

Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Carefully consider the pace of the lesson. A fast-paced lesson will keep learners alert and active – but ensure they have the time and support needed to be accurate with enunciation or skills application.
- Interactive lessons provide opportunities for learners to engage in different ways. In phonics, learners will be vocal when practising saying sounds, decoding and reading. There will also be opportunities for letter formation and writing.
- Use specific, targeted questioning to challenge and support learners.

How can I support learners who are resistant to mark-making or who have poor fine motor skills?

Phonics is a tool for learning to read and spell. A reluctance to mark-make or form letters may not be indicative of difficulty with GPCs. Learners will be introduced to letters and mark-making opportunities. Opportunities to develop fine motor skills can be encouraged through play and targeted support:

- Include a finger gym or fine motor skills station in your classroom with activities such as pegging, threading, using tweezers to complete intricate objectives.
- Provide opportunities for mark-making on different scales and with different media.
- If a learner is reluctant to write, reduce the reliance on whiteboards and pens in phonics lessons and consider using magnetic letters or phoneme cubes to build words. However, learners will need to be taught how to form letters and use phonics for spelling.
- Provide specific targeted support with handwriting.
- Praise all attempts at mark-making and point out specific successes and next steps.



Case Study

A child in reception with ASD and vision impairment, who is largely non-verbal.

She worked with 1:2 support and benefitted from visuals, consistent routines, and repetition. To support phonics learning, the teacher developed provision that included:

- Joining in with revision and teaching sections of lessons on the carpet with support, as she enjoyed listening to the sounds with peers.
- Having access to a quiet, distraction-free space - this enabled her to accurately recall grapheme-phoneme correspondences with increased consistency.
- Using concrete resources to match initial sounds to graphemes.
- Using magnetic letters to build and read CVC words to match concrete resources.
- Taking part in sound hunts in the outdoor area.
- A focus on fine motor skills with peers to develop her pen grip.

Case Study

A child in Year 2 with ADHD.

He had excellent recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondence during specific phonics lessons and assessment but worked with such speed that errors were frequent when segmenting to spell and decoding to read. He became frustrated, distracted and even distressed by perceived inability to overcome a challenge.

To support him, his teacher ensured the following provision was in place:

- Structured, interactive lessons to support his attention needs.
- Increased opportunities to come forward to the interactive whiteboard to model success to the class. This is something he enjoyed and was important to raise his confidence in the subject.
- Tone of voice: he was confident to apply his knowledge when correcting errors, but only when errors were highlighted in a calming, light-hearted manner by a familiar adult, e.g., reading the misapplication of a grapheme in a funny voice so that they could spot the error and 'own it'.
- Personalised grapheme-phoneme correspondence table taped on the desk with a GPC to focus on each week.
- Personalised learning targets, with a focus on one phoneme to apply accurately during writing lessons.

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How can I support learners who struggle with developing fluency (including phonics knowledge and word recognition)?

- Where learners are not yet secure with phonics, their phonics knowledge must be assessed. Phonics teaching can then be correctly pitched for developing learners' knowledge of phonics and skills such as blending for word reading. Use the same scheme or approach which is used for whole-class teaching in EYFS and Year 1 – this will support learners with making links and building on prior phonics knowledge.
- Whilst phonics should be the first strategy for common exception words, if learners have difficulty retaining words consider using precision teaching interventions or flashcards. Games can be used to engage learners such as Bingo, Pelmanism (matching pairs) or Snap. Learners could also have further opportunities to consolidate through playing these games during break or playtimes. Consolidation can also come through learners being able to independently revisit through accessing word mats on their tables or accessing these words on display in the classroom.
- Re-reading taught or familiar texts is key to building learners' confidence; have a box of taught or familiar books for individual learners to independently revisit during reading lessons, reading for pleasure, paired reading or if reading with volunteers.
- Ensure that learners have sufficient practice in reading, and re-reading, books matched to their phonic knowledge so that they can build up their bank of words that can be read speedily.
- Identify and pre-teach tricky or new words – find them in the book and tell the learner to look at them carefully. Write them on a whiteboard or on a flashcard and practise reading them before reading the text.

How can I support learners who struggle with comprehending texts (including vocabulary, reasoning, and print-concepts)?

- Talk about the book before reading; make predictions and ignite prior knowledge by talking about what they may already know about the genre, the author, or other books they have read with a similar or the same setting. Making links with other books will support learners with understanding the text they are preparing to read, whilst making predictions will support with building enjoyment – they will want to read on to find out what happens next!
- Practise deepening comprehension of shorter extracts of the text, e.g., looking closely at small chunks such as sentences or paragraphs to discuss between reading. Discuss reading at smaller intervals, e.g., after each sentence or paragraph, rather than at the end of a chapter; looking for inferences and authorial word choices within sentences rather than inferences related to broader reading such as characters' motivations or themes.
- Giving learners opportunities for re-reading following book talk will deepen their understanding as they will be able to give greater attention to the meaning.
- Support readers with understanding and retaining new vocabulary by pre-teaching new words prior to tackling the text.
- Have class 'read-alouds' which gives all learners access to age-appropriate texts. Plan for discussions at key points which will deepen all learners' understanding. Listening to texts being read out loud will also extend learners' vocabulary.
- Use drama and role-play activities to enable learners to explore the meaning of text through first-hand experience thereby deepening their understanding. Drama and role-play also provide engaging activities which are accessible to all learners.



Strategies to Scaffold Learning

How can I support learners who are reading below age-related expectations?

- Securing the basics of pen grip, letter formation and spelling allow learners to be able to focus on composing a piece of writing.
- For learners not secure with phonics, this should be a priority. Learners should have plenty of practice writing using the phoneme-grapheme correspondences they know and using the letter formation they have been taught. This can be most easily provided through dictation activities.
- Use picture and word banks of key vocabulary. When learners are doing extended writing, make sure that they have word banks of key topic words with pictures to match. This will support them to find and use adventurous and topic-related language. Ideally, the words for these word banks will be the ones you have generated together in skills lessons and added to your working wall, so they will be the ones learners have already begun to use and explore.
- Use the school marking code or symbols to remind learners of key skills, e.g., if they need to remember spaces between words, you could draw a little hand symbol at the top of their page to remind them or give them a simple reminder sheet of what makes a good sentence.
- Use story maps with actions. Story maps are an excellent way to develop early reading skills and support learners with oral rehearsal. If you draw your story map from top to bottom, left to write, learners can point at each symbol as they retell it. Use the same symbols and gestures to match each time, e.g., → for next, so that learners develop their independence and confidence retelling stories and using story language

Case Study

A learner in Year 6 with dyslexia, a very imaginative and enthusiastic writer, whose writing could not be read without mediation and who could not always read it back herself because she missed words, blended them together and made multiple letter substitutions, struggling to hear and write the dominant sounds in words.

The learner was encouraged to:

- *Identify key words that she would need to spell and then look them up in her spelling dictionary, when sharing ideas with a peer or adult.*
- *Use the working wall (with word and picture banks) to identify key topic words or phrases.*
- *Box up her ideas to help organise her thoughts into a clear beginning, middle and end, when beginning to write.*
- *Look at the first section of her writing and orally rehearse the first sentence, counting the words on her fingers.*
- *Write one word at a time. Midway through and at the end of the sentence, pausing and reading back from the beginning of the sentence, pointing at each word.*

To begin with, the adult would model these strategies, but independence increased over time.

How can I support learners who struggle to retain vocabulary?

- Identify new, interesting or useful words in a text or topic together (e.g., in the plenary of the first lesson looking at a new text) and add them to the working wall together. Refer to these words and model using them in your teaching and encourage learners to use the working wall in their independent writing.
- Rehearse new words. Practise saying them together in a high voice, a low voice, a fast voice, and a slow voice. Come up with an action together (or use a Makaton action), then say the word and show the action to reinforce.
- New vocabulary should be planned for and taught in context. Model using new words in a sentence and give learners time to practise them in context. For example, give them time to answer a question and share their answer.

How can I support learners who need additional time to develop conceptual understanding?

- Pre-teach. For example, if you are starting a new text on a Monday and know a learner will need more time to process it, find time for them to read it (ideally with a peer or an adult) on the Friday before. This allows them to explore it in their own time, ask any questions they may have and then be the expert when the class reads it on Monday.
- Create links in learning in different areas. For example, if you are learning about the Antarctic in geography, read related texts, learn about a penguin's life cycle in science, write an explanation text about it in literacy, represent its life cycle through dance in PE. Also, make links to what learners have previously learnt – did they learn about the life cycle of a frog the previous year? This helps to embed learning.
- Make learning multi-sensory, e.g., if you are learning a new concept or piece of vocabulary, read it, draw it, write it, act it out.

How can I support learners who struggle with attention?

- Break the learning into chunks. Ensure you mix teacher talk with partner talk, opportunities to write ideas on a whiteboard, and feedback through gesture (e.g., show me on your thumbs if you agree or disagree; wiggle your fingers if you could up-level my adjective).
- Give learners movement breaks. You can build this into your class routine; they help everyone to concentrate, e.g., before starting a teaching session, choose two or three short OT warm-ups to do together (such as rolling your shoulders 5 times, chair presses, piano fingers). Add these into independent learning when learners are writing for an extended period. For learners who need additional movement breaks, build in opportunities to the lesson. Could they hand out exercise books? Sharpen their pencil?
- Build in opportunities to develop attention and listening skills with your whole class. For example, when feeding back an answer, tell learners that you will ask them to share their partner's answer. To start with, practise this with simple questions (such as, what's your favourite colour?). Increase the complexity of questions over time. When asking learners to retell a story in pairs, play 'story whoosh': one partner begins retelling and, when you give a signal, the other person takes over and continues. You will need to model this first.



How can I support learners who struggle with change and transition?

- Have a clear routine and use visuals to support. For example, share the visual timetable at the start of each day. Refer back to it throughout the day: 'Now we have literacy, next handwriting and after that it is lunch'. If changes occur, share this with learners and change the timetable with them.
- Give learners warning. For example, if they will need to tidy up for lunch, give them a five-minute warning. Then, count them down. This means they know how long they have to finish and are prepared to stop. For some learners, it will be helpful to give them a five-minute sand timer so they can visualise this.
- Allow learners time to complete work. They may really want to finish what they are doing – it can be very frustrating if your story is missing its ending! Find time later in the day or soon after (e.g., for early morning work the next day) where they can finish. Keep their book open and any notes they've made on a whiteboard, so they know that it's in your mind.

Key takeaways to support learners with SEND in writing

The following strategies scaffold learning for all ages and stages:

Communication-friendly strategies:

- Use gestures
- Make it visual: add pictures to word banks to help all children access them
- Allow thinking time: always allow thinking time when you ask a question, even before children talk to their partner (think, pair, share)
- For those who need it, keep language simple and short
- When children need further support, offer forced choices, or use gap fills to scaffold them.

Model your thinking process: as teachers, we often ask questions. While these are important, it is also important to model your thinking process, and to model wondering or imagining. This removes the pressure of a question for a child while still allowing them to develop their thinking.

Subject Specific Strategies (Taken from NASEN Handbook): Drama

Standard vs. Non-Standard English

By exploring a range of characters from different contexts, learners are given the opportunity to experiment with language and vary the 'quality and variety of language' that they are exposed to. For example, consider how the protagonist of Bertie Doherty's *Street Child*, Jim Jarvis, speaks in contrast to other characters within the text or perhaps to those in other texts the learners may have explored.

To ask learners who struggle with literacy what vocabulary is considered formal or informal, standard or non-standard can be very difficult, as some will require a great deal of support to identify meaning in the first instance, let alone the specific context within which certain words should be used. But, through an opportunity to play with language in a 'safe' and 'supportive' low-stakes environment, learners can be guided towards a consideration of how these can be appropriately applied to given situations and thus how to modify their own speech to meet the needs of varying contexts and for different audiences/purposes.

How can drama benefit learners who struggle to participate in social situations?

Drama is a natural part of life. Many learners engage in fictional/make-believe scenarios during play even before formalised schooling. This process provides learners with a way to explore their own sense of self in relation to others. Even when assuming a role different to themselves, learners consider morality, looking at what is wrong and what is right, as well as how to solve the 'problem' within their play. It is therefore important to consider how drama in school can be used to support learners in exploring difficult issues, express their emotions and develop lifelong skills such as self-reflection or empathy, in a structured and supportive environment.

Emotional Intelligence

Social stories and comic strip conversations are common tools utilised to support learners with SEND. Explorative strategies, such as the conscience corridor or forum theatre, can also be valuable methods for exploring situations in response to the social and emotional needs of learners who struggle to engage in social situations. Establishing a fictional scenario where learners have to consider how a character might be feeling and having them vocalise this in the conscience corridor can be a powerful tool for building empathy and/or understanding of how people behave or respond in a social situation, particularly as each child will find different ways to verbalise these emotions. Hearing these responses can have a positive impact on learners, as they may be able to associate these with their own experiences, or in some instances, the way it is phrased by a peer may resonate with them more than a conversation with an adult.

Alternatively, having learners act out the scenario in a forum theatre style, allowing them to pause the action, make adaptations to how characters react within the situation and see the impact these changes have, is an engaging way for teachers to address the concept of choice and consequence. As the scenario develops, the learners can see cause and effect and again make links with their own behaviours outside of the drama bubble.

Following up either of these models with a discussion allows the learners to support their choices with reasoning, whilst carefully considered questioning from the teacher will help them to see how this learning might be applied to their own lives. As well as developing social/emotional skills, activities such as these support the development of key skills such as listening, collaboration and mutual respect.

Confidence Building

The charity Scope identifies that learners with SEND can struggle to stay motivated in school for a variety of reasons, including frustration at their own progress or a lack of confidence and self-esteem. The study of drama can greatly support learners to combat these feelings and have positive experiences across their primary education. The development of skills such as diaphragmic breathing, vocal projection and enunciation supports learners in communicating clearly, but for some learners with SEND, this can lead to a feeling of self-assuredness as their opinions are heard, understood, and counted. In addition, the study of drama supports learners to consider their physicality and the way they hold themselves. Through a deeper understanding of this, e.g., posture and gait, learners can be encouraged to stand or sit taller which studies have shown can have a subliminal impact on a person's confidence.

Strategies provided in the secondary drama guidance can also be applied in the primary classroom to ensure learning is scaffolded to promote effective learning for all.

