

ECT Mentor session

Module 3: Developing quality pedagogy

Week 8: Using grouping to support specific needs

Session Elements



sharing of practice



action planning

Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn how to:

Group pupils effectively, by:

- 5m.** applying high expectations to all groups and ensuring all pupils have access to a rich curriculum
- 5n.** changing groups regularly, avoiding the perception that groups are fixed
- 5o.** ensuring that any groups based on attainment are subject specific

Introduction

In their self-study session earlier this week, your mentee extended their knowledge of teaching pupils with special educational needs. They considered where to access the information they needed to inform planning and explore the range of strategies that can be deployed when teaching pupils who experience barriers to learning. Alongside this, they also considered the importance of grouping pupils effectively.

In this session, you will analyse how your mentee responded to a number of challenges posed in their self-directed study session to do with adapting their teaching and groupings to meet the needs of their pupils with specific needs. You will help them to refine their responses.

Research and Practice Summary

Molly is a Year 8 pupil with a moderate learning difficulty. She has been identified as having limited working memory capacity, which means she has difficulty in memorising important concepts and factual information crucial to her success in most subjects. Teachers regularly observe that Molly will remember something within a lesson and a day later appear to have no recollection of this information.

- What challenges could this difficulty pose for Molly if you were teaching her?
- What steps could be put in place during a lesson to ensure information is embedded for Molly?

Barriers to learning are specific factors which prevent pupils from making progress and acquiring new knowledge and skills. These can be additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, or external factors, such as bereavement or challenging home circumstances. There can also be barriers to learning within the classroom, such as poor behaviour or lack of facilities and/or equipment. A pupil's socio-economic circumstances can also result in significant barriers to learning.



To help you to identify and overcome pupils' barriers to learning, you should:

- work closely with the SENCO, your Designated Safeguarding Lead and other special education professionals who work in or visit your school
- use the SEND Code of Practice, which has guidance on supporting SEND pupils
- learn more about your pupils' barriers by liaising with their families and other colleagues
- if you have them, talk to teaching assistants or learning support advisors who may be keyworkers for the pupils you teach

Molly's teachers know that she has a moderate learning difficulty but they may not all understand what strategies have proven to work well for her. Specialist and experienced colleagues can help with this, such as the SENCO; the SEND Code of Practice contains practical guidance. Molly's family have a lot of insight into what

helps their daughter succeed; they can help guide her at home as well as talk to her teachers about these strategies.

One of the most important aspects of teaching is the ability to establish an accurate understanding of the pupils' **prior knowledge** within a given subject or domain. In this way, the teacher can start with where their pupils are and help them from there rather than working backwards from a long-term learning goal. It is also understood that increased prior knowledge reduces working memory load. When pupils encounter familiar problems, this activates information from long-term memory and supports working memory, where problem-solving occurs. Novice pupils therefore find complex activities like problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity particularly effortful, as they have fewer experiences (and therefore less prior knowledge) and the problems they encounter are more likely to be novel. Where prior knowledge is weak, inaccurate or misapplied, it can have a distorting effect both on the immediate activity and on the learning that results from this.



To help you address the prior knowledge needs of your pupils where they have specific learning needs, you should:

- wherever possible, talk to colleagues who taught them before or who teach them in other areas now, so you can benefit from their experience
- carefully assess their prior knowledge when planning how much new information to introduce (you may have to adapt your teaching in lesson as you realise that their prior knowledge is not secure)
- provide explicit modelling and guidance, breaking problems down into steps (e.g. keywords and sentence starters for written work, simple teacher demonstrations for practical tasks)
- use worked examples with clear and minimal steps (including step-by-step visual guides)
- identify likely misconceptions and plan to prevent them from occurring (if you are able to co-plan with colleagues, that will help here)
- give them regular, purposeful practice so they can consolidate learning in their long-term memory

Which of these strategies would be likely to be effective with Molly?

Adaptive teaching involves being flexible and responsive about the methods used in lessons to ensure that they can meet the needs of all their pupils and deviate from the lesson plan, where necessary. Adaptive teaching requires a reflective approach, since the teacher needs to be able to acknowledge the need to change the strategy being used. Although adaptive teaching is easier with experience, it can be achieved early in a teacher's career through careful planning – by anticipating pupil misconceptions before they arise, for example. It is important that this is done in response to pupils' needs, not as an artificial process which breaks the flow of the lesson.

Adaptive teaching includes providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, but creating separate distinct tasks for different groups is less likely to be valuable: it risks lowering expectations for some, and it can add unnecessarily to workload.



To adapt your teaching without creating separate distinct tasks, you should:

- intervene within lessons with individuals and small groups (e.g. as Mr Andrews did with Molly)
- divide your support between the whole class, specific groups and individuals (e.g. it is often possible to set up a whole-class independent task, freeing you to give extra support to a group or individual)
- while maintaining high expectations for all, you can vary the quantity of work you demand from some or the amount of time you allow some to complete it
- use and reuse templates, writing frames, key concepts mats and other worked examples as scaffolds you can easily introduce or withdraw as you adapt your teaching

Mr Andrews (as you will see next) mainly adapted his teaching for Molly in this lesson by dividing his support between her and the whole class and by using visual prompts as a scaffold he could introduce and gradually remove.

Deliberate, purposeful **practice** is essential if pupils are to retain the new knowledge and skills they have been taught. This requires the pupils themselves to put sustained effort into improving their performance within a given domain. Deliberate practice is positively correlated with performance. Each time memories are recalled, they are strengthened. In order to embed new learning in their long-term memory and be able to retrieve it for future use, pupils need to regularly retrieve new knowledge and skills and apply them in new and diverse contexts.



To help your pupils with specific learning needs to learn through practice, you should:

- design learning sequences that give your pupils regular opportunities to practise and to retrieve from memory what they have previously learned (so much the better if you can make this low-stakes and low-stress)
- design practice tasks to ensure a high success rate for your pupils, but
- over time, increase the challenge, for example, by removing scaffolding or by increasing the length of time between visits to the topic

Mr Andrews planned a Year 8 lesson on the ‘problems of living in a city’. The pupils were provided with several paragraphs of information on the given topic. Pupils needed to break down the information via a series of small illustrations/symbols, which would later serve as visual memory prompts. Pupils could write only a maximum of four key words to support their work.

- For Molly, the next step to secure this knowledge further was to have her use her illustrations and word prompts to recall this information verbally to a study partner before attempting any comprehension work or written work about the topic.
- Beforehand, Mr Andrews modelled for them how he wanted them to conduct their paired talk. He knows that pairings such as this can increase success for Molly but also that he needs to give her and her partner clear guidance. He has discovered that, for now at least, this pairing seems to have improved the behaviour and motivation of both Molly and her partner, but he is keeping an eye on this and will assess the impact also on their attainment.
- Using easy visual prompts gave Molly an extra step in embedding the

information. Using these regularly across a series of lessons and gradually taking the visual prompts away, ensured Molly could transfer this information more easily into her long-term memory.

- Mr Andrews is prepared to give Molly this specific type of support because he is aware that she learns at a different rate to most of the other pupils in the class.

Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan section of this session.

Review and Plan 5 mins

- (1) Start this session by briefly following up the actions that the mentee set at the end of last week's session. Ask your mentee to summarise
 - a. what they did
 - b. the impact of this on pupil learning (including how they are evaluating this)
 - c. what they will do going forward to build on these actions
- (2) Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

At the start of this module, you looked at all of the 'learn how to' statements for Standards 4 and 5 and conducted a module audit with your mentee: in some areas they will already be confident and skilled; in others, they will want more practice and support from you and others. Look back at this audit now and use it to help decide how you and your mentee will make the most productive use of the suggested Theory to Practice activities below.

Theory to Practice 40 mins



1. Action planning

In their self-directed study session, your mentee completed the table below. They may have focused on a specific group of pupils.

What specific guidance and	assign roles to your pupils or	
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support will you need to provide your pupils to ensure effective group work takes place?	issue strict protocols	
How can you monitor the impact of your groupings on the engagement and motivation of pupils with specific educational needs?	monitor the engagement and motivation of a <u>smaller</u> group of pupils	
Can you build flexibility into your attainment groupings to avoid a fixed mindset being established?	experiment with different types of within-class groupings, such as by near prior attainment, or by mixed prior attainment	
How will you adapt your teaching for those pupils who are learning at a different rate to others?	vary the attention you give to different pupils, the time you allow, the quantity you expect	

As yet, this activity has been theoretical – they have not put it into action. Now is the time to help the mentee to plan how to implement their responses. You are going to do this by:

- a. listening to your mentee explain their initial thinking
- b. challenging them to think harder
- c. supporting them with practical strategies

Listen to your mentee explain their responses to the challenges. Try not to interrupt, but perhaps give them a limit of 5-10 minutes.



2. Sharing of Practice

You are now going to challenge them to think harder while supporting them with practical strategies. Wherever possible, share your own research-informed strategies and those of other experienced or specialist colleagues. (Some hints are offered, but you may need to help your mentee to translate these into their own setting.)

Further challenge	Practical suggestions
Applying high expectations for all groups and ensuring that all pupils have access to a rich curriculum	<p>Avoid setting different learning objectives for different pupils – these may signal low expectations for some pupils</p> <p>Teaching the whole class, where you ‘teach to the top’ and scaffold so that all can achieve, means that all pupils should experience the same curriculum</p> <p>Avoid signalling that you are giving ‘easier’ work to some pupils – use language like ‘my challenge for you is...’</p>
Changing groups regularly, thus avoiding the perception that the groups are fixed	<p>Remember the example of home and away groups in Week 5</p> <p>Group by attainment, but only when you have a specific subject purpose</p> <p>Change your table groupings or seating plan at least every half term</p>
Ensuring that any groups based on attainment are subject specific	<p>Avoid grouping pupils according to your perceptions of their ‘fixed abilities’ or your expectations for their behaviour – doing so lowers expectations</p> <p>If you teach a number of topics or subjects to the same class, avoid keeping the pupils in the same groups (if you group by attainment)</p>

Next Steps 5 mins

Come to an agreement with your mentee as to how they will put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improving pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, during which you will check on your mentee's progress.