

A positive impact

Four years ago, only 29% of students using AAC were reaching National Curriculum targets in speaking and listening. After just one year of making AAC a curriculum subject, 100% of students achieved their targets and many surpassed them. In addition, they all gained City & Guilds qualifications at entry level, a great achievement.

While these outcomes are all we could have wished for, we were delighted to receive the 2017 Shine a Light AAC Award in recognition of the combined impact of prioritising AAC as part of the curriculum, providing structured language learning opportunities within these lessons, and introducing a formal qualification to assess and celebrate students' learning.

Based on our experience, we would

recommend to all schools where AAC is used that they make AAC a curriculum subject in its own right because it has such long-lasting impact on students' futures.



Hazel Darby is the former principal and Becky Ffrench is a teacher at Ingfield

Manor School in Billingshurst

FIND OUT MORE

- Ingfield Manor School: <http://bit.ly/ingfield>
- The Shine A Light Awards are run by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust. www.shinealightawards.co.uk

Improving communication in a special school

Abi Steady talks to **Virginia Butcher** about the power of creating a total communication environment

Ashmount is a special school for pupils aged four to 19 with severe and profound and multiple learning disabilities that puts SLCN at the heart of its teaching ethos.

'We are committed to developing young people's ability to communicate so that they are empowered to contribute to the decisions that will affect their lives as they grow up,' says Abi Steady, deputy head and strategic lead for communication.

Underpinning this commitment is a deep belief that facilitating a 'total communication environment' is crucial to the quality of teaching and learning and the development of interpersonal relationships. 'It means we use anything we can to help support a young person's ability to communicate,' says Mrs Steady, 'including switches, signing, visuals, music and even smells, as well as voice where this is possible. The concept is rooted in mutual respect and the idea that everyone has something to say. Our job is to provide young people with the opportunities and means to express themselves.'

Ashmount ensures that every pupil has access to a carefully planned balance of inclusive experiences: some where they learn alongside pupils of a similar age who may have very different abilities and needs to themselves, and some highly specialised sessions where pupils are matched with other pupils working on common areas of communication. This balance has proved highly effective in ensuring that all pupils make outstanding personal progress.

Area training

The emphasis on creating a total communication environment extends



A child works out her response to a question from a school member of staff who is working in a cafe in the local community

beyond the school. As an outstanding special school and teaching school, Ashmount coordinates a range of training and support across the area. For example, staff encourage colleagues in local mainstream schools to attend their training classes in Makaton and other means of communication. In school, they invite all early years' parents to a series of workshops where they learn to support their child's early communication development in a variety of ways, such as through music, play and signing.

For CPD, Ashmount adopts a joint practice development model, which is based on self-improvement and collaboration. This brings together

like-minded members of staff interested in developing the same skill to create projects that will have a big impact and a lasting legacy.

Under this premise, Ashmount is able to have a significant impact on working practice, not only within Ashmount itself but also, more broadly, within local mainstream environments. The opportunity for mainstream support assistants and teachers to work alongside Ashmount staff as part of a job swap scheme has proved a particularly effective way to support the NHS SALT team in promoting communication strategies and developing staff and skills.



Children are relaxed and enjoy themselves in speech and language sessions



Children practise descriptive words in a specialist language group for students using AAC devices

'Training' the community

All this training and development will prove futile if young people are unable to cope outside the secure environments of home and school. To this end, Ashmount also focuses on developing their independence and ability to communicate in a pub, a shop, a cinema or doctor's surgery.

To promote a better understanding of AAC in the wider community, pupils go out in groups and use their communication devices to converse with people in cafés and supermarkets so that the general public gets used to seeing these in action.

Other groups do the same with the picture exchange communication system (PECS). The aim is to raise awareness of different methods of communication and reduce the awkwardness many people feel when confronted with someone who struggles to communicate in a more 'typical' way.

A coordinated approach

Ensuring that everyone who works with pupils is pulling in the same direction is fundamental to Ashmount's success in developing their ability to communicate. To optimise the implementation and dissemination of support programmes, and maximise continuity and consistency for pupils and family, the school created a specialised communication team to organise and implement coordinated SCLN support.

The timetables of specialist staff, including the teacher for augmentative communication, the NHS speech and language therapist, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, are integrated so they can work side by side with each other and other school staff to provide an efficient and cohesive service that meets the needs of pupils more effectively.

One of the communication team's initiatives was the creation of a range of language groups that meet on Wednesdays, each with a specific focus. For instance, there is one for Makaton signers, one for eye gaze users, one for VOCA users (voice output communication aids), and one for pupils with autism.

Mrs Steady describes how a group session for pupils with profound learning difficulties might unfold.

The aim is to raise public awareness of different methods of communication

'The first part of a session is dedicated to helping pupils acclimatise to their environment and the people supporting them. Some young people operating at a very early level have a slow processing time as well as challenges with short-term memory, so they are working within two sets of constraints. The aim is to get them ready to respond to input by using a single channel of sensory processing at a time. For example, for an auditory input, we would dim lights and concentrate on just, say, the rhythm of a big drum.'

Since the school first trialled the idea, 16 distinct groups have evolved that cover the range of abilities within the pupil body. Thanks to the concentrated impact of teaching and learning in these groups, pupil progress has accelerated. For instance, all seven pupils in the pre-intentional communication group were judged to be making outstanding progress from their individual starting points.

Video modelling

Another initiative that came out of Communication Wednesdays is the use of video modelling to improve language acquisition in children who have severe and profound learning needs. 'These pupils have a tendency to become quite prompt dependent because they are surrounded by adults all the time,' says Mrs Steady. 'Unfortunately this becomes embedded in their learning processes until they become unwilling to have a go at things independently.' Video modelling has proved very successful at encouraging independent task initiation in pupils with autism, for example, making them less reliant on adult cues. The aim is to make pupils more independent by teaching them to carry out everyday tasks, like putting on their coat or opening a bag of crisps, without the need for adult encouragement.

Another use of video modelling is to improve Makaton signing skills. Pupils watch videos of themselves signing a word and then learn how to correct themselves and improve their performance by reviewing their videos. 'Often pupils spot their own mistakes,' says Mrs Steady. 'This is better than adults trying to explain what they did wrong or correct them, and it stops our input from becoming part of their learning and communication process.'

Library and assessment toolkit

Paramount to pupil development are assistive technologies and communication aids. To facilitate the often complex and drawn out process of assessment and funding application, Ashmount has created a switch/AAC assessment library, financed in part from the school budget with the rest coming from fundraising. Over the years, it has acquired a wide range of low- and high-tech devices, which enables staff to explore possibilities

for using different types of equipment with a pupil over a more extended period before deciding what suits them best and applying for funding.

The school plans to grow its switch/AAC assessment library, and hopes eventually to be in a position to lend devices to Ashmount pupils outside school and ultimately to pupils in other schools and settings.

In conjunction with the library, the AAC teacher, together with the school's NHS speech and language therapist and communication mentors, developed an assessment toolkit to help them form an initial, informal judgement about the suitability of communication devices. 'This is a set of criteria, activities and indications that we look for from the young person to be confident that they are ready to move forwards,' says Mrs Steady. Ashmount also uses CODES, a licence-free resource from KeyComm (Edinburgh), when assessing pupils for high-tech aids.

The team has also implemented switch passports for switch users, which document the pupil's current switch use



Every child feels empowered to ask questions

and targets to help carry-over between class teams.

Looking forward

Ashmount School's achievements were formally recognised when it won the SEN School of the Year Award at the 2017 Shine a Light Awards. Its success in the field of SLCN is all the more impressive as the school does not commission any additional therapeutic input to achieve its results, but focuses on harnessing centrally commissioned resources available across agencies to optimise outcomes for young people.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Ashmount is now following a new set of communication standards, *The 5 Good Communication Standards* produced by the National College of Speech and Language, and plans to excel across the board in these. 'We want to be setting the benchmark,' explains Mrs Steady.

Other areas that the senior leadership team plans to continue developing include the assessment toolkit, particularly when it comes to assessing pupils operating at the pre-intentional and very early stages of communication language levels (P1.1 to P2.2). There will also be a focus on implementing specific language interventions for children with hearing impairments and finding ways to improve and adjust teaching and learning styles to accommodate such pupils.

The school's dedicated search for new and better ways of creating a total communication environment goes on.



Virginia Butcher is a freelance writer

Harnessing technology to improve provision

Chris Dyson explains how technology helped him halve his speech and language therapy bill

In one of the most deprived areas of Leeds, Parklands Primary School has 380 children on roll, of whom 33% are on the SEN register and 72% are in receipt of the pupil premium.

Many pupils join us in Reception with no experience of nursery schooling and 85% of them start at well below age-expected language levels. We aim to pick up difficulties early so that, by the time they reach Key Stage 2, those with speech, language and communication delay will have caught up with their peers. Consequently, speech and language provision is crucial.

Until recently, this provision was met by NHS speech and language therapists (SLTs). Unfortunately, it was no longer providing value for money. For example, in the last three years, we've had six different SLTs, fracturing the quality of service and destroying continuity for everyone concerned.

The service cost the school £42,000, a

sizeable sum at a time when school and SEN budgets are falling in real terms. So I started to investigate alternatives.

A new way of working

Among the providers I researched was Mable Therapy, which offers a technology-driven solution. Instead of an SLT coming into school, children have one-to-one sessions with a therapist online where they play interactive games targeting the specific skills they need to develop. If a Mable SLT is off sick, one of their colleagues steps in, unlike the NHS provision where no replacements were provided in cases of illness.

With 38 children needing specialist support, we decided to try out Mable's more flexible offer. Once the necessary hardware was installed, the children were assessed to determine which programme was appropriate for their needs, then embarked on twice-weekly therapy sessions via an online face-to-face connection. Lasting 20-25 minutes,

these sessions are supervised in school by a trained TA, Aysha Arian, who also facilitates follow-up sessions using work supplied by Mable.

The only children who don't work this way are the 12 pupils from our resource provision for children with severe learning difficulties. The demands of the system would be too much for children with their high level of need, so a Mable therapist comes into school for half a day a week to work with them individually, face to face.

Professional development

Professional development is an important part of the Mable Therapy service. Its Learning Zone, which is directly linked to the needs of the children the staff member is working with, provides an assessment at the end of each module to check the child's learning and a certificate to acknowledge professional development.

Miss Arian has also received two days' training at Mable headquarters, where the SLTs took her through the various



Miss Arian observes as a pupil interacts with the speech and language therapist

programmes they use and taught her how to support children effectively in the follow-up sessions.

All follow-up work is done on a tablet and every time Miss Arian runs a session, the system credits her with points, which she trades in for additional training – an incentive she finds very motivating. Another advantage of having the children's programmes on her tablet is that she can do follow-up work anywhere, including in class.

At present, Miss Arian is solely responsible for provision supervision, but eventually we hope to have other staff trained too.

Practicalities

We introduced Mable in the summer term of 2017. There were a few minor technical hitches at the start, but within a couple of weeks everything was running smoothly.

Sessions are organised on a rolling timetable. Every morning, Miss Arian checks who is absent and reallocates their slot so that no session is wasted. She then

“Mable Therapy trained the TA in how to support children effectively in follow-up sessions”

spends half an hour familiarising herself with what each child will be working on and planning the follow-up sessions for the previous day's children. Meanwhile, Mable's system automatically generates an email to class teachers to let them know which children will be called out of lessons and when.

Therapy sessions are scheduled for the morning, with follow-ups taking place the following afternoon. To minimise disruption to children's learning, Miss Arian alters the timetable each week so that they are not missing the same lessons every time.

Managing the day-to-day logistics is

simple: the child who has just finished fetches the next child, which takes them three to four minutes. The Mable SLT uses this time to upload the next child's programme onto the computer.

Parents can also access activities online to reinforce their child's learning at home.

Monitoring impact

Children's progress is tracked by the software and an end-of-week report shows which sounds each child has mastered, which ones they are working on and which ones they still have to learn, providing teachers with very specific feedback to inform their lesson planning.

Meanwhile, the senior leadership team has an overview of the progress being made across the whole cohort and can clearly see how much funding has been allocated and the impact it is having.

Outcomes

The children love the way speech and language therapy is now delivered. Many of them do not have access to computers at home, so they find the online sessions novel and exciting. The material is all age appropriate – for example, younger children will see balloons flying around on screen and they have to find the matching sound.

We can see from the children's responses in class that they have become more confident speakers and communicators. This is confirmed by our data, which evidences accelerated progress in 90% of the participants, a much greater improvement than we had anticipated. As a result, 20% of the pupils have been discharged as they are now working at an age-appropriate level.

Meanwhile, this innovative, online approach is saving us £20,000, literally halving the cost of our SLCN provision. To other schools, I say, look closely at value for money. Don't stick with a supplier just because you've been with them forever. Consider all the options available.



Chris Dyson is headteacher at Parklands Primary School, Leeds. He welcomes staff from other schools to come and observe the school's SCLN

provision

FIND OUT MORE

- Mable Technology in Leeds was joint-winner of the 2017 Shine a Light Award for innovation in SLCN. <https://mabletherapy.com>

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Line of sight is vital when communicating with deaf children, not just when signing



Sound advice

Natalie Packer advises on how to remove barriers for pupils with a hearing impairment

Almost all teachers will, at some point, have pupils in their classes who are not hearing clearly.

Some children will experience hearing loss because of a temporary condition, such as glue ear, while others may have a permanent hearing loss. Hearing impairment (HI), or deafness, is sometimes described as a 'hidden' special educational need, because it is not immediately obvious. If you have a pupil with a hearing loss, it is crucial to know how best to communicate with them and support them in the classroom.

The extent of the difficulty

You will want to start by finding out all you can about the nature of the pupil's disability. Few children are totally deaf and most have some residual hearing and can hear sounds at certain pitches or volumes.

Mild hearing loss is quite common and

usually means that the pupil can hear a normal voice, but only at a reduced level.

“A pupil with HI may be unable to pick up incidental information gained by watching and listening to others”

Hearing aids are not always helpful in such cases, and are more likely to be prescribed for children with a moderate hearing loss. However, while pupils with mild hearing loss may appear to cope in the classroom, they may still experience challenges and some will rely on lip reading.

A pupil with a severe or profound hearing loss will almost always use a hearing aid or cochlear implant, as

without this technology they will not be able to hear speech or other sounds. They are also likely to require significant levels of support to access the curriculum, which may include the use of sign language. Talk to the pupil, their parents and colleagues who have had experience of working with the child to establish the nature of their hearing loss and how they prefer to communicate. Information from specialists, such as a qualified teacher of the deaf, will also be invaluable.

The impact on learning

The difficulties faced by pupils with HI will vary depending on the degree of hearing loss. For a long time it was thought that mild hearing loss had only a small impact on learning. However, recent research by the National Deaf Children's Society suggests that this is not the case and that these pupils can miss up to 50% of what is being said. Imagine how

Hearing impairment

difficult it is to learn when you hear only half of any conversation.

Whatever the nature of a child's hearing loss, it is very likely to have an impact on their listening and language development. A pupil with HI may find it challenging to hear and understand in a noisy classroom. They may be unable to pick up incidental information usually gained by watching and listening to others. The pupil may not hear all the words, or all the individual sounds in a word. They may miss or misinterpret unstressed words in speech (e.g. prepositions) or find some sounds difficult to make (e.g. 's', 'sh' and 't'). They may also have reduced vocabulary and understanding of words and concepts.

In addition, a deaf pupil may:

- find it hard to hear when there is background noise
- struggle to locate the source of a sound
- miss important information, including their name being called or instructions
- ask for things to be repeated
- need more time to process information and respond
- find it difficult to concentrate and appear to be daydreaming or fidgety
- find it difficult to join in group discussions
- struggle to regulate their own voice and so shout or whisper
- find oral work harder than written work
- become tired because of the extra effort required to concentrate on listening or lip reading
- find it difficult to form friendships because of the challenges in interacting with their peers
- become frustrated with not being able to hear, and experience low self-esteem
- find it difficult to understand and express what they are feeling.

Times of transition can be particularly difficult for a pupil with hearing loss where they are likely to be encountering new learning environments, unfamiliar staff, changes in peer groups and more demanding subject content or vocabulary.

The types of teaching strategy that will support them to make the same progress as other pupils of a similar age and cognitive ability will differ depending on the nature of the hearing loss and the challenges they face. Talk to the pupil and their parents and agree strategies together.

Adapting the environment

A good starting point is to consider your classroom environment. Check the acoustics and try to minimise background noise such as heaters (or chattering). The



There is no reason deaf children should not make the same progress as their peers, given the right support

acoustics can be improved by having a carpet on the floor, putting rubber tips on chair legs and introducing soft furnishings such as curtains and cushions. If reverberation is a problem, for example, if your classroom has high ceilings or large windows, felt-covered boards, such as the HushBoards produced by PC Werth, can be installed to reduce echoes (see *Tried and tested*, *Special Children* 230).

“When teaching phonics, be aware of the limitations of lip reading”

Avoid seating the pupil near noisy equipment such as printers, and turn these off when not in use. If possible, arrange your desks in a circle or semicircle so the pupil can see their peers. This is especially important if they need to lip read. Check that there is plenty of light in the room and be aware of where you stand so that the pupil can see whoever is talking, be it you or another pupil, read their body language and clearly see their face.

Communication strategies

All communication with deaf pupils needs to be clear and effective. Ensure that you have their attention before speaking, otherwise they might miss the start of the conversation. Get into their line of sight and agree a signal for when you are about to speak, for example, raising your hand. Once a conversation has begun, try the following strategies.

- Speak clearly, naturally and at your normal pace. Shouting or speaking too slowly distorts lip patterns and isn't helpful for a pupil trying to lip read.
- Try not to walk around the classroom too much. If the pupil lip reads, it is difficult for them to see your face if you are moving.
- During group discussions, consider using a talking stick so the pupil knows who is speaking and where to focus their attention. Alternatively, repeat other pupils' comments and questions.
- Remember that listening to someone speak will require considerable effort and may mean the deaf pupil is unable to perform other tasks at the same time. Rather than expecting them to lip read and take notes, for example, provide notes for them or ask another adult or pupil to help.

- If pupils are watching a video, use subtitles if available or provide transcripts. Allow for frequent pauses to summarise what has happened so far.

Communication with peers can be a particular challenge for deaf pupils, so provide a range of opportunities for positive interaction. Ensure the other pupils are deaf aware and encourage the deaf pupil to share information with their peers about the best way to communicate with them. You may want to set up a peer buddy system, in agreement with the deaf pupil, or establish 'quiet zones' where deaf pupils can go to communicate with their friends.

Using technology

Communication can be effectively supported through the use of technology. Deaf pupils use different types of personal hearing technology depending on the nature of their hearing loss. These include hearing aids that amplify sounds to maximise the pupil's residual hearing, as well as cochlear implants and bone conduction hearing implants. An audiologist will have assessed and recorded how much the child can hear with their hearing technology fitted. However, it is important to understand that, while this will have been set to allow them to access sound as near to typical hearing levels as possible, it does not replace normal hearing.

Many deaf pupils may benefit from using a radio aid or soundfield system with their hearing technology (on soundfields, see *Tried and tested, Special Children* 207). Radio aids carry the teacher's voice directly via a microphone to a receiver attached to the pupil's hearing technology, enabling them to hear the teacher more clearly in relation to unwanted background noise. If you use a radio aid, remember to switch the transmitter on when talking to the whole class or group in which the deaf pupil is working, and off again when having a conversation that the pupil does not need to hear.

A number of schools are now starting to use technology to caption speakers' words live on a screen. This involves the teacher wearing a mobile phone with a microphone around their neck, which transmits what they say to a captioner. The captioner then repeats their words into voice-recognition software and the transcript appears for the pupil to read, either on an individual tablet or on the class whiteboard. One example of such technology is Visible Classroom from

Ai Media (see *Tried and tested, Special Children* 226).

The school has an important part to play in ensuring that the deaf pupil gains maximum benefit from their hearing technology. A few key members of staff should receive training to enable them to manage and maintain the technology and know what to do if it stops working. Make sure the class teacher and SENCO have at least a basic understanding of the technology a deaf pupil uses and where to go if they or the pupil need further support.

“Speak clearly, naturally and at your normal pace”

Developing language and literacy

Even with effective technology in place, deaf pupils may face particular challenges when learning phonics because of the difficulties they have in discriminating and understanding speech sounds. You may need to give a deaf pupil more time to process and respond to phonic decoding tasks. When teaching phonics, be aware of the limitations of lip reading, as some sounds will look very similar on your lips whilst others have no clearly distinguishable lip pattern.

When introducing new letters, provide opportunities for the deaf pupil to physically manipulate letters using magnetic boards and letters, letter fans, phoneme frames or other visual supports. In fact, presenting information and concepts visually is vital in all subject areas because it ensures the pupil is not just relying on listening and speech or lip reading. Use pictures, diagrams and objects to support spoken explanations or to remind pupils of new vocabulary.

Additional strategies to support the deaf pupil to develop their language and literacy include the following.

- Consider using a visual cueing system such as cued articulation to support phonic awareness. As the sound is said, a particular hand shape or movement accompanies the sound so the pupil can 'see' the sound.
- Consider using cued speech, another system of hand shapes that clarify the lip-patterns of speech. (There will be a feature on this in the next edition.)
- Provide focused, individual or small group literacy programmes to teach and

reinforce key literacy skills.

- Provide pre- and post-tutoring for new topic areas, ensuring the pupil is aware of new concepts and vocabulary.
- Provide the pupil with regular opportunities to develop language skills and read texts through access to a language-rich environment.

Further support

A range of professionals specialise in supporting hearing-impaired pupils in school. Qualified teachers of the deaf can provide help if a pupil uses alternative forms of communication, such as British Sign Language (BSL), or give support in using hearing technology. They can also support and advise school staff on strategies, provide deaf awareness training or carry out specialist assessments. Some pupils may also get support from a speech and language therapist, who may assess their understanding and use of language, listening skills and speech production.

Teaching a pupil with a hearing impairment can be challenging. However, taking the time to get to know them and finding out what works for them, how they communicate and how they learn effectively will get you off to a good start. With the appropriate adjustments and strategies in place to manage and minimise the impact of their hearing loss, pupils with a hearing impairment will be able to make excellent progress in the classroom.



Natalie Packer is an independent education consultant specialising in SEN and school improvement. www.nataliepacker.co.uk. Her latest book, *The Teacher's Guide to SEN*, is published by Crown House Publishing

FIND OUT MORE

- National Deaf Children's Society: www.ndcs.org.uk
- Using the Explain Everything app to teach profoundly deaf children: *Tried and tested, Special Children* 236
- Enabling deaf children to access music: *Pull-out resources, Special Children* 239
- Cued articulation: www.soundsforliteracy.co.uk
- The Cued Speech Association says that cued speech makes education fully accessible – teachers can use it for literacy, to teach phonics and to access the whole curriculum. Research shows that 96% of English can be lip-read accurately when using it. www.cuedspeech.co.uk
- *Giving language a helping hand*, a TED talk by Cathy Rasmussen on how cued speech works and why teachers might use it over BSL. <http://bit.ly/sc240-01>



Students from Rainhill High School deliver an inspiring performance

Time to pay attention to ADHD

Untreated or poorly supported ADHD can have serious consequences for a child's future life prospects, yet it can take years to obtain a diagnosis and even then appropriate support may not be forthcoming. **Alison Thomas** attended the ADHD Foundation annual conference to find out more

'Would all students who are in detention this evening please report to Room 305 immediately. I repeat, all students who are in detention this evening please report to Room 305 immediately.'

As a student steps forward to issue the summons, her fellow performers from Rainhill High School, St Helens, follow on in groups, chanting in unison as they go. 'We love detention... not! We love detention... not! Room 305! Line up! Shirts tucked in! School badge showing on your tie. Phone on silent and stowed in bag. Room 305! Line up! Shirts tucked in...'

Once everyone has assembled, the teacher starts taking the register and soon discovers that tonight's detainees are no strangers to Room 305. For some, it's the price they pay for constantly forgetting their homework; for others, endless fidgeting or calling out answers in class is the problem. At this point, they start musing about their dreams, which range from winning an Olympic gold medal to recording a number one hit, with the teacher duly putting down each person for unrealistic aspirations.

Finally, we learn the identities of the role models who are keeping the students' dreams alive. Michael Phelps, Will.i.am, Richard Branson, Emma Watson, Billy Connolly... the list is long. All have scaled the heights in their chosen professions. All have ADHD.

'We all have talents, strengths and dreams,' the actors conclude with a flourish. 'We all deserve to have our talents supported, our strengths promoted, our dreams nurtured. Born to be ADHD! Our dreams to be me!'

Born to be ADHD

The setting is the ADHD Foundation's annual national conference, and the audience comprises a cross section of education, health and social care professionals and commissioners who have gathered in Liverpool to learn from leading researchers and practitioners and share insights and ideas from their respective fields.

The performers' parting shot – Born to be ADHD – is the strapline of a campaign run by the foundation in partnership with other ADHD charities and organisations to dispel the common misconceptions

that continue to surround ADHD and ensure that those affected can be better supported in identifying and managing their condition effectively.

‘ADHD is not the outcome of poor parenting skills,’ says Colin Foley, national training director of the ADHD Foundation, ‘but these and other myths persist, despite scientific evidence to the contrary. Hence the social stigma that still prevails to this day. What SENCO has never approached parents to suggest that their child might be showing symptoms of ADHD, only to be met with the response: “Oh no, we don’t want our child to be saddled with that label. We don’t want to take this any further.”’

‘My advice to schools is always: don’t let that be the end of the conversation. Keep going back to it, reinforcing the message: “ADHD is nothing to be ashamed of. It’s always better that we know. Then we can put strategies in place.”’

A message to policy makers

Unfortunately, even when schools and parents are united in their determination to get support for a child, in the words of one SENCO: ‘You are fighting a constant battle to get these children diagnosed because you have to jump through hoop after hoop after hoop.’

Her experience is corroborated by the campaign’s latest initiative, a comprehensive research review entitled *A lifetime lost or a lifetime saved* which shows that it can take two years or more to obtain a diagnosis, and that even then, access to effective follow-up care varies hugely from one part of the country to another, with many families ‘just left to fend for themselves’.

Yet, as the report clearly demonstrates, failure to identify and address ADHD at an early age can have damaging long-term consequences, including serious mental health issues, problems with relationships at home and at work, a greater likelihood of experiencing financial difficulties or being dismissed from employment and a much greater likelihood of spending time in prison (nine times more likely according to one survey).

Meanwhile, in the context of education, children with untreated or poorly managed ADHD are:

- over twice as likely to be frustrated at school
- three times more likely to have a reading disability
- over five times more likely than their peers to get involved in fights
- twice as likely to consume excessive amounts of alcohol.



Sports day at Wilds Lodge School provides plenty of opportunities for aerobic exercise

The report also notes that a third of young people with ADHD had been temporarily excluded from school while waiting to see a specialist, while 51% of adults and children had experienced ‘a lack of recognition for ADHD as a real condition’ from frontline professionals including GPs, other specialists and school staff.

“ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder and a spectrum condition”

‘Our society today understands and accepts several mental health disorders and many different types of neurodiversity,’ the researchers conclude, ‘meaning that disorders such as depression, dyslexia and autism – which in previous years may have been marginalised, trivialised and even disbelieved in the way that ADHD is today – are now accepted.’

‘We vehemently believe that in future years, we will not only destigmatise ADHD, but celebrate it as a route to creativity, passion and ingenuity. This won’t be easy, and will rely on the help and dedication of many people, but a few simple steps can set us off on the right path.’

Training for schools

One of the steps the report recommends is regular training for school staff, not just for SENCOs and other designated personnel, but for everyone who interacts with children.

The need for this is highlighted by a recent survey of 803 primary and secondary teachers, which showed that while most teachers recognise the impact of ADHD on students’ life chances, and many are concerned about the risks these children face in terms of bullying and exclusion, their levels of understanding and confidence are mixed, with 42% of respondents having received no ADHD training. The survey also revealed a lack of awareness that ADHD is a mental health condition.

Like autism, ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder and like autism, it is a spectrum condition. The main elements are very poor concentration and poor memory, impulsivity – not just of action, but of thought and feeling – and hyperactivity. Very low emotional resilience is another key feature.

Hyperactivity is not always present, however, particularly with girls. ‘There are a lot of girls who get missed,’ says Colin Foley, ‘which explains the 4:1 ratio of male to female diagnosis. When girls do get picked up, it is often not until their teenage years when they present with things like anxiety, depression, self-harm or eating disorders. Mental health is a really important issue that schools need to be acutely aware of. They should be constantly on the lookout, watching students’ mood and monitoring changes in behaviour.’

Attention is what really matters

Meanwhile, for those children who *are* hyperactive, although their behaviour can be frustrating for those around them, in terms of academic achievement, it is not a significant impairment.

‘Most teachers are quick to pick up on wriggly little boys who can’t sit still,’ says Mr Foley, ‘and they are often very good at dealing with that in terms of providing fidget toys for the hands and gadgets that allow movement from the waist down. Which is great. But what we really need to do is pay less attention to the H and focus more on the A – the inability to pay attention. That is what holds children back.’

As evidence of this, he points to a longitudinal study of 46,369 children throughout their primary schooling which showed that hyperactivity made no measurable difference to the children’s attainment at the age of 11, while impulsivity appeared to be a positive asset. Inattention, on the other hand, had a significant negative effect on their end-of-school results.

It is important, therefore, to provide children with regular activities to practise concentration and focus. These could

take the form of board games, card games or action games, they might involve matching things up or unravelling a puzzle... anything that is fun and engaging and can support the child to sustain their focus for increasing lengths of time. (For a list of brain-training programs to improve memory and concentration, see pull-out resource, page 26.)

Executive functioning deficiencies

Another common feature of ADHD is an inability to self-regulate thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

‘We have all found our mind wandering when we attend talks at a conference like this,’ says Mr Foley, ‘but we are able to pull it back and fill in the gaps from the context. Likewise, we might have something really interesting we’d love to share, but we don’t, or we save it for later, because we know that will disrupt the flow of the presentation.’

‘Children with ADHD don’t have that facility. When they say they can’t help something, they are not looking for excuses, it is the truth. The same applies to their high levels of distractibility. We talk about ADHD as being about inattention, but some people argue very eloquently that it is about too much attention, paying attention to everything that’s around you, as opposed to focusing on the specific task that needs to be done.’

Executive functioning deficiencies are also likely to include problems with planning, organisation, time management, starting and completing tasks, switching from one activity to another, flexible thinking, working memory, emotional self-regulation and more.

‘Staff need to appreciate just how difficult it is for children with ADHD to inhibit the key features of their behaviour and actions in classrooms,’ says Mr Foley. ‘Then, rather than getting cross, which will only reinforce the child’s negative self-image, they can start looking for strategies that will help.’

Movement, activity and collaboration

Research has shown that providing regular opportunities throughout the school day for children with ADHD to have intensive cardio-exercise leads to improvements in cognition, attention and mood. ‘If you haven’t got one, buy a treadmill,’ advises Mr Foley, ‘and have that as a resource so children with ADHD can go and run and get the dopamine moving in their brain. And get themselves ready to learn.’



Two boys from Wilds Lodge School focus intently

ADHD Friendly School pledges

1. We pledge to work with the ADHD Foundation to provide an ADHD training session for teachers and/or parents.
2. We pledge to provide regular opportunities for all learners with ADHD to have access to physical activity and exercise during the school day.
3. We pledge to provide opportunities for all learners with ADHD to learn self-calming strategies, for example, belly breathing, progressive muscle relaxation or mindfulness.
4. We pledge to provide tactile resources in every classroom.
5. We pledge to produce a display for the whole school and hold an assembly to celebrate the achievements of people living with ADHD.
6. We pledge to set up a parent/carer’s ADHD support group.

He also recommends filling lessons with movement, activity and collaboration to keep students engaged and focused, boost their self-esteem and reduce their persistently high levels of anxiety. ‘Movement in lessons is absolutely fundamental,’ he says. ‘Don’t plan lessons where children are expected to sit in the same place facing in the same direction for the duration. Think about where information comes from. If it tends to be delivered by you or projected on a screen, find other ways of putting it out so the children have to find it, preferably on their feet while they are moving around. (See pull-out resource pages 25-26 for some suggestions.)’

ADHD Friendly Schools

The ADHD Foundation runs one-day courses for school staff at various venues around the country and recently launched a licensed instructor programme which trains staff to deliver the foundation’s parenting course to families, so that school and home can be working hand in hand. Its latest initiative is the ADHD Friendly Schools quality mark, where schools work in collaboration with the foundation to evaluate current practice and put interventions in place to enshrine six pledges into the daily life of their school so that children with ADHD can flourish.

The first two recipients received their award at the conference: Our Lady Star of the Sea RC Primary School, Liverpool, whose SENCO will be sharing her insights in a future edition of *Special Children*, and Wilds Lodge School, Leicestershire, a residential therapeutic school for boys with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Two very different settings, two different types of provision, both equally committed to creating an environment where the Rainhill High School students’ call to action can become a reality. ‘We all deserve to have our talents supported, our strengths promoted, our dreams nurtured. Born to be ADHD! Born to be me!’

FIND OUT MORE

- **ADHD Foundation:** www.adhdfoundation.org.uk
- **A lifetime lost or a lifetime saved:** <http://bit.ly/sc240-18>
- **For information on ADHD Friendly Schools,** contact colin.foley@adhdfoundation.org.uk

Marcus and his grandmother at the ADHD Foundation conference, where Marcus was awarded a trophy and a bag of goodies for his contribution to raising public awareness of ADHD and comorbid conditions



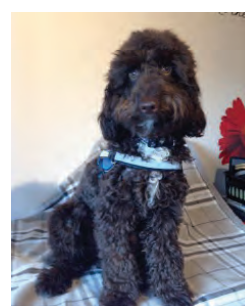
It's cool to have ADHD

As a spectrum condition, ADHD affects everyone differently, but 10-year-old **Marcus Wilton's** account provides insights that bring the reality of living with the condition alive

What's special about me?

My special birthdate is 07.07.07.
Grandma said it could have been worse... it could have been 6.6.6!

- I have a great sense of humour and love telling jokes. Like this. Maths teacher to his class: 'If I have five bottles in one hand and six in the other hand, what do I have?' Student: 'A drinking problem.'
- I have a really good memory for facts.
- I am really good with computers.
- I can sing.
- I love all kinds of music.
- I have super powers, ADHD, high functioning ASD and PDA... all with honours...
- I also have a puppy called Cocoa.



Cocoa is 12 months old and is training to be my service dog.

He is my best friend and helps me to be less anxious. He comes to sit with me when I get upset and

puts his paws on my shoulders. The idea is that when we are both sensible enough, he will sleep in my room to keep me company at night. But we are both a bit giddy for that yet...

It will take about another year or so for him to be fully trained but we are learning together.

What do I need help with?

Having ADHD and autism means my brain is wired differently; a good analogy is that it's like being a PC in an Apple shop.

I see the world in a different way and some people don't understand that. Sometimes on bad days, I think I don't want to be this boy any more.

Some of the things I need help with are listed overleaf, and include difficulty making and keeping friends.

- I get anxious in certain situations and this can affect my behaviour.
- I am really impulsive and don't think about the consequences sometimes. I also find it hard to concentrate and I am easily distracted... Oh look! There's a squirrel...
- I definitely find it hard to listen when deep down I know I need to.
- I have sensory issues – some clothes don't feel right, and strong smells and tastes make me uncomfortable. I also don't like loud noises... unless of course I'm the one making them!

Concentration

Impulsivity

Distractibility

Keeping calm and controlling my anxiety

Making and keeping friends

Dealing with my emotions

Sitting still

Listening

Completing tasks

Organisation

Some of the things Marcus needs help with

How does ADHD affect me?

ADHD and ASD affect people differently, but for me it's like I'm living with a brain that races past everything, yet I know I'm expected to notice the important things.

It feels like I'm living in a room with loads of TVs with the volume low, all playing different channels. In that room are also lots of people having six different conversations at the same time. The dog's running around with his toys barking. Someone is trying to get my attention and gets upset because I can't filter out the instruction from all the other noise and activity in that room called my brain.

I'm juggling hundreds of ideas, feelings and thoughts constantly, which often means I can't concentrate on other things, especially conversations, listening, following instructions and just focusing on what I need to.

It's exhausting when you feel like you're switched on all the time just to be able keep up with the world.

Medication

When you have more than one thing going on alongside ADHD, it's hard to get the right medication, so I have tried lots of different ones over the last few years.

My ADHD nurse has worked hard for a long time to get the right medication for me. I had a lot of side effects from some I tried. Some made me sick, some made me sad, and some didn't work at all. Eventually, after trying loads of different ones, I now have a mixture that works for me and helps me to focus better in the day. There are still some side effects but the positives outweigh the negatives at the minute, and I know without them I wouldn't be doing so well at school.

My mainstream experience

I started nursery like most kids at three, not that I remember much about it except being moved from one nursery to another and eventually moving into a regular primary school just after my fourth birthday.

Right from the start, I struggled in a class of 30 other kids. Even with one-to-one support and a shedful of meds, I had the concentration of a gnat. No one really understood why I was so distracted, why I struggled to do what was expected of us in class. The ones I found hardest to do were sitting quietly, concentrating, getting on with work and not shouting out.

It didn't help when teachers and teaching assistants said: 'This is easy for you Marcus, you're bright. Just get on with it.' It was easier to be the class clown. Then I would be taken out and given my own workspace. To me that was a result!

The school was great and tried really hard to help me, but towards the end of Year 4, after I managed to get into the school admin system and removed the special programs I hated doing in the afternoon... and later changed the password on all the iPads and wouldn't give it up... the head, my grandma and the local authority decided I needed a more 'nurturing environment'.

A quieter, less busy setting with more individual support

Rossendale is a special school with really small classes. There are only four other children in my class with a teacher and a teaching assistant. This means they have more time to support me. It's not as noisy and as busy as mainstream schools. This helps me to concentrate better and complete more work. I'm not different

any more either. There are loads of other individual Marcus's.

I've been there just over a year now and although it took a while for me to settle, I really like it there and know it's the right place for me. So much so that on presentation day this year I received the award for the most improved pupil.

ADHD is cool

After all that, I want to tell you that there's also a great side to having ADHD. I think about it as my superpower.

- I have loads of energy and don't need a lot of sleep. I'm not sure that at five o'clock in the morning everyone in my house would agree with that being one of my finest superpowers, but hey ho!
- I have a really good memory, which means I find learning easy... but only when I'm interested in a subject of course. My head is full of hundreds of interesting facts. Like this. What's the smallest ocean in the world? Answer, the Arctic Sea. Not many people know that!
- I have really good communication skills.
- I'm funny and I'm really good at music, computers and quizzes like Countdown and The Chase.
- I also get to do really cool stuff like speaking at conferences.

In my old school there was no one like me. They called me The Flash because I was always running around, so I used it as my alter-ego superhero. I was different, I stood out by a mile and I liked being different.

That difference makes us individuals and brings out our talents and gifts. We make great actors like Emma Watson and Daniel Radcliffe, great sports stars like Louis Smith, great comedians like Rory Bremner. I just can't wait to discover what my special talent will be when I grow up.

So what's there not to love about ADHD and being a super hero?

In a nutshell

I wanted to finish with something that I think sums me up, and I found this.

I may not be
who I ought to be,
I know I'm not all
that I want to be.

But I've come a long way
from who I used to be.

And I won't give up on becoming
what I know I can be!

Sabiny Pierrevil

Extracts from a presentation that earned Marcus a standing ovation at the ADHD Foundation's annual conference, November 2017.

Identifying and supporting children with ADHD

Colin Foley, national trainer for the ADHD Foundation, offers some guidelines for school staff

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental spectrum condition that can persist into adulthood. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behaviour, and hyperactivity.

ADHD has three subtypes:

- predominantly inattentive
- predominantly hyperactive-impulsive
- combined inattention and hyperactive impulsive.

Early identification is key. Time lost has a significant impact on attainment and future life outcomes.

Things to look out for

Avoiding eye contact. The child might appear to be ignoring you, but some children with ADHD find making eye contact really difficult.

Fidgeting. Not standing or sitting still, or fiddling with something while you are talking to them. This does not necessarily mean the child is not listening. If unsure, ask them to repeat back what you have just said to check and reinforce their understanding.

Avoiding work. When children with ADHD do not understand what they have to do, rather than risk getting it wrong, they may opt out altogether on the grounds that a telling-off is preferable to being perceived as stupid. Failure to get started or complete a task can also be due to their inability to direct focus, rather than laziness or because they just can't be bothered.

Inappropriate behaviour.

Children with ADHD have difficulty understanding what constitutes inappropriate behaviour. They might, for example, think making rude noises in class is funny and socially acceptable, or they might interrupt the teacher's explanation of a key concept

with a comment about their personal appearance. They say what they see; they have difficulty reading social cues.

Disregard for consequences.

Children with ADHD make no connection between behaviour and consequences. If you point out a behaviour issue, they may acknowledge it and apologise, then five minutes later do the very same thing again. Lack of executive functioning (analysing, problem-solving and understanding sequence of actions and consequences) results in impulsive and unconsidered behaviours.

Daydreaming. Being distracted by what is going on elsewhere in the room or outside is a characteristic of ADHD. This doesn't mean that the child is not paying attention: it is more likely they are paying too much attention to everything and not focusing on just one thing.

Negative self-esteem. Children with ADHD can easily become frustrated at their inability to understand or remember instructions and communicate with others. This results in feelings of isolation and exclusion from recognition, praise, reward and affection from adults and peers. This in turn creates anxiety, which exacerbates ADHD characteristics. Inevitably this causes behavioural problems as the child feels impelled to act out, unable to articulate what they feel.

Being the class clown. Trying to make people laugh and cause disruption, possibly due to work avoidance: 'I can't do it, so the class won't be able to do it either.' Or: 'I will gain the esteem and friendship of my peers by making them laugh. As I will not be able to gain the esteem of my teacher, I will behave in a way that meets my instinctive need for relationship and a sense of belonging.'

Impulsivity. Children with ADHD have difficulty waiting their turn in queues or in group work. They act and speak without thinking. They may be

clumsy or accident prone; they may break things and accidentally hurt others.

Rule breaking. Children with ADHD struggle to understand boundaries as they have poor social observations. They need to have the rules explicitly spelt out and they need to know how far they can go.

A complex picture

Two thirds of children with ADHD have another condition and a third have two or more. Common comorbidities include autism spectrum disorder, specific learning difficulties, Tourette syndrome, anxiety disorders, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder and depression.

Some comorbidities stem from the impact of ADHD upon a person's life (e.g. poor academic performance leading to anxiety) while others (e.g. autism and dyslexia) occur simultaneously. Their presence can affect the presentation of ADHD symptoms, or they can mask the condition, making it hard for teachers to get a true picture of what might be going on.

QbCheck

QbCheck is a new online screening tool from Swedish health technology company Qbtech that can help teachers to make sense of the confusion. Easy to administer, the test lasts 15-20 minutes and generates an instant visual report comparing the individual's levels of activity, impulsivity and inattention with the performance of groups of people of the same age and gender, with and without ADHD.

This provides schools with objective evidence to confirm or rule out ADHD, which they can present to families and use to support the referral process. Some schools also use it to monitor the effectiveness of medication.

See www.qbtech.com or email tony.doyle@qbtech.com

Key principles of an ADHD-friendly classroom

If you think that a child is demonstrating ADHD characteristics, act immediately by introducing ADHD strategies into teaching, the curriculum and support, both academic and pastoral. Clinicians will not diagnose children under the age of six years. For older children, the process of obtaining a diagnosis can be very long and drawn-out.

Be positive

- Understand and accept that when the child shouts out or struggles to conform, their behaviour is not prompted by naughtiness; they literally cannot help themselves.
- Make sure they know the boundaries. Avoid long discussions about what is right and wrong in their behaviour. Tell them what you want, focusing on the positives.
- Have positive expectations. When the child fails to fulfil these, deal with the issue there and then, and move on. Don't bring it up again the following day. Start each new day with a clean slate.

Alleviate anxiety

- Allow 'time out' if the child needs to move or practise breathing/relaxation techniques to de-stress.
- Allow de-stress/tactile/fiddle toys.
- Facilitate a quiet space the child can retreat to in times of need. In a primary classroom, that might be a chill-out tent in a corner of the room; in a secondary school, chill-out zones could be strategically placed within faculty areas to make them readily accessible.

Minimise potential distractions

- Sit the child near you, near the whiteboard, at the front of the room, away from windows and away from colourful displays.
- In primary classrooms in particular, which are often a riot of colour, have one 'calm wall' to reduce sensory or distractibility overload.
- Use large type on handouts and make these as uncluttered as possible.

Be clear and specific

- Display classroom rules prominently;

ensure these are unambiguous and written in a positive way.

- Give directions clearly and, and wherever possible, visually (e.g. notes, a timetable, lists). Provide clear instructions to settle the ADHD learner and ensure they have a full understanding of the requirements of the task.
- Repeat directions more than once, write them on the board, and check that the child understands.
- Provide the child with a checklist of their own – these children need reminders they can access themselves.

Gain the child's attention

- Use deliberate eye contact when speaking to the child (almost 'staring').
- Break down each task into its smaller component parts.
- Make learning fun – all children hate being bored, but boredom sets in very quickly for children with ADHD.
- Allow the child to doodle, make notes or create mind maps if that helps them to focus when they are expected to listen.

Sustain the child's attention

- Monitor progress regularly throughout the lesson.
- Be consistent, firm, fair and patient and give constant feedback and rewards.
- Seat the child next to a good role model or learning buddy to help them to engage and stay on task.

Provide predictable structure and support organisation **In primary schools**

- Establish a daily classroom routine with regular times for stories, desk work, creative activities etc.
- Display the day's lessons on the wall or board.
- Provide lists, timetables, timescales and regular reminders.
- Share changes to the timetable or activities with the learner in advance to avoid confusion and anxiety.

In secondary schools

- Write down homework in the child's planner or use pre-prepared stickers.

- Get the child to create visual reminders of what they need to bring to every lesson, keeping one copy in their bag, and another at home.

Support self-management

- Adopt 'stop, think, do' approaches.
- Encourage all pupils to stop and think before talking – this will help a child with ADHD to learn to slow down before talking. You can do this by waiting 10 seconds before you accept answers from the class.
- Remind the whole class to put their hand up if they want to talk, not just the child with ADHD.
- Likewise, remind the whole class about the rules for interrupting – if someone persists, talk to them on their own, not in front of the class.

Help children with a poor sense of time

- Adopt 'when... then' approaches.
- When children are taking turns in a group, use a timer to set limits.
- Use visual prompts to assist with time on task and organisation of learner time.

Make transitions less stressful

- Count down to transitions within lessons.
- Develop movement systems, such as traffic lights or key phrases, to manage movement between tasks and classrooms.
- In secondary schools, support smooth transitions between lessons by allowing the ADHD learner to set off a few minutes early with a reliable buddy.

Make assessments meaningful

- Avoid timed tests; they will not tell you what the child knows.
- Do not set lengthy homework tasks: go for quality.
- Allow the child to use a laptop for coursework or in place of written work.
- Consider access arrangements for tests/assessments/exams – minimise stress, distractions and anxiety, use laptops for assignments, use a separate room, allow rest breaks and allow the child to move around if necessary.

Thinking about reward

Thinking about reward is one of the keys to unlocking good classroom practice for pupils with ADHD.

Children who have an impaired sense of time, an impaired sense of working towards long-term goals and deferred gratification are not going to respond to a conventional reward system where points build up to something at the end of the week or even longer. These are children who live in the moment. So what is going to keep them going lesson by lesson during the school day? What is going to keep them going minute by minute within each lesson?

Some schools use time very effectively as a reward. If the child works for the specified period deemed appropriate for them, they clock up a minute. At the end of the morning, or the end of the day, the accumulated time is used creatively for targeted support, such as fun activities to aid concentration.

Homework is another good way to use that time. That might not sound like a reward, but homework is a huge problem for children with ADHD and very difficult for their families. It comes down to the relationship you build with the child, and the conversations you have to find out what they might buy into. If you get the parent involved too and can persuade them both that you are not fighting them over homework, you are freeing the child up to do something they would much rather be doing, you are on to a winner.

I had a case recently where a mother was keeping her son away from his karate lessons, which he loved, because she had to sit with him every night, battling with him over his maths and English. That has to be wrong!

Supporting self-management

For most children, clear and consistent expectations regarding good classroom behaviour are enough to keep them on track. For example, they know that shouting out is not acceptable and they don't need constant reminders to comply. Imagine you are a highly distractible child and your targets for the lesson include waiting your turn and not shouting out. What is going to keep you remembering to do that all the way through to the end?

You need to externalise what is not happening internally. Give the child



Seating the pupil next to a good role model or learning buddy helps them to engage and stay on task

a visual representation to keep on the desk, where they tick off or highlight their targets every time they meet them, so they can immediately see where they are up to in the lesson and how well they are doing in terms of self-management. How often they do this will depend on where they are on the spectrum. For some, it could be every five minutes; for others, every 20 minutes might be appropriate.

Don't be tempted to throw these sheets away; keep them so you and the child have a record. Then when things are not going well, you can pull out a good one and say: 'OK. You have had a bad day today but let's look back – you did really well last Wednesday.'

Getting lessons off to a good start

A typical lesson in a secondary school begins with the teacher outlining the aims and objectives or providing an explanation of some kind. Even if this doesn't last for long, a child with ADHD, who has an impaired sense of time, has no way knowing that, no idea how long they are going to be expected to sit still and listen.

The solution is to give them something practical to do as soon as they walk through the door, something to physically touch and manipulate, such as a pairs game where they match up cards that are related in some way.

If this is done as a whole-class activity, it has the added advantage of getting everyone straight down to work, rather than letting things drift as you wait for latecomers to arrive.

Incorporating movement

Children often spend a lot of time in class sitting down. Ask yourself how many of the activities you have planned could be done equally well standing up, so that a hyperactive child has the chance to move and to fidget. For example, next time you ask pupils to talk about something in pairs or small groups, if you get them to their feet it will change the dynamic completely and can help children with ADHD to engage.

One teacher I know, whose SEN class of eight boys includes five with ADHD, gets them to stand up whenever they want to speak instead of putting up their hand. Every lesson, you have the comical spectacle of children bobbing up and down, but it is working because they are moving.

Movement also helps to embed information and knowledge in the brain. If you combine revision and review activities with movement, so pupils mime, act out, or have different physical symbols and signs for different key pieces of information, that will really help a child with ADHD to remember – and other children too.

Group work

Positioning and structure are the two key things to consider when planning group work and talk-based activities.

- Position the child within the group to minimise distractions.
- Pay particular attention to giving the activity an explicit, clearly defined end. Children with ADHD have trouble completing tasks. If the activity is allowed to drift, with some groups finishing before others, the child with ADHD will lose focus very quickly.
- Structure in some kind of feedback, follow-on or collation activities where the child with ADHD is taking the lead, so they have to listen to their peers and record what they say as the task proceeds. If they have to report back to the class afterwards, they will have to persist until the end. Plan activities with persistence in mind.

Memory and concentration

Quiz Quiz Trade by Spencer Kagan is a fantastic activity for memory. It also involves waiting your turn, being on your feet and moving, and supporting each other, three more good reasons for using it for with children who have ADHD.

- Prepare a set of cards with a question on one side and the answer on the other. Give each student one card.
- Get the students to stand up, put their hand up and pair up with someone else who has their hand up.
- Partner A shows Partner B the question. Partner B answers. Partner A praises if correct or coaches if incorrect.
- They switch roles and repeat the process.
- After thanking each other and exchanging cards, they put their hand up to find a new partner and start again with their new card.
- The activity ends after specified period of time.

This is an excellent activity for revision and review, but since the answers are provided, depending on the complexity of the subject matter, it can also be used for introducing new material. You don't always have to teach from the front. Give pupils the information in their hands and get them to teach each other. Peer

Structure group work carefully and give the child with ADHD tasks that will help them to stay focused



tutoring is an excellent strategy for ADHD.

Programs to aid memory and concentration

Captain's Log Personal Trainer from BrainTrain offers 50 programs with more than 2,000 games targeting 20 different cognitive skills, including visual and auditory processing speed, conceptual reasoning, working memory and response inhibition. www.braintrain.com

Brain Fitness Pro Jr for children aged 6-11 from MindSparke is a set of video games designed to boost focus and train memory, leading to improvements in academic performance and test-taking. <http://bit.ly/sc240-19>

Fit Brains comprises 40 brain-training games played on a mobile device to promote skills such as memory, processing speed, and visual-spatial recognition. The software tailors each exercise to a child's needs. www.fitbrains.com

MyBrainSolutions is an online suite of games and exercises which give individualised assessments and strategies to improve cognitive and emotional skills, including memory, focus, stress reduction, and positivity. www.mybrainsolutions.com

ACTIVATE™ from C8 Sciences enhances memory skills, improves the ability to pay attention, and boosts other cognitive skills through tasks like memorising sequences, completing patterns, task-switching, and sorting objects into categories. The version for home use comes with an additional physical exercise programme to be

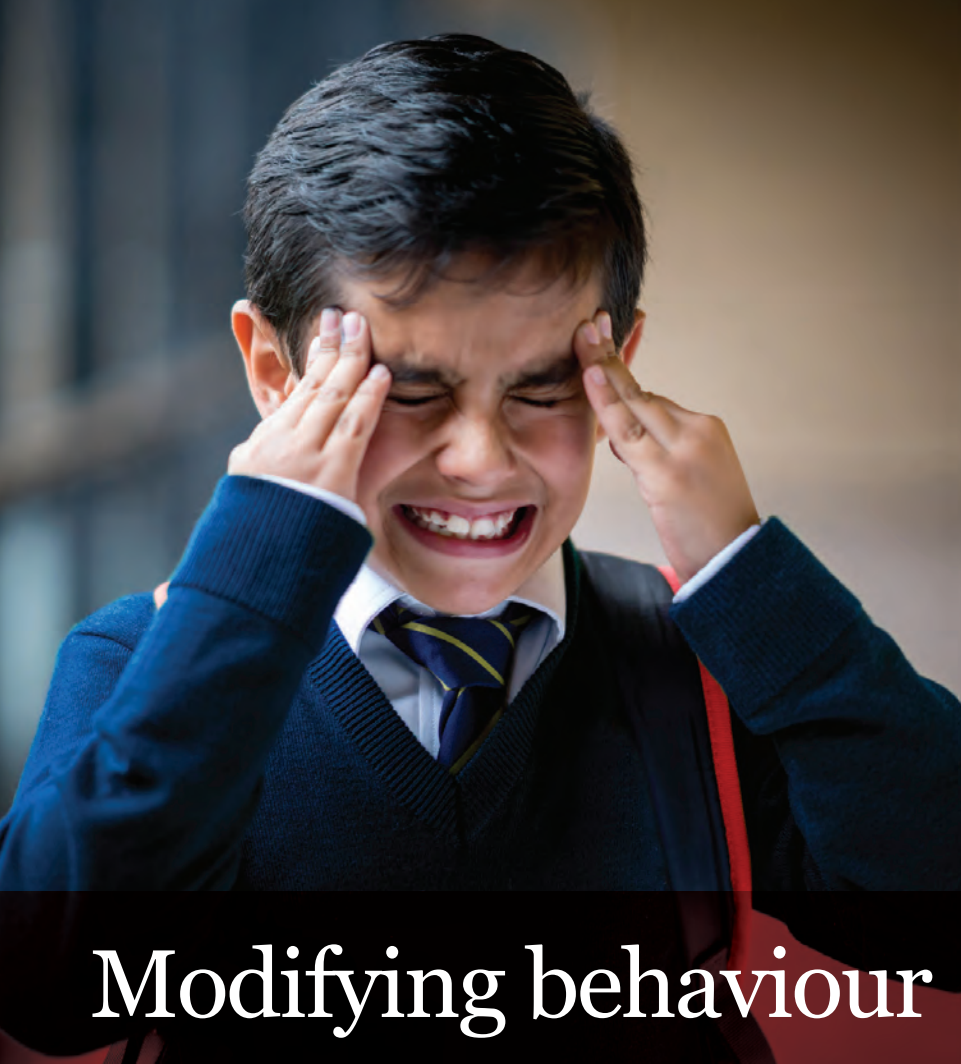
followed three to five times a week. www.c8sciences.com

Play Attention teaches children to improve focus, ignore distractions, develop memory skills, and finish tasks. When the child is engaged, the brain emits a signal, which is monitored by an armband and transmitted to the computer. In this way, the child's mind controls the action as they play games and complete interactive activities. www.playattention.com

BrainBeat uses a metronome-like tool, along with a headset and hand gear. As children engage in the activities, they listen to beats, clap hands, and receive instant feedback through scoring, sounds and light cues. The activities are designed to improve focus, working memory and language processing skills. <https://brainbeat.com>

ATENTIVmynd™ has a headband that measures attention levels. Children play a video game on a computer or mobile device, using their attention levels to make their moves. The idea is that playing the game helps them identify their 'attention muscle' and strengthen it. <http://atentiv.com>

Myndlift is a mobile neurofeedback app which uses brainwave measurements and visual/auditory feedback to improve attention and focus. As children play the games, the characters run faster or slower depending on the child's level of attention, giving them an incentive to pull back their mind when it starts wandering. It is designed to be supervised remotely by certified clinicians. Watch it in action on <http://bit.ly/sc240-20> or contact inquiries@myndlift.com to find out more. www.myndlift.com



Modifying behaviour

A Post Incident Learning (PIL) app provides a structure to help children identify what triggers challenging behaviour and respond in a different way next time. **Dean Cotton** explains

In 2010, I studied a variety of talking therapies designed to support mental health, wellbeing and behaviour modification. These included Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Beck 1967), Life Space Interviews (Redl 1960), Life Space Crisis Interviews (Long and Morse 1991) and Motivational Interviewing (Miller 1983).

All of the therapies I studied have similarities that are instrumental in any behaviour support process: they all encourage the individual to explore their experiences, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

With this in mind, I developed a simple post-incident structure where a child who had been involved in a serious incident would be supported to think about the experience that had led to the incident, identify how that experience had made them feel and develop alternative strategies to try the next time they felt that

way. The process became known as Post Incident Learning (PIL) (Cotton 2010).

My initial research involved training the staff of two schools for children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) in the PIL structure, and asking two similar schools to support students as much as possible following an incident without the framework to guide them. The schools that used the PIL structure saw a much greater reduction in disturbing incidents than those that supported students without it.

An alternative to detentions in mainstream

In 2013, I invited a larger than average mainstream secondary school in South Yorkshire to implement the PIL structure in place of detentions, following a literature review that questioned the effectiveness of these as a means of modifying behaviour.

For this study, I developed an app to ensure that the same structure was always

Before a child can learn to modify their behaviour they first need to understand the emotions that make them respond in this way

followed. When a student displayed a behaviour that would normally warrant a detention, they were told they should complete the PIL app instead. They could do this alone or with support.

Using the mobile device to record their answers, the student addressed three questions.

1. What triggered your behaviour?

Their response could take the form of a written explanation, a drawing or a photo.

2. How did this make you feel? Again, the student could use words, a drawing or a picture, or they could select a feeling from a drop-down list.

3. What can you do the next time you feel like that? The same three recording formats were offered, together with a drop-down list of alternative behaviours for the student to choose from and then practise.

On completing the app, the student was encouraged to discuss their answers with a member of staff.

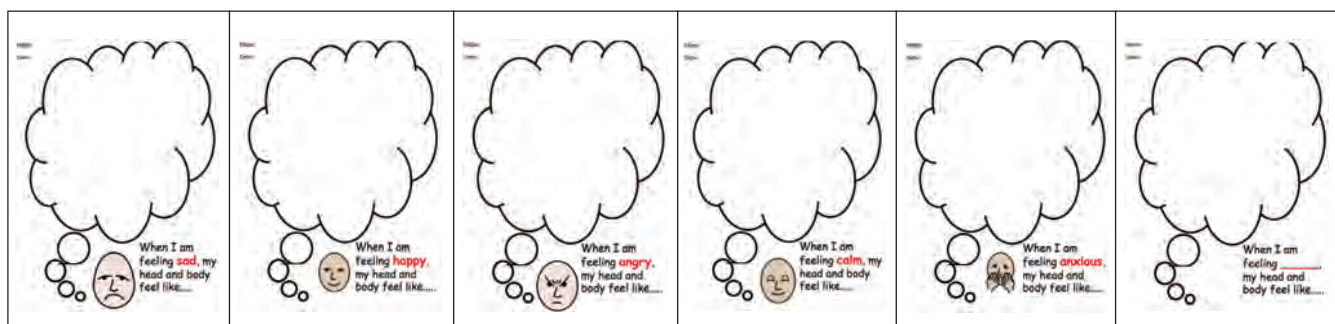
Supporting students to recognise the trigger, think about the feelings it had generated and choose alternative behaviours to try in future proved to be an effective behaviour management tool; in just three months, serious incidents were reduced by 64.5%.

Supporting children with communication difficulties and ASD

Although this strategy can work well with students in mainstream settings, the complex needs and communication difficulties of some children can make even this very simple process extremely difficult.

A number of communication aids are helpful here, including picture exchange communication systems (PECS), Makaton, alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC), and voice output communication aids (VOCAs).

These alone may not be enough, however, and in 2012, I engaged two special schools in a small-scale research study to explore additional communication strategies that could help to support the delivery of the PIL approach with students on the autism spectrum. The children involved ranged in age from 11 to 15 and



An example of a communication passport

were between P levels 4 and 6 for speaking, and P levels 4 and 7 for listening.

Both schools agreed that building positive relationships was key when attempting to modify behaviour. They also identified that many of their students found it extremely difficult to recognise their feelings in the first place. Clearly, this had to be addressed before they could be supported to learn how to manage these more effectively.

Some of the strategies and materials the schools developed or adapted included the following.

- **A communication passport** to support the delivery of the PIL structure and enable staff to react to each child's needs in a personalised way. This was completed with the child and shared with school staff, parents and other professionals.
- **A communication dictionary** to record how the child communicated and ways in which staff could help them to feel better.
- **Worksheets** for staff and children to complete following an incident and provide evidence of how staff had tried to rebuild a positive relationship. These were laminated so that when the student had given as much information as they could manage, the sheet could be photocopied and wiped clean to be used again.
- **Red and green faces** to teach basic feelings such as happy and sad. The teacher would show students the different faces depending on the situation; for example, if a child did a good piece of work or was particularly helpful, they would be shown the green face, while unacceptable behaviour, such as violence towards another child, would elicit the red face. Staff tried to ensure that the green face was shown more often than the red face.
- **Coloured symbols to teach different feelings** – these were woven into stories to enhance understanding when used for post-incident support. (The colour was removed for children who found this overstimulating).

- **Feelings diaries** completed by children and staff at the end of each day to help staff recognise how individuals were feeling.

The benefits of PIL

Post Incident Learning has now been developed and implemented in a large variety of education and care settings with some outstanding results. It has several key features that account for this.

Logical consequences

Completing PIL is a logical consequence for almost any behaviour and can be used in place of a punishment. Where a punishment is usually designed to make a child feel bad about a behaviour they have exhibited, a consequence is designed to teach them a more appropriate alternative.

Logical consequences have two main attributes.

- They are delivered with support.
- They are logically linked to an exhibited behaviour.

Logical consequences are an extremely effective way to teach behaviour.

Emotional intelligence

PIL aims to support students to recognise, name and manage their feelings, in other words it helps them to develop emotional intelligence. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence is one of the most important factors influencing an individual's behaviour (Brackett *et al* 2004).

People who are very emotionally intelligent are generally more successful, happier and more attractive than people with a lower level of emotional intelligence; this is because they are positive, assertive, value others, make things fun and are difficult to offend (Goleman 1995).

I believe all schools should have at least one display in every classroom dedicated to emotional intelligence.

Simplicity and consistency

When different members of staff deal with behaviour incidents in different ways, the

child receives mixed messages, which is confusing and reduces the impact of even the most well-thought-out approach. PIL overcomes this by providing a clear and simple structure for everyone to follow. If a drop of water falls on a pebble, eventually it will change the shape of the pebble, especially if it keeps falling in the same place.

Wider uses

Although initially conceived to help staff support students with serious behavioural issues, PIL has wider applications. All students, even the most resilient, are liable to become anxious or upset following a stressful incident, although they may not show it overtly. When a person locks their negative thoughts and feelings away, these can amplify and potentially develop into mental health problems.

Talking therapies, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, are designed to address this. Unfortunately, these are not usually made available until a person's mental health has deteriorated badly.

If the PIL structure is implemented after lower level incidents as well as major incidents, it works almost like proactive mental health support tool to keep negative thoughts firmly in their place and allow students to get on with their lives.



Dean Cotton is an independent researcher, behaviour consultant and trainer with many years' experience of working in education and care settings

FIND OUT MORE

- **Download the PIL app** (free for Android devices, 99p for iPads), read the research in full and access a variety of resources for students with communication difficulties: www.pbstraining.co.uk
- **How to teach behaviour and how not to** by Dean Cotton contains further information about PIL and other positive behaviour management strategies: <http://bit.ly/sc240-14>

The school grounds have been designed to offer a range of 'outdoor classrooms'



Learning to behave differently

A primary school for children with SEMH has replaced traditional methods of controlling and containing challenging behaviour with strategies that help the children to self-regulate. Headteacher **Catherine Smith** explains

Haywood Grove is a Hertfordshire maintained mixed special school for children aged 4-11 with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).

We currently have 42 pupils on roll, who have all been excluded (or on the verge of exclusion) from their mainstream school, and in some cases from more than one. They all have a statement or an education, health and care plan (EHCP), mainly for their SEMH but also for other needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, specific learning difficulties, ADHD and anger issues. Many have experienced developmental trauma or have attachment difficulties.

Low self-esteem, an impaired sense of empathy and extremely high levels of anxiety impact on their ability to communicate and cooperate with others, or forge relationships that last for any

length of time. Instead, their lives are dominated by conflict.

A change of direction

When I joined the school in 2013, it used traditional methods of externally controlling behaviour, like exclusion and physical intervention. The governors were keen to adopt a different approach, and so was I. It was almost as if the children were our enemies as opposed to being people with the capacity to learn. I felt that low expectations were the norm and that changing the philosophy would be about having a belief that the children could actually come up with their own solutions to managing their behaviour more effectively given the right support. I wanted to develop their capacity to exercise internal control so that when they moved on to secondary school and out into the wider world, they would be able

to have mechanisms for themselves that weren't reliant on other people.

In order for that to happen, the quality of relationships would be key. That's what makes children actually want to come into school; that's what gives them the incentive to learn.

The Just Right State

I was working with an adopted child and commissioned an occupational therapist with a specialism in attachment disorder to come in and provide additional tailored support. As I talked to her about what she was doing with this particular child, it struck me that there was a synergy with what we were trying to achieve for the school.

On exploring this further, she recommended The Just Right State, a programme that looks at children's survival patterns and gives staff ideas and processes to help children identify things

they can do for themselves that will make them feel better and put them in the right frame of mind for learning.

This sounded to be just what I was looking for, both in terms of developing pupils' ability to self-regulate and shifting staff attitudes. With the abolition of punitive systems, it was important that adults came to appreciate that a child's disappearance under a desk, say, was a coping mechanism rather than a misbehaviour. It was about developing staff understanding that behaviour is a form of communication, and that children in a heightened state of anxiety may behave physiologically in a fight or flight response. And that our job was to help them to do things differently.

Physical activities, food and storybooks

The Just Right State was designed by occupational therapist Éadaoin Bhreathnach to develop children's emotional awareness and give them simple tools to help them self-regulate. It comprises three strands.

The first is a 40-minute session of sensory-based physical activities at the start of every day to help children get into 'the just right state' for learning. These might include patting or stroking their body as if they have just got out of the shower, rolling on gym balls, climbing, eating crunchy foods or sucking on sweets – what each child does will depend on how they feel at the time. Someone who is still half-asleep, for instance, might pat themselves all over to make them more alert, while someone who arrives in school overexcited and hyperactive might need to gently stroke their arms, which has a soothing effect.

'The just right state' also varies depending on what the children are going to be expected to do. For example, writing is a trigger for a lot of our pupils, so if we see someone becoming agitated before a writing activity, we will get them to do something that helps to calm them down first.

The second strand is a weekly session called Snack and Chat, where children try out a variety of foods and talk about how these make them feel. So where citrus foods are alerting, sweet or salty foods and warm spices provide comfort. Likewise, different eating actions have a different effect: sucking is comforting and nurturing, chewing and crunching have the capacity to calm aggression.

And finally, there's *The Scared Gang*, a set of storybooks featuring nine cartoon characters representing different survival and attachment patterns of behaviour,



A pupil tastes an egg while wearing a blindfold to see how it affects him physiologically

from Wary Wanda who is constantly on the lookout for danger, to Frozen Frank who refuses outright to do something that frightens him and Run-Away Ronnie whose attempts to abscond are actually a cry for help. The children come to identify with the character whose behaviour is similar to their own and take on board what the character tells them about what they do to achieve 'the just right state'.

Introducing and embedding the programme

We trialled the programme with the occupational therapist leading, then over time trained teachers and teaching assistants, until now we are in a second round of training to revisit and refresh our skills. We also trained two senior colleagues to work with parents on the accompanying parents' programme.

In addition, Éadaoin Bhreathnach visited the school to look at our grounds and design what she calls 'outdoor classrooms', both for the purpose of enhancing the curriculum, but also for the purpose of self-regulation. For example,



Forest School promotes positive relationships and develops important life skills

in a quiet area away from the school building, we have a pond where children can go to float, because the sensation of floating can help them to feel calm.

The immediate impact has been that children are now talking about what helps them feel calmer, what helps them feel better, and some of them will talk about self-regulation. So it has given them a vocabulary and a little bit more insight and reflection on what it is about their behaviour that provokes so much conflict and distress and what they might do to change that.

The Haywood Grove curriculum

The Just Right State is just one part of a complementary programme that we run as part of our curriculum. We follow the National Curriculum but we also have a specialist element which allows us to incorporate subjects and activities we know our children will engage with very readily.

For example, many of our pupils like to be outside to learn; they like the freedom offered by wide open spaces and they prefer kinaesthetic learning styles. So we introduced Forest School to support all aspects of their learning, from the physical and the cognitive, to the development of social and emotional awareness and the ability to forge positive relationships with their peers. For the same reason, we run residential visits and camping trips, initially for years 5 and 6, but we are hoping to roll these out with younger children as well because the skills their older peers have developed have been quite significant.

Given the profile of our intake, some people might be surprised to see some of the activities we do, such as teaching children how to use a knife to whittle and how to light fires – what would normally be considered to be high-risk activities. But our children respond really well to the risk and show a level of responsibility they might not display in a classroom situation.

The importance of play

Play is another important part of our timetable, with many children coming to weekly, consistent play sessions where they get the chance to be creative and have fun using toys and materials covering a whole range of mediums, including role play, arts, sensory activities, games and music.

Play is essential for children's development; it is their natural means of self-expression and fosters imagination and creativity, while providing opportunities for learning. Play also improves wellbeing and releases chemicals that make children feel safer and happier.

In addition, we are incredibly fortunate to have two members of staff who were already trained as play therapists when they joined the school and who are currently studying at masters level. Being able to offer full-time play therapy provision internally is a fantastic asset.

A curriculum that never stands still

For those children who still find it difficult to be in a group situation, we run individual AQA unit awards which give them formal recognition for their achievements, no matter what these might be, how long it takes to achieve them or how small the learning steps are. Our HLTA also runs cookery sessions, which have a high emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy in a functional context.

Our curriculum is constantly evolving in response to the needs, personalities and circumstances of the children who come through our door. For example, we know scientifically that interacting with animals can be very therapeutic because an animal's response is predictable, it doesn't answer back and it doesn't pass judgement. So our Forest School teacher brings in her two dogs and some of our pupils have programmes that incorporate taking them for a walk.

Meanwhile, our outdoor education teacher takes some children on an accredited climbing course. Again, that might seem to be a dangerous activity for children who have difficulty controlling their emotions, but neuroscience shows that you can't be angry as you climb because your brain's focus is on coordinating your hands and feet in case you fall. If it prevents a child from lashing out or causing another child physical harm, it is a risk worth taking.

We are now at the stage where we are developing individual self-regulation programmes based on each person's attachment style and survival patterns. So



It is impossible to be angry when your brain is focusing intently on where to place your hands and feet

for some children, climbing is great, while others find that being under a blanket with a hot water bottle makes them feel good. Whatever works for the individual is what we will try to achieve for them. They then get a sense of what they might need, and over time they start asking for it.

Engaging with parents

In the course of developing a new culture, we have tried to generate a high level of engagement with parents so that they understand what we are doing and what we are trying to achieve. If we were still using external control, we might be able to stop a behaviour, but we wouldn't be able to change it in any way. That is our focus. To help our children change how they behave so they will enjoy a better life in the future.

If restraint is the only method you use to control dangerous behaviour, there comes a point when that is what the child will require to stop them from doing the

same thing again. So it's really important for us, when we have children while they are young, that we change the pathways in their brains so that they begin to look at things differently.

It is a slow approach because we have unbelievably high expectations. To the untrained eye, the reverse might seem to be true, because if you come to our school you will see challenging behaviour. But we are not afraid of that because we believe that in order to be able to change it, we need to see it, in much the same way that a doctor needs to see all the symptoms of an ailment in order to fix it. So we expect to see challenging behaviour, and when we do, we have the expertise to be able to put in place programmes and strategies to help the child learn to respond to life's challenges in a more appropriate way.

FIND OUT MORE

- Just Right State and *The Scared Gang*: www.sensoryattachmentintervention.com
- For information about training, contact ebsaic.training@yahoo.com

Developmental trauma

The developmentally traumatised child benefits from an individualised approach to helping them participate in school life to the best of their potential. This is likely to involve trying strategies which are different from traditional, behavioural-based techniques that work for some children, but not those who have experienced developmental trauma. The table below compares the traditional view versus the approach at Haywood Grove.

Traditional approach	Haywood Grove's approach
Based on consequences	Based on self-regulation
Rewards and incentives create motivation	Relational influence creates motivation
External controls (star charts, removal of privileges, detentions)	Internal controls (sense of self, sense of accomplishment, self-acceptance, self-love)
Time-out	Time-in
Expectations based on chronological age	Expectations based on emotional/social age
Behaviour management	Stress management
Individual focus	Community/family focus
Performance/outcome based	Process based
Intervention	Prevention
Major transitions identified	All transitions identified
Child to fit into the environment	Environment to fit the child
Behaviour is a matter of choice	Stress drives behaviour

Adapted from *Help for Billy – A Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Challenging Children in the Classroom* by Heather Forbes.

Product design taps into the boys' enjoyment of hands-on, practical activities and encourages problem-solving skills



A compassionate approach

An outstanding secondary school for boys with social, emotional and mental health difficulties has abolished sanctions to focus exclusively on rewards. Principal **Steven Baker** and head of school **Mick Simpson** explain why

On returning to school after October half term 2017, our pupils were in for a pleasant surprise. In their absence, the main corridor had been given a long overdue makeover.

We have been doing some work with Thorn Cross open prison, and in return they let us borrow a couple of prisoners for the week. We are incredibly badly funded, and we literally cannot afford to paint our school, so two people on a Thorn Cross decorating course came in with a prison officer to do it for us. The benefits were felt on many levels. We got our corridor painted, and the prisoners got an enormous sense of wellbeing; they were able to give back to society and further their education.

We felt brilliant. They felt brilliant. And the children loved having a fresh, clean environment.

Breaking the mould

Our relationship with Thorn Cross is one of a growing number of reciprocal partnerships that helped to earn our school a nasen Effective Collaborative Working Award, also in October. But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me go back to the beginning.

Kilgarth in Birkenhead is a secondary school in an area of high deprivation for boys aged 11-16 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. When I became headteacher in 2011, it was a conventional SEMH school with a conventional system of rewards and sanctions. My two deputies at the time were Mick Simpson and Kirsten Brown, now heads of secondary and primary respectively since we partnered with Gilbrook, a mixed primary school for children with SEMH difficulties, with me overseeing the federation.

About a year after my appointment at Kilgarth, we sat down together to take stock and begin developing our vision for the future. We are a school, so we focus unashamedly on progress and attainment. But we also wanted to care for our students' wellbeing, to support their social and emotional development and their mental health, and that of the staff as well.

What did we want our school to look like? What were we trying to achieve? What were the outcomes we wanted for our boys and the success criteria we would measure these by?

Having explored these questions in depth, we invited stakeholders to join us for an Inset day of facilitated discussion. As well as staff and governors, we had groups of parents, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, CAMHS workers, careers workers, local clergy... anyone with the slightest

connection to the school received an invitation.

This provided the basis for a further 12 months of work, culminating in our new vision and our new mission statement: Always growing, always learning.

Today our vision is enshrined in a mural that greets you as you enter the school. It takes the form of a wordle in the shape of a tree, its roots firmly planted in the ground, its branches spreading out to embrace the world. Best... everybody... honesty... relationships... challenges... these and other motivational words capture the essence of our ethos. At its heart is perhaps the most important word of all: nurturing.

For our vision is about being compassionate and treating people well, having very high standards and raising aspirations, but also being mindful that we are in loco parentis. We are looking after these boys. We want to do what is right for them.

A coaching culture

And we want to do what is right for our staff. My wife teases me sometimes by saying: 'Happy wife, happy life.' I say: 'Happy staff, happy students. Happy students, better outcomes.'

To help us achieve this, we introduced coaching to support the development of emotional resilience, promote staff wellbeing and foster the creation of a more cohesive school team. If growing and learning together is the maxim for our students, it applies equally to staff, who are trained to support and guide each other using active listening and key questioning to encourage a solution-focused approach

to specific issues that are causing concern.

In keeping with our identity as an inclusive community where every contribution is valued, there is no pecking order to the system. I have been coached by an unqualified teacher, Mr Simpson by a teaching assistant.

Research is another important element of our approach. Two years ago, I completed a second masters degree looking at coaching as a tool to build staff resilience in a challenging environment and I have just started a doctorate on staff wellbeing. At Gilbrook, we have people doing masters degrees in wellbeing, while at Kilgarth, a teacher is undertaking a practice-led PhD on using multimedia to promote interaction, increase engagement and raise attainment. As we learn together, so we develop together, for the benefit of the children in our care.

“Our approach links neurobiology with pedagogical understanding”

Collaborative working

I will let Mr Simpson explain the details of our approach to behaviour modification and the removal of sanctions, as he was the driving force behind the change. Suffice to say that it is based on sound research, combining the scientific expertise of psychologist Dr Alice Jones

of Goldsmiths, University of London, with our own pedagogical understanding to link neurobiology with what actually works at the chalkface.

At the same time, through our work with Ambition School Leadership, Mr Simpson and I have developed a free, online programme on supporting young people with challenging behaviour which has attracted almost 10,000 people from all over the world on its first two runs. We have also delivered free training to thousands of people locally, not only teachers and TAs, but also police officers, including custody staff. Now we are expanding our reach to work with prisons nationwide on rehabilitation, wellbeing and leadership for staff in challenging environments.

So what's in it for us? The repainting of our corridor is just one small example of what we get in return. Another was the offer of places on HMP Berwyn's accredited mental health first aid course in November following our invitation to them to join us for a CAMHS event run by the federation, which in turn was a thank you for supporting CAMHS to deliver training in schools.

In these straitened times, it makes sense to share insights, ideas and understanding within and across sectors for the benefit of all.

Aspire

Finally, let me tell you about our Aspire project, which contributed towards our nasen award and gained further recognition in the 2017 Educate Awards in the North West.

We invited successful people from around the globe to send us a signed photograph with some encouraging words for our students and published these in a book. Film stars, sporting heroes and well-known comedians, scientists, academics and broadcasters, MPs and local councillors... all sorts of people responded, demonstrating that anything is possible in any walk of life if you have determination and self-belief.

For the children in our care, that message is so important. All the more so today, as we are seeing children with increasingly complex needs, and hence increasingly complex behaviours, come through our doors.

Behaviour is a form of communication. We have to chip away at that and get down to the heart of the matter, the underlying cause, so we can address that and not just put a sticking plaster on a huge wound.

But now it's time to hand over to Mr Simpson.



Behaviour modification

Mick Simpson outlines the rationale and outcomes

There are three aspects to what we do: a compassionate approach, a non-confrontational approach, and using rewards instead of sanctions. They all tie together to make a really powerful tool to support behaviour modification.

Of course, we have to manage difficult, challenging behaviours all the time, and we do. But our goal isn't to manage behaviours. Our goal is to modify behaviours and bring about lasting change.

Compassion

It's hard to describe this – you have to experience it to appreciate its full power. In essence, the children know they are loved and cared about by every single member of staff. That can be difficult sometimes, when a child is bombarding you with abuse, and you are still opening your heart to them, letting them know that no matter what, you'll still be there for them, you'll still be a port in a chaotic storm. We are the most stable relationship, the most valuable and positive relationship these children may have experienced in their lives to date. The compassionate approach is very important.

The rationale for avoiding confrontation

I wouldn't want to give the impression that we don't have high aspirations and expectations, because we absolutely do. These are made very clear to students, parents and staff and we all work extremely hard to make sure they are achieved. We just do it in a different way.

Our approach is based on the triune brain theory developed by neuroscientist



The tree that will encapsulate the school's vision and values begins to take shape

Paul MacLean in the 1960s. Although science has moved on since then, it still stands the test of logic and is a useful model.

According to Dr MacLean, the brain developed three parts at different stages of evolution.

- The reptilian cortex, the oldest part, controls the functions that keep us alive, such as heart rate and blood pressure, but also drives certain behaviours including the fight or flight response to threat.
- The limbic system, which appeared with the emergence of mammals, has many components, but in a nutshell involves emotional response.
- The neocortex, present in primates and humans, is responsible for learning, abstract thinking, language acquisition,

creativity... all the things we want to work with as educators.

When you are under threat, the reptilian complex becomes dominant and suppresses the activity of the other two parts. No longer able to respond in an emotionally mature way, which our students find difficult anyway, or engage in abstract thinking, you are not going to learn very well and your reactions are likely to be illogical. Even if the threat is imagined, perceived or sparked off by a memory, your body will react as if your life is in danger. On a scientific level, therefore, it makes no sense to snarl at a student or bang your hand on the table because that will be perceived as a threat.

So although we tackle inappropriate behaviours, we tackle them in a way that separates the behaviour from the individual. There is nothing new about the strategies we use, but we bring them together in one place. They include help scripts, so that our response is consistent no matter where the problem occurs or who is dealing with it. 'I can see you are upset. Perhaps we can talk it through.' 'I can see this is important to you and I am here to help.' All of our scripts have the same sort of theme and never include the word 'no'. The effect of 'no' is profoundly different.

The impetus for removing sanctions

In my view, punishment satisfies an instinctive, overwhelming human desire



Stakeholders brainstorm ideas at the school's Inset day

for retribution. If detentions worked, we wouldn't see the same students over and over again.

In the past, at the end of the day, students engaged in a social activity which helped to improve relationships. Football, cooking, Minecraft... a whole range of pleasurable activities were on offer. If a child didn't perform in lessons, they had to do 'catch-up' instead, where they were given extra work, which was often meaningless and just served as a punishment. It didn't change behaviours and sometimes resulted in deeply unpleasant secondary behaviours.

Anecdotally, I knew these sessions didn't work; the challenge was to convince others that we could do without them. Moreover, we had nothing to put in their place, until Mr Baker met Dr Alice Jones through Learnus, a community that brings together educators and researchers who specialise in the study of the brain, the mind and behaviour. She provided the scientific validity to back up what I felt instinctively.

What science tells us

There are three groups in society who don't respond well to punishment and who happen to make up a large proportion of the population of our school.

Callous, unemotional traits (CU).

Some people with CU can't empathise – their brains are wired differently, so it is not their fault. Others can empathise in the sense that they understand how another person might be feeling, but they just don't care. Restorative justice techniques won't work for these students and merely give them further ammunition to torment their victim again. Nor will punishment, as their anger will be transferred to the person applying the punishment or the victim.

Autism and social communication difficulties. When punishment does change behaviour, it is not the punishment itself that makes this happen, but the teacher's disapprobation. The child doesn't like this, so they make sure they don't commit the same offence again. If the effectiveness of punishment depends on not wanting to attract disapprobation, and you don't understand all the social cues, you are not going to pick up on that as well as other people do.

A combination of ADHD and SEBD. Research conducted when SEMH was defined as SEBD shows that a

combination of ADHD and SEBD inhibits fear responses. This can be measured in lots of ways, neurologically and physically. So while the fear of punishment can be a deterrent for some people, these children are really not bothered because it doesn't frighten them. Around 80% of our students have ADHD and SEBD.

Using reward effectively

Reward, on the other hand, works for everybody, and especially for children with CU. But it has to be built in, immediate and explicit.

Students earn marks every lesson on a five-point scale for effort to learn and behaviour. At the end of the day, these are collated and averaged. If their average is three or above, they earn the reward of going to social activity; if not, they carry on with normal lessons. In the past, catch-up was a punishment, and social activities were taken away. Now, social activities are rewards. We also have longer-term rewards, which come in a variety of forms, like certificates, prizes and trips.

Praise has a massive impact. Not just 'Well done,' but 'Well done for passing Tom a pen. I love that because it's thoughtful and creates a good learning environment.' We've all seen what happens when you are handing something out, and the first six people say nothing, then the seventh says 'thank you'. If you acknowledge that and say that it makes you feel good, you will hear 'thank you' again and again as you pass along the rows.

Reward must be built in, immediate and explicit

To people who argue that our approach doesn't prepare students for the reality of life after school, my response is that we are helping them develop their brain. The brain's plasticity continues until around the age of 25, and as new neurons grow, new pathways develop. The more often a student hears, 'Thank you for your lovely manners. That makes me feel great,' the more often they repeat that behaviour until it becomes part of their repertoire. The aim is to change their behaviour on a lifetime basis.

Impact

Initial research by Goldsmiths shows that the approach is popular, which is good in itself, because wellbeing is so important.



Otis is a cross between a boxer and a labrador, chosen by Mick Simpson for his friendly, even-tempered nature. Almost from the day he arrived, at the age of 16 weeks, he went to work in the first of his two key roles: as a de-escalation tool.

'If a child is in crisis, the dog will either be taken to the child or the child will come into my office,' Mr Simpson explains. 'Otis will automatically climb up onto the chair next to them, put his head in their lap and very soon, from an incoherent, angry young man, we are dealing with someone who can cuddle a dog, enjoy the licks he get in return and talk to us. It works extraordinarily well.'

Otis's second role is as a classroom assistant, and he is now well enough trained to be able to go into a classroom and either wander around or sit in a corner, or perhaps go into a reading tent where a student will read to him. This has an immediate settling effect on the whole class.

Lots of our students are forever being told that they are failures, and many have mental health problems. If they feel good about themselves, it equips them to deal with issues.

In terms of long-term impact, that is harder to say. Barely two years since we started, it hasn't made things worse and it has reduced some of those unpleasant secondary behaviours. Some students are also showing signs of positive change, but that happened in the past as well. Moreover, change is inevitable; for example, the symptoms of ADHD can lessen as children grow older.

We also have a fluid population and some pupils only arrive in Year 11. The fact they are being spoken to as human beings can have an immediate and sometimes dramatic effect, but it is not going to have the long-term impact we are striving to achieve with those who are with us all the way through.

FIND OUT MORE

- **Challenging Behaviour: Strategies for Helping Young People:** <http://bit.ly/sc240-16>



Bett Show 2018 preview

John Galloway runs through the highlights of this year's show

Given that technology is always developing, it should come as no surprise that the event best known for showcasing what's new in education should also evolve, with new exhibitors showing off their wares and established companies no longer coming along.

Supporting literacy

One Bett stalwart is the TTS Group, best known for its range of educational toys and low-tech products such as the Talk Time cards, cubes and even a clipboard that you can record your voice on (stand C195, www.tts-group.co.uk). This year sees the advent of the Chatter Chum, a toy bee with a voice recorder and a motion sensor – when it detects someone nearby, it plays a recorded message, providing endless possibilities for interactive displays. A bigger draw is likely to be the company's Storytime Phonics, a scheme built around real books read by the Phonic Fairy in videos with top-notch production values that model how to share a book and activities to teach the

letter or phoneme. These are great for both supporting what class teachers do and acting as a resource for small groups led by teaching assistants. A quality resource in every sense.

Other literacy resources on show include Spellbots from Mighty Mango, an online resource featuring a number of off-world robots to teach spelling (stand E40, www.thespellbots.com), and, by way of contrast, Actiphons, a way of learning phonics based on physical activity (stand C40B, www.actiphons.com). For a more conventional multisensory approach to dyslexia, have a look at Ascentis and its IDL system (stand G399, www.idlcloud.co.uk).

Also offering support for students struggling with literacy are several companies which have been providing resources for reading and writing for some time. Matchware has updated its Mindview mind-mapping tool to make it more dyslexia friendly, offering greater control of colour contrasts and an improved ability to structure documents in Word and PowerPoint (stand C142, www.matchware.com). Kurzweil Education Systems (stand B454, www.kurzweilededu.com), Claro Software (stand A441, www.clarosoftware.com), and ReadSpeaker (stand C66, www.readspeaker.com) will all be showing off their well-established bolt-on toolbars

to variously provide screen readers, predictors, study tools, and smart spell-checkers that can pick up homophones and other oddities.

Texthelp has a similar offer, but it is also bringing two new products to the show (stand C141, www.texthelp.com). WriQ is a free add-on to Google Docs that keeps track of students' work and provides information about such technical language elements as sentence length and structure, and age-appropriate vocabulary, which could provide a useful insight into literacy development for both SEND and EAL learners.

Maths support

Texthelp is also introducing EquatIO, which should make it easier to write mathematical equations, graphs and formulae on a screen by typing on the keyboard, writing on the screen, or even dictating. This includes a built-in library of expressions to make the process easier, and the finished calculations can be copied into other documents.

Maths is also the focus of SRS Learning's maths practice app, which it believes will improve attainment for underachieving and low attaining pupils (stand FS32, www.srslearning.com). The program is being offered for free until July 2019 to help build up the company's fund of data.



Making learning tangible

Other apps on offer include those from Yellow Door (stand G95, www.yellow-door.net) and Magikbee (stand FS8, www.magikbee.com), which both offer products that combine tangible objects with tablet screens. Yellow Door has a wide range of apps covering many different areas of early learning, along with letter blocks to explore alongside the screen. Magikbee has building blocks that interact with the screen along with books using augmented reality, where objects become three-dimensional when viewed through the device's camera.

Another device relying on a camera, although for a very different purpose, is the AV1 from NoIsolation (stand B390 with the IKT Norway/Oslo EdTech Cluster, www.noisolation.com). This looks like a white, plastic, robot but is really a means for children and young people who cannot get into class to continue to follow lessons alongside their peers. It is about the size of a jug blender, and has a built-in camera, speaker and microphone, connected to a tablet by a secure mobile phone or internet connection. When learners are out of the classroom, perhaps because of long-term illness, they can dial into their AV1, watch what is going on and interact. There is even a 'hands-up' facility that allows them to answer or ask questions. It could be a game-changer for those who want to keep up with their studies but are unable to get into school.

What NoIsolation has done is to take a well-known technology, the webcam, and make it useful for a particular purpose. In a similar way, Vocal Recall from We Can Remember It has taken the QRcode and given it a new spin (stand FS51, <https://vocalrecall.co.uk>). It provides sheets of pre-printed codes to be peeled off and attached to anything you like, then, using an app on a smartphone or tablet, you record a message to be replayed when the user scans it. It could be used in an exercise book to provide prompts and reminders, or even on a display to give it a multimedia dimension, or perhaps on an object to provide instructions on its use. As a tool for

formative assessment, it can quickly provide feedback when stuck in a book where the teacher's scrawled red ink usually goes.

Assessment tools

A more formal approach to assessment is provided as part of GL Assessment's Doodle (stand B149, www.gl-assessment.co.uk). This combines assessment and monitoring with multimedia teaching materials right across the curriculum. Materials can be differentiated to meet the range of levels in any particular class, and personalised checklists of achievement can be created. Parents can also have accounts to enable them to keep an eye on the work their offspring is doing.

It's almost impossible to consider assessment and monitoring for SEND without thinking about B Squared, a specialist in this area for many years, largely through its work in continually developing and responding to changes in school systems (stand B241, www.bsquared.co.uk). Recently, this has included developing a means to put the Rochford Review into practice. In addition, it has also brought out Evisense, an online evidence-gathering tool: any media can be uploaded to it and linked to a statement from an assessment framework. This can then be used for reports and reviews, and shared with parents.

More specific assessment is available with Axon from Neurotech Solutions whose attentional profiling engine can apparently help to identify elements of ADHD and provide an intervention (stand F340, www.neurotech-solutions.com).

Also concerned with learning and behaviour is Kanda Care, a tablet-based system for evidence gathering and recording to support interventions (stand FS18, www.kanda.care). Factors that can affect learning and behaviour are wellbeing and mental health, and these are the focus of People Diagnostix, which provides survey software and staff development materials to identify and support children and young people at risk (stand G70, www.flourishingatschool.com).

CPD strands

While plenty of exhibitors will provide CPD as part of their offer to schools and teachers, this is somewhat in short supply for SEND specialists at this year's Bett. A change of organisers has seen a change of approach: all seminars are now sponsored, so it costs to host one rather than to attend one. There are only four sessions tagged of interest for SEND, of which these three might be worth a look.

- *Learning through play, and why we shouldn't teach to test* looks at the role of play in child development. Bett Arena, 24 January at 13:15, sponsored by Futures Inspiration.
- *Inclusive classrooms: tackling dyslexia & improving learning*. Schools Theatre, 24 January at 15:45, sponsored by Microsoft.
- *Using mixed reality to support students with additional learning needs and transition to college*. Post-16 Theatre, 26 January at 12:00, also sponsored by Microsoft.

However, that doesn't mean that good quality, low-cost CPD aimed at practitioners working in SEND is not available; it's just not in good supply at Bett. Among the companies that you might have expected to be at the show, but who have absented themselves, are Widgit (www.widgit.com), Wordshark (www.wordshark.co.uk) and Crick (www.cricksoft.com). They are now providing opportunities to find out about their products, and often much more, at seminars and breakfast meetings across the country throughout the year. The trend was started by Inclusive Technology (www.inclusive.co.uk), begetters of HelpKidzLearn (www.helpkidzlearn.com), who departed Bett some years ago, and has now been embraced by others, particularly Crick. Visit their websites to find out about these opportunities.

The Bett Show 2018 takes place between 24 and 27 January at ExCeL, London.
www.bettshow.com

Communication – teaching this vital life skill

Making Good Communicators – A Sourcebook of Speaking and Listening Activities for 9-11 Year Olds

By Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring

Published by Routledge

ISBN 9781909301566

£39.99

Reviewed by Helen Punter-Bruce

Communication underpins every curriculum area. Learning new vocabulary, being able to put words and thoughts into context, and speaking with meaning while taking on new ideas and listening to others are crucial life skills which we must impart to the children we educate.

This book, the fourth in a series, provides structured activities to develop the main areas presented in the speaking and listening elements of the primary National Curriculum. The authors are experts in speech and language development and practice, and are renowned in this field.

The content is easy to navigate, making lesson planning and teaching easy. Online support offers resources for each activity via an account, which is accessed by a unique activation code at the front – no CD-Rom to lose! The skill areas covered include explaining and describing, understanding and using complex language structures, narrating, predicting, asking and answering questions and matching language to content.

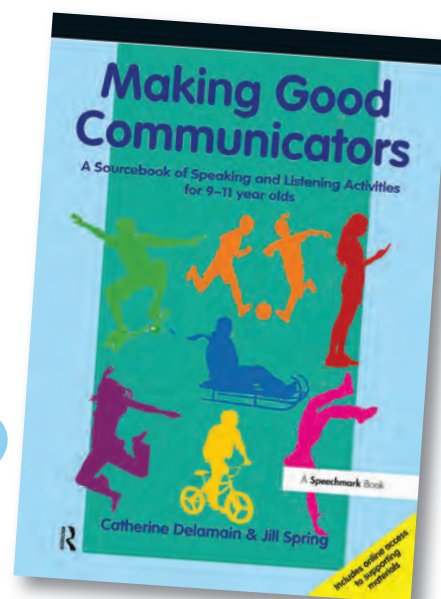
All the activities are clearly described, any equipment or resources required are listed, and the methodology is outlined and illustrated with an example. I found this

“Teachers can use the activities individually or work through different areas simultaneously”

helpful when searching for activities to suit various group sizes and needs, and was able to pick out something suitable most times.

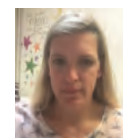
The book is split into two parts. Part 1 has five sections targeting basic speaking and listening skills, each with 10 activities, while Part 2 moves on to more complex and abstract concepts, again with 10 activities for each skill area. There is also an extensive section containing sample texts and pictures for use with the activities. All these are available online as well.

Although the recommended age for the book is nine to 11 years, I have successfully used many of the activities with a Year 3 class. I'm sure parts of the resource could be equally useful with older year groups. Teachers can teach skills individually or work through different areas simultaneously. The ideas can also be used as an intervention for children who have a particular need – this



is mostly how I used them in my school. The first activity in each area tends to be the easiest but there is no developmental graduation, although the authors advise that children's ability to cope with the first activity in any skill area offers the best guide as to how to proceed.

This is a useful resource for speech and language development, making it a great addition to any classroom.



Helen Punter-Bruce is a specialist leader for additional educational needs and an inclusion manager at Parkside Primary School in

East Sussex

The power of 'Once upon a time'

Creative Storytelling with Children at Risk, 2nd edition

By Sue Jennings

Published by Routledge

ISBN 9781909301825

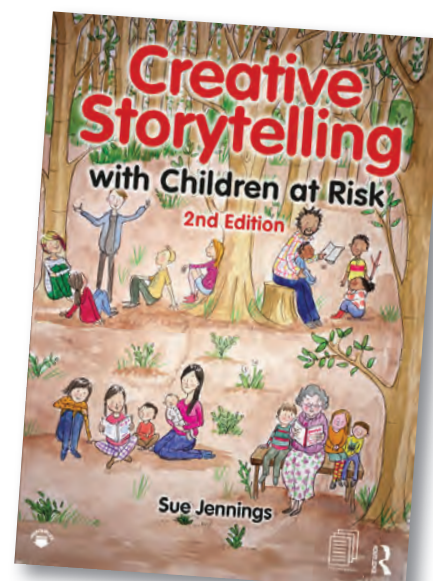
£36.99

Reviewed by Helen Curran

This book explains how stories and storytelling can be used to work with and support children who are at risk. The second edition revises and updates the first and includes new sections on trauma and abuse.

Dr Jennings starts by setting the context and explaining the importance

of storytelling, something which many teachers may readily accept, yet it was good to be reminded just how essential this activity is. The author concisely explains the purpose of play, and stories in particular, in relation to neuroscience and theories of development. This, in itself, is fascinating and effectively



conveys the wider relevance and potential impact of this strategy.

The author moves on to a discussion about specific case studies, which enable readers to see the practical relevance and place storytelling can have when supporting vulnerable children, before devoting the rest of the book to guiding readers through the process of therapeutic storytelling. She includes stories, practical activities and worksheets to facilitate this.

Different sections address specific concerns – for example, there are stories for sequencing and outcomes, anger management and sadness as well as stories about neglect. These are beautifully written, full of description and

draw on myths, tradition and nature.

The intended audience is broad, with the author suggesting that the content would be relevant for teachers, therapists, care workers and early years teachers. While it was written with children at risk in mind, it is perhaps useful to interpret this term broadly; there is much that could have wider relevance for children who experience challenges related to anger, sadness or who are just having a difficult time.

The material is clearly presented and easy to navigate. The author is able to communicate meaning effectively, explaining concepts and making links for the reader, and her style flows easily.

On the other hand, the content requires reflection, so the book does not really lend itself to being dipped into when looking for a quick activity.

This thought-provoking volume demonstrates, through good explanations of theory and examples of practice, the potential power of stories and storytelling when supporting vulnerable children.



Helen Curran is a senior lecturer in SEN at Bath Spa University. A former SENCO and LA SEN advisor, she recently submitted her PhD which explores the impact of the SEND reforms

Developing physical skills

Helping Children to Improve Their Gross Motor Skills - The Stepping Stones Curriculum

By Rachel White

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

ISBN 9781785922794

£24.99

Reviewed by Martin Edmonds

Rachel White has written a superb book which provides everything required to create and run an intervention to support gross motor skills development. Stepping Stones is a structured programme that enables adults to teach physical skills and monitor and track a child's progress as they work towards mastering motor coordination.

The format is flexible enough to allow implementation in a variety of settings, the resources required are standard school equipment, and the layout is clear, with photographs to illustrate specific skills. The programme is logical, straightforward and practicable. The book provides an initial assessment tool along with suggested warm-up activities to ensure that children and staff are fully prepared to begin the Stepping Stones programme. Cool down activities, assessment methods and a certificate-of-achievement template are also included.

The bulk of the book consists of detailed curriculum sheets to support basic gross motor skills development and, in a separate section, the application of these skills in sporting activities. In this way, specific skills, such as balance, jumping, bat and ball, and throwing and

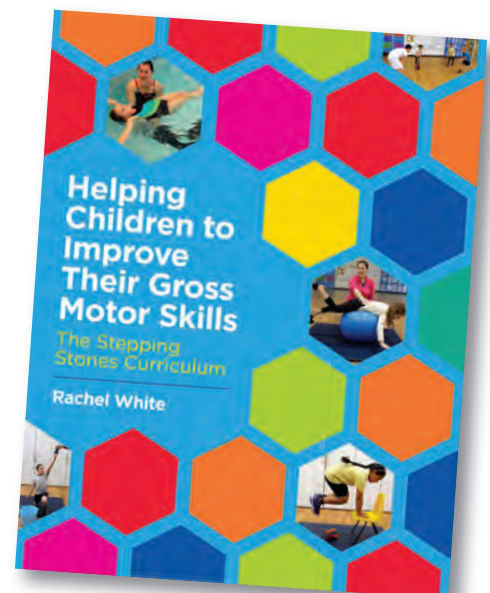
“There is a firm focus on enjoyment and confidence building”

catching, are taught discretely, developed and embedded incrementally, and then utilised as sports skills to reinforce learning and build confidence.

The section on developing aquatic skills begins with out-of-pool preparations along with arrangements for entering the pool, before focusing on significant issues for some students, such as accustoming them to getting their face wet.

A wide range of sports activities necessary for full engagement in secondary school PE are covered, including the skills necessary for badminton, rugby, football, table tennis and hockey. There is also a section on trampolining that focuses on teaching the basic skills while explaining how to use these to develop confidence and competence in using the equipment.

The book supports the development of children's gross motor skills through clear teaching practice by breaking down skill acquisition into incremental steps with a



firm focus on enjoyment and confidence building. The fact that the author is an experienced paediatric occupational therapist is apparent throughout this eminently practical and well-structured resource.

Martin Edmonds is a secondary school SENCO and manages an enhanced specialist provision for children with a diagnosis of ASD

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Facilitating conversations about mental health – Julia Clements

Over half of all mental health difficulties start before the age of 14, and 75% have developed by the age of 18 (Murphy and Fonagy, 2012). It is therefore essential for young people to be given the opportunity to talk about mental health from a young age, so they know where to turn if they need help. However, leading such discussions is not always easy.

Enter Fink Cards' Conversations about Mental Health with Children and Young People. This is a pack of colourful, attractive cards not unlike a deck of playing cards. Each card contains a simply worded question designed to start a conversation. For instance, in the general Mental Health section, one question asks: 'What does mental health mean?' The deck has four other sections: Feeling Better, Getting Help, Coping with Difficult Feelings and Types of Difficulty – all colour coded for easy navigation.

Fink (Family Interaction Nurtures Kids) started out in 2008 when parent Lisa Warner created a set of cards to stop her children bickering at mealtimes. Since then, Fink has gone on to produce packs covering many different topics for use at home or in school. For example, Fink collaborated with Child Bereavement UK to create a set of cards to promote discussions around death and bereavement.

More recently, Fink teamed up with the children's mental health charity Place2Be to write a pack of cards designed to help adults to have supportive conversations about mental health with children and young people at primary or secondary school.

Each pack comes with teachers' notes providing helpful guidance. Modelling is central to how the cards are used, so it is important that teachers feel confident



and secure talking about mental health themselves before they lead a discussion with their students. For this reason, we advise staff to remove any cards that make them feel uncomfortable.

The cards are not a specialist resource. As with anything new, a little preparation is necessary at the outset, but no special expertise is required to facilitate good discussions. That said, one SENCO led a staff meeting on how colleagues might use the pack, getting them to handle the cards and try out some of the questions on each other until everyone felt at ease talking about mental health.

In addition, teachers or teaching assistants are encouraged to inform a member of the senior leadership team if, during discussions, a child says something that concerns them or if something related to safeguarding arises.

Feedback from teachers indicates that the cards are a flexible resource. One teacher used them in association with images, weaving the questions into her work with a friendship group. Another picked out two or three cards to form the basis of whole-class PSHE lessons. Yet

another gave mini projects to students, tasking them to find out more about a particular card, such as 'What is anxiety?' or 'What is depression?' In this instance, she started off by getting students to talk about what they already knew through their own experience or that of family or friends. She was astonished by how familiar some young people already were with many of the topics, and found that these discussions gave them the opportunity to explore and articulate the issues, while giving others the opportunity to ask questions and fill the gaps in their knowledge.

Meanwhile the cards in the Getting Help section encourage help-seeking behaviour by prompting children and young people to consider what they can do if they are concerned about their own mental health, or that of a friend or family member, and who they can turn to.

In short, this resource helps raise awareness about mental health, enables non-specialists to facilitate difficult conversations, and helps give children the language they need to discuss their own and others' mental health.

A pack of cards for Conversations about Mental Health with Children and Young People from Fink Cards is £18.99. www.place2be.org.uk/resources



Julia Clements is the principal educational psychologist at Place2Be, the UK's leading children's mental health charity providing in-school support and expert training to improve the emotional wellbeing of pupils, families, teachers and school staff. www.place2be.org.uk

Spelling assessments – Donna Nelson

Our school places a strong emphasis on spelling and grammar – this will open doors for pupils academically as well as in the workplace later on. To this end, every class from Year 2 upwards has a daily spelling lesson. A new spelling rule is introduced every Monday, with a focus on using the new words throughout the week, and there is a spelling test on Friday.

Now that spelling is tested in the Year 6

SATs, it is essential for us to know if children are working at an age-appropriate level; checking this every six months would allow us to put interventions in place if pupils' spelling ages started to slip. Last year we took part in trialling the New Group Spelling Test from GL Assessment for years 2 to 6. Following the new National Curriculum, the test offers pupils plenty of challenge while building on spellings from previous years. This

means that every pupil starts the test believing it is achievable and is not put off by the difficulty of the first word, with the spellings becoming gradually harder.

The test we trialled was a paper version, with class teachers administering both parts, but the final version is digital and can be used on a PC or a tablet. The first part of the test comprised single words; the second was spelling in context, where the teacher read a word aloud,

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A pupil concentrates hard as she goes through the New Group Spelling Test

The online test

On a computer or tablet, pupils open the test and, wearing headphones, go through the two parts of the test, which is adaptive, so the spellings are in line with the ability pupils demonstrate. This is helpful for children with a low spelling attainment as they can be assessed with words at a lower level than that determined by age. It also means that they are more likely to remain motivated right through to the end. The adaptive element also benefits high attaining pupils because they can be tested with words that better reflect their skills.

Afterwards, teachers are able to generate both group and individual reports themselves at the press of a button. There is a Group Report for Teachers, which provides a summary of the age-standardised scores for the chosen group of pupils, presented both in rank order and in comparison to the national population. The Individual Report for Teachers shows all scores, a profile summary for each pupil and implications for teaching and learning.

then read it in a sentence, and finally read it on its own again. Children on the SEN register did the same tests as their peers, but in a small group in a separate room. This enabled us to stop the test when it was evident that it was becoming too difficult for them. The electronic test, however, adapts the questions to the child's ability (see box). Being aural, the assessment is not suitable for children who have hearing impairments.

The tests themselves were easy to administer, the instructions clear and the time-frame manageable although, in our case, class teachers split the test over two days: single words followed by spelling in context.

I was emailed group and individual

electronic reports from which I was able to identify patterns in pupils' knowledge. For example, the report for Year 6 pupils showed that many rules and exception words had been mastered (invention, attached, lamb, plough, primrose, preview, thought) but some words had proved difficult for everyone (correspond, controversy, accommodate). Most pupils spelt better in context. What was most insightful was that some very able writers were clearly limiting their vocabulary to words they knew how to spell, which was impacting the quality of their written work.

The New Group Spelling Test is challenging but accessible, thanks to the inclusion of spellings from previous years. If budgets allow, this is a test I would

invest in and run twice a year because it gives everyone such useful insight into their pupils' spelling ages.

The New Group Spelling Test from GL Assessment is £2/pupil/test + VAT.
www.gl-assessment.co.uk



Donna Nelson is vice principal, SENCO and Year 6 teacher at St Joseph's Catholic Academy, a one-form entry primary school for children in Goldenhill, Stoke-on-Trent

Gaining deeper insight into reading skills – Gaurav Dubay

The New Group Reading Test for students aged seven to 16, also from GL Assessment, tests their ability to read, decode and comprehend a text, revealing precisely where they need support, while benchmarking them against national averages. It also determines each child's reading age and, from Year 7 onwards, allocates a predicted GCSE grade based on current skills.

We have been using it with Year 7 since 2016/17 and this year tested years 8 and 9

as well. The tests are easy to administer. After logging onto a computer, pupils have 30 minutes to read a text extract and answer multiple choice questions on it.

The multiple choice format removes any ambiguity, giving the school a clear measure of students' basic comprehension and deeper analytical skills. For example, when answering questions that assess summary skills or the ability to analyse quotations, the child has to choose which interpretation best matches the extract. It is also possible to compare decoding skills

against passage comprehension to identify students who are competent decoders but have weak comprehension skills.

The test is in two parts – sentence completion, which mainly assesses decoding, and passage comprehension, where the questions become increasingly difficult. The report also identifies who is reading well and who needs extra support in terms of reading for meaning. Pupils with very weak decoding skills will be diverted to a phonics test.

Group and individual reports are



A group of pupils take the New Group Reading Test

produced automatically. At an individual level, the report highlights gaps and provides detailed insights for teaching and learning. Group reports can be at cohort level or focus on specific groups, such as students with SEN or in receipt of the pupil premium. These allow teachers to work in a very targeted way. For example, we discovered that one of the Year 7 weaknesses this year was selecting and retrieving quotations. While this only affected a small group of students, it still represented a significant proportion. Staff can arrange catch-up sessions for individuals or groups, and adjust teaching and learning for whole classes. After analysing the reports from the September

test, we assign students to sets according to their attainment.

The biggest difference the tests have made is in how we differentiate. We have comprehensive schemes of work and each of those reading skills is tested. This means that if we find that most students in a group are competent in a particular skill, we will only visit it now and again, and if there is an area of weakness, teachers differentiate accordingly. We also put interventions in place for students who are still struggling to decode while helping them improve their skimming and scanning skills.

We gave the results to parents, along with literature to help them interpret

these, but they found it hard to grasp the implications. For example, the test showed that one 11-year-old had a reading age of 17+ yet he was not one of our more able pupils: his technical ability to explain what he was reading was relative to his age. His parents focused on the headline reading age and could not see that their son's interpretative skills were weak. Consequently we are now putting a workshop in place to help parents understand the test results.

Interestingly, we found the New Group Reading Test more accurate than the SATS in assessing students' strengths and weaknesses. SATS just give us a number. The test gives us details on the areas we need to focus on. We are seeing faster progress thanks to the New Group Reading Test because we are now addressing these areas early.

The New Group Reading Test from GL Assessment is now available as a termly test. It starts from £5.65 + VAT per digital administration, which includes automatic scoring and reporting. www.gl-assessment.co.uk



Gaurav Dubay is head of English at King Edward VI Handsworth Grammar School for Boys in Birmingham

Why rhythm makes a difference to reading – Paula Burke and Elaine Haver

Rhythm for Reading is an innovative way to engage students with reading that complements phonological approaches yet focuses on rhythm instead of words.

The outcome for our students has been phenomenal. For instance, we set a target for one particular student to read simple words by the end of July, but he achieved this in the first five weeks of the programme and progressed to reading sentences.

Our school is for young people with severe learning difficulties, including autism and Down syndrome. For years we plugged away at a range of interventions in an attempt to teach them to read, including Jolly Phonics, Premier League Reading Stars and all the reading schemes traditionally used in primary

schools. The difficulty, however, was that by the time students arrived in Year 7, many had been turned off reading, convinced that it was a pointless effort and that they would never master the skill.

Principal Elaine Haver came across the Rhythm for Reading programme when she was scouring the internet for something that might help to overcome this. After learning about the work of Dr Marion Long, who developed the programme, she realised that while it had been trialled in a school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ADHD, it had yet to be tried in a setting like ours where pupils have such widely varying needs, including severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication difficulties.

Nevertheless, she was willing to give it a try, even if it only worked for one or two. That was 12 months ago. Today we are excited to be extending the Rhythm for Reading programme across the school.

The intervention supports and improves reading comprehension and reading fluency and helps in supporting phonological awareness. It works by honing students' sensitivity to sounds and in this way accelerates their progress in learning phonics. Fundamentally it improves their sensitivity to rhythm so that they start to connect words fluently, enabling them to read for meaning for the first time.

Mainstream schools run the 10-minute programme once a week for 10 weeks via a secure portal, which streams materials onto the interactive whiteboard. We adapted this slightly for our pupils by



Improving students' sensitivity to rhythm enables them to connect words more fluently

extending it to 15 weeks, during which time they gradually became more accurate with their letter sounds. As the name suggests, the programme is based on rhythm – counter-intuitively, students work in groups of up to 10 to learn to read music where they associate each note with a sound, and make actions and sounds to these. The focus is on fluency. They later learn the letters for the phonemes. At first, staff could not understand the concept and were extremely sceptical about how learning might transfer back into the classroom. However, after a training session from Dr Long, they could see exactly how it worked, and as the programme progressed, slowly but surely students' reading became clearer.

We tried it with students who have moderate to severe learning difficulties, including autism and Down syndrome, and staff have additionally differentiated sessions for students with visual and hearing impairments. We think it succeeds because it is very active and the musical notation shows students how to speed up and slow down, and consequently they quickly develop a rhythm to their reading. In the past, they learned to read with letter blends and even whole words, but their reading was so disjointed that they didn't understand what they were reading. Here they were tackling phrases rather than individual words or sounds.

Initially, the programme was run as an action research project by Dr Long,

who came in on Wednesday afternoons to lead six groups of students supported by teachers and TAs. From our point of view, it was easy to pick up.

The key, we think, is that this is a different way into reading and so there is a different level of engagement. All the students who took part in the action research project are now reading more fluently; they have access to a range of materials, from books on Kindles to magazines, catalogues and environmental prints around the school, and we've seen a lift in their willingness to engage with all of these. Parents also gave us good feedback indicating that the methodology was working at home.

“The focus is on fluency”

The programme includes pre- and post-assessments to enable staff to monitor levels of student engagement. Dr Long continues to keep our skills up to date using Skype calls. Meanwhile, our own action research is drilling down into the details – we have now identified that the best time of day to teach the programme to our students is straight after lunch. The format also seems to suit pupils on the autism spectrum perfectly. Meanwhile, it has also helped two young men with

Down syndrome who are very able communicators but had refused to try and read anything.

From the teachers' point of view, it is fabulous to have students engaged at the start of lessons and wanting to try something new. Today, every member of staff has been fully trained and actively uses the programme in their classrooms.

The Rhythm for Reading programme costs between £2,500 and £5,000 depending on the size of the school and type of delivery.

<https://rhythmforreading.com>



Elaine Haver is the principal and Paula Burke is a

Key Stage 4 teacher and the English coordinator at Cavendish High Academy, Runcorn, Cheshire, a school for children with severe learning difficulties aged 11 to 19

FIND OUT MORE

'I can read further and there's more meaning while I read.' An exploratory study investigating the impact of a rhythm-based music intervention on children's reading, a peer-reviewed article by Dr Marion Long, published by Sage. <http://bit.ly/sc240-02>

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SWOYO performing at Bristol Cathedral with Lydbrook Band and the University of the West of England Singers

Orchestras for all

Barry Farrimond tells the story behind the imminent launch of the world's first disabled-led national youth orchestra and invites schools to provide inclusive music-making opportunities for their own students

OpenUp Music is a charity with a very simple mission – to make orchestras accessible to young disabled musicians.

It didn't start out that way, however, and for the first six years my co-founder and I worked on a research project developing new musical instruments and exploring ways of introducing these instruments and music-making into the lives of young disabled people. We tried making music with phonics, we wove it into parts of the maths syllabus, and looked for as many opportunities as we could find to integrate a musical element into the curriculum.

It was the closing ceremony of the 2012 Paralympics that marked the turning point. I was working in a special school at the time and a huge sense of excitement swept through the whole school; everyone was buzzing about the performance by the British Paraorchestra they had seen the night before. The deputy headteacher said to me, half jokingly: 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if they had a school orchestra?' to which I replied: 'Yes, indeed. That would be a truly wonderful thing.'

So we did a survey of all of the

secondary schools in the South West and all of the special schools. The results were very revealing. Roughly half of the secondary schools had a school orchestra. Not a single special school did.

“Students can play one shape or hundreds, laid out in whichever pattern suits them best”

It was clear to us that this was an area of education that was completely out of bounds for these young people and that something had to be done about it. And that the orchestra, as an idea, might be a way of opening doors and, crucially, leaving a lasting legacy. There are lots of exciting music programmes that drop into schools, but come back a year later, and you find that they have just evaporated.

A school orchestra, on the other hand, has the potential to be there forever.

Open Orchestras

We began by establishing three special school orchestras in the South West through a programme we called Open Orchestras. In those early days, we were still using all the instrument prototypes we had been developing for the previous six years. They were good ideas, but they were complicated to set up, very expensive, and not very transferable; people couldn't start using them without a music technologist on hand. So our first year was quite costly and required a lot of resource. We were really just trying our best to make something happen.

And happen it did. We had three exceptional orchestras made up of young people who would ordinarily have been excluded from music simply because they weren't able to access conventional instruments. When they played at the Bristol Colston Hall, the sensation they created was the inspiration for the Colston Hall's Fast Forward Festival, an annual event showcasing the talents of disabled musicians from across the world. It was an immensely powerful performance. Something was stirring.

Expanding our reach

Building on this momentum, we branched out in two directions. The first was to expand Open Orchestras in pursuit of our ultimate goal: to see an orchestra in every special school in the country. To that end, we started the process of distilling everything we were doing down into an accessible package that other people could start using.

Today there are 28 Open Orchestras across the UK and the number is growing. We no longer deliver the programme directly. Instead, schools, arts organisations and music education hubs pay an annual subscription enabling them to set up and maintain Open Orchestras themselves, supported by us through detailed schemes of work and lesson plans, extensive staff training, supported delivery (where we go into schools to help staff run workshops, provide feedback and offer further ideas) and an evaluation framework.

We also provide access to our unique instrument: the Clarion.

The Clarion

Unlike conventional instruments, which are fixed, the Clarion can be adapted to the specific needs of each individual.

For young people with physical impairments, the Clarion for PC can be played with any part of the body, including the head, the feet and the eyes. For those with autism or learning difficulties who are manually dextrous, Clarion for iPad is an approachable, versatile alternative.

Musical notes are represented on screen as shapes that can be coloured, resized, reformed and rotated. Students can play one shape or hundreds, laid out in whichever pattern suits them best. If you were working with a young person with complex needs, say, and one of your objectives for the year was to promote a cause and effect relationship between touching an iPad and a sound coming out, you could have a single note covering the whole screen. At the other end of the spectrum, we have young musicians who play to an incredibly high standard using sophisticated set-ups which they configure themselves.

Although this is technology at its best, we don't use the term 'music technology' to describe it. It's a musical instrument, just like any other. As soon as you mention 'music technology', people start worrying: 'Oh, how am I going to set it up? How does it work?' They focus on that rather than making music.



George Roberts accepts the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award trophy on behalf of SWOYO

The UK's first disabled-led regional youth orchestra

The second strand of our work was the establishment of the UK's very first disabled-led regional youth orchestra and now, excitingly, the imminent launch of the world's first disabled-led national youth orchestra to develop young talent and potentially open doors to music as a career.

Founded in 2015, the South West Open Youth Orchestra (SWOYO) brings together disabled and non-disabled musicians to perform music created especially for their unique blend of instruments, which range from piano, French horn and trombone, to the accessible and incredibly expressive LinnStrument created by Roger Linn, and, of course, the Clarion.

Some of the orchestra members have severe physical disabilities, others have cerebral palsy. Ashleigh, our pianist, is blind, partially deaf and on the autism spectrum. It is a very broad range, but when they are on stage together, their impairments disappear as they are swept

up in the power of their music.

They call it reverse inclusion, although that's not an expression I like very much as it implies that one way is the expected route and the other way is reversed. For me, inclusion is a two-way street. It goes without saying that disabled people need to be given the opportunity to participate in all walks of life, but non-disabled people also need to be given the opportunity to take part in areas that are led by disabled people. That is how you get a richer society.

And these young musicians have got something unique to say. When asked why she had joined the SWOYO, one of our non-disabled players said: 'For the music. Because the music is exciting.' Not because she wanted to become a music therapist, or because it was a charitable thing to do, but for the music.

That is what we set out to achieve.

Once you get past the fact that some of the orchestra members have disabilities, what you are left with is just young musicians making amazing music.

Musical repertoire

Running in parallel with both strands of our work has been the development of our repertoire.

With the invention of the piano, suddenly beautiful music was being written especially for it that was very different from any music that had been written before. It has taken generations to fine tune and develop this. We are really interested to find out what it sounds like to play music with your eyes or your head movement – it should sound different



The SWOYO pianist is deeply immersed in the music she is creating during a rehearsal



Clarion musicians can alter every aspect of the instrument to suit their individual needs

– so we have started to commission a repertoire. You can watch one of our first commissions – *The Umbrella* – on vimeo.com/238111644, composed by Liam Taylor-West, who came to all the rehearsals and really engaged with the musicians. They brought their ideas to the piece, and he captured them and sewed it all together. It was a collaborative process. That is crucial.

Meanwhile, for Open Orchestras, our musical director has taken a range of works and broken them up into the musical building blocks, which we provide both as presets in the Clarion, and also through our lesson plans and schemes of work so that they can be rebuilt in a way that maps around the needs of the participants. In the same way that the Clarion adapts to individual need, so too does the repertoire.

Beethoven's Symphony No 7, for example, is a solid enough piece of music to be broken up, rebuilt and still sound beautiful. And it can be rebuilt anew each time. When you listen to it from one school to another, it is a different piece of music and yet it is still the same. It is a truly wonderful thing.

This is a really exciting area. Ultimately, if we want to get young disabled musicians into professional orchestras, repertoire and musical instrument development will be the key. As we continue to refine and develop the Clarion to create a professional standard instrument, if there is a body

of composition and repertoire behind it, a mainstream orchestra will want to perform that. And if they need to get a Clarion player in, because there is a whole part written for the Clarion, that's a career opportunity. That changes everything.

“*The young people's impairments disappear as they are swept up in the power of their music*”

Trailblazers

The achievements of the South West Open Youth Orchestra have already demonstrated the extraordinary levels of musicianship that are possible when all the barriers are removed.

SWOYO has performed in the Colston Hall, played alongside a brass band and the University of the West of England Singers in Bristol Cathedral; it has featured on the BBC's *The One Show* and performed live on *BBC Radio 3*. The ultimate accolade came in September 2017 when it was accorded a Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award – the Oscars of the orchestral world – in the category for learning and participation.

Building on this success, we are now preparing to launch the National Open

Youth Orchestra (NOYO) in September 2018 to continue our work on developing young talent and providing a progression route to a possible career.

Calling all budding musicians

We are recruiting at the moment. For the first year, we will be looking in the South West and the South East, but in 2019 we will be pushing north until we get national reach. So no matter where you live in England or Wales, please get in touch through the NOYO website. We definitely want to hear from you.

What we are looking for are disabled and non-disabled young musicians who could potentially have a career in music if there were no barriers in the way. Our application criteria are summed up in our three Ps.

- Passion – they have got to want to do this!
- Perseverance – with the right support in place, they will persevere, look to improve their musicianship and practise.
- If they have passion and perseverance, then they have the third P: musical potential.

While we welcome applications from experienced, accomplished musicians, we are equally interested in hearing from young people who have never had the opportunity to make music, but that is what they have always longed to do. Passion is what matters. We will provide a tutor, rehearsal time and a musical instrument to practise on so they can develop as musicians.

Barry Farrimond is chief executive of OpenUp Music

FIND OUT MORE

- **National Open Youth Orchestra.** NOYO is being delivered in collaboration with Bristol Music Trust, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Barbican and Guildhall in London, who are responsible for setting up regional training centres, providing tuition and arranging monthly rehearsals. OpenUp Music will provide the rest including residential rehearsals, creative oversight, the repertoire and the instruments. <http://noyo.org.uk>
- **Open Orchestras.** If your school would like to set up an Open Orchestra, get in touch with your local music education hub or contact Open Orchestras on www.openorchestras.org

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