

## Creating an inclusive learning experience for English language learners with specific needs:

Case studies from around the British Council's global network



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# Introduction

This collection of case studies aims to share some of our experiences in promoting positive attitudes and thinking around specific needs. It also aims to describe teaching and classroom management strategies to create an inclusive learning environment and positive experience for English language learners with specific needs. Each case study is followed by a reflection activity that can be used for training both in our own teaching centres and in the wider ELT community. Suggested answers to the activities are provided. The activities involve teachers in discussion and challenge the idea that only people with 'special' skills are equipped and qualified to teach learners with specific needs.

The British Council is committed to providing its learners with a structured English language learning experience that will support each individual in the process of reaching their full potential in language learning. We currently teach approximately 300,000 learners a year, from early years to adults of all ages in more than 85 centres across 50 countries and work in over 100 countries supporting the development of English language programmes with a range of stakeholders such as Ministries of Education as well as directly with teachers and learners. This encompasses a wide range of learners with diverse needs in terms of their behavioural, emotional and social needs, their sensory and physical needs, their communication and interaction needs and their cognitive and learning needs. There are an estimated 650 million people with disabilities in the world and this suggests that even in small teaching centres or schools there will be some learners who have specific needs. We value the abilities and achievements of all our learners and have created our own Specific Needs Policy which is in keeping with our commitment to promote equal opportunities and diversity. To this end we ensure that, when possible, appropriate provision and any reasonable adjustments will be made for learners with specific needs.

In recent years, the number of learners with specific needs has become more apparent, as teachers, across our network, have asked for help in providing support to their learners and in managing their learning environment. As a result, teachers have become highly motivated in the area of specific needs, from their contact with their students and have sought further education and development in this field. Not only have they increased their knowledge and built their confidence, they are providing a more professional and informed approach within the ELT arena. The 23 case studies represent a diverse range of students with specific needs from different cultural contexts and who are learning English in our teaching centres or in partnership with other organisations. They also describe a variety of teaching and classroom management strategies that are being used to ensure that student needs are met, learning takes place in the best possible conditions and outcomes are successful.

Over the years, we have observed a change in attitude among our teachers from exclusive to inclusive. There is now dialogue between managers and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers, parents and learners and learners and learners. Consequently, awareness, understanding and tolerance is being raised.

**Phil Dexter** Adviser Teacher Development, Global English

**Gail Ellis MBE** Adviser Young Learners and Quality

**Jenny Simms** Operations Manager, Teaching

AREAS OF SPECIFIC NEEDS			
COGNITION AND LEARNING	BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION	SENSORY AND/OR PHYSICAL
Specific learning difficulties (SpLD)	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)	Speech, language and communication needs	Hearing impairment (HI)
Dyslexia	Attention deficit disorder (ADD)	Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	Visual impairment (VI)
Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	Asperger's syndrome	Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)
Severe learning difficulties (SLD)			Physical impairment (PI)
Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)			

# Case study overview

CASE STUDY	SPECIFIC NEED	GENDER AND AGE
BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS		
1. Tim	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Male 12 years
2. Nicola	Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)	Female 10 years
3. Matt	Gifted, emotional and social disorder	Male 11 years
4. Bernie	Concentration difficulties	Male 12 years
5. Milagros	Psychological needs	Female 11 years
6. English in Action	Phobias, emotional disorders, ADHD, physical disabilities, general learning difficulties, long term illnesses	Children aged 5–16
SENSORY AND PHYSICAL NEEDS		
7. Khalid	Physical impairment	Male 12 years
8. Eman	Hearing impairment	Female 12 years
9. Mariam	Hearing impairment	Female 33 years
10. Juan	Hearing impairment	Male Teenager
11. Jason	Visual impairment	Male mid-twenties
12. Moyad	Visual impairment	Male early twenties
13. Raed	Visual impairment	Male 29 years
14. Maged	Visual impairment	Male 40s
15. Project Gatti School	Visual impairment	Young adults
16. English Social Club	Visual impairment	Young adults in their 20s
COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION NEEDS		
17. Charlie	Autism	Male 12 years
18. Jane	Autism	Female 9 years
COGNITION AND LEARNING NEEDS		
19. Kelvin	Dyslexia	Male 8 years
20. Zoe	Dyspraxia	Female 11 years
21. Harry	Possible Dyscalculia	Male 8 years
22. Maxence	Down syndrome	Male 11 years
23. The Centre for Vocational Training for People with Intellectual Disabilities	Learning difficulties	Adults

TEACHING CENTRE/ELT NETWORK	COUNTRY	REGION	AUTHOR
<b>BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS</b>			
Colombo	Sri Lanka	South Asia	Tashya Mitchell, Teacher
Hong Kong	China	East Asia	Ingrid Daniels, Senior Teacher
Paris	France	EU	Nayr Ibrahim, Assistant Teaching Centre Manager
Porto	Portugal	EU	Deolinda Rego, Teacher
Domiciliaria n 1	Argentina	Americas	Andrea Blawdziewicz, Teacher
Buenos Aires	Argentina	Americas	Susan Hillyard, Co-ordinator, English in Action, Ministry of Education, Argentina
<b>SENSORY AND PHYSICAL NEEDS</b>			
Bahrain	Bahrain	MENA	Matthew Stubbs, Teacher
Bahrain	Bahrain	MENA	Matthew Stubbs, Teacher
Dubai	UAE	MENA	Pauline Edwards, Teacher
Madrid Young Learners	Spain	EU	Diane Beeson, Teacher
Athens	Greece	EU	Jo Boyd, Teacher
Riyadh Men's Teaching Centre	Saudi Arabia	MENA	Damian O'Brien, Teacher
British Council, Jordan	Jordan	MENA	Andreea Pulpea, Teacher
English for the Future Project, Cairo	Egypt	MENA	Fiona Robertson, ELT Project Support
Special Needs School number 37 Francisco Gatti	Argentina	Americas	Leonor Corradi, Operations Manager Arts and English
Hanoi	Vietnam	South Asia	Leath Traill, ELT Co-ordinator
<b>COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION NEEDS</b>			
Hong Kong	China	East Asia	Jonathan Rickard, Teacher
Hong Kong	China	East Asia	Justin Frith, Teacher
<b>COGNITION AND LEARNING NEEDS</b>			
Napier Road	Singapore	East Asia	Anna Britton, Senior Teacher Young Learners
Paris	France	EU	Sophie Handy, Teacher Co-ordinator
ASPAEN Gimnasio Horizontes	Colombia	Americas	Bernardo Martinez, Teacher Co-ordinator
Paris	France	EU	Gail Ellis, Adviser Young Learners and Quality
Athens	Greece	EU	Cliff Parry, Academic Manager



Case studies behavioural,  
emotional and social needs



# Tim

**AUTHOR:** Tashya Mitchell, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Colombo

**COUNTRY:** Sri Lanka

Tim is a 12 year old boy who completed an elementary level English course in our teaching centre. When I first met him, I was told that he struggled with writing tasks. I spoke to his father at the end of the first lesson and he told me that Tim was essentially a 'slow learner'. It was not until I had got to know Tim's father better and had gained his trust that he informed me that Tim had been diagnosed with ADHD. Parents are sometimes reticent to tell us if their child has any specific needs.

Tim and his father were waiting for their visas to be processed in order to join Tim's mother in Canada. Tim was, therefore, attending English classes at the British Council to prepare for life in an English-speaking environment. Schools in Sri Lanka do not provide support for children with specific needs, however, Tim had recently started in a new school for children with specific educational needs, the first in the country, where English is the medium of instruction.

I wanted to help Tim achieve his potential in writing and to help him excel at reading and listening tasks. The challenge was to keep him focused and on task. I did this by sitting near him and letting him tell me the answers to listening or reading tasks orally, while the others in the class wrote them down. After setting up a writing task for the whole class, I tried to give him more support by sitting next to him, providing more scaffolding with the organisation and keeping him focused on actually completing the task. I tried giving him a variety of shorter tasks and changed his place so that he sat next to supportive, helpful classmates. I also moved the other children around in the same way.

At an end of term assessment, he wrote a paragraph with good punctuation, grammar and reasonable spelling. This was an achievement for Tim and both he and his father were very proud.

I have been motivated to learn more about specific educational needs since teaching Tim and have discussed this with my managers. I have applied to do a diploma in special educational needs support.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

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1. Tim's teacher works with Tim's strengths to help overcome his limitations; can you give examples of how she does this? Can you think of any learners you have taught where this strategy has helped?
2. This case study highlights the issue of parental reluctance to disclose any specific needs their child may have. How can teaching centres and schools encourage parents to be open about their child's needs?
3. What ways of overcoming cultural barriers to talking about specific needs that are appropriate for your context?



# Nicola

**TEACHER:** Ingrid Daniels, Senior Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Hong Kong

**COUNTRY:** China

Nicola is a 10 year old Hong Kong Chinese girl. She had been assessed with ADD, and when she joined my class she had difficulties managing her behaviour and interacting with others. Her mother completed and handed in our specific needs declaration form, which stated simply that she needed extra attention. There was no reference to her ADD.

It soon became apparent that Nicola required additional support, as, among other things, her behaviour showed that she did not realise that instructions given to the class also applied to her. She was easily distracted and would shout out whatever she was thinking about at the time. Her habit of getting out of her chair and dancing was very disrupting and annoyed the other students. As it was a small class, however, I felt that I could manage her behaviour while giving the other students the attention they needed.

I regularly spoke to her mother after class to discuss her participation and made sure to praise any improvement or good behaviour I had noticed. I used the same structure and kept to the same routines each lesson and often repeated activity types. Nicola's participation and ability to complete an activity or task became noticeably better especially when an activity type was repeated. Her language skills were never an issue.

When another teacher took over the class and new students joined, Nicola's behaviour became more of a concern again as she struggled to cope with the changes. The new teacher found that she was spending large amounts of time in the lesson giving Nicola individual attention. However, this aside, the teacher felt that the main challenge was dealing with the reactions of the other children. Nobody wanted to sit with Nicola, and their behaviour was turning to bullying. We had a more formal meeting with Nicola's mother which was when she informed us that Nicola had been diagnosed with ADD and that she wanted Nicola to attend an International School the following year. By enrolling Nicola on our course, she had hoped Nicola would become familiar with an English-speaking environment and mix and make friends with children other than her usual classmates.

We agreed to provide an assistant in the class (paid for by Nicola's mother) and discussed strategies that the teacher and the assistant could use with Nicola, such as instructions given specifically to her and gentle reminders to focus on the lesson when her attention wandered. Nicola arrived 15 minutes late for her next lesson to enable us to speak to the other students. We explained how we expected students to behave towards each other, but did not make any specific reference to Nicola. Nicola has now settled in well to the class and is trying hard to manage her behaviour. The other students have become more understanding and tolerant.

At our most recent meeting with her mother, it was agreed that Nicola would not have an assistant with her in class any more. As it is now a new semester Nicola has another new teacher so to ensure continuity, I have met with her to discuss Nicola's needs, Nicola's progress and the classroom strategies that I had found successful. Nicola's mother is very appreciative of the way we are trying to meet Nicola's needs and provide an inclusive learning environment for her.

From this experience I have learnt that it is crucial to have regular, open communication with the parents/carers and to gain their full support and co-operation. Strategies need to be discussed together as a team as no action can be taken by the centre unless the parents/carers agree. I also feel that it is necessary to take into account the reactions and needs of the other students in the class and to look at ways that the teacher can best manage these.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. How does establishing a routine contribute to creating a constructive learning environment? How do children benefit from this?
2. Why is continuity from one class to the next important? How would you set up systems to ensure that continuity takes place?
3. What strategies can a teacher use to encourage learners to empathise with a classmate who has ADD and what do the classmates learn from this?

# Matt

**AUTHOR:** Nayr Ibrahim, Assistant Teaching Centre Manager

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Paris

**COUNTRY:** France

Matt enrolled in the Paris Teaching Centre's Bilingual Section at the age of six and remained in the centre until he was 11. The Bilingual Section caters for children who speak English fluently and who usually come from a bilingual family background. Matt is bilingual English/French with an American father and a French mother. He had above average intelligence but he experienced problems dealing with the classroom environment, making friends and managing his emotions. He seemed to be in his own world hiding under the table or refusing to sit down, basically, 'doing his own thing'. He often tried to monopolise the teacher's attention and disobeyed her instructions.

As Senior Teacher, I first met Matt when he was six during a class observation. What struck me was Matt's insistence on speaking to his teacher. He would not sit down until the teacher gave him her undivided attention. When she asked him to sit down he would then not obey. The teacher, aware of this, handled the situation very well. While the rest of the class were doing pair work, she would take the opportunity to spend time with Matt, listening to his stories and praising his work. This strategy was successful as it satisfied Matt's need to express himself to the teacher and not necessarily to the whole class.

The following year, his experience was not as successful because the teacher found Matt difficult to manage and she did not feel he should stay in her class. The Teaching Centre Manager observed her class in order to assess the situation, but Matt's behaviour during this lesson did not raise any concerns. In the meantime, we met Matt's parents who were very helpful and willing to share any information that would help us best manage Matt's behaviour and enhance his learning. They were keen to keep Matt in the Bilingual Section as he was an excellent student, regularly achieving an average of 80 per cent for his writing, spelling and reading tests. We agreed to meet with Matt's parents each year thereafter.

When he was eight, Matt had a PGCE-trained teacher, who managed him excellently. The following year also passed smoothly.

It was when Matt was ten that I had to intervene and speak to him and his parents again. Matt had been agitated on various occasions throughout the year, once again refusing to work and on occasions hiding under the table. The teacher had needed to give him time-out, speak to him and calm him down. Matt was demanding a lot of attention and he was incapable of concentrating for any period of time. This was problematic at the age of ten as students are expected to spend more time analysing and writing longer texts. The teacher asked for advice and, following discussions with management and Matt's previous teachers, he restructured his lesson introducing literacy development at the beginning and settling activities for after the break to help Matt, and the other students, settle down. In discussion with Matt's parents, we discovered that Matt was now aware of his behaviour and was making every effort to control his reactions.

Matt's parents tried to enrol him in a bilingual school when he entered secondary stage. They were open and frank about Matt's behaviour with the school but, unfortunately, he was not offered a place despite his excellent marks. Matt studied with us for one more year and once again got over 80 per cent in his final tests.

Matt's English language learning career was a success in our centre as he developed his English literacy skills. It was also a lesson in tolerance for us all. His classmates were aware of Matt's differences and they learnt to understand him. Even so it always remained difficult for him to make friends.

The most important learning points from working with Matt were that it is beneficial if:

- you have the support of the academic management team
- you can develop a positive relationship with the parents encouraging them to share their insights
- you keep academic records to enable each new teacher to be briefed about a child's needs. These records helped us build on prior experience, provide continuity and a positive language learning experience for Matt.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

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1. Matt's behaviour indicates a lack of understanding of social situations. Can you think of ways of teaching him to understand how his behaviour impacts on others?
2. What strategies could be used to overcome the problem of Matt monopolising the teacher's attention?
3. What inferences could be drawn from the fact that Matt scores so well in his tests yet finds it so hard to relate socially to his peers?

# Bernie

**AUTHOR:** Deolinda Rego, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Porto

**COUNTRY:** Portugal

Bernie is a 12 year old Portuguese boy in a Junior 1 class along with two other learners also with specific needs. He has first language difficulties and is in Form 5 although he should be in Form 7.

It was clear from Bernie's first lesson that he had difficulty expressing himself in complete sentences in Portuguese (his mother tongue). He found it difficult to begin tasks and then had trouble completing them. However, if he had a goal, such as a reward, he was more productive and focused.

My two meetings with Bernie's parents confirmed that since kindergarten he had had problems with concentration and progression. He attended an International School from the age of four until Form 1. However, due to his specific needs he left in the middle of Form 1 to follow a Portuguese education. He developed well in primary school, as the school followed a Montessori approach. He repeated Form 2 because at this stage he was unable to read in Portuguese and in Form 5 he moved to a private school.

His parents wanted him to learn English as they felt that it was imperative for his future and in addition, they travelled extensively and they wanted Bernie to be able to communicate effectively in English.

The main challenge that I faced was to ensure that Bernie participated and produced work during our three hour lessons. Every week when he arrived he was very enthusiastic and active at the beginning of the lesson but as soon as writing or another productive task was introduced, Bernie began but soon lost concentration. He would start to make high pitched noises (he did this both at school and at home), turning his body side to side and investigating his stomach or belt. I would attempt to refocus him by reiterating the task objective and reminding him that once it was completed it would be break time or a game would be played. I reminded him that if he continued the task, he could choose the next song on YouTube, and I reminded him that he would receive a smiley face sticker. These strategies did not usually work as Bernie seemed to be detached having a vacant look in his eyes a lot of the time. I did not insist that he completed tasks but I praised and rewarded learners with stickers who did complete them. I asked the stronger learners to assist him which at times helped. However, when this failed I wrote a note on

his page or handout that it was unfinished and needed to be completed for homework. The other learners also had specific needs and were patient and understanding.

At a meeting with his parents they explained that his school had a number of strategies including the use of a behaviour caterpillar. For every hour that Bernie was on task the caterpillar got coloured green. If he was off task the caterpillar was coloured red. They also used visual aids, such as 'Keep quiet' word cards which could be shown to him discretely when he began making strange noises.

In the future I plan to try the strategies that they are using at his school and in the upcoming term I will be adapting assessments to ensure that Bernie is better able to complete them. I will include fewer writing tasks and more multiple choice, true and false questions, gap-fills and labelling activities. These types of testing techniques are used at Bernie's school and he is responding positively. The parents will send me examples of school assessments.

My Senior Teacher for Young Learners, my Assistant Teaching Centre Manager and our Customer Services team have been supportive to me.

I am still trying to understand Bernie's specific needs. I have found working with him extremely interesting and feel that I would like to learn more to ensure he is able to develop his English language to the best of his capability.

For further information on Montessori education see:

<http://www.mariamontessori.org/>

<http://www.montessori.org/>

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. What is the 'Montessori approach' and why do you think it worked so well for Bernie?
2. What might be the reason for Bernie's behaviour when he is asked to do writing tasks?
3. Can you think of other strategies that might help in this situation?

# Milagros

**AUTHOR:** Andrea Blawdziewicz , Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Domiciliaria n 1

**COUNTRY:** Argentina

Milagros is an 11 year old girl who has been my pupil for two years. She attends a school for children with specific needs, and there are five children per class. The project is unique and ground-breaking because we are teaching the children English as a second language.

Milagros experiences severe separation anxiety from her mother, and the two of them are undergoing psychiatric treatment. For the first year, I had to teach her one-on-one with her mother constantly at her side. Milagros was introverted and feared that I would separate her from her mother. This was the main challenge I faced when working with her. She was afraid to participate in lessons and insisted that she would never learn English.

To overcome her fears, I utilised drama techniques and storytelling. Milagros and I used puppets, visual aids, games, finger plays, costumes, and music as I believe that the best way to help a child learn oral language skills is through imaginative and hands-on activities.

Whilst working with Milagros, many teachers and administrators doubted the chances of success, however, as time went by, I received more encouragement, and support. Several teachers even participated in lessons by dressing up and singing with us.

Today, after two years, Milagros works with me in a classroom with four other children. Her mother sits outside, and as long as she is within sight of Milagros, because they still feel the need to maintain eye contact, it works.

Milagros has made progress and several accomplishments. She now co-operates well with her peers and she has grown comfortable enough to perform in front of them. She has also developed the confidence to be a leader within the group. She was able to perform on stage in front of 200 people and face an international examiner sitting for the Trinity Drama and Speech Exam, which she passed with merit.

When working with Milagros, I discovered the power of pretend play. By using masks and costumes, Milagros was able to express herself more freely. This seemed to liberate her and give her the ability to express herself verbally and through the mask, she was no longer afraid to look at me.

I have taught English in primary schools for more than 30 years, but when working with Milagros, I needed to learn how to adapt my teaching to her specific needs becoming constantly attuned to her behaviours. This enabled me to experiment with new methods to help her. I have learned that every child has the potential to learn and succeed. Each child needs somebody patient to work with them and build a sense of trust. We need to transform their mentality of 'I can't' into 'let's try', and to help them to believe in their ability to succeed.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. This teacher had wonderful ability to adapt her teaching to the child's specific needs and managed to turn Milagros' negative expectations into positive outcomes. How did she achieve this?
2. Why was the use of drama techniques so effective in this case?
3. Here we can see the importance of trust in allowing the child to take the risks necessary to learn. Why is risk-taking important in the language learning process?

# Project – English in Action

**AUTHOR:** Susan Hillyard, Co-ordinator, English in Action, Ministry of Education, Argentina

**COUNTRY:** Argentina

A project set up in 2010 at the Ministry of Education, City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, to provide English classes in 20 schools for students with specific needs which had previously had no access to foreign language provision despite the education policy which stipulates all students should have such access.

From, 'No, I can't' to, 'Yes I can!'

English in Action is a project designed to teach English through educational drama techniques to students with specific needs who are at primary level in state special education. The project is designed by a co-ordinator and implemented by a group of 20 teachers contracted by the Department of Special Education, Ministry of Education, City of Buenos Aires to promote inclusion and equal opportunity for students presently attending special schools.

These students have not been exposed to any formal English classes in their state education system so far, but if and when they are included in mainstream, they will be in a class with students of the same age who may already have completed between one and four years of English language classes.

English in Action is aimed at learners between five and 16 attending special schools, shantytown schools, hospital schools, orphanages, transplant units as well as children receiving home tuition in the City of Buenos Aires. These students may have phobias; emotional disorders; ADHD; physical impairments; general learning difficulties; long-term illnesses such as cancer or be living with HIV or waiting for heart or liver transplants and therefore cannot attend regular school for a period of time. We are working with nearly 400 students in 20 establishments scattered all over the city.

The emphasis is on developing listening and speaking skills and using educational drama techniques to develop confidence, self-esteem and fluency. The definition of educational drama includes role play, improvisation, song, story, music, Total Physical Response, art and craft, puppets and language games. It is about developing language through the use of creativity and moving the students on the inside and the outside into imagined worlds.

The teaching of the language includes social education, pragmatics and personal development through interaction and active language acquisition. Each teacher creates an original ActionSack which forms the basis of the curriculum for a three month period. Then they exchange ActionSacks and ideas for the development of the project.

There have been many challenges, from the initial scepticism of some directors and some teachers in the 20 very different establishments, to rejection, by some students, of the methodology, especially the use of the body and the voice. There is also a lack of resources combined with frequent disruptions through absenteeism, lack of parental support and teachers' strikes. As we come from the private sector, the teachers and I had to adapt to the state system, which is very different to our own experiences.

The variety of ages and levels of cognitive skills, combined with the vast array of learning difficulties in the same group, posed major challenges at the outset. However, with experience the teachers have found strategies to address these differences in some coherent ways. The use of drama techniques has provided a means of escaping the traditional styles of teaching which have led the students into an attitude of 'I can't', transforming a striking number of students into an 'I CAN' mode.

The culmination of this work was a festival in which more than 90 students from special schools performed in English to an audience of about 300 students, teachers, directors and authorities who expressed joy at the recognition of the abilities and confidence in basic English language skills and performance of the students.

We still have a lot to learn but we have the backing to continue the project.

### **REFLECTION ACTIVITIES**

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1. This project makes use of drama techniques to build confidence and self-esteem. Give examples of some of the techniques they used and any you have used.
2. Why do 'imagined worlds' help these students to learn?
3. In what ways can language teaching help students develop other skills in social interaction and self-development?





# Case studies sensory and physical needs

# Khalid

**AUTHOR:** Matthew Stubbs, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Bahrain

**COUNTRY:** Bahrain

Khalid is a 12 year old Bahraini student who had a physical impairment which required him to use crutches when he walked long distances. He had been enrolled in a high elementary course and had attended the British Council before.

Khalid's name was marked with a flag on the register, indicating that he had specific needs or there was important information from his parents. On discovering that Khalid had a physical disability I was able to swap classrooms with the help of my line manager and the Customer Services team. The class had originally been timetabled in an upstairs classroom situated two corridors from a bathroom. I was moved to a room on the ground floor close to the building entrance, shop and toilets. The room was also more suitable for Khalid as it had conference chairs, rather than tables, which were more comfortable and accessible for him.

In the first few weeks of the course I discussed with Khalid what he felt he could and could not do and carefully planned activities to be as inclusive as possible. I tried to research the issues that might occur in the classroom by talking to other teachers and referring to the British Council intranet and external support websites. Throughout the course I made students aware of Khalid's mobility difficulties, encouraging them to move to him during activities rather than vice-versa. I factored this in to lesson planning, ensuring that he interacted with a range of students each lesson. Khalid was still keen to be involved physically in lessons, so I called on him to go to the interactive white board when he indicated to me that he was able to do so. I also created flipcharts which had interactive elements at a suitable height for him.

Although in the first few lessons the students needed to be prompted to include Khalid in mingling and more kinaesthetic activities, by the end of the course I felt I had fostered a warm and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Students embraced the opportunity to help Khalid collecting worksheets and stationery for him, and giving him assistance when he needed it.

I also found that the experience of working with Khalid helped me to develop my own classroom management skills. I had to carefully visualise the way in which activities could be adapted for him, and the way in which seating plans could affect his learning experience. I also developed my ability to maximise student participation in lessons, as I needed to be aware of how to negotiate affective issues such as, in Khalid's case, fatigue and mobility.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Why is forward planning important in the teaching and learning process? How did this help in the case of Khalid?
2. It is vital to discuss directly with a student with a physical disability what he or she is able to do. What kind of questions do you think the teacher asked Khalid?
3. How can we foster a warm and supportive atmosphere in the class? List some of the strategies the teacher used and add more ideas or your own.

# Eman

**AUTHOR:** Matthew Stubbs, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Bahrain

**COUNTRY:** Bahrain

Eman is a 12 year-old Bahraini girl who was attending her first course at the British Council. Her parents had enrolled her in a pre-intermediate course to help improve her English at school, and also because she was very motivated to study English. She had dreams of studying and living in the UK or USA.

Prior to the course her mother informed me that Eman had a serious hearing impairment, and that she wore a concealed hearing aid. I had previously attended an in-service teacher training session in our centre on equal opportunities and diversity issues in the classroom, focusing on specific needs such as physical, visual and hearing impairments.

During the first lesson I monitored Eman closely, and noticed that she had difficulty communicating with others due to the large volume of speech in communicative activities. This was exacerbated by pronunciation errors which I felt might be due to difficulties differentiating between phonemes, for example with minimal pairs. Throughout the course, I often gave her individual delayed feedback on pronunciation whilst other students were engaged with writing and reading tasks. However, I made sure that I also spent time doing this with other students.

Early in the second lesson, with her consent, I made the other students in the class aware of Eman's impairment and we spent time learning functional language for checking understanding, asking for clarification and asking for repetition. I ensured that the volume was at a suitable level for Eman during listening activities and encouraged her to swap places with a student closer to the interactive white board. The rest of the students were very understanding about this after I demonstrated to them how difficult a listening exercise could be if the volume was too soft for them to hear.

During the course I had regular contact with Eman's mother after classes when I would discuss Eman's progress with her. I advised her of several sources of listening material which Eman could use for further practice at home, such as the LearnEnglish Kids website. Throughout the course Eman made good progress and, by the end, both Eman and her mother felt that she had really benefited from attending. They thanked me for setting up an inclusive learning environment as Eman's mother had been worried as she had not received the same level of support at her school.

From working with Eman I developed a much better understanding of how a hearing impairment could impact on a students' progress. I was able to put into practice strategies for managing this. It made me think more carefully about my students' needs and how I could work with them individually during lessons.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. How has this teacher managed to incorporate raising awareness of Eman's needs into a language learning exercise?
2. How did this teacher manage to consider Eman's individual needs and implement a positive approach?
3. Due to the importance of speaking and listening in language teaching, some teachers may feel daunted at the prospect of including someone with hearing difficulties into a language class. Can you think of ways that this could be turned into a positive advantage for the rest of the class?

# Mariam

**AUTHOR:** Pauline Edwards, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Dubai

**COUNTRY:** UAE

Mariam is 33 years old. She is a fairly fluent English speaker but speaks very quietly due to her hearing impairment. She has a brother who is a police officer and speaks to her in English, but for the most part she only speaks English when attending class.

Mariam joined my mixed gender class for UAE nationals with specific needs as part of an initiative by the Community Development Authority (CDA), a governmental department. It is part of a programme named 'ELKAYT' which is designed to help Emirati people with learning difficulties find employment within the community. The ability to speak and to understand English with some fluency is beneficial to anyone seeking a work position in the UAE. Mariam has had no previous work experience which could make it difficult for her to find employment.

In this group of eight students social and cultural hierarchies existed. Mariam was very shy and would prefer not to mix with men in an office environment, although she was friendly and got on well with her peers. She wore an abaya and veil which allowed us to maintain eye contact so I was able to gauge and monitor her understanding and responses.

The challenges I faced in this situation were the lack of resources and the mixed profile of participants. They had varied language levels and types and levels of disability. I wanted to improve the group's conversational ability and confidence, but also with a secondary focus on literacy skills for some participants.

We used the course book, Opportunities Beginner, which Mariam and others found interesting and challenging without being too taxing. There are numerous spoken texts in this course which the students enjoyed participating in and which I exploited to the full. They took great enjoyment in reading aloud, and it did seem to increase their confidence.

I used a variety of supplementary resources such as Timesavers for English Teachers; EduFind; ESL – Kids; SEN Teacher; Enchanted Learning; Sparkle Box; Kidzone; Worksheet Works.com; Teacher created Resources; Primary Vocabulary Box; Kid's Box and Teachers Resource Pack.

I also used a variety of activities:

- card games: lotto, animal snap, transport snap, happy families
- flash cards: numbers, alphabet, pairs, telling the time, phonics
- boxed games: sight word bingo, numeric bingo, alphabet bingo picture lotto, days of the week.

The centre had games and other young learner-type resources, but did not have any learning aids for people with specific needs. My colleagues have also been supportive.

Although Mariam's hearing impairment was quite profound she was able to understand me because of our close proximity when teaching. However, she found class discussions difficult. Mariam enjoyed the extra work I gave her to complete at home. Having marked the work we then discussed it, which she found helpful.

Mariam made good progress in spoken English and her confidence increased. She achieved a high grade in a one-hour progress test from the Opportunities Beginner Teacher's Book which she was delighted about and revealed to me that she had never actually sat an exam before. Certificates gained previously had been based purely on course attendance rather than assessed achievement.

Progress was slow, but there was always a step forward, even if it came after what seemed like a few steps back. This English language learning experience was very important to Mariam and her peers, and they derived much from it. I was impressed by the tolerance levels of the students towards each other, who all showed a great deal of determination, enthusiasm and conscientiousness.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Mariam's teacher managed to carry on despite setbacks. What values does this demonstrate?
2. What were the specific benefits of setting homework for Mariam?

# Juan

**AUTHOR:** Diane Beeson, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Madrid Young Learners

**COUNTRY:** Spain

Over the years I have taught many students with specific needs. At the British Council's Madrid Young Learners Centre I taught Juan, a teenager with a hearing impairment. On the first day, Juan's mother informed me that although Juan had a hearing impairment, he could lip read in English. She stipulated that I treat him in the same way as any other student and that I should not give him any privileges. She told me that he should be expected to do the same homework as the other students.

Although Juan was a model student, there were classroom procedures which needed changing and teaching methods which needed adapting. As a result, I discovered many useful techniques.

As Juan needed to see my lips to read them, it was necessary for me to speak slower than usual. My training in dramatic techniques came to the fore as, emotions normally understood by a rise in the tone of voice, needed to be acted out. It soon became apparent that Juan judged his performance on my reactions, so I was careful to smile approvingly whenever he performed. The pronunciation of new vocabulary needed to be taught in a different way, so worksheets were devised. I also used a system where the origin of the sounds was shown to the students by pointing to my face and emphasising the muscular movements involved in pronunciation.

I involved the students in an awareness-raising session to help them understand Juan's language learning experience. I mouthed a spelling check voicelessly and students had to write down the words. Juan outscored his cohorts and his classmates became more aware of Juan's strengths. Other activities were developed which helped bond the students and stimulate a real language learning community.

Listening tasks were not accessible for Juan so the other students would complete the listening task and write their answers on their worksheets. I would then assign Juan the role of reading the tape script aloud; however, I had always marked the intonation patterns on the tape script. The other students were then able to correct their answers. This meant I could also correct any mistakes Juan made by pointing to my face silently. Juan was respected by the other students for the additional effort he had to make in the class and for his role as assistant teacher.

The techniques I developed for Juan, as well as for other students with specific needs, have made me a better teacher. Moreover, the worksheets created for Juan are still successful and part of my classroom routine today. I have also become aware of techniques necessary to help other students with specific needs, such as dyslexia, emotional disorders, insecurity and other language learning difficulties.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Why are gestures and facial expressions so important for a student with a hearing impairment? What techniques could you use as a teacher to ensure that you are using these appropriately?
2. Juan's teacher developed a system of teaching pronunciation by using his strengths which had a positive outcome for the rest of the class – please give examples.
3. The teacher overcame the issue of listening exercises by allowing Juan to read the tape script. This had the additional positive outcome of giving Juan special status among his peers, which increased his self-esteem. How could this strategy also help other students? When would you use it and why and how often?

# Jason

**AUTHOR:** Jo Boyd, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Athens

**COUNTRY:** Greece

Three visually impaired employees of a large institution completed a short English for specific purposes course in our centre. Later, when all employees of the same institution were offered general English courses, they also expressed an interest. We were keen to ensure that they had the same opportunity to participate in the courses as everyone else, particularly as this was for their own needs and they had already shown their commitment to learning English.

All three wanted social English, especially one who was a Paralympic athlete and travelled frequently, and one young man, Jason, who wanted the chance as he had missed out on lessons as a teenager.

Jason, in his mid-twenties, was injured in a firearms accident at the age of 11 and as a result became visually impaired. He played the guitar, wanted to enjoy films (rarely dubbed in Greece) and did not use Braille. His objective was to progress from pre-elementary to upper-intermediate level in three years of two, 75 minute lessons per week.

I found it was possible to adapt the main coursebook by utilising Jason's own environment and knowledge of the world. For grammar, we followed the syllabus in the coursebook but supplemented the book with our own exercises. I changed the content to suit Jason's needs and modelled grammar forms. All grammar forms were taught in this way. Jason found work on new grammar intense so I kept it to short, 15 minute slots best just before a break. He used a computer programme with slow, syllable-timed delivery, so he needed help recognising how grammar forms are contracted in natural speech.

Mood swings sometimes affected the lessons. When Jason was feeling down we needed short activities or coffee breaks for social chit chat. We, therefore, needed to be flexible in our lesson planning. Vocabulary work motivated Jason because he was good at identifying meaning and had a good ear for sound patterns. This also helped with spelling.

For reading, I used recorded texts as much as possible partly to give Jason exposure to different voices and accents, but also because I felt it was better to use my own voice for teaching or correction. Lexical items that might hinder target comprehension were pre-taught because he found these difficult to ignore on first reading. Questions and multiple choice options needed to be delivered in memory-sized chunks and Jason signalled the pauses himself.

Writing began with exercises involving gap-fill, responding to prompts, and transformation exercises. Jason progressed to free writing, but copying down what he dictated was not always helpful. With texts over 100 words he needed to hear his own voice going back over ideas to be able to choose and edit without distraction, which he did better by recording his voice at home. Whole lessons were recorded to provide better access to what had happened in the lessons.

Jason made more progress than some of his colleagues. He could talk about entertainment and was comfortable using English in social settings. Unfortunately, he missed taking his First Certificate English exam because of a prolonged bout of depression.

In this case student involvement and co-operation was key, allowing strategies to evolve as we worked together.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Jason was injured in an accident at the age of 11 and lost his sight. How might he differ in his learning from someone who was born visually impaired?
2. This teacher was sensitive to Jason's mood. How did she find ways of adapting her teaching to match his feelings?
3. What strategies did the teacher use to create a positive and constructive learning environment for Jason?



# Moyad

**AUTHOR:** Damien O'Brien, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Riyadh Men's Teaching Centre

**COUNTRY:** Saudi Arabia

Moyad is a university student in his early twenties. He joined a Beginner 2 English class. This Class was learning English for general purposes at a level of present simple sentences and questions and basic vocabulary relating to personal information and daily life. He was visually impaired and relied on assistance to come to class. He used a walking stick and needed Braille study materials.

I found out about his needs when he arrived for the first lesson. This was the first time I had worked with a visually impaired student. My priority was to include him as much as possible in classroom activities. However, we use many communicative activities which often rely on images or prompt cards at this level. This made it difficult for Moyad to participate effectively. It was also difficult for him to move around the class during mingling activities. It was sometimes possible to give extra attention to enable him to participate, but this was not possible all the time.

The other students responded well and included Moyad when possible. He was particularly good at spelling and was generally able to retain information well. He could also reproduce it quite accurately compared to other students. This strength made Moyad a useful reference resource for the other students, particularly in small group and pair work.

He was not issued with any Braille resources until the end of the second week of the course and these were not entirely consistent with the other resources and, due to his low level of English, it was difficult to get a reliable picture of how much the versions differed. We were unable to assess Moyad in the same way as the other students because we did not have copies of any of our tests in Braille and he was asked to supply a means of typing to assess his writing skills but he did not.

He was clearly stronger in some areas than the other students because of compensatory strategies he used, such as good memory skills for spelling. He comfortably passed the course but did not continue his studies here.

The government in Saudi Arabia has promoted the integration of students who are visually impaired into mainstream education. Given the particular strengths of learners who are visually impaired, they should be able to achieve well in areas such as language learning.

Teachers need to be fully briefed about students with specific needs prior to the course and Individual Education Plans (IEP) need to be agreed. Unfortunately, Moyad did not re-enrol for another course in our centre.

For an example of an IEP see Appendix 1.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. How could this student have been encouraged to re-enrol and continue his English language learning?
2. Can you think of ways of including low level students of English who are visually impaired in communicative activities?

# Raed

**AUTHOR:** Andreea Pulpea, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** British Council, Jordan

**COUNTRY:** Jordan

Raed is a 29 year old student who joined our centre earlier this year as an elementary level student. Although support from his family is limited, Raed leads an independent life. He lives in Amman and works in a hospital call centre. Raed is a motivated student, who has worked hard and as a result is about to complete the pre-intermediate level.

Raed was my student earlier this year, on an intensive summer course. In our first class, while introducing himself, he said, 'My name is Raed and I am blind.' He lost his sight relatively late in life and cannot read Braille. He relies on special software that converts any written text into sound which helps in all aspects of his life. He has a Facebook profile and uses this software to read friends' updates. Raed is studying English for career-related reasons. His dream is to be a translator.

The main challenge in planning lessons for Raed's class was to make sure all activities were productive and feasible for him, while allowing the rest of the class to follow the syllabus without disruption. I used a lot of audio resources for vocabulary-based activities. Authentic materials (BBC and Al Jazeera programmes on news, sports, science, etc.) worked well, as did speaking activities followed by language input. For grammar or writing activities I always made sure Raed had a strong partner and effectively used pair work for support, clarification and peer correction.

In class Raed was always accompanied by a teaching assistant who read out and described all the materials. This generally worked very well, although at times it was hard for the assistants not to get too involved as they had a very good level of English and they sometimes provided the answers themselves, occasionally even correcting mistakes.

In the future, Raed would like all materials in audio format, which our centre is looking into providing.

Raed had a lot of support from his peers both in class and outside. His colleagues accompanied him to the cafeteria during the breaks, made sure he was comfortable and were keen to work with him at all times. Two other students came in half an hour early every day to help him with homework.

In class, the learners often used dictionaries independently and then explained new vocabulary. Raed used phonetic online dictionaries and helped his colleagues with pronunciation, which increased his confidence significantly. In more generic terms, constant pair work, open feedback and peer correction have all worked very well.

Raed has made good progress and is now on his fourth course with the British Council. He will continue to study with us and has had a very positive experience in class.

Working with Raed has taught me a lot about the value of personal connections and peer support. In a similar situation in the future, making sure that the other learners are supportive and take pride in the student's success would be my priority.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. This study demonstrates the value of peer support. How did the students in the class support Raed?
2. What were Raed's special strengths and how did his teacher work with them?

# Maged

**AUTHOR:** Fiona Robertson, ELT Project Support

**TEACHING CENTRE:** English for the Future Project, British Council, Agouza, Cairo

**COUNTRY:** Egypt

I discovered a few days before I arrived to deliver one week of a three-week Train the Trainers course that one of the participants was visually impaired. The student, Maged, is an Egyptian university teacher in his forties. His English is of Proficiency level and he was participating in the Train the Trainers course in order to become a teacher trainer for university teachers.

When I found out about Maged's disability I was slightly concerned as I did not have any time to plan or do much research. However, the teacher trainers who were already at the centre assured me that, 'there was no problem'. I arrived prepared to manage the course as best I could.

I wanted to:

- set up learning conditions whereby Maged could get as much from the course as all the other participants
- manage a class where pairs and groups of students would rotate, so each student would at some point work with everyone else
- ensure the course accommodated everyone's needs 99 per cent of the time. I did not want any students to feel their needs were not being met because I was adapting materials or activities for a student with a visual impairment.

At the beginning, it was a challenge for me to manage Maged in the same way as everyone else. I did not want to overcompensate by checking in with him all the time or ignoring him as a way of trying not to draw attention to his disability. This became less of a problem as I got to know him and the other students better.

I was not aware initially that his computer read software; otherwise I would have prepared the materials I was using in advance. As a result, I was only able to give the materials to him halfway through the course.

I managed his needs by keeping visual input such as pictures or activities, relying on visual stimuli, to a minimum. His co-students read texts to him. One of the other students was a close friend of Maged's and he was always available to give practical help with reading and visual descriptions and to accompany him to different parts of the classroom. However, I sometimes separated them to enable his friend to be free from this responsibility and allow him to concentrate fully on

his own participation in the course. I also wanted to enable both of them to work with other participants. Other students were always willing to help and work with Maged.

Maged has managed his visual impairment very well. He was at ease with himself and it was not immediately obvious that he had a disability. He was able to stand up and teach in the same way as anyone else, directing himself towards individual students effectively using sound instead of sight. In fact, he was one of the most capable students and obtained the highest marks in the mock Teaching Knowledge Test. A Braille version of the exam is being prepared for Maged to be taken in the future. If all goes well, he will soon be teaching university students who are visually impaired. If this project goes ahead he will need support with specialised materials and methodology.

I have become aware that working with a visually impaired student is not as challenging as may appear at the outset and this opportunity has helped me to review how I direct my attention to individual students as I tried to avoid paying Maged too little or too much attention.

In the classroom I focused on an audio level, making sure that important information was relayed through a spoken medium, relying less on PowerPoint. I planned for Maged to be doing the same activities as everyone else, and managed this most of the time. I tried to create an open and transparent atmosphere creating conditions which were relaxed in order that the whole class could talk about Maged's disability. I did this by encouraging Maged to talk about himself to show that he was comfortable, and then encouraged others to ask him questions. This was mostly successful.

On another occasion, I would try to talk to a student who is visually impaired before the start of a course in order to gain a better understanding of their abilities and needs.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. How could you avoid students feeling as if a student who was visually impaired was getting an unfair amount of attention from the teacher?
2. How would you encourage discussion about visual impairment in an open and relaxed way in front of the class? What type of questions would you ask?

# Project – Gatti School

**AUTHOR:** Leonor Corradi, Operations Manager

**SCHOOL:** Special Needs School number 37 Francisco Gatti

**COUNTRY:** Argentina

This is a post-primary state school for students who are visually impaired, which organises workshops so that students can acquire skills which will enable them to earn their living. Students are young adults some have finished secondary school but many have not, and some have not even started it. Their visual impairment is the result of serious illnesses ranging from diabetes to AIDS. In 2009 the authorities decided to start a pilot project to teach English to some of these students.

Ten students at beginner or false beginner level attended the English workshop. They were all users of Jaws, a screen reading programme, which I learnt how to use. Each student had experienced frustration when trying to learn English on regular courses.

At the first meeting, they were apprehensive. During the conversation, their preconceptions about English and learning were aired. They felt English was too difficult, and they would not be able to learn. It became evident that I would have to work on building a bond with the students, generating trust and boosting their self-esteem. At the same time, I would have to show them that they could understand and use English.

Language is a way of constructing and conveying meaning and this was what I had to show my students. I was told by specialists in teaching the visually impaired that I should translate a lot, but I felt that this would be denying the students the chance to construct meaning in English by themselves. However, unless they understood, they could not learn. I therefore created meaning by using cognate, sounds, and by relating to their own context and existing knowledge.

Here are two examples of meaning construction at work: Students had a PC available to them, which they used as a person without a visual impairment would use a writing pad. The lessons are in Word documents, which I downloaded onto the PCs. The basic classroom language was scroll up/down, go to page/exercise. The word *exercise* is a cognate, which is not the case with *scrolling up/down*. However, students were familiar with the word *download*. The

connection I helped them establish was with the internet being *above us*, which requires **downloading**. As for *up*, I made reference to the drink *7Up*, which, they concluded, makes you feel positive, and which they associated with the word *up*.

I frequently worked with quizzes, which students loved as the focus is not directly on learning English. I used one to teach *there is/are*. They had already learned numbers and I linked them to cognates, e.g. *There are 20 provinces in Argentina* or *There is a president in Spain*. Once they understood the meaning of *there is/are*, I created another quiz about articles in my bag. They were then helped to discover that these structures are used to describe rooms, houses, and the articles in an object like a bag or a fridge, etc.

The students very seldom missed classes, which was unusual in this school. They knew they were learning. Their beliefs about English and learning changed, and they reached A1 level.

The first lessons I had to plan were a learning opportunity for me as I realised I had to convey the meaning of every object and visual aids such as body language. Realia and facial expressions were not helpful. I realised how many limitations I had and still have as a teacher. Teaching is helping others to learn, which requires starting from where the students are. Helping my students learn would be impossible unless I build on their strengths.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. How did the teacher dispel/overcome negative feelings about learning English?
2. Describe the teacher's creative, flexible and resourceful approach to teaching.

# Project – English Social Club for the Visually Impaired

**AUTHOR:** Leath Traill, ELT Co-ordinator

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Hanoi

**COUNTRY:** Vietnam

The English Social Club was launched in October 2011 by the British Council and the Australian Charity for Children of Vietnam (ACCV). The club, which is held at the British Council, hopes to create a central meeting point for English students in Hanoi who are visually impaired. For the first time, these students will have a venue where they can meet, make new friends and practise using the English that they are learning at the four ACCV run English schools. ACCV is a charity and all their classes are run by volunteer English teachers.

There are about 20 students who attend the club twice a month and the sessions follow a 'conversation club' format. There is a predetermined topic and British Council teachers take turns attending as guest speakers. In the second hour of the club there are language games based on the day's topic, and the club ends with a song. Two members of the English Language teaching team attend each session as well as one ACCV teacher. We are there in a support role as the club hosts are 2 students who are visually impaired (Hong and Dat) and who are training to become ACCV teachers themselves.

The majority of the students are in their twenties and most of them are working as masseuses. This is a common form of employment for people with visual impairments in Vietnam. Learning English will offer them access to a range of other employment possibilities. Several of them are finishing their high school studies and a few are enrolled at university. Four of the students have partial vision, but the others are blind.

Two training sessions were organised at the British Council based on a needs analysis conducted by ACCV who had already been teaching the students for over a year. The first related to mobility and was attended by Security, Customer Services and other interested members of British Council staff. The second training was delivered to teachers and it covered how to teach learners who are visually impaired along with the basics of Braille. We do not use much Braille at the Social Club though as the emphasis is more on conversation and an enjoyable 'day out' for the participants.

All British Council departments and management have been most supportive in facilitating and promoting this initiative. Four TV stations have been invited to report on the club and it is hoped that this publicity might bring some sponsors for ACCV.

The club is very successful and the students are delighted to have this opportunity.

I have learned that motivation and exposure are probably the two most important requirements when learning a language. These students have only been learning English for a year but are almost all at Intermediate level (B1). This is due to their motivation towards learning and their enthusiasm for reading. A large part of their Braille literature, everything from storybooks to computer manuals, comes in English as donations from Australia.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

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1. What were the key motivational aspects for the students in this project?



# Case studies communication and interaction needs



# Charlie

**AUTHOR:** Jonathan Rickard, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Hong Kong

**COUNTRY:** Hong Kong (China)

Charlie is 12 years old and in the first year of secondary school. He recently joined my pre-intermediate class.

On the first day of class, his mother gave me a letter which explained that Charlie had autism. The letter also mentioned that he was stubborn and often refuses to work, either by himself or with others. If this happened she recommended I leave him and she would help him do the work at home.

There were 21 students in class. At this level, it is not uncommon to have demotivated students, students with behavioural problems or ones with little inclination to study.

Sometimes Charlie did not do the work set, and instead flicked through the book or sat and stared. Sometimes encouragement worked, but other times he refused to participate, especially in communicative activities. He would say, *I don't want to tell you*, or ignore me.

Several classmates took a strong dislike to Charlie and there were instances of light physical contact such as nudging and pushing with partners. He sometimes refused to answer in pair and group communication activities.

Maintaining discipline and fairness was challenging. Once I asked him to change desks, away from a boy he was nudging. He refused, despite me trying to persuade him and warning I would call his parents. I gave up and asked the other boy to move. The boy reacted angrily, feeling he was being punished while Charlie had escaped unpunished. I felt the incident undermined my authority.

Charlie would not let me sign his lesson record, which is his proof of attendance. Without my signatures, he has no proof of his attendances and I have no proof of his absences. He has already skipped class once.

I have found the following strategies helpful:

- seating Charlie away from students who antagonise him
- providing extra exercises, as he generally finishes long before the rest of the class.

Charlie is more content to do puzzles and gap-fills than opinion-based exercises (*What's your favourite...?*) or writing about himself.

The Senior Teacher has been supportive and encouraged me not to view these issues as personal failings. We discussed a behaviour agreement, but I decided against this as I am not sure whether his behaviour is within his control. My line manager observed me and suggested re-grouping the students. This worked well.

Charlie's mother is in regular contact, which makes me feel I am not alone and I value her support. Moving Charlie has improved the atmosphere and participation of the entire class.

I learnt to try various approaches: being firm, being gentle, as well as varying seating, interaction and activities. I learnt to be patient, especially with myself, because I was doing what I considered best. We do occasionally make progress and recently Charlie started to let me sign his lesson record.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Like many children on the autism spectrum, Charlie finds interacting with others difficult and stressful. What alternatives to making him join in with these kinds of activities might be more productive for Charlie and the rest of the class?
2. What are the benefits of finding Charlie's special interest and allowing him to pursue it in relation to his language learning? How could this also benefit the whole class?

# Jane

**AUTHOR:** Justin Frith, Teacher

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Hong Kong

**COUNTRY:** China

This case study was based on a student at the British Council in Hong Kong, which provides English Language lessons to Early Year, Primary, Secondary and Adult students. Primary Year Children attend for one, 90 minute class weekly and classes are divided into similar age and level groups. There are no support assistants for classes of Year 3 upwards, though there are for Year 1 and Year 2 classes. The centre has been developing its courses for young learners, and has also had to adapt rapidly in order to support a greater number of children with specific educational needs. We have created new policies to support teachers, staff and parents as much as possible. The school emphasises that every child should have a successful learning experience.

Jane, a nine-year old primary student, studies English for 90 minutes a week in a Year 3 class. She has been diagnosed with autism and has a history at the centre, having displayed some minor anti-social behaviour.

In the previous year before our class, her teacher was made aware of her needs and was able to find out what interests she had (dogs and pets) and used these to connect with her. Over the following summer school, the next teacher was not made aware of Jane's specific needs. This caused difficulties due to what the teacher interpreted as a lack of co-operation.

Jane has a habit of reading through her class book when activities do not require this, being confrontational with students and using inappropriate language. However, this behaviour improved by giving her time limits to complete tasks, negotiating with her when possible, but also being firm and clear about what was and what was not acceptable behaviour. Her mother was patient and supportive with her daughter, and class work not completed in class was done at home together. I was made aware of Jane's needs through my line manager and from her academic records, and so I was able to discuss her needs with the mother. Since then, it has been much easier to include Jane in the class. The transfer of information before classes begin is perhaps the most important factor in Jane's case.

There are questions regarding how effective the teacher, and the institution, can be in helping to support and get the best out of students with specific needs. In what ways can the school strive to improve, or intervene when there is inappropriate behaviour, and how can we maintain a high degree of consistency of learning within a classroom?

I was able to observe Jane (and her classmates) within the context of the school environment and collect documentary evidence; including the student's work, spelling tests, project work and workbook activities. These clearly show she is capable of completing work and of working in pair and group activities.

Having had some opportunities to speak with Senior Teachers, Customer Services, other teachers and Jane's mother, some of the learning points that can be highlighted are:

- The importance of parents telling us if their children have any special educational needs before they join classes.
- The practical support that needs to be available for teachers who are working with students with specific needs.
- The need for a comprehensive and consistent whole school approach to working with students with specific needs.
- The importance of a transfer of student information from the previous teacher to the new teacher.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. What boundaries did the teacher apply in her teaching with Jane? How do these help children on the autism spectrum?

For an example of a social story useful for learners on the autism spectrum see Appendix 2.



# Case studies cognition and learning needs

# Kelvin

**AUTHOR:** Anna Britton, Senior Teacher Young Learners

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Napier Road

**COUNTRY:** Singapore

Kelvin joined my Primary 2 class and after two lessons of avoidance strategies like, 'I forgot to do my book review; I can't see the board very well...' I gave him some one-to-one time. It was clear he could not spell and was even struggling with short phonic consonant-vowel-consonant words. When he copied directly from the board or a text he made errors with b/d, p/q, etc. and was much slower than the other students.

Talking to other British Council teachers I realised that most teachers had similar stories. We did some research and discovered a course run by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. We contacted them and arranged for them to run a closed course at the British Council.

The course was delivered by trained specialists in learning differences. We looked at an overview of specific needs teaching including Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disability and Asperger's Syndrome. We gained an understanding of what dyslexia means, how it affects learning, testing for dyslexia, using a psychological report, understanding the Orton-Gillingham approach and practical strategies for supporting a dyslexic child.

In Kelvin's case, his parents were not willing to have him tested so we have had to continue to support him without an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Strategies we used include:

- placing Kelvin in a supportive class team with stronger students who help him
- awarding points for team collaboration, rather than finishing first
- talking to, and praising, team mates after class for their support
- ensuring activities are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic as students with dyslexia learn best when all senses are engaged
- encouraging a weekly book review, no matter how short; top prize for completing it
- one-to-one help to complete comprehension questions as well as telling Kelvin beforehand which question I will ask him during feedback so he is prepared and feels confident

- trying to rephrase answers, instead of saying 'that's wrong'
- encouraging spoken English during circle time as no reading or writing is required
- building in recycling activities
- reviewing phonic sounds/blends/digraphs.

Kelvin still needs to make progress but is now able to read independently and has grown enormously in confidence within the class. He is a fully integrated member of his class team who support him with his answers and he is not shy about asking for help from the other students or from me.

Some general learning points from this case study:

- students with dyslexia benefit enormously from good teaching practice
- it is possible that at least 20 per cent of students in your class will have specific needs related to dyslexia.

Some action points from this case study are that our materials now have:

- Arial or Comic Sans fonts which students with dyslexia find easier to decode
- visual anchors for activities and tricky words
- plenty of word puzzles.

For an example of an Individual Education Plan see Appendix 1.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Why do students with dyslexia often use avoidance strategies when it comes to reading and writing?
2. Copying from the board involves using the working memory, which is often problematic for people with dyslexia. How could the teacher overcome this difficulty?

# Zoe

**AUTHOR:** Sophie Handy, Teacher Co-ordinator

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Paris

**COUNTRY:** France

Zoe is an 11 year old girl who has dyspraxia. Although a fluent English speaker, like many of her peers she was in a bilingual class to improve her writing skills. I first learnt of Zoe's needs from a colleague who had taught her.

The main challenge we faced together was focusing her attention on the work at hand and getting her to complete her work. She usually wanted to give up half way through, blaming her lack of interest in completing the task on her dyspraxia, of which she is acutely aware. However, unlike most students I have come across with dyspraxia, she has no trouble with reading or spelling, often getting top marks in classroom spelling tests. I would say she is unusual in the sense that she is gifted at spelling, clearly enjoys reading lots of books, and yet has dyspraxia.

Nevertheless, she had specific needs in comprehension, information processing and listening to instructions. Although Zoe does not have a specific Individual Education Plan (IEP), I support her by making clear worksheets (using a clear font such as Arial in size 14 on pastel-coloured paper) and accepting type-written work and untidy handwriting. I also assisted by writing down her homework and coaching her during the plenary session of the lesson. In addition, I wrote what we covered in class in her language learning folder. I always provided written directions for assignments and remained patient and non-judgemental. I included the other students in her learning by creating an atmosphere of support and encouragement in the class. I showed her existing essays, anonymous work from the previous year, as examples for her, removed time pressures to relieve stress and even made sure she had both feet flat on the ground when working at her desk. This seemed to have a calming and anchoring influence on her.

By building an atmosphere of trust and respect we created a harmonious working environment where Zoe could interact with the rest of her peers with very little need for differentiation.

I learned that Zoe could produce work on a par with other students if given the right type and amount of encouragement. I also learned that catering for different learning styles and making judicious use of differentiation techniques are a big factor in motivating young learners.

For an example of an IEP see Appendix 1.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Zoe has got used to blaming dyspraxia for everything she finds difficult or tedious. How could she be encouraged away from this negative thinking?
2. How has this teacher shown sensitivity to Zoe's needs and found imaginative ways of meeting them?

# Harry

**AUTHOR:** Bernardo Martinez, Teacher Co-ordinator

**TEACHING CENTRE:** ASPAEN Gimnasio Horizontes

**COUNTRY:** Colombia

Harry is an eight year-old student in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He arrived from the USA two years ago with his Colombian mother. His father is American and still lives in the USA but keeps in contact with Harry and has travelled to Colombia to visit him on two occasions.

Harry has not been diagnosed as having any specific needs. His level of English is excellent and he has learned Spanish too. However, I have encountered difficulties when teaching him maths. He is the only child I have had who I have not been able to engage in the class. Most of the time he likes to play with his ruler or any object that he has available, pretending to shoot his classmates all around. I have talked to his group director and have regular meetings with Harry's mother asking her for her support, but she seems to lack authority and just smiles and says that she is going to work with him.

In the beginning, Harry said that he did not like the subject because we rarely used colours in class, so I let him use colours instead of a black pencil for his exercises in his notebook. This worked pretty well in relation to his acceptance of the class, but he still did not pay attention and showed no interest in maths, even though I tried many different methods including Content and Language Integrated Learning. I always ensured permanent follow-up to his work in class and acknowledged any achievements. I made the lessons as varied as possible giving the children the opportunity to create posters related to the topics and encouraging Harry to work in teams. When the children went to the computer lab to use the internet to explore maths, Harry preferred to surf the internet for pages on different topics. I modelled exercises on the board or integrated them into different activities and used games and contests to teach maths which I learnt about through a virtual course. As maths can be abstract in nature, I used realia to contextualise it in order to make it more concrete.

To summarise, it is obvious that Harry has difficulties in comprehending mathematics. I have used a variety of strategies with little success although his attitude in class has become more positive. He seems to like me and the way I treat him, but his results in the subject still need improving and he rarely pays attention in class. I do not feel I have found the right way to guide him in order to gain his interest in the topic and to lead him towards achieving the minimum standard.

It is part of our job to teach students with specific needs, and it is always a challenge to help them to learn. As a teacher I am very pleased to progress my knowledge in this area, with all types of specific needs, but we need more resources to guide us.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. The discrepancy between Harry's high ability in languages and his difficulties with maths may indicate dyscalculia. This learning condition involves difficulty with counting, calculating and estimating automatically, as well as an inability to comprehend abstract mathematical concepts and symbols. What strategies do you think might help Harry overcome these difficulties?



# Maxence

**AUTHOR:** Gail Ellis, Adviser Young Learners and Quality

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Paris

**COUNTRY:** France

A few years ago, when I was Teaching Centre Manager in Paris, I received a call from a mother of an 11 year old boy with Down syndrome. Maxence was bilingual French/English with French parents having attended an American school for children with special needs in Japan. Since returning to Paris where he is in a special class within a regular school, his mother was concerned that he was losing his natural spontaneity and fluency in English. I offered Maxence a place on a one week, 15-hour, story-based holiday class. The teacher requested the help of a support teacher and I agreed to take on this role myself. I considered the extra demands this would make on my time were justified as this would provide an ideal opportunity to develop procedures for our centre. It also provided a unique opportunity to observe and appraise a teacher throughout a programme of work from beginning to final outcome.

Maxence joined a class of 10 year olds in their final year of primary school, four girls and seven boys of mixed levels and nationalities. The teacher used the factual story of Pocahontas in combination with extracts from the Disney video. The plan of work included the following activities: introducing the characters, telling the story, making a book, learning a song and rehearsing a play for the final story presentation to parents on the Friday.

Day one: Maxence integrated well into the class. Linguistically, his peers were impressed as he was often able to predict quicker than they were as the teacher skilfully elicited adjectives to describe the characters in the story. However, unpredictable elements of behaviour manifested from time to time, as well as unexpected displays of affection which were not appreciated by his neighbour Thomas. Disruption was diffused; the teacher changed activity and showed a couple of short extracts from the video. All of a sudden there was an outburst from Maxence, 'Hey! What are you doing? Stop-Start. Stop-Start. That's really annoying me!' We are not used to such direct and frank comments about our methodological

approaches. Despite the unintentional disrespect to the teacher, it could be argued that Maxence was taking an active role in his own learning process while his peers sat by passively. He was informing us that he did not understand the purpose of the video activities which clearly did not correspond to his expectations or his learning preferences.

Day two: Having discussed the group dynamics, we decided who would sit where in order to separate some of the livelier boys. Five minutes into the lesson Maxence asked to go to the toilet and, in his absence, there was some tittering so I decided I needed to explain Maxence's differences to his peers.

Day three: 'Hello Pat!' said Maxence cheerfully as he walked into class, having obviously heard me address the teacher by her first name. Laughter from the children who enjoyed witnessing this familiarity as our class code of conduct requires learners to address teachers by their family name and title. The week progressed.

Day Five: Final rehearsal for the story presentation to parents and some of the boys were playing up. Miraculously, the presentation went well. Maxence and Yvenne read their lines perfectly as narrators, Pocahontas and Chief Powhattan spoke up clearly, Sir John Radcliffe managed to say his lines and add dramatic effect, John Smith remembered his lines, Pokoun died gracefully and did not writhe around the floor noisily as he did in rehearsals, and we all sang the song enthusiastically wearing our native American head-dresses, made in one of the lessons.

Maxence left happily having spent 15 hours immersed in English and activating his slightly dormant knowledge, and having gained the respect of his peers. He also left with his Pocahontas book, his head-dress and his end of course 'well done!' certificate. His mother was very happy. The other learners left with the same things also having learnt a great deal of English. In addition, they learnt about Maxence and to respect his differences.

Our centre was able to establish more clearly the kind of procedures we needed to put in place to accommodate students with specific needs.

- The dialogue I had with Maxence's mother before the course allowed me to establish his educational and linguistic background and his current needs. Partnership and dialogue with the parents/carers is invaluable.
- Accommodating a child with specific needs may require the presence of a support teacher who should ideally have training in this area. Such support will aid the teacher to create an inclusive and productive learning environment for all students.
- Maxence highlighted how important it is that the teacher explains the purpose of activities to students so they understand what the teacher is doing and why and what is expected of them.
- It is sometimes necessary to speak directly and openly to other members of the class about someone's differences to enable them to develop awareness, understanding and tolerance.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

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1. How did Maxence's lack of inhibition provide some valuable feedback on the teacher's teaching methods?
2. What were the advantages of informing classmates about Down syndrome and Maxence's differences?

# Project – Centre for Vocational Training for People with Intellectual Disabilities

**AUTHOR:** Cliff Parry, Academic Manager

**TEACHING CENTRE:** Athens

**COUNTRY:** Greece

As part of our equal opportunities and diversity work, for the past three years the Teaching Centre through a local partner ESTIA (The Centre for Vocational Training for People with Intellectual Disabilities) has offered English language lessons to a group of individuals with specific needs.

Aiming at improving quality of life through fostering social and vocational skills, as well as providing competency in basic English language functions, the programme content was chosen to reflect likely individual English language needs. Many of the individuals travelled internationally to take part in sporting events such as the Special Olympics or attend symposiums/conferences for people with cognitive disabilities. Due to this fact, it was decided that content such as the language of introductions, asking for and sharing personal information and expressing preference or need would be of high value.

The programme itself involved 45 minutes of contact time once a week backed up by another 45 minutes of reinforcement through an IT-based environment.

Delivery itself focused on creative learning and leisure activities with much emphasis given to the use of visuals and body language to promote understanding and prompt repetition and production. As there were low levels of reading and writing in the mother tongue, it was agreed with the partner that the programme would focus on developing participants' speaking and listening skills.

Given some problems with attention and limited motor skill proficiency, a typical activity sequence consisted of short stirring activities (for example chanting, miming and Total Physical Response routines) and settling activities (for example visual identification, memory and selection exercises). Participation was encouraged through positive teaching with little attention to error and correction but with increased provision of good models and verbal reward.

Participants themselves were encouraged to build up a visual record of lesson content either through their own drawing and painting, selection of pictures from magazines and other printed materials or from a clip-art resource. To exploit the latter, participants were given training and support in accessing photos and pictures through the MS Office Suite. Though the outcome of this supported the English language lesson, the guidance was provided in the first language and the information technology skills acquired were considered to be useful vocational skills for the individuals concerned.

The programme itself proved popular at ESTIA, growing from an initial group of four participants to a current 12. Apart from the demonstrable evidence of participants communicating in English, albeit on a restricted level, with peers from other countries, it has fostered an understanding of individuals with similar needs from different cultures.

Special Olympics

<http://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk/>

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

1. Why is it important to make learning relevant to these students' daily lives?
2. How does the use of the visual record as an imaginative alternative to the written record help these students?

# Reflection activities – suggested answers

Author of reflection questions and answers:

**Sally Farley**, Specialist Support Tutor, University of Kent

## **CASE STUDY 1: TIM (ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER)**

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1. The teacher enabling Tim to use his strengths in reading and listening tasks. She minimised writing tasks by allowing Tim to answer orally. She provided scaffolding to help Tim with organising his answers.
2. Teaching centres and schools can encourage parents to be open about their child's needs by explaining the prevalence of specific educational needs in the general population and emphasising that working with a child's strengths can help overcome these difficulties. It is important to point out that having a specific need does not impact on intelligence, and that many people with specific needs go on to become extremely successful.

## **CASE STUDY 2: NICOLA (ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER)**

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1. Establishing clear routines is helpful for all learners, and particularly important for learners with specific needs. It gives them clear expectations and helps lower the anxiety levels associated with uncertainty.
2. Continuity from one class to another is important because change is often difficult for students with specific needs, and communication between teachers and parents helps ease the transition to a new class. The new teacher will have an understanding of the learner's needs and be able to use strategies which were successful in the previous class. Setting up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is another way of ensuring continuity. For an example of an Individual Education Plan see Appendix 1.
3. In order to get learners to empathise with classmates who have specific needs it is important to talk about those differences so as to demystify and normalise them. Explain that people with ADD/ADHD have difficulty concentrating, and it is not their fault. A good metaphor is that it is like trying to watch lots of TV channels at the same time. You can concentrate on one for a little while, but the others are constantly distracting you and demanding your attention. Ask the students to imagine what this feels like, and how it would impact on their ability to learn. Once they are aware of these difficulties they will be able to empathise and are more likely to be motivated to support the student with ADD/ADHD.

## **CASE STUDY 3: MATT (GIFTED, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DISORDER)**

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1. Some people have difficulty judging how their behaviour impacts on others. This is very common for people on the autism spectrum. An effective way of teaching them to understand this is through examples given in a 'social story', which is tailored to their situation. An example of a social story can be found in Appendix 2.
2. Children who feel the need for constant attention and praise from the teacher need reassurance that they have not been overlooked and that their turn will come. Finding the right moment to give the child one-to-one time and making this a regular feature in every lesson will help meet this need.
3. Matt's patterns of strengths and weaknesses could indicate that he is on the autism spectrum. Although this may not necessarily be the case, considering this possibility can be helpful in understanding Matt's needs and working out suitable teaching strategies.

## **CASE STUDY 4: BERNIE (CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES)**

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1. Montessori teaching concentrates on the individual child, emphasising independence, freedom of choice within limits and encouraging learning through discovery rather than instruction. This approach probably worked so well for Bernie as it enabled him to learn in his own way and at his own pace.
2. Bernie probably finds writing tasks very difficult. Rather than insisting he completes them, it may be more useful to give him alternative activities where he can record his answers orally.
3. Visual prompts enable the teacher to give gentle reminders to the child without drawing attention to them and disrupting the rest of the class.

### **CASE STUDY 5: MILAGROS (PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS)**

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1. The teacher used activities which caught Milagros' interest and imagination, distracting her from her separation anxiety as she became engrossed in the stories, songs and games.
2. Drama techniques such as role play, dressing up and wearing masks can enable a child to enter a fantasy world where they are free from the burdens of their everyday lives.
3. In order to learn a language a student needs to feel secure enough to take part actively in class discussions, try out new forms of language and risk making mistakes.

### **CASE STUDY 6: PROJECT – ENGLISH IN ACTION (VARIOUS)**

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1. Drama techniques used in this project include role play, improvisation, music, singing, storytelling, Total Physical Response, puppets, masks, dressing up, arts and crafts and language games.
2. 'Imagined worlds' create a space away from the burdens and difficulties of everyday life where students can develop language skills and build self-confidence.
3. Social education can be integrated into the language learning through role play and interaction with classmates and teachers. Group activities encourage collaboration and respect for others as well as self-awareness and self-development.

### **CASE STUDY 7: KHALID (PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT)**

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1. Forward planning ensures that students with specific needs can be included fully in the class. In Khalid's case the teacher anticipated access and mobility issues before the start of the course as well as designing all classroom activities in a way that allowed Khalid to participate.
2. To find out what Khalid was able to do the teacher would have asked Khalid what he felt comfortable with physically, i.e. how long he could stand, what kind of chair was best, how he felt about walking to the interactive white board and how much involvement he wanted in physical activities. He also checked Khalid's feelings before each activity, realising that these would vary from day to day.
3. We can foster a warm and supporting environment by making the other students aware of Khalid's mobility difficulties and encouraging them to go to him during activities and helping him whenever necessary.

### **CASE STUDY 8: EMAN (HEARING IMPAIRMENT)**

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1. Teaching functional language for checking understanding and asking for clarification or repetition helped raise awareness of Eman's needs.
2. The teacher made the rest of the class aware of Eman's difficulties by demonstrating how hard a listening task could be if the volume was too low. They then readily accepted the volume being at a suitable level for Eman to hear. By giving Eman feedback on pronunciation while the rest of the class were busy with writing activities the teacher ensured that her specific needs were met without inconveniencing the other students.
3. Students with hearing difficulties are often good at lip-reading, which means they are highly aware of the physical actions involved in producing sounds. This strength can be used to help the rest of the class learn pronunciation by imitating the movements of the lips and tongue.

### CASE STUDY 9: MARIAM (HEARING IMPAIRMENT)

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1. The teacher's positive attitude and belief in Mariam's ability to learn helped her to overcome temporary setbacks. It demonstrates the values of determination and perseverance.
2. Giving Mariam homework helped to compensate for missing out on class discussions and enabled a one-to-one discussion with the teacher instead.

### CASE STUDY 10: JUAN (HEARING IMPAIRMENT)

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1. Students with hearing impairments often understand language through lip-reading, facial expressions and gestures. It is important that teachers make sure they face the student when speaking, that light is falling onto their face and that they are not standing in front of a window. If using an interactive white board, make sure the beam does not prevent the student from seeing your face.
2. The teacher helped the whole class with pronunciation showing the way sounds are produced by pointing to her face and emphasising the muscular movements involved. She also mouthed a spelling test which encouraged them to watch closely and imitate her actions.
3. If a student has difficulty in one area of learning, it is important to work with and celebrate their strengths in other areas. This enhances learning and increases self-esteem.

### CASE STUDY 11: JASON (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)

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1. Somebody born with a visual impairment is more likely to read Braille than somebody who becomes visually impaired later in life.
2. The teacher varied the length and type of activities, allowed breaks when necessary and made her lesson plans flexible in order to adapt to Jason's mood.
3. To create a positive and constructive learning environment Jason's teacher focused on his strengths, used his existing knowledge of his environment and the world, adapted materials and teaching methods to his needs and made full use of technology.

### CASE STUDY 12: MOYAD (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)

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1. Perhaps this student could have been encouraged to re-enrol if Braille materials had been ordered in advance and checked for consistency with the other resources. A Braille version of assessments could have been produced. A teaching assistant could be used to read out materials and describe visual prompts.
2. By using recordings and other audio resources, pair work and peer correction, singing, chanting and Total Physical Response a visually impaired student can be included in communicative activities.

### CASE STUDY 13: RAED (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)

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1. His classmates supported Raed when working in pairs by clarifying and correcting. They accompanied him during the breaks and came in early to help him with homework.
2. The teacher used Raed's special strengths in pronunciation to help build his confidence and self-esteem by encouraging him to help the other students in this area.

### CASE STUDY 14: MAGED (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)

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1. Be aware of overcompensating for disability, especially at the beginning of a course, and giving a student with specific needs too much or too little attention. By encouraging pair work and group work, keeping visual input to a minimum and planning activities which benefited the whole class while including the visually impaired student.
2. You could encourage discussion about visual impairment by encouraging an open and transparent atmosphere where the student could talk about being visually impaired and answer questions from the rest of the class about how this impacts on their daily lives and what strategies they use to overcome their difficulties.

### CASE STUDY 15: PROJECT – GATTI SCHOOL (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)

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1. The teacher dispelled negative feelings by building a bond with the students which enabled them to trust her and believe in their ability to learn English.
2. The teacher worked by taking words and phrases that the students already knew and gradually building up chunks of language from them. This enabled them to construct meaning in English independently. More information about this method of language teaching can be found in Michael Lewis' work *The Lexical Approach*.

Lewis, Michael; *The Lexical Approach*,  
(Hove: Language Teaching Publications 1993)

### **CASE STUDY 16: PROJECT – ENGLISH SOCIAL CLUB (VISUAL IMPAIRMENT)**

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1. Visually impaired students were motivated to attend this social club as it gave them the chance to meet and make new friends as well as practise English in an informal and supportive atmosphere. The emphasis was on fun and games, conversation and enjoyment.

### **CASE STUDY 17: CHARLIE (AUTISM)**

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1. Rather than insisting that Charlie joins in communicative activities, it could be more productive to allow him to work on appropriate language exercises on the computer. This way he would feel more comfortable, and his classmates would be less likely to feel resentment towards him.
2. The benefits of finding Charlie's special interest and allowing him to pursue it is that this would be using Charlie's strengths in order to make learning a pleasant and productive experience. It is likely to improve the classroom atmosphere and have a positive effect on the rest of the class.

### **CASE STUDY 18: JANE (AUTISM)**

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1. Children with autism need established routines and firm boundaries in order to feel secure. Unexpected events and last-minute changes can cause high levels of anxiety and distress. Jane's teacher set time limits and gave firm and clear guidelines about acceptable behaviour which she applied consistently.

### **CASE STUDY 19: KELVIN (DYSLEXIA)**

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1. Text-based activities are often extremely difficult for dyslexic students. Being asked to read aloud can cause distress and feelings of humiliation.
2. By preparing handouts which can be given to the dyslexic student in advance. This avoids drawing attention to their working memory difficulties.

### **CASE STUDY 20: ZOE (DYSPRAXIA)**

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1. Zoe's teacher has found strategies which help build Zoe's self-esteem. Positive marking, praise and encouragement all help to overcome Zoe's negative expectations.
2. This teacher has identified Zoe's difficulties in comprehension, information processing and understanding instructions. She has found a variety of ways to support Zoe, including making special worksheets, writing down instructions and homework assignments and giving extra coaching. She remains patient and non-judgemental at all times, thus fostering an atmosphere of support and respect.

### **CASE STUDY 21: HARRY (POSSIBLE DYSCALCULIA)**

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1. Using a hands-on, concrete approach to learning maths where quantities can be measured physically, fractions understood by cutting things into halves and quarters and distances measured on foot. Multimedia interactive computer programmes are also useful for dyscalculia.

### **CASE STUDY 22: MAXENCE (DOWN SYNDROME)**

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1. By providing such frank and immediate comments on this particular activity, Maxence helped the teacher to see the lesson from the learners' point of view. The other children may have experienced similar feelings of frustration, but unless this was voiced the teacher would not be aware of this.
2. Informing the classmates about Down syndrome enabled them to understand and empathise with Maxence, and respect and appreciate his differences.

### **CASE STUDY 23: PROJECT – CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING (LEARNING DIFFICULTIES)**

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1. It is important to make the learning relevant to daily lives as it helps motivate the students as they can make use of the language they are learning outside of the classroom.
2. A visual record avoids the need for reading and writing skills and is fun to make. It is a useful way of remembering what was covered during the course.





# Guidelines and tips for creating an inclusive learning experience

# General principles for inclusion within the classroom

All good teaching strategies and techniques include the planning and stating of carefully balanced, varied learning sequences with clear achievable objectives, so learners know what is expected from them. In addition, a well-managed classroom will be one where routines are established, classroom dynamics analysed and class layout and seating arrangements planned accordingly to accommodate diversity and provide equal opportunities for all learners. You will recognise many of the suggestions below as standard techniques for any classroom.

Many learners can have difficulty paying attention without having an attention deficit disorder. They may have trouble focusing because they are anxious, upset and not feeling well, or simply bored. Do not make any learner stand out as being different, needy or the subject of any special attention. Ensure that all learners can see and hear you and other learners. Present information in a variety of ways in order to accommodate different learning styles (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic).

Factors which mitigate against an inclusive classroom include poor materials, misunderstandings, lack of communication, inappropriate teaching methods, poor or insufficient planning and an unsuitable classroom environment. If you want to foster an inclusive learning experience think carefully about the following:

## The classroom environment

- Consider the layout of the room and how you can improve it.
- Is it easy for the class to work in pairs without having to move lots of furniture?
- Is there an area that can be used for role play?
- Is there a quiet area?
- Look at equipment such as interactive white boards, MP3/CD/cassette players, laptops, realia, flashcards, etc. and decide how best to use them.
- If you are using Language Masters, are they easy to get out?
- If anyone is using a laptop are they within easy reach of the power socket?
- Is your room stimulating enough but not over stimulating for any learners with Autistic spectrum disorder? Often classrooms are full of equipment and walls full of posters, maps and pictures which can cause sensory overload, for some learners.

- Make one corner a stimulus-free area where people can sit and think or engage in quiet study. Make sure that this is not seen as 'the naughty corner' but a place where learners can go to work alone or in pairs.
- Change displays often. They lose their appeal quite quickly.
- Encourage learners to make things for the wall. They often remember things that they have touched and constructed much more clearly than pieces of writing.
- Interactive white boards are becoming increasingly popular; they are easy to integrate sound and video as part of the lesson and they can more clearly demonstrate the relationship between the written word and what is heard.
- Colours and pictures reach out to a wider range of learning styles and those who are visual learners will benefit greatly from their use. The printout facility on an interactive white board can help to reinforce messages and encourage peer discussion. Printouts are especially useful for learners with dyslexia, who copy inaccurately and may have short-term memory problems.

## Learning styles

Auditory learners benefit from:

- sounding out words when reading
- verbal instructions
- the use of audio tapes/CD/MP3
- rehearsing information, repeating it many times to pronounce the sounds correctly.

## Visual learners benefit from:

- the use of visual diagrams
- the use of video, flashcards, charts and maps
- practising visualising words and ideas
- writing out notes for frequent and quick visual scan and review.

## Kinaesthetic/tactile learners benefit from:

- tracing words as they are being spoken
- learning facts by writing them out several times
- moving around while studying
- taking risks in learning
- making written notes but also discussing these with others
- making study plans.

### **Differentiation within tasks**

- Adapt tasks to take account of all levels of ability from the most able to those needing the most support.
- Make sure that tasks are adapted according to their mode of input and output; visual, audio, text, etc. as well as the resources that are used within the activity.
- Make sure that the differentiation takes into account learning styles, particularly for learners with specific needs.

### **Resources**

- Illustrations are a vital ingredient, whether they are photographs, drawings or cartoons. They motivate most learners and in many cases give visual clues to the accompanying text. This is helpful to all learners, especially those who have a strong visual memory; illustrations also break up text into more manageable chunks.
- Many learners find reading difficult for a variety of reasons. The majority of texts are still black print on a white background and this is uncomfortable for some categories of readers. Learners with dyslexia may use a coloured plastic overlay to obviate the problem of 'glare'. However, they may still find it harder to write on white paper.
- Use a range of coloured pens and paper for homework or 'best work'.
- When producing your own materials, make sure that the font is Arial, Comic Sans, Sassoon or New Century Schoolbook. Font size 12 or 14 is best for most learners. Bold is fine but italic is hard to read. Use double or 1.5 line spacing to help learners who have problems with visual tracking. Use lots of headings and sub-headings as signposts.

### **Positive Communication**

Verbal:

- use simple understandable words
- use the learners first name
- use a moderate rate of speech
- use a moderate and varied tone
- praise good behaviour
- use humour to reduce tension
- give clear instructions
- reflect back and clarify statements
- be non-judgemental

- use 'I' statements
- answer questions about self
- respond to the primary message
- summarise
- phrase interpretations tentatively to elicit genuine response.

Non-verbal:

- look at the person who is speaking
- maintain good eye contact
- lean your body towards the listener
- smile
- nod your head
- use touch and praise
- use facial animation
- use occasional hand gestures.

Good communication is important to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to bad behaviour.

### **Managing behaviour**

- be polite; encourage children to say please and thank you
- be fair
- smile
- give praise
- encourage children to put things right/make amends
- help children get out of difficulties
- chat to children about their interests and yours
- label the act NOT the child, e.g. that was unkind, not YOU are unkind
- reward positive behaviour with stickers, certificates and badges
- give children the opportunity to choose to follow the rule and remind them of the consequence if they choose not to. This helps them become more responsible for their behaviour.

# Tips for learners with specific conditions

The tips below are recommended for supporting learners with particular conditions; however, each person may experience their condition in a slightly different way so they are pointers rather than rigid rules and they are guidelines rather than a comprehensive list. Whenever possible, find out how best you can support your learners by speaking to them or to their parents.

## Attention Deficit Disorder

- Keep instructions simple; the one-sentence rule.
- Make eye contact and use the learner's name when speaking to them.
- Sit the learner away from obvious distractions.
- Provide clear routines and rules, rehearse them regularly and be willing to restate rules.
- Reinforce positive behaviour rather than highlighting the negative.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Give a plan for each lesson to the learner.
- Warn the learners about any changes to their usual routine – allow the learner to sit in the same place for each lesson.
- Avoid using too much eye contact as it can cause distress.
- Use simple clear language, avoid using metaphor or sarcasm.
- Create as calm a classroom environment as possible.

## Down syndrome

- Use simple familiar language.
- Give learners time to process information.
- Break lessons up into a series of short, varied tasks.
- Accept a variety of ways of recording work such as drawings, diagrams, photos and video.

## Hearing impairment

- Find out about the degree of hearing loss the learner has.
- Check on the best seating position for each learner.
- Check that the learner can see your face for expressions and lip-reading.
- Make sure the light falls on your face and lips. Do not stand with your back to a window.

- When using the interactive white board ensure that the beam does not prevent the learner from seeing your face.
- Indicate where a learner is speaking from during class discussion and only allow one speaker at a time.
- Provide lists of vocabulary, context and visual clues and copies of tape scripts.
- Be aware of and reduce any interfering background noise as far as possible.

## Visual impairment

- Find out about the degree of sight impairment of the learner.
- Check the optimum position for the learner, e.g. for a monocular learner their good eye should be towards the action.
- Maximise the listening environment as far as possible by having a quiet classroom.
- For the more severely visually impaired learners, verbally describe everything that you are doing.
- Check that the use of the interactive white board does not disadvantage the learner.
- If you are using video clips, explain the context. If necessary, pause the video and describe what is happening on the screen.
- Always provide the learner with their own copy of the text.
- Check the learner's use of ICT (enlarged icons, talking text and keyboard skills).
- Do not stand with your back to the window as this creates a silhouette and makes it harder for the learner to see you.
- Make sure the floor is kept free of clutter.
- Tell the learner if there is a change to the layout of a space.
- Find out if the learner uses any specialist equipment such as enlarged print dictionaries, lights or talking scales.
- Look at alternative format such as enlarged, modified enlarged and Braille.

### **Dyslexia**

- Give clear, precise instructions and follow verbal instructions up with a written text which can be referred to later.
- Display key words on display panels/boards and provide word banks.
- Provide support in the form of frameworks for writing.
- Encourage the learner to think what they have to do before starting and perhaps repeat it to you.
- Provide photocopied notes, printouts, lists of spellings and highlight or underline key phrases.
- Photocopies should be made on off-white paper, e.g. salmon, grey or beige.
- Look at alternative ways of recording information, such as audio recordings, mind maps and pictures.
- Use different colours for each line if there is a lot of written information on the board, or underline every second line with a different coloured pen.
- Ensure that writing is well spaced.
- Use a coloured plastic overlay to prevent the problem of 'glare' of black print on a white background.

### **Dyspraxia**

- Ask the learner questions to check their understanding of instructions and tasks.
- Check seating positions and ensure the learner is sitting in an upright position with both feet resting on the floor.
- Use computers to record work to minimise handwriting.
- Use worksheets with spaces for answers to reduce the amount of writing required by the learner.
- Break down tasks into small components and chunks.
- Repeat verbal instructions several times and keep them simple.
- Use different coloured pens for each line when writing on the board.
- Signpost the different stages of the lesson and when the lesson is nearing its end conduct a review stage.

### **Physical disability**

- Ensure that any wheelchair user is timetabled into a classroom which is easily accessible.
- Ensure you are familiar with how the disabled lift functions or have another member of staff available to assist you.
- Ensure that the classroom is clutter-free and easily accessible.
- Ensure that there are clear evacuation procedures in place in the event of an emergency and that these are communicated to everyone including security guards, customer services teams, teachers, assistants and learners.

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Bates, J: *Able, gifted and talented (Special Educational Needs)* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005)
- Birkett, V: *How to support and teach children with Special Educational Needs* (LDA, 2003)
- Brown, S; Harwood, S & Vahid, B: *500 tips for working with children with Special Needs* (Routledge, 1998)
- Brown, T: *Attention Deficit Disorder – the unfocused mind in children and adults* (Yale University Press, 2006)
- Clough, P & Corbett, J: *Theories of inclusive education – a student's guide* (Paul Chapman, 2000)
- Cooper, P: *Understanding and supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties* (Jessica Kingsley, 1999)
- Cyf, G: *Teaching pupils with visual impairment – a guide to making the school curriculum accessible* (David Fulton, 2007)
- Davis, P: *Including children with visual impairment in mainstream schools – a practical guide* (David Fulton, 2003)
- Delaney, M: *Teaching the unteachable: practical ideas to give teachers hope and help when behaviour management strategies fail; what teachers can do when all else fails* (Worth, 2008)
- Delaney, M: *What can I do about the Kid who...? A teachers' quick guide to dealing with disruptive pupils (and their parents)* (Worth, 2010)
- Distin, K (Editor): *Gifted Children: A Guide for Parents and Professionals* (Jessica Kingsley, 2006)
- Ellis, G: *Teaching children with additional educational needs* <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/teaching-children-additional-educational-needs>
- Farrell, M: *The effective teacher's guide to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties: practical strategies* (Routledge, 2005)
- Farrell, M: *The effective teacher's guide to sensory impairment and physical disability: Practical Strategies* (Routledge, 2005)
- Gray, C: *My social stories book* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001)
- Green, C: *Understanding ADHD – A parent's guide to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children* (Vermilion, 1997)
- Hannell, G: *Identifying children with special needs: checklists and action plans for teachers* (Corwin Press, 2005)
- Holbrook, M: *Children with visual impairments – A parent's guide* (Woodbine House, 2006)
- Hull Learning Services: *Supporting children with cerebral palsy* (David Fulton, 2004)
- Jupp, K: *Everyone belongs: mainstream education for children with severe learning difficulties* (Souvenir Press, 1992)
- Knight, P: *The care and education of a deaf child – a book for parents* (Multilingual Matters, 1999)
- Lynas, W: *Communication options in the education of deaf children* (Wiley Blackwell, 1994)
- NASEN: *The SEN Handbook for trainee teachers, NQTs and teaching assistants* (David Fulton/NASEN, 2006)
- Neanon, C: *How to identify and support children with dyslexia* (LDA, 2002)
- Olsen, J & Cooper, P: *Dealing with disruptive students in the classroom* (TES Kogan Page 2001)
- Reid, G: *100 ideas for supporting pupils with dyslexia* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007)
- Teaching young children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders to learn* (Autism Asperger Publishing, 2002)
- Westwood, P: *Commonsense methods for children with special education needs – 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Strategies for the Regular Classroom* (Routledge Falmer, 2003)

## WEBSITES

TeachingEnglish

**[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/)**

LearnEnglish

**[learnenglish.britishcouncil.org](http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org)**

LearnEnglish Kids

**[learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org](http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org)**

Promoting diversity through children's literature

**<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-kids/promoting-diversity-through-children%E2%80%99s-literature>**

See story notes for Susan Laughs and The Very Busy Spider which can be used to raise awareness about disability.

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

**[www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)**

Anxiety UK

**[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)**

Association for All Speech Impaired Children (AFASIC)

**[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)**

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia

**<http://www.dys-add.com/symptoms.html>**

British Deaf Association

**[www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)**

British Dyslexia Association (BDA)

**[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)**

British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD)

**[www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)**

Bullying UK

**[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)**

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)

**[www.csie.org.uk](http://www.csie.org.uk)**

Deaf Education through Listening and Talking (DELTA)

**[www.deafeducation.org.uk](http://www.deafeducation.org.uk)**

Down Syndrome Association

**[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)**

Dyslexia Action

**[www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)**

Dyspraxia Foundation

**[www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)**

National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service

**<http://www.addiss.co.uk/>**

National Association for Gifted Children

**[www.nagcbrtain.org.uk](http://www.nagcbrtain.org.uk)**

National Association Special Education Needs (NASEN)

**[www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk)**

National Autistic Society (NAS)

**[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)**

National Blind Children's Society (NBCS)

**[www.nbcs.org.uk](http://www.nbcs.org.uk)**

National Deaf Children's Society

**[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)**

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

**[www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)**

SEN Teachers Resources

**<http://www.senteacher.org/>**

Signature (promotes excellence in communication with deaf people)

**[www.signature.org.uk](http://www.signature.org.uk)**

Writing Social Stories

**<http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories/how-to-write-social-stories>**

# Appendix 1

## **An example of an Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

Submitted by **Phil Dexter**,  
Teacher Development Adviser,  
British Council, UK

An IEP is an important framework in supporting a learner identified as having specific needs. It can give a specific individual a structured learning programme aimed at raising and meeting standards in mainstream education. It is also a record of progress, achievement and a recommendation for further action that may be necessary. To be effective it is usually a programme to be implemented over a six week period which is then reviewed. To be effective it is usually devised and agreed between the school, external support agencies, parents/carers and most importantly the children themselves.

Though IEPs are usually devised as a means to support a child in achieving standards that all learners are intended to meet in school subjects, it can also be a useful technique in devising an individual programme for gifted and talented children who require an individual programme going beyond the 'achievement norm'.



# Primary School – Individual Education Plan for Luke

<b>NAME: LUKE</b>		<b>AREA OF CONCERN: LITERACY/NUMERACY</b>		<b>START DATE: NOW</b>	
<b>DOB:</b>		<b>ASSESSMENTS:</b>		<b>REVIEW DATE: SIX WEEKS</b>	
<b>CLASS / CLASS TEACHER: YR 5</b>		<b>PROPOSED SUPPORT: SUPPORT IN CLASS, DIFFERENTIATED WORK, SMALL GROUP WORK AND DIFFERENTIATED TASKS WITH A SENSORY FOCUS.</b>		<b>IEP NUMBER: 1</b>	
<b>TARGETS TO BE ACHIEVED:</b>		<b>ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA:</b>		<b>POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR USE IN CLASS:</b>	
To focus on activities that support Luke in staying on task for an increasing length of time.	Luke uses his plans and ideas to help him focus on a task steadily increasing his ability to concentrate.	Activities are devised which enable Luke to attend to short tasks that can be achieved and demonstrate success. The content of the tasks are multi-sensory and topics/subjects that interest Luke. The complexity of tasks to be increased steadily as Luke demonstrates success. Luke is given time and opportunity to personally reflect on his increasing successful learning strategies and what he still finds challenging.		<b>IDEAS FOR THE TEACHING ASSISTANT:</b>	
To learn how to sequence more effectively.	Luke demonstrates understanding of how written texts are sequenced and this is reflected in higher marks in class work.	Luke works on texts in all subjects through a jigsaw approach supporting him in making judgements on how to effectively sequence in English. Luke is asked to focus on phrases that link sentences and this in turn can be used for simple science statements. The strategy is also effective for mathematics linking cause and effect at year 5 level. This approach is also sensory as Luke will physically manipulate the texts to sequence or can be done on a computer in ICT lessons and at home.		Luke has shown improvement in his concentration which has resulted in an improvement in both his reading and writing. This has led to much improved classroom, work at home and results in classroom tests. Luke still needs to make further progress but is making significant progress in his school work which has helped him to feel part of his class and relate much better with his peers.	
To understand more effectively the relationship between segments and the bigger picture.	Luke shows greater understanding of the relationship between the parts and the whole in all subjects through completion of classwork tasks.	Luke works on tasks that link chunks of language to sentences and paragraphs so he understands the relationships more effectively. This is done through using a range of content from different subjects. This also supports Luke in seeing closer relationships between all school subjects. The use of Cuisenaire rods, Lego or other building blocks allows Luke to 'build' a big picture on a topic while at the same time build up step by step. It also links to Luke's strong sensory feelings by learning through and approach involving shapes, colours and the tactile. This activity can also facilitate abstract thinking skills. Luke is also encouraged to focus on his learning outcomes and to understand how his small successes link to bigger learning outcomes through writing statements on what he has achieved.			
To develop confidence in interacting with peers.	Luke demonstrates increased successful collaborative skills in working with peers on classroom tasks and also shows greater confidence in participating in class and any aggression towards peers is diminished.	Luke is encouraged to work on tasks with a peer he is comfortable in working with and then build up to work in a small group and then larger groups. As the learning processes are ones that Luke is comfortable with he has more control. Gradually understands how everyone can learn from each other and what different strengths individuals bring to a group.			
Parent will support by: Encouraging Luke to work on tasks supporting at home what is begun in school. Providing positive support in developing small successes into bigger ones.		Luke will: Think about, talk about his learning outcomes with teachers, assistants and his parents. He will follow up work in school at home and make a record of his own progress.			
Parents comments:		Pupils comments:			
Signed:					

# Appendix 2

## Social Stories

**Author: Phil Dexter**, Teacher Development Adviser,  
British Council, UK

Providing social stories is an important support technique which is a short description of an event written for a child to develop social understanding. They are often used as a tool to aid understanding and develop social skills in contexts that appear very difficult for children who have been diagnosed as being on the Autism spectrum. Social stories can be used for any social situation which may provide particular challenges – for example, dealing with hygiene – how to take a bath/shower, moving home or learning to help others.

While social stories have a specific purpose for children with Autism spectrum disorder – they are in many respects a model of story structure for developing social understanding and imagination, in general. Though it is important to point out that children with ASD do not necessarily have problems with imagination itself – many on the Autism spectrum are extremely gifted in art, music and mathematics. The challenge is with social imagination, and social stories can help to provide both a routine framework that makes sense to the child and also a structure to help develop social skills.

The structure and features of social stories as defined by Carol Gray in *Writing Social Stories*, (Future Horizons Inc, 2000), regarded as the inventor of Social Stories, includes:

- An introduction, body and conclusion.
- Answers relevant 'wh' questions – who, what, when, where, how, why etc.
- A person-centred tailored text – If for a young child, it is written in the first person, if for an older child in the third person (similar to a newspaper article).
- A positive tone – with any negative information written from a third person perspective.
- Literally accurate information that can be understood without altering the intended meaning.

- Alternate vocabulary that might cause anxiety or stress – i.e. instead of 'I have difficulty listening to teachers', 'sometimes, my teacher talks to all the children at the same time'.
- Text written at the reading ability and attention span of the child with ASD including using visual supports and illustrations where appropriate.
- Relevance to the child's interests.
- A patient and reassuring affirmative quality.

In addition to the above in the *New Social Story Book*, (Future Horizons Inc, 2010), Carol Gray further defines the criteria of good social stories. This includes:

1. Three types of information – News (e.g. clear literal information), Ways to think about news (e.g. what might work from some children) and Connections and Implications (e.g. connections between events that may occur at different times).
2. Different types of sentences – descriptive (there are many holidays during the year), perspective (many people think it's polite to wait before opening a gift), coaching (I will try and keep the paint on the paper), affirmative (sometimes a learner is absent. This is ok. The teacher will help them get their assignments so they can finish their schoolwork), partial or gap fill (many people think that nice surprises are \_\_\_\_\_).

An example of a social story (using the above criteria) supporting a child in coping with getting dressed for Physical Education is provided on the next page.

# Getting changed for PE?

Children often play sport and games in the PE class and need to wear different clothes from those worn in school and at home. PE clothes help children to run around freely and can get dirty when they play.



Before the PE class children often need to change from school clothes to PE clothes. Most people usually don't like to be watched when they are changing.

Once a great footballer in the school refused to play in the team for a really important game but nobody understood why. The football coach asked him why he refused to play and he said he was embarrassed when others watched him undress in the changing room. This feeling is normal.



The coach told the player that most people have the same feelings about changing and the best thing to do is just turn his back to everyone else and concentrate on getting dressed.

The great footballer did this and scored the winning goal in the game.



It's usually best to think about enjoying the PE class and that sometimes not thinking about changing into PE clothes will make the players feel happy and can make them better players.



Playing games and sport usually makes people happy and wearing clothes for playing makes people happy, too. These clothes are much more comfortable than school clothes.



This can help people play well in the game and make players, teachers and mothers and fathers happy, too. When playing in sports clothes we can get them dirty and nobody will care. Dirty sports clothes can be washed and then seem as good as new again.



It usually only takes a few minutes to change and we can then get on with playing the games and sport and enjoy ourselves with friends.



## Sources

Gray, C: *The New Social Story Book, 10th Anniversary Edition* (Future Horizons, Inc, 2010)

Gray, C: *Writing Social Stories with Carol Gray* (Future Horizons Inc, 2000)

## Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of standard notebook paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



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