

MENTOR HANDBOOK

B8 | BEHAVIOUR: STRUCTURED SUPPORT OF LEARNING

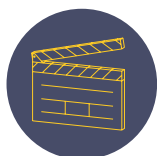
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can make learning more manageable for pupils by understanding that:

- > When academic demands are not well matched to pupil capabilities, pupils' working memory can become overloaded, causing them to stop trying or go off-task.
- > Introducing new material in steps, building on prior knowledge and using guides and scaffolds all help to avoid overloading pupils' working memory and make it more likely that pupils will stay on-task.

Get yourself into a strong position to mentor your teacher by working through the following:



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**READ THE EVIDENCE
SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Ms Sterling notices that, while pupils are willing to attempt class work, when they perceive tasks to be too hard this leads to off-task behaviour – including getting distracted and sometimes distracting others. How can she make learning more manageable, supporting pupils to persist at tasks?

KEY IDEA

Breaking challenging tasks into steps and providing support when necessary makes it more likely pupils will persist with tasks.

MAKING LEARNING MANAGEABLE SUPPORTS ON-TASK PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

Challenging behaviour can arise when there is a mismatch between classroom academic demands and pupil capabilities (IES, 2008). This happens because working memory capacity is limited and can become easily overloaded when pupils are asked to complete tasks which are unfamiliar or overly complex (Gathercole et al., 2008; IES, 2008). Pupils may seek to avoid a task if it seems threatening to their sense of self (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996): for example, if a pupil thinks they might fail at the task.

By making learning manageable, teachers affect how pupils behave, as well as how they learn (IES, 2008). Ms Sterling has already been thinking about the foundations of managing behaviour: telling pupils the types of behaviour she expects, modelling this, and responding consistently. Refining her instruction is another way to improve pupils' learning behaviours since students' success can build their motivation and confidence (Coe et al., 2014). Introducing new material in steps is a particularly effective approach to making learning more manageable (Rosenshine, 2012).

INTRODUCING NEW MATERIAL IN STEPS AND USING EXAMPLES MAKES IT MORE MANAGEABLE

Checking pupil prior knowledge and explicitly linking new ideas to what has previously been learned makes it less likely pupils working memory will be overloaded (Deans for Impact, 2015). Ms Sterling could use several instructional principles to support pupils in this way (Rosenshine, 2012):

- > Briefly reviewing what pupils have already learned.
- > Introducing new material in small steps.
- > Checking pupil understanding of the new knowledge regularly.
- > Allowing pupils to practise using this new knowledge in steps whilst providing models and scaffolds for this practice.

Introducing new materials in steps like this helps make new material more manageable, making it more likely pupils will persist with the task.

GUIDES AND SCAFFOLDS ALSO HELP PUPILS THINK ABOUT KEY IDEAS TO BE LEARNED

Learning can also be made more manageable by providing pupils with 'scaffolding'. This can be tools that complete part of the task for the students, or a model of the completed task itself (Rosenshine, 2012). In the early years, scaffolds might even be physical objects such as counters and toys (EEF, 2017); among older pupils they could be cue cards or checklists (Rosenshine, 2012).

Scaffolding simply means providing pupils with support to tackle a problem or demonstrate their learning (Rosenshine, 2012). By making the task more manageable, Ms Sterling can avoid overwhelming her pupils' working memories and make it easier for them to focus attention on particular aspects. For example, worked examples can be particularly helpful for Ms Sterling's pupils as these stop pupils searching for any possible answer to a task. This reduces distractions by supporting pupils to focus only on each step of a successful solution (Deans for Impact, 2015).

Scaffolded tasks should be challenging as well as manageable. Making learning manageable doesn't mean lowering expectations of all or some pupils. Where this balance isn't achieved, pupils may become frustrated or bored, as the task can be perceived to be beyond (or beneath) their capability (van de Pol et al., 2015). This frustration or boredom can then result in low-level disruption. Scaffolding should therefore be used in a targeted way and be removed when pupils show they are able to be successful at a task, supporting pupils to become independent (Rosenshine, 2012).

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

Ensuring pupil working memory doesn't become overloaded doesn't mean setting unchallenging work – it means helping pupils to think hard about what they have just learnt by providing structured support as appropriate (Deans for Impact, 2015).

While teachers provide pupils with temporary 'scaffolds', it is important that these are withdrawn once pupils are experiencing success, as scaffolds inhibit independent practice once pupils have mastered the material taught (Rosenshine, 2012).

While good task and lesson design can help pupils to focus, ultimate responsibility for a pupil's behaviour rests with the pupil, not with the teacher. If a pupil is unfocused, a teacher may wish to consider whether a change to the task design might avoid this in future. But this does not mean that the solution to pupils' lack of focus is always the teacher's lesson design.

SELECT

Before you observe, first select a **DEVELOPMENT AREA** to focus on. Next, familiarise yourself with the **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**, as you will zoom in on one of these during your observation. Finally, craft a **PRECISE TARGET** when you observe your teacher (examples are provided below).

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
Using steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher breaks down what pupils need to do into sequential steps and uses what they know about pupils' prior knowledge to make these steps manageable. > Teacher ensures pupils know the steps they need to take. > Teacher embeds as a routine a memorable framework for processes they need pupils to use often. 	<p>If your teacher is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not doing it at all: Explain what pupils need to do by breaking it down into steps. > Doing it but needs some improvement: Explain what pupils need to do by breaking it down into steps that are clearly sequenced, e.g. by numbering them. > Doing it well, but needs some stretch: Explain what pupils need to do by breaking it down into steps that are manageable given pupils' prior knowledge and clearly sequence these steps.
Breaking down models and explanations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher models aloud a process by breaking it down into sequential, manageable steps based on pupils' prior knowledge. > Teacher checks that pupils have understood each part of the model and how it relates to the whole process or concept. > Teacher breaks down their explanations of concepts into manageable chunks based on pupils' prior knowledge and checks for understanding at appropriate points. 	
Focusing attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher ensures they have all pupils' attention when they model or explain and restates their expectations pre-emptively to help pupils to remain focused. > Teacher focuses pupils' attention on the important features of the model or explanation. > Teacher limits distractions when modelling or explaining through their use of language, resources and instruction. 	

RECORD YOUR THINKING HERE

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
(select before observing)	(select whilst observing)	(select/write whilst observing)

OBSERVE

Consider the following questions based on a short (approximately 15 minute) observation of your teacher.

What was your teacher's **previous** target? Are they meeting it? How do you know?

For the **DEVELOPMENT AREA** you are focussing on for this observation, what is your teacher already doing well?

Next, go to the previous page and select a **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA** to further zoom in on. Then select (from the examples) or write one **PRECISE TARGET** (bite-sized action) to coach your teacher on. You can choose to stick with the previous target if your teacher have not made enough progress yet.

How will you model the target to your teacher to show them what good looks like? What questions will you ask to check your teacher understands the model? For example, 'How it is different from your current practice?', 'What impact might it have on your practice and pupils?', 'What links can you see between the model and the module principles (below)?'

Reminder: Your model should help your teacher develop their ability in some of the following:

- > Break complex material into smaller steps.
- > Reduce distractions that take attention away from what is being taught.
- > Use modelling, explanations and scaffolds, acknowledging that novices need more structure early in a domain.
- > Identify pupils who need new content further broken down.
- > Give manageable, specific and sequential instructions.
- > Check pupils' understanding of instructions before a task begins.

Next, meet with your teacher to work through the 'Feedback' stage of instructional coaching. See the guidance on the feedback stage in the appendices of the Mentor Handbook for support.

REFERENCES

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