

# MENTOR HANDBOOK

## 16 | INSTRUCTION: ADAPTING TEACHING

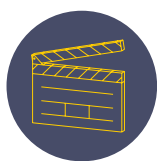
### STUDY

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher's expositions will better match pupil needs if they understand:

- > Your teacher can effectively adapt her teaching if they understand that:
- > Adapting teaching means identifying key adaptations and deploying them responsively to ensure pupils experience a high success rate.
- > Whole class questioning can expose what pupils understand to inform responsive teaching.
- > Teachers need to understand key pupil differences and potential barriers to learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, and prepare solutions before the lesson.
- > Worked examples and careful grouping can support pupils to fill knowledge gaps or correct misconceptions.

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 Garcia feels increasingly confident at identifying key content and presenting it effectively, building on pupil prior knowledge. However, she notices that sometimes pupils grasp key ideas quickly, while at other times pupils struggle to do so at all. Sometimes it is individuals or groups of pupils that struggle, at other times the whole class. How can she adapt her teaching to better meet the needs of all pupils?

#### KEY IDEA

Adapting teaching requires assessment of pupil needs and appropriate teacher responses, before the lesson and within it, to enable a high pupil success rate.

## ADAPTING TEACHING AIMS TO SUPPORT ALL PUPILS TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Effective teachers adapt their teaching to respond to the needs of the class and individual pupils (OECD, 2015). This doesn't mean adapting lessons to different 'learning styles' such as 'visual' or 'kinaesthetic' as the evidence is unambiguous: while pupils have different learning preferences, they do not have distinct learning styles (Coe, 2013).

When pupils are introduced to new ideas, explicit guided teaching is more effective than pupils discovering new ideas without teacher support (Coe et al., 2014). However, pupils learn at different rates and have different levels of prior knowledge. Effective approaches to establishing pupils needs and adapting teaching are available. Teachers can check pupils' needs through gathering information on what pupils do and don't understand yet. Once they have, adaptations they could make include:

- New information broken down into smaller steps.
- Additional explanations and examples.
- Additional forms of teacher support (Gathercole et al., 2006)
- Additional stretch, for example through questions which extend pupil thinking, or removal of unnecessary support.

This is responsive teaching: using evidence of what pupils have understood to allow us to adapt our teaching to better meet pupils' needs (Wiliam, in Christodoulou, 2017).

Responsive teaching does not mean creating distinct tasks for different groups of pupils or setting lower expectations for some (Pashler et al. 2007). Instead it entails identifying key content pupils might struggle with and options to support or stretch them, to make sure all pupils are successful. To make the workload of adapting teaching manageable, teachers should focus on a few key barriers and key adaptations.

## FIND OUT WHAT PUPILS KNOW, AND TEACH THEM ACCORDINGLY

Responsive teaching requires effective ways to monitor pupils' learning (Deunk et al., 2018). If what pupils learnt was the same as what they were taught, there would be no need for assessment at all; however, we know that what pupils remember from a lesson can vary enormously (Wiliam, 2010).

Ms Garcia needs to collect and use assessment information to inform her key instructional decisions (Wiliam & Leahy, 2015). She can either use information to decide whether to adapt teaching between lessons, or within a lesson. To adapt effectively, she needs to prepare assessments based on key information she needs pupils to understand, to show her which pupils lack key knowledge or hold misconceptions and which pupils have a firm grasp of key material (Christodoulou, 2017). For example, teachers can use a sequence of carefully crafted questions and collect whole class responses to detect misconceptions and so more precisely target their teaching (Christodoulou, 2017).

## ADAPTING TEACHING BEFORE THE LESSON

Some adaptations can be planned before the lesson or unit begins. It is good practice for teachers to seek support and information in advance about specific barriers to learning and specific solutions to these for individual pupils, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. A conversation with the SENCO or parents or referring to the

SEND code of practice may help. For example, a teacher may find out that a pupil's ability to write is impaired and print resources for them. Teachers can also draw on formative assessment data collected in a previous lesson to adapt teaching to either stretch or support pupils.

## ADAPTING TEACHING WITHIN THE LESSON: WORKED EXAMPLES AND GROUPS

Pre-lesson preparation can also support responsive teaching within the lesson, guided by the I-We-You instructional approach (Lemov, 2015) to get the right balance of stretch and support. Teachers can prepare adaptations in advance and deploy them responsively if assessment reveals pupils need them.

If in lesson assessment reveals the majority of pupils have struggled with a specific idea or question, teachers can use worked examples to illustrate correct solutions. Worked examples reduce the cognitive burden that pupils feel when learning a new skill by breaking it down into smaller sections, allowing pupils to master the foundations before moving onto more complex parts (Deans for Impact, 2015). Ms Garcia may choose to use an additional worked example with pupils who have not yet grasped a particular skill; or break down a worked example even further for certain pupils while ensuring all work towards the same endpoint. Pupils benefit from explicit teaching and hearing many examples and questions (Rosenshine, 2012) so, if in doubt, giving a further example will often be helpful, even if assessment suggests some pupils have understood the idea.

Ms Garcia may also want to consider how to adapt groupings within her classroom to ensure that she can best tailor support to individuals' needs. Grouping pupils within a class based on their current level of understanding could help Ms Garcia more precisely target support. Doing so relies on assessing pupils' needs accurately, providing all groups with sufficient support and maintaining high expectations for everyone (Coe et al., 2014). For example, assessment may reveal most pupils are ready for independent practice, but a few still need teacher support, in which case Ms Garcia may create a small focus group to support once the class is practising independently – though she must be careful to make clear that this group is based on attainment and change it regularly. However, this may be tricky to achieve without embedded routines and behaviour expectations (IES, 2008).

## NUANCES AND CAVEATS

Grouping pupils by ability has a limited impact on pupil outcomes (Coe et al., 2014) so care should be taken to monitor the impact of groupings on pupil attainment, behaviour and motivation.

The aim of responsive teaching is to support pupil success. If pupils are practising independently and struggling, Ms Garcia should still stop the class (or intervene with particular pupils) to provide further support. Similarly, if Ms Garcia's assessment suggests pupils need stretching, she can let pupils move on to more challenging work, while monitoring carefully to ensure they are successful, in case support is needed.

Teaching assistants can adapt teaching for assigned pupils, for example pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. However, they need to be prepared for the lesson by the teacher, and supplement not replace teacher support (EEF, 2018). For example, providing they can further break down tasks during guided practice.

# 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
Planning to adapt teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Teacher, with the support of a colleague, pre-empts what pupils are likely to find challenging in the material they are teaching and plans how they might adapt their teaching to support all pupils to reach the learning goals, e.g. by providing additional time to practise or worked examples.</b></li> <li>&gt; Teacher plans how to adapt their teaching to stretch pupils' thinking when they become increasingly successful, e.g. by removing unnecessary exposition, scaffolding or using stretch questions.</li> <li>&gt; Teacher, with the support of a colleague, a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or special education professionals, seeks to understand the needs of all pupils, including individual pupils' needs, and how they might best adapt their teaching to support all pupils to meet learning goals without creating an excessive workload.</li> <li>&gt; Teacher, with the support of a colleague, discusses when it is appropriate to intervene with individuals and small groups rather than the whole class and plans how to do this efficiently and effectively.</li> </ul>	<p><b>If your teacher is...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <b>Not doing it at all:</b> With the support of a colleague, discuss what pupils are likely to find challenging about the material you are teaching, in what ways they may find it challenging and how you might adapt your instruction to support pupils if they do find it challenging, e.g. by breaking down an explanation.</li> <li>&gt; <b>Doing it but needs some improvement:</b> Plan additional support for when pupils struggle to understand challenging concepts, e.g. plan additional examples and non-examples to explain the concept.</li> <li>&gt; <b>Doing it well, but needs some stretch:</b> Plan additional support for when pupils struggle to understand challenging concepts and processes, e.g. plan additional examples and non-examples and plan to scaffold a process further by taking pupils through a worked example.</li> </ul>
Understanding what pupils know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Teacher plans to check for understanding of the knowledge, skills and concepts they need pupils to have secured and especially focuses on those they think pupils may find challenging, e.g. by using questions that target common misconceptions about the material.</li> <li>&gt; Teacher reframes or asks additional questions to understand where pupils' wrong answers stem from, e.g. whether they have misunderstood the question, have made a careless error, have a gap in their knowledge or a misconception.</li> <li>&gt; Teacher checks for understanding continuously as they model a process to determine when pupils are ready to take over and do parts or all of the process with less support.</li> </ul>	
Adapting teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Teacher gradually hands over the process they are modelling to pupils as pupils' knowledge becomes more secure, e.g. by asking pupils more questions so they are gradually doing more of the process themselves.</li> <li>&gt; Teacher provides additional support for pupils when they show they are struggling to understand or recall knowledge, skills and concepts, e.g. by further breaking down material, giving further examples or providing a worked example.</li> </ul>	

### 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:**

- > Adapt lessons, while maintaining high expectations for all, so that all pupils have the opportunity to meet expectations.
- > Reframe questions to provide greater scaffolding or greater stretch.
- > Monitor pupil work during lessons, including checking for misconceptions.
- > Build in additional practice or remove unnecessary expositions.
- > Consider carefully whether intervening within lessons with individuals and small groups would be more efficient and effective than planning different lessons for different groups of pupils.

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.

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