

Special Children

Meeting Children's Additional Educational Needs

- Whole-school speech and language approaches
- Self-awareness and leadership skills
- Literacy across the generations
- Meltdowns and pupil safety



Tourettes

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**PULL-OUT
RESOURCES**
Raising awareness
of dyslexia

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Special Children is published by Optimus Education, a division of Optimus Professional Publishing Ltd.

Registered office: Optimus Professional Publishing Ltd, 2nd floor, 5 Thomas More Square, London, E1W 1YW.

Registered in England and Wales, reg no. 05791519
ISSN 0951-6875

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Printed in the UK by
PENSORD PRESS
www.pensord.co.uk

www.optimus-education.com/special-children

In these days of ever-tighter budgets, the government’s announcement of £80 million to support the implementation of the SEND reforms is welcome news.

Although this money isn’t actually coming to schools, £35.8 million will go to local authorities to support the transition to EHC plans.

One of the challenges facing schools in this context is getting to grips with co-production and writing outcomes. The article on pages 30-32 gives a clear explanation of what is involved and step-by-step guidance on writing good outcomes. You will find additional insights into this and other aspects of the reforms on the Optimus Knowledge Centre.

Building character

‘We believe teachers can support pupil outcomes by developing their character, as well as developing their knowledge, understanding and skills,’ states the *Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training*, January 2015.

More recently, a new study for the Sutton Trust, *A Winning Personality*, identified three character traits as being particularly beneficial for career success – extraversion (sociability, confidence and assertiveness), self-esteem and a positive outlook (<http://bit.ly/sc229-50>).

These same qualities underpin a programme for schools which motivates children to raise their sights and take control of their lives. Read all about humanutopia on pages 34-36.

E-safety matters

Sustaining children’s self-belief in the digital age isn’t easy, however. According to the counselling charity ChildLine, children report that their confidence and self-esteem are being destroyed by a constant onslaught from cyberbullying, social media and the desire to emulate the ‘perfect’ images they see online.

Meanwhile, a survey of 1,200 young people for CBBC Newsround shows that more than three quarters of 10- to 12-year-olds have social media accounts, although the minimum age is 13. Over a third have befriended strangers and a quarter have been bullied or trolled.

These findings are reflected in research conducted by Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board and Sheffield E-Learning Service prior to the development of an e-safety curriculum model for key stages 1-4. Find out what the children were saying and see an extract of the curriculum model on pages 18-21.

Tourette syndrome

Lack of self-confidence was also a stumbling block for 26-year-old Tom Morgan before he appeared on Channel 4’s *The Undateables*

in January. Tom has Tourette syndrome and Asperger syndrome, and the anxiety caused by his determination to suppress his tics on a date was ruining his chances of taking the relationship further. Since the show aired, he has been inundated with supportive tweets, including invitations from girls keen to go out with him.

The experience of Sophie Bevan, who features on the cover of this edition, is equally heart-warming. Watch her in *Kitchen Impossible with Michel Roux Jr* and read pages 14-16 to learn more about the condition and how to support children who are affected.

Communication skills

Government figures reveal that 20% of children starting school in England have poorly developed language skills, and polling shows that teachers are struggling to cope with the impact in their classrooms. Meanwhile, the Communication Trust has produced a new resource to help teachers monitor progression in spoken language in years 1-6 and identify children with poor speaking skills so that steps can be taken to support them.

Some children’s communication needs are more severe, however, and we profile two Shine a Light award-winners on pages 8-10 and 12-13. The first is a primary school, which gives children with significant SLCN specialist support while maximising their opportunities to integrate into mainstream classes, and also implements a raft of schoolwide strategies. The second is a special school where pupils with complex needs are immersed in a symbol-rich environment.

Dyslexia awareness

Dyslexia affects 10% of the population, yet there is widespread lack of awareness of what the condition entails. That was clearly demonstrated recently when a Starbucks employee won a disability discrimination case against her employer. In her role as a supervisor, Meseret Kumulchew had been responsible for keeping a record of fridge and water temperatures at specific times until she was demoted on the grounds of having falsified the results. Ms Kumulchew was able to demonstrate that her dyslexia had led her to make genuine mistakes and that she had declared her condition when she took up the post.

Raising awareness in schools is the focus of the pull-out resource on pages 25-28, while the article on pages 22-24 features a drama production which children took on tour to spread the word amongst the wider public.

Alison Thomas *Sophie C.*

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Tourette syndrome:
Sophie Bevan asks employers to look beyond her 'label' by proving she has what it takes to work in a kitchen with a Michelin star chef



Genome project helps in diagnosis

The first genome diagnoses are being made, thanks to the 100,000 Genomes Project. This was set up by the government to map the genomes of people with rare diseases or cancer.

When the human genome was mapped back in 2001, everyone thought it would transform medicine. Now the NHS is starting to benefit from information generated by the project – the first health system in the world to do so.

Jessica Wright has a rare, genetic condition that causes epilepsy and affects her movement and development. But which disease is it?

Her clinicians had used MRI scans, EEGs and lumbar punctures in an attempt to identify her condition to enable them to decide on treatment. In desperation, her parents turned to the 100,000 Genomes Project, which examined DNA from her blood and compared it with that of her parents to try and identify the genetic changes that might be responsible for her condition.

She has now been diagnosed with glut 1 deficiency syndrome: it seems her body does not produce enough of the protein that transports glucose from her blood to the fluid around her brain.



Jessica's condition is not inherited from her parents and might be controlled with diet rather than medication

Jessica's mother, Kate Palmer, says: 'Now that we have this diagnosis, there are things that we can do differently almost straight away. Her condition is one that has a high chance of improvement on a special diet, which means that her medication dose is likely to decrease and her epilepsy may be more easily

controlled. Hopefully she might have better balance so she can be more stable and walk more. She's now four years old and still looks like a wobbly toddler trying to move around!'

Over 135 rare diseases are included in the project. Find out more: www.genomicsengland.co.uk

Gaps in SRE leave children at risk

Campaigners at the Sex Education Forum are calling for mandatory status for sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools, after its survey of young people found that their safety is being undermined by dramatic variations in what is taught.

The survey of over 2,000 11-25 year-olds showed that many young people have gaps in their SRE. Many were missing out on key information, such as knowing where to turn to for help if they experience sexual abuse, information about female genital mutilation (FGM), or sexual consent.

50% of those surveyed had not learned about how to get help if they experience unwanted touching or sexual abuse while at primary school, 16% had not learned the correct names for genitalia, and 17% had not learned that the genitals are private – all key to recognising and reporting abuse. Young people were more likely to have learned about the difference

between safe and unwanted touch from discussions at home (45%) than at school.

When asked about their school SRE as a whole:

- 53% of young people had not been taught the signs of someone being groomed for sexual exploitation
- 46% had not learned about how to tell when a relationship is healthy or abusive
- although sexual assault is something that a significant minority of young people experience, lessons about sexual consent are not routinely covered in schools
- 50% of young people had not discussed real-life scenarios about sexual consent
- 34% had been taught nothing at all about sexual consent
- only 24% of young people said they had learned about FGM, but the figure increased to 40% amongst 11-13 year olds, suggesting things are starting to change.

Lucy Emmerson, coordinator of the Sex Education Forum, says: 'The odds of a young person learning vital information about equal, safe and enjoyable relationships are no different from the toss of a coin. The ultimate consequence of this is that many children don't know how to recognise abusive behaviour or how to seek help.'

Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary, Association of Teachers and Lecturers, says: 'As members of the Sex Education Forum, ATL fully supports its call for mandatory and inclusive SRE. We know that education staff want high-quality training so that they can deliver lessons that will enable young people to keep themselves safe.'

Full details about the survey can be found in: *Heads or Tails: What young people tell us about sex and relationships education* at www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

The next edition of *Special Children* will be looking at SRE for children with autism.

Passport Maths



New interventions have been developed to support children who have difficulty with maths. A better grounding in the subject will help them for the rest of their lives.

A new joint UK and US study warns that older people with poor numeracy skills may be at greater risk of financial exploitation. Researchers from Plymouth University and Scripps College in California found that individuals with poor numeracy are more prone to certain biases when making decisions, including a greater risk of being manipulated verbally by those around them. The study also found that because individuals with low level numeracy are less likely to engage with or interpret numerical information accurately, they are more likely to make conclusions that are not in their best interests, particularly when it comes to money (<http://bit.ly/sc229-24>).

Meanwhile, a report from both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills

warn that the UK education system is failing to provide the basic maths skills needed for everyday life and work (<http://bit.ly/sc229-23>).

The report *Building Skills for All: A Review of England* has found that, while England is around average for adult literacy compared to other OECD countries, it is well below average for numeracy skills, with around nine million people having difficulty with everyday tasks, such as estimating how much petrol is left in the tank from looking at a gauge (<http://bit.ly/sc229-22>).

To help address these matters, the UK charity National Numeracy is developing a number of resources to support the teaching and learning of maths. Materials for primary schools will be ready later in the year.

For secondary schools, it has introduced Passport Maths, a proven intervention aimed at students starting Year 7 who are not secondary-ready in maths. It helps them to master the basics they may have missed at primary school and supports progression from level 3 to level 4 so students can go on to get better results at GCSE maths.

Teacher training is £750 and National Numeracy says that many of the schools it works with in England and Wales use their pupil catch-up funding for this intervention. Pupil progress booklets and log-ins are £10 each. <http://bit.ly/sc229-21>

Let Teachers SHINE



You have read about some of the winners of the Let Teachers SHINE awards recently in these pages.

Items include Story Walks, and teaching with augmented reality (*Special Children* 228), as well as Active Phonics (*Special Children* 227).

The search is on once again for teachers who have developed some great interventions that really ought to be rolled out to other schools for the benefit of other pupils. Ideas might involve after-school programmes or clever use of technology, and work with whole classes, small groups or individuals.

Entries for the competition, run by the education charity SHINE, and supported by Capita SIMS, close on Sunday 17 April. Each of the 10 winners will receive up to £15,000 from SHINE to enable them to develop their intervention further. This might be to trial it in local schools or develop online resources to facilitate rollout. www.capita-sims.co.uk/shine-3

Lords and ladies of the dance



A RADiate dance class at Paddock Primary School

Children on the autism spectrum in London can now benefit from specialised dance classes.

The RADiate project – led by the Royal Academy of Dance and with new funding from the City of London Corporation’s charity, the City Bridge Trust – is offering subsidised dance classes to children with autism, children with moderate to

severe and complex learning difficulties, and those who are non-verbal in schools across south and south-west London.

The sessions are led by highly experienced specialist dance teachers. The nature of dance particularly suits these children’s more visual, non-verbal learning style, enabling them to benefit creatively, physically and socially. They learn all the action words found in dance by physically doing them, and use Makaton signing to enhance the rich language of storytelling.

Michael Nunn OBE, co-founder of BalletBoyz, has recently joined RADiate as an ambassador. He says: ‘Dance, by its very nature, is a natural mode of language. It stimulates the mind and allows us to communicate both emotionally and cognitively in non-verbal ways. RADiate offers children with special educational needs a tool for personal expression and



Michael Nunn joins a RADiate class at Paddock Primary School

social exploration. My son has autism, and I know how important initiatives like this are in nurturing children in a creative environment at their own pace.’

While the RADiate project has a full quota of London schools enrolled this year, to register your school’s interest for the next academic year, email: courses@rad.org.uk

 #oeSENCO

How to meet new expectations and tackle key challenges in 2016

Join us at our flagship event for SENCOs to ensure you are successfully managing change and crucially, continuing to support good outcomes for students with SEND



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SEND LEADERSHIP

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Find out more at www.oconferences.com/SENCO16

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Continuous blood glucose monitoring for diabetics

‘Children and young people with diabetes are being set tighter blood glucose targets – the evidence shows that this helps reduce the risk of serious complications in the long term.’

So says Barbara Young, former CEO of Diabetes UK, when giving her reaction to the new NICE guidance on recommendations for children with diabetes. She continues: ‘However, the government needs to ensure that appropriate support is available to help children and their families to achieve this. We know that the majority of children with Type 1 diabetes already struggle to achieve current blood glucose targets. The most recent figures reveal that less than one in five manage this.’

It was known back in 2008 that adults with Type 1 diabetes who use continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices are able to manage their diabetes better.

Research funded by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund and presented at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes at the time was based on a

26-week trial involving over 300 people aged eight to 72.

Libby Dowling, senior clinical advisor at Diabetes UK, says: ‘If your child uses CGM, you will know their blood glucose levels without having to do a finger prick blood test. More importantly, you will be able to see trends, so you can see when glucose levels are starting to go up or down and can intervene earlier. The NICE guidelines made it easier to make a case for getting CGM on the NHS, especially for children who have frequent hypos, who are very young or doing lots of activities, or who have anorexia. However, even if you can make a case for it, it is not always available because the device is expensive and the hospital may not have the funds to pay for it or enough personnel to train families and users to operate it.’

There are currently 38 different blood glucose meters on the market.

‘Not everyone will need or want CGM,’ continues Ms Dowling. ‘While research shows that CGM can reduce the amount of hypos children get and improve their control, research suggests they need to

use it at least 70% of the time to see this kind of benefit. It’s a useful tool and can make management easier and better. Some people can’t do without them.

‘It is not hard to use and involves the insertion of a sensor below the skin once a week, which is attached to a transmitter about the size of a 50p piece; most children get used to the discomfort. It doesn’t take away the need for testing, as the device needs to be calibrated twice a day. Meanwhile, the sensor measures the glucose levels in the interstitial fluid between the cells, rather than the blood, so pupils will still need to do a finger prick blood test to check precise levels before proceeding with an intervention. If a pupil wants CGM, and fits the NICE criteria, they should be able to get one.’

For more information, Diabetes UK has produced a *Type 1 Technology Guide*. <http://bit.ly/sc229-36>

Joanna Templeton thinks CGM should be more readily available on the NHS and has started a government petition. If you want to support her, sign it here: <http://bit.ly/SC229-37>

Basketball for hearing impaired pupils

The National Deaf Children’s Society has teamed up with Basketball England to give deaf children an opportunity to play, thanks to new deaf-friendly basketball tips.

The new resource has been developed to make the game more accessible for the 45,000 deaf children and young people in the UK. The perceived barriers can be easily overcome with small and simple steps, such as:

- asking coaches, team managers and even opposition players to raise their hand when the whistle is blown



Tips include ensuring the deaf player is looking directly at you before talking

- ensuring the deaf player is looking directly at you before talking to them

- if needed, writing information down for the deaf player to read.

Jon Stonebridge, disability participation officer for Basketball England, says:

‘This resource will enable coaches and clubs to increase their knowledge of deaf basketball and to raise awareness in general. The resource is about letting coaches know that, with a few minor alterations to the way they already coach, they will open up their sessions to a wider audience.’

Download the resource: <http://bit.ly/sc229-17>

Children start school struggling to speak in full sentences

A poll of more than 500 teachers from across the UK has revealed that children are joining primary school without the speech and language skills needed to learn in the classroom or start to read.

Teachers surveyed said that many children never catch up and that this early language gap was dragging down school

results and making it harder for them to deliver the curriculum for all children.

According to the survey by Save the Children – which belongs to the Read On. Get On. literacy coalition of leading charities, teachers, parents and businesses – 75% of primary school teachers see children arriving in Reception class struggling to speak in full sentences, read (81%) or even

follow simple instructions (65%).

As a result, more than three quarters of teachers voiced concerns that, despite their best classroom efforts, these children may never catch up. 24% of teachers believe being behind in speech and language at age five will still affect children when they enter secondary school, 14% expect the impact to be life long.

Work experience for young people with physical disabilities

In a survey of young disabled people, the Trailblazers group at the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK found that over half had experienced barriers when looking for work experience.

To address this, the charity has developed a work experience scheme, thanks to new funding from the City Bridge Trust. This will enable 30 disabled young people aged 16-30 to receive mentoring, support and hands-on work experience in a range of departments at the charity's London offices. Work placements might include advocacy, communications and press, event management, fundraising, IT, web management, social media, policy and campaigns.

One of the first young people to benefit from the scheme is a young man with a muscle-wasting condition, Rupert Prokofiev. Rupert, 28, worked in the charity's care and advocacy department, working on cases on behalf of people who have problems with housing or healthcare. He says of the scheme: 'I wanted to get out from home and to be doing something positive, but found it difficult to get work experience. The Trailblazers scheme was a great opportunity, allowing me to develop my writing skills in a friendly and supportive environment. It also gave me valuable insight into how organisations like Muscular Dystrophy UK work, and the chance to input into that. I've found



Rupert Prokofiev wanted to do something positive but found it difficult to get any work experience

what I learned really valuable and I've gone on to use those skills in lots of ways in my life.'

While the work experience is currently limited to people able to come into the London office, over the next year, the charity has plans to extend its network of businesses and other charities that proactively support disabled young people to get work experience.

Find out more: <http://bit.ly/sc229-41>

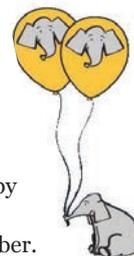
The elephant's tea party

Statistics from Child Bereavement UK indicate that 92% of pupils will experience a significant bereavement before the age of 16. Up to 70% of schools have a bereaved pupil on their roll at any time.

Talking about death and dying as a normal, natural subject can help bereaved children to develop better coping skills. Giving them support from familiar, trusted adults will mean that most will not need professional help. Schools are well placed to provide this support.

Consequently, the charity has developed a free Elephant's Tea Party Activity Pack (www.elephantsteaparty.co.uk) to help primary schools equip pupils with coping skills for bereavement. The pack includes activities and lesson plans which can be differentiated for different age groups and abilities. These include the following.

- A lesson focusing on the social bonds and family groups in elephants – it is now well recognised that elephants grieve for family members who have died. Pupils explore how they think the elephants feel after the death of a family member.
- A lesson based on the theme *An elephant never forgets*. Grieving is about remembering not forgetting the person who has died, so pupils learn the vocabulary they need to articulate deep feelings of loss by considering the ways elephants might remember a family member.



And finally...

Attainment gap for deaf children narrows

The latest government figures issued by the Department for Education show that GCSE attainment levels for deaf young people in England have improved.

In 2015, 41.1% of deaf young people achieved five GCSEs (including English and maths) at grades A* to C, compared to 36.3% of deaf children in 2014.

However, that still leaves 58.9% of deaf children who are failing to achieve the government's expected benchmark of five GCSEs at grade A* to C, compared to just 35.8% of other children with no identified special educational need.

Autism and sport

The National Autistic Society is running a practical, one-day course on autism and sport in various locations. It will help delegates recognise and understand the key areas of difference in autism, as well as looking at supportive strategies in practical situations to reduce the difficulties experienced by participants and session leaders.

<http://bit.ly/sc229-33>

The Education Show 2016

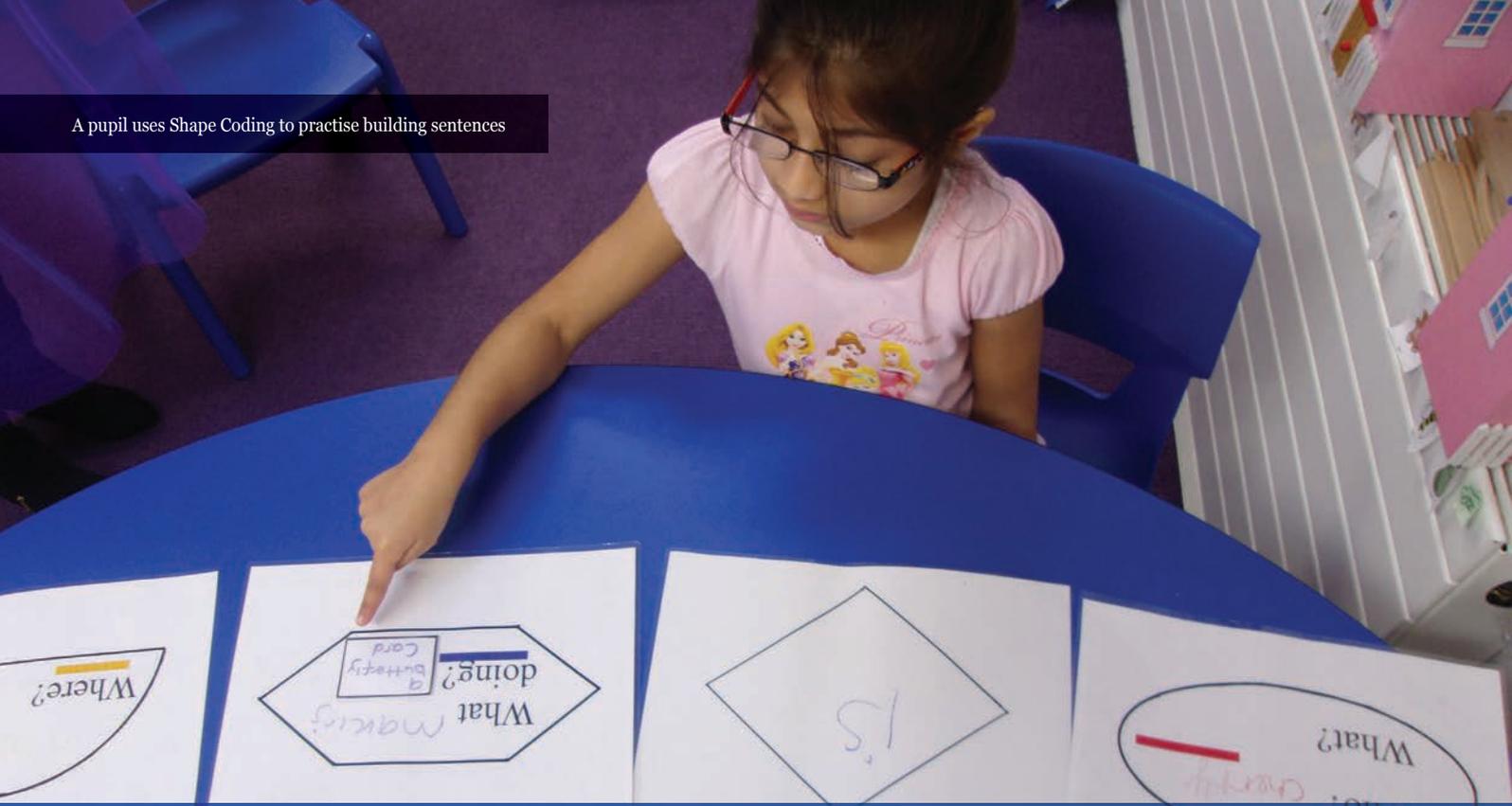
This takes place at the NEC Birmingham from 17-19 March. The wide array of SEN seminars includes: *Risk assessing and managing challenging behaviour*;

Supporting effective teaching and assessment of reading in your Reception classrooms; *SEN: making the most of your budget*; *Continuous provision in the Foundation Stage – play as a differentiation strategy* and *What's great about autism?* www.education-show.com

How is life different?

While not a SEN matter, Action Aid's new teaching resources on what life is like for many child refugees are certainly topical. The worksheets, presentations, teacher's notes, apps and blogs are aimed at improving literacy, and teach children about respecting difference.

<http://bit.ly/sc229-35>



Speech and language: a whole-school endeavour

Maxine Whitmore shows how her school's approach to speech, language and communication is having an impact on all pupils

Aerodrome Primary Academy in Croydon has an above-average proportion of pupils with SEN, and in particular with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). The figures for social disadvantage are also higher than the national norm.

However, the school's focus on communication ensures that every pupil's schooling gets off to a strong start. Part of our success is down to the Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP), a specialist unit at the heart of the school for children with severe SLCN. This was set up in 2010 when the academy opened in new premises following the amalgamation of two schools. Pupils from Reception onwards are referred to it by a speech and language therapist or an educational psychologist. Some return to mainstream schooling within a couple of years, while others need specialist teaching for longer.

One of the school's strengths is its philosophy of integration. Children with SLCN join their mainstream peers as

their language develops, particularly for lessons in PE, music, art, maths and literacy. They are supported in this by a TA, who helps differentiate the curriculum to their level.

“Everyone has a grasp of Makaton at some level”

An early start

Speech, language and communication are critical to opening up access to the curriculum, so we screen every child for speech and language delay when they arrive at the nursery, which is for children aged three to four. Priority pupils are then supported as a group by highly trained staff.

Children with severe SLCN receive a lot of one-to-one support. Here, a typical activity might be Bucket Time, where

a practitioner, perhaps a speech and language therapy assistant (SLTA), works with the child using early Makaton sign language and early language. The child is encouraged to look at the adult, who takes sensory items out of a bucket, one by one, to explore with the child. If the bucket contains pretend snow, the child may indicate that they want more or ask for it to stop when it is sprinkled on their head, and the adult builds on this early communication.

Children starting school in Reception are also screened for language delay and other language difficulties, and those who will benefit are put on a Wave 2 intervention called the Just Arrived at School Language Programme, which I developed to accelerate the acquisition of early vocabulary. I deliver this with the assistance of an SLTA, who repeats each session on her own a few days later to give pupils maximum exposure to new words. We also run this eight-week programme for children entering Year 1 who require it.

Extending vocabulary

In Year 2, teaching staff use the Talk for Writing programme in class. Developed by Pie Corbett, this encourages expressive storytelling by getting children to practise reproducing the key language they need for a topic orally, before committing their ideas to paper.

Meanwhile, an SLTA runs the Partners in Talking Programme (introduced by Croydon NHS) for everyone in the school, taking small groups of pupils out of class at a time. This 10-week intervention is designed to improve speaking and listening skills across the curriculum, and we find it really helps build pupils' confidence when it comes to speaking in front of larger groups and the class.

Harnessing signs and symbols

Everyone has a grasp of Makaton at some level, as we use it throughout the school and across the curriculum. Significantly, the lunchtime Makaton club is particularly popular with mainstream pupils, who get a lot of fun out of being able to communicate this way.

There are lots of opportunities for everyone to practise their skills, as the school's head of music regularly stages Makaton-signed assemblies. In addition, last year pupils from the ELP teamed up with their mainstream peers to sing Christmas carols supported with Makaton signing.

The school also makes conspicuous use of symbols, using Communicate: In Print from Widgit. Being surrounded by displays that contain symbols improves pupils' fluency, supports their understanding of instructions and tasks, and encourages independent learning.

A few pupils need help with sound production itself, and all staff are trained in Cued Articulation, devised by Australian speech pathologist Jane Passy. Because children with SLCN respond better to visual support than oral or verbal support, Cued Articulation helps children see, sequence and pronounce sounds with the aid of hand gestures. The position of the hand indicates where the sound is made, the shape and movement of the hand indicates how it is made, while the use of one or two fingers indicates whether it is voiced (e.g. 'g') or unvoiced (e.g. 'k'). Thus all the features of the 49 phonemes can be described with one cue.

Cued Articulation is used throughout the school, primarily when working with children who have SLCN, but also when teaching phonics in the main school. Because it is so visual, pupils quickly pick it up.



Singing assemblies give pupils a chance to practise their signing

“Children with SLCN integrate with their mainstream peers as their language develops”

Engaging with parents

Seeing parents in class first thing in the morning, huddled over an exercise book with their child, is a common sight – we encourage parents to stay for a few minutes every day when they drop off their child to share their learning with them. If a child is working on a piece of writing, they'll get out their book and

show Mum or Dad what they have been doing. This not only helps parents keep abreast of what their child is learning but helps them support their child's learning at home.

At a more specialist level, we have regular meetings for parents of children in the ELP to teach them Makaton. Other strategies we teach them include Shape Coding, a visual means of representing sentence formation developed by Susan Ebbels. This is based on the notion that children with language delay don't pick up language patterns simply through hearing other people talk, and need to be taught the rules of syntax and grammar explicitly. The strategy may also help children with ASD, Down syndrome and hearing impairments learn how to construct sentences, although the efficacy of this has yet to be studied.

Extensive training

None of this would be possible without extensive staff training. In fact, everybody in the school receives some level of speech, language and communication training. For example, non-teaching staff are trained in Shape Coding as well as Cued Articulation.

Kitchen staff support children in a different way. When pupils from the ELP come to choose their lunch, for example, one of the dinner ladies will name all the items on offer and help them make choices.

Coming together as a whole

Importantly, the whole school regularly comes together for events like the Chatterbox Challenge and No Pens Day Wednesday. The latter gives everyone



Children from the ELP enjoy their role as the No Pens Day Wednesday police



A pupil takes his turn to develop vocabulary during a session of the Just Arrived at School Language Programme

a break from writing, and offers some pupils a chance to showcase some of their creative skills – on previous occasions, a few pupils have put together short films while others have created books of photographs. In this way, other pupils start to see that their peers may have strengths and skills that may not normally be evident in lessons. The pupils in the ELP enjoy their special role on No Pens Day Wednesdays, acting as the no-pens police.

“The school makes conspicuous use of symbols”

The whole school took part in another national event back in November. This was Voice Box 2015, a joke-telling competition run by Giving Voice in conjunction with The Communication Trust. The aim was to show that communication is fun, and children were invited to tell their joke in front of a panel of judges. Our winner was a young girl with autism who has been in the ELP for three years. Her joke was sent off to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to compete with entries from schools all over the country; she is among the winners who have been invited to tell their joke to the Houses of Parliament on 2 March.

There is always a buzz around the school when we hold these events. What impressed us in this instance, however, was that children we would normally

describe as quiet or, in some cases, non-verbal, came forward to tell their joke.

Successes

Tracking from the Nursery shows progress in communication and language, and the post-intervention measure for pupils in Reception provides evidence of a wider vocabulary and rapid progress from significantly low scores on school entry.

Year 2 Sats results improve year on year. Thanks to the Talk for Writing programme, all pupils have demonstrated significant progress in reading, writing, and maths, but particularly those children with SLCN. Meanwhile, standardised assessments show that 85% of pupils in the ELP are making progress in line with the rest of the school.

While these outcomes speak for themselves, it made every member of staff stand a little taller when our efforts were formally recognised at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards, where we were presented with the Primary School of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding practice in supporting communication development.



The day the 'Queen' – Maxine Whitmore all dressed up – came to visit the ELP

Top tips

- Involve the whole school community, from the headteacher to the caretaker.
- Undertake regular staff training, whether this is in house or external, delivered by specialists or provided through peer-to-peer observation of best practice.
- Work closely with your nursery.
- Screen for language delay on entry.
- Encourage language development through stories, songs and creative activities.
- Use whole-school visual support systems including Communicate: In Print, Shape Coding, Cued Articulation and Makaton.
- Take part in regular whole-school speaking and listening activities.



Maxine Whitmore is the specialist speech and language therapist responsible for the Enhanced Learning

Provision at Aerodrome Primary Academy in Croydon, and also supports language development in the main school

FIND OUT MORE

- **Talk for Writing:** www.talk4writing.co.uk
- **Cued Articulation:** <http://cuedarticulation.com>
- **Cued Articulation in practice.** Watch teachers from Aerodrome Primary Academy modelling the alphabet: <http://bit.ly/sc229-04>
- **Communicate: In Print.** The site contains lots of video tutorials, and Widgit runs free, 45-minute online training sessions on how to use the software to support the curriculum: www.widgit.com
- **Shape Coding.** Susan Ebbels talks about the Shape Coding system: <http://bit.ly/sc229-07>
- **Teaching grammar to school-aged children with specific language impairment using Shape Coding** by Susan Ebbels was published in *Child Language Teaching and Therapy Journal*, 2007: <http://bit.ly/sc229-06>
- **Giving Voice** is a campaign by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to demonstrate the unique importance of the SLT's role and evidence their value for money to national and local decision-makers: <http://givingvoiceuk.org>
- **No Pens Day Wednesday** encourages schools to put down their pens and run a day of speaking and listening activities. The Communication Trust provides downloads of everything required to run the day: <http://bit.ly/sc229-08>
- **Chatterbox Challenge.** I CAN's annual, educational fundraiser for under-fives: <http://chatterboxchallenge.org.uk>
- **The Shine A Light Awards** are organised by Pearson and The Communication Trust: <http://bit.ly/sc228-16>

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A member of staff talks to a young boy about a book he is thinking of reading

Total immersion

Rosie Clark explains how her school's approach is making a difference for children with communication difficulties

Four years ago, I joined Woodlands School in Surrey, a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties and complex needs. While developing speech, language and communication skills had always been a priority, there was a discrepancy between progress in receptive and expressive communication, with 79% of pupils achieving the national targets for listening and 65% for speaking.

At the time, the school was using mainly PECS, Makaton signing and, in the case of a few pupils, high-tech communication devices, but these were mostly used in lesson activities. Since then, we have introduced the principles of aided language stimulation and total language immersion to give pupils the opportunity to learn how to communicate in natural situations. Instead of limiting them to just making choices, the aim is to give every child access to full language.

Three years on, the outcomes speak for themselves. Children who weren't communicating autonomously are now saying what they want, to whoever they

want, whenever they want. 97% are making the expected progress in listening and 95% in speaking.

A presumption of competence

Fundamental to this transformation has been the change in our expectations. We now start from the presumption that every pupil has the potential to communicate with competence.

When pupils first arrive at Woodlands, nobody knows how each individual will learn to communicate. However, one thing every teacher knows for certain



Children discovered that even Father Christmas knows how to communicate using symbols

is that unless we immerse them in a communication-accessible environment, they have very little chance of picking it up.

Language doesn't just happen. Typically developing children are surrounded by language and spend a long time soaking it all up before they actually start using it. If we expect children to be able to use symbols without first immersing them in a symbol-rich world, then we are asking more of them than we do of their typically developing peers.

Expanding opportunities

'A child who uses speech will independently select the words she wishes to use from the vast array of words she hears/sees used everyday. A child who uses AAC will independently select the words she wishes to use from the vocabulary other people have chosen to model and, for aided symbols, made available for her to use.'

This quote from Porter & Kirkland (*Integrating Augmentative and Alternative Communication into Group Programs: Utilising the Principles of Conductive Education*, 1995) has been our inspiration. Children who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) are usually exposed to the symbols they need as required, and the result can be quite limiting. What would you like to eat: an orange or an apple? What would you like to play: bowling or ping pong?

So now, AAC has become a second language in the school. Our pupils are immersed in it, with staff using exactly the same tools as they do to converse, constantly modelling good communication so that children learn to use language expressively to the best of their ability. To this end, every child is assessed for a full AAC system when they join us.

All the staff have their own communication book for use with the children – whether this is to talk about choices, opinions and ideas or something related to the curriculum. They also communicate through the children's individual AAC devices, modelling how to use these, high tech or paper based. They focus on language that the pupils themselves would want to use, rather than adult talk. Whilst some children go on to develop some speech, most of our pupils never will. But with AAC, we can still give them a voice.

Aided language displays

To support full communication, we have created an aided language environment, with symbols posted up around the school covering useful words and expressions

associated with different contexts, activities and subject areas.

For example, in the Play-Doh® area, a wall display provides all the symbols the child and teacher need in order to converse when using modelling materials. In the dinner hall, posters illustrate the symbols that anyone and everyone uses when talking about food and drink.

Meanwhile, the children's own communication books contain enough symbols to enable us, as adults, to extend their passive – and ultimately their active – vocabulary. If we provided them with only a few symbols, say to make choices at lunchtime, then we would not be able to model language they can use at any time, whether it is to express their emotions and ideas or engage in general chat. Gradually the children reflect this modelling back to us and we start to have a conversation.

Language for multiple contexts

Our approach to language immersion is based on PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display), a flexible communication system developed by Australian speech pathologist Gayle Porter, which can be adapted to cater for the needs of a huge range of children.

Available in book form or for use on high-tech devices, it involves selecting and organising symbols in a way that facilitates communication between people with complex communication needs and their communication partners, providing all the vocabulary needed:

- for continuous communication
- for a range of messages
- across a range of topics
- in multiple environments.

Powerful as it undoubtedly is, PODD is just one of a range of tools we have at our disposal. Children use what is appropriate for them and a few may start off using other systems such as PECS. However, we move them onto a full language system such as PODD as soon as possible to make sure we don't limit their development.

All pupils, whatever their communication strategy, start with aided language stimulation, with staff modelling the language they want them to learn to use, pointing to the symbols in their communication books as they talk, so the children learn how to use those symbols to communicate back.

Children's communication books are their constant companions. Some children have them on paper; others do as the teachers do and keep them on an iPad worn on a harness. A few children have a device they control with their eyes.

A comprehensive training programme

Staff training in all the strategies and tools we use is crucial. In addition to regular in-school training, new teaching staff complete a two-day PODD course and then learn on the job from experienced staff, who show them how to model language to the children. Other classroom staff undertake at least a one-day PODD training course and everyone, including administrative and premises staff, attends at least an introductory session in using AAC.

Classroom staff are also trained in the use of high-tech devices and other communication strategies, including touch cues and PECS. Meanwhile, a teacher who is a trained Makaton tutor delivers regular training to staff and parents, and we have a Makaton choir, where pupils have the chance to develop their signing proficiency through music.

As important as this formal training is the time we set aside to enable staff to practise their new skills – we even practise in staff meetings.

“We start from the presumption that every pupil has the potential to communicate with competence”

To enable parents to build on our work at home, we run termly one-day training courses and more frequent informal drop-in chat sessions, which are both very well attended. Siblings, grandparents and the extended family are encouraged to come too, and we often have five or six family members on a training day.

As the final element in our training portfolio, we offer free training in language and communication to the respite centres many of our pupils use, the local colleges they move on to when they leave us, and all our external providers.

From individual triumphs to public recognition

Victoria is one of our many success stories. Now 16, she has global development delay and complex communication difficulties.

Her mother says: 'Victoria is a very happy, sociable young woman and loves sharing her ideas, plans and interests with



Staff and many students wear communication devices on a harness so that it is readily accessible

everyone around her. To do this, she uses her PODD communication system on her iPad, which has speech output, so when she presses the button, it speaks for her. This gives her independence and her iPad goes everywhere with her.

'In the past she used Makaton, which proved very limiting because not many people know it and she had to rely on us to translate for her. Now she is unstoppable. She chats to people in shops and on the train and shares her ideas with anyone she wants to reach out to.'

Meanwhile, the school recently scooped the 2015 Augmentative and Alternative Communication Award at the Shine a Light Awards, an annual event organised by Pearson and The Communication Trust to celebrate outstanding practice in supporting communication development.

I think the judges appreciated the way we have turned language and communication on its head. Many schools wait until children prove they can understand symbols before they introduce them to a full symbol-based language system. Instead, we give children language from the first day they join us, and then they show us what they can do.

This makes our pupils very confident. At Christmas, we put on a play and many were able to use their communication systems to enable them to take part. They are young people with complex special needs who communicate very well. Victoria speaks for them all when she says: 'I like to talk.'



Rosie Clark is assistant head teacher at Woodlands School, Surrey, a school for children aged two to 19 who have severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autism

FIND OUT MORE

PODD: www.novita.org.au

Sophie Bevan from Bridgend in South Wales recently featured on *Kitchen Impossible with Michel Roux Jr* (watch it on Channel 4 OD: <http://bit.ly/sc229-10>).

Now 17, she is passionate about cooking.

Unfortunately, job applications to over 170 jobs in restaurants and cafes resulted in just two, very brief, interviews. Sophie was diagnosed with Tourette syndrome at 14, which can result in awkward facial expressions, physical tics and uncontrollable swearing. However, when she concentrates on her cooking, her Tourette's is far less pronounced. She volunteered for the programme because she wanted to prove that she had what it took to work in a busy kitchen by training with a Michelin star chef.

She says: 'While I also have OCD and ADHD, these conditions help me to be more creative as a cook because I think outside the box. In September, I will be studying patisserie level 2 in York. What I learned while training with Michel Roux Jr was that no matter what gets in my way, I can always do what I am passionate about, even if getting there is a more of a challenge.'



Tourette syndrome

Suzanne Dobson sheds light on this often misunderstood condition

Tourette syndrome is an inherited neurological condition. The symptoms are tics – involuntary movements and sounds that are disruptive and difficult to control.

Key characteristics

Research from around the world suggests that 1% of school-aged children are affected, although the proportion is considerably higher in children with SEN. However, it is also a spectrum condition, with some symptoms so mild that they require no intervention.

Tics present in many ways.

- Facial tics include eye blinking, nose twitching, sniffing, grimacing, squinting, lip smacking or tongue poking.
- Motor tics include head jerking, foot stamping, body twisting, neck stretching, shoulder shrugging or arm extending, as well as obscene gestures (copropraxia) and imitating the actions of others (echopraxia).
- Vocal tics include throat clearing, grunting, spitting, swearing, hissing, shouting, barking or moaning, as well as repeating what others say (echolalia) and shouting out obscenities (coprolalia, which only presents in 10% of people with the syndrome).

Over 85% of pupils with Tourette syndrome will have additional conditions, such as ADHD, ASD and OCD. They may also suffer from low self-esteem, depression and moodiness.

Other associated difficulties include a poor attention span and failure to complete tasks. Pupils may be easily distracted, unable to listen attentively, fidgety and impulsive.

“ **The tics are involuntary, a bit like us blinking or sneezing** ”

One characteristic that often causes problems in class is non-obscene, socially inappropriate (NOSI) behaviour. This may lead pupils to call out personal remarks about other people's appearance or behaviours and, occasionally, inappropriately touch themselves or others and make rude gestures.

Tics, especially verbal tics, can be autosuggestible, and so it is not uncommon for classmates to deliberately provoke an outburst. In such cases, it

is important to talk to the children concerned and help them understand that such behaviour is inappropriate and unkind to both the child with Tourette syndrome and the victim of their outburst.

Tourette syndrome and SEN

Uncontrollable ticcing is not a sign of parental abuse or bad parenting. Nor does it affect mental capacity or intellect. Tourette syndrome is not a learning disability.

However, only about 12% of people with a diagnosis have to contend with Tourette syndrome alone; everyone else has a cocktail of conditions (see Figure 1 on page 16). Some of the symptoms and comorbidities can have a substantial impact on a child's ability to learn. Where the pupil's behaviours or symptoms require additional provisions to enable them to access learning, then they are recognised as having SEN.

The combination of Tourette syndrome and OCD can be especially challenging, as the child may feel compelled to do their tics 'right'. One young girl has a shrieking tic which her classmates and teachers find difficult to ignore. If she shrieks 'right' first time, all is quiet for up to 90 minutes. If it doesn't feel 'right', she shrieks and

shrieks. She is more settled now that she has a TA with her and, after a protracted statement application process, extra funding has been found for the provision of a room where she can go and tic without disturbing another class.

Diagnosis

Usually identified at about age seven and peaking during puberty, for around 50% of young people the condition starts to abate in the late teens or early 20s. For the rest, it is probably a lifelong condition.

To be diagnosed, children must exhibit at least one vocal and one motor tic for more than one year, with no more than a three-month break from tics within that period. Blood tests, X-rays and scans do not help with diagnosis, although a lot of research is going into trying to identify the genes involved. A diagnosis is made only after a child has been referred to a neurologist and a psychiatrist/psychologist, who will take a family history, observe the child and carry out a range of tests before coming to a conclusion.

Tics wax and wane in number, frequency, complexity and severity. They can change or disappear for a while before new tics take their place or old ones reassert themselves. Stress and anxiety make them worse, but they often ease when the student is engaged in an activity, such as drumming, singing or sport.

Treatment

There are no drugs to treat the syndrome – medications used to alleviate symptoms are ‘borrowed’ from other conditions. Many of these have serious side effects and so are usually avoided in young children.

Researchers are currently investigating the potential benefits of deep brain stimulation for young people and adults whose Tourette syndrome is completely debilitating. This involves placing electrodes in the brain and connecting them to a battery pack inserted into the shoulder, similar to a pacemaker.

For now, the most effective treatment is a form of cognitive behavioural therapy. Research carried out by the National Institute for Health Research demonstrates that CBT is as – if not more – effective than any medication, without any of the side effects (<http://bit.ly/sc229-01>). Unfortunately access to CBT is extremely limited.

Managing the condition

The tics are involuntary, a bit like us blinking or sneezing. The worst thing



Zak has Tourette syndrome and OCD and says: ‘I don’t mind because it makes me unique and different from other people. My teachers are very supportive and I have a hall pass if I ever feel stressed, so I can leave the class and let my tics out.’

teachers can say to a child with Tourette syndrome is: ‘Stop doing that,’ because it will become the very thing they need to do.

Verbal tics

Many people find it inconceivable that a child who is calling them fat, boring, spotty or worse is not doing it intentionally. Even harder to believe is that the child is as surprised and disconcerted as they are, because they didn’t know they were going to make the remark and, most likely, even as they utter it, it wasn’t what they were intending to say.

Many children are deeply embarrassed by the words that escape from their lips unprompted, to the extent that some will not leave the house in case they say something inappropriate, and so become school refusers. The best way forward is to support the offended pupil or staff member and help them to understand Tourette syndrome better, explaining how these things are as random as any other tic. Meanwhile, the child needs to be encouraged to try and manage their tics



Henry, who also has Tourette syndrome, says: ‘I am in Year 6 and have a fantastic teacher. She is very understanding and supports me by giving me regular breaks and at difficult times has given me a shoulder massage to help calm me. My teacher and mum communicate through my home-link book.’

a little, perhaps by removing themselves from the proximity of the person who is triggering them, or diverting themselves in another way.

Motor tics

Motor tics can be as simple as a shrug. More complex tics can send the whole body into a spin or cause the person to fall to the ground.

For simple tics, such as throwing out the left arm, a solution is to sit the child at the end of a row. As they get older, they need to start taking responsibility for positioning themselves in such a way that they can’t strike anyone.

Sometimes tics look dangerous. Kat Thomas was diagnosed with extreme physical tics at the age of 14. These made the senior leadership team at her school so anxious that they wanted her to work on her own in a padded room. After discussions involving our charity, the SENCO, the girl and her mother, solutions were found that would enable her stay in the mainstream classrooms. These included:

- educating staff about Tourette syndrome
- ensuring that where Kat sat was safe for her
- educating Kat’s peers to be aware of her tics
- reassuring staff that she could manage herself
- having a good group of supportive friends.

Now aged 17 and in Year 12, Kat was recently nominated for the Smith-Milne Young People of the Year awards which recognise young people who give to others. Meanwhile, after satisfying the DVLA that she is safe behind a wheel, Kat is learning to drive, and is on the way to fulfilling her dream of becoming a paramedic.

Support strategies

Whole-school education

For the very few children who have coprolalia or copropraxia, dealing with it in school requires some thought, as failure to punish a pupil’s apparently outrageous behaviour can result in mixed messages going out to their peers. The solution is a whole-school education programme about the syndrome.

Poor attention

While the syndrome does not affect the intellect, the demands of managing it can make learning a challenge. Often, children are able to suppress tics in school, but this requires constant self-monitoring, which

Condition insight

takes up a large amount of their attention. So check that they have understood the key points and what is required of them.

Rage

Some children with Tourette syndrome seem to have an inner rage, which they don't understand and therefore find unsettling and stressful. Their heightened anxiety can increase the level and strength of their tics, and a fiddle toy may help to alleviate this.

Encourage them to talk about their difficulties with an adult mentor and to share their concerns with trusted members of their peer group. It is also important to watch out for signs of depression.

Short breaks

Sometimes the urge to tic becomes too much and it may help to allow the child to leave the room for a short while, preferably to a designated place where they can go and tic in private.

On the other hand, young children often find it difficult to return to class, not knowing if they have been away too long. Meanwhile all sorts of other anxieties have built up in their minds. In this case, giving them a specified time to return may help.

A 'passport'

Depending on how their tics manifest, the best policy is for children to be able to tic in the classroom. However, this requires other children and staff to cooperate and does not take into account that the child will try anything not to tic in lessons.

Research by the University of Nottingham on behalf of Tourettes Action showed that children find supply teachers especially difficult because they don't understand their needs and often refuse to believe the child has the syndrome.

As a result, the charity has designed a small 'passport' with space for a child's picture, and boxes to record strategies that ease their tics and things that make them worse, all signed by the SENCO. Download: <http://bit.ly/sc229-02>

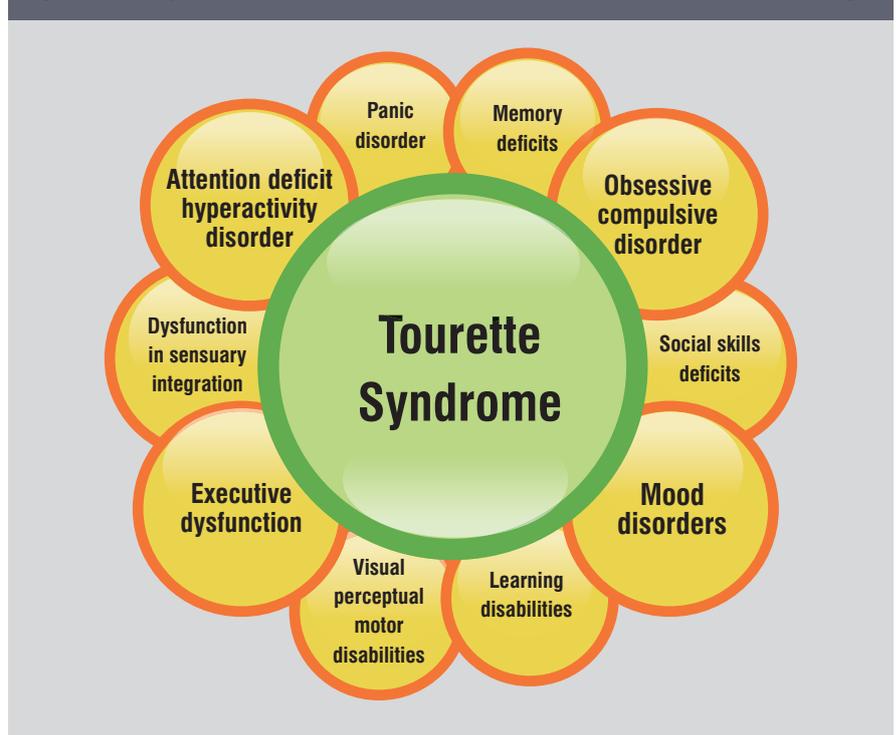
Homework

Suppressing tics at school often leads to an explosion of tics at home, which may last well into the evening.

Some clinicians say that the act of suppression causes the tics to rebound with greater intensity. Others believe that it is down to leaving a place where conforming is important for a place where you are able to be yourself.

Whichever theory turns out to be true, it has a huge impact on learning. First, homework is difficult if you are jerking or

Figure 1. The syndrome's main comorbidities with the more common ones shown larger



throwing your pen, blinking, twitching or generally not at peace with yourself.

Second, this extreme activity may make sleep difficult. Tired children do not learn well.

Exams

If homework is presenting real difficulties, the school might discuss a reduced timetable of exam subjects with the pupil and their parents as a way of lightening the homework load. Given that Tourette syndrome can abate in later years, five good passes may be better than eight low grades.

Exams cause stress and therefore herald a period of increased ticcing. There are several things to consider.

- If the motor tic affects writing, is the child eligible for a scribe? (See *Levelling the playing field* on exam access arrangements, *Special Children* 228)
- Where should the child sit within the hall during exams? Some children like to sit at the back so that no one can see them, or to one side so they can move arms or legs, or at the front so they can't see anyone else.
- Would a separate room be better?
- Extra time is often unhelpful, as it obliges pupils to suppress their tics for longer, putting them under even more stress, which in turn increases the urge to tic. Rest breaks may be a better way of giving them space to tic and still have enough time to complete the exam.

Working with parents

Naturally, each child with Tourette syndrome is different and has different needs. The better the school understands these, the better the outcomes for the pupil. If possible, organise a meeting with the pupil and their parents to discuss how the syndrome and any comorbid conditions affect the child and their learning. Key outcomes from the meeting will include:

- strategies that are helpful at home
- strategies that could help at school, such as having a place to go to tic
- a discussion about the possibility of informing the rest of the class/school about the syndrome to help reduce misunderstandings, unwanted attention or bullying
- an outline of how the school intends to support the child
- if the child is on medication, an understanding of the possible side effects and impacts on learning, and a reminder to parents to inform the school of any changes to medication.

The link between parents, teachers and perhaps the child's clinician is vital in understanding what these children need to be able to achieve their potential.

Suzanne Dobson is chief executive of the UK charity Tourettes Action. Its website is full of useful information and presentations for schools. www.tourettes-action.org.uk



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A child uses her tablet unsupervised, but does she know how to keep herself safe?



Staying safe online

Julia Codman explains how feedback from children of all ages informed the development of an e-safety curriculum that directly relates to their online lives

Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) has been working on e-safety education for a number of years now, and schools across the city have taken the key messages on board. Whether the children are listening, however, is another matter altogether.

That was one of the findings that came out of our focus-group conversations with children from key stages 2-4 in a representative cross-section of schools.

There was unanimous agreement that e-safety is important, but pupils complained they were being told the same things over and over again and watching the same or similar films, often in assemblies, and they tended to just switch

off. They would much rather talk about these things in class, they said, looking at scenarios reflecting what they actually get up to online, discussing the issues that arise and learning from each other.

Listening to the learner

These focus-group meetings were part of a research project we conducted with Sheffield E-Learning Service to inform the development of a model e-safety curriculum for years 1-11. We also distributed a questionnaire to schools citywide and consulted teachers and parents from a variety of different establishments.

The issues we explored in the focus groups included:

- what current trends are
- what the children like and don't like
- things they are concerned about
- what they do if they get into difficult situations.

Crucially, we wanted to know whether they felt their existing e-safety curriculum was relevant to their online lives. Clearly, the answer was no.

Encouraging openness and honesty

A typical group comprised 10 pupils and we sat around a table, using mini whiteboards and Post-it notes to record our thoughts and flip charts to pull the different strands of our discussions together.

Focus-group findings

The trends in the use of apps, social networks and games were largely the same in all schools, irrespective of the social composition of the catchment area. Meanwhile, children in Key Stage 2 were engaging in many of the same activities as the older students.

Patterns and concerns

Age-inappropriate gaming

Gaming was prevalent from Year 3 onwards. Minecraft was very popular in the primary phase, but in every focus group inappropriate gaming was mentioned, specifically Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty, with a significant number of children in each group showing a high degree of knowledge about the games.

Sexualised behaviour

Viewing pornography was commonplace amongst boys in key stages 3 and 4 and students of both sexes were exchanging inappropriate images or engaging in sexualised chat. Girls also reported feeling pressured about their appearance because of the images they saw online.

Although students were attracting attention from unknown contacts, many of them were unsure how to apply privacy settings to their image-sharing apps. They had little or no awareness of the law regarding the distribution of self-generated indecent pictures, or the potential consequences of making photos of themselves available to anyone who cared to take a look.

These practices were beginning as early as Year 7, increasing markedly over years 8 and 9. The older students felt strongly that the issues needed to be addressed before transition from primary school.

Cyberbullying

This was a concern at all key stages, although the behaviours that the children cited were not confined to the unkind comments we normally associate with cyberbullying. Some children spoke about being excluded from Xbox parties because of their lack of gaming skill, others talked about feeling pressured into joining communities and activities so that they would be more popular and accepted. Trolling, rage and swearing were widely mentioned.

In-app purchases

The children disliked ads and pop-ups because of the inappropriate content that they lead to and the danger of in-app/game purchase. Several children reported that they had fallen foul of in app/game purchases and one child expressed concern about how free credits in gambling sites attract children.

Few or no boundaries set by parents

Many parents were unaware of what their children were doing online. Even those who were familiar with the popular online environments vastly overestimated the age at which children start using these. When we showed a sample of pupils' responses to a group of Year 3-5 parents, they thought these belonged to upper Key Stage 3 students and were shocked to discover that they were their own children's views.

The same was true of teachers in schools, whose initial response to our findings was often: 'Our children don't do that,' when the evidence clearly indicates that they do.

Special school children

There was considerable overlap between the two groups, with the same age-inappropriate games being played, and the same issues being raised.

One significant difference lay in the fact that while some children made regular use of the internet, others were denied access by their parents in the interests of safety. While that is very understandable, the day will come when these children will want to do the same things as their peers, or they will find a way of getting access for themselves. So we need to start teaching e-safety at a basic level and build their knowledge up.

Those who did have home access tended to be more closely supervised than most mainstream pupils, and more willing to ask their parents for help or tell them if something was wrong. This wasn't the case for them all, however, and some were totally unsupervised and therefore very vulnerable.

The children who were supervised were able to retell the key messages they had learned at school and at home. However, they tended to see things very distinctly as either black or white. With regard to friendships, for example, they knew it was wrong to agree to meet someone, so that was not an issue. What they found harder to grasp was that no matter how deep an online friendship might become, the person they were interacting with was still a stranger.

With regard to nasty comments, they were more phlegmatic about these than their mainstream peers. Again, they were very clear about the fact that this behaviour is wrong, so they just deleted them or told their parents. Obviously, mainstream children can be subjected to bullying too, but the children with SEND seemed to accept it as an inevitable part of their lives. Which is very sad, but on the plus side, together with their black and white view of the world, it had made them more resilient.

The children were really honest about what they do. Year 5 and 6 pupils, for example, told us they were accessing websites that are too old for them and playing 18-rated games. They were very articulate about why these are 18-rated. Even those who weren't using them themselves knew of their existence, or had watched their siblings or peers in action.

When we started discussing the potential implications of these and other activities, if a pupil expressed concern about something, another might respond: 'Have you checked this out?' or 'Have you got that setting?' So they were sharing experiences and picking up tips from each other.

I think that is an important point. We found that even the younger children were creating blogs or making videos for YouTube, independently without any help. How do we harness those skills, or do we just ignore what they are doing?



A student from Talbot Special School in Sheffield enjoys using Bee-Bot to learn basic programming skills

Developing the curriculum

Using the information the children had shared with us, together with insights from parents and school staff, we devised a curriculum model that would allow teachers to integrate e-safety discussions into work they are already doing.

To this end, we mapped out opportunities that presented themselves through the new ICT computing curriculum and the core themes of the PSHE Association programme of study for key stages 1-4: health and wellbeing, relationships and living in the wider world.

It was important to devise something that wouldn't be onerous for staff, who already have more than enough to do. For example, the PSHE topic 'What makes a good friend' can be expanded to include 'What makes a good online friend'. So it is an integral part of the curriculum, not a bolt-on.

In the context of health and wellbeing, children's online lives are

“Does it matter how many 'friends' they have on Facebook?”

hugely significant. Take the topic 'To recognise their personal strengths and how this affects their self-confidence and self-esteem'. The opportunity here is to discuss what it does for a pupil's confidence and self-esteem to create a blog or a video that gets lots of hits. But there are negatives as well. What if people don't 'like' their posts or leave negative comments? Does it matter how many 'friends' they have on Facebook? How does that affect their self-esteem and what can they do about it?

E-safety in special schools

The curriculum model was developed with mainstream schools in mind, but much of

it can be used in special schools too. 'What makes a good online friend', for example, is a subject that needs to be explored with any child who uses social media or gaming forums, and teachers can use their discretion to adapt suggestions to cater for individual need, take ideas from a lower key stage, or mix and match two key stages.

However, that still leaves those pupils whose developmental age is below Key Stage 1. At the end of last term we did some focus-group work in special schools and we are now working with teachers to produce a back sheet to the mainstream framework, breaking it down into the key issues that came out of the focus-group work, and signposting teachers and parents to relevant resources. We hope to complete this work by April.

Making a difference

In the meantime, although the curriculum was only released in 2015, the delivery of e-safety education is already changing. Some schools which had dropped PSHE when it ceased to be compulsory have re-introduced some lessons, and one primary school is successfully exploring the issues with pupils in circle time.

In the past, teachers often held back from engaging their classes in discussion because they were acutely aware that the pupils knew far more than they did. For their part, pupils were not turning to them for advice because they didn't expect them to understand what they were doing, let alone come up with answers to their problems.

During our two-day training programme for staff we tell them: 'The children are your main resource. They will update you. They are happy to explain how it all works.' That has begun to take effect. The adults are losing their inhibitions and the children are now talking to them. It has opened up the channels of communication.

Julia Codman is the e-safety project manager for Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board



Modern technology offers students an engaging way of learning. But it holds dangers too

FIND OUT MORE

- The curriculum model and the results of the research underpinning it: <http://bit.ly/sc229-46>
- PSHE Association programme of study: <http://bit.ly/sc229-47>
- National Curriculum computing programme of study KS1-4: <http://bit.ly/sc229-48>

Sample grid for PSHE

The e-safety elements for each core theme in the programme of study are colour coded. Green denotes a high e-safety link, amber indicates a link worthy of mention and white means that the link is weak or doesn't exist. These grids are available for each key stage.

Key stage 1

Core Theme 1: Health and wellbeing	E-safeguarding opportunities
1. What constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the benefits of physical activity, rest, healthy eating and dental health.	Screen time, no technology in bedrooms or before bed. Mix of being online/games and outdoor play.
2. To recognise what they like and dislike, and learn how to make informed choices that improve their physical and emotional health. To recognise that choices can have good and not so good consequences.	Knowing about personal information and keeping personal information private. Thinking about who they talk to online and what games they play – suitable for their age (Call of Duty classification 18 years).
3. To think about themselves, to learn from their experiences, to recognise and celebrate their strengths and set simple but challenging goals.	Use the idea of 'What makes me special' to get over the idea of personal information. You can be identified by certain personal information.
4. About good and not so good feelings, a vocabulary to describe their feelings to others and simple strategies for managing feelings	CEOP's Lee and Kim use the 'butterflies in your tummy' – important to understand that they can get good and bad feelings online. The need to tell someone they trust about bad feelings.
5. About change and loss and the associated feelings (including moving home, losing toys, pets or friends).	The internet can be a good way to keep in touch with family and friends who live away. Comparison between a real friend and a virtual friend.
6. The importance of and how to maintain personal hygiene.	
7. How some diseases are spread and can be controlled, and the responsibilities pupils have for their own health and that of others.	
8. About the process of growing from young to old and how people's needs change.	Age-appropriate sites and games. Discuss that what older siblings and parents play is not always appropriate for them.
9. About growing and changing, and the new opportunities and responsibilities that increasing independence may bring.	Trusted websites with parents. Telling parents about any problems. Behaving kindly and sensibly.
10. The names for the main parts of the body (including external genitalia), the similarities and differences between boys and girls.	Depending on children, could be a possibility of including core values, what is right and what is not.
11. That household products, including medicines, can be harmful if not used properly.	
12. Rules for and ways of keeping physically and emotionally safe (including road safety, safety in the environment, safety online, the responsible use of ICT, the difference between secrets and surprises, and understanding not to keep adults' secrets).	Pupil Acceptable Use Policy – discuss rules and involve in design. Being a good online friend. Playing games that are not for children their age e.g. COD and GTA. Not keeping secrets or surprises applies to online world too. Reporting in games e.g. Moshi Monsters.
13. About people who look after them, their family networks, who to go to if they are worried and how to attract their attention, ways that pupils can help these people to look after them.	What to do if they feel upset by something online – who to tell. Hector screen saver.
14. To recognise that they share a responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe, when to say, 'yes', 'no', 'I'll ask' and 'I'll tell'.	Again, applies to online world. CEOP's Lee and Kim.

Key stage 1

Core theme 2: Relationships	E-safeguarding opportunities
1. To communicate their feelings to others, to recognise how others show feelings and how to respond.	Understand that feelings are the same on and off line, e.g. cyberbullying includes being unkind in online games. A range of resources available at http://bit.ly/sc229-42 .
2. To recognise how their behaviour affects other people.	Being a good online friend – not saying nasty things or excluding from games. Talk about how there's no difference between being unkind online and in the real world, and that people are not anonymous.
3. The difference between secrets and surprises and the importance of not keeping adults' secrets, only surprises.	Not keeping secrets or surprises applies to the online world too. Explain that it is important to tell someone if they are asked to do something that makes them uncomfortable. CEOP's Thinkuknow film and resources – Lee and Kim. http://bit.ly/sc229-43
4. To recognise what is fair and unfair, kind and unkind, right and wrong.	Introduce the SMART rules. http://bit.ly/sc229-44 Cyberbullying. CEOP's Lee and Kim and Hector's World are good resources. http://bit.ly/sc229-43
5. To share their opinions on things that matter to them and explain their views through discussions with one other person and the whole class.	Class blogs or tweets are a good way to share information and give opinions. Modelling positive behaviour.
6. To listen to other people and play and work cooperatively (including strategies to resolve simple arguments through negotiation).	Discuss positive and negative behaviours in online game play and possible consequences. Support the children to develop strategies to resolve issues, including when and how to report.
7. To offer constructive support and feedback to others.	Model giving positive feedback through the class blog, virtual art gallery, or class Twitter.
8. To identify and respect the differences and similarities between people.	Talk about how making nasty comments online can upset people.
9. To identify their special people (family, friends, carers), what makes them special and how special people should care for one another.	The difference between an offline friend and an online contact. Not everybody is who they say they are online. http://bit.ly/sc229-42



Working across generations

Michelle Haywood of Entrust education service describes how a children’s drama production raised awareness of dyslexia and helped to recruit older volunteers for a reading support programme

‘A B C – easy as one, two, three. Or simple as do, re, mi. A B C...’

The catchy lyrics of the Jackson 5 hit set the context as two rows of pupils settle down at their desks and wait for the lesson to begin. As the music dies away, a child steps forward to recount the story, while the others mime the actions.

‘I remember my first ever spelling test at school,’ he announces, standing beside a boy in the middle of the front row. ‘The teacher gave the first word. It was the word “spelling”. So I thought very carefully and wrote down the letters: S P E L L I N G.’

The boy’s untidy, misspelt response earns him a furious telling-off from the teacher, and things go from bad to worse as he is made to write the word out 100

times, gets it wrong again in the next test, and has to endure his classmates’ jeers when he can’t find the right page in his book or answer any of the teacher’s questions.

“*The aim was to show what it feels like to be a dyslexic learner*”

‘I can’t read, I won’t read. I hate reading!’ wails the narrator, standing by his shoulder. The others pick up the refrain. ‘I can’t read, I won’t read, I hate reading!’ they chant over and over, while the boy covers his ears and runs away.

Insight and empathy

Entitled *#Superheroes*, the drama takes a more positive turn as it continues, exploring the unique talents and strengths dyslexia can bring, and ending on a high note with profiles of famous people with dyslexia who struggled at school, yet went on to achieve great things.

Written and performed for national Dyslexia Awareness Week 2015 by Year 6 and 7 pupils from Bird’s Bush Primary School and Tamworth Enterprise College, the aim was to shed light on what it feels like to be a dyslexic learner, the difficulties these children face on a daily basis, and how this affects them emotionally.

The bare bones of the plot were provided by Entrust and fleshed out by the pupils, with guidance from the

college's drama teacher, who had been given some additional insights by me. The children had all volunteered to take part, and while several had SEN, the only one with dyslexia was the central character. The point of the exercise was to promote understanding and empathy amongst fellow pupils, school staff and the wider public, and the boy in question felt supported and valued, and was therefore quite happy to proclaim towards the end: 'I have dyslexia!'

“She felt in a better position to support her son emotionally”

'One of our parents became quite tearful as she watched the story unfold,' said Julie Cappleman-Morgan, co-founder of Dig-iT, a community support group for dyslexic people of all ages. 'She told me that the "penny had just dropped" regarding how her son felt as a result of his struggles with literacy and that it explained a lot of his behaviour. She now understood what he was experiencing and felt in a better position to help him emotionally.'

Enlisting support for struggling readers

The children put on three performances in the course of the week. The first was for their own schools; the second was to an invited audience of Dig-iT members, headteachers and pupils from neighbouring schools, and local dignitaries, including the mayor of Tamworth. The third was at a social event for retired people at Burton Albion Community Hub and it was here that the children's powers of persuasion came together with the work of the Children Matter project.

Run by Age UK South Staffordshire and supported by Entrust, this lottery-funded initiative engages people aged 50+ in voluntary work with primary schools, with the aim of boosting children's educational attainment, confidence and self-esteem and simultaneously supporting older people to stay active, play a useful role in their local community and maintain their own sense of self-worth.



A reading volunteer and a young child enjoy sharing a book together

When the performance came to an end, representatives from the project took to the floor to talk about an important strand of their work – the reading volunteer programme. With the help of #Superheroes, three new recruits were enlisted that day.

When old and young get together

Older role models are a valuable asset for a school and the time and interest they invest in individual pupils can make a significant difference to these children's

Recruiting and supporting volunteers

People who have never worked in education are often reluctant to contact schools to discuss how they might volunteer. Here are some strategies that may help to break down this barrier and support them in their role.

Setting the scene

- Invite community groups to events such as school performances, Christmas fairs and lunches.
- Put on a drama performance and take it on tour to venues which attract older people.
- Run events where pupils can bring members of their extended family, such as grandparents, to engage in activities like making Christmas decorations, cake decorating and gardening.

During these events, outline the role volunteers can play to support pupils and have some readymade leaflets prepared to give out. If you already have some volunteers, ask them if they would be willing to make themselves available to talk to people and give them the insider's view.

Defining the role

Produce some guidelines explaining what reading

volunteering might entail. Here is an example.

If you commit to volunteering we would like you to volunteer for a couple of hours a week, on a regular day. Twice a week would be a great if you can manage it – then you can work with the same child. We ask you to:

- engage with children on a one-to-one basis
- adapt to the children you are working with
- show an interest in the individual and praise their achievements.

If they take up your offer, remember they will need a DBS check and safeguarding level 1 training.

Supporting new recruits

- Offer support through welcome information, training and mentor support from a member of school staff.
- Provide a handbook with essential information, such as the timing of lessons and breaktimes, the school's behaviour and safety policy and the names of key staff.
- Issue a handbook offering advice on how to support reading. This might include:
 - top tips for reading volunteers

- learning to read with phonics
- a glossary of terms such as phoneme, grapheme and blending
- examples of phonics activities, such as using magnetic letters to get to know the alphabet
- questions to ask before, during and after reading
- tips for supporting more confident and fluent readers
- suggestions for games
- ideas for supporting spelling.

- Provide resources to use – this could be a magnetic board, some magnetic letters, dry wipe pens, examples of fiction and non-fiction texts and some games.

Continuing support

- Catch up with them regularly to discuss the positives and problem-solve any issues they may have experienced.
- Invite them to training or governor updates which concern literacy.
- Offer additional opportunities for training and development.



Sometimes reading volunteers go on to get involved in other areas of school life

willingness to engage and hence to make progress.

Meanwhile, for the volunteers themselves, their first venture inside the school gates often paves the way for deeper involvement. It's quite common to see them accompanying school trips, joining in with arts and crafts activities, or helping the children to look after the school garden. Some have even gone on to become governors.

It's not enough, however, just to sit down with a child to look at a book, and Entrust has supported Age UK to develop an introductory training programme. We also run training sessions for more experienced volunteers so they can work with children who have literacy difficulties, and we are leading the training for the latest new recruits.

A volunteer's experience

For the last two years, Sandra Lopez, 72, has been reading with children for two afternoons a week at Chadsmoor Infants

School in Cannock.

'The two teachers I work with made me feel really welcome from the very start,' she says. 'So too did the children. I love watching them grow. Some are extremely good, and progress very quickly, while others take a little longer. One little boy was struggling so much at first, I asked if we could drop down to a book at a lower level. By the end of the year, he was well on his way. I think a lot of it has to do with self-confidence. After hearing me tell him over and over again: "I know you can do it!" he eventually began to believe in himself.'

Self-confidence is important for the volunteers too and she admits she would never have approached a school without the support she received from Age UK.

“A lot of it has to do with self-confidence”

Using magnetic letters as a support for reading



If a child struggles to blend the sounds in a word when reading a book, try using magnetic letters to help them see the word differently (if the word is decodable).

Make the word with the letters and add 'sound buttons' if needed – a dot for a single letter (e.g. 'm') and a dash for two or more letters that make a phoneme (e.g. 'ea'). Then say the sounds and blend them together. Sometimes this can help a child to make more sense of the word, as they

can physically segment or break up the sounds then blend them back together. Return to the book and re-read the word and sentence.

This strategy can be used occasionally to work on a particular word that is difficult, but not for every word. Sometimes it's best just to supply the word, then re-read the sentence.

'It started with induction training in all the fundamental things, like school policies, health and safety, and the data protection act,' she explains. 'Then someone from Age UK accompanied me when I came in to meet the headteacher and learn more about my role. I also spent a day in another primary school, where I was introduced to some teaching and learning techniques.'

Two years down the line, she is looking forward to receiving additional training from Entrust and is enjoying her other roles within the school community.

'I accompany pupils on day trips throughout the year, help out with plays at Christmas and assist with the preparations for sports day in the summer,' she says. 'It's a win-win situation. The school has someone to give children and staff a little extra support and I get so much out of it too.'

Michelle Haywood is a SEN and inclusion service manager within the Entrust education service, which works with schools to drive school improvement and improve pupil outcomes

Top tips for reading volunteers

- Let children see you love reading. Share books, magazines and newspapers.
- Ask school staff to let you use a comfortable place with no distractions.
- Read aloud to all children, not just to the younger ones. This allows them to listen to a good model. Reading stories to children will develop their language skills and help them understand story structure.
- Make it fun: read with expression (put on the voices of the characters) and talk about the characters, the setting and the story, or share newspapers and discuss current events.
- Listen to children read and ask questions before, during and after reading. Encourage children to re-read to develop fluency and understanding.
- Help children to choose books, and encourage interest and enthusiasm.
- Keep a simple dictionary to check meanings of new vocabulary.
- Play games to help children learn new words, e.g. Trugs tricky words (<http://bit.ly/SC229-26>) or simple board games.
- Make notes of any difficulties or progress you observe when working with children and pass on to the teaching staff.

FIND OUT MORE

Watch #Superheroes at <http://bit.ly/sc229-27>

Dyslexia awareness

Michelle Haywood outlines some activities to raise awareness of dyslexia across the school so that these pupils can feel supported and flourish

The following activities were designed as assembly materials for Dyslexia Awareness Week in October 2015.

However, they could equally well be used throughout the year to keep the importance of respecting difference at the forefront of people's minds. Or they could be incorporated into a wider initiative designed to earn the school a dyslexia-friendly quality mark from the British Dyslexia Association. (For information on what this entails, see <http://bit.ly/sc229-34>.)

- The activities can be used in any order and with any age group.
- The play, which has been widely used in a range of schools, was the springboard for the performance described on pages 22-24.
- The two stories are aimed at younger children but could be adapted to make them age-appropriate for older pupils. (Many thanks to some of the children who attend the Staffordshire Specialist Support Centre for the colourful illustrations.)
- The examples of famous people with dyslexia who achieved great things are just a few of many. You will find more at www.dyslexia.com/famous.htm
- Celebrity profiles could be supplemented by contributions from staff or pupils with dyslexia who have positive experiences they are willing to share.

Understanding and empathy

The secondary school assembly invites students to consider what it is like to be affected by dyslexia, and so encourages empathy within the learning community.

Participants

Someone to set the scene, a reader, and two actors (a student and a teacher).

Resources

A small whiteboard or large notepad, and a marker pen.



Pupils from Bird's Bush Primary School and Tamworth Enterprise College rehearse their production in the run-up to Dyslexia Awareness Week

Script

Scene-setter: This is a true story. Only the names have been changed. Let's call the student Phil.

Reader: I remember my first ever spelling test at school.

Actors enter. Teacher gives the whiteboard/notepad and pen to the student. The actors then mime the action as the reader narrates. The intention is to create pathos rather than humour.

Reader: The teacher asked me to spell the first word. The word was 'spelling'. I thought very carefully and wrote the word down: 'S P E L L I N G', then I showed the word to the teacher.

Student displays whiteboard/notepad to the whole assembly group.

Reader: He was furious and marched me to the front of the class. He made me write out the word with a correctly formed P and two Ls in the middle on the board. He made me write the word 100 times.

Student mimes writing on a board very slowly and precisely multiple times

Reader: It took me a long time because I had to copy out his correct version very carefully. But I managed to

get it right. Then he told me to return to my place and continue with the spelling test. The teacher gave me the next word in the test. It was 'spelling' again. I thought very carefully and wrote the word down: 'S P E L L I N G'.

Student displays whiteboard/notepad to the whole assembly group.

Reader: The teacher was furious once more, but I didn't understand why. He marched me to the front of the class, made me write it out again... and again... and again... 'Now go back to your seat!' he thundered. 'I will see you again on Thursday night in detention.'

Pause

Reader: I didn't come back to school the next day. In fact, I played truant for six weeks until my parents moved me to another school.

Pause

Reader: The teacher's name was Mr. Goodfellow.

Michelle Haywood is a SEN and inclusion service manager within the Entrust education service, which works with schools to drive school improvement and improve pupil outcomes

Trespassers will be prosecuted



Read the story

Every afternoon as a group of children came home from school, they would stop and play in a large garden that looked like a park. It had soft green grass, beautiful flowers and peach trees. No one ever seemed to come and pick the peaches, so the children and their parents would take them home to eat.

One day, the owner of the garden came home after a long holiday and saw children playing in his garden and their parents eating peaches.

He ran out to the garden and shouted at all the children and parents to go away and never come back. The next day, he built a high fence round the garden and put up a big sign saying: 'Trespassers will be prosecuted.'

Now, the children had nowhere to play. Their parents always hurried them past, too frightened to look at the garden because they didn't want to be shouted at again.

One boy hadn't been there on that day and didn't know what the man had said. He looked at the sign but didn't recognise the words. He tried to work them out by breaking them down into sounds he knew, just as his teacher had



told him to. He found this very difficult and thought the sign said: 'Treasure will be presents.' Excitedly, he went into the garden to look for treasure.

The boy was surprised to find no one there. He started to look around. From the house, the owner saw him and was very angry. He rushed into the garden and shouted: 'What are you doing in my garden? Didn't you read my sign?' The boy started to cry, as he was scared and confused. He looked up at the owner and said: 'I'm looking for the treasure and the presents.'

The owner stopped. He looked at the sign, he looked at the boy, and he started to think...

Discuss

- What was the owner thinking?
- If you were the owner, what would you have done?
- How could he make a better sign?
- What do you think the owner should do next?
- How could the owner help the boy?

Hare and Turtle



Read the story

Hare often came to the riverbank. He loved to boast about how fast he could run. He was always asking the other animals to race him.

One day Turtle was so fed up of Hare boasting, he challenged him to a race. Hare wanted to race on land. Turtle wanted to race in water. The other animals decided there should be two races, one on land and one in the water. News soon spread through the forest that Hare and Turtle were

going to have a race. Hare told everyone he was going to win.

A huge crowd of animals gathered for the first race through the forest. Hare raced off and Turtle crawled along behind him. As Hare expected, he won the race. For the next few days Hare boasted that he was the fastest animal in the forest.

The day of the river race soon arrived. Again all the animals had gathered to watch the race. This time Hare struggled to take his place at the start line. He asked for a ladder to help him down to the river. He climbed down and he fell into the water with a SPLASH!

'Help!' Hare cried...

Discuss

- What do you think happened next?
- Who do you think won the race?
- Why did Hare need the ladder?
- How do you think Hare felt?
- How do you think Turtle felt?
- What are you good at?
- What do you find difficult?
- We are all good at different things so should celebrate our differences and help each other.
- Do you think Hare and Turtle can still be friends?

Take five

Short activities to make spelling more fun and give pupils pause for thought.

Take one

Set the challenge of trying to spell an unusual word, such as a lesser-known capital city, or the Latin name for a common plant. Discuss ways of learning to read and spell new words, and undertake a survey across the class about which method(s) were used. Consider the different types of memory strategies which were needed to complete this.

Take two

Ask pupils to choose five words which they find difficult or tricky to spell. Create a sorting activity based on these words in which the words are created in different fonts, colours and sizes. Organise teams of pupils and get them to race each other to find specific words.

Take three

Use any set of words which could be sequenced, for example the days of the week. Mix up some letters in one set of words and create another set where the spellings are correct. Jumble the two sets up and see how quickly pupils can sequence the words that are correctly spelled.

Take four

Introduce a game, such as Sparkle, which is based purely on chance. Ask pupils to stand in a circle and give each person a list of five words.



Choose one of the words from the list and ask each child in turn to say one letter until the word is completed. The pupil who says the final letter of the word is 'sparkled out' and sits out. Continue until only one pupil is left.

Take five

Ask pupils to choose one word and estimate how many times they think they can write it in one minute, two minutes and five minutes. Set the timer for one minute. Did they guess correctly? Repeat for two minutes, and finally five minutes.

Dyslexia is a gift

Although dyslexia affects about 10% of the population, research shows that some 20% of the UK's most successful entrepreneurs have the condition. Surprising? Not really. People with dyslexia may be terrible at spelling, but many of them are innovative thinkers, possess outstanding oral skills and have bags of creativity.

People with dyslexia excel in all walks of life

Business

'When someone sends me a written proposal, rather than dwelling on detailed facts and figures, I find that my imagination grasps and expands on what I read.'

Richard Branson

Literature

'Writing and spelling were always terribly difficult for me.

My letters were without originality. I was... an extraordinarily bad speller and have remained so.'

Agatha Christie

Politics

He was regularly punished in school for failure and lack of effort, sometimes failing the same class numerous times.

Winston Churchill

Science

A teacher sent a note home when he was six: 'He is too stupid to learn.'

Thomas Edison, inventor of the light bulb, the phonograph, the motion picture camera and more.

Entertainment

The only way he can learn his lines is by listening to them on tape.

Tom Cruise

Difficult schooldays

Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver is worth around £35 million and has sold over 37 million books in 36 languages. Yet the first time he read a whole book right through to the end was a couple of years ago, at the age of 38.

Talking to journalists on the set of *Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast*, which he co-hosts with his childhood friend Jimmy Doherty, he described his schooldays as follows.

'While we were at school, I struggled. Imagine a boys' school.

Thirty boys in the middle of English, bang bang bang on the door: "Can we have Jimmy and Jamie for special needs? Just us two out of our class."

He went on to explain that this was the cue for the other children to start singing 'special needs' to the tune of *Let it Be* as the pair left the room.

Would that ever happen in your school?



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The three questions addressed in the one-page profile are the starting point for the development of an outcome

Co-production and writing outcomes

Anita Devi explains how outcomes differ from objectives and offers advice on how to construct a good one

This year marks the second year of the implementation of the SEND reforms. The complete change cycle is a seven-year process, with the first three years (2011-2014) dedicated to Pathfinder trials and consultation, and the remaining four to implementation. However, as the Department for Education acknowledges in *SEND: supporting local and national accountability* (March 2015), it will take between five and 10 years for the full impact to emerge.

The aim of this article is to support practitioners to go beyond compliance – just doing what needs to be done – and start changing the culture of their communities in order to embed a new way of working.

You will find extensive advice on implementing different aspects of the reforms on the Optimus Education Knowledge Centre.

In this piece, I want to focus on co-production and writing outcomes.

Defining an outcome

One of the many changes is the shift from specifying objectives under the old system of statements to using an outcomes-based approach when considering SEN Support or Education Health and Care Plans.

“ **An outcome is something that will happen as a result of an activity** ”

The process of pursuing an objective involved setting targets for the pupil. The end goal was perceived as desirable, something the pupil should aim for, but there was little scope for measuring real impact.

By contrast, an outcome is ‘something that *will* happen as a result of an activity, process, input or intervention.’ It is affirmative and constructed in a way that

makes the success criteria explicit to everyone involved.

This approach is not new per se and has been used quite widely in health and social care for many years. However, its application to special educational needs and disability provision supports pupils and their families to consider longer-term aspirations and the various steps that will be required to achieve them.

Developing an outcome

There are four key principles that must be followed when developing an outcome.

1. Build on what works/is working well for the individual and their families

This involves understanding the individual’s current successes and strengths and exploring how these can be applied or transferred to other contexts.

Let’s imagine a young man – we’ll call him Steve – who is a confident user of mobile technology but struggles with remembering routines, especially in

the morning. A good outcome could be to focus on using mobile technology to increase his independence, not only with regard to remembering routines, but actually undertaking the tasks, one by one, in the right order and in a timely manner.

2. Focus on changing things that are not working well

Steve cannot complete routine tasks independently because he struggles with chronology and has working memory difficulties. The outcome addresses his manifest behaviours by accurately identifying the underlying issues or barriers.

3. Address needs

A need and a barrier are not necessarily the same thing. The need is for Steve to get himself ready each morning in plenty of time to catch the bus for school. This is part of the preparation for adulthood. The barrier in his case is a deficit in cognitive processing skills.

4. Move the young person towards their aspirations

It is important to distinguish an outcome from an aspiration. Too often these terms are used interchangeably.

The Department for Education and Ofsted both make frequent reference to aspirations, but neither body has provided any explanation of what they actually mean by the term. Having researched this area extensively, here is my definition of aspirations.

‘The ability (and opportunity) to set goals for the future, whilst maintaining the motivation, inspiration, independence and confidence in the present to reach those goals, utilising a thought-out plan of action.’

It’s about connecting what is happening in the here and now with the future.

Putting the child at the centre

Finally – and crucially – an outcome is expressed from the child’s or young person’s perspective, as opposed to a service perspective.

- **Person-centered outcome:** to get dressed by myself by 8.00 am, so I can catch the bus at 8.30 am.
- **Service perspective:** to provide Steve with mobile technology assistance to support independent morning life skills.

This example demonstrates how person-centered outcomes need to remain within the control and influence of the individual concerned and those who support them. They also need to be specific to that person and measurable.

Writing a good outcome takes practice and involves following a number of steps to gather the information, assimilate the different perspectives of all the relevant people and then collectively formulate a desired outcome in plain English.

It is worth devoting some training and professional development time to this. Even the most experienced SEN practitioner will have to develop a new set of skills.

One step at a time

The eight-step guide below was produced by Helen Sanderson Associates, a consultancy and training provider that has been developing and refining person-centred practices for many years and delivered some highly enabling work.

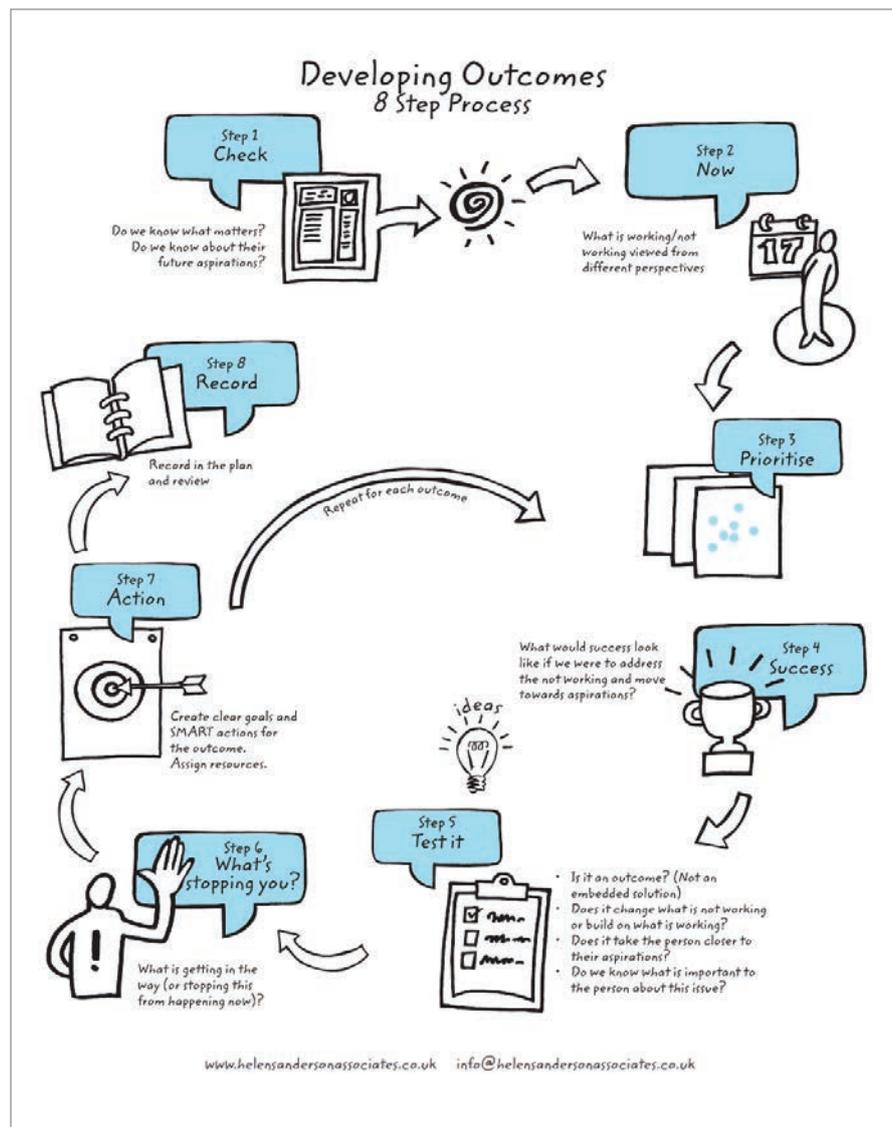
Steps 1-4 and 6 (gathering the information through dialogue) are supported by the use of person-centered thinking tools, available for free on <http://bit.ly/sc229-28>. There are over

12 to choose from, depending on the circumstances and needs of the child or young person.

The starting point is the authentic one-page profile addressing three core questions – what people like and admire about the pupil, what is important to them, and how best to support them. The other tools add layers of useful information to ensure that the outcomes developed are accurate and reflect the needs of the individual in question.

Returning to the example of Steve, when he is struggling to get ready on time, he does not actually see this as a problem, as he is quite happy for other members of the family to do things for him. His family has a different story to tell about the stress it creates in the morning.

- Using the good day/bad day tool will help him to express what difference being on time means to him personally.
- Step 2 of the eight-step process – what’s working, what’s not working – will



SEND reforms

unpack the issue of remembering and then doing, and highlight that using mobile technology in other areas of his life has, in the past, increased his independence.

- The doughnut tool, which identifies the roles and responsibilities of different people providing support, will help to establish boundaries of support.
- An appropriate selection of the other tools on the website will add further insights, building up a much more involved and fuller picture.

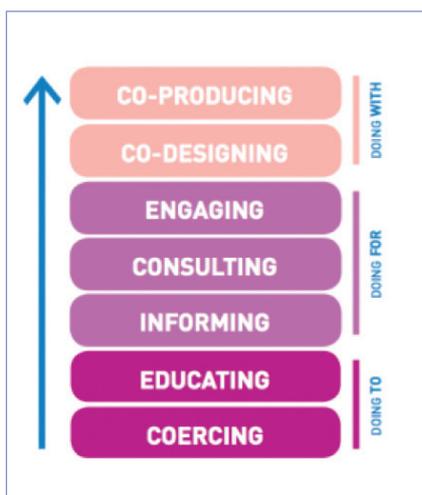
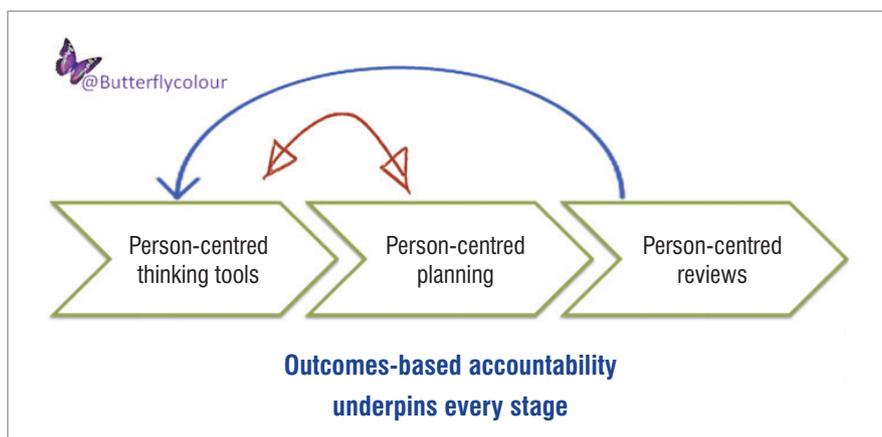
Common pitfalls and misconceptions

When writing outcomes, it is all too easy to slip into solution mode. As Steve's experience shows, a key foundation skill in developing an outcome is listening, without trying to solve, fix, advise or judge. It is about asking the right questions to unpick what this means from the person's perspective and/or those who live or work with them.

Another common error is failing to be specific enough in order to measure the success. The outcome for Steve provides precise time markers: to get dressed by 8.00 am in order to catch the bus at 8.30 am. The mention of the bus departure time is crucial, as it explains why it is important for him to be up and dressed by 8.00 am. However, depending on the severity of his difficulties, 'to get dressed' may turn out to be too vague, in which case it will be necessary to break this down further.

Meanwhile, an area of confusion I regularly pick up from SENCOs is a lack of clarity about the relationship between person-centred thinking tools, person-centred planning/plans and person-centred reviews.

The illustration below highlights the interconnectivity between these three concepts.



A shift of emphasis

Whenever I meet school leaders, SENCOs, governors and other key staff to discuss the SEND reforms, my first question is often: 'Have you read the core principles underpinning the reforms as set out on page 19 of the Code of Practice?'

Namely, that local authorities (and by analogy schools) **must**:

- have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their family
- provide them with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
- support them in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

My second question is: 'How do these principles align with your school mission and policy?'

Co-production

Nowhere are these principles more apposite than in the area of co-production.

Again, this is not new. The focus on taking account of everyone's views and making decisions together enables us to think about the quality of relationships and dialogues we have with our pupils and their families.

'Co-production means delivering services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours' (adapted from New Economics Foundation).

The important word here is reciprocal. It is about doing things *with* people, not *for* them or *to* them.

Many schools and settings have found the adapted diagram (left) helpful in evaluating their relationships and dialogue with children, young people and their families.

Once you have a perception of what your current dialogue with children, young people and their families looks like; it is easier to articulate where you would like to be and how to make that change.

It will take time and commitment

In conclusion, as our focus changes from compliance to cultural shift, practitioners need to invest time in developing their skills and processes for writing outcomes and working in partnership with parents. This will only come about if school leaders make this a priority for all staff within the setting improvement plan and the respective performance management targets.



Anita Devi is an educational consultant, policy developer, change strategist and trainer with international teaching and leadership experience from Early Years to postgraduate.
www.AnitaDevi.com. @Butterflycolour

FIND OUT MORE

- **SEND: supporting local and national accountability** (DfE, March 2015): <http://bit.ly/sc229-29>
- **SEND Reforms (including outcomes-based accountability)**: Optimus Education Knowledge Centre. <http://bit.ly/sc229-49>
- **Aspirations Poster**: Five steps to creating aspirations and a poster to display in school. <http://bit.ly/sc229-30>
- **Person-centred thinking tools**: <http://bit.ly/sc229-28>
- **Useful tools and resources for older students**: www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk
- **Working with parents**, open access online resource: <http://bit.ly/sc229-32>

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Alison Thomas investigates

Can you make the most of your education? Have you got what it takes to make a difference? Who's in the driving seat? Are you in or are you out? It's your education, your future... what sort of world do you want to grow up in?

130 or so Year 7 students at Cheney School, Oxford, are presented with a series of potentially life-changing questions, before two simpler, more immediate ones appear on the screen.

- Who or what do you take for granted?
- How does that make you feel?

'I'd like you to share your thoughts with the person next to you,' says humanutopia facilitator Lauren McCormack. 'There are no right or wrong answers as long as you are honest. You have two minutes. Go!'

A buzz of low chatter fills the room, followed by instant silence when she

calls for their attention again and asks every second person in each row to move forward one place.

This is the cue for the same conversations to start all over again, only now the students will be talking to people they may not know very well or people they usually avoid. 'Everyone deserves the same respect, no matter who they are,' Ms McCormack reminds them. 'Who or what do you take for granted? How does that make you feel? Two minutes. Go!'

Serious issues can be fun

The pupils change places several times as the session continues, as one of the objectives is to take them out of their comfort zone to engage with people beyond their own circle. At the same time, they are guided through a carefully planned series of themes, starting with the things that might be holding them

back, followed by how they make choices (do they make their own decisions or follow the crowd?) and finally their dreams for the future.

It sounds very heavy, but it is delivered with such a light touch and in such an entertaining way, the students remain engaged throughout the entire two-hour session. Not once does anyone step out of line and whenever someone shares a personal experience with the whole group, everyone listens attentively and applauds at the end.

‘The atmosphere we create is very safe and supportive,’ Ms McCormack tells me afterwards. ‘That gives the students the confidence to speak out and allows us to really get them thinking about what they want out of life, and what they need to do now if their dreams are going to come true.’

Improving life chances

Humanutopia was founded in 2004 by former teachers Graham Moore and Carlo Missirian, who met through BSKyB’s aspirational Reach for the Sky programme and decided to launch something similar, but more extensive, for schools.

“The students remain engaged throughout the entire two-hour session”

‘It has evolved over the years,’ says Mr Missirian. ‘Fundamentally, we try to enhance and improve the qualities of young people to help them, not only to get qualifications but, more importantly, to be prepared for life. Our approach has always been about the person and supporting their holistic growth.’

The organisation does a lot of work with schools in disadvantaged areas, where it seeks to break the vicious cycle of low self-esteem and failure and replace it with its five big outcomes: hope, confidence, happiness, relationships and employability.

‘These schools often have significant numbers of students with SEND,’ Mr Missirian goes on. ‘We treat everyone the same – that is an important part of what we do. People are often amazed at how well these children integrate. Our view is that every young person is special, and we try to give them the same opportunities to express themselves. Children with autism, Asperger syndrome or dyspraxia often offer a unique perspective on things. We

have had people stand up and talk about their condition, which helps other pupils to understand them a little better. It can be very moving at times.’

Short and long programmes

The courses humanutopia offers range from one-day taster experiences to longer programmes spread over two to nine days, and three-year partnerships, where the whole school explores the key development areas in greater depth.

The shorter courses are designed to help pupils overcome the barriers they face in school (peer pressure, conformity, bullying) and reflect on their own image of themselves and how that could improve. Meanwhile, the three-year partnerships include ongoing engagement between secondary and primary schools and transition summer camps.

A key element of the programme is the heroes’ journey, where volunteers are trained to run courses for their younger peers and act as positive role models.

‘We give them training in leadership and mentoring skills and support them to deliver their first course to younger pupils in their school or in feeder schools,’ says Mr Missirian. ‘It’s then up to the schools to build on the relationships we have instigated. We work with them and give them ideas, but ultimately sustainability depends on the lead teachers’ commitment and the school’s willingness to make it work on a day-to-day basis. But the foundation we lay is very solid.’

The heroes’ journey

The heroes’ journey at Cheney starts in Year 9, although the long-term plan is to have heroes throughout the school. The student council is almost entirely composed of heroes, whose training and commitment makes them ideally suited for the role. They are also responsible for running workshops at the week-long summer camp for pupils in years 6 and 7.

‘Some of the most unlikely characters put themselves forward as volunteers,’ says assistant headteacher Amjad Ali. ‘Students you might have thought were too noisy, too loud, want to contribute. Humanutopia engages them in a way I have never seen any other company be able to do.’

Of course, other heroes are conscientious, motivated students, like the Year 10 girl who tells me about summer camp. ‘It was run almost entirely by us with a little support from humanutopia and school staff,’ she says. ‘When choosing our workshop themes, they told us: “Do what you enjoy doing. If

you have a passion, use it.” Mine is dance. Other people ran workshops on writing, sport, art... all sorts of things.

‘We had training days beforehand to teach us how to bond and how to help the children feel safe. I loved it. It put everyone in a really nice place. If anyone was thinking of becoming a hero, I would say: “Go for it. It’s a great thing to do!”’

Nurturing the heroes

The second session I attend is for Year 9 and 10 heroes, but instead of working on their leadership and mentoring skills, today they are enjoying a refresher course to ensure they are looking after themselves as well as their younger peers.

They seek out discussion partners they don’t know very well, then talk about extremely sensitive issues, such as drugs, sex and depression. Later, they are presented with various attitudes they might try to give up – such as being insecure or taking everything personally – and are invited to respond: yes/no/why.

“Some of the most unlikely characters volunteer to be heroes”

Some of the contributions from the people who share their feelings at the end are quite profound. One girl, who grew up blaming herself for her parents’ separation in the belief that her dad didn’t like her, pledges to stop trying to please other people ‘because it doesn’t get you anywhere.’ That is also the resolution of a boy who admits that he doesn’t do himself justice because other people expect him to behave in a certain way. ‘He has a long history of underperforming,’ says Ms McCormack. ‘The whole room agreed to support him in carrying out his resolution. Whether he actually does will be up to him.’

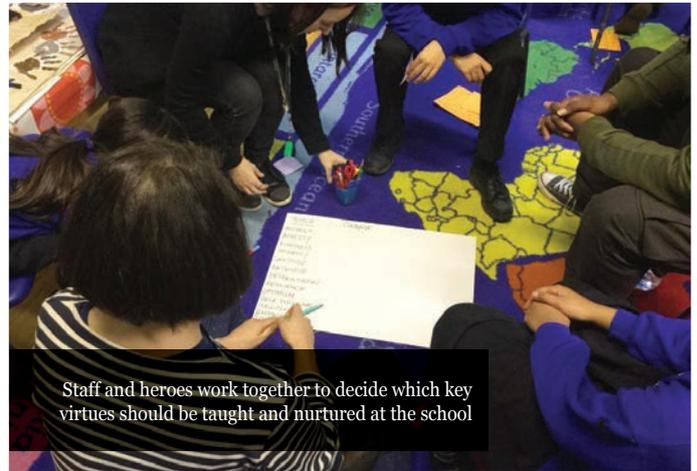
Engaging primary school pupils

Sixty miles away in Camden, Holy Trinity and St Silas C of E Primary School only became involved with humanutopia in September 2015, but already it has transformed the school.

‘The facilitators initially came in to spend three days with years 5 and 6,’ says PSHE and humanutopia coordinator Rebecca Hall. ‘Right from the start, all the staff were blown away by the messages they were delivering and the way the children were responding. The ones



At the hero-buddy meetings, children play team-building games, discuss things like friendship and propose ideas for change within the school.



Staff and heroes work together to decide which key virtues should be taught and nurtured at the school.

who tend to get into trouble were saying things like: “Actually, I behave in this way because I’m getting dragged down by certain friends,” or “Maybe it’s because I don’t feel confident enough to say that I don’t really understand something.” It was really moving to see children you wouldn’t expect to participate responding so well.

Building trust

She puts the power of the impact – and the speed with which it takes effect – down to a variety of factors.

“The first thing the facilitators do is make everyone laugh,” she explains. “It’s like shock almost. You can see the children thinking: “Who are these people?” The way they deliver isn’t like anything the children have experienced in school before. So laughter is the first thing that breaks down the barriers and helps the children to open up and listen to what the facilitators have to say.

“They also share their own and other people’s stories about how they have made poor choices in their lives or in their education. And how, by doing certain things, they have been able to turn things around for themselves.

“The atmosphere they create is very safe and it’s a real leveller. It’s not like a maths lesson, where some children get everything right first time and others struggle. When you are talking about yourself... your feelings, your hopes, your expectations... you are the expert.’

Belief in every child

Another powerful element of the facilitators’ approach is their belief in each and every child.

She explains: “They look at a pupil and say: “Correct me if I’m wrong, but I am guessing that you are someone who doesn’t speak up very often.” And they are always right. Then they go on: “I believe you can do it. By the end of today I know

that you are going to have stood up in front of all these people and spoken.”

“It’s not a question of “You must do it right now” but “I believe you can do it and you will do it.” Then when an opportunity arises, they give that person a little look or a gentle nudge: “Would you like to have a go?” It’s very, very nurturing. It has a lasting impact on the children, especially the ones who choose to become heroes.’

“**The atmosphere is very safe and it’s a real leveller**”

Building on the foundations

She attributes part of this success to the fact that her passion for the programme has propelled her to drive it forwards within the school, supported by her equally enthusiastic headteacher.

She has set up weekly meetings with the heroes to discuss, not only their personal development, but also any changes they might like to make in the school. They have, in effect, replaced the school council, but with a much deeper level of commitment.

She has also put in place a system of heroes and buddies, whereby each hero is allocated a number of younger children and runs a mentoring session with them once a month to play team-building games and talk about things like playground behaviour and how to be a good friend. The outcomes of these sessions are fed back to her at the weekly heroes’ meetings.

‘Not only has the heroes’ confidence soared since they took this on,’ she remarks, ‘it has made a lot of them reflect on their own behaviour too. They feel

responsible for teaching their buddies the difference between right and wrong, so they want to be better people themselves and try to be the best they can possibly be.’

Recent developments

In the run-up to Christmas, the heroes made advent calendars for the whole school, advocating a different act of kindness for each day. Weekday acts included ‘Look out for someone who needs a friend’ and ‘Say sorry to somebody you know you have hurt’; at weekends the pupils were asked to do things like helping with the washing up and obtaining something for the heroes to take to the foodbank on Monday.

‘One lovely act of kindness was when the school choir went to a local old people’s home to sing carols,’ says Ms Hall. ‘Every child in the school made a card for one of the residents, which the choir delivered on their visit. All these ideas were put forward by the heroes themselves.’

The programme has had such an inspirational effect on both heroes and staff, they are now putting their heads together to develop a set of virtues they believe the school should be nurturing in its pupils. ‘We held our first meeting in January,’ says Ms Hall, ‘where teachers, TAs, governors, lunchtime staff and heroes worked together in mixed groups to come up with their suggestions as to what these virtues should be. It is early days, but the aim is to have these embedded by the summer term.’

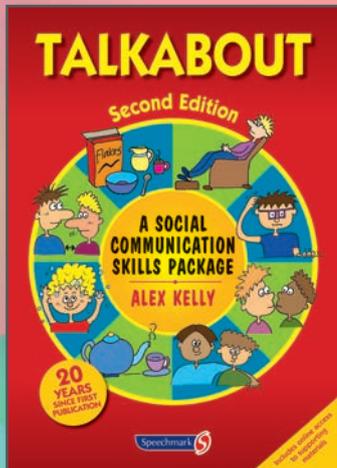
And then what? ‘Time will tell,’ she replies. ‘The journey has only just begun. Who knows where it might lead?’

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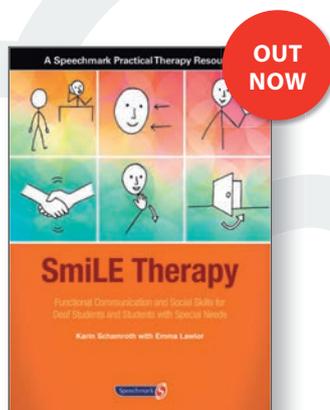
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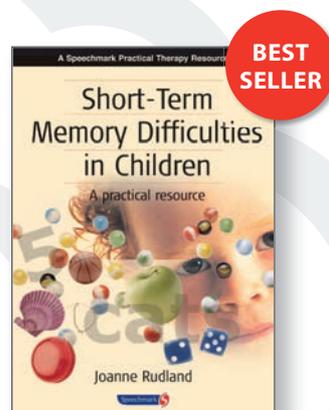


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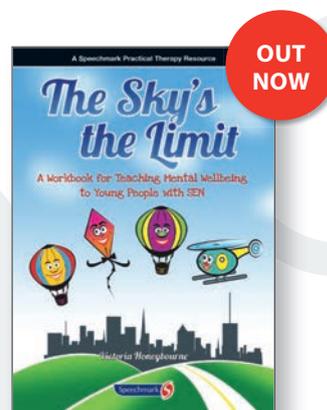


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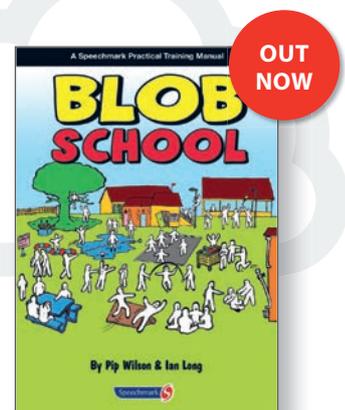


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It takes time for young people to learn self-management techniques. Sometimes relaxing music can help



Meltdowns and how to forestall them

Esther Thomas offers advice on how to manage children before, during and after these overwhelming episodes

Meltdowns, experienced by many children with autism and other conditions, can be very alarming for everyone present.

Seeing a young person out of control is difficult, especially when there is little you can do to help them. Parents worry about their child's safety and try to protect them from injury. Teachers also worry about the other pupils in their care. Fellow pupils become anxious or even terrified.

But it is just as difficult for the person having the meltdown.

Mounting frustration turns to anger

Eighteen-year-old Benjamin is in the sixth form at TreeHouse School, Ambitious about Autism's flagship school. He loves playing on his iPad and Xbox. He is good at using the iPad to communicate and entertains himself with various electronic devices.

However, recently he had a really bad day, playing a game on his iPad that he kept losing, and he began to get frustrated and then angry, and everything escalated from there.

He usually shows his frustration by making unhappy vocalisations. His teacher tried to help him to tell her what was going wrong, but he could not communicate with her and did not really hear what she was saying. Instead, he became steadily angrier, stamping his feet and jumping up and down. It wasn't long before he started smashing his iPad against the wall. Then it got worse: he started banging his head against the wall.

The episode was scary for him because he was out of control. Sometimes it can take him 30 minutes to calm down and respond to simple instructions after such an incident. On some occasions, Benjamin has even been aggressive towards teachers – kicking and biting them. He does not mean to hurt them, but when he is in meltdown, he is overwhelmed.

A loss of control

Meltdowns involve a loss of behavioural control that can take different forms, including shouting, screaming, kicking, biting, hitting, destroying property or self-injury. The duration of the episode varies.

They can happen anywhere, but

commonly occur in public places, such as supermarkets, libraries, restaurants or parks, which are noisy and busy. Unfortunately, this can lead parents to start avoiding these places altogether.

The school bus is another stressful setting that can provoke an outburst. However, going to school cannot, and should not, be avoided.

Spotting triggers

Benjamin's meltdown over the iPad appeared to build up gradually. At other times, meltdowns can be explosive and come out of the blue. Both situations can be difficult to manage, even for practitioners with a great deal of experience. Although Benjamin's teacher tried to get him to communicate at the early stage, it took time and persistence to restore calm after his anger had escalated. This was because he cannot listen during a meltdown, so she needed to be patient and find the right time to communicate with him.

Understanding what triggers a meltdown can help; Benjamin's distress was fuelled by the demands of the

game, which he was losing consistently. Recognising this trigger earlier may have avoided this episode.

Distraction techniques might have included helping him to skip a stage, persuading him to retreat to a lower level, or redirecting him to an easier game or task.

Interpreting behaviour

Before attempting to intervene, you need to understand the function of the behaviour, which varies from one situation to another. This will also help to identify appropriate behaviours to replace the challenging ones.

Behaviour is a means of communication. Some young people's behaviour becomes challenging because they are unable to convey their wants, needs or feelings in any other way. Hence, teaching functional communication responses, using speech, symbols or signs, is a priority.

Common behavioural functions include the following.

1. **Social attention** – sometimes a child exhibits challenging behaviour to get attention from others (perhaps a parent, a teacher, peers or siblings). For example, a child who cries whenever a parent talks on the phone, which results in attention.
2. **Demand or task avoidance** – a child may throw a tantrum to escape from a difficult task.
3. **Access to a preferred or desirable item or activity** – a child may push a peer in order to gain access to the computer.
4. **Sensory stimulation** – sometimes behaviours provide some form of internal sensation whether for pleasure, such as hand flapping, or to prevent pain.

Managing behaviour

Social attention

- Teach alternative, appropriate ways of seeking attention. You could try a tap on the shoulder if the child is non-verbal.
- Give positive attention throughout the day.
- Create opportunities for gaining your attention.

Demand or task avoidance

Benjamin's frustration grew because he was being overwhelmed by the demands of the game.

- Teach the pupil to communicate effectively, asking for breaks or for help.
- Break the task down into smaller steps.
- Teach pupils to tolerate losing and making mistakes through prompting and reinforcement in the course of

games or tasks where the desire to win at all costs is not so overpowering.

- Establish a good rapport and set clear expectations.
- Provide coping strategies and ample opportunities to practise these.
- Offer choices.

Access to preferred or desirable item or activity

- Teach pupils to ask for the item or activity appropriately.
- Offer them choices, and create opportunities for them to access the item or activity that they prefer.
- Increase the variety of items or activities they are interested in.
- Give transitional warnings.

Sensory stimulation

- Teach a variety of play and leisure skills.
- Redirect inappropriate behaviours to more functional ones and provide reinforcement.
- Redirect pupils to an activity that is incompatible with self-stimulatory behaviour. For example, if the pupil is flapping their hands, encourage them to engage in a puzzle that uses both hands.

Dealing with an explosion

The problem with meltdowns is loss of control. Hence, for the observer, it is important to remain calm and show no fear. The pupil is afraid and deeply anxious and is seeking help to regain control.

Gain insight

Recognising the warning signs is paramount. Everyone who works with the pupil needs to be aware of these, as well as the triggers. Circumventing meltdowns starts with a better understanding of what is going on. In a calm moment, make notes of the child's behaviour before and during an episode.

Intervene early

Once you have assessed the situation, intervene early. For effective communication, adopt a calm, neutral stance, listen to the child and talk slowly in a low volume. Let them know what behaviour you want from them and offer reassurance. Try diverting and distracting them by introducing another activity or topic.

During the escalation period

Continue to provide diversions and reassurance. In addition, set clear limits and boundaries and offer clear choices and alternatives. You may need to provide the child with options for

getting out of the situation with dignity. Continue to assess the situation, make the environment safe and get help.

Avoid injury

Avoiding injury to yourself, the child and others is the top priority. One mother has made sure all her furniture has soft edges and then moves her son to a safe place, ensuring that there is nothing around that he can put in his mouth. She also removes anything that could be thrown.

In school, this might involve taking the rest of the class out of the room if the pupil in question cannot be safely moved.

Sometimes simply changing faces by swapping teachers can help.

For children who engage in self-harming, such as head banging, try placing cushions and mats to protect them.

[See page 40 on the safer handling of children in meltdowns, which includes advice on restrictive physical intervention.]

Reducing the frequency of meltdowns

It is vital that teachers and parents support a child to recognise the warning signs of a meltdown themselves from an early age so they can learn how to defuse it before they reach adulthood.

Teach them self-management strategies and relaxation, such as deep breathing and counting exercises, and develop a range of alternative activities that might help them to calm down when they feel themselves getting agitated. For some children, going for a walk helps. For others, it might be listening to relaxing music or jumping on a trampoline. For Audrey, one of our parents, teaching her child self-management techniques and supporting him to communicate more effectively has reduced the frequency of his meltdowns. When they do occur, they are now less scary for both her and her son.

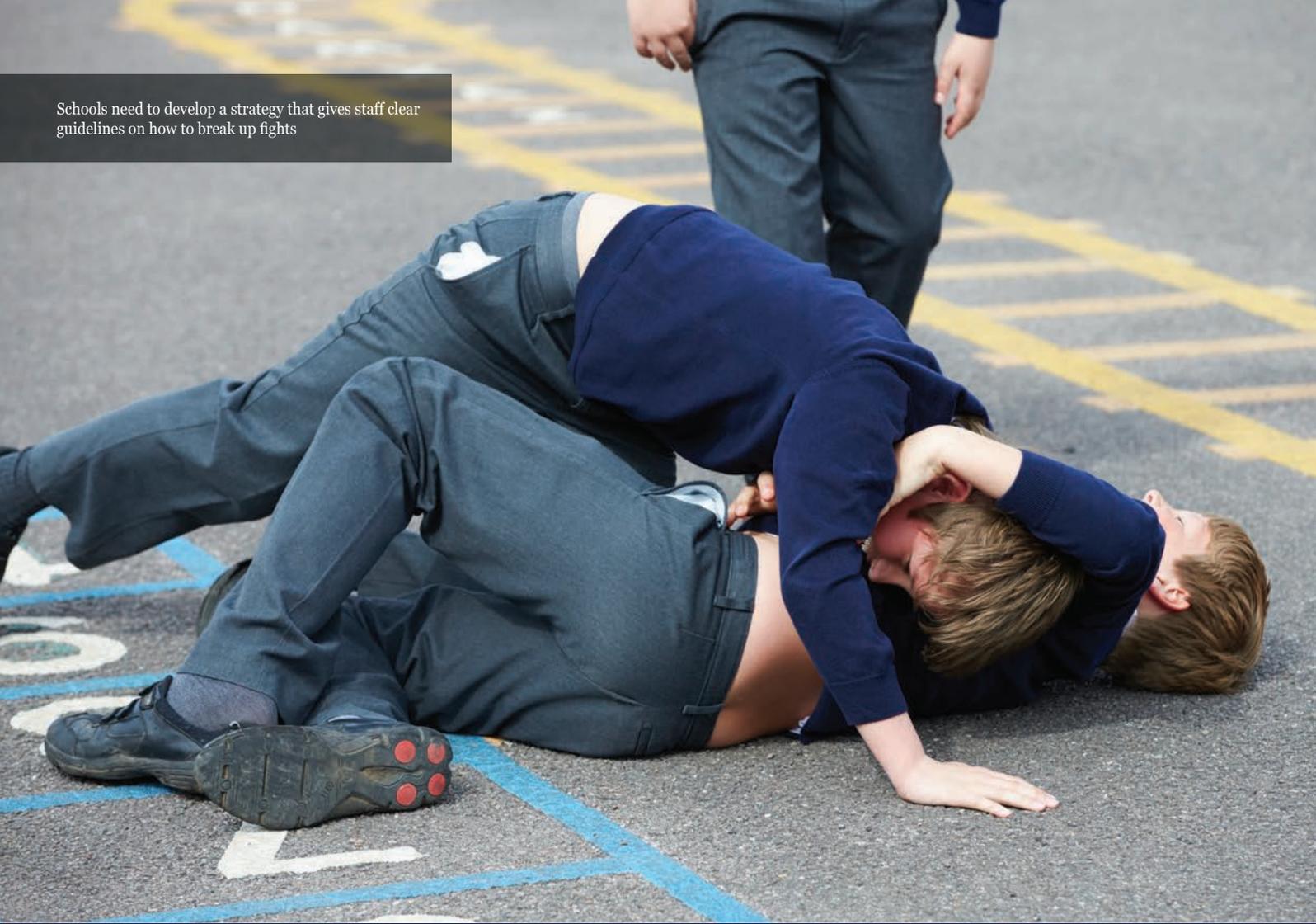
Of course, no two people are the same and there is no universal solution. What is important is that you work with the child to find the right techniques for them, and that you work with the parents and the child to help the child learn to manage potentially difficult situations themselves.



Esther Thomas is a senior behaviour analyst offering training and consultancy at Ambitious about Autism, the national charity for children and young people with autism.
www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

The student's name has been changed

Schools need to develop a strategy that gives staff clear guidelines on how to break up fights



Safety first

When is it acceptable to use reasonable force, and what is ‘reasonable’? **Doug Melia** explains how to keep everyone safe as well as within the law

Imagine a TA bending down to tie a child’s shoe laces. He reaches out and grabs hold of her hair, gripping it tight and tugging as hard as he can. Wincing in pain, she asks colleagues to come to her aid, trying to keep her voice calm so as not to alarm him.

While it is hard enough judging the best way to respond to an incident of this kind, it is even harder when you know that the child in question doesn’t mean to hurt you and doesn’t understand the consequences of his actions.

Should the TA’s colleagues intervene physically, running the risk of distressing the boy and making matters worse? Or is there a better way of resolving the situation?

Risk management

Risk management is not about using bureaucracy to cover your back. It is there to enable settings to take sensible, practical steps to protect employees and pupils from serious harm.

When someone physically intervenes, breaks up a fight or stops someone self-harming, they may decide to use force. Guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service says that the situations where a person may use such force as is ‘reasonable in the circumstances’ include:

- self-defence
- defence of another
- defence of property.

In assessing ‘reasonable’, prosecutors ask two key questions:

- Was the use of force necessary in the circumstances?
- Was the force used proportionate to the harm (or honestly perceived harm) avoided?

The dangers of restraint

Staff attending training sessions often ask me to teach them floor restraints, and I reply: ‘Where is the necessity in an education setting?’ If a child is lying alone on the floor, the chances of them coming to harm are slim. When you introduce another person into the equation to hold them down, the risk of positional asphyxia rises fast.

So if a child drops their weight and it is safe to let go of them, do so and treat them as if they are having a seizure: move

things away from them and if they start self-harming – by banging their head, for example – place something soft on the floor to protect them.

If you do have to intervene, avoid doing anything that could restrict their airways or hamper their breathing – which can easily happen if you hold someone face down on the floor or in a basket hold, or during prolonged struggling.

Meanwhile, manual handling regulations limit what people can lift without a separate risk assessment when standing (25kg for men; 18kg for women). When kneeling, this figure drops dramatically to 3kg. Physical intervention is a manual handling activity and must therefore comply with the relevant legislation.

When it went terribly wrong

Gareth Myatt, 15, choked on his own vomit as he was held down on his bed by three members of staff during an argument over his refusal to clean a toasted sandwich maker. They ordered him to his room, where he lunged at them when they began confiscating personal items, including a piece of paper containing his mother's new mobile phone number. Gareth was a vulnerable teenager who was 4ft 10in and weighed less than seven stone. The coroner said that if he had simply been secured in a room on his own, he would be alive today.

Adam Rickwood, 14, hanged himself after being restrained by five male officers, one of whom used the nose distraction technique (the edge of the hand slammed sharply against the base of the nose). People who knew Adam well said he usually gave in with good grace when he could see a good reason for a punishment, but became distraught when he couldn't. Outraged by his treatment, he wrote in his suicide note: 'What right have they got to hit a child?'

Risk management is not about using bureaucracy to cover your back

While neither of these incidents took place in an educational setting, they illustrate how quickly things can get out of hand when perspective is lost and people decide to use force. Meltdowns happen.

Young people become violent and there are times when adults need to intervene.

In a school context, staff also need to consider factors such as the child's dignity, their level of maturity and how they perceive things.

To a child who has been abused in the past, even the mildest form of physical restraint could border on torture, officially defined as 'degrading treatment, or treatment that arouses fear, anguish or inferiority in the victim'. How will it make such a child feel to be pinned on the floor in front of their peers?

Even when a child has lost control, containment is usually a better option than restraint because the impact of restraint may not just be physical but emotional, as with Adam.

ERIC

The Health and Safety Executive has a hierarchy of risk assessment that goes by the acronym ERIC. This stands for: eliminate, reduce, isolate and control, and can apply to any situation. Here I will focus on using ERIC when dealing with challenging behaviour.

Eliminate

If staff are taking part in an activity which could cause harm to them or their pupils, the first question is: 'Can that activity be eliminated altogether?'

Reduce

If you can't eliminate a risk, you may be able to reduce it.

Making adaptations may be as simple as changing your stance. For example, if you must tie a child's laces, is it necessary to squat down to do this, thereby offering the top of your head to latch on to? In some situations this may be unavoidable. In most cases, a better strategy is to sit the child in a chair and get them to rest their foot on your knee, where the most they can reach is your hands.

You can also reduce risk by reducing its frequency through behaviour management (nipping things in the bud so they don't escalate) and understanding the child's needs. Meanwhile, school leaders have a responsibility to ensure that staffing levels are adequate to keep class sizes manageable, provide appropriate staff training, and deploy experienced staff where they are most needed.

Isolate

If a pupil is in meltdown, isolation involves either removing them from the area (where it is safe, necessary

and appropriate to do so), or removing the other children from the room and allowing the one child to remain. This may be less traumatic and is often safer than physically holding the child.

When considering whether to isolate a child, some teachers are concerned that parents may accuse them of 'breaching the child's human rights' in some way. There are two types of human rights that are relevant here: absolute and qualified.

Staff need to consider the child's dignity and how they perceive things

Absolute rights include:

- the right to life, which places a positive duty on state authorities, including schools, to preserve life
- prohibition of torture.

Qualified rights can be taken away depending on the circumstances. For example, every child has a right to an education and freedom of expression, but if they put one of the absolute rights at risk, this can affect their entitlement to qualified rights. So if a child is bullying other children (either physically or mentally), using inappropriate sexual language, or acting irresponsibly around Bunsen burners, you may exclude them from the classroom.

Everyone also has the right to liberty, but not every child may go out at breaktime. For instance, if a child keeps finding a way of slipping off the premises when no one is looking, then the school may restrict their liberty for their own safety.

Control

Let us return to our TA who is being held by her hair. She has three courses of action open to her.

- **Waiting for the child to calm down.** If the TA can stabilise the child's hand by holding both her hands over the child's, preventing the grip from getting tighter, and if she or a colleague is confident and comfortable reassuring the child and negotiating with him to let go, this may be the best way forward, although it may take some time.
- **Unfurling the hand.** If the hand can be unfurled without causing unnecessary pain or discomfort, I am sure this would be the option that

Behaviour

most people would take. On the other hand, what was a manageable situation may deteriorate if the child becomes alarmed and starts trying to fight their way out. Imagine the TA's predicament if another member of staff tried to be helpful by running up with a pair of scissors, sending the child into a frenzy.

- **Using force to make the child let go.** This is certainly possible, provided that the force used is 'reasonable in the circumstances'. Again our two questions have to be asked to help us decide if the use of force was reasonable:
 - Was it necessary (or honestly believed to be necessary)?
 - Was it proportionate? I.e. was the harm caused less than or equal to the harm avoided?

When justifying the use of force, you cannot cite a child's past behaviour or physical size and strength if there is no immediate threat to anyone's safety.

Questions to ask yourself include:

- Is the risk of harm likely to rise if you intervene?
- If the child's behaviour is considered hazardous, are they in the right setting and do you have adequate support?

Intervening on your own

Except in an absolute emergency, single person physical interventions should be avoided as they carry a greater risk to all parties. There is:

- the risk of injury to the adult or to the child
- the risk of litigation (your word against the child's)
- the fact that restrictive holds are manual handling activities.

This means that, in the event of an injury, your risk assessment could be brought into the spotlight. If this isn't consistent with The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the accompanying Approved Code Of Practice, there could be a case for negligence if the breach caused injury.

Lack of adequate staffing is never acceptable in an environment where the likelihood of the need for physical intervention is high, as might be the case in some special schools or PRUs. Sometimes, however, situations may arise due to lack of staff availability. Ways around this include having systems in place to allow staff to get help from colleagues using buttons, alarms, signals or, where appropriate, sending a child for help.



To a child who has been abused in the past, any form of physical restraint could border on torture

The use of force

The other litmus test is: will force work? Even if it does, if the child has marks on their hands or claims to have been injured, or if an adult who tries to assist

is hurt, the school could find itself facing a safeguarding hearing or even end up in court.

When defending themselves in such cases, staff need to be able to explain why they used a particular restraining technique, demonstrating they have been trained in how to do it and have followed a certified course. For their part, the senior leadership team must be able to evidence what it has done to eliminate and reduce risk before the situation ever arose.

In the case of hair grabs, let me reframe the issue. If you worked in an environment where there were chemicals, flames or open machinery, would you tie your long hair up before entering the work place and avoid bending over flames, vats or machines?

Of course you would. If you work with small, grabby hands, everyone needs to think about how they move, sit and interact with those in their care to avoid hair-grabbing situations and worse.

Doug Melia is an expert witness on the use of force and director of the specialist training provider Safer Handling. Tweet @saferhandling www.safer-handling.co.uk

“ **Single person physical interventions carry a greater risk to all parties** ”

Containment considerations

When it comes to containing a child, careful thought needs to go into how chill-out rooms are used to ensure that their use does not, in itself, border on torture.

In the last few years, pressure has been mounting on the government to review the regulations following reports that, in some settings, children with autism are being isolated in these rooms for hours on end.

Simon Baron Cohen, professor at Cambridge University in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, stresses that such practices risk giving children with autism a sense that they are 'failures'.

Meanwhile, human rights barrister Sam Karim, who fought a high-profile case on the issue, maintains that 'an incapacitated individual should not be deprived of their liberty save for the most exceptional circumstances.'

For more information, read Sharon' Paley's insightful blog in the *Special Needs Jungle* on *Seclusion Rooms: What Every Parent and Professional Should Know*. <http://bit.ly/SC229-19>

FIND OUT MORE

- More information on reducing the risks of workplace hazards can be found on the HSE website: <http://bit.ly/sc229-11>


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★ Star Letter:
The power of networking

In the local authority where I work, every district has a Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) which meets once a term. Each team comprises a mixture of SENCOs and representatives from local outreach providers, including an educational psychologist and a variety of therapists and specialist teachers.

Whenever I want to call in a specialist to do an assessment or provide an intervention, I have to present my case to a LIFT meeting. At first I thought I would find this constraining, but now that I have experienced the system for over a year, I think it works really well.

First, the regular meetings allow you to build a wider network of helpful contacts than you could ever establish on your own. Second, the process of gathering evidence to support your request forces you to step back, reflect and evaluate, while the discussions that ensue provide reassurance if your proposal meets with general approval, or alternative solutions and offers of support if it doesn't.

At our last meeting, we had somebody who was under pressure from social services to apply for a statutory EHCP assessment for a child, and who didn't feel that this was appropriate. After consulting

the group, she was able to go back to these professionals and tell them that colleagues with a wide range of experience and expertise supported her view. When I myself had a tricky EHCP request last term, it was good to know I had a team of people I could turn to for feedback and constructive criticism when putting together the application if it got to that point.

Meanwhile, my school recently started offering its feeder primary schools something along the lines of the supervision sessions educational psychologists are entitled to. A few weeks ago, for example, I spent the morning in one of these schools supporting a colleague with an application for a statutory assessment that had been causing her concern.

Primary SENCOs can feel very isolated sometimes, and early feedback indicates they are finding these collaborative sessions very valuable. And, of course, the benefits go both ways, giving us insight into the issues they face and the needs of children who will one day be our responsibility.

Lucy Stephen, director of learning support, Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre, Kent

Supporting TAs

Following your features on supporting TAs to have maximum impact (*Special Children* 226), I would add that good quality performance management is another important ingredient.

Performance management should always be a helpful and collaborative process, not an opportunity to criticise failings. One

way I do this is to select statements from the TA's job description and ask them to go through these before our meeting, rating themselves on a scale of zero (I'm totally lost) to 10 (I'm world class at this).

We then look at these scores together, paving the way for discussions about the person's skills and strengths and what they

ICT and learning

I have been expanding my use of ICT in the classroom, so I was interested to read how Aurasma and Storywalks can be used to develop literacy (*Special Children* 228). The two end products are quite different, but they both demonstrate how powerful technology can be when it is used with clear pedagogical goals in mind. Throw in opportunities for the children to showcase their work and you're onto a winner.

One of my own success stories has been with Shadow Puppet, which my Year 5 used to make a video pulling together all the strands of their recent learning (<http://get-puppet.co>). They chose images and took photos, uploaded these onto the app, recorded their voiceovers and added music. They were also able to add text to provide further explanations.

Children of all abilities loved it and they became so engrossed in their projects, they didn't move when I told them it was lunchtime. Later, when their parents came in to see their work, there was a magical moment when the children were teaching them how to use the technology through sharing their learning. Educational gold.

Claire Bracher, assistant headteacher and English lead, Huntingtree Primary School, Halesowen, Dudley

could do to raise, say, a score of 5/6 to 7/8.

It is completely non-judgemental and often ends up with ideas for more specific training, more support from teachers and a happier and prouder workforce.

Barbara Ball, managing director ASEND, www.asend.co.uk

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Number sense

Understanding Dyscalculia and Numeracy Difficulties: A guide for parents, teachers and other professionals

By Patricia Babbie and Jane Emerson

Published by Jessica Kingley Publishers

ISBN 9781849053907

£13.99

Reviewed by Saira Pester

Written as a one-stop guide on understanding numeracy difficulties, this easy read will be useful for parents and practitioners, particularly those working with primary pupils. It offers a basic overview of the origins of number sense, why difficulties might occur and how to address them.

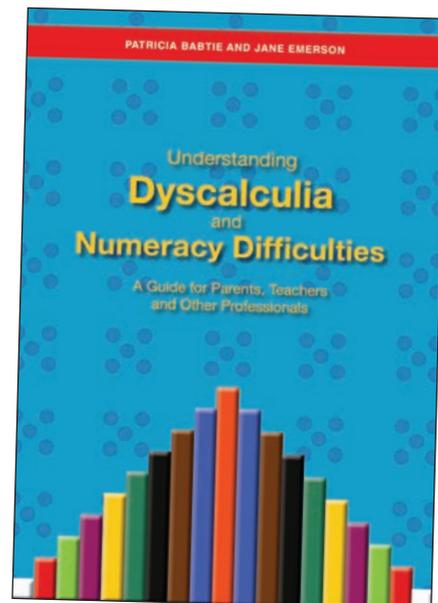
Split into two sections, Part 1 looks at the nature of dyscalculia, factors affecting learning, comorbidity with specific learning difficulties, assessment and legislation. Some of the content is focused on the American system and a few things are out of date – for instance, the information regarding Key Stage 1 and 2 Sats talks in terms of the old ‘levels’. Where the authors come into their own, however, is in Chapter 3, which breaks down the elements of number sense, and the knowledge and skills involved in basic numerical thinking.

Part 2 considers areas to assess and

how to do this, the types of errors to watch out for and how to rectify these, ways that parents can help, and further resources that might be useful.

“Some good teaching strategies and activities”

Whilst the authors don’t offer the means to diagnose dyscalculia, they highlight the importance of good diagnostic assessments and offer some good teaching strategies and activities to remedy the main areas of difficulty. These are aimed at younger children who have gaps or misunderstandings, or have reached a point where it is clear that their fundamental building blocks are not secure.



The book focuses on difficulties with number sense. For those seeking wider content, such as difficulties with multiplication, division, time and other high order maths concepts, I would suggest resources by Anne Henderson or Ronit Bird.

Saira Pester is a specialist teacher with eight years’ teaching experience in mainstream and special schools. After 14 years as a learning needs teacher for her LEA, she set up her own company providing specialist teaching and advice

Provision mapping made easier

Provision Mapping and the SEND Code of Practice: Making it work in primary, secondary and special schools (Second Edition)

By Anne Massey

Published by David Fulton

ISBN 9781138907089

£23.99

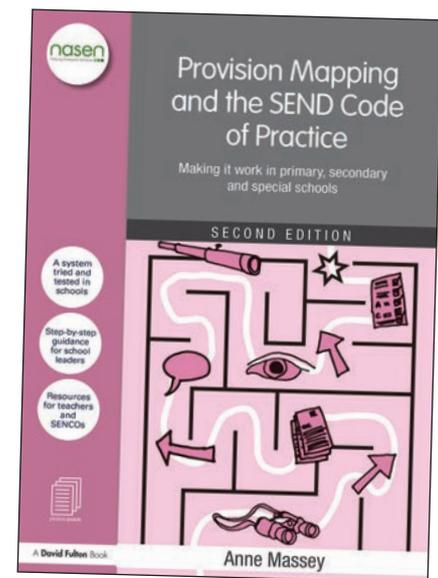
Reviewed by Martin Edmonds

It seems a little disingenuous to describe this book as the second edition of the 2012 Provision Mapping: Improving outcomes in primary schools.

It has widened its remit to include secondary and special schools, and the content has been substantially revised and updated in the light of recent changes to SEN legislation, the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, and the new National Curriculum and Common

Inspection Framework. Although a slim volume at 130 pages, it contains practical advice and lots of helpful materials, and feels more like a sequel than a new edition.

Anne Massey will be a familiar name to many working within the field of SEND. An experienced teacher, SENCO and school leader, she spent six years working as a local authority school improvement adviser before setting up her own independent consultancy. She



specialises in using provision mapping to evaluate and evidence the impact of additional support for students with SEND.

She begins this edition with a concise overview of recent changes to SEND policy and then moves on to four chapters, one for each aspect of the familiar Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle. Each section is clear, starts from first principles and is supported by a wide range of examples of practice from named schools. Suggested templates for review documentation are included throughout.

Ms Massey points out that provision mapping is not solely the province of the SENCO, but can be used effectively to identify, provide for and track the progress of all students. For example,

“A useful addition to any new SENCO’s bookshelf”

it can be used to evidence the impact of pupil premium funding while helping to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

The process can also be invaluable in supporting conversations with parents and carers, and can contribute to encouraging a greater degree of parental

confidence in the ability of the school to fully meet the needs of their child.

The final three chapters provide models of how high quality provision mapping should look in primary, secondary and special school settings.

This is a useful addition to any new SENCO’s bookshelf. And, because the recommendations are fully referenced, it would also benefit anyone studying for the National Award for SENCO. Highly recommended.

Martin Edmonds is a SENCO and manager of an enhanced support provision for students with ASC

The building blocks of language

Assisting Students with Language Delays in the Classroom: A practical language programme

By Francesca Bierens

Published by Speechmark Publishing

ISBN 9781909301573

£39.99

Reviewed by Cate Wood

In my last school, there was a boy named Sean – a cheeky 11-year-old with a sunny smile and a reading age of seven. Initial assessments indicated a low verbal score and triggered further investigation. When shown a set of pictures of everyday animals, Sean was fine until he came to one of a duck.

‘It’s a... thing,’ he said, flapping his arms to imitate flight. ‘You see them on telly sometimes, it’s a... a bird thing.’ He was unable to recall the word ‘duck’ because it was missing from his vocabulary.

This book, aimed at practitioners teaching children aged five to 18, would have been very helpful. As a SENCO, it would have allowed me to quickly draw up an intervention programme using a range of activities from Part 3, and the TA working with him would have started building his vocabulary before teenage disaffection set in. I have no idea if Ms Bierens would approve of dipping into her book this way, but for pupils like Sean, it offers a range of excellent activities.

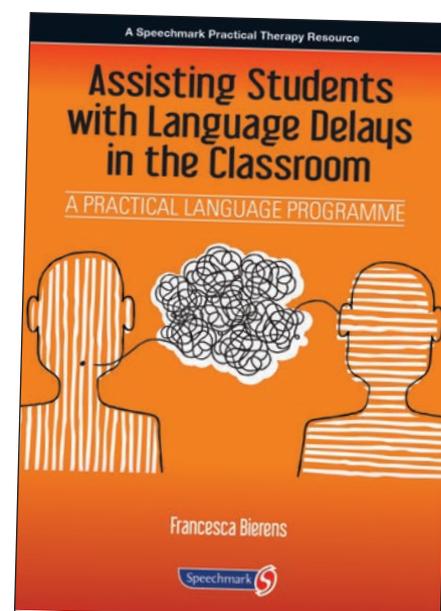
Many of the activities and much of the language suggest that the book is aimed at teachers working with small groups in special schools. Yet most young people with SLCN are in mainstream schools. For

them, group teaching, along with some of the tasks outlined in the book, would be inappropriate. On the other hand, many activities would be ideal as part of a programme supported by a TA.

The book is in three parts – a short introduction, a section on preverbal skills and the one on the building blocks of language mentioned above. From my point of view, the last part is where this book excels, although the section on preverbal skills would be useful for practitioners supporting younger children, those with autism and children with severe language needs and impairments.

“A copy in every staffroom would be a good place to start”

The author does not dwell on theory, which is tucked away in the first chapter together with a useful table on the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of preverbal skills. Instead she focuses on activities that will make a difference. Meanwhile, the imagery is contemporary and clean, and the book’s



spiral binding makes it easy to keep open on the desk during activities.

According to the children’s communication charity, I CAN, about one in 10 children has SLCN requiring long-term support. In areas of high deprivation, the proportion is far higher. Meanwhile, a YouGov poll of 349 teachers, undertaken by The Communication Trust, found that only 27% had received training around speech, language and communication, and 81% felt they would benefit from more training on this issue. This book is highly accessible, and a copy in every staffroom would be a good place to start.

Cate Wood worked in SEN for almost 30 years as a teacher and a trainer. She now offers training around all aspects of special needs, and writes for a children’s charity

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Tracking first aid incidents – Sharon Riddell



Medical Tracker allows staff to create short- and long-term care plans and export them to PDF for parents to sign

As a small school, we have between 20 and 25 incidents and accidents a day – mainly minor scratches and bumped heads. In the past, we used duplicate notebooks to record these, with the injured child taking the copy home to parents, while we kept the books for our records.

Every year, I would go through the books manually to collate a report for the governors. This was painfully time-consuming, dull work.

Then out of the blue in October, I received a marketing email telling me about an online program called Medical Tracker and offering me a short trial. As it happened, another school nearby had just started using it, so I gave them a call to find how they were getting on. They were impressed, so I decided to give it a try.

Being online made it easy because I didn't have to download any software to get going – it was available straightaway on my computer. Within days we were up and running. The training is simple and the whole system is self-explanatory. Meanwhile, data is kept safe in a secure offsite location and to much higher standards than we could realistically achieve through a server-based solution in school.

The system allows staff to log every incident, however minor, notifies the parent or carer automatically, produces our governor accident reports and generally makes the whole process swifter and us more compliant. In fact, if I choose, I can have a live analysis of injuries on the school's dashboard.

Because it holds all the details about pupils' medical conditions, medication and care plans, this allows us to manage administration of medicines and have a comprehensive medical profile of each child. Crucially, Medical Tracker interfaces with SIMS, meaning that each child's record is complete. A feature I really like is that it sends a daily reminder when each child's medication must be administered.

Another part of the system allows me to keep a log of all staff medical qualifications. An added bonus is that it automatically drops me a reminder by email when staff need to refresh their training.

The old paper system had many faults. There were occasions when the duplicate books were misplaced, and pupils didn't always remember to pass the notes to their parents. Even when they did, parents were not always happy with the amount of information supplied.

Today every member of staff, even those who rarely use IT, accesses it via a computer or tablet, or a smart phone if they are off site. We are now more confident that parents can follow up on accidents if necessary. For example, if a child sustains a bump on the head that gives rise to worrying symptoms later on, parents would be able to give the doctor or A&E staff all the details, including how the injury was treated at the time.

For the school, tracking first aid incidents is much easier, we are more accurate and we have a paperless first aid room. This is a great product providing value for money and the customer service is excellent.

An annual licence for Medical Tracker ranges from £315 to £1,095 + VAT, depending on the size of the school.
www.medicaltracker.co.uk



Sharon Riddell, is the school business manager at St Anne's Infants' School, Bristol

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Tackling mental health head on – Bridget Moss



During the Year 7 mental health week, the students engaged in many activities, including team-building tugs of war

I came across mental health journals when I attended a course to become a mental health champion in our school, led by Marilyn Tucknott, an education mental health trainer.

As creator of the journals, she discussed the benefits of enabling young people to express their emotions, feelings and opinions and reflect these in a positive way. It soon became clear to me that working with our new intake before behaviour issues started to materialise could have a significant impact.

Our school is in a deprived area of the North West. Last year we ran a mental health week for Year 7 pupils. This included a couple of assemblies around keeping yourself safe and keeping yourself happy. During the week we focused on heroes and role models, and looked at how we can become the best that we can be. At the end of the last session, we offered a mental health journal to every child. Most took a copy, although some opted out.

Produced by Butterfly Print, the series comprises four personal, paper diaries, each one designed to cater for a different age group.

It starts in Key Stage 1 with *Being Me*, which invites children to make statements about themselves and accept themselves for who they are, before going on to explore themes such as empathy and forgiveness, as well as more difficult areas, such as not feeling guilty about adult behaviours. This is followed in Key Stage 2 by *Understanding Me*, which acts as a mentor for pupils by providing a range of phrases, actions and solutions to everyday scenarios, such as being bullied and supporting friends through difficult days.

Live Out Loud is small enough to fit in a blazer pocket but looks appropriately subversive for its target user – students



The school works hard to ensure students are well balanced by offering a good mix of learning and extra-curricular activities

in key stages 3 and 4 – being ink-stained and filled with graffiti-style artwork. It addresses a range of issues, from making apparently superficial choices to exploring sensitive hopes and fears.

The final journal in the series, *Mindspace* for key stages 4 and 5, asks more searching questions. Like the others, it encourages interaction and creativity. For example, students are invited to

become more self-aware by commenting about themselves and reflecting on their actions. Some pages are quite directive and others are more exploratory and open to interpretation.

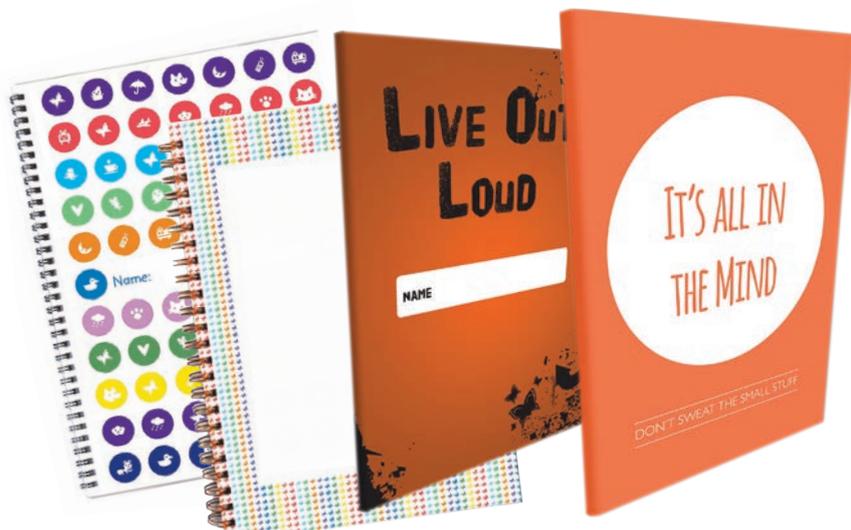
Subtitled *You can always change your mind*, its starting point is that there is much to be angry about, whether this regards personal issues or worldwide concerns, and it guides young people who are feeling overwhelmed, who are dwelling on things that could go wrong and who feel they are on an emotional rollercoaster. Among other things, the student is encouraged to review the usefulness of their current thinking, do a reality check and learn to keep their inner critic quiet.

(As it happens, *Mindspace* was created specifically for Wigan Council. The KS 4-5 journal available nationally – *It's All In The Mind: Don't sweat the small stuff* – has almost identical content.)

Although form teachers talked to students briefly about how they might use the journals and how they might prove helpful, ultimately it was up to the young people to make use of them or not. This was not something we could monitor because these are private diaries. Yet we felt confident that the tone and level of literacy was something all the students could engage with.

Some children with SEN need more emotional support than others, so we made sure that those we thought would benefit in particular from the journals all received one, and we also offered them help on a one-to-one basis. The journals are designed to help them with self-esteem and their own self-image and so hopefully they have been empowering.

Meanwhile, improvements in behaviour are reflected in the data. I



collate a behaviour report at the end of every half term. At the time of writing, the last one I compiled was in late October when I would expect Year 7 incidents to be relatively rare – the children are still finding their feet in a new school. On the other hand, Year 8 students traditionally like to push the boundaries at this time. And yet the current Year 8 has logged fewer behavioural incidents than any other year group, with a tally of 13%. This compares with 14% for Year 7, 31% for Year 9, 18% for Year 10 and 24% for Year 11. In fact, Year 8 had the lowest number of students on any kind of report. Of course, there are lots of other factors

involved, so it is not just down to the journals, but I would say that these have had a positive impact.

We know that early intervention, before behaviour issues emerge, is best. As a school, we need to help young people in the early stages of mental health difficulties. Addressing the root of the problem is far better in the long run than just dealing with the impact, which is behaviour. The journals help with this.

Unfortunately, we did not have the resources to give a journal to every student in Year 7 this year. However, we do still use them, in particular with students in Key Stage 4 who are causing

concern, especially those who don't have someone they can share worries and concerns with.

Single copies of KS1-4 journals, published by Butterfly Print, are £6.99 each, with generous discounts for large orders. www.butterflyprint.co.uk



Bridget Moss is assistant headteacher at Bedford High School near Wigan

Multimedia advocacy – Kathryn Stowell

As a school for young people with ASD, PMLD and complex needs, we believe it is essential that every person has a comprehensive understanding of each student. RIX Wikis from RIX Research & Media make this possible.

The RIX Wiki is an easy-to-build personal website that uses pictures, words, video and sound to capture the voice, skills, aspirations and needs of the individual. We call this multimedia advocacy. The wiki allows users to create and edit web pages using a web browser. The pages support hyperlinks and have a simple text syntax for creating new internal pages with links between them. RIX Wikis, using new technology, are perfect for our young people.

Each RIX Wiki profile is designed around a central template. A picture of the young person is at the centre – it is *their* wiki – and is surrounded by a halo of six more images, every picture acting as a hyperlink to the relevant section. Into these, students upload images, videos and documents to create an online, multimedia portfolio about themselves.

While you can allocate any type of information you like to each section, the school has suggestions based on person-centred planning tools and the EHCP planning. The central link takes visitors to *About me*, where students tell their story and explain who they are. Other pages usually include: *How I communicate*, *Who is important to me*, *How best to support me*, *My goals*, *My person-centred plan or EHCP* and *What I am good at*.

However, nothing is fixed, so some of our more able, older students design theirs to act as a copy of their CV,



Students use their wiki when they meet new people to explain who they are and what is important to them

with illustrations of their work and achievements. Meanwhile, students with profound and multiple learning difficulties might have a section about mobility and sensory needs or another area of their life that is important to them.

We have used multimedia for a long while. In the past this involved storing a lot of video files and maybe burning them onto discs for families, or putting them into a PowerPoint presentation for meetings. Now, the data for each wiki is securely held in the cloud, saving us hours of time. Young people and their families can invite other people to view



Wikis are designed simply to make navigation easy

their profile anywhere and at any time, provided they have access to the internet. Meanwhile, staff now have a central hub for each child where they can store evidence of progress, videos and photos.

What is great about the technology is that it is simple enough for our students to develop their own wikis – if you can use an iPad then you can create a wiki – so they have true ownership of their page and it is not always adults putting something together for them. The latest version of the program even allows you to upload content from a smart phone.

We started using RIX Wikis as a pilot project three years ago. But when we saw the benefits they offered, we decided to roll them out to everyone almost immediately. Today every student has a wiki as a matter of course.

Wikis have made a huge difference to annual reviews and EHCP meetings. In the past, many of our students weren't able to take part in these fully, but now they can show us aspects of their wiki, demonstrating what is important to them, showing off their successes and explaining what they want to achieve, which gives them a strong voice.

For example, a student who has profound and multiple learning difficulties recorded lots of videos to tell us that he really loves music. He stays in our residential provision and a staff member recently observed how much he loves going outside, getting really excited as he leaves the building. So together they uploaded information about this, which means that, hopefully, he will have opportunities to go out more often.

We worked with RIX Media to develop the template for our students

and we have just put the finishing touches to some new online training materials, which staff tested in our academy. These will empower school leaders, teachers, TAs and parents to help young people find their own voice. The training comprises six one-hour sessions. It focuses on person-centred planning tools, multimedia, self-advocacy, working within a multidisciplinary team and communication, and outlines the key principles involved in supporting someone to create their own wiki page.

If you want to be as person-centred as you possibly can, this tool really gives young people a voice.

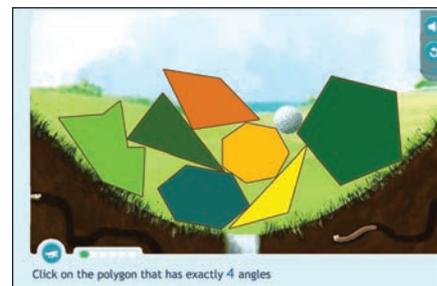
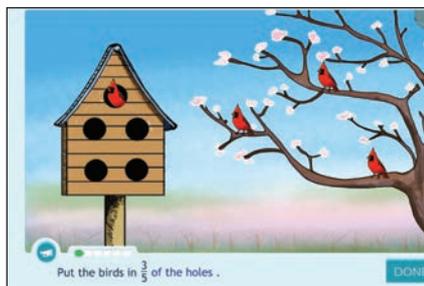
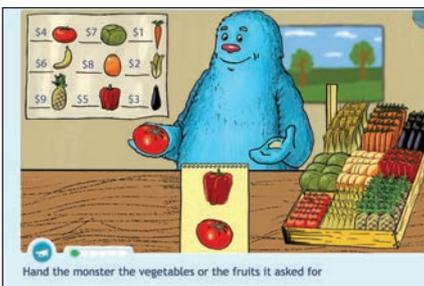
RIX Wikis are available from RIX Research & Media, a not-for-profit organisation. The package includes online and face-to-face training, software provision and technical support. Prices start at £5,500 + VAT per establishment plus an annual fee for account hosting. <http://rixmedia.org>



Kathryn Stowell is head of outreach and alternative augmentative communication at Charlton Park Academy, a secondary special school near London

See also Multimedia advocacy, Special Children 217, about how creating a wiki enables students with communication difficulties to express their views and play a full part in decision-making.

Inclusive maths games – Carol Allen



I first came across Matific at a TeachMeet just over a year ago, and engaged with it immediately. It takes a very hands-on approach to teaching maths to children in key stages 1 and 2 using interactive mini-games, which the publishers call episodes.

As you may know, I have spent my career looking at creative ways to support inclusive learning, particularly in communication and literacy. This program just seems to nail maths. Other software and apps offer a range of excellent maths activities, some of which I use, and pupils do well with them. Yet very few of these programs invite children to apply their learning to real-life situations in the way that this one does.

Matific is available online and as an app on androids and tablets. The games have a nice, clear interface and many of the activities have sound support, which helps to consolidate understanding. One of the many things I like about it is that I can customise the games on offer and thus restrict 'drifting' to other activities.

Intervention groups are often run by TAs, and those with the necessary experience can pick and choose the right learning opportunities for their pupils. For TAs who are new to the role, the website contains comprehensive video tutorials, teaching ideas and detailed lesson plans for each year group that suggest how they might use the activities.

For myself, I mainly use Matific as a bank of resources to customise overlearning material – the publishers have put a lot of work into indexing the activities to make it easy for me to link these to activities in textbooks when required.

I've been using Matific for about a year with a range of users. These include mainstream primary schools, intervention groups and pupils on the autistic spectrum, and reactions are all positive so far. Staff see it as a welcome addition to their maths toolkit, especially in these times of constrained budgets (Matific is free to schools) and all the pupils enjoy the games-based approach to learning.

“ This program just seems to nail maths ”

Every teacher knows that early mathematical skills are acquired best through direct manipulation of familiar objects in familiar settings: counting animals, sorting cookie jars, cutting and pasting geometric figures. The fact that the designers have incorporated such scenarios into their episodes makes the games ideal for promoting independence, particularly in children who may not be able to physically manipulate objects themselves.

Of course, one or two small changes

would make my life easier. Some accessibility issues act as barriers for a few of my pupils. For example, in Flying Flocks, the birds move very quickly and there seems to be no way to slow them down. For children with processing issues, this is a problem.

On a positive note, the company is receptive and keen to receive feedback. In the previous version, episodes had to be played by the whole 'class', which is not ideal when working with an intervention group. This has all changed in the latest incarnation, and I can now allocate individual games to individual pupils easily.

Matific's problem-solving games make overlearning fun and engaging. One pupil's reaction sums up how he and his peers feel about the games: 'Leave me alone. I can do this!'

All Matific educational activities are free for teachers and pupils to use at school. A Matific premium account allows pupils to access the games from home for £6 per pupil per year. www.matific.com



Carol Allen is a SEN and inclusion consultant. @caroljallen

Caught on camera

Chris Pim talks about his experiences of digital storytelling

It's a perennial question: how do you get children more engaged in literacy?

Tapping into children's love of TV dramas and films, teachers at Thomas's Clapham, London, among others, have given pupils the chance to make one of their own.

Pre-production

Children work collaboratively to come up with a plot, using storyboarding techniques to plan the major scenes with a sketch and a bit of text explaining what's going on. They then work together to identify and make props, and compose the script.

I always recommend teachers opt for a narrator rather than have pupils speak their lines. This is because it is so difficult to get a good audio feed, even with professional cameras and a quality microphone – there are echoes, doors slamming, noises in the corridor and children fluffing their lines. Of course, it is possible to cover up flaws with appropriate sound effects, but generally, if the actors must speak, I find it simpler to record them separately afterwards.

The last element of pre-production involves drama when they practise miming how they will portray the characters.

A finished film of between three and five minutes works best. This keeps the project tight enough to maintain pupils' enthusiasm and file sizes small enough to store and edit on a tablet.

Green screening

When the time comes to film, you don't need much technical kit – any digital camera will work. You can even use a mobile phone or an iPad.

However, unless you have a huge collection of ready-made backdrops, one way to bring a film to life is through a technique they use in Hollywood called chroma key or green screening. This allows directors to film in real time against a uniformly coloured background. During the editing process, this is automatically stripped out and replaced with whatever fantastical film or image you choose, whether it's dinosaurs, outer space, the ocean depths or a burning building.

Despite the term 'green screening', any uniform colour will work. I started off using a blue cloth but found a green



By using green-screen technology, teachers at Thomas's Clapham were able to make it look as if the pupils were in Egypt when they made their film

one works slightly better with the editing software. However, a white wall will do, so long as the children's clothing and the props don't contain any white and there are no reflections, otherwise you end up with some very interesting effects! Often, because of the available lighting, there are shadows on the background anyway, so it is never a uniform colour. Most editing suites allow you to make adjustments that will even out these blemishes.

Obviously, teachers need to consider copyright when using downloaded images for backgrounds, but screen captures of, say, a Minecraft game or a photo of something that pupils have painted themselves work just as well.

Editing

When editing your film, the free software on iPads does a reasonable job, although it is not as flexible or versatile as a dedicated editing program. More sophisticated suites let you flip the image, slow it down, speed it up, crop the frame size, reduce or enlarge the scale, and have five or 10 layers of different things going on.

I use Adobe Premiere Pro but the lite version Adobe Premiere Elements is perfectly adequate, allowing you to arrange your footage into order using familiar drag and drop techniques.

Managing the project

Schools either work on a film intensively over two days or spread the process out over several weeks during literacy periods, tying the subject matter in with one of their current topics.

Once the films are complete, follow-up

work might include an extended piece of writing where pupils explain how they made the film and compose invitations to attend the premiere.

I started making films to engage bilingual children – it gave them a chance to shine by doing the narration in their own language, which boosted their self-esteem and confidence and generally brought them out of their shell. Films are also an excellent way for children who feel their written work is not as good as that of their peers to show off their creativity in a different way.

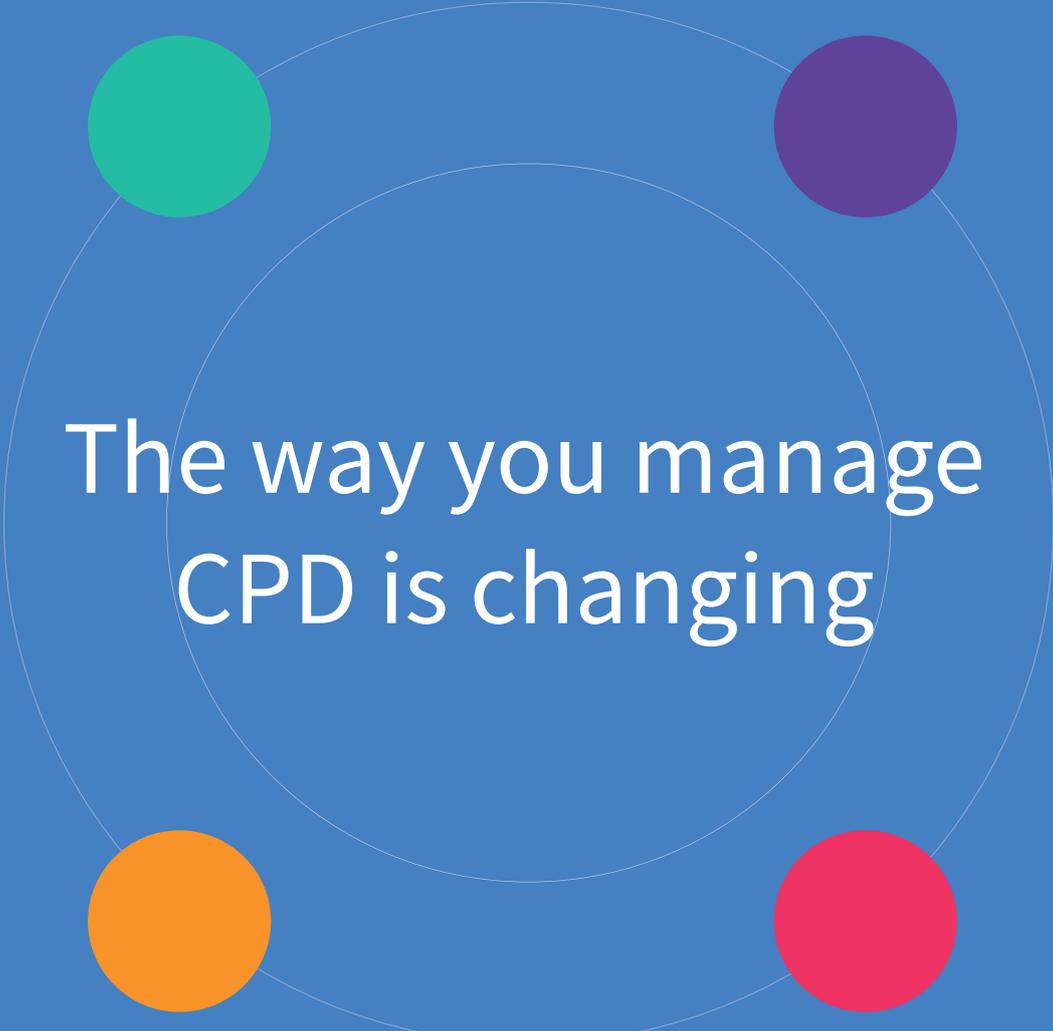
It's easy to get going. All teachers need is a bit of confidence.

Chris Pim is an independent ICT and EAL consultant. chris.pim@btinternet.com

FIND OUT MORE

- Adobe Photoshop Elements for teachers is £86.72 inc VAT. <http://bit.ly/SC229-12>
- I Can Present from Kudlian starts at £49.95 + VAT and allows you to record using chroma key, split screen or picture in picture. Try it for free until 30 April. <http://bit.ly/sc229-13>
- *How to bring the curriculum alive with green screening*: <http://bit.ly/sc229-16>
- *Digital storytelling*: <http://bit.ly/sc229-15>

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