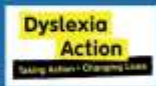


# Teaching for Neurodiversity

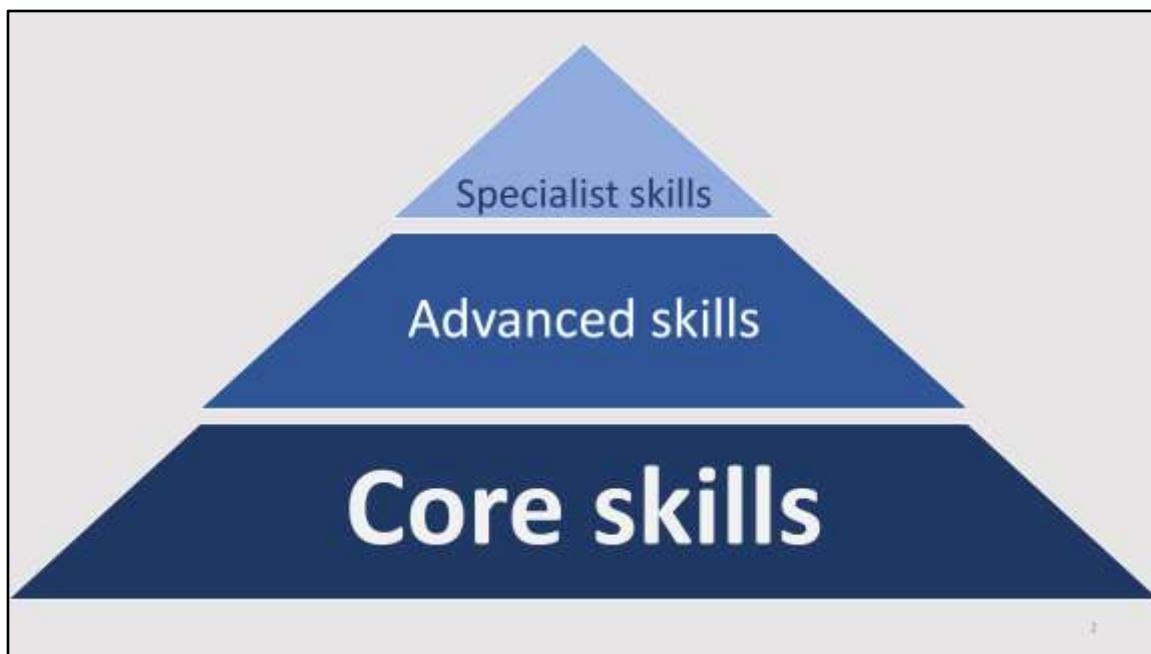
## Engaging learners with SEND

Working together to empower educators to cater for Special Educational Needs



This project is being evaluated by a research team from Manchester Metropolitan University. They will be looking at the impact your cascaded training has had on your school/college. We'd like you to think about this as you deliver the cascaded training.

- When and how will you complete this evaluation?
- How will you ensure your colleagues are thinking about impact in the weeks following the training?



The Rose Review divides training into three levels:

- **Core skill: Awareness** - to give a basic awareness of SEN, appropriate for all staff
- **Advanced Skills: Enhanced** - how to adapt teaching and learning to meet a particular type of SEN, for early years practitioners, class and subject teachers/lecturers and teaching assistants working directly with the child or young person on a regular basis, and
- **Specialist skills** - in-depth training about a particular type of SEN, for staff who will be advising and supporting those with enhanced-level skills and knowledge.

This training is at the level of Core Skills. It is designed to be delivered to ALL staff and to be the starting point for whole school awareness of neurodiversity. The training can contribute to your school SEN Report and be flagged within your Local Offer.

It provides an introduction to and overview of neurodiversity BUT it is intended to be a starting point only.

Colleagues should be encouraged to identify from the training where gaps in their knowledge lie and to use this to inform and guide further training and CPD.

Suggestions for further training courses are provided in the accompanying Guide to SpLD, which you should make available to all staff.

All schools should have a clear approach to **identifying and responding** to SEN. The benefits of **early identification** are widely recognised – identifying need at the earliest point and then making **effective provision** improves long-term outcomes for the child or young person.

SEND Code of Practice 6:14

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An initial thought for the start of the training.

It would be a good idea to read this quotation out to delegates in case anyone has difficulty reading it from the slide.

# Breaking the ice!



## **Tip for cascading**

If they prefer, delegates can, in their own school/college setting, select a different activity that also helps to convey some of the difficulties faced by neurodivergent learners.

This activity is designed to break the ice and encourage delegates to talk to their neighbours, but also to help them to experience some of the problems faced by learners with verbal communication difficulties.

Some of the delegates may well have tried this activity before but it's an activity that's easy to administer, works in a large group, and never gets any easier! The activity should take around 5 minutes.

## **'Missing –e activity'**

Turn to the person next to you.

In a moment, one of you is going to talk for one minute about their summer holiday and the other is just going to listen.

OK – off you go [trainer times 1 minute].

And stop!

How did that feel? Easy? Good!

Now, where are our listeners? Raise your hands!

You are also going to talk about your holiday for one minute. BUT you are not allowed to use any words containing the letter 'e'.

Ready? Off you go! [time 1 minute].

How did that feel? Were you able to speak as fluently as your partner? How did that make you feel? Partners - how did it feel listening as your partner was struggling to put their thoughts into words?

Challenging? Frustrating? Annoying?

Explain how this activity aims to replicate how many learners feel.

During the course of the day, we're going to look at the problems these learners have, how to identify them and how to support them.

# Teaching for Neurodiversity

## Part 1: Seeing the whole picture

Working together to empower educators to cater for Special Educational Needs



### Tips for cascading

To get the most out of each section, try covering Parts 1, 2, and 3 in consecutive staff meetings. Set a task to be completed before the next part of the training and begin each part with an opportunity to discuss the task and review learning.

Part 1 is called 'Seeing the whole picture' because we want to encourage teachers and TAs to look beyond their initial impression of a pupil and to develop a fuller understanding of their needs based on detailed observations.

But first, we'd like to introduce you to someone who might sound familiar [click to next slide].

## Meet Hannah



This is Hannah. She's 14 and in year 10.

Hannah's parents are very worried about her as she is socially isolated and her friendships are not sustained. At home she absorbs herself in an online group dedicated to Lord of the Rings. She has three guinea pigs and is committed to their welfare, spending hours at home looking after them. Her parents are increasingly concerned that she must be unhappy as she has no 'real' friends. However, when asked by her tutor and head of year, Hannah seemed confused and unsure of the concept of 'friends' and 'happiness'. She struggles to complete class work in time and tires quickly. Hannah is often distracted by the environment and off task. A teaching assistant has noticed that she has very flexible finger joints and appears to have difficulty gripping, lifting and manipulating small objects. Hannah says her 'worst' subject is maths and her teacher confirms that she is withdrawn, reluctant to join in, struggles to consistently recall number bonds and multiplication tables. He doesn't know how best to help Hannah.

Does Hannah remind you of anyone?

As we progress through the day, we'll be returning to Hannah to see if we can shine some more light on her behaviour and increase our understanding of her needs.

We'll also be giving you a chance to discuss your own learners and their profiles.



## Seeing the whole picture



You've probably met this idea before, but we think it's worth repeating. The iceberg captures the idea that what we see on the surface is underpinned by a greater hidden depth.

All of our pupils and students are icebergs, of course. The part of their character that we see in the classroom can be masking a whole realm of hidden depths. This is particularly true of pupils with learning differences - including Hannah. Sometimes their challenges can be so overwhelming that they mask their learning strengths.

However, in other cases, learners can conceal their challenges by putting into place a range of compensatory strategies. In this case, the pupil may seem on the surface to be doing well, but, below the surface, they may be struggling to keep up. It's our job, as teachers and TAs, to dig down below the surface and to find out as much about them as we can.

Let's look at some of the most common co-occurring strengths and weaknesses.



NB – Be aware that this is an animated slide so it looks a bit strange. When you play the slideshow, you'll see how it works.

This slide presents some of the most common strengths associated with learning differences.

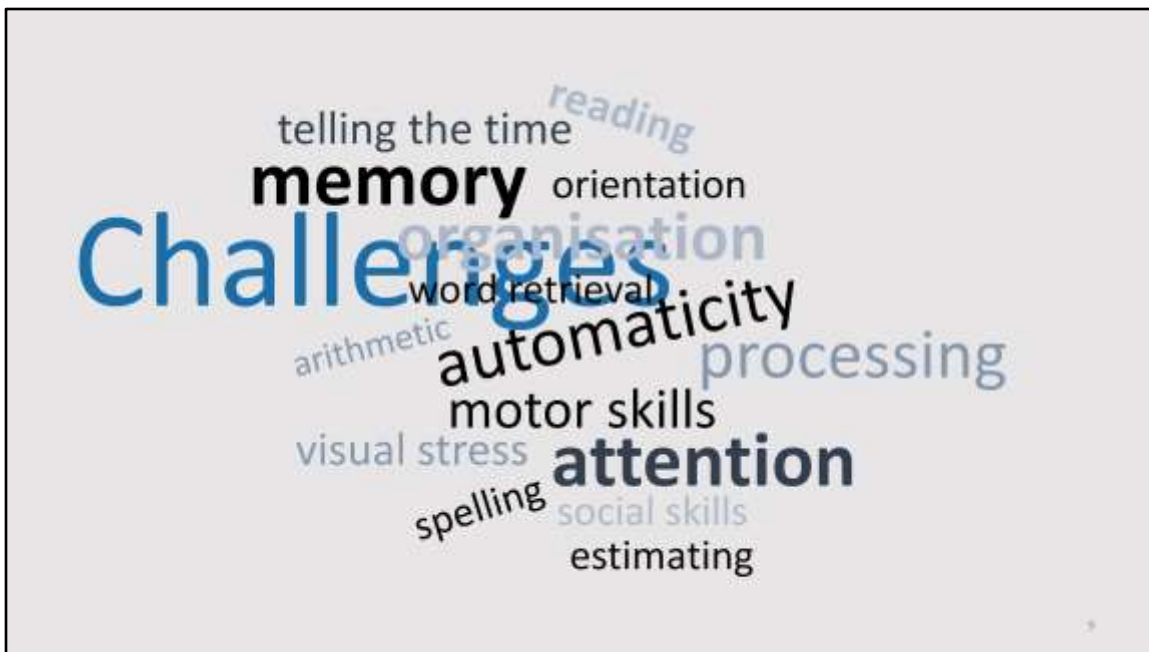
[click once to begin the animation]

Many of these are strengths which don't always shine in the education context. However, they are highly valued in a number of professional contexts; e.g. web & game design, GCHQ, NASA, or architecture (Richard Rogers values the ability of dyslexic employees to visualize in 3D).

Nonetheless, the passage to adulthood can be difficult and pupils may have to be helped to appreciate their own abilities. Learners may not be aware that they have strengths and may not have been in a situation where they are identified or valued. This may be because their strengths are overshadowed by the challenges they face.

Note that this list is far from complete; for more detail, see the Guide to SpLD and Neurodiversity which accompanies the training materials.

You may want to ask delegates if they can suggest additional strengths that they've observed in their SEND learners.



NB – Be aware that this is an animated slide so it looks a bit strange. When you play the slideshow, you'll see how it works.

It would be misleading to focus only on the strengths that pupils with learning differences may have. It is equally important to recognise the challenges they face.

These may include the following [click to begin the animation].

Remember: as with the list of strengths, this list is not exhaustive. In addition, not all neurodiverse learners will face challenges with all of the elements listed. It's also important to note that challenges may result in different behaviours from one pupil to another.

You may want to ask delegates if they can suggest additional challenges that they've observed in their SEND learners.

## What about Hannah?



We've already heard about some of the behaviours observed by Hannah's teachers and family.

Let's look at some of the strengths and/or challenges Hannah faces.



Here's a reminder of some of the key points in Hannah's profile – see if delegates can remember any of these before clicking on:

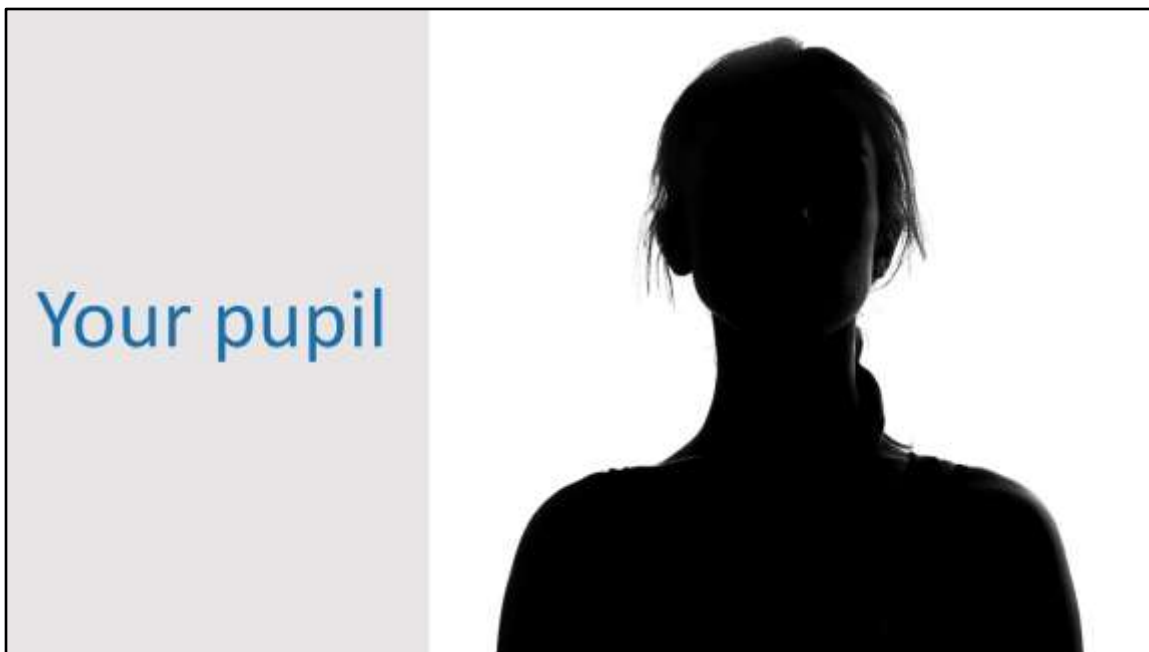
- socially isolated and friendships are not sustained. parents are increasingly concerned that she must be unhappy as she has no 'real' friends
- when asked by her tutor and head of year, Hannah seemed confused and unsure of the concept of 'friends' and 'happiness'.
- struggles to complete class work in time and tires quickly.
- often distracted by the environment and off task
- she has very flexible finger joints and appears to have difficulty gripping, lifting and manipulating small objects.
- Hannah says her 'worst' subject is maths
- In the maths class, she is withdrawn, reluctant to join in, and struggles to consistently recall number bonds and multiplication tables
- Member of an online group dedicated to Lord of the Rings.
- has three guinea pigs and is committed to their welfare, spending hours at home looking after them.

[click once to animate challenges; click again to animate strengths ]

Ask delegates – is there anything missing here? Anything that you would add?

Identifying these strengths and challenges is an important step in building a profile of Hannah.

As we move through the rest of the day, we'll be looking at other information that will help us to add detail to her profile and further our understanding of her needs . We'll also be looking at classroom support strategies that will help us to support Hannah's weaknesses whilst also making the most of her strengths.



Spend around 5 – 10 minutes on the activity, depending on time available.

If you are delivering the training in three separate sessions, you could ask delegates to complete this activity as 'homework' and bring it along for discussion at the next training day.

Ask delegates to think about one of their pupils and the types of behaviours, challenges and strengths that they exhibit.

Ask them to share their thoughts and experience of their pupil with a partner; e.g.

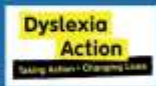
- What behaviours have you observed in the classroom?
- What strengths do they have?
- What does this learner say about themselves?
- What do their parents/carers say?



# Teaching for Neurodiversity

## Part 2: Understanding neurodiversity

Working together to empower educators to cater for Special Educational Needs



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In this part of the training, we're going to discuss what we mean by neurodiversity and how it relates to Specific Learning Difficulties (or Differences?).

We're also going to look at how we can find out more about our pupils' needs by using a Combined SpLD Checklist.

So what is  
neurodiversity?



**Tip for cascading**

Ask staff members to discuss in pairs or small groups what they understand by the term 'neurodiversity' and to feedback their ideas.

The term 'neurodiversity' is relatively new (it first appeared in print in 1998) and is attributed to Judy Singer, an Australian social scientist. It has its roots in the social model of disability, which sees the concept of disability as rooted in society rather than in the individual.

Although the term 'neurodiversity' is questioned by some, it's useful to see it in terms of other labels which have been used in the past (and which are still used in many quarters) to link cognitive function to learning and behaviour. These include: Learning Disabilities, MBD (minimal brain dysfunction) or ABD (atypical brain development) – all of which sound overtly medical and have very negative connotations. Most people will probably agree that the term 'neurodiversity' sounds much more positive!

Neurodiversity is a concept where **neurological differences** are to be **recognized and respected** as any other human variation. These differences can include those labelled with Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, and others.

[neurodiversitysymposium.wordpress.com/what-is-neurodiversity](http://neurodiversitysymposium.wordpress.com/what-is-neurodiversity)

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This slide gives a definition of 'neurodiversity' from the Syracuse University Symposium on Neurodiversity, which we feel is particularly useful and accessible. It shows that, although the Neurodiversity Movement grew out of the Autism Rights Movement, the concept of neurodiversity has now expanded to include all neurominorities, including those with dyscalculia, dyslexia, ADHD, SLI, ASD, DCD, and others.

#### **Further reading**

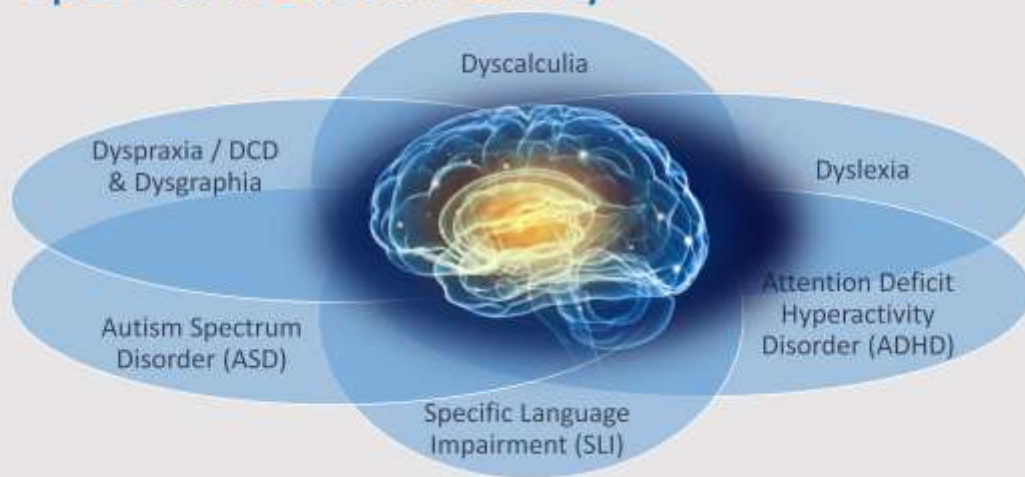
<http://www.autismacceptancemonth.com>

This website states that:

The neurodiversity movement celebrates and embraces all kinds of minds.

The neurodiversity movement recognizes that there is not just one right way to think and perceive the world. The neurodiversity movement works toward a world where people's brain differences (ADHD, autism, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, cognitive disabilities, et cetera) are seen as valuable differences rather than as things to be fixed. Proponents of neurodiversity want to make it easier for people of all neurotypes to contribute to the world as they are, rather than forcing them to attempt to appear or think more typically.

## SpLD & Neurodiversity



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### Tip for cascading

Before going on to deliver the next part of the notes, it may be useful to ask your staff what they understand by the term 'SpLD'. You should expect to receive some of the following responses:

- SpLD are specific learning difficulties as opposed to global learning difficulties, so they affect one or more specific areas of learning rather than all areas.
- SpLD affect the way information is processed and learned
- They can appear across all ranges of ability and with varying severity or significance
- They are lifelong conditions
- They are often hidden, sometimes by compensatory strategies

A useful activity may be a matching exercise which requires your colleagues to match particular behaviours or traits to different SpLD. For ideas of what to include, see the Combined SpLD Checklist and the descriptions given in the Guide to SpLD which is included in your training materials.

As the previous slide showed, the term 'neurodiversity' encompasses all specific learning differences, many of which may co-occur and overlap as this diagram indicates [click on slide for each of the SpLD labels to appear]

It is particularly important to notice that the various SpLD overlap; this is because a student is likely to have one or more co-occurring difficulties.

In 2001, Gilger & Kaplan wrote: 'In developmental disorders co-morbidity is the rule not the exception' (point out that many prefer the term 'co-occurrence' rather than 'co-morbidity').

The implications of this are far reaching. If each student is a mix of different aspects of different SpLD, it means that we can't assume anything – either about their needs and abilities, or about the type of support/intervention that will work for them. It is dangerous to limit our understanding of a student by assuming that their difficulties will all fall into one neat package as defined by a generalized description of one single SpLD. Instead, we have to recognise the complexity of each individual profile and treat each student accordingly

You may want to pose the question: In this case, is it useful to identify SpLD or to label a student as being dyslexic, dyspraxic, etc?

The answer really is that it depends on what use you're going to make of that information. If you're going to use it to increase your understanding of a student's learning needs and to inform the provision that you put in place to support them, then it's useful. If it becomes a barrier to putting support in place, it most definitely isn't!

We believe that by using 'neurodiversity' as an overarching term, we are encouraging you to look at learners in a more holistic way, focusing on what they can do well and what their individual needs are, rather than dwelling on what label you should use to categorise them. Moving from labelling to profiling helps to empower teachers to understand that they can provide support within the classroom, without relying on the services of an 'expert'.

### **Further reading**

Gilger, J.W., & Kaplan, B.J. (2001) Atypical Brain Development: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Learning Disabilities. *Developmental Neuropsychology*, 20:2, 465-481. ([http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15326942DN2002\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15326942DN2002_2)).

Nicolson, R., & Fawcett, A. (2008) *Dyslexia, Learning, and the Brain*. London, MIT Press

# The Combined SpLD Checklist

## Combined SpLD Checklist: Secondary Level (ages 12 - 16)

Name of Pupil:

For each behaviour, select **not at all**, **sometimes**, or **often** from the dropdown list in column C

Behaviour	not at all	sometimes	often
Other family members with similar difficulties			
Problems recalling facts			
Difficulty with recalling/following instructions			
Difficulty remembering sequential information			
Poor concept of time			
Poor organisation skills			
Difficulty with fluent, accurate reading			
Continued difficulty with phonological awareness			
Persistent difficulty with spelling			
Poor structure/organisation of written work			
Difficulty copying from the board			
Has obvious good/bad days			
Low self esteem			
Work avoidance tactics used			
Poor comprehension skills			
Slow speed of writing			
Weak short term and/or working memory			
Slow speed of reading			

NB – It would be useful for trainers to have the computer based version of the checklist loaded onto their laptop or computer so that, at this point of the training they can switch to it and demonstrate how it works.

## What is the Combined SpLD Checklist?

We've developed a checklist which pulls together behaviours and indicators associated with a range of SpLD: Dyslexia, DCD, ADHD, ASD, Dyscalculia and SLI [click to reveal image].

The aim of this is to discourage teachers from seeing pupils in terms of one particular SpLD (i.e. Joanne is dyslexic and so she'll have difficulties with x, y, z).

Instead, we want to encourage teachers to be open minded and to build a unique picture of pupils' needs in which a number of different SpLD may overlap. In other words, we want to see our pupils in terms of neurodiversity.

This has the potential to result in a more tailored approach to meeting pupils' needs.

## When and why should you use a checklist?

If you're concerned that a pupil is not making the expected rate of progress or is having difficulty with aspects of learning, a checklist is a quick, easy to use first step in a graduated response (Assess, Plan, Do, Review). The Checklist can be used by any teacher or TA within the school. It doesn't have to be completed by the SENCo. With older children, it can be useful to involve them in completing the checklist. You may also want to involve the parents/carers, particularly for information about family history.

The benefits of using a checklist are:

- It's quick and easy to use.
- It doesn't require specialist training.
- It provides a framework through which to observe pupil learning behaviours and to help in building your profile of pupil needs.
- It can identify areas in which the pupil requires additional support and these can be matched to support strategies.
- If the checklist indicates a range of difficulties commensurate with one or more particular SpLD, the next step would be to consult the SENCo, who will decide whether it is appropriate to carry out further in-school assessments or to refer on for a full diagnostic assessment.
- Note that the Combined Checklist contains fewer behaviours for each SpLD than would normally appear in a single checklist. On completion, teachers may feel that a useful next step would be to explore one or two SpLDs in more depth.

Dangers of using a checklist:

- A checklist is **not** a diagnostic tool and should **never** be understood in this way.

What about Hannah?	Poor organisation skills	Yes
	Low self esteem	Yes
	Slow speed of writing	Yes
	Difficulties handling tools and equipment	Yes
	Handwriting difficulties (speed and/or presentation)	Yes
	Lack of stamina	Yes
	Struggles with team games	Yes
	Poor time management	Yes
	Difficulty forming relationships	Yes
	Sensory issues (e.g. problems with unexpected noise, certain materials, textures, etc.)	Yes
	Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli	Yes
	Difficulty sustaining attention or completing tasks	Yes
	Difficulty maintaining friendships	Yes
	Is over-sensitive to certain textures or sounds	Yes
	Dislikes/avoids social situations	Yes
	Difficulty recognising the appropriate mathematical strategy	Yes
	Takes a long time to complete mathematical tasks	Yes
	Problems with estimating	Yes
	Problems with the planning of maths activities	Yes
	A poor understanding of place value and its use in calculations	Yes
	High levels of debilitating anxiety related to maths	Yes
	Difficulties recalling basic maths facts/equations/times tables	Yes
	Poor ability to carry out mental maths tasks	Yes

### How do we use the checklist?

Teachers are concerned about Hannah's lack of progress and confidence and so the school SENCo invites Hannah to complete the Combined SpLD Checklist alongside him to see if it can help with understanding more about Hannah's difficulties. He also asks Hannah's teachers to contribute to completing the checklist.

The results reveal a complicated picture of co-occurring difficulties. It is noticeable that most of Hannah's areas of weakness are typical of Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia – two SPLD which frequently co-occur; however, Hannah's difficulties with social situations also hint at an underlying possibility of ASD.

A useful activity at this point would be to ask delegates how they would respond to Hannah's checklist profile. Following their discussion, go through the suggestions below.

### Suggestions for further assessment

- Almost certainly needs input from a psychologist or psychiatrist. All this to be closely coordinated with the school informed and given advice.



- Identify someone with whom she can feel secure to talk through social and emotional issues. This would be one accessible person, with another to oversee and monitor.
- Explore how much constant experiences of failure in maths contribute to low self-esteem and self-concept needs to be explored.
- Explore obsessive traits.
- Referral, via a GP, to an Occupational Therapist and physiotherapist to help with motor skills, exercises to help build stamina and de-sensitization to external factors. Hannah's hypermobility needs to be investigated further to see if it extends to her body joints. We know from research that there is link between generalised hyper-mobility syndrome and dyspraxia/DCD and parents and Hannah may well need some advice and treatment for this (this is usually carried out by a physio since she may well need a generalised muscle strengthening exercise programme) as well as confirmation of a diagnosis and treatment/advice for dyspraxia/DCD (physio and/or OT)
- Dyspraxia combined with dyslexia is not a helpful combination for maths, so Hannah needs to get some experiences of success in maths and to be protected from too much failure. For unrestricted tests giving in depth diagnosis of maths difficulties (and explanations on interpretation) see Steve Chinn 'More Trouble with Maths' 2nd ed. These test involve significant opportunities for discussions with the student, so good 'clinical' skills will expand how much is discovered.
- Work based on Attributional Style could be beneficial for self-concept.

### **Suggestions for immediate action**

#### **Maths**

- Use concrete examples e.g. 9 apples minus 7 apples = 2 apples
- Use actual money to teach concepts of money
- Use sets of objects from the environment to practice addition, subtraction etc (or pictures of guinea pigs!)
- Teach concepts one at a time.
- Try and use real life situations which may make more sense...e.g, a guinea pig needs so and so space..
- Ensure mastery of one concept before introducing another
- Ask parents to use measuring cups etc to make a cake/treat (? For the class).
- Use rulers, measuring cups, calculators
- Introduce computer 'games' e.g. Number shark
- Use apps

#### **Distractibility**

- Have a booth for working
- Seat sensitively (front of class and close to source of information)
- Break tasks down

- Make directions clear and simple
- Present assignments in small amounts
- Follow a less desirable task with a more desirable one
- Ergonomics (fidgeting could be due to proprioception issues)
- Ensure task is at the correct academic level
- Multi-sensory approach
- Highlight important points
- Set appropriate time limits for completion of tasks

#### Hypermobile joints

- Exercise weak joints
- Learn normal extension limits and try not to over extend
- Rest breaks
- Ergonomic help (wrist supports, etc)
- Pencil/pen grips and try different types
- React to pain if suffered

A meeting is set up to discuss these recommendations with Hannah and her parents.

And what  
about your  
pupil?



#### **Tips for cascading**

- using a checklist – require all relevant teaching and support staff in the school to trial using the checklist for at least one pupil; less confident staff members can pair up and work together; build in feedback and discussion groups. Ensure that everyone understands the importance of completing the Recommendations box.
- As at the end of Part 1, this activity could be set as homework to be completed prior to the next training session.
- next steps – it is crucial for the school to have in place a clear policy for a graduated response to identification and intervention/support; this should include details of external agencies who may be consulted, and will be available to all staff as well as parents & pupils.

Using the Combined SpLD Checklist [NB - in the Train the Trainer session, there probably won't be sufficient time for delegates to complete the list. This activity is just an initial taster which they should be encouraged to continue with after the session]. Try to allow 5 – 10 minutes for this activity.

Instruct delegates to open up the checklist on their laptop or tablet or to look at the paper based version.

On the electronic version, the dropdown list in column C allows each behaviour to be graded as not at all, sometimes, or often.

On both the paper based and electronic versions, 'sometimes' is shown as amber, and 'often' as red.

The electronic version has a filter at the top of column C. This allows you to select only the behaviours that you've identified as applying to your pupil [If this can be demonstrated on the screen, that would be useful].

The resulting profile provides a record of the areas in which the pupil has challenges, and shows which SpLD are associated with each of these challenges.

#### Remember

- The checklist is not a diagnostic tool – it cannot be used to assess, diagnose, or label.
- It provides a framework for “informed observation”.
- It captures the results of this observation in one place.
- Normally, completion of the checklist will be the responsibility of the SENCo or equivalent.
- The checklist shouldn't be rushed through. It should be completed carefully and thoughtfully, possibly over several days and, if possible, in collaboration with all teachers involved with the pupil AND with the pupil, themselves.
- Completing the checklist should always result in further actions, the first of which will always be putting in place well founded strategies to support the pupil's needs.
- Concerns and actions should always be discussed with your pupil and their family. The discussion with the pupil (and parent) is a highly skilled task and should be face-to-face. For guidance, refer to the Structured Conversation <http://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/23.3-Structured-Conversation-Handbook.pdf>.
- The use of a checklist should become part of school policy as a first step in identifying and meeting pupils' needs as part of Quality First Teaching.

It is also important to bear in mind the following: [click to next slide]

Slow progress and low attainment **do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN** and should not automatically lead to a pupil being recorded as having SEN.

Equally, **it should not be assumed that attainment in line with chronological age means that there is no learning difficulty or disability.**

SEND Code of Practice (6.23)

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There is a huge range of 'normal' in learner development and we shouldn't be in a hurry to label children or young people.

Not all challenges result from SpLD or neurodiversity. Slow progress may be the result of any number of factors.

What other reasons can you think of for a learner failing to make expected progress?

How would you gather this information?

Allow time for discussion in pairs/groups of 4.

Expect suggestions such as

- Poor attendance
- Lack of opportunity
- Illness
- Effects of medication
- Effects of English as an Additional Language
- Young in year group

Gather info through interviews with parent/carer; pupil records; etc.

Remember – this information will also need to be recorded on a pupil profile / pupil passport.

Note – very sudden changes in behaviour may indicate a medical condition and can be a red flag for referral.

It is also important to point out that we must not jump to conclusions based upon a superficial observation of a pupil's performance - remember the Iceberg! [click to reveal second sentence].

Many learners develop compensatory strategies which can mask their difficulties. A pupil who is performing at average level may be capable of doing much better if given the support they need.

Learning challenges, and their predominant features, may become apparent at different times in an individual's educational career. Remember that learning difficulties occur across the range of cognitive abilities and, left unaddressed, may lead to frustration, which may manifest itself as disaffection, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Teachers need to notice, respond, and adjust to pupils' needs; to recognise their challenges at as early a stage as possible and to put in place provision to support.

# Teaching for Neurodiversity

## Part 3: Classroom support strategies

Working together to empower educators to cater for Special Educational Needs



21

### Tip for cascading

- Ask colleagues to select two or three of the ideas included in this section to trial in their classrooms
- Ask them to monitor their success using an Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle (provide a template to facilitate this)
- Ask yourselves: did this enable learners to do better than they were doing before? Have you noticed that this improved some learner's performance that you hadn't even noticed before, perhaps just underachievers.
- Share ideas in staff meetings and through Learning Walks.

The examples given in this section are really just good practice. What is effective in teaching pupils with SpLD is effective in teaching all pupils.

We know that that many staff will already be implementing many of these techniques. We hope that this section will re-assure them that they're doing the right thing, explain why these methods support SpLD learners and offer some tried and tested techniques which are new to you but which you will be keen to take back to your settings.

We will be stressing in this section that not all methods will work for all individuals or in all situations, it tends to be a process of trial and error to find the right strategy for the right situation.



The purpose of identification is to **work out what action the school needs to take**, not to fit a pupil into a category.....The support provided to an individual should always be **based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs** and seek to address them all using well-evidenced intervention targeted at their areas of difficulty and where necessary specialist equipment or software.

SEND Code of Practice (6.27)

22

Before we go on to look at support strategies, it's worth considering this paragraph from the CoP.

As the code of practice states, the purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil into a category.

In the previous sections, we've been building a picture of our learners and in the last section, we used a checklist to find out more about their needs. It is important to say again that this process doesn't aim to label for the sake of labelling. Rather, it aims to increase our understanding of pupils' strengths and needs so appropriate interventions can be put in place.

We hope that using the checklist will help teachers in the classroom to look at these learners with fresh eyes. Instead of trying to label – look at those areas of difficulty that can overlap.

It is essential to put provision in place as soon as possible whether a pupil is 'labelled' or not. It is ALWAYS critical to put support in place as soon as a need is identified rather than waiting for further assessment.

From a motivational perspective it is important to provide this support so that the

pupil experiences success and improvement asap.

Some interventions may require preparation and coordination (e.g. differentiated worksheets); however, others can be implemented straight away and may even help other pupils in the class.

It is these easy to implement, effective classroom support strategies which are the focus of this section of the training. We are not turning people into specialists but introducing them to the 'IKEA catalogue'.

These strategies are the interim between wondering why learner is not progressing and going to others for more specialist advice.

These are strategies that you will be suggesting to your colleagues to take back to their classrooms to support them in implementing the Code of Practice.

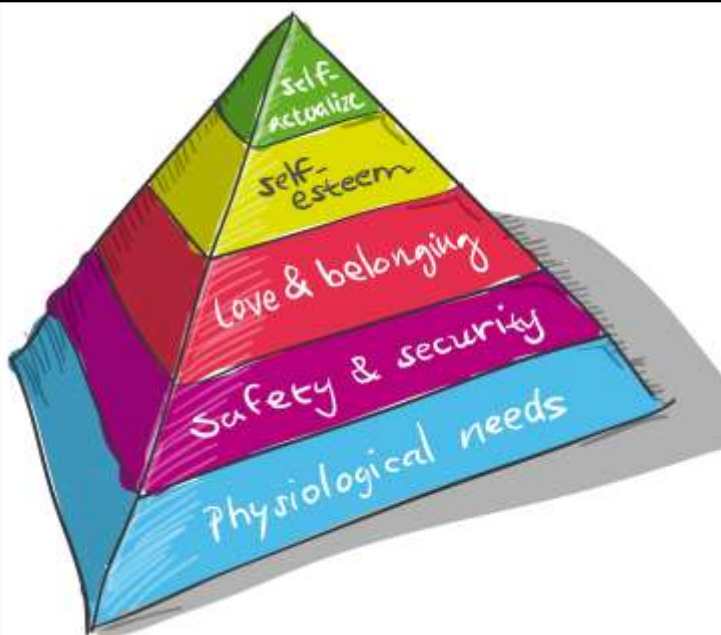
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf) pages 111 - 118,

Final thought: the SEND Code of Practice (2014) makes it clear that settings are expected to identify and support students with SEN at as early a stage as possible. Research shows that intervention at age 4 and 5 is more effective than intervention at 6 and older.

It is vital that settings are seen to be following the SEND COP and other legislation. Putting these practical tools and strategies into place and making them standard practice is a good way forward.

Not only is it a requirement that reasonable adjustments are made, it will be a valuable asset from Ofsted's perspective.

## Boost self-esteem



### Why?

By the time they reach secondary school, many SEND learners may be vulnerable. Self esteem needs to be carefully nurtured and improved.

### How?

- Look for learners' strengths and help them to recognise and value them, too. Group work can be a good way of helping with this. Partner learners with others who have different strengths so that each can bring their own talents to the situation.
- Always emphasise the positive – what the learner can do. Praise for small achievements – make praise specific and descriptive; don't give general platitudes as praise.
- Also, be careful not to praise poor work – children and young people know when they are being patronised!
- Give praise and advice in a one to one, quiet or private situation – many learners do not want to be singled out or to be praised in front of an audience.
- Reflective listening – check learner's input/ideas by asking questions to confirm understanding
- Accumulate positive outcomes which will improve self esteem; e.g. for writing

task, build up to the final piece of work in carefully planned stages:

- teach a planning method e.g. Mind Maps and allow the student to produce just that planning section as a piece of work first;
- develop the work in stages, perhaps beginning with a series of bullet points or an outline sketch in a writing frame which is then expanded into fuller text;
- at each stage - praise!
- Eventually produce the finished product as a piece of 'published' text i.e. printed with some illustrations and ensure it is displayed at school and at home.
- Then positively teach the same method into other areas of the curriculum e.g. history / geography.

## Understand challenging behaviour



### Why?

Frustrated/angry or simply quirky behaviour is a red flag for many SpLDS; for many of these learners the classroom is simply a sensory overload room! Noise is a particular problem for many.

Remember that some behaviours are all about concealing or covering up anxiety. Anxiety and fear can show itself in students as anger/ annoyance.

We need to understand triggers – what is it that will make a learner anxious. This can vary from one learner to another, and the source of anxiety may be something that is very easily remedied; e.g. a pupil worrying about not being able to copy their homework from the board in time.

Remember, too, that anxiety may take different forms. With some it is obvious, resulting in the pupil 'acting out' with poor behaviour. With others it may be hidden - many pupils simply shy away preferring not to be noticed. Both extremes need to be acknowledged.

### How?

- Ensure that the classroom is a positive environment for learning. Reduce extraneous noise, ensure lighting is good, ensure the learner is seated near the

front of the classroom where they can see and hear clearly.

- Create an atmosphere of trust in which learners know they can ask for help when needed - not at the beginning and end of class but with a system that is personal, confidential and effective for both student and teacher. They also need to build up trust in the teacher that their requests for help will not be met with exasperation or impatience.
- Prepare learners for what is likely to be coming up next – with visual reminders/prompts where possible. Even if the exact course of events is unknown (e.g. on a school trip), giving an outline of possible events / what might be coming up might help – e.g. if it's raining then we will ...; if it is dry/not raining then we will ...
- Time out – does the learner need time for the anxiety to lessen?

### **Further reading**

- Mental health and behaviour in schools: Departmental advice for school staff. DfE. 2016 (available online at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508847/Mental\\_Health\\_and\\_Behaviour\\_-\\_advice\\_for\\_Schools\\_160316.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508847/Mental_Health_and_Behaviour_-_advice_for_Schools_160316.pdf))
- For an interesting recent article on one person's experience of anxiety, see [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/i-suffered-from-anxiety-for-years-and-didnt-even-know\\_us\\_57854b78e4b0e7c8734efeeb?platform=hootsuite](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/i-suffered-from-anxiety-for-years-and-didnt-even-know_us_57854b78e4b0e7c8734efeeb?platform=hootsuite)

Motivate



### Why?

Motivation is a vital factor for learning. However, if self-esteem is low, motivation will be affected.

### How?

- Goals need to be simple, straightforward and available to see. Learners need to be reminded of them.
- Goals must be achievable - teacher and learner must believe in this completely. It's no good expecting the learner to achieve more than they are capable of – and they need to know they are capable of it. Differentiation is key.
- It is important to use SMART targets. For example - Spelling lists. If a learner is consistently achieving 3 out of 10, reduce the number of spellings to 3 and achieve 100%. This results in motivation to do the same with 4 words etc. and goals can be extended as confidence grows.
- Teach 'ownership' of learning. Allow the learner to have some input into goal setting, thereby getting them 'on board' and in control of their learning. Let them set targets that are totally achievable. Success will breed success.

## Teach metacognition



### Why?

Metacognition can be defined as ‘knowing about knowing’ or ‘awareness and understanding of one’s own thought processes’. It can be thought of as ‘knowing how I learn’. It is identified by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Teaching & Learning Toolkit as one of the most impactful and cost effective intervention methods. It can encourage active learning and keep learners engaged. Asking pupils how they learn and what works for them can really help to build self-esteem and motivation.

### How?

- Ask your pupil to think of something that they’ve learned successfully – it can be something



factual or a skill – even riding a bike. Ask them how they learned and what worked for them. Can they apply the same learning techniques to other situations? Many pupils will never have experimented with different learning techniques or even thought about how they learn best and how this relates to their own individual strengths and weaknesses. This is where having their own education passports is useful. It's the job of a good teacher to help them to do this. (Multi-sensory teaching is one powerful tool to help with this process – this is discussed later in

this part of the training).

- Try thinking about the task and what makes things difficult for individuals. Model this internal dialogue for those who may not do it unconsciously:
  - What am I doing this for?
  - Have I done anything like this before?
  - What's the best way to learn this?
  - How can I help myself remember this?
  - What techniques/strategies do I know that could help with this task - e.g. would a mindmap be a good tool to use?

- Encourage ‘teaching on’. If they can teach it they are more likely to understand it.
- Peer support / Buddy Up we know that from the age of 8 or 9 years children learn more from their peers than their teachers.

## **Further reading**

‘How People Learn’ (Bransford et al, 2000). Includes 3 key Findings. The third is about the value of metacognition. For a free downloadable pdf see:  
<http://www.nap.edu/download/9853>

Use positive  
language



### **Tip for cascading**

At the start of slide, give an instruction depending on layout of room / environment e.g. “Don’t look out of the window” or “Don’t check the time”. Most people will do exactly what you tell them you don't want them to do! This example can serve to illustrate the point that it is important to concentrate on what is wanted, not on what to avoid.

### **Why?**

Positive language can help build self-esteem.

In addition, using positive language can help you to concentrate on what is wanted, not on what to avoid.

### **How?**

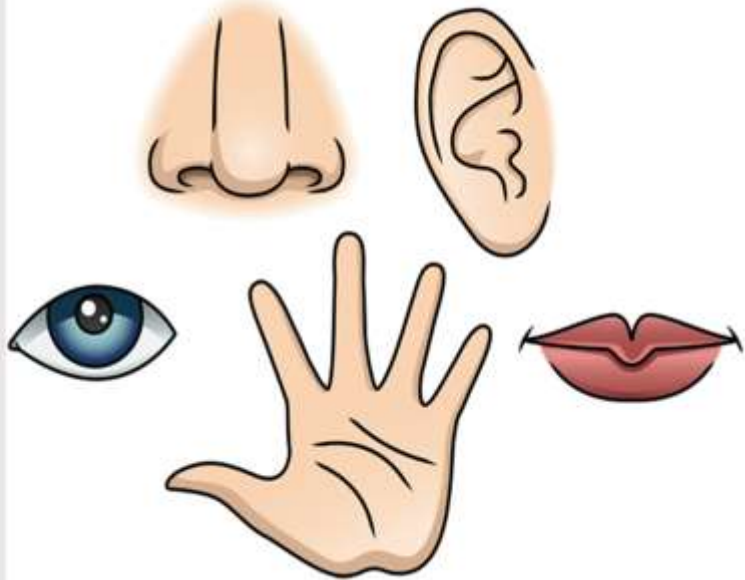
Use expressions such as:

- Would it help if I.....?
- Which bit can I help you with?
- I really like the way you have.....

- That would be even better if.....
- Which bit do you like best?

Try to avoid using the word '...but'! E.g. 'This is a really good piece of work, but.....'

## Use multisensory techniques



### Why?

The benefits of multisensory teaching have been known and recognised for a long time. They are beneficial for all as they play to the learner's strengths.; however, they are particularly appropriate to learners with SpLDs.

Using a range of multi-sensory techniques can provide opportunities for over-learning whilst also encouraging learners to improve their meta-cognition through discussing which techniques work best for them.

### How?

- Ask yourself which channels are being employed in any of the tasks or learning points that you deliver. Try to employ a combination of Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic channels and employ as many of the 5 senses as possible to make the material being learned more memorable. So, rather than simply talking, employ as many visual aids, gestures, memory hooks, activities, etc. as possible. This will help all learners retain what is being delivered to them much better. Usually, the more inventive and wacky the better.
- WAGOLL – never underestimate the power of modelling – many students just cannot 'see' what is being required of them – don't assume they will 'get' this from your words alone. Giving examples and/or showing how to do something is

essential. Use The Great British Bakeoff or Masterchef as an example. Think about how much more difficult is it for the contestants to know how to cook and present something in the technical challenge when they have no knowledge of what the end product should look like.

- Visualisation - can be a very powerful strategy for turning auditory input into a visual memory. (although it should be noted that not all learners can visualise). For those that can, you need to show them how powerful it can be by teaching it as a method. One method is to read a piece of descriptive text (Harry Potter or similar) and ask questions about the detail. Then tell the learners that this time you would like them to listen and to 'make a movie' in their head. Then ask questions again. The detailed info recalled usually amazes the learners and when asked how they did it, they say they could see it. Key is to switch on the play switch ahead of time - this can work well with a list of instructions, sports and also a 'still photo' of apparatus required for an experiment in science. It can also work extremely well for learning spellings.
- Auditory support skills - teach students to note-take effectively by using abbreviations/symbols, mind maps and doodles to assist the memory. Essentially, this is a way of turning auditory input into a visual reminder.
- Encourage learners to use their own voice to support memory (our own individual voice is the most memorable) using strategies such as discussion, teaching on, recording and listening back, or proof reading out loud. A smart phone is a really useful tool for recording information /instructions in the student's own voice. This is a particularly useful method for revision before exams.
- Kinaesthetic support skills – try to include movement whenever you can, this can be a powerful influence on memory, e.g. writing words in sand, walking letter shapes, using fingers for times tables.
- Remember that with all of the above strategies, learners will need explicit instruction and should be shown examples.

### **Further reading**

(<http://www.learning-works.org.uk/arrow-article-pdf>: (Dr Colin Lane) ARROW is a multi-sensory teaching/learning system based upon the use of the student's own recorded voice.

Give one  
instruction  
at a time



### **Why?**

This is beneficial for those with short attention spans but also for those who cannot cope with verbal overload and those who have a limited memory shelf. Saying a little at a time and as little as possible is much more powerful.

### **How?**

- Always try to give very clear, short instructions which require one activity at a time.
- Ask specific questions to ensure instructions have been understood (not just 'Do you understand?')
- Be prepared to repeat yourself – don't just get louder! Cf speaking abroad/to foreign visitors
- Keep instructions in the order of the activity – i.e. Don't say 'go and get your PE kit, but first finish the question you are on and then put your book away'. Instructions delivered out of order are very difficult for students with sequencing issues.





### Why?

Research has shown that 15 – 20% of people suffer visual stress to some extent ([http://www.whh.nhs.uk/\\_store/documents/orthoptics-visualstressandcolouredoverlaysjoinedleaflet.pdf](http://www.whh.nhs.uk/_store/documents/orthoptics-visualstressandcolouredoverlaysjoinedleaflet.pdf))

This is not something that is picked up by a normal optician who checks the health of the eyes but needs a behavioural optometrist who will look at the processing – the eyes working together and aspects of what happens between the sight occurring and the processing in the brain. Sometimes learners report that text moves around, or that the black on white dazzles.

These young people often do not know that it is different for others so it is always worth asking how they see text.

Never underestimate how long it can take some students to process visual material. Errors can be with:

- tracking: skipping lines or re-reading the same lines
- reading small high frequency words – if/is/in
- adding or omitting high frequency words – a, the
- making errors within or at the ends of words, which affects understanding the text being read

- confusing words that look alike – split for spilt, the for there.
- confusing letters – b/d/p/q/g, m/n, m/w.
- confusing numbers – 9/6, 2/5, 91/19

### How?

- The larger a font is, the easier it is to process. This can reduce the likelihood of errors being made when reading. Ideally, font size should be 12 – 14.
- The ability to increase text size electronically is a strong argument for making materials available electronically to pupils with visual processing difficulties.
- There is much controversy about which fonts are best for learners with visual difficulties. Sans serif fonts such as those shown on this slide are generally considered to be more accessible. Again, some trial and error with this is likely to be required. Everyone is different. Another one to try is the 'dyslexia font' – this can easily be found on the Internet – again opinions on it vary.
- AVOID BLOCK CAPITALS, underlining, and italics
- Use bold for emphasis.
- Don't use fully justified (e.g. newspaper column – the space between the letters and words varies in order to keep the right side of the column straight and is tricky to read).
- Left justify passages of text.
- Some learners are really adversely affected by the use of bright white paper. They can find it difficult to manage because of the glare. Using a softer colour can really support their reading. Use cream/pastel paper with blue, grey or 85% black text
- Try different things with different learners – e.g. have a supply of different coloured overlays in every classroom so that everyone can try them out. Encourage pupils to experiment with different colours – empower learners by allowing them to choose what works best for them. Remember, it won't just be the dyslexic pupils who may prefer to work with overlays.
- Line spacing – giving slightly more space between lines makes text easier to process. 1.5 line spacing is best.
- Large blocks of dense print can be intimidating. Try cutting longer texts up into paragraphs or present information using bullet points.
- Apply these standards to your use of the whiteboard and/or computer screens - set a different background colour and check the colour, size and spacing of the font.

### Further reading

- For excellent guidance on dyslexia friendly text and accessible formats see the BDA

Dyslexia Style Guide:

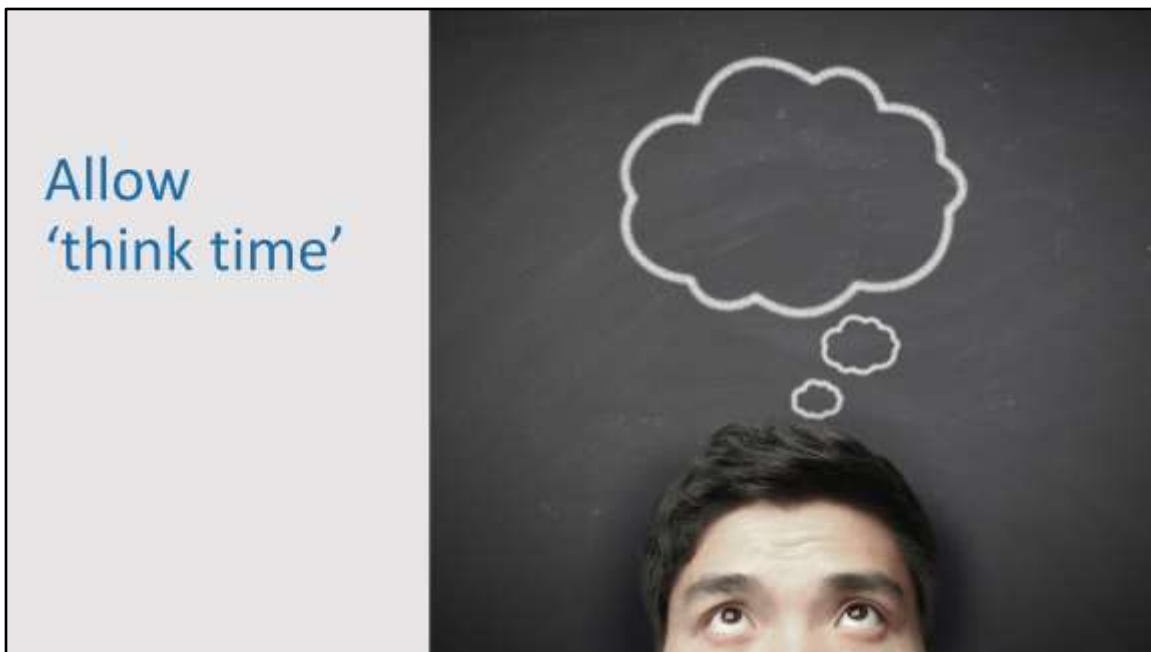
[http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About\\_Us/policies/Dyslexia\\_Style\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/About_Us/policies/Dyslexia_Style_Guide.pdf)

- John Stein's Dyslexia Research Trust (<http://www.dyslexic.org.uk/>)
- BABO – British Association of Behavioural Optometrists (<http://www.babo.co.uk>)
- <http://www.essex.ac.uk/psychology/overlays/faq%20oc6.htm> : 'In several studies, children in county primary schools were individually shown a passage of text covered in turn by a variety of coloured overlays, including grey or clear overlays for comparison. About 20% of the children found one or other of the colours improved the clarity of the text.'

### **Reader friendly books**

Barrington Stoke publish on cream paper. Go to [www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/tints](http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/tints) for an e reading app with tinted backgrounds and a reading ruler.

Pearson's 'Rapid Reading' series are also published using coloured backgrounds, lots of visuals, and a dyslexia friendly font. See [www.pearson.co.uk](http://www.pearson.co.uk).



### **Why?**

Slow processing speeds are a common feature of many SpLD.

Never underestimate how long it can take some students to process verbal material – written or spoken.

Following previous training projects, we had lots of positive feedback from teachers who put these strategies into practice. Many were astonished at how effective such comparatively simple adaptations can be.

Consider this feedback from last year's project – 'When the teacher gives me time to think, I have more time to know the answer'.

We are aware that teacher training is delivering the message 'be snappy, snappy, snappy' but this doesn't work for all.

### **How?**

- Never put a pupil on the spot in front of the rest of the class - this is a sure fire way to demolish their self-esteem!
- Slow down your rate of speaking – you may need to practise perfecting this skill! - students will give longer responses and say more.
- Allow students time to process what you say – that is, allow 'think time' – again, you will get better responses. There has been much research into this and at least

3 seconds seems to be the magic number. We have seen so many instances of the positive impact of 'think time' in feedback from really quite young students; they really appreciate a few extra seconds to process a question and have a go at responding.

- Allow appropriate response time so learners can formulate their answer; e.g. at the beginning of a learning point let pupils know what questions you want them to answer at the end. Some learners need a long time to formulate spoken answers. A useful strategy is allowing 'rehearsal' time. Encourage learners to discuss and practise their response with a partner or in a small group before they deliver in front of the whole class.
- Don't talk when students are writing – this will distract them and they will lose their train of thought and have to begin again. Any learner with a weak working memory needs to have as much free 'headspace' as possible to perform.

### **Further reading**

See research paper by Mary Budd Rowe

[http://www.scoe.org/blog\\_files/Budd%20Rowe.pdf](http://www.scoe.org/blog_files/Budd%20Rowe.pdf)

Reduce  
memory load



### Tip for cascading

You may need to explain what is meant by different types of memory.

- Short Term Memory (STM) – a limited amount of information that can only be remembered for a few seconds if no further rehearsal/strategies are employed (use the shelf storage analogy – someone with average STM may be able to put 7 or 8 items on their memory ‘shelf’; someone with limited STM will only have space for 3 or 4 items; as soon as they exceed that number, the shelf collapses and everything is lost!)
- Long Term Memory (LTM) – the storage of any information that can be drawn upon easily, quickly, and efficiently; i.e. is very well known to the individual
- Working Memory (WM) – a person’s capacity to hold information in mind and do something with it. Weak working memory will impact on mental arithmetic and general problem solving. Effective use of WM allows information to be filed efficiently in LTM if rehearsal is involved, in turn allowing for successful retrieval as and when required.

An effective way to demonstrate STM and WM is by using a digits forwards and reversed activity. See <http://www.dyslexia-international.org/content/Informal%20tests/Digitspan.pdf> for an example of this test. If you want to put more pressure on your colleagues, try delivering the digits in

another language, e.g. French, German, or Spanish, depending on which is most familiar to the group.

### **Why?**

Weak short term and working memory skills are common to many SpLD. This can have a severe effect on pupils' learning abilities.

### **How?**

- Reduce memory load to make tasks more manageable
- Break any task down into manageable sizes – bite size.
- Signal words can be very effective at alerting learners to what is required of them, e.g. there are **three** things you need to remember. Count them off on your fingers and encourage your learners to do the same.
- Check understanding – if a learner has not 'got' what is required of them in class, they will not be able to get on with their work. Many may be too shy or ashamed to admit this/ask for help.
- Consider using 'study buddies'.
- Provide written instructions using numbered bullet points
- Always ensure that homework requirements are written down and/or available on the school website.

Again, these small changes can be extremely effective.

Keep your  
language  
simple



### Why?

Note the distinction between speech and language. Often, it is thought that if a person speaks well, they must be able to understand too. However, a student with excellent speaking skills may have poor receptive language which they become very good at disguising. This is an area which is often underestimated. Language difficulties are often not obvious and therefore are overlooked as the source of a learner's problems. This can be particularly true of learners who speak English as an additional language. These students may have developed strong communication language (BIC – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) but have weak academic language (CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) (see the work of Jim Cummins).

### How?

- Use simple sentences, e.g. instead of "Before you do x, do y" say "Do x, then do y"
- Allow 'think time' so that pupils can process information, instructions and/or questions.
- Avoid (or explain) idioms/double meanings – 'pull your socks up' etc.



- Avoid sarcasm
- Always think about how what you are saying might be construed by students.

## Encourage alternatives to handwriting



### **Why?**

Handwriting requires fine motor skills, i.e. smaller movements using the small muscles of the fingers, hand and wrist. Difficulties with motor skills are common to many SpLD.

NB - Poor handwriting is a red flag for Dyspraxia/DCD & should warrant further investigation.

### **How?**

- Encourage the use of laptops and tablets and teach touch typing.
- Consider the use of speech-to-text software e.g. Dragon
- If Assistive Technologies are unavailable, consider the use of a scribe.
- Avoid the need for copious copying from the board
- Encourage the learner to do exercises (e.g. squeezing a soft ball) to strengthen the small muscles in their hands and fingers

If handwriting is absolutely necessary:

- Avoid the need to copy from the board by provide printed or online home work instructions or by allowing pupils to use their smart phone to take photos of the board

- Ensure that pupils sit facing the board so that, if they do have to copy any information, they don't have to keep turning round
- Make sure the learner can sit with their bottom at the back of their chair and their feet on the floor.
- The table should be at an appropriate height - the learner should be able to rest their forearms comfortably with shoulders relaxed.
- Writing tools should be the correct weight for the learner's hand. He/she should be able to grip/hold the pen or pencil.

## Support gross motor skills



### **Why?**

Difficulties with gross motor skills are also common to many SpLD. Be aware that games and physical activities require gross motor skills – bigger movements using large muscles, e.g. for running, jumping, catching, rolling.

### **How?**

Allow extra time for changing into PE kit.

Ensure all staff are aware and supportive of any learner who has difficulties with gross motor skills.

### **Further reading**

P.E. Activities for Junior and Senior School Children who have Dyspraxia by Michele Lee

Available from <http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>

## Support academic language development



### **Why?**

From the teenage years, new vocabulary tends to come from reading rather than listening. As many learners with SpLD are reluctant readers, this can put them at a disadvantage.

Longer, more complex words can also be intimidating for learners with reading difficulties.

### **How?**

- Demystify academic vocabulary – show how words are built up by teaching about word-building (morphemes and affixation) and/or derivation.
- Use word-building knowledge to break down words into manageable chunks (e.g. anti-dis-establish-ment-arian-ism!); this will also help with spelling.
- Display key academic vocabulary on the classroom wall, on mouse mats, on screensavers, or as personalized desktop lists.
- Give students one or two new words which they have to use in a lesson – either in written work or in a discussion.
- Encourage scanning tasks where the learner scans the text to find target words and then reads the sentence to see how they are used.

## Teach organisational skills



### Why?

Organisation is an area of difficulty which occurs across all SpLD.

It is often assumed or expected that learners of different ages will have miraculously developed good organisational skills to support them in school, with homework, revision etc. However, this may not be the case for pupils with SpLD. Once learners reach secondary level, the need for good organisational skills becomes increasingly important. Remember that parents may equally have organisational problems so it can't be assumed that there will be support for this area at home.

### How?

- Visual timetables should be standard. These can take the form of small, individual timetables that the learner carries around with them; table-top or credit card sized.
- Use pictures, diagrams and/or photos to help with organisers; encourage learners to choose their own pictures.
- Don't assume that using organisational aids is understood or the importance recognised. Many learners need to be taken through the purpose and benefits of such aids. Teach how to use planners and filing systems (paper and electronic) e.g. planners, filing etc. Pupils may need to be told specifically – and reminded

regularly - what stationery, files, dividers, they need, and how to use them.

- Use colour coding for different subjects (this can even be extended to the walls & doors of each department or their pages on the school website).
- Link time, activities and equipment - otherwise pupils may carry everything around with them in their bags just in case!
- Many apparent organisational problems may stem simply from the fact that the learner just did not get information down – especially if it required copying from the board. Here technology is invaluable. Taking photos is becoming the norm – invaluable for our SEND learners.
- Homework, especially, can cause difficulty as pupils may go home without the instructions or materials. Avoid requiring learners to copy homework instructions and ensure they have the materials they need to take home.
- Employ any other IT short cuts to support organisation – recording devices, apps, etc. – there is so much out there now to support organisation.
- Provide examples (WAGOLL) - your learner may not be able to devise organisational systems without this help.

## Use assistive technology



### Why?

There is a wealth of assistive technology available, much of which has been developed by designers who, themselves, have an SpLD. The range of available tools and programmes is constantly expanding and developing. Assistive technology also involves using everyday devices in an innovative way to support learners for example a simple smart phone has many features which can be used to support SpLD learners e.g. alarms, diary apps, the ability to increase and decrease the size of font and speech to text technology.

### How?

- Familiarise yourself with what's out there: attend the BETT exhibition or see <https://bdatech.org>.
- Check out Tech Thursday from Dyslexia Action, new technology is introduced and technologies such as e-readers are compared.
- Consider how the technology that is already available to the students can be used to support their learning.
- Encourage the use of laptops and tablets and teach touch typing.
- Consider the use of speech-to-text software e.g. Dragon or ReadWrite TextHelp
- Load2Learn has a huge range of educational textbooks available for free in digital



format. See <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/page/load2learn>

Remember that, as with all methods, what works for one learner may not work for another. Encourage students to be creative and to work in a way which is in line with their strengths.

## Teach reading and proof reading techniques



### Why?

Learners with SpLD are likely to find reading text challenging. Any assignment will involve a student reading and creating written work. In order for SpLD learners to be successful in secondary school they will need to read and comprehend information and create written work which meets criteria. They need to have strategies which they can use independently and which they understand how to apply in a range of situations

### How?

- Encourage learners to take time to read
- Encourage learners to read small chunks at a time
- Provide digital copies or photocopies which offer the opportunity for important points to be highlighted and for learners to add notes in their own style
- Demonstrate to learners how to make separate notes when reading
- Provide relevant word lists and demonstrate the use of these
- Teach proof reading techniques – read in reverse to check spellings, read out loud to check meaning, wherever possible ask someone else to check your work
- Assistive technology such as speech to text and text to speech can be extremely useful. Learners will need to be taught how to use this technology for it be fully

and successfully utilised.

As with other suggestions not all strategies will work for all but many of these strategies will be useful for both those with SpLD and those without

## Teach study skills and exam techniques



### Why?

Learners with SpLD will benefit from being taught specific study skills as this increases their confidence and provides clear strategies for engaging with written work and examinations.

### How

- Use rhyming phrases to aid memory – e.g. Commas – if in doubt leave it out. Encourage learners to make their own rhymes and acronyms.
- Provide templates for essay writing. Tips and suggestions can be added to templates e.g. write the title and keep it in front of you, this is what the essay will be focussed on.
- Introduce the use of colour coding when organising notes for essays.
- Teach the use of both digital and non-digital mind mapping.
- Support learners with revision techniques and the opportunity to practise exam papers in advance. Learners with issues with working memory may require repetition of exam papers for some subjects e.g. maths with learners going back and checking their own answers, encouraging them to be active learners. In subjects such as English or Science, using games such as pelmanism can be useful for learning technical terms.

- Grouping activities where information can be physically moved around, e.g. on post its, help learners to sort ideas into sections or identify information which will not be included.
- When examinations involve questions which are complex and are in several parts ensure learners are aware of this. Demonstrate how to break a question down into its parts by adding numbers to the different parts of the question. This helps learners to ensure that they respond to all of the parts of the question.

Many of these are useful techniques for learner both with and without SpLD.

## Exam Access Arrangements



### **Why**

Learners with SpLD are often eligible for reasonable adjustments made to the exam in line with their learning difference. This could take the form, for example, of extra time in the exam; the use of assistive technology which enables a learner to have the exam read to them and/or to take their spoken words and put them into writing; or permitting a learner to take the exam over a longer period and to take breaks during this period.

### **How**

The Joint Council for Qualifications [JCQ] are the body who are responsible for Exam Access Arrangements regulations. Rules surrounding Exam Access Arrangements (EAAs) are revised on a yearly basis and settings need to ensure they are complying with up to date regulations. Teaching staff and support staff play a vital role in ensuring the right kind of support is identified and the learner has experience using these arrangements.

For learners to be eligible for EAAs the educational setting needs to provide evidence of the learner's normal way of working and must reflect the support given to them in their setting, so early identification of those individuals who may be eligible

is essential. And learners must have appropriate opportunities using the access arrangements before their exams, for example:

- in the classroom;
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- literacy support lessons;
- literacy intervention strategies;
- in internal school tests/examinations;
- mock examinations.

We know that not all educational settings apply for Exam Access Arrangements for their learners. We feel we should also highlight at this point that EAAs are for learners of all abilities, in some cases it will mean the difference for a learner between A and A\*, and in other cases it may mean the difference between U and E.

Testing for EAAs needs to involve a practitioner with a minimum of a Level 7 qualification, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, and/or a qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council [HCPC] and/or a specialist assessor with an Assessing Practising Certificate (APC).

Professional associations and support centres can be sources of specialist assessors and provide training for access arrangements assessors.

If you need help or advice about identifying which learners may be eligible for EAAs or you would like a qualified practitioner to visit your setting and carry out the assessing for your school or college, you can find information and support at any of the following websites:

- [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/assessments)
- [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/)
- [www.helenarkell.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/assessments.php](http://www.helenarkell.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/assessments.php)
- [www.patoss-dyslexia.org/SupportAdvice/TutorAssessorIndex/](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/SupportAdvice/TutorAssessorIndex/)
- [www.bps.org.uk/bpslegacy/dcp](http://www.bps.org.uk/bpslegacy/dcp)

### **References:**

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2016-2017:  
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office>

Have high expectations



### **Tip for cascading**

It may be worth referring to the SEND Code of Practice 6:12: 'The National Curriculum Inclusion Statement states that teachers should set high expectations for every pupil, whatever their prior attainment.'

### **Why?**

Teachers have been known to lower their expectations for pupils' identified with SpLD.

Also, in the case of higher achieving learners with SpLD, teachers may assume that they are achieving well and do not require additional support. However, it may be the case that provision of well-targeted support could move these pupils from above average to well above average.

Identifying an SpLD should never cause us to lower our ambitions for that pupil. It is essential that teachers have high expectations for all, that learners' strengths are identified and taken into account as much as their weaknesses, and that support is put in place to ensure that every pupil achieves to their full potential.

### **How?**



- Use observation, interviews with the pupil and their family, checklists, and assessments, to build as complete and accurate a profile as possible. Use this to set appropriate targets which make the most of a learner's strengths and provide support for their weaknesses.
- We are often asked about whether a learner with SpLD should take a modern foreign language or study a subject such as history, which is very language heavy. The answer is Never say never! All learners are individuals and it is impossible to predict which subjects or skills they will do well in. With the right support and encouragement a pupil may go on to excel in a subject that we would never have predicted.

## How would we support Hannah?



### **Tip for cascading**

Before giving delegates the list of suggestions below, you could ask them which of the preceding ideas they think would be useful for supporting Hannah.

We've already see some suggestions for supporting Hannah – here are some more general classroom techniques that may help her:

- Teach planning/organization skills to help Hannah break down tasks into smaller steps and adopt a systematic approach. This could include using simple checklists or a flow chart to identify steps.
- Encourage Hannah to 'say it back' to ensure that she has taken in instructions or the steps involved in an activity. This will help her to recall and strengthen her grasp of a task.
- Encourage Hannah to use a visual timetable.
- Encourage use of IT to help with writing tasks. Provide instruction in touch-typing, if required.
- Use multi-sensory, 'concrete' and experiential methods to reinforce maths learning.
- Provide memory aids for Hannah to use in the maths class (e.g. wall charts,

posters, or desktop reminders).

- Introduce 'Circle of Friends' as an effective intervention to build relationships; offer a 'buddy' trained through the Circle of Friends.
- Build self-esteem by focusing on Hannah's strengths and interests – e.g. tap into her interest in Lord of The Rings or her pets; encourage her to write/talk about and share these interests.

And how  
will you  
support  
your pupil?



Which of the strategies discussed in this part of the training would be most appropriate to support your learner in the classroom?  
How would you implement them?

Try to allow 5 – 10 minutes for this activity.

Again this could be set as an activity to be completed as homework.

# What have we covered?

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The Teaching for Neurodiversity training has covered:

- Part 1 – Seeing the whole picture – recognizing strengths as well as challenges;
- Part 2 – Using a Combined SpLD Checklist to inform our observations of pupils' needs;
- Part 3 – Classroom support strategies to meet the needs of ALL our pupils

During the course of these different sections, we've been adding an increasing amount of information to our pupil profile. We now have

- initial observations, including strengths and weaknesses;
- more detailed observations from using a checklist;
- a list of appropriate strategies to trial in the classroom.

In the training materials, you'll find an example of a completed pupil profile (WAGOLL). If you don't already have a pupil profiling template in your school, you can use this as a starting point.



### **Tip for cascading**

Delegates should develop their own ideas for next steps within their school.

It is important to reiterate that this training should be regarded as a first step towards cultural change within the school. However, it will only have an impact if it's followed up in a strategic way.

The school SMT team will need to reflect on current policy and practice and put in place a plan for change which operates across the whole school.

Here are a few suggestions. Further ideas for CPD and school award schemes are given in the Guide to SpLD which accompanies the training materials.

- Adopt a whole school approach to neurodiversity and make this part of school policy
- Recognise & celebrate diversity throughout the school: staff as well as pupils!
- Raise pupils' awareness of learning differences & strengths
- Include the voices of pupils and parents wherever possible
- Ensure that **everyone** has access to training and /or information

### **Key 'take home' message**

One of the main issues that can undermine teachers' confidence in developing their inclusive practice in the classroom is the feeling that they are 'just' mainstream practitioners who do not have the 'expertise' needed to work with the 'kids with SEN'....

This training aims to challenge the notion of SENs as mysteriously 'other' and to build an understanding of learner diversity, where 'categories' and labels', whilst sometimes administratively convenient, can often get in the way of seeing each child an individual with diverse personal strengths and needs; as a learner and as a person.

Ann Lewis and Brahm Norwich's work (2001; 2004) suggests that there is as much variation between individuals within so-called 'SEN categories' as there is between individuals across these so-called categories. Furthermore, their work suggests that the notion of 'special teaching for special children' does not stand up to close scrutiny. For example.. to develop the literacy skills of learners with dyslexia, the methodology for teaching phonics emphasises a multisensory approach, and a structured, cumulative building of phonic knowledge with plenty of opportunities for over-learning (Kelly and Phillips, 2016); but it is still, at heart, phonics teaching; something that all mainstream primary practitioners are engaged with.

Our mainstream colleagues are the key players in developing inclusive practice... they need to be made to feel empowered and to understand that a lot of their day to day classroom practice may already be neurodiversity-friendly.... Even if they did not realise this !!!

### **Further reading**

Lewis, A., and Norwich, B., eds. (2004) *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for Inclusion*. Inclusive Education. Open University Press