

**Special educational  
needs and/or disabilities  
Training toolkit**

For PGCE trainees

Cognition and learning

# Moderate learning difficulties

Self-study task 6

# Introduction to the self-study tasks

These self-study tasks are designed to help trainee teachers on PGCE courses learn more about teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They can be used as stand-alone activities or to supplement and extend taught sessions on SEN and disability provided by the school or local authority.

There are 17 self-study tasks in all. Each task will take about two hours to complete, excluding practical activities.

Every Child Matters	
SST1	Inclusion and Every Child Matters
SST2	SEN and disability legislation
SST3	English as an additional language and SEN
SST4	Children's needs and development
SST5	ICT and SEN
Cognition and learning	
SST6	Moderate learning difficulties
SST7	Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties
SST8	Working memory
Behavioural, emotional and social needs	
SST9	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Communication and interaction	
SST10	Speech, language and communication needs
SST11	Autistic spectrum disorders
Physical and sensory impairment	
SST12	Visual impairment
SST13	Hearing impairment
SST14	Handwriting
SST15	Developmental coordination disorder/dyspraxia
Working in partnership	
SST16	Working with colleagues in school
SST17	Working with parents/carers and other professionals

## How to use the materials

This is an online resource. Some of the tasks are for you to do on your own; others are particularly suitable to do working with a partner.

Where some of the tasks ask you to record information you need to print out the relevant material first. Other tasks may involve using the internet, which gives you access to rich sources of information about SEN and disability and online forums for additional advice.

Each task includes the following elements:

- the professional standards addressed
- learning outcomes
- an opportunity to explore the concepts, definitions and research findings most relevant to the topic
- ideas for implementing the national curriculum inclusion statement in relation to the topic, including target setting, practical strategies, the role of additional adults and pupil grouping
- practical activities – including action research, child study and class observation
- resources – including books and websites
- an opportunity to evaluate your progress against the outcomes and plan your next steps.

A useful resource to support your studies is **Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings (DfES, 2006)**. It is available free to all schools and there should be a copy in your training institution or school. (If you haven't got a copy, you can order one using the link.)

It should be read in conjunction with **Promoting Disability Equality in Schools (DfES, 2006)** – which you can view, download or order by following the link.

## Evidence and sources of information

As you work through these self-study tasks, try to keep a critical and evaluative attitude. Much of the understanding we have of what works, or doesn't work, in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities has not been fully researched.

Remember:

- many interventions suggested for one group of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will often benefit other groups of pupils, including those without SEN and/or disabilities
- the quickest way to find out what to do is often to ask the pupil or their parent/carer what they think works.

Literature reviews of 'what works' in relation to literacy and mathematics for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, which has been investigated in some depth, are available at: [www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR554.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR554.pdf)

Other sources of information are listed at the end, under 'References'. You can use these to follow up and learn in greater depth about the material covered in this self-study task.

## Self-study task 6

# Moderate learning difficulties

### Professional standards addressed

- Q1** Have high expectations of children and young people including a commitment to ensuring that they can achieve their full educational potential and to establishing fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with them.
- Q10** Have a knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning and provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.
- Q20** Know and understand the roles of colleagues with specific responsibilities, including those with responsibility for learners with special educational needs and disabilities and other individual learning needs.
- Q25** Teach lessons and sequences of lessons across the age and ability range for which they are trained in which they:
  - (a) use a range of teaching strategies and resources, including e-learning, taking practical account of diversity and promoting equality and inclusion
  - (b) build on prior knowledge, develop concepts and processes, enable learners to apply new knowledge, understanding and skills and meet learning objectives
  - (c) adapt their language to suit the learners they teach, introducing new ideas and concepts clearly, and using explanations, questions, discussions and plenaries effectively
  - (d) demonstrate the ability to manage the learning of individuals, groups and whole classes, modifying their teaching to suit the stage of the lesson.
- Q26** (b) Assess the learning needs of those they teach in order to set challenging learning objectives.
- Q29** Evaluate the impact of their teaching on the progress of all learners, and modify their planning and classroom practice where necessary.

## Learning outcome

You will understand how barriers to participation and learning can be removed for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD).



## Activities

**Activity 1** Researching moderate learning difficulties

**Activity 2** Planning for pupils with MLD

**Activity 3** Thinking about strategies

**Activity 4** Preparing lessons for pupils with MLD

**Activity 5** Differentiating lessons for pupils with MLD

**Activity 6** Introducing the P scales

**Activity 7** Points for action

## References

**Appendix** Links you might have made

## Timings

**15 minutes**

**15 minutes**

**20 minutes**

**15 minutes**

**25 minutes**

**20 minutes**

**15 minutes**

## Activity 1

# Researching moderate learning difficulties



Approximate timing: 15 minutes



Start by exploring the definitions of the whole range of cognition and learning needs at:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/Cognitionlearningneeds](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/Cognitionlearningneeds)

As you have seen, the area of cognition and learning includes a range of needs, including:

- moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
- severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and
- specific learning difficulties (SpLD), including dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

This self-study task focuses on removing barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD.

The attainment of pupils with moderate learning difficulties will be well below the expected levels for their age in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. They will have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated delay in speech and language, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and underdeveloped social skills. Moderate learning difficulties are sometimes referred to as 'global' or 'generalised' learning difficulties.

The school curriculum can present a range of barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD. These may relate to pupils' difficulties with:

- understanding instructions and what is required of them
- acquiring sequencing skills
- coordination
- understanding how they affect and relate to their immediate surroundings
- personal organisation over the short, medium and long term, and
- remembering information, processes and instructions.

Activity 2 looks into suggested strategies for removing barriers to participation and learning for these pupils.

## Activity 2

# Planning for pupils with MLD



Approximate timing: 15 minutes

### Finding out what strategies work best



Read the chapter on moderate learning difficulties by Felicity Fletcher-Campbell in *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for inclusion* (see the full reference in the 'References' section).

Fletcher-Campbell has summarised the research on ways to address barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD. She found some evidence that:

- pupils with MLD can follow a programme of work broadly similar to their peers, without particular technical aids
- differentiation for pupils with MLD should focus on earlier stages of learning that their peers have already mastered, rather than learning something different – eg in history, pupils with MLD might be given less complex texts and tasks and be asked to do more straightforward analysis of situations than the rest of the class
- pupils with MLD do not need a supplementary curriculum, unless they also have learning difficulties in another area, and
- pupils with MLD are rarely considered to benefit from therapies, interventions or medication, although they can benefit some pupils.

As with any other group of learners, pupils with MLD will have different profiles of attainment across the curriculum. Some pupils may be good at one subject, some at another.

The statutory inclusion statement in the National Curriculum allows you freedom to plan for learners in the ways suggested by Felicity Fletcher-Campbell. When preparing lessons that include pupils with MLD, you can differentiate them by:

- choosing earlier elements of a programme of study or National Strategy, 'tracking back' to earlier levels
- focusing on a narrower area of a programme of study or National Strategy than the rest of the group is working on, and/or
- breaking tasks down into small steps.

When planning approaches for pupils with MLD, you need to:

- set targets that are appropriate to their level of understanding, but which challenge them a bit
- work with other adults to plan ways to 'scaffold' the pupils' progress towards those targets, until they can attain them independently, and
- explore pupils' strengths and interests and make use of them in the context for their learning.

Table 1 suggests some strategies that can be useful in including pupils with MLD. You will have the opportunity to think further about some of these, and other helpful strategies, in the next activity.

**Table 1**

<b>Understanding instructions</b>	<p>Make sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• you give enough time for the pupil to understand the task</li><li>• reinforcement is provided to help them remember what they need to do, and</li><li>• the pupil knows how to ask for help if they are not sure.</li></ul>
<b>Memory</b> (Adapted from Gathercole and Alloway, 2008)	<p>You can use a range of supportive approaches, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• structuring your input so that you don't give pupils too much to remember at once</li><li>• checking that any new learning fits into the framework of what the pupil already knows</li><li>• structuring activities so that the pupil can make use of readily available resources, such as word banks</li><li>• using visual or concrete ('real') materials, or activities involving movement, to reinforce their learning through a range of sensory channels</li><li>• making sure they have a range of enjoyable ways to consolidate the new knowledge, eg using computer software</li><li>• making sure pupils can use aids to support their memory, and</li><li>• helping pupils to find their own strategies to support memory.</li></ul>
<b>Sequencing</b>	<p>You can support pupils by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• giving them some sort of visual 'timetable', perhaps using symbols or photographs</li><li>• providing 'markers' they can use to check they have completed a part of an activity and can move on to the next element, and</li><li>• teaching a 'protocol' or procedure that you will always use when a task or sequence of activities has to be changed, so that the pupil is not disorientated by the change.</li></ul>
<b>Coordination</b>	<p>If a pupil has difficulties with coordination, it can help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• make sure they have enough time to complete activities</li><li>• use another form of recording if writing is a barrier for them, and</li><li>• talk to PE staff, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) or a physiotherapist about ways of improving their coordination.</li></ul>



**Table 1** continued

<b>Visual or auditory modes of learning</b>	If visual or auditory ways of learning present specific barriers for a pupil, support which enhances learning through other sensory channels will help. Remember, though, that straightforward changes – such as checking font size and style for clarity before using them with pupils with mild visual impairments – can be equally important.
<b>General</b>	Observe carefully how an individual pupil responds to different ways of praising and reinforcing success (not everyone is comfortable with public praise, for instance). Use the approach that seems to work best for them.

### Case study: Andrew

This case study will give you an opportunity to consider some of these strategies in action.

#### The lesson

Andrew, a pupil with moderate learning difficulties, will watch a 10-minute film with the class. Afterwards, the teacher will ask the group to explore how characters' feelings change at different points of the film. Pupils are going to retell the story briefly in comic book frames that show characters' emotions at different points. Then, as a group, they will discuss how the characters develop.

#### Planning

The teacher and teaching assistant considered Andrew's understanding of emotional language and decided to concentrate on a limited range of concepts: happy, sad, frightened, angry and surprised. The teaching assistant will discuss these terms with Andrew before the lesson, using cards with pictures of people showing the appropriate emotion.

To be sure he understands the sequence of the activity, the teaching assistant will put together a brief visual 'timetable' showing the order each part of the lesson will take place.

The teacher and teaching assistant will also prepare a worksheet for Andrew and others in the group who may have difficulty remembering events in the film. The worksheet will show five important scenes and provide a space (in the form of 'thought bubbles') for pupils to record the feelings the characters are showing in each scene.

Andrew does not have coordination difficulties, but another pupil in the class does, so the teaching assistant will prepare some sticky-back cards with pictures and 'emotion' words on them so that this pupil can fix them to the worksheet instead of spending time writing them down. Andrew will be able to use these cards if he wants, but usually he is confident enough to have a go at writing for himself.

For the plenary at the end of the lesson, the teacher and teaching assistant have agreed and noted down two or three questions that will enable Andrew to show what he has learnt and which will challenge him to think further about emotions. The teacher will use these in the plenary, giving plenty of time for Andrew to respond, and will follow up carefully with reinforcement of this learning.

## Activity 3

# Thinking about strategies



Approximate timing: 20 minutes

If you have a study partner in your school or another school, you should work together on this activity. The activity will tell you more about the strategies you can use to remove barriers to participation and learning for pupils with MLD.

### Thinking about strategies



Choose two pupils you have taught or observed on school placement (or who you know), who have been identified as having MLD.

Print out table 2 (on page 11).

Now read through the issues column and draw a straight line to link each issue that is relevant to the pupils you know to strategies that might help. Each strategy can be used as many times as you like.

When you have finished, **click here** to compare the links you made with the examples in the appendix.

**Table 2: Issues and strategies – links you might have made**

Learning issue	Possible links	Approaches
Maintaining an inclusive learning environment		Use drama and role-play
		Give pupils time to consider questions
		Plan self-checks at each stage of a task – eg a self-tick flow chart on laptop
Multi-sensory approaches, including ICT		Use visual timetables, prompt cards with pictures to remind pupils what to do
		Target praise
		Use browsers that simplify website presentation (eg cut down the number of pictures)
Working with additional adults		Word banks
		Writing frames
		Put up writing/symbol/picture posters showing ways to behave/tackle a learning task
Managing peer relationships effectively	Enlarge print	
	Work with teaching assistant to check pupils' understanding of questions and tasks	
	Structured questioning with teacher support/scaffolding of response	
Adult-pupil communication	Make a mind map or other visual representation of what pupils already know	
	Make an audio recording to record steps in the task	
	Use presentation or simulation software to help pupils work through a sequence of behaviour they find hard – eg working in a group	
Formative assessment/ assessment for learning	Minimise writing to concentrate on physical activity	
	Use buddying to support the pupil	
	Store resources where all pupils have access to them	
Motivation	Teaching assistant goes over key vocabulary and ideas with the pupil before the lesson	
	Display key words on the wall, with pictures/symbols	
Memory/ consolidation	Physically demonstrate tasks	
	Repeat information in different ways	
	Use 'concrete', visual or audio materials to support pupils' understanding	

## Activity 4

# Preparing lessons for pupils with MLD



Approximate timing: 15 minutes

In this section, you will learn what you need to know before you tackle a lesson planning exercise involving a pupil with moderate learning difficulties in activity 5.

### Effective planning

Read the following information on planning effectively for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

#### Planning effectively for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Effective planning will:

- be integral to the planning system used throughout the school – not simply ‘bolted on’ – and embedded in the teacher’s usual planning format
- incorporate personal (eg individual education plan (IEP)) targets, wherever possible
- cover learning objectives, teaching styles and approaches, strategies for removing barriers, and
- involve collaboration (with other teachers for the year group, teaching assistants, the SENCO) as appropriate.

#### Access strategies

It is important to identify strategies that will help all pupils to access the learning objectives for the lesson or activity. Consider: “What are the barriers that might get in the way here?” For example, the barriers might be the language adults use to explain a task, the amount they are asking a pupil to recall at once, or the need to record ideas in writing for a pupil who does not write fluently.

You might consider overcoming these barriers by:

- pre-teaching concepts or key vocabulary
- using mixed-ability, collaborative small group work
- encouraging pupils to use alternative methods of recording
- providing alternative means to access the curriculum – eg through information and communication technology (ICT), adapted materials or specialist equipment, and/or
- supporting pupils’ learning by using ‘concrete’ materials, ‘buddies’ or any additional adult support in a targeted way.

First, in general, you should:

- check that all the pupils can see and hear you and any resources you are using – avoid background noise where possible, make sure the light source is in front of you, and make careful seating plans for pupils
- make sure all new or difficult vocabulary is clarified, written up, displayed and revisited
- check that pupils have understood instructions– eg ask a pupil to explain them in their own words
- give time or support before expecting a response – eg personal thinking time, partner talk, persisting with progressively greater scaffolding until a pupil can answer correctly
- use 'buddying' for seating and paired/partner work – eg pair a more settled pupil with one who finds concentration difficult, more able with less able pupils
- where extra adult support is available, plan for them to prepare or pre-tutor selected pupils if this would help them to gain access to the lesson
- relate tasks to work already addressed and demonstrated to the whole class – eg in teaching/shared reading or writing – so that pupils have an example to follow
- explain, demonstrate or model tasks clearly, and check that pupils understand; use task cards or boards as reminders; make the amount of time available and the expected outcomes clear
- provide pupils with resources to help them to be independent – eg relevant material from whole-class sessions on display, word lists or mats, dictionaries of terms, glossaries, number lines, tables squares
- make arrangements (eg buddying, adult support, recordings) where necessary to ensure that pupils can use written text or instructions
- plan alternatives to paper and pencil tasks, where appropriate, and
- make effective use of ICT as an access strategy – eg speech- or sign-supported software, on-screen word folders, predictive text in word processing.

You should then think about the pupil or pupils with very 'individual' SEN – that are more complex or severe – and annotate your weekly planning with brief notes on the learning objectives, teaching styles and access strategies you want to use to support learning for these individuals. At this point, any personal targets the pupil has will inform your planning. Notes on IEPs, or other formats used by the school, about teaching approaches and access strategies that suit each pupil best will also contribute.

Effective planning will also set out the role of any teaching assistants who will be working with the pupil, so that they, the teacher and, wherever possible, the pupil will know who is doing what and when.

### **Planning collaboratively**

There are always time constraints in school, but planning collaboratively is invaluable. Problem solving with colleagues who have different perspectives but share the goal of improving learning can be very helpful. For example:

- The perspective of a teaching assistant who has been working closely with a pupil and has observation their misconceptions closely will be useful when planning the next steps
- The input of a SENCO who has knowledge of specific needs and the provision throughout the school will also be helpful
- The perspectives of a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist or other specialist colleagues can also enhance your planning. These specialists will have helpful assessment information and can suggest appropriate activities to enhance the pupil's learning

## Elements of planning

You will find examples of planning relating to the following seven aspects of preparation in the next activity – on differentiating lessons for pupils with MLD. You will need to consider:

### Using multi-sensory approaches, including ICT

You have looked at some useful approaches and strategies for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in activity 3. You can bring these into the next activity.

### Working with additional adults such as teaching assistants

Differentiating lessons for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities is your responsibility, though teaching assistants can be valuable partners in the process. The art of deploying teaching assistants effectively is to find the right balance between support and independent working. The idea of 'scaffolding' is helpful. You and the teaching assistant should plan together for him or her to stand back as the pupil's learning develops. You will find more ideas on this in self-study task 16: Working with colleagues in school.

### Managing peer relationships effectively

You need to consider how to use pupil groupings to help pupils with learning difficulties. This is likely to involve thinking how 'buddies' and others can support one another's learning.

You will also need to think about when to use grouping by ability. The SPRING research project (see [www.spring-project.org.uk](http://www.spring-project.org.uk)) suggests that "in **same ability groups** (high or middle only) pupils can push each other and come up with ideas that neither would be able to think of alone. But it is well known that **low ability groups** are unlikely to be successful as there is nowhere for new ideas to come from." Pupils can become demotivated if their position as the 'low attainers' is regularly reinforced – and they are acutely aware of the meanings of ability groupings, whatever names are given to them. For example, one six-year-old told her mother recently: "I'm a Duck. That means I am not as clever as the children in the Owls group. And I am not as stupid as the children in the Monkeys group."

Planning that varies groupings is helpful. Mixed-ability pairs and groups can help one another. Buddies can offer emotional and practical support.

### Communication between adults and pupils

Teachers and other adults always need to think tactically about the way they communicate with pupils. This is particularly true when thinking about how to question and encourage dialogue with pupils who are finding barriers to participating and learning, such as those with MLD. You will find many suggestions on this in self-study task 10: Speech, language and communication needs. You can improve your partnership with the teaching assistant by making sure you regularly spend time on joint planning and evaluating the impact of their work.

### Formative assessment/assessment for learning (AfL)

This covers three aspects of setting targets or expectations:

- The learning objectives for the session or sequence of lessons need to be appropriate for pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers often use a three-level planning model: all pupils will.../ some pupils will.../ a few pupils will.... For this exercise you should consider whether that is enough. Perhaps you need to use the freedom given by the national curriculum inclusion statement to:
  - 'track back' to earlier objectives in the programme of study or strategy, and/or
  - use a narrower range of objectives for this pupil.
- You need to incorporate into the planning any relevant individual targets the pupil may have on their 'passport', IEP or elsewhere.
- You should plan opportunities for formative assessment (AfL) into lessons for all pupils. The key issue for pupils with MLD is likely to be communication. Pupils will not be able to take part in any dialogue about their learning unless everyone involved understands and uses appropriate forms of communication – including, for example, symbols, pictures and mind mapping, as well as the spoken and written word.

## Motivation

Pupils, their parents or carers, and other teachers and classmates can help you with this. Consider:

- The way a pupil likes to learn. This is sometimes reduced to the notion of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles, but you can be more sophisticated than that. For example, if a pupil is particularly comfortable with mind-mapping software, such as Kidspiration or Inspiration, you can build in opportunities for them to use that software in your lessons.
- The things a pupil knows about and enjoys learning about. These can give context and relevance to the activities you are planning. You can build topics or references relevant to the pupil's interests or strengths you're your lesson plans, or you could teach a concept or idea through a curriculum area the pupil has had success in rather than tackling it through the core subjects. So, for example, if a pupil enjoys music and needs to learn about sequencing, you could work with colleagues to develop times in music where he or she can practise sequencing.

In thinking about motivation, you should also be alert to any aspects of school that demotivate pupils. Narcie Kelly's study (Kelly and Norwich, 2004), collected many reports of bullying from pupils with MLD. Given these results and the high incidence of bullying reported among people with learning disabilities in a piece of MENCAP research,<sup>1</sup> you should always consider this as a possible factor if you find a pupil with MLD showing a lack of engagement.

## Memory/consolidation

Some pupils find remembering things difficult, even things they have only just heard or seen. Short-term 'working' memory impairments can cause particular difficulties in lessons. You have already looked at some ideas for supporting memory in activity 2.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.dontstickit.org.uk](http://www.dontstickit.org.uk) for more about this.

## Activity 5

# Differentiating lessons for pupils with MLD



Approximate timing: 25 minutes

This activity contains two versions – one for primary and one for secondary teaching. You should only work through the version of the activity for the phase you are training to teach.



In this activity:

- look at the sketch of the lesson and the description of the pupil with MLD
- in the blank column of table 3 (primary) or table 5 (secondary), add your ideas for making sure the pupil is included in the lesson, and
- then compare your ideas with what happened in the lesson – table 4 (primary) or table 6 (secondary).

### Differentiating lessons: primary

#### Brief details of the lesson plan

**Area:** literacy – work on glossaries and looking up words in dictionaries

Sequence of events

- Present intended learning outcomes
- Remind whole class about alphabetical order – pupils at front of the class each hold a letter, and move into alphabetical order in response to suggestions from the rest of the class
- Whole-class exercise led by teacher and teaching assistant (modelling) – defining a word
- Introduction to task
- Class work in small groups to define a word, record their definition and then check it in the dictionary
- Whole-class discussion of results
- Evaluation against learning outcomes

#### Pupil: Lewis

Lewis is in year 3 of his mainstream primary school. He has been identified as having MLD and is working at level 1 of the National Curriculum for speaking and listening.

He greatly enjoys sequencing exercises and games that involve making patterns. His coordination is relatively good and he enjoys football – and likes Arsenal FC and his Arsenal shirt very much. He has an excellent relationship with his teaching assistant.

Lewis' reading age is three years below his chronological age. He finds spoken instructions difficult and does not enjoy speaking in a large group.

He sometimes forgets tasks he has been set, and often loses concentration.



**Table 3 (primary): How would you support Lewis?**

<b>Primary</b>		<b>Your ideas</b>
Present intended learning outcomes.	How, if at all, would you differentiate the lesson's intended learning outcomes for Lewis?	
Remind whole class about alphabetical order. Pupils at front of the class each hold a letter, and move into alphabetical order in response to suggestions of the rest of the class. Whole-class exercise led by teacher and teaching assistant (modelling) – defining a word.	How would you make sure Lewis can contribute to the discussion?	
Class work in small groups to define a word, record their definition and then check it in the dictionary.	How would you group the pupils for this activity? What would be the role of the teaching assistant? What strategies might you use to support Lewis?	
Whole-class discussion of results.	How would you encourage Lewis to join in and remember key points from the lesson?	
Evaluation against learning outcomes.	How would you make sure Lewis can evaluate his success in the lesson effectively?	
Scope for including ideas relating to Lewis' strengths and interests.	What, if anything, might you include that relates to Lewis' strengths and interests?	

**Table 4 (primary): What happened in the lesson?**

Primary		What the teacher did
Present intended learning outcomes.	How, if at all, would you differentiate the lesson's intended learning outcomes for Lewis?	The teacher and the teaching assistant had agreed on words for Lewis to define that would be appropriate to his level of understanding.
<p>Remind whole class about alphabetical order.</p> <p>Pupils at front of the class each hold a letter, and move into alphabetical order in response to suggestions of the rest of the class.</p> <p>Whole-class exercise led by teacher and teaching assistant (modelling) – defining a word.</p>	How would you make sure Lewis can contribute to the discussion?	<p>The teacher asked the teaching assistant to practise alphabetical order with Lewis before the lesson so he could help sort the pupils into alphabetical order.</p> <p>The teacher made sure that she framed her questions to Lewis carefully. She used words that were appropriate to his understanding, while the questions challenged him a little. She had noted the questions she was to use on her planning sheet.</p>
Class work in small groups to define a word, record their definition and then check it in the dictionary.	<p>How would you group the pupils for this activity?</p> <p>What would be the role of the teaching assistant?</p> <p>What strategies might you use to support Lewis?</p>	<p>The pupils were in mixed-ability groups, with Lewis' buddy working with him.</p> <p>The teaching assistant sat between Lewis' group and another one, helping both groups and making sure Lewis was able to take part.</p> <p>Lewis had a card with symbols and text on it, to take him through the stages of the task. They were set out on the card so that he was completing a pattern as he filled them in. He also always has a symbols and text card showing the ways he can ask for help.</p>
Whole-class discussion of results.	How would you encourage Lewis to join in and remember key points from the lesson?	The teacher and teaching assistant encouraged Lewis to use his symbols and text card record to prepare comments for the plenary discussion, and the teaching assistant reinforced his learning of key points by reflecting them back to him.

Primary		What the teacher did
Evaluation against learning outcomes.	How would you make sure Lewis can evaluate his success in the lesson effectively?	The school uses a traffic light system for pupils to evaluate their own progress. Lewis' use of this is not very secure, so the teaching assistant checked with him how he felt things had gone.
Scope for including ideas relating to Lewis' strengths and interests.	What, if anything, might you include that relates to Lewis' strengths and interests?	The teacher considered giving Lewis' group words to define that related to football. But other pupils in the group have no interest in the game, so she and the teaching assistant put together a mixture that included football-related words along with a range of others. Other pupils in the group explored multiple definitions of words such as 'score'.

## Differentiating lessons: secondary

### Brief details of the lesson plan

**Subject:** English – analysing the presentation of information on posters, websites etc

Sequence of events

- Present intended learning outcomes
- Whole-class discussion – points to look for in a poster or website page
- Introduction to task
- Small-group work – analyse the messages on a poster
- Groups move around to tell other groups of their conclusions
- Whole-class discussion of conclusions
- Evaluation against learning outcomes

### Student: Anita

Anita is in year 8 of her mainstream secondary school. She has been identified as having MLD and is working at level 3 of the National Curriculum for speaking and listening.

She has excellent relationships with the teaching assistant and a regular buddy, Zoë. She will chat readily to the small group of friends and adults she knows. She greatly enjoys watching an Australian soap opera on TV.

Anita's reading age is three years below her chronological age. Her writing is slow, even on the laptop she enjoys using, and her coordination is not very good. She has a poor memory for instructions from adults, and has problems with personal organisation.

**Table 5 (secondary): How would you support Anita?**

Secondary		Your ideas
<p>Present intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>Distinguish between facts and opinions.</p> <p>Show the writer's arguments and comment on how they are developed.</p> <p>Understand and comment on how information is presented.</p> <p>Understand and evaluate how the writer use language and structure.</p> <p>Select material according to purpose, and collate and compare material from different sources.</p>	<p>How, if at all, would you differentiate the lesson's intended learning outcomes for Anita?</p>	
<p>Introduction to task.</p> <p>Whole-class discussion – points to look for in a poster or website page.</p>	<p>How would you make sure Anita can contribute to the discussion?</p>	
<p>Small-group work – analyse the messages on a poster.</p> <p>Groups move around to tell other groups their conclusions.</p>	<p>How would you group the students for this activity?</p> <p>What would be the role of the teaching assistant?</p> <p>What strategies might you use to support Anita?</p>	
<p>Whole-class discussion of conclusions.</p>	<p>How would you encourage Anita to join in and remember key points from the lesson?</p>	
<p>Evaluation against learning outcomes.</p>	<p>How would you make sure Anita can evaluate her success in the lesson effectively?</p>	
<p>Scope for including ideas relating to Anita's strengths and interests.</p>	<p>What, if anything, might you include that relates to Anita's strengths and interests?</p>	

**Table 6 (secondary): What happened in the lesson?**

Secondary		What the teacher did
<p>Present intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>Distinguish between facts and opinions.</p> <p>Show the writer's arguments and comment on how they are developed.</p> <p>Understand and comment on how information is presented.</p> <p>Understand and evaluate how the writer use language and structure.</p> <p>Select material according to purpose, and collate and compare material from different sources.</p>	<p>How, if at all, would you differentiate the lesson's intended learning outcomes for Anita?</p>	<p>The teacher and the teaching assistant chose a narrower range of concepts for Anita to learn, only including ones they felt would fit with her targets for the half-term.</p>
<p>Introduction to task.</p> <p>Whole-class discussion – points to look for in a poster or website page.</p>	<p>How would you make sure Anita can contribute to the discussion?</p>	<p>The teacher asked the teaching assistant to go through the task with Anita beforehand, making sure that she understood the key ideas. She was then able to join in when asked a question.</p> <p>The teacher made sure that she framed her questions to Anita carefully. She used words appropriate to her understanding, while the questions challenged her a little. She had noted the questions she was going to use on her planning sheet.</p>

**Table 6 (secondary): What happened in the lesson? continued**

Secondary		What the teacher did
<p>Small-group work – analyse the messages on a poster.</p> <p>Groups move around to tell other groups their conclusions.</p>	<p>How would you group the students for this activity?</p> <p>What would be the role of the teaching assistant?</p> <p>What strategies might you use to support Anita?</p>	<p>The students were in mixed-ability groups, with Zoë, Anita's buddy, working with her.</p> <p>The teaching assistant sat between Anita's group and another one, helping both groups and making sure Anita was able to take part at each stage.</p> <p>Anita had access to a laptop to record her conclusions. The teaching assistant set this up before the lesson with some word-processing software that Anita knows well, which incorporates text and symbols.</p>
<p>Whole-class discussion of conclusions.</p>	<p>How would you encourage Anita to join in and remember key points from the lesson?</p>	<p>Anita used her 'log' of the lesson on her laptop to help her remember key points. Her buddy supported her in preparing her comments on the lesson.</p>
<p>Evaluation against learning outcomes.</p>	<p>How would you make sure Anita can evaluate her success in the lesson effectively?</p>	<p>Anita gave her view of her understanding using the 'traffic light' system that is used throughout the school. She also discussed her feelings about the lesson with the teaching assistant afterwards.</p>
<p>Scope for including ideas relating to Anita's strengths and interests.</p>	<p>What, if anything, might you include that relates to Anita's strengths and interests?</p>	<p>The teacher made sure that one of the websites visited in the introduction was from a soap she knew Anita watched.</p>

## Reflecting on the activity

How did you get on?

The following points, which come up in both the primary and secondary lesson records, are worth noting:

- For pupils with MLD, intended learning outcomes often need to be narrowed in scope, rather than 'tracking back' to earlier material
- Questions to pupils with learning difficulties should not be **too** easy, though they should be planned carefully to be sure that the pupil will understand them
- You should vary the pupil groupings over a sequence of lessons, as ability grouping for long periods is likely to be counter-productive for the pupils who are always in the lowest group
- The role of the teaching assistant should be planned to allow the pupils only the support they need to be as independent as possible

## Including pupils with MLD in your lessons



Choose a lesson you taught during your last school placement. Put the details into the relevant template above (table 3 or table 5) and complete the table, considering how you might support a pupil with MLD. When you are next in school, ask the SENCO or the teacher you are working with to discuss with you their approach to differentiating lessons.

## Activity 6

# Introducing the P scales



Approximate timing: 20 minutes



You will need the P scales for speaking and listening to complete this activity – you can find them at: [www.qcda.gov.uk/11979.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/11979.aspx)

You may also wish to look at the films in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) pack, 'Using the P scales', DVD (QCA, 2009 – available from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) Orderline: 0300 303 3015).

The P scales are national performance descriptions that were originally introduced in 1998 to enable teachers to set targets for all pupils working below national curriculum levels. They were introduced "to support the school improvement process through the development of target-setting for all." (QCA/DfEE, 2001)

They are now seen as an important part of the National Curriculum. All schools now report the P scale scores of pupils not working within the national curriculum levels, as part of national curriculum assessment.

The P scales are based on research into early development, applied to the subjects of the National Curriculum. They are 'best-fit' performance descriptions, which rely on teachers' observations and judgements for their application.

There are eight levels in the P scales.

They are not intended to be used for early education settings. The early years foundation stage profile is used in nurseries and reception classes.

The P scales are not meant for everyday use. They are designed to be used for summative assessment, once or twice a year.

### Looking at the P scales



Choose any two subjects and compare their P scales on the QCDA website. You'll notice a difference between levels 1–3 and levels 4–8. The first three levels, which represent very early learning in each subject, are generic – they are the same in every subject, although the examples change. At level P4 and beyond, it is assumed that specific subject learning can be identified.

### Best-fit judgements

Using the P Scales (QCA, 2005) will guide you on how to use the P scales. It also sets out the key elements of best-fit judgements.

Best-fit judgements are based on:

- the teacher's knowledge of the pupil
- contexts in which learning takes place, and
- considering a variety of different forms of evidence over time.

Judgements about the P level a pupil is placed on should not be made on the basis of a single piece of work or any single piece of evidence. However, pupils do not need to repeat responses that their teachers believe are secure (by performing a given skill five times over, for example).


If you are told that a pupil in your class is 'on the P scales', find out how they were assessed and which scale the pupil was placed on. Always make sure you understand the assessment of your pupil's **understanding** (probably recorded through the scale for 'listening: receptive communication'). This can help you decide how you might approach planning for their learning over the next few weeks. The next task suggests how this might happen.



## Curriculum and development: understanding cause and effect

This short task demonstrates the importance of knowing the typical sequence for how children develop over time. You will identify the stages that children typically go through before they can use 'because' consistently and appropriately.

Throughout the National Curriculum, causal reasoning is emphasised. The programmes of study contain many references to 'problem solving', 'understanding the causes of...' and so on. The use of 'cos' or 'because' – the vital conjunction in the explanation of the link between cause and effect – first appears at P8 of the 'speaking: expressive communication' P scales.

 Work with a partner to identify, from the following list, three capabilities that are essential for a child to be able to answer the question 'why?' appropriately, using a sentence starting 'because' or 'cos'. You can use the 'speaking: expressive communication' and 'listening: receptive communication' P scales to help you.

Write the three capabilities in table 7 in what you think is likely to be the order a child typically acquires them.

### Capabilities

- Understanding 'over' and 'under'
- Understanding how to take turns in a group
- Understanding the use of 'before' and 'after'
- Ability to differentiate between activities, for example in playing with toys
- Ability to answer questions appropriately, for example, "Where is the ball?"
- Understanding that cause comes before effect
- Ability to express the sounds 'r' and 'j'

Table 7

1	
2	
3	

Now check the answers.

### Answers

The three essential capabilities are typically acquired in the following order:

- 1 Ability to differentiate between activities, for example in playing with toys
- 2 Understanding the use of 'before' and 'after'
- 3 Understanding that cause comes before effect

Taking turns, answering questions appropriately and expressing particular sounds **might** have some relation to learning how to use 'because', but they are not essential.

Distinguishing between different times when you are doing one thing or another, then placing these events in an order (sequencing) are significant milestones in early development. Awareness that cause comes before effect grows through a range of experiences. Eventually, in conversations with a parent or other adult, children feel confident enough to try answering the question "why?" with "because".

Once you are clear about this developmental sequence, you can consider:

- what teaching or contextual changes will be appropriate for a pupil who has not yet reached the point of being able to use 'because' appropriately, and
- what will be appropriately challenging for an individual at this point.

For example, you can build opportunities into lessons for pupils to practise talking and thinking about sequencing if they are close to being able to use 'because' confidently in a range of applications. For some pupils, this could include activities like getting a toy dressed. For others, it might be about playing games, with other pupils or an adult, that involve sequencing, or working with an ICT resource with the same objective. And for others, it might mean exploring examples of narrative, with plenty of opportunities to practise the sequence of the storyline.

Knowing the ways children typically develop helps you to pitch your teaching effectively. You can avoid asking pupils questions that are beyond their stage of comprehension. For example, if a pupil has only just learnt to use 'before' and 'after' appropriately, you may not have much success with questions like, "Tell me why?" You might do better to work with situations where cause and effect are involved but made into a story – for example, "First we went to the swimming pool and then we changed into our swimming things and then we got into the pool... Suppose we had kept our ordinary clothes on, what would have happened?"

## Activity 7

# Points for action



Approximate timing: 15 minutes

15 mins

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this self-study task and record key points for action below.

What do I want to do next to develop my practice?

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How will I do this?

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What is my timescale for this to happen?

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How will I know if I have been successful?

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Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

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# References

Fletcher-Campbell, F, Moderate Learning Difficulties, in Lewis, A and Norwich, B, 2005, Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for inclusion, Open University Press

Gathercole, S E and Alloway, T P, 2008, Working Memory and Learning: A practical guide for teachers, Sage Publications

Kelly, N and Norwich, B, Pupils' Views on Inclusion: Moderate learning difficulties and bullying in mainstream and special schools, British Educational Research Journal, 30(1), pages 43–65, 2004

QCA, 2005, Using the P Scales: Assessing, moderating and reporting pupil attainment in English, mathematics and science at levels P4 to P8 – available online at:

**[www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/pscales\\_guidance\\_bklet.pdf](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/pscales_guidance_bklet.pdf)**

# Appendix

## Links you might have made

**Table 2: Issues and strategies – links you might have made**

Learning issue	Possible links	Approaches
Maintaining an inclusive learning environment		Use drama and role-play
		Give pupils time to consider questions
		Plan self-checks at each stage of a task – eg a self-tick flow chart on laptop
		Use visual timetables, prompt cards with pictures to remind pupils what to do
		Target praise
Multi-sensory approaches, including ICT		Use browsers that simplify website presentation (eg cut down the number of pictures)
		Word banks
		Writing frames
		Put up writing/symbol/picture posters showing ways to behave/tackle a learning task
		Enlarge print
Working with additional adults		Work with teaching assistant to check pupils' understanding of questions and tasks
		Structured questioning with teacher support/scaffolding of response
		Make a mind map or other visual representation of what pupils already know
Managing peer relationships effectively		Make an audio recording to record steps in the task
		Use presentation or simulation software to help pupils work through a sequence of behaviour they find hard – eg working in a group
Adult-pupil communication		Minimise writing to concentrate on physical activity
		Use buddying to support the pupil
Formative assessment/ assessment for learning		Store resources where all pupils have access to them
		Teaching assistant goes over key vocabulary and ideas with the pupil before the lesson
Motivation		Display key words on the wall, with pictures/symbols
		Physically demonstrate tasks
Memory/ consolidation		Repeat information in different ways
		Use 'concrete', visual or audio materials to support pupils' understanding

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