Hampshire Services

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Personal Education Plan toolkit

Identification of children's and young people's needs with supportive strategies and interventions within the school setting

Hampshire Virtual School for Children in Care
Children's Services Department

Hampshire County Council

www.hants.gov.uk

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Foreword by Brian Pope

It is well known that there is a large discrepancy between the educational outcomes of children in care and those in the general population and that, despite the challenges that many of our children in care face, we should be enabling them to achieve much better outcomes. We know that colleagues in schools and from across Children's Services share our commitment to improve the education of the children in our care, but sometimes find it difficult to identify the specific areas of need that require intervention. Consequently this makes it increasingly difficult to plan appropriately to meet these needs, engage the children in their learning and thus support them to attain the educational outcomes to which they are entitled. In this pioneering and important piece of work we have provided school and Children's Services staff with clear guidelines on how to identify, and then meet, the needs of children in care in educational settings. We know that children in care generally do not differ in their cognitive ability to their peers but their educational attainments are significantly lower. This toolkit will provide information that will help those working with this vulnerable group of children and young people to identify specific areas of need that may be impacting on educational outcomes. In addition, it will offer practical guidance on how best to meet these needs and thus raise attainment. The toolkit is divided into two sections. The first section is a needs identification tool which will guide staff in identifying particular behaviours, skill deficits, cognitions and emotional difficulties that are affecting learning. The areas of need that we have identified as being the most frequently cited by educational and social care staff as requiring targeted intervention are: difficulties with adult relationships, difficulties with peer relationships, difficulties with executive functioning skills (for example, organisation and planning, attention and concentration), difficulties with self-regulation of behaviour and learning, poor motivation, a negative self-concept and specific difficulties around language and communication. The second section has a chapter devoted to each of the areas of need, with practical guidance for staff on how best to meet these needs. However, in identifying specific needs, staff also need to be mindful of the strengths of the children and the situations in which these difficulties are not present, as this is as important to identify when planning interventions.

We hope you find this toolkit useful.

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Foreword by Anwen Foy

Children in care have, more often than not, experienced relational trauma and loss; this of course is not just exclusive to children in care but also to wider vulnerable groups. This means that engaging in school life can be very difficult for them. These children and young people can present us with a wide range of behaviours in an attempt to communicate to us how they are feeling.

The purpose of this toolkit is to enable schools to have a way of identifying and understanding children and young people in care in terms of their unmet needs and areas of difficulty. Effective use of the toolkit will support schools with their recognition and management of children in care through clear identification of need and suggested interventions, thus assisting the Personal Education Planning (PEP) process.

The need for this toolkit and associated guidance became evident to Hampshire's Virtual School team as a result of our collaborative work with schools, settings and other partners, to raise and improve educational outcomes of children in care. We know that there is the will and moral purpose to achieve this and that progress has been made. However, standards for children in care remain unacceptably low.

The PEP Toolkit is now widely used by schools to help identify the specific needs of children and young people who are looked after as well as wider vulnerable groups of pupils. As a result, teachers have been able to adapt their practice or put in place strategies to secure learning to bring about better outcomes.

Schools and settings educate children, and the local authority provides challenge and support to achieve high standards for all children. In this instance our focus is on those in our care, and it is important that we support schools and settings to devise effective Personal Education Plans (PEPs) that enable pupils to achieve good educational outcomes. Most children in care do not differ in their ability to access the curriculum but their educational outcomes are generally poorer than those of their peers. This is related to the many other factors influencing their learning which we hope have been captured in this document. The needs identification and guideline information are intended to help staff in schools, settings and social care recognise where the difficulties lie and to offer ideas for classroom management, together with specific teaching strategies and interventions that can be incorporated into the PEP.

We trust you will find the toolkit and guidance useful in enabling you understand the needs of children and young people in care and to secure good educational outcomes for them.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following:

- **Family Futures Consortium**, whose work we have drawn on extensively in this document and who have kindly given us permission to reproduce some of this work. Family Futures has made a significant and pioneering contribution to this field and also provides training for teachers and educationalists. Family Futures also offers an intensive assessment and treatment programme for children who are fostered or adopted. Family Futures is an adoption support and adoption agency.

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- **PAC**, whose work has been drawn on extensively in this document and who kindly gave their permission to reproduce their work. PAC offers advice, information and support to anyone involved in adoption and other forms of permanent care, including:
  - adoptive families and other families with permanently placed children
  - adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents and other permanent carers
  - individual adults adopted as children
  - birth parents and birth relatives of adopted children, and of now adult adopted children
  - professionals working in adoption and permanent care.

  PAC's services include: daily advice line; individual counselling; family therapy; support with contact arrangements between adoptive and birth families; intermediary services for birth relatives and adopted adults; drop-ins for birth mothers whose children have been compulsorily removed; workshops, groups and seminars for all parties to adoption and permanent care; professional consultation and training; training for education staff.

  PAC's counsellors are professionally qualified in counselling/psychotherapy and/or social work and have a wide range of experience and training in all aspects of adoption and permanent placement.

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  www.pac.org.uk/Schools

- **Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS)** for all their advice when developing the needs identification and specifically Kate Ripley with all her years of experience and research in the area of language and development in children and young people.

  The authors would also like to thank HEPS for their permission to reproduce some of the work. This is especially in reference to the chapter on *Motivation and locus of control*, and specific acknowledgements need to go to Dr Roger Norgate, John Burrell, Kate Hancock and Jackie Bachelor for their pioneering work in this area.
- **Dr Cara Osborne** from HEPS Research and Development Team for her support in the final edit of this document.
- **Rachel Allen** for her commentary on the strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- **Paul Dix** for his kind permission to reproduce his work *Tweaking teaching to transform trouble*, Pivotal Education Ltd:

  www.PivotalEducation.com.
- **Tina Rae** for her kind permission to reproduce her work on self-esteem and personal resiliency builders. Tina is a senior educational psychologist in the London Borough of Hillingdon and the emotional literacy co-ordinator for Chantry SEBD school in West Yiewsley.
- **Peter Galvin** for permission to reproduce some of his work.
- **Speechmark Publishing** for permission to reproduce some of the work from *Emotional well-being – an introductory handbook*.
- The **Nurture Group Network** for their kind permission to refer to their work. For further information please refer to their website:

  www.nurturegroups.org/pages/who-we-are.
- The **Virtual School administration team** – Geraldine Lawrence, Sharon Adamson and Janet Cox, for their extensive work in proof reading this document.

Introduction

Attachment begins in pregnancy and develops throughout infancy and toddlerhood. It is the bond that grows between a parent and their child through affectionate feelings, thoughts and actions. Touch, eye contact, smells, smiles, parental control and, most of all, joy and attunement play a major role in this process. A positive attachment triggers a heart and mind development in the child that lays the foundation for future relationships; a safe and sensitive first experience of a close relationship equips the child to form healthy relationships with self and others in the future (Cocking and Georgiades, 2003). The first three years of a child's life are particularly important in determining how they form relationships with others in the future. For a baby, human contact and interaction is part of survival and it will engage other humans to get its needs met by any means necessary (Cocking and Georgiades, 2003). If a baby's basic needs are not met by its carers in a consistent, caring way, its expectations and ways of engaging with the world become distorted. One of the child's biggest fears is of no human contact at all. Therefore, it is better to have cries met with anger and irritation than to be ignored. If this is a persistent pattern in the child's early life, they begin to lose the ability to tell the difference between positive and negative attention or to value one over the other. Their aim is to avoid being forgotten and neglected (Cocking and Georgiades, 2003). Children and young people with these difficulties may act out these feelings of rejection with teachers at school as these are the child's attachment figures in the school. In fact, the more maternal the teacher (male or female) the more likely they are to experience this type of behaviour from the pupil with attachment difficulties.

Some children with disrupted patterns of attachment have had early histories that have left them feeling completely out of control of their destiny. They have been moved between their birth parents, relatives, foster carers or childcare institutions a number of times. Even when this decision has been made, the children may remain in foster care for some time before suitable adoptive parents are found. Even though social workers work hard to prepare children for moves, the impact on the child goes beyond an intellectual understanding of why and where and whom. Many children recount their life stories with little prompting. What is often missing from these stories is the sensory, emotional and psychological experience of this history, the impact of which cannot be underestimated. It is not surprising, therefore, that once such a child is old enough, they begin to find ways of taking control of their environment and relationships. Their aim is to escape from the feelings of helplessness and chaos in their lives (Cocking and Georgiades, 2003).

In school, difficulties stemming from this early disruptive history may manifest in one or more areas, including relationships with teachers and peers, problems with school work, and in more general emotional and behavioural difficulties. In order to best meet the needs of looked-after children (LAC) in school, it is critical that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is thorough and comprehensive, clearly identifying the specific needs and outlining appropriate related interventions. The following toolkit is designed as a way of helping school staff and social workers achieve this aim. However, it must be mentioned that not all LAC experience the difficulties identified in this document and some are happy, well-adjusted children and young people. This needs to be borne in mind when using the needs identification toolkit and a focus on the pupil's strengths and resiliency is also of utmost importance.

Much of the information in the introduction has been taken from Cocking and Georgiades, *Working with adopted and fostered children in education* (a publication from the PAC, 2003) and used with their kind permission.

Administration guidelines

Who is this toolkit for?

The toolkit is designed to be used as an aid to writing Personal Education Plans (PEPs) in school, so can be used by school staff and social workers.

Who is the tool designed to be used with?

The tool is designed to be used primarily with looked-after children (LAC) when writing their PEPs.

In addition, it may be appropriate to use the tool with children and young people who have been adopted, who are on the edge of care, who currently or previously have had some social care involvement or who live with extended family members as part of an Inclusion Partnership Agreement.

The items in the profile have been specifically developed from a literature review identifying the most frequently occurring behaviours, cognitions, affective (mood) states and specific skill deficits found in children and young people who have been in care or are on the edge of care. It must, however, be noted that not all children and young people in care or on the edge of care will present with difficulties, and it is important to focus on resiliency factors in addition to needs.

Purpose of the toolkit

The PEP toolkit is specifically designed to provide a structure for gathering and recording information being sought from the adults supporting a pupil, in order to plan appropriate interventions and monitor their effectiveness over a period of time.

The pupil/young person's voice

This toolkit is specifically designed to gain the perspective of the adults around a pupil/young person. However, it is also advisable to complete the PEP with the pupil/young person, to help plan appropriate interventions, taking into consideration their perspectives.

Personal Education Plan toolkit – needs analysis tool

Use this tool to support the summary of needs that are causing a barrier to learning. Information from the Care Plan and Health Plan should be used when identifying needs. Consider the following questions in relation to the behaviours, actions, cognitions, skills and emotions the pupil demonstrates.

Note: The following are to be used just as a guide. The following areas of need are not necessarily fixed and they may change depending on factors such as mood, the nature and quality of the relationship the child/young person is in and whether the child/young person is in a situation they find particularly challenging or anxiety provoking.

It may also be useful when considering these questions, to contemplate in what situations these behaviours do not occur, as these can be just as powerful when designing support and intervention.

Does the child/young person	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Deny the need for support from the teacher?					
Appear sensitive to the proximity of the teacher?					
Need consistency from the teacher?					
Show hostility to the adult/teacher if directed?					
Appear sensitive to tone of voice, body language, perceived warmth of the teacher?					
Have a constant need for adult/teacher attention?					
Show dependence on the adult/teacher?					
Direct hostility to the adult/teacher when frustrated?					
Have difficulties showing trust to adults? (They may say adults are against them or feel they are being persecuted.)					
Show controlling/power-seeking tendencies especially when directed by an adult?					
Sometimes seek/respond to affectionate contact and reject it at other times?					
Engage in regressive behaviours with the adult (ie acting in a baby-like manner)?					
Crave affection/approval of adults but remain insecure when reassurance is given?					
Resent the adult giving approval to other pupils?					

Does the child/young person have difficulties	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Maintaining normal physical boundaries with peers?					
Making appropriate verbal requests to other pupils who may be in their way?					
Abiding by the rules of the group?					
Accommodating other pupils when they play/ socialise?					
Playing/working alongside others without interfering/causing disturbance?					
Showing genuine interest in other pupils/ activities/narratives?					
Showing empathy for others?					
Making genuine and reciprocal friendships with other children/young people?					
Playing/interacting with more than one other child/young person and experimenting with the differing roles taken in group games and activities?					
Showing appreciation for the work of others?					
Being positive to their peers, eg: • is the pupil disparaging of others? • does the pupil remember real/imagined offences – bear grudges to peers? • does the pupil bully/intimidate/use force with peers?					

Does the child/young person have difficulties with	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Planning/organisation? This is when pupils have: difficulties setting goals in their learning; difficulties planning steps needed to reach a goal and work through these steps in a timely manner; difficulties planning their work; difficulties breaking down work into smaller tasks; a tendency to avoid work they think they cannot do; difficulties organising their school bag, resources, desk and locker; a tendency to arrive at a lesson without the required resources.					
Inhibiting their behaviour? This is the ability to stop one's behaviour at the appropriate time; not acting on one's immediate impulse. These pupils will often shout out in class or appear out of control. They may show particular difficulties in non-structured periods and activities as they need the presence of an external regulator to assist them in managing their impulses.					
Shifting? This is the ability to move from one activity to another and make smooth transitions within any problem-solving activity. Pupils with difficulties in these areas tend: to be inflexible in their approach and can find it difficult to switch from one lesson to another; to become disorientated by change; to not be able to move on from a playground dispute. In addition, difficulties in these areas may lead to problems with generalisation. Pupils may have learnt a skill in one context but find it difficult to apply this knowledge in another; a high level of adult bridging will be required to transfer the skill.					
Initiating? Pupils with difficulties in this area may find it difficult to start a task independently; even things they enjoy. They may find it difficult to generate ideas and come up with problem-solving strategies.					
Working memory? The ability to use working memory involves the ability to hold information in one's mind in order to complete a task. Pupils with difficulties in this area tend to forget complex instructions and cannot manage multi-step tasks.					

The table on this page has been adapted from *Attachment, developmental trauma and executive functioning difficulties in the school setting* with kind permission from the Family Futures Consortium.

Does the child/young person have difficulties with	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Monitoring? Pupils who have difficulties with monitoring find it difficult to see their behaviour as others perceive it and find it difficult to understand the affect it can have on others. It also includes being able to monitor one's work and achievement. Pupils who are unable to monitor their work tend to make mistakes and do not have the ability to check over their work. They may not understand why they have a poor mark and may believe they are being treated unfairly. The failure to monitor the effect of one's behaviour on others can also lead to peer problems or problems with adult relationships.					
Impulsivity and attention control? Does the child/young person: • appear impulsive? • require immediate gratification? • have difficulty in sustaining attention in tasks? • have difficulties following through on instructions? • fail to finish their work? • avoid/dislike tasks that require sustained mental effort? • tend to be easily distracted? • tend to be forgetful in daily activities? • fidget with hands/squirm in seat? • call out answers to questions before they are completed? • have difficulty waiting for their turn? • have a tendency to interrupt others?					

Does the child/young person	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Have difficulties calming themselves down after an altercation? What is the approximate time taken to calm down?					
Have uncontrolled/unpredictable emotional outbursts (eg to release/relieve pent-up anger/aggression/anxiety)?					
Have difficulties in controlling reactions when they do not get immediate attention (poor frustration tolerance)?					
Overreact to affection or attention (eg may become overexcited, loud, boisterous)?					

Does the child/young person have difficulties	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Recognising when they are underachieving?					
Making efforts to improve?					
Working towards tangible rewards?					
Responding to positive social reinforcement (eg a smile/verbal praise)?					
Accepting constructive feedback?					
Maintaining confidence when learning new skills?					
Attending school for tests/exams?					
Readily answering questions?					
Relating success in schoolwork to themselves (eg their own efforts/strategies used)?					
Enjoying classroom responsibilities?					
Enjoying the process of learning?					
Enjoying the times when they are given a choice in what they learn?					
Believing they can succeed?					
Persevering with challenging tasks?					

Does the child/young person	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Explode into temper/rage/violence when thwarted/frustrated/criticised?					
React hyper-sensitively to the criticism of others?					
Spoil, or show negativity, to the achievements of others?					
React defensively when there is a perceived threat?					
Ever imagine others are against them?					
Have difficulties taking responsibility for their own actions/blame others/make excuses/ deny?					
Appear self-denigrating/self-demeaning? Do they have difficulty accepting compliments?					
Appear listless/lacking in motivation/works only with direct support?					
Find it difficult to accept when disapproval is shown or when attention is withdrawn?					
Find it difficult to accept imperfection in their work?					
Have difficulty in telling people what they are good at?					
Have a negative body image?					
Display a high level of anxiety in the classroom (maybe demonstrated by controlling power seeking behaviour)?					
Have difficulties accepting not knowing things and asking for help from others?					

For their age, does the child/young person have difficulties in their first language with	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
Phonic attack skills?					
Receptive language?					
Reading comprehension?					
Expressive language?					
Letter sounds?					
Expressive grammar skills?					
Narrative organisation skills?					
Expressing age-appropriate vocabulary?					
Using language flexibly?					
Use of homonyms/synonyms?					
Understanding maths concepts?					
Understanding abstract concepts?					
Intelligibility of speech sounds?					
Retelling stories using appropriate vocabulary, expressive language, speech sounds, grammatical structure?					
Appearing to misunderstand or get the wrong end of the stick? This often provides amusement to peers, and sometimes may appear deliberate when it is not.					
Shouting out answers that appear random and unrelated to the topic being discussed?					
Age-appropriate thinking and problem-solving skills, such as visual spatial tasks and practical skills that do not involve language?					

Reflect on the responses to the questions and look at where the frequency of ticks occur for each section. Correspond with the colour-coded table below to help you identify the underlying needs of the looked-after child. You can then refer to the relevant pages in the handbook to gain further insight and knowledge about these needs and decide on possible suitable interventions; there are also useful suggestions and strategies to help teachers to support the pupil. This needs identification can be photocopied for each child/young person with whom it is to be used.

Identified need of looked-after child	**Refer to the chapter on page**
Adult relationships	15
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Adult relationships

Research suggests that looked-after children (LAC) often have difficulties forming relationships with adults. Sadly, some children spend the first months or years of their lives being told how bad they are. For others, though, their lack of worth may not actually be expressed in words but in actions or lack of action. Being beaten, punched, kicked, bitten or burnt is more than enough to demonstrate to anybody that they are unworthy of love or care. Having to find one's own food, being abandoned or living in squalor and excrement understandably will affect one's view of life. Even being placed for adoption as a baby can lead to profound feelings of worthlessness. When all this is put into context, one can begin to see the dark cloud of shame under which these youngsters live; it is not surprising that many of these young people have difficulties trusting adults which may lead to difficulties in their relationships with adults (Allen, 2008).

Suggested strategies and interventions

General

The following interventions have been taken from Cocking and Georgiades' (2003) *Working with adopted and fostered children in education* a publication from PAC and reproduced with their permission.

When welcoming a new pupil into the classroom, most teachers go out of their way to help that pupil fit in as quickly as possible. For the pupil with attachment difficulties, some of the usual strategies may need to be modified.

- Sitting the pupil at the front of the classroom is recommended, if possible close to a wall, as this will help them **stay focused** straight ahead rather than be distracted by things around and behind them. They are also in a position to have more direct eye contact and non-verbal communication with the class teacher. If a pupil is trying to monopolise the teacher's time with trivial questions, **clear boundaries** need to be set around this from the start. The teacher should use an **empathic but firm** tone and try to avoid sounding irritated or angry, eg *"Donna, I know you have questions to ask. Please make a note of them, and I will come to you when I am ready, I have not forgotten you".*

Support and consistency

The following interventions are adapted from Cocking and Georgiades' (2003) *Working with adopted and fostered children in education* publication from PAC, reproduced with their kind permission.

- **The home-school partnership** is essential for meeting these pupils' needs. Communication between home and school should be carried out directly between the adults. **The child should never be used as an intermediary or to convey information to and from their carers**. Information can become distorted and misinterpreted by the pupil, consciously or unconsciously, which can lead to a breakdown in communication and relations.

- It is important that all the adults involved with the pupil have regular **meetings** to share fruitful strategies and to ensure they are using a consistent approach.
- Although **lines of communication** should remain open between home and school, **what happens at home, in terms of misbehaviour, should be dealt with at home and what happens at school should be dealt with at school**.
- Contact with home is important. This could be achieved through permission to receive phone calls at lunchtime to remind them that they are loved and being thought about.
- Be aware that the child may try to get you to reject them in some way. A child who has deep-rooted feelings of anger, low self-worth and fear may unconsciously project these feelings into the pupil-teacher relationship. These pupils can provoke very **negative reactions** in teachers and thus reinforce their own feelings of self-doubt and worthlessness. This **transference** is very powerful. A space for the teacher to talk and recognise this process with other staff is helpful when trying to recognise and work with it.
- Be aware of **short-term memory problems** due to the child's need in the past to be hypervigilant. Their failure to retain information should not be interpreted as defiance. They may need instructions or information repeated several times. Check that the pupil comprehends instructions and help them to stay emotionally connected with what is going on by repeating and reinforcing information, rather than extending support time.
- Staff changes can be a real **source of anxiety for pupils** with attachment difficulties. They may experience all kinds of fantasies about what has happened to Miss/Sir or feel responsible in some way for the member of staff being off work. Pupils with attachment difficulties are likely to need more **information and reassurance** than other pupils about staff changes in order to reduce their anxiety. Give the pupil as much notice as possible of forthcoming changes.
- When pupils do form attachments to the teacher, transition times such as moving from classroom to classroom, school to school or term breaks can evoke **unconscious feelings of abandonment**. The imminent loss involved in these situations triggers a high level of anxiety and a number of the behaviours described earlier. To pre-empt and minimise this behaviour, thought needs to be given to the way in which such transitions take place.
- The **end of the school year** can be particularly distressing for these children as endings are often associated with loss and rejection, so this time needs to be handled particularly sensitively. The child/young person will need some kind of visual reminder of the special times they had in the previous year, for example, photographs with their teacher and teaching assistant (TA) in differing contexts (eg school trips, the classroom, playground activities). The present class teacher/form tutor and TA will need to talk to the child/young person and reinforce to them that they understand how hard this change is for them. They need to also reinforce that they will still be around if they want to see them. If the TA can stay with the child when transitioning into the next class this would be ideal. It is also important that transition visits take place so the child can get to know the new teacher and new environment. It may also be useful to write a therapeutic story for the child in preparation for the move and what is going to happen.

Please contact Hampshire Educational Psychology Service for more information on how to write therapeutic stories: **heps.enquiries@hants.gov.uk**.

Boundaries and discipline

As the adult, it is the teacher's responsibility to understand that LAC often have a history of rejection and expect, and even provoke, further rejection from adults in their lives. It is, therefore, imperative to avoid getting into control battles and to be self-aware of how we react to and deal with the behaviour that manifests as a result of the pupil's background.

The following interventions have been reproduced with kind permission from M Allen (2008) *Attachment, developmental trauma and executive functioning difficulties in the school setting* (Family Futures Publication).

- **Reprimands** – keeping the reprimand **succinct and focused** enables the pupil to recognise your awareness of the misdemeanour and their need to take **responsibility for their actions**, whilst **minimising the possibility that shame** will lead to **anger**, **denial** or **dissociation**. Do not expect them to be able to tell you why they have behaved the way they have; they may well be unable to answer you.
- Try to **avoid long**, **drawn-out enquiries** to elicit the truth. **Do not** be tempted to **demand eye contact**. You may feel that a lack of eye contact demonstrates rudeness, but this can be incredibly difficult for a looked-after child since it can replicate early experiences. In actual fact, they do not need to actually look at you to hear you. They may be sinking in shame and imagining and predicting consequences in their mind before you even start talking. They are probably very afraid.
- **Consequences** – **sanctions and consequences** need to be specifically related **to the behaviour** and to be **short term**. These pupils **cannot** manage systems that **incorporate several lives** or that **build up in severity**. Sanctions that build up in severity may encourage pupils to believe they are unable to manage and **lead to escalating behaviour** to get the consequence out of the way. In effect, the pupil will live up to their own (and their perception of your) expectations to try to alleviate the suspense and to save themselves extra worry. Consequences that add to their shame, eg waiting outside a teacher's office or having to spend time in another class as the naughty person will confirm their belief about their unworthiness and will compound the shame with which they live constantly. Isolation can be traumatising for a looked-after child who spent much of their early life alone and neglected. Waiting for a consequence will prevent a child from focusing on anything else. Try to ensure that consequences fit the behaviour, are short and completed sooner rather than later, and that the episode is then finished – a line is drawn under it; it is not counted towards further sanctions and it is not referred to again when they do not manage next time.
- **Use of sanctions** – these pupils can feel an overwhelming **sense of shame**. When they behave badly, they let themselves down as much as the adults around them. They fulfil their own expectations of themselves; they feel they are rubbish and their rubbish behaviour is a self-fulfilling prophecy. **Preventing these pupils from participating in class rewards, school trips, etc, or placing them in isolation, adds to their feelings of rejection and shame and can inflame memories of their early trauma. If given three lives towards these, they may use all the lives**. They do not mean to, but they may be unable to control themselves, especially with the added pressure of desperately wanting to avoid rejection, but at the same time, subconsciously inviting it.

The following suggestions have been adapted from Cocker and Georgiades' (2003) *Working with adopted and fostered children in education* and reproduced with the permission of PAC.

- **Use of sanctions and consequences** – there may be occasions when you need to think about how best to deal with a pupil's behaviour. Here I would suggest you tell the pupil that you are struggling to think about how you can best help them, that you will need some time to get it right and that you will let them know what will happen when you have figured it out. This strategy, if applied sparingly, will allow you time to think and, perhaps, to seek advice from colleagues.
- These pupils need **immediate consequences for good and bad behaviour** so that they can learn to think about the choices they make. There should not be a countdown or warning, such as, *"If you do that again …"*, consequences must occur **immediately and consistently** to create a feeling of security and predictability. These boundaries and consequences should be **presented with empathy and with as little anger as possible**. They should be presented as a choice the child has made rather than as a punishment, for example: *"It's a shame you drew all over the wall with crayons. You can clean it off and come and join us again in the playground when you have finished".*
- As with a younger child who is learning the consequences of their actions, you may need to help them with the task. Give clear, consistent guidance and boundaries that support the pupil in **making choices and dealing with the consequences of these choices**. This helps the pupil to think and take responsibility, for example: *"Because you haven't done your homework, you will have to do it in break time. It must be difficult to miss break, but please feel free to join us in the playground once you have finished"*.
- Remember, this pupil may be functioning at the emotional level of a much younger child. Do not assume that the pupil has **internalised the difference between right and wrong**. When you discuss a pupil's behaviour attempt to make possible links as to why they may feel the need to behave that way. However, do not allow these reasons to get in the way of setting appropriate boundaries and appropriate consequences for misbehaviour.
- Encourage the pupil to think and understand the choices they have made with their behaviour. **Avoid getting into control battles** with these pupils. As well as offering choices which you determine, try to verbalise the pupil's needs. Give them lots of opportunity to practise/role-play appropriate behaviour, for example: *"Let's practise trusting someone else to take charge"*.
- **Time out** – some find that using a time out card is helpful when they feel their anxiety levels rising. Other pupils who have experienced neglect or abandonment find time out very difficult. These pupils need to have their time out from an activity or class in the presence of someone else, preferably in a quiet area of the classroom where they can see and hear you. Consequences for breaking boundaries should be **clear**. They may take the form of time out or rest time. Any time out should consist of doing something less enjoyable than being in the classroom, for example schoolwork, a cleaning or tidying activity, or simply looking at a wall with no attention from the teacher.
- **Praise** – pupils with attachment difficulties have a tendency to **self-sabotage**. They believe themselves to be worthless and find it difficult to cope with anything that contradicts this belief. Strategies such as behaviour charts or contracts can be tried, but may not work as they provide the opportunity to self-sabotage. **Praising** the pupil for good work, personal

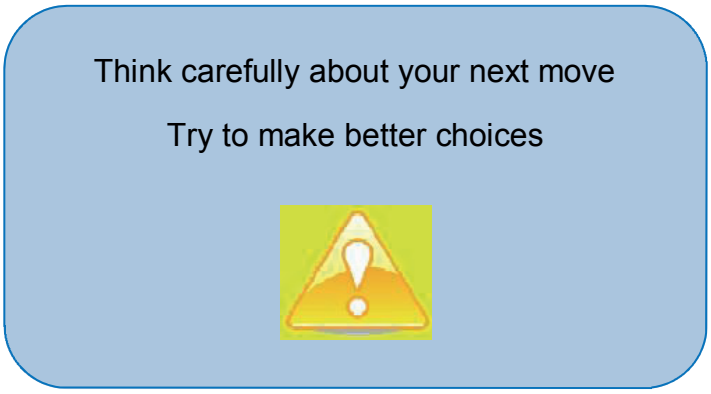
organisation and generally good behaviour is very important, **but most effective if done in a low-key manner**. Too much enthusiastic praise may create a desire to self-sabotage. It may be useful to link the praise to a small additional task, for example: *"Well done, now I wonder if you could … as well?"*

- **Public praise**, in school assemblies for example, may be difficult for the looked-after child. This is best kept specific and short. Remember children and young people who have been sexually abused may have very negative associations with praise, and phrases such as, *"Being a good girl"*, may trigger distressful memories.
- **Do not insist on eye contact** during times of talking through incidents. Pupils who have attachment difficulties find eye contact particularly threatening and anxiety provoking. Comments such as: *"Look me in the eye so I know you are telling the truth"* are not appropriate.
- For **minor misdemeanours** the only question could be simply: *"What could you have done differently?"* This may help the pupil think.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on in helping the children and young people develop more positive adult relationships.

As mentioned above, boundaries and consequences should be presented with empathy and as little anger as possible. They should be presented as a choice the child has made, not as a punishment. In order to help the child understand their actions and the consequences of their choices, give the pupil a chance to think and take responsibility. This could be done discreetly by placing this card on the pupil's desk. It is necessary to explain the use of this card to pupils before it becomes a strategy in your classroom and it is useful to invite them to talk to you after the lesson if they have received the card, but this is their choice.



Try to help the child think about right from wrong and consequences as a reflection following an incident.

The following questions are useful to ask a student to reflect upon independently, paired, or in small groups where appropriate, or through a one-to-one discussion with the teacher. Choose the questions you think may be appropriate for the student and the situation.

Ask the pupil to answer each question honestly and reassure them that the first step to putting things right is to recognise what is wrong.

1 How does your behaviour affect your learning?

2 How does your behaviour affect the learning of other, well-behaved students in the class?

3 How many times this year has the duty manager/head of year (or other adult in school with this role) been called for you? Have there been occasions when the duty manager should have been called because of your bad behaviour?

4 How many poor behaviour slips/behaviour comments in logbook (or other school system) have been written for your behaviour?

5 Does other students' bad behaviour stop you learning well? Write down their names and what it is they do to affect your learning.

6 Make a list of the type of behaviours you show in a lesson that could be described as disruptive or making it harder for others to learn.

7 Do your carers (parents) know what your behaviour is like in school? What do you think they will feel about it?

8 What do you think students who want to listen and learn feel about you talking when the teacher is addressing the class? How do you think they feel when you mess around and the teacher gets cross? How do you think they feel when the teacher stops the lesson to tell you off? Do you think your classmates want you to remain in the class behaving badly?

9 Make a list of the behaviours that let other students learn easily and allow the teacher to lead the learning in the classroom.

10 Think of a recent lesson where your behaviour was poor. Imagine your carers (parents) were outside the classroom watching the lesson through CCTV with (name of senior teacher/head). What would they see and hear that would embarrass, surprise or upset them? Write a detailed report of the lesson and, using a different coloured pen, write the comments that you think your parents would make as they see what you are doing. At the end write down what you think the teacher might have felt about your behaviour and how the lesson went.

11 Write a report on your behaviour this term for each of the following subjects: mathematics, English, science, French, history, geography, personal, social and health education (PSHE), physical education (PE), creative and performing arts (CAPA). Write the report as if you were the teacher reporting to a senior teacher/head. For each subject write down one target that you think the teacher would like to set you.

12 Write down the types of activities where you always behave well (eg quiet reading, discussion, making things).

13 Do you find learning easy? What activities/subjects do you find hard?

14 Write down a list of class rules that you feel are needed to make sure everyone is able to learn free from distraction.

15 Write down three things that you are going to do to enable you to rejoin your class successfully.

Repair and rebuild relationships

The classroom should not be a place where the teacher feels the responsibility to control the behaviour of pupils, but one where students are empowered to take control of their learning and shown how to take responsibility for their own behaviour. In some classrooms there is a constant battle where there is a perception of winners and losers, this ends up with someone having to accept defeat and this is often the pupil. This can lead to the pupil having to pay for losing one way or another and be subject to appropriate sanctions. The sanctions sometimes reflect the teacher's opportunity to prove a point and an expectation that the behaviour will stop. If the pupil perceives the teacher has the victory over this classroom battle and they have wrongly been sanctioned, then further rebellion may well be planned for some time! Or on the other hand, the fear of more humiliation and further sanctions may lead to the behaviour temporarily ceasing until confidence and anger builds again for round two.

The key is to consider what has been going on under the surface. Is there the chance of learning being more likely for that student? Is learning likely to be more effective for the rest of the class? Are hostilities over, or is it merely a temporary ceasefire?

It cannot be stressed enough that the resolution of conflicts will allow the real work of the teacher to enable learning. It is about developing relationships of trust and respect.

Respect

Underpinning the relationships, of course, is **respect**. This is a dominant factor for young people and depicted in much of the media with which they associate. Phrases about working not being cool seem tame to adults, but, for a 15-year-old boy who is labelled a swot life can be intolerable. They can be bullied, physically and emotionally. There are ways around this social exclusion for young people. They include adopting the style of one of the various trendy groups – taking on clothing and hairstyles of a particular group – usually with its related music. This becomes a source of conflict with school uniforms and codes of dress. Another way around it is to show elements of aggressive behaviour, often linked to an anti-authority image, which again will lead to conflict with school. Of course all of this is related to a looked-after child's sense of self and fulfilling their need for a firm identity and affiliation to a group of people.

Alternatively it may be the reverse, an ultra pacifism showing itself as self-exclusion from society. Respect also comes from adopting the tactic of not engaging in areas where you are likely to fail. In the classroom context, this means that for most boys (and an increasing numbers of girls) it makes sense to opt out of – or even become antagonistic towards – academic success. Young people stop reading for pleasure. They avoid showing pleasure in academic success. They seek to divert the cause of their lack of success away from any hint of personal lack of ability and towards an external cause – usually taking the form of the teacher. Here lies the source of much of the conflict in our classrooms. Teachers must take time to understand the real issues underlying apparent challenges to their authority. Make sure that the students know that it is the teacher who decides the culture of the classroom and determines what is and what is not acceptable. The successful teachers, however, do this in such a way as to avoid direct challenges to the student's respect. It is done by maintaining consistently and openly that the problem is a particular behaviour and that the student has a choice as to how to deal with the

conflict, bearing in mind that there will be automatic logical consequences of their choices. Finally, however, it is about reinforcing the message that the problem is the behaviour, not the pupil, by taking the opportunity to repair and rebuild relationships as soon as possible. It is this crucial element that is behind the comment that: *"Mr X is strict but he is fair"*. It is the way to ensure that behaviour is challenged – not the integrity of the individual.

The tactics

Repairing relationships is not rocket science. Keep it simple and consistent. At the lowest level the teacher would simply acknowledge the acceptance of the instruction given by something as simple as positive eye contact, a tap on the shoulder as you pass by, a nod or even a thumbs up sign if the student is able to accept this acknowledgement publicly. For more serious incidents the teacher may feel that a private word is better. The closer this is to the incident the better, though sometimes it might be better to leave it until the end of the lesson if the student is still clearly showing signs of anger or upset. The danger here is that this may turn into a lecture. The best way to deal with it is to:

- keep it very short
- avoid reliving the incident
- give a brief reminder of the ground rule broken
- avoid discussion about rights and wrongs
- end by saying: *"Thank you for agreeing to abide by the ground rule"* – or *"Thank you"* for anything the pupil displays that is a move towards making amends – and smile
- leave the meeting with a comment about something else – say football or music.

Repairing damaged relationships with students

The following has been adapted and reproduced from the article written by David Stott for the *Behaviour matters* e-bulletin (Optimus Education 2009).

How to repair or rebuild damaged relationships between teacher and student, resulting from difficult or challenging behaviour in the classroom

- **Situation 1** – there has been an incident in your classroom involving a pupil who has challenged you verbally and refused to comply with your instructions. This has led to the pupil walking out of your lesson, leaving you to cope with the rest of the class and feelings of anger and frustration – but also with the knowledge that the same pupil will be back with you next lesson, after lunch or next week.
- **Situation 2** – you are faced with a pupil or group who is constantly pushing the boundaries in your lessons. There is no single, easily identified incident, but a collection of day-in, day-out, low-level, morale-sapping issues. You are becoming increasing intolerant of the pupil or group and you are aware that the situation is not only affecting your relationship with the pupil(s), but it is also beginning to affect the overall atmosphere of the classroom.

These are just two typical situations that occur on a daily basis in many schools. The problem (and hopefully the solution) is how to deal with the direct behaviour and also how to repair the damage caused to your relations with the pupil. In many classrooms where the process of challenge and failure to comply has begun, pupils become tied in to a continuing cycle, one which is driven by peer pressure, emotion and familiarity. It is a situation pupils find difficult, if not impossible, to change. Relationships may be harmed and lessons will be difficult at times. If you are not able to turn things around, or at least give all parties the opportunity to make amends, then the situation and your relationships with individual pupils can be irreparably damaged or will break down altogether. The resulting behaviour can be pupils refusing to attend lessons or school; or on some occasions, teachers simply refusing to have certain pupils in their lessons.

Clearly either of the final two scenarios is unacceptable. As the teacher, adult and full-time role model, we must begin the process of reparation. This will provide the opportunity to repair or make amends, and to move forward on a positive note, thereby benefiting all parties: you, the pupil and the whole teaching group.

Practical tips

Tip number one must be to avoid the temptation to do nothing. If you work on the basis that it is the pupil who has the problem (not me) and therefore it is them who has to change, then the situation will certainly not improve and it is highly likely that the problem will get worse. Once you have realised there is a problem that needs addressing, it is vital that you are proactive in your responses if you are to successfully manage your relationships with the pupil.

All pupils and situations are different; there is no way that one prescribed response to all problems will work. It is, therefore, essential that you have a range of proactive responses enabling you to assess, monitor, evaluate and, when necessary, change your methods.

Spend some time identifying the problem before embarking on an intervention. It may also be helpful to gain the observations of a colleague at this point, in order to build up a clearer and more objective picture of the difficulties.

Once you have a calm and objective description of the problem you should focus on providing opportunities for reparation to begin.

- **One-to-one meeting** – the start of the process should begin with a one-to-one meeting with the pupil in question. This should be at a time when you are both calm and should not be aimed at apportioning blame. It should be a statement of the problem, backed up with observations and reference to school and classroom policies. The meeting should also take place away from opportunities for peer pressure. It is helpful to write a record of the meeting, not to form a contract, but simply as a record of the process and comments made.
- **Informal meeting** – be prepared to speak to the pupil at a time other than the formal lesson situation or one-to-one meeting. Ideally this could be at lesson change (a brief but well-directed positive exchange can make great strides in relationship building).
- **Break and lunchtimes** can also be excellent opportunities for similar conversations. The meeting should not be set up as: *"Come and see me at break!"* or *"Report to me at the staff room this lunchtime!"* Instead, try the less formal approach of chatting over lunch or being around at break time to again engage in a non-confrontational conversation.

It can be a difficult step to take when you feel annoyed and even bitter towards a pupil because of their behaviour, but a simple gesture, some shared time and proactive planning can prove invaluable in repairing what can easily develop into a difficult time for both you and the pupil.

Developing a positive mind-set

The following has been adapted from P Galvin (1999) *Behaviour and discipline in schools: practical positive and creative strategies for the classroom*, David Fulton Books, London. Copyright © Peter Galvin. Used with kind permission.

The following may be helpful to discuss with colleagues to help you develop a positive mind-set that will improve the behaviour of difficult groups and individuals:

- keep a balanced view of the problem
- welcome the conflict as an opportunity to develop new skills – have a view of the future
- do not blame yourself
- get some help – talk about it
- have the view that bad behaviour is logical
- be a detective – develop a hypothesis (look for clues when the behaviour is not happening)
- consider the motive for the crime is probably about getting needs met
- try something different – regard the process of experimentation as a success
- do as little as possible – think small, go slow
- notice the effects of what you do and value those effects
- do not be pulled out of shape (dabble too much/chop and change/be pulled all over the place) – think jazz (try creative variations around a central basic structure, which you keep in mind and to which you return)
- stay in touch with your basic values
- be optimistic – behaviour can change.

20 dispositions of an active thinker and learner

By emphasising the sort of behaviours listed here, the aim is to steer the students away from the belief that being good at thinking and learning is limited to those who are conventionally clever. Everyone, regardless of ability, can learn to improve their potential by developing positive thinking and learning dispositions. Try to catch the pupil demonstrating the behaviour, use the language specifically and help them to see how they can transfer this behaviour into other aspects of their lives, eg *"Well done, you showed fantastic resilience this lesson, I could see you were not going to give up! Are there any other times this week when you've stuck at something and not given up?"* (In or out of school.) "*Or, do you think there will be another time this week when you will keep going? How do you feel now?"*

These phrases can become a language for learning in the classroom as the teacher catches pupils demonstrating behaviours and helps them to transfer them. It can be used in marking work, wall displays, for peer evaluations, self-assessments, target setting and plenaries. The whole class will benefit, but the teacher may want to focus on the impact it will have on a vulnerable pupil.

- **Co-operation and collaboration** – a willingness to work with other people, to learn from different points of view and to form new ideas and plans by pooling talents.
- **Concentration** – the ability to stay focused and avoid distractions.
- **Courage/self-belief** – the confidence to put forward one's own suggestions and ideas and to stand by a reasoned opinion regardless of other people's reaction, knowing that many good ideas are initially ridiculed.
- **Curiosity/enthusiasm** – an eagerness to ask questions, to explore beyond what is required and to discover new things.
- **Direction** – a sense of purpose, an awareness of one's own goals and the inclination to consider how these might best be achieved.
- **Empathy** – a willingness to listen to others and to try to understand things from their perspective.
- **Flexibility** – the ability to adapt, to generate alternatives and to change one's mind when new information or arguments are presented.
- **Good judgement** – a desire to avoid gullibility and to think critically about ideas and information before deciding what to believe.
- **Humility** – the willingness to be self-critical, to accept when one is on the wrong path, to seek help when it is needed and to learn from others.
- **Humour** – an ability to laugh at oneself and keep a balanced perspective.
- **Imagination** – an inclination to visualise, to dream, be creative with one's thoughts rather than to think within conventional boundaries.
- **Independence/initiative** – an awareness of the strategies and options that are available and a willingness to reach one's own decisions and take actions based on these.
- **An open mind** – a readiness to welcome unusual ideas, even if they sound strange at first, and to consider how existing ideas can be improved and adapted.
- **Perseverance/tenacity** – a willingness to keep looking, keep thinking and keep learning rather than settling for the first plausible answer or idea that comes along.
- **Precision** – the willingness to be careful, accurate and pay attention to detail.
- **Reflection** – an inclination to think about the methods and approaches that have been tried and to analyse both successes and failures.
- **Resilience** – the confidence to stick with it when thinking and learning hurt, to not give up at the first hurdle and to recognise the importance of intellectual struggling.
- **Responsibility** – a recognition that each person is responsible for improving their own thinking and learning and for finding methods that suit them.

- **Risk-taking** – the courage to take a chance and have a go at new things even when success may not be guaranteed.
- **Self-discipline** – the self-control required to make sure one's potential is achieved.

Tweaking teaching to transform trouble

- Smile.
- Convince your students that there is no place you would rather be.
- Find out what makes a student feel important.
- Personal acknowledgement.
- Let students lead learning.
- Share responsibility with students.
- Moments of authentic praise – private and public.
- Positive communication with carers/parents – notes/phone calls.
- Positive communication with form tutors.
- Write down praise to reinforce – make the moment last!
- Show that their ideas and experience have real value.
- Catch them doing the right thing.
- Use subtle private praise in reinforcement.
- Differentiate the way you celebrate achievement – not everyone wants to feel famous but everyone wants to feel important.
- Insist on 3:1 culture (three positive/praising comments to one negative/discipline comment).
- Displays that reek of high expectations.
- Agreed rewards/sanction structure.
- Make your students feel important for the behaviours that they can show and not for the behaviours they cannot.

Used with the kind permission of Paul Dix, Pivotal Education.

Peer relationships

Many looked-after children (LAC) have difficulties forming relationships with their peers. When you are fighting for survival in the early years of life, developing social skills is not a priority and not essential for survival. However, this does mean there may be some delays in some areas of social development, which can cause difficulties for the children and young people in later years.

Suggested strategies and interventions

General

The following interventions have been collated through consultation with members of LAC Educational Psychologists in the Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS) and education colleagues who have worked extensively with LAC.

- Encourage children and young people to be involved in clubs and activities. They will learn social rules by following the lead of adults and other pupils. Being involved in clubs and activities outside of school also helps build resilience. However, it is important that the child is not involved in too many activities so they are *overloaded*. It is also important to be aware that forming attachments with several people is a challenge for these children and young people, so it is important they do form a close bond with an adult at the club to support them. This relationship with an adult in an after-school club is key in helping the child/young person develop social skills, as the adult can act as a guide/mediator when the child/young person is forming relationships with their peers.
- Ensure that there is a safe area with adult presence and availability to talk that these pupils can go to if they are having difficulties.
- Provide structure in their free time. Unstructured play and lunchtimes are very challenging socially for these children and young people. Zoning recreational spaces is a good way of providing structure. Ensure that there is a wide variety of activities available at unstructured times.
- Adults need to get alongside younger children and mediate with other children to teach them how to play with their peers. A high level of adult mediation will be needed in structured social group work for older pupils as well.
- The pupil needs to practise games where they are not in sole control and can therefore learn to co-operate and work with others. Again this can be done through games, group work or playground activities for younger children. The key is, they will not learn these skills just from being with their peers, an adult needs to act as a facilitator or mediator to do this.

Buddying systems

There are various forms of structuring and providing peer support.

It could be argued that every pupil would benefit from having a buddy, mentor or tutor. However, particular individuals or groups of learners (looked-after children) might need something extra and may respond well to the approaches listed below.

- **Peer mentoring** – useful for children and young people who have low self-esteem or have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; this is often also appropriate for able learners who are underachieving.
- **Peer tutoring** – effective for children who need support in lessons (particularly in practical activities such as science investigations), where a more competent peer can act as a guide; also good for reading practice, and activities such as learning spelling outside of the classroom.
- **Circle of friends** – provides a support network for a child with a disability or behaviour difficulties, or a child who is just new to the school.
- **Buddies** – one-to-one support, which can work well for children who lack confidence; they can respond well to an older brother or sister relationship with a peer who will look out for them.
- **Study partners** – sharing ideas about how to revise, how to make useful notes, how to plan an essay, these are skills that (older) able pupils can pass on to others in an accessible way.
- **Peer-mediation** – young people are trained to mediate disagreements between peers in instances such as name-calling, bullying, fighting and quarrelling. Group support enables children and young people to understand the hurt that they have caused, so that each person comes away from the mediation with a positive experience and the sense that the outcome is fair to both sides.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on in helping the children and young people develop more positive peer relationships.

From 2006 to 2008, the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) was contracted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to establish a high-quality, formal and sustainable peer-mentoring scheme in 180 schools in England that could be evaluated to assess the impact on pupils and schools.

For reference:

- **www.mandbf.org/**
- **www.peermentoring.org.uk**
- **www.samaritans.org**.

Whichever type of peer support you are going to set up, key issues will be:

- the choice of pupils (both tutors/mentors and tutees/mentees)
- formalisation of the project
- appropriate training
- on-going support for the project
- careful monitoring and evaluation.

The choice of pupils

You may want to approach particular pupils who you know are reliable and sensible, with good interpersonal skills, or advertise throughout the school and be prepared to turn down some pupils. Many schools have found, however, that when pupils who have a history of behaviour difficulties or low self-esteem are asked to accept the role of tutor, they rise to the occasion; their confidence grows, and the tutoring is valuable to both partners. Recent research by the MBF has shown that schemes seemed to be most successful when students were matched according to similar interests and hobbies or similar personality characteristics. Matching of boy to girl was deemed to be less successful than same-gender matching. The child needs to have the approach properly explained in basic terms and be prepared to give it a go. The child's parent or carer will need to have had the approach explained to them and given their assent and support.

Formalisation of the project

The MBF research findings advocate formalising mentoring schemes so that they have kudos in the school, with appropriate resources allocated to them.

This might include:

- mentor/mentee meetings, pre-arranged by the scheme co-ordinator at a set time and place each week
- designated mentoring area within the school
- special badges for mentors
- scheme co-ordinator available for sessions.

Appropriate training

This is essential to the success of this type of work. Pupils need to understand how to listen, encourage, explain and to understand the importance of confidentiality. Use role-play, videos and modelling: brainstorm strategies and agree which can be tried. Be clear with the group about responsibilities, disclosures and boundaries. Let them know exactly what is expected of them. (Organisations such as the Samaritans will provide mentoring training: **www.samaritans.org**.)

On-going support for the project

The key to success in this approach is a teacher or teaching assistant (TA) who is committed to using it and who will be able to give sufficient time to supporting the tutors or mentors. Regular meetings can provide mutual support within the group and opportunities to discuss tactics and progress, and any issues that arise. This interaction also helps to sustain interest and motivation.

Careful monitoring and evaluation

Peer support schemes will require a degree of resourcing, so you need to demonstrate their effectiveness over time. Use quantitative measures, such as attendance figures, numbers of reported incidents (which hopefully will show a decline in poor behaviour) and test scores and class-work marks. Qualitative evidence can include questionnaires and remarks from teachers and pupils.

Adapted from Linda Evans' (2009) *Effective peer support*, Optimus Education. Available at: **www.optimus-education.com/effective-peer-support**.

To support pupils making and keeping friends the zoning of areas during unstructured time has proven effective. This would be in addition to the variety of clubs and extracurricular activities run by members of staff. When zoning recreational space, it is useful to ask pupils to sign up to areas in which they may wish to hang out. This can be done during registration time at the start of the week or at the end of the week in preparation for the following week. If the school has a virtual learning environment (VLE), it can also be managed electronically. Ask different year groups/ tutor groups to lead and run the rooms; prefects can take a key role here. Of course lunchtime supervisors and members of staff on duty will need to be briefed.

This is an example of how zoning could be organised in a secondary school (see table on next page):

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Classroom 1 Film	Classroom 1 Film	Classroom 1 Film	Classroom 1 Film	Classroom 1 Film
Drama room Organised activities (senior prefects)	Classroom 2 Peer mentor time for Years 7 – 8	Music suite Mid-week quiz	Classroom 2 Peer mentor time for Year 10	Classroom 3 Music and chat Key Stage 3
Classroom 2 Peer mentor time for Year 9	Library Space for quiet time	Drama room Organised activities (senior prefects)	ICT rooms Gaming Key Stage 3	Classroom 2 Peer mentor time for Year 11
Room 6 Monday's mystery activity	ICT rooms Gaming Key Stage 4	Learning support Homework help Key Stage 3	Learning support Homework help Key Stage 4	Classroom 9 Music and chat Key Stage 4

Executive functioning

Research suggests that many looked-after children (LAC) demonstrate delayed development of their executive functioning due to experiencing developmental trauma. These executive functions are the skills that underpin learning and form the basis for the problem-solving skills of everyday life. The following are often noted as being areas of need (Allen, 2008). Often teachers struggle with the fact that, at times, a pupil seems to manage behaviour or situations that on other occasions they do not manage. It can seem that this behaviour is a deliberate attempt to thwart adult authority, however, this is not necessarily the case. It is usually related to the complex needs the pupil has in the following areas.

Suggested strategies and interventions

These strategies have been taken from and reproduced with kind permission from Marion Allen for Family Futures' (2008), *Attachment, developmental trauma and executive functioning difficulties in the school setting*.

There are strategies that can support these pupils and many of these strategies can be class-wide, thus cutting down on time given to one pupil specifically and providing the opportunity to extend all pupils' executive skills.

- In the classroom setting, these problems manifest themselves in many ways. **Changes in routine** and just **moving from one lesson to another** can be difficult. **Daily visual planners**, **using visual timers**, **two-minute warnings** for the end of each activity, **consistent routines for beginnings and endings**, warnings if there is to be a different teacher can all help.
- **Starting tasks** can be very **daunting**. These pupils often need **support** at the **beginning of the task** to help them focus. **Chunking of work, interactive, hands-on learning, verbal prompting and encouragement, prompt sheets, visual examples of expectations** (*"Here's one I did earlier!"*), idea-generation strategies (eg **mind-mapping**), a **teacher monitoring the progress** of long-term tasks are all supportive strategies. These pupils often have more success with computer games because they give instant feedback and instructions are usually foolproof.
- Difficulties with **working memory** can cause difficulties across a range of subjects, as well as everyday actions in relation to remembering the sequence of expected events and the processing and retrieval of complex instructions. Tileston (2004, as cited in Allen, 2008) focuses on the child's use of memory in their learning and suggests that teachers can facilitate learning by ensuring that the lesson relates to **previously acquired knowledge and relates to the pupil's life**, thus having relevance for the learner. This also enables connections to be made to information already processed. Lastly, she suggests incorporating emotion into the learning by arousing sensory receptors. Good practice within schools ensures all learning styles – **visual, auditory and kinaesthetic** – are addressed. She lists strategies such as **mind-mapping, peer teaching, chunking, mnemonics, using symbols and incorporating music into classroom learning, all of which can be integrated into education plans as class-wide strategies**. Difficulties with working memory, of course,

also infringe on the pupil's planning and organisational skills. Pupils with deficits in these areas find it difficult to plan their working, playing and relaxing activities.

- **Self-evaluation** can be built into the lesson, using the plenary for the class to express individually how they feel they managed the lesson objective. **A show of thumbs up, sideways and down, smiley face sheets, or a traffic-light system all work well in the class setting**. Grading a piece of work to one criterion can focus the pupil's mind on the specific learning objective. The pupil can grade their work themselves first, with the teacher having input afterwards, explaining why the grade agrees or disagrees with that of the pupil.
- Pupils who find **planning difficult** could be provided with **planning formats**, for example, a list of steps for common routines, ensuring the pupil understands the goal of the activity. A structure of **goal, plan, do and review** can be implemented for the whole class, a small group or individual pupils. For individual pupils, this approach can be used to support them with everyday tasks. Involving the pupil in the process is vital to the success and the pupil can be given a verbal mantra to help them internalise the process.
- Mark Ylvisaker and Tim Feeney (as cited in Allen, 2008) emphasise the need for optimism at the end of each mantra, using the phrase: *"There's always something that works"*. This is in line with the view of setting pupils up to succeed, and for pupils who have suffered trauma, this serves to assist them in seeing more positive aspects to life's problems and gives them hope. The use of video and technology, such as **palm pilots**, allows the pupil to be guided through an activity, either by using the video as they complete the activity or by repeatedly watching it to consolidate the course of action. This method can be used for almost any task or activity that is presenting as difficult for the pupil, for example, organising their homework diary, preparing for school or a lesson. Many of these pupils have **problems organising** themselves and need structure and routine to help stay focused. They also need adults around them whom they can practise being dependent on, rather than trying to control everything themselves.
- Strategies can also support those pupils who find it difficult to organise their personal materials. Itemised lists, where the **pupil can tick off resources as they collect them**, **visual organisers**, and personal support and guidance can help here. **Sand timers**, **water timers** and **stop watches** that **provide good visual clues** can be helpful for marking the beginnings and endings of different activities; also these children may have difficulties with the concept of time so need visual reminders.
- Organisation of resources is a skill that has to be learned but, also, because these pupils do not feel good about themselves, they show this in the disorganised, haphazard manner in which they live. Most pupils will have been given opportunities to learn these skills in the protective and guiding environment of primary school, however, some pupils may not have been ready at that time and were unable to make full use of the available support. These pupils have a lot of **developmental catching up** to do. It is, however, vital that the school work with the pupil's level of emotional functioning whilst they are learning to trust (PAC, 2003).
- Pupils with executive functioning difficulties can find it very difficult to stop a task before it is finished (shifting from one activity to another). This is because they have not had adults to prioritise their needs and so have had no sense of what is a priority, what is not a priority or what can be left until later.

The following have been adapted from Cocking and Georgiades' (2003) *Working with adopted and fostered children in education*. Reproduced with their kind permission.

- It could be that a trusted member of staff could go through the timetable of the day with the pupil, as many traumatised children have difficulties organising themselves. Teachers, class room assistants and mentors may need to show these children where objects belong, where things can be found and be prepared to do some tasks with which the child is too anxious to cope. This may seem to go against the ethos of a secondary school where there is an emphasis on self-reliance, however, of this staff need to be mindful.
- Transition can be very challenging for pupils with attachment/trauma difficulties, as it can evoke anxiety about possible loss or abandonment. In light of this there needs to be clear communication between school and home, perhaps this could be the role of a trusted adult. Children and young people themselves should never be used as the intermediary to convey the information from the carers.
- **Transition** – pupils need to know about the transition well in advance. They need to be given the opportunity to mourn the loss of the old way of being and have an introduction to the new. Enough time needs to be given so that this can be completed in small manageable stages. **Beginnings and endings** are highly charged situations for pupils with attachment difficulties. The practice of not telling pupils until the very last week or day who will be teaching them next year, or the pulling apart of the classroom on the last week of term, can have particular resonance for these pupils.
- A **transitional object** can be used to remind a pupil that although they are separated from a carer they are still in mind. The transitional object can be anything like a cuddly toy, a blanket with a familiar smell, a photo or a note.
- **Beginnings and endings** on a smaller scale, such as the beginning and end of the school week, moving from the classroom into the playground, can also raise anxiety and affect behaviour. **Low-key but consistent checking-in** with the pupil to say goodbye or welcome back and reminding them what is going to happen next may help the pupil to stay focused, relaxed and make transitions smoother.
- **Changes to the school routine**, for example, the introduction of a supply teacher or when a planned event is cancelled, need to be supported. **A familiar member of staff** can act as a link person to help the pupil negotiate the change. This may need repeated explanation and reassurance to keep anxiety at bay.
- Is there a possibility of the pupil **starting the school day earlier** than other pupils, so that they have time to prepare themselves for the transition from home to school? This will give the pupil time to check out their environment and enable them to concentrate more on the learning tasks by the time the school day officially begins.
- Something as simple as where a pupil sits in the class may have a big impact on the pupil's ability to focus. For example, **sitting at the front of the class** so that there are fewer distractions and more opportunity to relate directly with the teacher, and/or perhaps near a wall where the pupil may feel there is less danger.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on in helping the children and young people to develop their executive functioning skills.

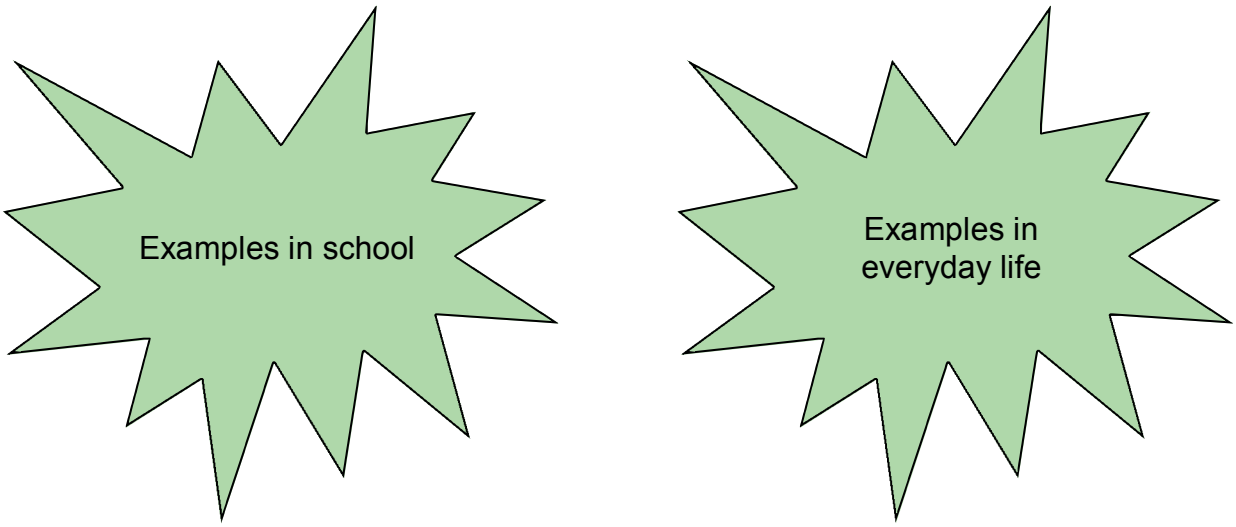
Practical support examples for executive functioning difficulties

Difficulties with working memory can cause problems across a range of subjects, as well as everyday actions. Try to facilitate learning by ensuring the lesson relates to previously acquired knowledge and to the child's life, thus having meaning for the learner.

Bridging scenarios

Bridging scenarios can be used as starters or plenaries, with individuals or with the whole class. It could be a wall to stick things on, an interactive slide on a smart board or a page in an exercise book.

It is about making connections with real life, TV, stories and analogies to encourage students to make connections, generalise and see the bigger picture with regard to the value of being able to transfer skills and knowledge. Ask pupils to record in the space where else in school, or beyond, they will need to remember something from the lesson, use a skill or think/behave in a certain way, etc.



Bridging scenarios are the basic platform for meta-cognitive reflection: develop this to prompting and supporting students in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own thinking.

Example: Before a challenging task, ask questions to cue **backward-reaching transfer**, eg *"What does this problem/task/activity remind you of? Have you done anything before that might help? What strategies could you try that you have used before? Do you think they will work here?"*

After an activity, cue **forward-reaching transfer** by asking students to reflect on: *"What went well? What was hard? How could I handle what was hard better next time? What skills/strategies have I learned that I might be able to use again, elsewhere?"*

Explore purpose and value: ask students to reflect on the value of what is being learned. Research shows that we are more likely to retain new knowledge and skills, and therefore be able to retrieve them from memory when the need arises, if we have recognised, for ourselves, their use and value.

Two game-show style activities that students enjoy and that are very useful in this respect are:

- **WTP** (What's the point?)
  Following an episode of collaborative thinking, conduct a WTP challenge for any new thinking skill, disposition or learning strategy that your students have identified. Say, for example, they have identified that a given task has involved resilience, making connections or a particular problem-solving strategy. Give them one minute (backed by a suitable clip of countdown game show music) to consider *what's the point* of developing these particular qualities or skills?
- **11/21/41** (or 8/28/48 or 16/26/56 depending on the age of your students)
  In this variation, students are challenged to come up with a convincing reason a particular skill or disposition is: useful *now* (when they are 11); might still be useful when they are 21; might still be valuable when they are 41. Thus, they are encouraged to take the long view and consider where certain skills and qualities that they are discussing now might be necessary for their future.

Transfer of learning is more likely to take place in an environment where students are regularly encouraged to talk about their thinking and learning, and where teachers regularly employ guiding questions to make meta-cognitive monitoring, usually an implicit process, into an explicit process.

It is useful to work with other subject teachers to make connections with or bridge to other contexts. This should include authentic, everyday situations and demonstrate the relevance and transfer into other subject areas. The value of teaching approaches such as these is that teachers acquaint students with the whole problem of transfer, rather than merely teaching particular knowledge and skills for transfer; they teach students in general how to learn for transfer.

Metacognition

Ask your students to think of something they have done recently at home or at school that was really difficult – where they had to think hard. Ask them to swap stories with a partner, sharing their responses to the following questions.

- *What did you do?*
- *How did you think your way round the problem?*
- *Did you try to think of something that you had done before that might help?*
- *Did you make a plan?*

- *Did you keep checking you were on the right lines?*
- *Did you have to stop and think and perhaps try a new way of doing it?*
- *Did you talk to yourself? What did you say?*
- *Did you make a mental note of how you did it so that you could do it again or do it better another time?*

Explain that if they did any thinking like this about the difficult task or job, then they were using metacognition: they were thinking about their thinking. Another useful analogy is to explain that learning to think in this way is a bit like being an athlete and a coach all rolled into one – doing the job, but coaching yourself at the same time.

As a whole class, try to get your students thinking about the kind of thinking they were doing as they worked on the difficult task; did they do any planning, checking, re-planning or reviewing?

Another option would be to tackle a difficult problem or puzzle, yourself, in front of the class – modelling the sort of thinking involved by thinking aloud. This could also be an imaginary situation, such as getting locked out of the house.

Guiding questions

You can make the process of thinking meta-cognitively more *visible* to your students by using guiding questions to help draw them in to the type of thinking involved.

For this you will first need to give your students something interesting to think about, so challenge students to have a go at an open-ended activity of your choice – any activity where students will have to think hard and employ strategies that they would see as personal.

A collective memory activity would work well and help students experience for themselves the value of thinking meta-cognitively.

Warn your students that at various points before, during and after the activity you are going to be asking them some unusual questions to help them activate their metacognition – questions that will help them think about how they are doing the task.

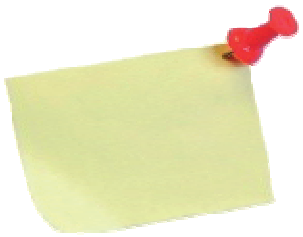
Examples might include:

- **planning** – *"What would be a good way of going about this? Have you done anything before in other subjects that could help you?"*
- **checking progress** – *"Is everything going according to plan? Are you on track? What strategy are you using? Is it working?"*
- **re-planning** – *"Did you change your strategy or ideas as you worked?"*
- **reviewing** – *"What went well? Would you do anything differently next time? What thinking skills were you using or learning? What have you learned that you could use again?"*

Reproduced with kind permission from Anne de A'Echevarria's (2010) *Thinking through school*.

- Pupils who find planning difficult can be provided with planning formats – daily/weekly visual planners can help. Secondary school pupils will have a student planner/logbook. Sometimes a laminated card to clip in the log book can help organise the pupil on a daily basis.
- Often the pages in the log book get filled up with lots of information and cloud the working memory, so something to aid short-term memory can be useful.

Below is an example of a laminated personal planner, which pupils have found useful.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Personal planner
 
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Things to do this week list
  </td><td>Things to remember today</td></tr>
<tr><td>People I need to see</td><td>Things to remember for tomorrow  </td></tr>
</table>

A self-evaluation idea:

- the use of self-evaluation can be built into the lesson to support the pupils to think and express individually how they feel they managed the lesson in relation to behaviour, skills, the subject or emotionally. The teacher could ask pupils to tweet or write a Facebook status update to show what they have learned, what was the most memorable part of the lesson, what they think they have achieved, how they feel, what they found difficult, skills they think they have mastered, of what they are proud, etc
- a strategy for an individual pupil could be to hand the tweet or status update to the teacher on leaving the lesson, or record it in the exercise book. This can enable the teacher to create an opportunity to revisit any issues or praise the pupil. Some teachers have found this useful as a whole-class activity and have a display of tweets and statuses.

Templates for students to write on:

Date

Tweet ……

Rob is ……

1

Self-regulation

Self-regulation (or self-control) is also an area of executive functioning, but warrants a chapter of its own as the needs in this area are complex and often cause the most difficulties in schools.

What is self-regulation?

Some pupils find it more difficult to learn to manage their own behaviour than others of the same age. In school, they may present as impulsive, not guarding against potential hazards and apparently failing to learn from experience. They behave like much younger pupils in this area of their development and are at risk of being perceived as having social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. We expect small children to respond impulsively, for example, see a puddle and jump in it or, without looking, run into the road after a ball. Adults are aware and vigilant so that they can act as an external source of regulation while the children gradually develop self-regulation.

In order to self-regulate using good judgement in a range of situations, we need to go through a series of stages starting with accepting responsibility for our own behaviour.

We also need to develop a number of skills that are mediated by language, of which the following are examples:

- the ability to label emotional states, which helps us to recognise and control these states (Kopp, 1989)
- the separation of emotions from actions (Berkley, 1995; as cited in Ripley, 2009), eg swearing at a teacher may relieve immediate feelings but puts a pupil at risk of exclusion
- the internalisation of rules so that we know what is acceptable behaviour in different settings
- planning ahead to accommodate future events. This supports many activities that involve goal directed behaviour, eg *"If I train regularly I will make the football team"*. Problem solving in the classroom also involves working towards a goal, both for completing the task itself and thinking of the consequences of finishing, or not finishing, before recreational time.

The early years before self-regulation

Very young children experience high states of arousal that are positive and negative. They rely on the adults around them, who are attuned to their needs, to manage those feelings and restore them to a comfortable state of arousal. Thus, we may drive our crying baby round in the car if this usually calms them, or anticipate the tears before bedtime when our toddler is over-excited by removing the sources of excitement and going into a familiar calming routine of bath/story/bed (Gerhardt, 2004). Children who have secure attachments (relationships) to their carers find it easier to learn to regulate their behaviour and modulate their behaviour according to the cognitive, emotional and social demands of specific situations (Rueda, Posner and Rothbart, 2007). Unfortunately, looked-after children (LAC) often have fragmented early experiences that make it difficult to form secure attachments to key adults in their life and are often not exposed to

adults who attune to their needs. This often results in poor self-regulatory abilities with regards to learning and behaviour, which are particularly salient in the school context.

Sugested strategies and interventions

In order to self-regulate and use good judgement in a range of situations, we need to go through a series of stages starting with accepting responsibility for our own behaviour. As teachers we often talk of managing behaviour and discipline, we do not necessarily talk about teaching behaviour. We have expectations of behaviour and we manage the behaviour we do not want to see. It is often necessary to step back from managing behaviour and begin to teach pupils the skills they need for effective behaviour in order to learn, socialise and manage their feelings.

It is useful to separate the behaviour from the pupil so we can teach and practise the self-management skills in relation to learning and support the pupil in transferring these skills to self-regulating behaviour.

General

The following guidelines are recommended to support children and young people in the above. In an intervention study piloted in Hampshire around developing self-regulation skills in LAC (see Warhurst, Alfano and Ripley, 2011), teachers reported the following to be helpful in assisting LAC self-regulate.

- Help the child/young person identify how they are feeling. You may need to do some body awareness activities. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) resources have useful ways on how to do it.
- The child/young person will need to develop a feelings vocabulary. You can do this by starting to label the feelings for the child/young person, then carry out emotional literacy work around identifying feelings.
- Adults to provide a commentary for the children/young people and wonder aloud (*"I think you may be feeling like this ... as I noticed …"*), this helps children and young people to:
  - **develop self-awareness**
  - **differentiate behaviours, thoughts and feelings**.
- Pupils who are in a fight/flight state and, subsequently, high levels of arousal, will find it hard to sit still or regulate their own behaviour. They will need an adult to do this for them.

The Family Futures Consortium recommends the following to help traumatised children and young people self-regulate.

Teaching a pupil how to self-regulate

Try to remember that a **defiant front** can be a desperate attempt to hide the fear **they are feeling**. Their cortisol and adrenaline levels may be incredibly high, and they may be fiddling through anxiety. Alternatively, they may seem to be **unaffected** because they have dissociated

as a survival strategy. All this can be incredibly annoying and can lead to you experiencing frustration. While this is understandable, your calmness is more likely to help them see that their behaviour does not automatically lead to rejection or abuse as it did in the past. The pupil desperately needs to know that it is their actions you find unacceptable, not themselves. It is, therefore, vital that immediately after the reprimand you let them know they are worthwhile and can, with support, do things differently (Allen, 2008, for Family Futures).

- *"I understand you find it very difficult to walk away when somebody is annoying you. Let's see if we can work out a way to help you do this."*
- *"I am really sad you didn't manage to control your anger. I can show you ways you can be angry in a safe way. Why don't you try ...?"*
- *"I know it's hard for you to know I like you when I have to tell you about some things you've been struggling with. Can we figure out ways I can make it easier for you to remember that I think you're a great pupil who sometimes struggles with ...?"*

These pupils need **structure**, **containment** and **consistent rules** and **routines**, they also need an **empathic, understanding approach**.

Acknowledging verbally their problems to them can **validate their feelings**. As these children may not have early self-regulation from their carers, they may be in a fight/flight state and be **hypervigilant and guarded and may not trust adults**. This can lead to control power-seeking behaviours.

Being in control has been the child/young person's survival strategy in the past and relinquishing this can make them feel very vulnerable. They can only relinquish control when they have built up a positive and trusting relationship with the adult and can then gradually develop self-regulation skills through internalisation of the adult commentary mentioned above.

It must be pointed out that children and young people with attachment difficulties often **misunderstand adults' intentions**. They may attribute hostility to a raised voice or a teacher pointing out a mistake to them and experience this as a form of attack or persecution. It may then take a while to build up the trusting relationship with the child/young person, and teachers may need to modify their interactions to quite an extent until this trust is built up. This will help reduce the anxiety or feelings of threat of the child/young person that can lead to the altercations.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on in helping the children and young people develop their self-regulation skills in learning.

Practising the skills required to be a self-manager can help pupils to self-regulate in learning and beyond. Teaching, modelling and allowing practice time to develop these skills will help self-regulation in behaviour. The teacher will need to provide a commentary to enable the transfer of thinking and skills. Where a pupil can self-manage ideas, tasks, time and learning, we can encourage them to use these skills to self-regulate thinking, emotions and behaviour.

Self-managers

Self-manager skills are more than just something we train children to do; they are to be practised until they become good habits. These skills should run through the school holistically.

To become self-managers students need to develop and practise the following:

- planning
- revising
- staying focused
- being determined
- interdependence
- using different tools to problem solve.

As a result students will:

- be punctual
- manage homework
- set and evaluate their own targets
- create plans
- complete a variety of tasks
- plan ahead
- have personal goals
- avoid feeling weighed down
- choose appropriate resources and how to use them, eg the internet or the library
- choose where to go for advice and how to act upon it.

The teacher should create the appropriate emotional climate to encourage self-managers. For example:

- allow students to be leaders of their own learning
- work to deadlines
- encourage curiosity
- give moments of reflection to self- and peer-assess self-manager skills
- give open-ended challenges for students to think and plan for themselves, and give them confidence when/if they make mistakes to rethink and re-plan.

Starter and plenary ideas

- Timed challenge:
  - *"You have got 10 minutes to …"*

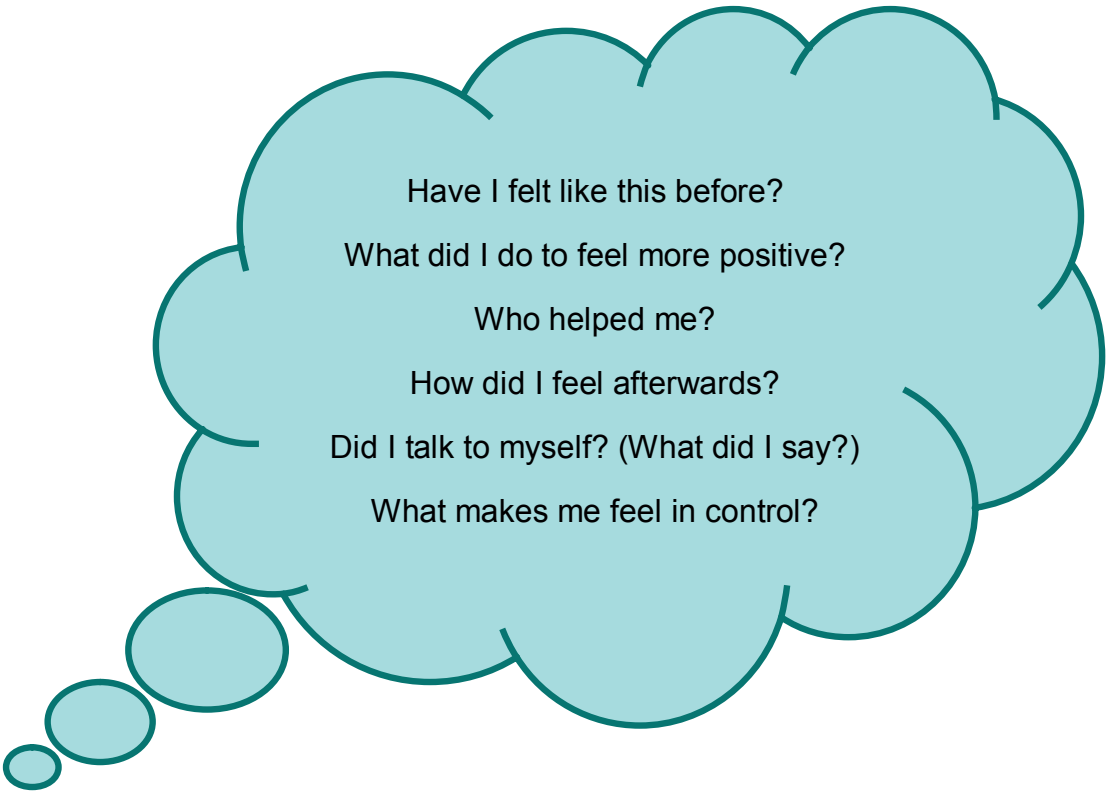
- *"How much can you sort/do in the next two minutes?"*
- *"Find out as much as you can in five minutes"*.

  The challenge does not need to be linked to subject content as it is the development of a habit. It could be related to sport, TV, the news or preparing a presentation/short role-play.

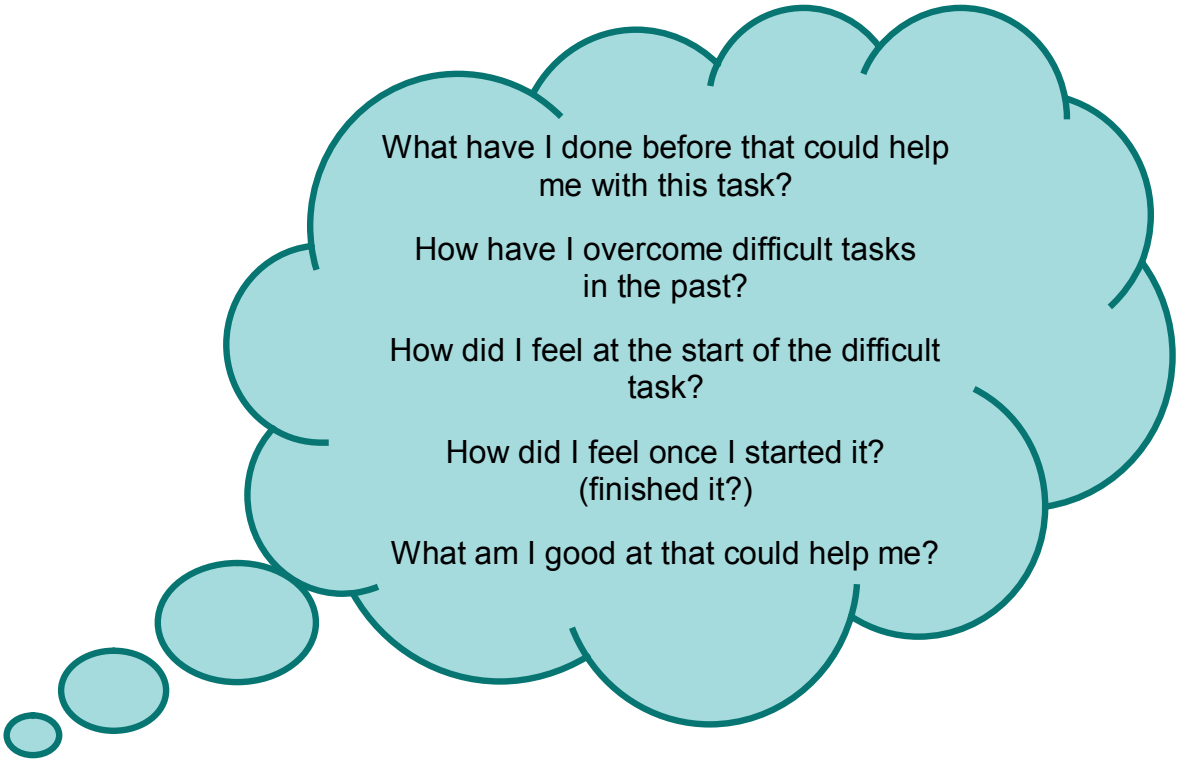
- Set a challenge that requires students to find information, frame questions, explore different views and form an opinion using a resource or selection of resources (book, information sheet, media clip, internet, CD-ROM).
- Use enquiry as a vehicle – introduce the topic/lesson focus giving deliberately limited information. Students are required to explore a range of possibilities, resources and questions.
- Get students to create a spider diagram of what they need to find out, the questions they need to ask and the skills they need to use for this lesson/topic.
- In groups, students role-play being journalists working to a tight deadline to produce a newspaper/magazine front page. Give them a range of stories to choose from and feed in new information to change the priorities.
- Ask students to plan events/activities (or even a lesson). Make use of flow diagrams for visual learners.
- Model the habit of sequencing what has to be done.

Using my inner quiet voice to self-regulate

About behaviour



About learning



Motivation and locus of control

Research suggests some children and young people may be de-motivated in their learning and have an external locus of control, which suggests they feel powerless to change their learning outcomes.

Effort is often a key area when discussing pupils' needs as it is something internal and within our control. However, not all children have an internal locus control and they need a high level of support to believe that they can affect change and that effort will be effective. There tend to be two stages in order to help pupils do this. Firstly, the pupil is given sufficient support to be able to achieve more successfully. The second stage is to teach them to attribute this new found success to the effort, skills and strategies they have been applying.

Dweck (1975) tested this experimentally. She used two groups of children. The first group was given support to improve their success in a subject. The second group was provided with support to be more successful, but was then trained to relate that improvement to the effort, skills and strategies they had used. She found that only those children who had been taught to attribute success (or failure) to the amount of effort they had applied persisted when they found tasks difficult. Consequently, it is important to enable children to become more successful learners, but they need to be taught **why** they are more successful learners (Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS), 2007, *Motivation and pupil attributions*).

Suggested strategies and interventions

How can we change pupil attributions?

The literature (Alderman, 1999) suggests there are several approaches to modifying pupil attributions. One approach is that the more pupils are aware of the skills and strategies they are mastering, the more they are able to change their attributions. One way of doing this is for teachers and school staff to provide verbal praise that draws attention to the effort, skills and strategies pupils are continuing to apply.

The following ideas are taken from *Motivation and pupil attributions* (HEPS, 2007) and reproduced with their kind permission.

Self-instruction

Like all of these approaches, the basic aim is to shift attribution for success or failure to internal causes and consequently aspects pupils can control. The approach here is to have pupils give themselves instructions as they perform a task, eg "*I really want to give this my best effort*". Again, the messages can relate to a variety of issues, but probably fall into the headings *effort*, *skills* and *strategies*. Through the self-talk that happens under these conditions, pupils become more conscious of what is involved in learning.

Prior information

This refers to the use of peer role models. In this approach, pupils who had previously taken the course of study are videotaped and this video is then shown to pupils currently taking the course. On the tape they discuss the difficulties they had, why the difficulties occurred and how they had worked to improve their performance. This draws attention to the fact that learning is difficult; successful pupils are not a breed apart, but are merely pupils who have managed to develop the skills and strategies they need to become successful. It makes the process more transparent and is probably conveyed more powerfully in that it is pupil talking to pupils. Again, the research (see Alderman, 1999) suggests that the training was most effective for pupils who had initially attributed their failures to lack of ability. It is about de-mystifying what is required to become a successful learner.

Attribution feedback

The goal here is to focus the pupil's attention on the effort, skills and strategies they have used to produce a successful response. The key is to link their current achievements with these factors. Stressing possible future benefits has not been found to be as effective (Schunk, 1982). The sequence in which feedback is given also appears important. Initially, when learning something new, feedback should be directed to the effort the pupil has made. As their skills develop, the feedback can shift to the skills and then the strategies they have learned. Co-operative learning can also help to establish attributions, particularly if pupils are taught how to give attribution feedback to each other.

Providing pupils with attribution feedback requires practice, but can be given both for success and failure on a task. Examples of the different types of attribution feedback are:

- **effort** – "*Great, you have got it right now because of the extra work you did"*
- **skills** – *"You have cracked it, now you really understand how to divide fractions"*
- **strategies** – *"You got it right because you applied the steps in the right order, then checked your work"*.

Failure will occur and the attributions for failure are equally important. If the pupil attributes failure to strategy (*"I didn't use the right approach"*) they are more likely to be motivated to try again than if they attributed it to ability (*"I'm not one of the clever ones"*). Caution needs to be used when claiming lack of effort, as it is difficult to assess another person's effort. You also need to ensure the task was within their ability to achieve. When pupils indicate they do not know why they have failed, the teacher can suggest a strategy that would enable them to be able to accomplish the task (eg "*I noticed you did not edit and revise your work; if you did so, your work would be much better"*).

- Ensure that pupils have a **common understanding of the key terminology: internal, external, control** and **no-control**. Teach pupils how to distinguish between the various types of attributions. Ensure pupils have a proper understanding of the term effort.
- **Take the magic out of success** – describe the importance of attributing outcomes to controllable factors. Emphasise effort as a strategy that can be improved. **Clarify what effort means**. It is more than just the time spent on a task; it requires active engagement.

Examples include the use of memory strategies, comprehension strategies, practice, over-learning and seeking assistance appropriately.

- Help pupils reframe **ability** as something that can be **developed** through **learning**, **practice** and **feedback**.
- Provide examples of how abilities can be improved.
- Provide models of constructive attributions that relate to effort, skills and strategies (*"I got these spellings right **because** I used a look-cover-write-check routine and spent time practising them"*).
- Try to focus the pupils' attention on the effort, skills and strategies they have used to produce a successful response/piece of work.
- **Have peers explain the skills and strategies they use in solving tasks** – this should include coping strategies – what to do about managing the emotional feelings when you feel you cannot do a task. In this way, any example can be a useful illustration. Develop a videotape of pupils discussing the difficulties they experienced in a subject, the causes of the difficulty and how they managed to overcome this and improve their performance by using these techniques.
- Teach pupils how to use this approach in the form of **self-talk** as they perform a task.
- Have pupils practise giving each other positive attribution feedback: *"That's great, you used the doubling rule appropriately to change **stop** to **stopped**"*).
- Have pupils undertake independent **practice of linking what they do with the underpinning effort, skills** and **strategies** they are using.
- Make pupils aware that learning new things can initially be confusing. It is a common experience for everyone. Show them that the skills can be learned and knowledge acquired in incremental steps.
- Provide **praise and reinforcement**, which links the outcome with the effort, skills and strategies they used. Use pupils' errors as an opportunity to clarify what they need to do to be successful. In this way, teach them a mechanism for handling failure by reframing the situation more positively.
- **Pupil responsibility** – if work results are good, get pupils to say what they did that contributed to that success; if the performance was poor, discuss what they might have done differently. Be sure that the attributions relate to specific performance criteria and not comparison to others.
- **Productive effort** – help pupils differentiate between productive and non-productive effort. When a pupil performs poorly and claims they worked hard, challenge them to explain what they mean by worked hard and offer improvement suggestions.
- Help pupils **shift how they perceive their performance** from a comparative reference to others to improvement in their own performance. Pupils/young people associate success and failure to ability – if you were smart, you would not have to study. Have them keep records showing how their skills have improved over time.
- **Link effort to outcome** – establish an evaluation system that links the effort a pupil makes with the outcome. For example, the effort being made in homework assignments with any improvement in test grades.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on when helping the children and young people develop motivation.

Try to focus the pupils' attention on the effort, skills and strategies they have used to produce a successful response/piece of work.

The key is to make learning visible to the pupil!

10 tips for helping pupils learn more effectively.

1 Start a lesson by getting each pupil to list five things that they have done well in the last week.

2 Get your pupils to imagine that they have finished their learning. What will it look like, sound like and feel like? Get them to picture themselves having successfully completed it. Visualising success is a proven way of helping you to be more positive.

3 Get each pupil to set a modest goal for their learning in your lesson.

4 Check that you have really got the big picture of what you are about to teach. Maybe you cannot see the wood for the trees! Your mind is constantly trying to make connections, so giving the big picture in advance gives the pupil time to make sense of things and gather all they know about a particular subject. See how many ways you can connect what you want to teach with what you know about your pupils' interests.

5 Before you start a learning activity, cover a blank piece of paper with notes on what you already know about the subject.

6 Make a list of good questions about any learning topic in which you are interested.

7 Get the class to make up a simple rhyme to help them remember something they find difficult.

8 Get pupils to describe out loud what they are doing when they are undertaking a task.

9 Encourage pupils to share their mistakes and analyse where they went wrong. Reward them for doing this.

10 Stop using marks or grades when marking your pupils' work and give specific written or verbal feedback instead.

Bill Lucas' (2005) *Teaching pupils how to learn*, Teaching Expertise. Available at: **www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/teaching-pupils-learn-700**.

Thinking aloud – making learning visible and taking the magic out of success

As you demonstrate a worked example, think aloud what you are doing so that the pupil gets an insight into your decisions and strategies. This will expose your internalised processes for the pupil to learn from and model how they can copy it by explaining aloud later how they are doing something.

Try to draw the pupil into the process.

> *"What do I need to do next?"*
>
> *"What do we do now? Any ideas?"*
>
> *"Why do you say that?"*
>
> *"Show me how to do the next bit or do the next bit for me."*

Prompt the pupil to share their thinking (this will also give you insight into any misconceptions and enable you to address them).

> *"What are you thinking now?"*
>
> *"Talk me through what you are doing."*
>
> *"Talk me through the options."*
>
> *"Tell me why you did that."*

What to say when a pupil is stuck; it is important not to smooth over these moments, try to get to the bottom of it as this will avoid future frustrations. It is not always helpful to ask: *"Are you stuck?"* or fake a query: *"Is that right?"* as the answer is obvious; instead ask the following:

> *"You've hesitated, why's that?"*
>
> *"Why do you think it's not working?"*
>
> *"This is the bit that's not quite right, can you think of another way?"*
>
> *"Let's go back to this bit where things were going well, talk me through this."*

Praise as often as you can, this will support the shift in learning – pupils cannot get enough praise. Do not give false praise or general praise. Identify specific things that are done well and praise these, even if there are outstanding weaknesses that you want to address.

> *"I like the way you did …"*
>
> *"I can really see an improvement in …"*
>
> *"The best thing about ... is …"*
>
> *"I notice that you used the method we tried last time …"*

The National Strategies social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) materials provide tools to help establish your understanding of the pupil's self-perception and useful ideas to use in lessons, small groups or in one-to-one sessions to address these needs.

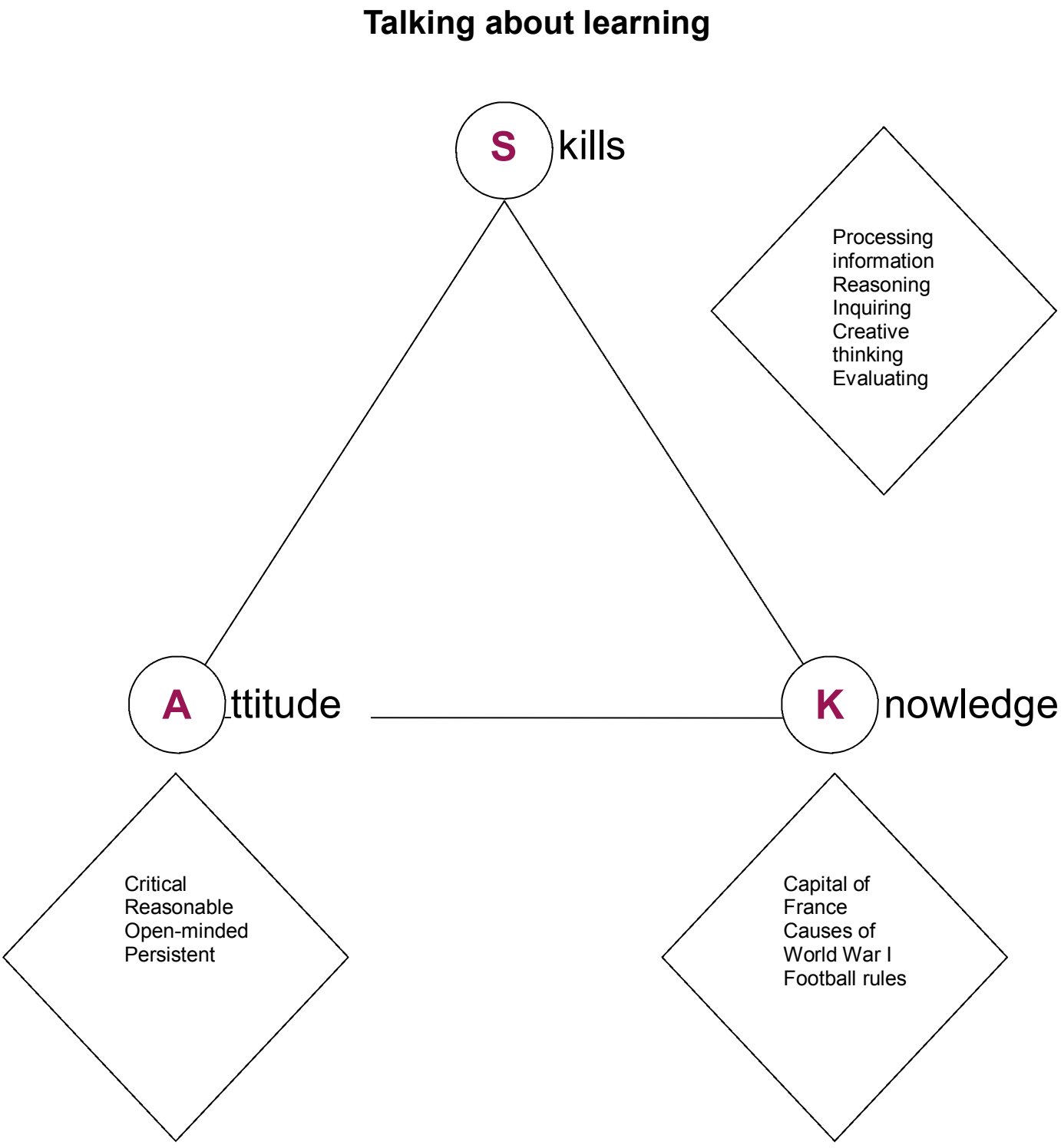
To access SEAL resources:

webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/nsonline.org.uk/node/87009.

For further support with using SEAL resources contact:

E-mail: **michelle.cain@hants.gov.uk**.

ASKing rich questions



The teacher and pupil know what, how and why they are learning.

Debriefing – making thinking and learning skills visible

Debriefing refers to the discussion that takes place following or during a learning episode. The purpose of these discussions is to encourage pupils to talk not only about their answers/solutions – what they have learned about a particular subject, but also to:

- talk about **how they are doing/have done the task** – both in terms of their individual cognitive processes and in terms of group processes
- anticipate possible opportunities for **transferring** the skills and strategies (including the personal qualities or mindsets required) to new contexts.

They are rich because they can draw out a wealth of possible responses regarding knowledge, know-how, thoughts, feelings and speculations. Being a rich questioner involves you in asking questions about things to which you cannot already know the answer – about how your students think and feel. Listen closely to their responses so that you can:

- ask follow-up questions that challenge and extend their thinking even further
- join up their thinking so they can learn from each other.

ASKing rich questions: The ASK model of learning helps to structure your rich questioning. Display an **ASK poster** on your wall to remind you and your students what learning is all about.

ASKing rich questions – attitudes

Questions linked to students' **attitudes** will explore the learning dispositions that motivate and sustain good thinking. Examples include:

- persistence
- determination
- curiosity
- open-mindedness
- flexibility
- showing empathy
- taking responsible risks
- striving for accuracy
- finding humour
- courage
- friendliness
- honesty
- patience
- reflection
- posing problems

- questioning
- applying past knowledge to new situations.

Examples of **A**-rich questions:

- *"How did your feelings change in the process of tackling the task?"*
- *"What personal qualities enabled you to think well as a group?"*
- *"Why do you value that?"*
- *"Imagine you had faced that problem on your own – what would have been your attitude then?"*
- *"Which disposition were you most tested on?"*
- *"How did you overcome the problem?*"

ASKing rich questions – skills

Questions linked to students' **skills** can explore their thinking skills as well as their subject-specific skills.

Examples of **S**-rich questions:

- *"How did you go about doing the activity/solving the problem?"*
- *"How did you know you were thinking well?"*
- *"What strategy did you use?"*
- *"Did you change your strategy or ideas as you worked?"*
- *"What skills were you using/learning?"*
- *"What type of thinking were you doing?"*
- *"Can you give an example of this?"*
- *"What helped you most to learn these skills?"*
- *"Where else could you use these skills?"*

ASKing rich questions – knowledge

Questions linked to students' **knowledge** can simply reinforce the subject-specific knowledge they have gained in the lesson or they can help towards the transfer of a developing thinking skill to its application in other contexts, ie knowing how to think well when the occasion arises.

Examples of **K**-rich questions:

- *"What knowledge did you draw on to be able to do this task?"*
- *"Had you done anything before in other subjects that helped you? Knowing that, how will it help you at home?"*
- *"What is the value of knowing that?"*

Do not expect an immediate reply to your rich questions. It can be useful to have a number of questions displayed on the board/overhead which you give students three to five minutes to have a quick think about. This means they have a **chance to prepare** their thoughts – they are not caught cold. Two or three questions would be enough on any one occasion.

Debriefing is helped by **watching and listening** to groups as they work, so that you know something about what they have done. You can later call on different groups to share the interesting comments/lines of reasoning that you have overheard.

The success of debriefing is heavily influenced by the **classroom climate** that you have created. Pupils must be prepared to listen to each other, contradict, develop and extend each others' ideas, and offer alternatives. It may take some time to get this right and, in the meantime, you have to be sensitive to how much a particular class is prepared to listen.

It is important to plan **analogies/stories/examples** that show how the thinking strategies/skills that pupils are learning can be applied to other contexts both within and beyond school. This not only helps pupils assimilate new skills, but makes it more likely that these skills will be **retrieved from memory** when the opportunity for their use arises.

This raises an important, longer-term issue – if one is concerned about transfer and making connections to other subjects, then it opens a need to talk to other subject/class teachers about the use of learning and thinking skills in their lessons.

It is vital that you **protect time** to conduct the debriefing, which may mean thinking very differently about the structure of lessons. Practitioners experienced in developing students' learning and thinking skills believe that the debriefing process is at least as important as the activity – that the learning processes are as important as the content. Without this belief, there is no motivation to make it happen.

Adapted and reproduced with kind permission from Anne de A'Echevarria's, 2012 *ASKing rich questions*.

Sense of self

What is sense of self?

There is some confusion about the key terms of **sense of self**, **self-concept**, **ideal self**, **self-esteem** and **global self-esteem** and they are used interchangeably.

- **Self-concept** is really the perception that a child has of themselves – how they define themselves. For example: I'm a boy; I'm Arthur's best mate; I play football; I like Big Macs. My self-concept would be that: I am a woman; I am loyal; I like writing and going to the gym; I love good wine and malt whiskey. It is these individual components that make up the person.
- **Ideal self** is what or who I would really like to be, and this is usually an idea that is formulated in comparison to others.
- **Self-esteem**, in effect, is the evaluation of those parts. For example, how much do I value being Arthur's mate? How important is it to have friends?
- **Global self-esteem** is the overall feeling that we have towards ourselves. There will be specific areas where we feel good about ourselves and others when we are not so positive – this is perfectly normal.

Adapted and reproduced with kind permission of Tina Rae.

Characteristics of pupils with low self-esteem

Pupils with low self-esteem do not all conform to one pattern of behaviour. There can be a variety of ways that low self-esteem manifests itself according to how it interacts with the pupil's personality. The following flowchart shows some of the different types of behaviour that can result from having low self-esteem.

Low self-esteem

Strong feelings of inadequacy and blame.

Do not believe they are capable or loveable.

May engage in criticising others in order to feel better about themselves.

May hurt others physically.

May harm themselves, eg eating disorder or other kinds of physical self-harm.

May be excessive worriers.

May often seem to be unhappy.

If I just keep quiet maybe no one will notice me at all

Withdrawn.

Quiet.

Shy.

Afraid to talk about their ideas in case they get it wrong.

I will show them how much I am worth

Show off, boast and brag about achievements.

Loud and arrogant.

Disruptive.

Need to be first.

Often this means that others may look at them and think that they are not suffering from low self-esteem, when in fact these behaviours are an attempt to overcome insecurity and the need to prove oneself to others.

If everyone likes me and shows me approval I must be okay

How others treat me determines how much I am worth.

Constantly seeking approval and reassurance from others.

Smiling people pleasers.

Over compliance.

Easily led.

How I perform determines how much I am worth

Rigid, authoritarian perfectionist, critical of others around them.

Driven.

Obsessional.

If I do not succeed, if I am not the best at everything I do then I am nothing.

Suggested strategies and interventions

The resiliency route to authentic self-esteem

Nan Henderson (2002, as cited in Shotton and Burton, 2012) developed a resiliency route to authentic self-esteem which she describes as "*not being the stuff of meaningless affirmations*". It is based upon: recognising actual accomplishments; identifying and understanding how we can make use of our strengths; living a life where we express our talents and gifts. These processes involve a shift in thinking for both adults and young people working to improve self-esteem. It is entirely solution focused. There is an appreciation of how and why we have done as well as we have done, and there is also a recognition of the need to draw on innate capacity for overcoming adversity and bouncing back.

Self-perception (also referred to as self-esteem, self-belief or self-worth, etc), however, is a complex concept but its influence on human behaviour is well documented. Research suggests that looked-after children (LAC) may have a negative sense of self/self-esteem due to the adverse situations they have experienced in their lives, however, they may try to hide their negative feelings of self-worth under bravado or macho behaviour (Cameron and Maginn, 2011). As children leaving public care are significantly more likely than their peers to need some kind of support or therapy, (Jackson and McParlin, 2006, as cited in Cameron and Maginn, 2011) it is important that this area is addressed in the Personal Education Plan (PEP).

Use of praise with looked-after children

We may know that adults were responsible for the pupil's experiences; the pupil is likely to feel that they themselves bear the responsibility. We may feel that **praising the pupil will help to make them feel more positive about themselves**, while the **pupil may view praise as a threat to their sense of self**. Furthermore, **praise for pupils** who have been **sexually abused** may be **linked with harrowing memories** (Allen, 2008). The fact that many of these pupils find it very hard to accept praise or to be reprimanded is, therefore, easily understood. They desperately need praise to build up their self-esteem, especially when their inappropriate behaviours lead to the necessity of reprimands; yet this needs to be done in a way the pupil can tolerate and manage. Both praise and reprimands need to be handled carefully. Please see the following for ideas, but always be sensitive to the background of the child/young person when choosing the most appropriate intervention.

Self-esteem – ideas for support

General ideas

- Developing your relationship with the pupil through:
  - listening to them
  - spending time with them
  - encouraging their efforts and praising their successes.

- Establish in pupils a sense of personal identity: what are their likes/dislikes in food, music, TV, books, etc. Help them to see their uniqueness and their right to be who they are.
- Review the pupil's life, key events and key people. Produce a family history life line with happy events.
- Look for genuine achievements to praise, set meaningful goals. Make them small, specific, achievable, realistic and timed over a set period (SMART).
- Detail pupils' strengths and interests.
- Discuss with pupil(s) a target they would like to achieve, consider with them appropriate strategies and support them in working out an action plan – step-by-step to ensure success.
- Encourage pupils to join only those clubs and activities where they have the necessary skills.
- Give frequent informal chats to listen to pupils' progress and boost their efforts.
- Design a contract with them for new goals/behaviours with agreed awards. If new skills are needed, make sure these are over-learned in a safe atmosphere before being tried out for real.
- Give appropriate responsibilities and/or tasks. Ensure that these are both valued and meaningful.
- Provide an older mentor to support pupils through looking out for them/having a chat with them.
- Ask pupils to help another pupil in areas where they have strengths.
- Promote positive thinking. Get pupils to list their positive aspects of themselves:
  - "*One thing I like about myself is ...*"
  - "*My successes include ...*"
  - "*My friends like me because ...*".
- Set homework on small personal goals. "*I will ...*"
- Work together on situations that cause anxiety and worry. Develop a script for the pupil. Get them to imagine being in a situation and practising what they will say. Role-play the situation before practising in a real context.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on when helping the children and young people develop a positive self-concept. Try asking pupils these key questions:

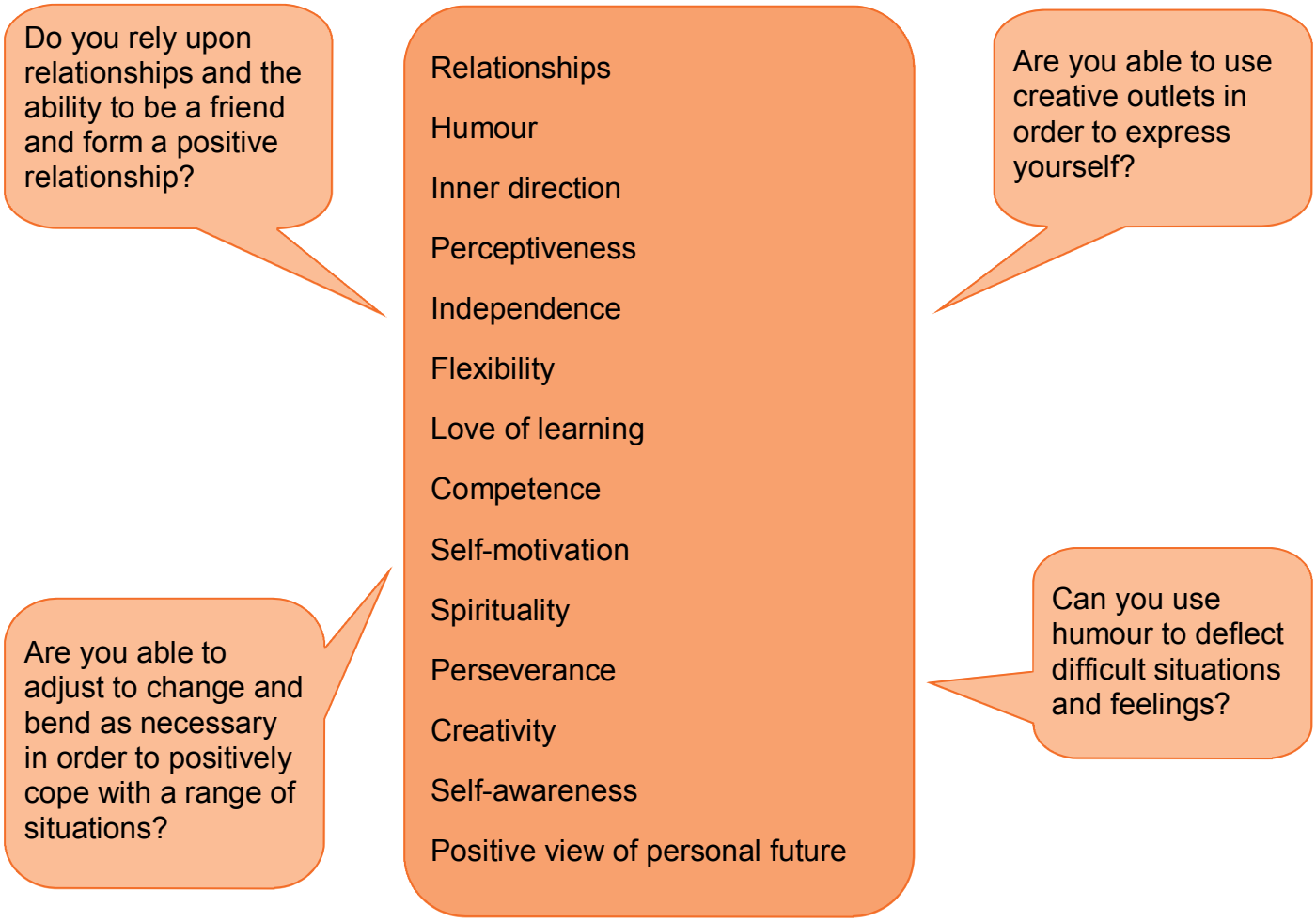
> "*How have I achieved as much as I have?*"
>
> "*What are the two or three biggest challenges, including crises or traumas, I have overcome in my life?*"
>
> "*What did I use to overcome them?*"
>
> "*What do I use every day to effectively cope with the typical stresses in my life?*"

Personal resiliency builders

It is essential that young people learn how to develop their own personal resiliency builders in order to overcome adversity. Individual qualities that facilitate resiliency are listed in the middle box. It is important for individuals to recognise the personal resiliency builders that they use most frequently.

Building this kind of self-awareness is particularly important when young people are developing in all these areas. They require prompting to consider their skills and to reflect upon how they can be further developed.

Take time to explore the resilience builders with pupils through discussion, try to notice when they show resilience and tell them how well they are doing!



Support authentic self-esteem across a school community through the following:

- valuing attempts that students make, but not in an over-the-top manner – particularly for students who have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. This needs to be done discreetly and can often involve a mere look or comment
- providing students with helper roles, from which their commitment and contribution is valued
- allowing students to make choices and be responsible in the learning context
- developing personal records of success
- avoiding comparisons that can be damaging to individuals
- teaching the skills for emotional literacy in order to foster self-awareness and self-concept
- teaching and modelling the skills and strategies of cognitive behaviour therapy in order to promote resilience and self-esteem (promoting personal resiliency builders)
- building positive relationships with both peers and adults in the school community.

14 ways to enhance self-esteem

Finally, it is useful to provide both students and adults in the school community with the following 14 ways to enhance self-esteem. These are common-sense strategies, clearly not rocket science – but it can be all too easy to forget the importance of such simple ideas.

1 Spend time with people who like you and care about you.

2 Ignore and stay away from people who put you down or treat you badly.

3 Do things that you enjoy or that make you feel good.

4 Do things you are good at.

5 Reward yourself for your successes.

6 Develop your talents and skills.

7 Be your own best friend and treat yourself well, doing things that are good for you.

8 Make choices for yourself and do not let others make those choices for you.

9 Take responsibility for yourself, your choices and your actions.

10 Always do what you believe is right.

11 Be true to yourself and your values.

12 Respect other people and treat them right.

13 Set goals and work to achieve them.

And, finally, and most importantly:

14 Do not beat yourself up when you get it wrong.

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Consider setting up a nurture group

A nurture group:

- is a small supportive class of up to 12 children, usually in a mainstream primary school
- provides a secure, predictable environment that caters for the different developmental needs of each pupil
- is staffed by two adults, usually a teacher and a learning support assistant, and pupils attend regularly for a substantial part of each week
- focuses on emotional and social development, as well as academic progress
- ensures pupils remain on their mainstream class roll with an expectation that they will return to their class in two to four terms.

Characteristics of nurture groups

Nurture groups have a number of characteristics that should be evident in practice. These were developed by the Nurture Groups Research Project in consultation with members of the Nurture Group Network and staff working in nurture groups.

A nurture group should:

- be located clearly within the policies and structures of a local authority or school continuum of special educational needs provision, either as an integral part of an individual school or as a resource for a cluster of schools
- ensure that children attending the nurture group remain members of a mainstream class where they register daily and attend selected activities
- have a pattern of attendance whereby children spend part of each day in the nurture group or attend for regular sessions during the week
- be staffed by two adults working together modelling good adult relationships in a structured and predictable environment, which encourages children to begin to trust adults and to learn
- offer support for children's positive emotional and social growth and cognitive development at whatever level of need the children show, by responding to them in a developmentally appropriate way
- supply a setting and relationships for children in which missing or insufficiently internalised essential early-learning experiences are provided
- ensure that relevant National Curriculum guidelines are followed for all children
- be taken full account of in school policies, participate fully, and be fully considered in the development and review of policies
- offer short or medium-term placements, usually for between two and four terms, depending on the child's specific needs
- ensure placement in the group is determined on the basis of systematic assessment in which appropriate diagnostic and evaluative instruments have been used, with the aim always being to return the child to full-time mainstream provision

- place an emphasis on communication and language development through intensive interaction with an adult and with other children
- provide opportunities for social learning through co-operation and play with others in a group with an appropriate mix of children
- monitor and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting the positive social, emotional and educational development of each child
- recognise the importance of quality play experiences in the development of children's learning.

Taken from **www.nurturegroups.org/pages/what-are-nurture-groups.html**, used with kind permission of The Nurture Group Network.

Self-esteem – specific ideas

- Develop a personal success book.
- Ask pupil(s) to imagine a special happy place. Ask them to draw/write about it.
- Ask the pupil to write or draw a story in which they are the hero/heroine and all ends well. Your pupil could write or draw about all the people that matter to them and why they matter.
- The pupil draws *a personal coat of arms* and writes/draws in some of their unique qualities and skills.
- Produce a special treasure chest, with examples of special events, memories, successes.
- Ask pupils to bury imaginary treasure (ie special qualities) they possess to get to if they have to cross a land where there are helps and hindrances. Each pupil makes a map illustrating where the treasure is buried and the problems to getting to it. How they get there can be a game in problem-solving.

Finding hidden treasure!

This is a powerful technique that Ioan Rees (2005, as cited in Shotton and Burton, 2012) describes as part of a solution-orientated approach. You have a conversation with the pupil, getting them to talk about their hobbies, interests, holidays, etc, in order to discover skills (what they can do), strengths (what they are good at) and resources (who knows the person has these skills).

A few suggested phrases:

- "*I would like to take the chance to get to know you more so I would like to hear about the sort of things you enjoy*"
- "*What could you start by telling me? What would you say you are quite good at? It could be at home or in school*".

As they talk about the things they like doing (eg playing on the PlayStation, cycling, etc) you draw more out of them about it. How often they do it, where and when, what they have achieved with it, etc. You need to listen really closely because you are looking for hidden treasure, what those activities tell you about the qualities/virtues a youngster may possess that are unique to them.

"*So playing the PlayStation all day ... that must take a lot of concentration. I could not do that. You must have good reflexes as well to be able to get such high scores. And you just keep going it at? You see, I would give up, but you do not, you just keep going. Do you know what that's called? That's called perseverance."*

Then you find out who else knows about this skill/strength.

- "*Who else apart from me knows you are so good at the PlayStation?*"
- "*If they were here right now what else would they tell me about you that would be interesting?*"

As the conversation goes on you could record the responses on a chart like this:

Activity	**Skill**	**Related virtue**	**Resource (who knows about it)**
• Playing on PlayStation.	• Good reflexes. • Good hand-eye co-ordination.	• Concentration. • Perseverance.	• Neighbour.
• Cycling.	• Good balance. • Fitness.	• Gets back on when falls off. • Courage.	• Granddad.

At the end of the session, take the time to feed back to the pupil all that you have learned about them, outlining the strengths that have been revealed.

Adapted and reproduced with kind permission from Speechmark Publishing: *Emotional well-being – an introductory handbook*.

The importance of feedback

This area of consideration for the classroom addresses multiple areas of need for LAC; particularly motivation and locus of control, self-regulation and sense of self.

John Hattie, in his book *Visible learning for teachers – maximising impact on learning*, rates feedback with an effect size of +1.13. This is also recognised by the Sutton Trust as a high-impact, cost-effective strategy.

Feedback is among the most common features of successful teaching and learning. Hattie would argue that while it is one of the most powerful moderators of learning its effects are variable. His work puts forward a model of feedback to use in the classroom. So, what is the purpose of feedback? Is this the same as praise? Hattie takes the stance that knowing error is the start to moving towards success, error is the difference between what we know and can do and what we aim to know and do. This applies to all struggling and talented teachers and students alike. As teachers, do we create a climate for learning to encompass this?

The three feedback questions Hattie considers are:

- Where am I going?
- How am I going there?
- Where to next?

Feedback levels and questions

This table is reproduced from John Hattie's *Visible learning for teachers – maximising impact on learning (*page 116).

Levels	Major questions			Three feedback questions
1	Task	How well has the task been performed: is it correct or incorrect?		Where am I going? What are my goals?
2	Process	What are the strategies needed to perform the task: are there alternative strategies that can be used?		How am I going? What progress is being made towards the goal?
3	Self-regulation	What is the conditional knowledge and understanding needed to know what you are doing? Self-monitoring, directing the processes and tasks.		Where to next? What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?
4	Self	Personal evaluation and affect about the learning.		

What does feedback look like at each level?

The three feedback questions work at four levels of feedback and the four levels correspond to phases of learning: from novice, through proficient, to competent.

Self level feedback

The purpose of feedback is to close the instructional gap. Feedback in the form of praise does not do this. If praise and instructional feedback are given at the same time, the student will be directed away from instructional feedback and such comments will be ignored by the student. An example of praise that directs attention away from the task to the self is "*clever girl*". It is rarely about the task and contains little task-related information.

An example of feedback at the self level:

"*You are really great because you have diligently completed this task by applying this concept*".

Task level feedback

This level includes feedback about how well the task is being accomplished or performed by distinguishing correct from incorrect answers, acquiring more or different information and building more surface knowledge. For the teacher it is the art of knowing when to add in/move to the next level of feedback. The teacher should move to process feedback when the student has sufficient knowledge to begin to strategise and sufficient confidence in the knowledge at task level.

An example of feedback at task level:

"*Your learning goal was to structure your recount in a way that the first thing you write is the first thing you did. Then you write about the other things you did in the same order that they happened. You have written the first thing first, but after that, it becomes muddled. You need to go though what you have written and number the order in which things happened and rewrite them in that order*".

Prompts to help give targeted and appropriate feedback relating to task:

- Does the answer meet the success criteria?
- Is the answer correct/incorrect?
- How can the pupil elaborate on the answer?
- What did the pupil do well?
- Where did the pupil go wrong?
- What is the correct answer?
- What other information is needed to meet the criteria?

Process level feedback

This level includes feedback specific to the processes underlying the tasks or relating and extending tasks. This feedback includes relationships among ideas, students' strategies for error detection and explicitly learning from others, as well as cueing the learner to different strategies and errors.

An example of feedback at process level:

"*You are stuck on this word and you have looked at me instead of trying to work it out. Can you work out why you may have got it wrong and then try a different strategy?*"

"You are asked to compare these ideas, for example you could try to see how they are similar, how they are different – how do they relate together?"

Prompts to help targeted and appropriate feedback relating to process:

- What is wrong and why?
- What strategies did the pupil use?
- What is the explanation of the correct answer?
- What other questions can the pupil ask about the task?
- What are the relationships with other parts of the task?
- What other information is provided (eg in the hand-out)?
- What is the pupil's understanding of the concepts/knowledge relating to the task?

Self-regulation level feedback

This type of feedback supports students to monitor, direct and regulate actions towards the learning goal.

This feedback includes the ability to create internal feedback and to self-assess, the willingness to invest effort into seeking and dealing with feedback information and being able to review work to decide if an answer is correct. It is about seeking help to further information and/or confirming a response.

An example of feedback at self-regulation level:

"*I am impressed by how you went back to the beginning of the sentence when you became stuck on this word. But in this case it did not help. What else could you do? When you decide what it means, I want you to tell me how confident you are and why.*"

"*You checked your answer with the resource book* (self-help) *and found you got it wrong. Any ideas about why you got it wrong* (error detection)*? What strategy did you use? Can you think of another strategy to try? How else could you work out if you are correct?*"

Prompts to help give targeted and appropriate feedback relating to self-regulation:

- How can the pupil monitor their own work?
- How can the pupil carry out self-checking?
- How can the pupil evaluate the information provided?
- How can the pupil reflect on their own learning?
- What else could the pupil do?
- What happened when the pupil ...?
- How can the pupil account for ...?

Hattie agreeably states that the art of effective teaching is to provide the right form of feedback at, or just above the level at which the student is working, but he warns not to mix praise into the feedback prompt, because this dilutes the effect. We need to be aware not to allow feedback to draw attention to the self. LAC with a negative self-concept who may have a fear of failure will want to protect the fragile sense of self they have. They will have difficulties accepting not knowing things and asking for help and find it difficult to accept imperfection in their work.

In order to move to the self-regulation level, teachers will need to consider modelling the strategies covered in chapter 4 and providing the commentary for transfer of skills. Hattie argues that when students can monitor and self-regulate their learning they can use feedback more effectively. Reflective probing questions are the key here to guide the learner on "*when*", "*where*" and "*why*". This is transferable between behaviour for learning and regulation of behaviour and emotions. Practising self-regulation in learning can feel far less threatening and subjective to a looked-after child, but there are huge possibilities in moving this into strategies for self-regulating behaviour.

Hattie's strategy on feedback can support the looked-after child with issues relating to motivation and locus of control, through making the learning visible and highlighting the process of learning itself. Thereby, giving the pupil a level of control over their learning and a focus on attribution feedback (as covered in chapter 5).

For further information on the place of feedback please refer to John Hattie's *Visible learning for teachers – maximising the impact on learning*, Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group) 2012.

Language development

Research suggests that on cognitive tests looked-after children (LAC) do not perform any worse than their peers, however, educational outcomes are significantly poorer (Forsman and Vinnerljung, 2011). One possible reason for this is specific difficulties with their verbal skills. Evidence suggests that children and young people with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties can have a specific language difficulty that is often not identified and may account for some of the child or young person's difficulty with accessing the curriculum (Ripley, 2007).

Note: If you suspect a specific language difficulty/impairment please liaise with appropriate professionals regarding further identification of need in this area. The following, however, are useful strategies.

The following have been collated in consultation with colleagues in Hampshire Educational Psychology Service (HEPS).

Suggested strategies and interventions

1 Pupils who have difficulties with understanding what words mean could do the following to help access the word by appropriate meaning (**semantic**):

- What category does it belong to?
- What other categories could it go in?
- What is it made of?
- What do you do with it?
- What does it go with, eg cup and saucer?
- Where would you see it?
- Who would use it/make it?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it feel like?

Semantic (word meaning) spider webs are useful to use as well.

2 Pupils who have difficulties with accessing **grammatical information** (for example, is it a noun, verb, etc, use of pronouns) could benefit from the following:

- What group of words does it fit into, ie noun, verb, etc?
- Where does it fit in a sentence?

3 When pupils have learnt to recognise the word and associated visual representation of the word, but still have difficulties accessing their **phonological memory** and actually retrieving the word, the following can be done:

- What sound does it start with?
- What sound does it end with?
- What does it rhyme with/sound like?

Use tip of the tongue cues:

- think of the first sound of the word (you may help them)
- picture what the word looks like in your head
- point to it/gesture/sign it
- think of another word that means nearly the same
- say what it is used for.

4 For pupils with difficulty with **word knowledge** and **expressive language** the following can be done – list vocabulary related to a class topic which the pupil can be introduced to in advance then ask pupils to:

- link new vocabulary in as many situations as possible
- work on opposites and words meaning the same as
- talk about categories, food, etc.

Practical suggestions

The following are practical ideas for teachers to draw on when helping the children and young people develop language.

- Ensure all verbal instructions are combined with visual cues, such as objects, pictures and gestures.
- As some of these pupils may process information slowly, staff should ensure they pause after verbal instructions to give time to process the information.
- Pre-teaching and developing vocabulary lists/category lists for each topic area using visual assignment plans and semantic webs.
- Encourage pupils to provide alternative information if they are not able to access the appropriate vocabulary.
- Gain the child's attention before speaking.
- Simplify your vocabulary, sentence structure and sentence length to the pupil's level of understanding.
- Give the pupil enough time to work out what you have said to them.
- Repeat key sentences and ask the pupil to repeat back what you have said.
- Use directions with actions so that large chunks of language do not need to be remembered at once.
- Order instructions into order of mention.
- Give the pupil time to reply.
- Do not allow other pupils to answer for them.
- Do not ask closed questions.

Use of scaffolding is important for pupils with language difficulties. Here are some examples of scaffolding.

- Setting ask questions – who, when, where?
- Beginning – what happened?
- Reaction – how did they feel?
- Goal – what did they plan to do?
- Attempt – what did they do?
- Outcome – what happened?
- Ending – how did it end?

The Speech and Language Therapy Team have also produced a Language Resource Pack for schools to support pupils with language difficulties.

Training materials were commissioned in response to a Government recommendation, following the Lamb Inquiry (2009). They can be accessed at the following web address: **www.education.gov.uk/lamb**.

They are designed to support teachers in mainstream schools who wish to gain advanced and specialist skills for teaching pupils with:

- autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
- behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
- dyslexia or specific learning difficulties (SpLD)
- speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

They are designed to be accessed at any time by any member of staff and could be particularly useful for members of staff working with LAC who have delayed language development.

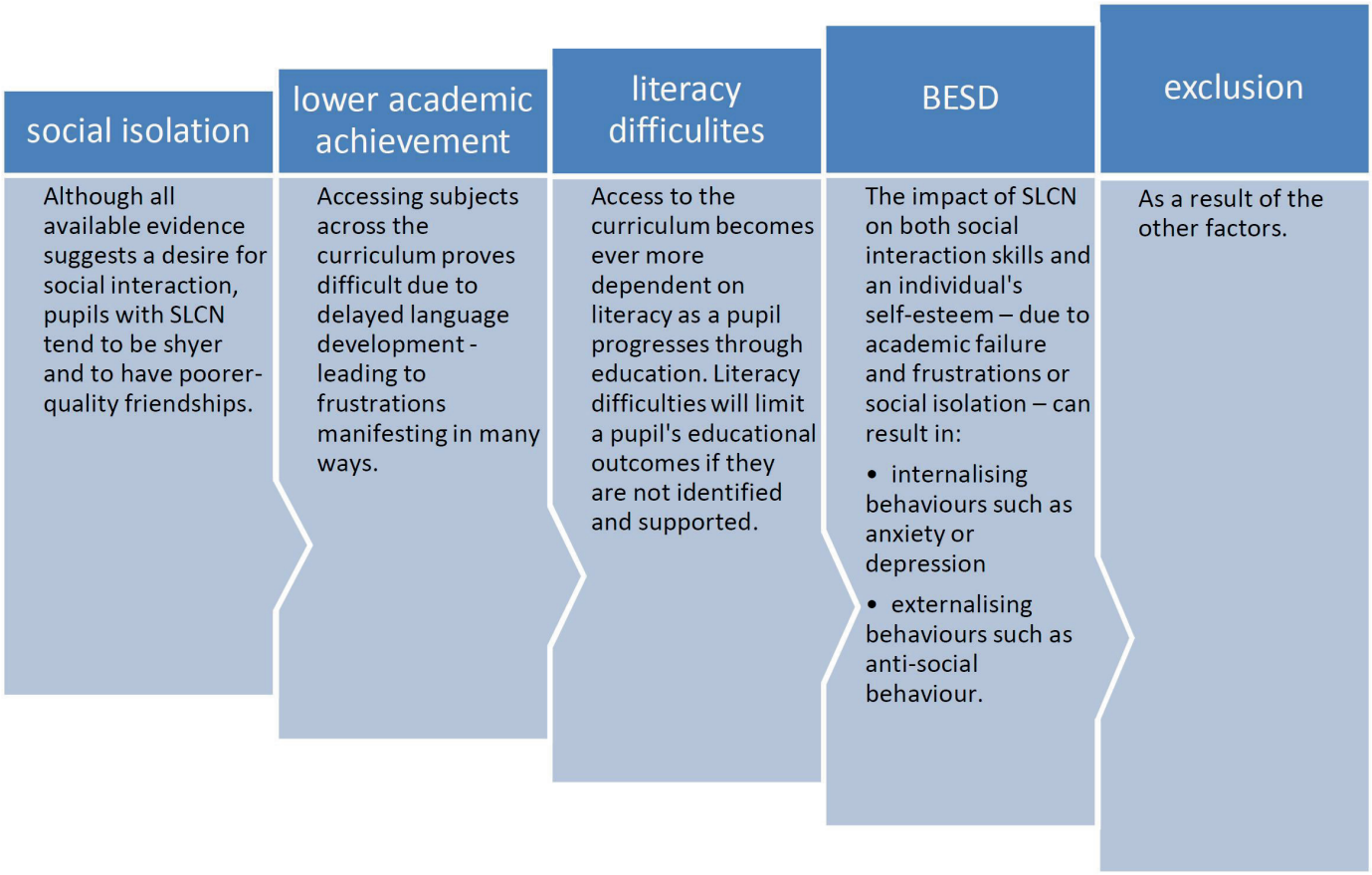
On the following pages are a couple of extracts for consideration.

Transition from primary to secondary

Throughout education, pupils experience multiple periods of transition, perhaps the most significant of which is the move from primary school to secondary school. This mind map shows some of the many changes that all pupils will experience, every one of which is likely to be much more challenging for children with SLCN.

How does your setting support language development in these areas?

Pupils with SLCN in secondary settings and the risks they are exposed to



How do you manage these risks in your settings?
How well equipped are members of staff?

Identification of children and young persons' needs with supportive strategies and interventions within the school setting summary version

In school, difficulties stemming from an early disruptive history of a pupil may manifest in one or more areas, including relationships with teachers and peers, problems with school work and in more general emotional and behavioural difficulties. In order to best meet the needs of looked-after children (LAC) in school it is critical that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is thorough and comprehensive, clearly identifying the specific needs and outlining appropriate related interventions. The summary is designed as a way of helping school staff and social workers do this successfully.

Begin by using the needs analysis tool, answering the questions in relation to the looked-after child. Upon reflection of the responses, focus in on the common characteristics in order to accurately identify the needs of the pupil:

- adult relationships
- peer relationships
- executive functioning
- self-regulation
- motivation and locus of control
- sense of self
- language development.

Use this summary to develop knowledge and understanding of these needs and begin thinking about classroom/whole-school strategies to support the needs of your looked after pupil.

Identified need	Definition	Possible interventions/strategies
Adult relationships	Research suggests that LAC often have difficulties forming relationships with adults. Sadly, some children spend the first months or years of their lives being told how bad they are. For others, though, their lack of worth may not actually be expressed in words but in actions or lack of action. Being beaten, punched, kicked, bitten or burnt is more than enough to demonstrate to anybody that they are unworthy of love or care. Having to find one's own food, being abandoned or living in squalor and excrement understandably will affect one's view of life. It is not surprising then that many of these young people have difficulties trusting adults which may lead to difficulties in their relationships with adults (Allen, 2008).	• Identify a key adult for the looked-after child, key tasks: – attending to the pupil – letting the pupil know they are being kept in mind – providing emotional holding/ containment – providing commentaries – creating opportunities for the pupil to practise new skills in conflict resolution – communicating empathy and care – support the looked-after child with emotional development. • Ensure consequences and sanctions are specific to the behaviour and are short term. • Careful use of praise (some LAC can find too much or public praise distressing). • Enable the LAC time to understand cause and consequence of behaviour that can cause difficulties in adult relationships. Do not assume all looked-after children are emotionally the same age they are developmentally. • Use time-out/thinking cards. • Be proactive and think ahead to times or situations that may cause anxiety for the looked-after child in order to prevent a reaction (eg times of change and transition).
Peer relationships	Research shows that LAC may experience difficulties with making and keeping friends.	• Peer mentoring/buddying. • Circle of friends intervention. • Zoning areas during recreational time. • Use activities to support the looked-after child to practise social skills. • Use of the key adult mentioned above to teach specific key skills in developing social skills.

Identified need	Definition	Possible interventions/strategies
Executive functioning	Research suggests that many LAC demonstrate delayed development of their executive functioning to experiencing development trauma. These functions are the skills that underlie learning and form the basis for the problem-solving skills of everyday life. The following are often noted as being areas of need (Allen, 2008). Often teachers struggle with the fact that, at times, a pupil seems to manage behaviour or situations that on other occasions they do not manage. It can seem that this behaviour is a deliberate attempt to thwart adult authority, however, this is not necessarily the case, it is usually related to the complex needs the pupil has in the following areas: • planning and organising themselves • inhibiting responses, such as shouting out in class • shifting – moving from one activity to the next, eg leaving playground disputes in the playground • difficulties generalising – this means if a child or young person has learnt a skill in one context they find it difficult to apply that skill in another context without a high level of adult bridging and mediation • initiating – starting tasks independently • working memory – the ability to hold onto several pieces of information at the same time in order to problem-solve effectively and follow complex instructions • own behaviour and learning and thus adjusting and adapting to feedback • impulsivity and attention control.	• Proactively support the looked-after child with changes in routine. • Link learning, skills and situations to things with which the looked-after child already feels confident. • Give the looked-after child a daily planner and help them with things to do/things to remember list. • Use self-evaluation plenaries at the end of lessons. • Help the child/young person on initiating tasks. • Plan for any changes or transitions. • Use multisensory approaches to learning, including peer learning, mnemonics, visual and kinaesthetic approaches. • Provide a high level of teacher bridging to help the child/young person generalise skills and apply what they have learnt in one context to another.

Identified need	Definition	Possible interventions/strategies
Self-regulation	Self-regulation (or self-control) is also an executive functioning difficulty, but warrants a section of its own as the needs in this area are complex and often cause the most difficulties in schools. **What is self-regulation?** Some pupils find it more difficult to learn to manage their own behaviour than others of the same age. In school, they may present as impulsive, not guarding against potential hazards and apparently failing to learn from experience. They behave like much younger pupils in this area of their development and are at risk of being perceived as having social, emotional, behavioural difficulties. We expect small children to respond impulsively, eg see a puddle and jump in it; without looking, run into the road after a ball. Adults are aware and vigilant so that they can act as an external source of regulation while the children gradually develop self-regulation.	• Use the personal, learning and thinking skills element of the curriculum to support the looked-after child in developing self-manager skills. • Teachers take time to know and understand the looked-after child very well in order to understand triggers for behaviour. • Refer to social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) resources in the school. • Give LAC opportunities to make choices. These children need an empathetic approach. They need time to learn and practise self-regulation skills over time, through individual sessions with perhaps the emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) or group sessions with peers who have good self-regulation skills. • Staff may need to develop a toolbox of strategies for the child or young person to help them calm themselves.
Motivation and locus of control	Research suggests some children and young people may be de-motivated in their learning and have an external locus of control that suggests they feel powerless to change their learning outcomes. Effort is often a key area when discussing pupils' needs as it is something internal and within our control. However, not all children have an internal locus of control and they need a high level of support to believe that they can affect change and effort will be effective.	• Differentiate between effort and attainment. • Make learning visible – the teacher can model learning and ask the looked-after child to talk through their thinking as they work/learn. • Use consistent language for learning and effort. • Link learning to other interests across and beyond the school. • Use authentic praise. • Do not assume that children and young people believe they can make their work better if they work hard. They may believe that it makes no difference what they do, they still will not succeed. Staff need to work on changing pupil perceptions and providing them with examples of success, not failure.

Identified need	Definition	Possible interventions/strategies
Sense of self	Self-perception (also referred to as self-esteem, self-belief or self-worth) is a complex concept but its influence on human behaviour is well documented. Research suggests that LAC may have a negative sense of self/ self-esteem due to the adverse situations they have experienced in their lives, however, they may try to hide their negative feelings of self-worth under bravado or macho behaviour (Cameron and Maginn, 2011). Children leaving public care are significantly more likely than their peers to need some kind of support or therapy (Jackson and McParlin, 2006).	• Use part of their week to explore activities to improve self-esteem. • Get to know the LAC and reinforce the things you know about them through conversation (ie *"How did your piano lesson go?"*). • Authentic use of praise. • Create time for activities where the LAC can write/draw about themselves and time to explore through discussion (possibly with the key adult). • Help the looked-after child use positive statements about themselves (*"Something you do well is …"*). • Use behaviour rewards systems to reinforce the positive behaviours. • Use games and activities to develop social skills and support the looked-after child in making friends and connections. • Talk about the good things that happen in a day/week/month. • Use humour.
Language development	Research suggests that although on cognitive tests LAC do not perform any worse than their peers, children and young people with challenging behaviour often have specific difficulties around their verbal skills. These include their use of language or word knowledge (expressive language) and their understanding of what is being said (Ripley, 2007). Difficulties in these areas can lead to difficulties accessing the curriculum as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties.	• Ensure all verbal instructions are combined with visual cues, such as objects, pictures and gestures. • As some of these pupils may process slowly, staff should ensure they pause after verbal instructions to give the pupil time to process the information. • Pre-teaching and developing vocabulary/ category lists for each topic area using visual assignment plans and semantic webs is useful. • Encourage pupils to provide alternative information if they are not able to access the appropriate vocabulary.

The significance of professional learning

We are absolutely clear that at the heart of meeting the needs of all learners is good teaching and learning, and a vision for insisting all pupils achieve regardless of background. What should, therefore, be considered is the professional development needs of the teachers of LAC in a school. For example, peer and team teaching to trial and evaluate the classroom strategies and interventions for LAC that develop from an accurate needs analysis. Further capacity can be built across the school through the expectation that the teachers who have completed this kind of action research roll-out the initiatives to support other teachers to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about four to16-year-olds. It comprises 25 items on psychological attributes, some positive and others negative. The 25 items are divided between five scales, these being emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour. The scores of the first four scales are added together to generate a total difficulties score.

The SDQ enables early detection of behavioural problems and strengths in children and adolescents. Assessing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties has always presented a challenge for educational professionals but they are important areas to address. The SDQ allows exploration of specific school-based and clinical interventions and the appropriateness of such for each child/young person. Annual assessment allows monitoring of the success or otherwise of such interventions and so promotes positive change for each individual, whilst also ensuring that funding and resources are well spent. Positive change can be defined as the movement from a current position where you are now to a more positive one or where you want or need to be. Identifying a problem identifies the gap between the problem and the situation as it should be. Use of the SDQ allows a problem-solving cycle approach to removal of gap.

Hampshire local authority requires all LAC and young people to have an SDQ score recorded in their Personal Education Plan (PEP). Questionnaires are completed by social workers and carers for the annual review. Where a score of 17 or above is achieved on both returns the designated teacher should, in consultation with the relevant teaching staff, also complete a questionnaire.

Appropriate school-based interventions and strategies for emotional needs begin with the use of SEAL activities and resources and the work of a trained ELSA. A document providing other appropriate strategies and interventions is being explored.

This information is partly based upon the **www.sdqinfo.org** website on which further information can be found.

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Useful websites

Nurture Group Network: **www.nurturegroups.org/pages/who-we-are.html**.

Sutton Trust: **http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit**.

Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties, Department for Education: **www.education.gov.uk/lamb**.