

# Camtree Digital Library



## PD Professional group - developing a specialist curriculum pathway

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## What is the impact of embedding adaptive teaching strategies across the whole school on the progress of learners with SEND?

Professional Development Group

### School: Primary

### School/Background Context

The junior school is three-form entry, with a total enrolment of 349 pupils. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is 18.62%, aligning with national statistics. However, the percentage of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is lower than the national average at 2%, as is the proportion of disadvantaged pupils (17.48%). This may be attributed to the school's robust SEND provision, which enables a high level of in-school support without requiring an EHCP. The school collaborates closely with the Inclusion Service and was among the first to pilot the a local Pathfinder project, a collaborative initiative aimed at maximising available resources and expertise to support SEND pupils. In certain cases, the school has successfully secured exceptionality funding for high-needs pupils.

SEND challenges vary across year groups. Some cohorts have a higher proportion of pupils with EHCPs, necessitating additional support, while others have a greater percentage of SEND learners overall. For instance, Year Five comprises only 15.38% of the school's SEND pupils, yet 28.57% of those with EHCPs are within this cohort. Conversely, Year Three accounts for 26.15% of the SEND population but has no pupils with an EHCP. Staff initially expressed concerns about the need for additional support personnel to meet these diverse needs.

Budgetary constraints rendered an increase in support staff unfeasible. Additionally, research indicates that an over-reliance on support staff can foster learned helplessness and the "Velcro effect." Consequently, the school sought to explore how adaptive teaching strategies could be implemented to enhance the progress of SEND learners without increasing reliance on additional staff.

### The Challenge

The central research question was: What is the impact of embedding adaptive teaching strategies across the school on the progress of learners with SEND?

Following discussions with teaching and support staff, several key issues emerged:

- Are teachers effectively considering individual pupil needs in lesson planning?
- Is the level of challenge appropriate for all learners?
- What techniques are used to set tasks?

## The Challenge (continued)

- Are available resources being utilised effectively?
- Do all staff possess a comprehensive understanding of their pupils' specific SEND?
- Do staff require additional training regarding SEND categories and strategies?

To gain deeper insight, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) conducted lesson observations and learning walks, including a review by the SEND governor. Findings indicated that inclusion is a priority, all SEND pupils being taught alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. However, the observations suggested inconsistencies in the use of adaptive teaching strategies. Some pupils were disengaged, technological resources were underutilised, and scaffolding approaches varied significantly.

Drawing on research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the SLT determined that systematic implementation of adaptive teaching strategies could improve access to learning, reduce dependency on individual support, and enable a more strategic deployment of existing support staff. This led to the introduction of a structured '5-a-day Adaptive Teaching Strategies' framework.

## What They Did

A staff meeting was conducted to introduce the concept of adaptive teaching, supported by video resources from the Inclusion Service. Staff were encouraged to share existing practices and identify perceived barriers to implementation. The following five adaptive teaching strategies were identified:

1. Classroom Environment
2. Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies
3. Explicit Instruction
4. Scaffolding
5. Use of Technology

A phased approach was adopted, focusing on one strategy at a time to ensure thorough integration. Each phase followed a structured process:

- **Introduction:** Staff meetings provided background research and guidance on best practices.
- **Observation:** Learning walks, lesson observations, and staff/pupil feedback identified current practices and areas for improvement.
- **Collation:** SLT analysed findings to establish key themes.
- **Expectation Setting:** Clear guidelines and timelines were communicated to staff.
- **Monitoring:** Follow-up observations and feedback ensured strategies were embedded effectively.
- **Adjustments:** Further support was provided where necessary.

For instance, in implementing the 'Classroom Environment' strategy, teachers conducted peer reviews using an evaluation checklist developed with the LA Inclusion Service. This activity prompted staff to critically assess classroom design elements such as accessibility, font size on displays, resource availability, and clutter reduction. Subsequent pupil voice activities gathered feedback on how the classroom environment supported or hindered their learning. Based on these insights, SLT established standardised guidelines, with staff given a designated timeframe to implement changes.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Increased engagement of learners with SEND

## What They Did (continued)

Similar methodologies were applied to subsequent strategies, ensuring consistency and staff engagement. The initiative was embedded into the school's development plan for 2024–25, allowing dedicated time for training and implementation. Expertise within the school was leveraged, including collaboration with a teacher involved in an 'adaptive technology' project and input from a specialist teacher allocated by the Stockport Inclusion Service.

## Next Steps

Although the project remains in its early stages, with two strategies fully implemented and the third in progress, significant improvements are already evident:

- **Increased Staff Confidence:** Teachers and support staff demonstrate a clear understanding of adaptive teaching principles and their role in promoting inclusion.
- **Enhanced Classroom Environments:** Observations indicate calmer, more structured learning spaces with a reduction in redundant display items.
- **Greater Use of Technology:** Despite not yet formally introducing the 'Technology' strand, staff have proactively integrated visualisers, Chromebooks, and iPads into lessons.
- **Improved Pupil Engagement:** Incidents of dysregulation have decreased, with SEND pupils demonstrating greater independence and focus.
- **Optimised Support Staff Deployment:** Freed from exclusive reliance on high-needs pupils, support staff now provide broader assistance, including leading targeted interventions such as Speech and Language and Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA) sessions.

Moving forward, the project will continue to be refined based on ongoing monitoring and staff feedback. Challenges remain, particularly in ensuring the effective use of technology, which has been scheduled as the final strand to allow for resource planning and staff training. Adaptive teaching will remain a core focus in the 2025–26 school development plan, ensuring its continued integration into lesson observations and learning walks.

By embedding adaptive teaching strategies, the school aims to create a sustainable, inclusive learning environment where all pupils, particularly those with SEND, can thrive.



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