



### Practical ideas for adapting the curriculum for pupils working below the level of their peers.

Most pupils will be able to participate in activities within the classroom as long as what they are expected to do is within their capabilities. Some areas will continue to need one to one individual teaching and some things can combine the two.

Teachers will need to be prepared to plan in advance for the individual child as well as to consult with support staff on what is expected of them. It is not fair to expect a support assistant to adapt the lesson 'on the hoof', especially if what is presented to the pupil could have been so much better if done in advance.

It is important the pupil understands what is expected of them. Even an adapted activity can be too difficult.

Communication is of paramount importance. If pupils need adapted or augmentative communication methods, either because of poor expressive skills or because of poor comprehension, then help and support with this should be sought as soon as possible. For pupils whose communication skills are those of a younger child, all staff working with them should adapt what they are doing to ensure that the pupil both understands what is going on at a level they are able to cope with and is able to contribute by whatever means. If pupils use alternative methods such as signing or symbols, all staff and other pupils in the school should be familiar with what they use and encouraged to respond appropriately. A lot of behaviour problems in pupils with severe learning difficulties are caused by a lack of communication – expressive or receptive.

For pupils with short attention spans, it is better to have a range of activities within the same area rather than trying to make them persist with one activity. If they can change the activity before they lose interest, you will have more chance of keeping them on task for longer.

### **Arts subjects:**

Art, music and drama do not usually require a high level of literacy so pupils can participate at a level that is appropriate for them. Art activities requiring very good fine motor skills can be adapted to take account of what the pupil is capable of. If a pupil's understanding of instructions is limited, think about using signs or symbols to help.

The class is making a papier mache reconstruction of the Tower of London for a project about the Normans. For the pupil with poor fine motor skills, who can possibly be over-enthusiastic about participation, put them in charge of paper tearing. Keep up the supply

of paper! Allow them (with others) to paint the base coat on the finished model, getting others to put in the details afterwards.

The class is doing a play about the Great Fire of London. The pupil cannot learn lines and might be disruptive if given too big a part. Create a part for them which gives them something to carry, such as a vegetable seller. Their role is to walk across the stage from one adult in the wings to another. Give them a line if they can say it 'Buy my vegetables' for example. The positioning of the adults (along with a good deal of practice) should prevent them wandering off.

The dance class is doing an end of term concert. Allow the pupil to participate in a round dance that involves him or her holding hands with at least one other pupil who will be able to lead them on and off the stage.

A lesson in dance tends to be disrupted by a pupil who is not able to follow group instructions. As well as having them participate with either their support assistant or another pupil, make large picture or symbol prompts which they can understand – and will understand are specifically for them – and hold them up when instruction is needed. Give them a mat to stand on when listening.

Activities such as colouring, painting, collage, dramatic reconstruction and music can be incorporated into a variety of subjects in order to allow the pupil to participate. Art packages on the computer can be used to create works by pupils whose motor skills are such that they would find it difficult to do so by hand.

### **Humanities subjects:**

History, Geography and RE tend to be seen as inaccessible but it is possible to adapt the content individually to incorporate skills the pupil needs to develop. As well as the creative activities mentioned above try:

Make a display of Hadrian's Wall round the classroom for the Romans. Each member of the class draws a roman soldier who is then stuck on as if guarding the empire. They can label their equipment etc or write a story about them or whatever else you would like them to do. The pupil concerned can colour in a picture if not able to draw. If they are capable of writing a short description using symbols or some other alternative method then this can be displayed alongside all the others.

The class are drawing a map of their local area and marking on it where things are. For a pupil who cannot do this, take them out with a camera and photograph easily recognisable landmarks. It may be useful to do this as part of a class outing to look at the neighbourhood. Stick these on a readymade map, ask the pupil to write a short sentence about each using Clicker or symbols, make a Clicker on-screen book, ask the pupil to match the picture to the relevant symbol, cut out pictures of things sold in shops and then stick the pictures onto a sheet with the relevant shop or match the photo to the materials involved (house = brick, river = water). Use photos to make an account of the pupil's

journey to school and make a display following their journey with the things that are important to them.

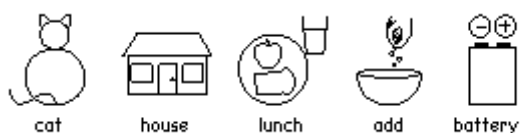
For RE projects on different religions, make sure you have lots of pictures of the ceremonies, buildings and clothing involved. Stick symbols or words on the pictures labelling the items. Make food for celebrations and eat it. Dress up. Do a survey round the school (using your communication aid if you have one) finding out how many people belong to which religion. Read story books about how people worship – and adapt them if the text is too difficult.

## Literacy

Whilst a lot of literacy will be done individually to develop the pupil's skills in speaking, reading and writing, there are still things to be done to help them participate. Remember that what might be hard work when handwritten could be a lot easier if done on a keyboard.

Phonics is only useful if you have some idea that text carries meaning. Research into pupils with Down's Syndrome has proved that they learn to read best by learning a sight vocabulary, supplementing it with phonics at a later stage. Pupils with ASD tend to be visual learners, finding techniques based on auditory methods confusing. Other pupils with learning difficulties may well be the same. If you cannot recognise your name written down or pick it out from a choice of three, you may well not be ready for letter sounds as an aid to decoding text.

Use symbols. Symbols are line drawings representing the concept of a word. They can be used as flashcards when learning new words or acquiring new contexts. The use of symbols for early literacy activities helps pupils to associate a concept with the word every time that word is presented. The size of the symbols, relative to the word, can be made smaller as the pupil relies more on the text and less on the picture. Symbols are very useful for pupils who are experiencing difficulties with reading, very young pupils who are being introduced to print for the first time and pupils who have English as an additional language. See [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com) for more details.



Widgit symbols

Use technology. Programmes such as 'Communicate: Symwriter', 'Clicker 7' and others allow pupils to use the skills they have to write with as much picture or symbol support as they need.

When writing about a specific subject use photographs, either taken by you or from the internet or elsewhere. Use 'Communicate: In Print' to make a book with simple symbol text below. Make an on-screen book in 'Clicker 7' or '2 Create a Story', then print it out.

Print out your photos to use as prompts. Use the 'Clicker 7' wizard to create a grid as the pupil tells you what they want to write. The pupil can then use their own words to write a

sentence. Helps those with short term memory issues who can think of a sentence but have forgotten what they were going to say after the first two words.

Print out the Clicker grid, cut it up and make up the sentences on paper.

Cut and stick descriptive symbols under pictures from catalogues or elsewhere. A good practical introduction to the concept of sentences as well as working on your fine motor skills.

When listening to a story, have a cushion or similar to sit on to mark the pupil's place on the carpet to help with sitting still. Give the support assistant another copy of the book or copies of the pictures from the book so that the pupil has to concentrate on something right in front of them rather than what the teacher is holding. For pupils with limited expressive communication, make a picture or symbol grid with the vocabulary from the book for them to point to – and for the assistant to point to, to aid their understanding.

Adapt books by simplifying the text or writing it in symbols, printing on an Avery peel off label (L4735REV), cut to fit and stick over the existing text. When you've finished with that book, peel off the adaptations.

If you are using 'Communicate: In Print' or 'Clicker 7', check the websites ([www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com), [www.learninggrids.com](http://www.learninggrids.com)) for support materials for different areas.

Think of activities for the whole class around books which can involve the pupil with learning difficulties. Make a play or a song. Act out the story. Make a whole class display.

It is usually possible to buy simplified versions of classic texts for older pupils, often with pictures.

Try Googling the title of the book and see how many online resources you can find. You'd sometimes be surprised.

## **Numeracy**

This may be the area in which it is most difficult to include the pupil who is working well below the level of their peers as it is difficult to learn more advanced stages of Maths without having grasped the easier ones first.

Remember that all aspects of a skill have to be taught to ensure the pupil has learned it before moving on to the next stage. Don't just count bricks – count stairs, cups, passing dogs, cars or whatever and do it in different circumstances. If you can accurately count a variety of objects in a variety of situations, can you recognise the numbers? Can you match the written number to a group of objects – again, in various circumstances? Can you hand over the correct number of objects?

When learning to recognise and / or write numbers, remember to do it as many ways as you can – write in shaving foam, sand, sandpaper, on the back of your hand or on your

back (don't use a pen for this bit!). Use wooden or plastic numbers that can be picked up and handled. Use the magnetic numbers sold for use on the fridge.

When you move on to addition and subtraction, graphs, shape space and measure etc, remember to use pictures and objects as reinforcers: don't teach anything in the abstract.

Teach things which have practical applications – money, time, measurement etc.

#### Websites and other resources

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/hub/whole-school/special-educational-needs>

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/>

[http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen\\_inclusion/curriculum\\_resources](http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen_inclusion/curriculum_resources)

[http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources.training-materials-for-teachers-of-learners-with-severe-profound-and-complex-learning-difficulties\\_1.html](http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources.training-materials-for-teachers-of-learners-with-severe-profound-and-complex-learning-difficulties_1.html)

<http://equals.co.uk/>

<http://www.ianbean.co.uk/senict-teaching-resources>. You may need to create a log in for this.