

ADVICE FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS



Advice commonly given further to observations and discussion during advisory visits to Primary Schools.

N.B. this advice will not be appropriate for all children in all situations.

Where reference is made to 'appropriate' further advice may be required.

- ▶ During 'Carpet Time' seat the child at the front where they can see and hear what is being presented. Consider the position of the supporting adult, sitting on the floor alongside the class teacher, facing the child is often a good position.
- ▶ When allocating 'table places' sit the child where they can see and hear and where the Class Teacher can easily interact with them / see what they are doing. Sit the child with their peers. Consider the position of the supporting adult, avoid them becoming an unnecessary barrier between the child and their peers. Sit the child with good role models. Avoid sitting the child within a group of other children who require much additional support unless the child is working with them. Do not overload the supporting adult by expecting them to support more children than they are able to.
- ▶ Support the child by providing visual prompts and appropriate help to access them. Examples of visual prompts; sign, gesture, objects, pictures, photos, drawings, written word / words, diagrams, books, copies of slides.
- ▶ Avoid talking over the Class Teacher.
- ▶ Use a notebook or paper rather than a small whiteboard to make notes / annotations to support the child. This will mean that there is a constant record which can be referred to. Additionally, content cannot be rubbed off by the child.
- ▶ Pre teach.
- ▶ Familiarise the child with resources.



- ▶ Avoid using 1 full time TA to support the child. Ensure that they are supported by more than one person, most likely 2 or perhaps 3, taking care to ensure that there is consistency and effective communication between them.
- ▶ Ensure that adults are appropriately trained.
- ▶ Ensure that there is a shared understanding between all adults involved about what differentiation / personalisation is.
- ▶ Assess carefully and ascertain baselines from which to plan. Ascertain what the child can do (and with how much and what support) and what they understand. Be aware that there may be a difference.
- ▶ Teach specifically.
- ▶ Use familiar teaching strategies.
- ▶ Utilise reading. Make simple books with the child across the curriculum.
- ▶ Use errorless learning as a teaching strategy.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for the child to have less close support as appropriate. This should be dependent upon the need of the child at that particular time in that particular situation. For example, take into consideration the task, the level of the task, the familiarity of the task, the environment, the child's emotional state. Ensure that the period of time for this level of support is also appropriate and be aware that it may be different to that which was expected.



- ▶ Draw the child's attention to class instructions /routines and support them to follow them whenever they are appropriate. In situations where they are not relevant to them inform the child of the case.
- ▶ Ensure that TAs are not referred to as the child's TAs or 'Your TA' / similar.
- ▶ Teach reading - start early, do not wait for the child to be speaking before introducing reading, begin to teach reading using a whole word (sight reading) approach. Do not confuse inability to read with inability to speak.

▶ When teaching phonics consider related difficulties, for example, can they hear the difference between sounds? Say the sounds? Do they understand the language being used? (Sounds, words, blend, phonemes, graphemes). Can they recall the previous sounds within a word and in the correct order? And teach in small steps with appropriate support.

▶ Consider what the rest of the class are doing when planning the child's tasks / activities. Aim for the child to be working with their peers wherever possible, whilst ensuring teaching at an appropriate level.

▶ Provide a number of activities within a 'session'. This will give opportunities for revisiting, generalising, developing independence, pre teaching and focussing upon additional learning and also support attention. Consider using a visual timetable to show these. Where there is no need to dictate the order of these activities give the child a choice regarding it. Keep sessions 'pacey'.



- ▶ Provide tasks at different levels of challenge.
- ▶ Ensure that supporting adults are fully informed regarding the planning for the child in advance of the lesson.
- ▶ Ensure that appropriate resources are provided.
- ▶ Support the child to move from a task they are enjoying by motivating them with the next. Show them the next task.
- ▶ Move the child on and avoid them slowing the pace.
- ▶ Ensure that the child is taught by the Class Teacher.
- ▶ Ensure that the child is actively involved in set tasks.
- ▶ Use a range of ways for the child to record information. Where information is to be referred back to ensure that it is clear and correct.



- ▶ Consider your use of language, ensure it is clear.
- ▶ Support, and where necessary encourage, the child to interact with their peers and support the peers to interact with the child whilst avoiding over supporting / inhibiting interaction.
- ▶ Use signing not only directly with the child but with their peers.
- ▶ Ensure a consistent approach to supporting behaviour. Consider the need for adjustments to school behaviour policy and procedures. Develop and agree a plan. Aim to prevent unwanted behaviours; pre-empt, ignore, distract. Reinforce wanted behaviours, remain calm, develop staff confidence. Use appropriate reward systems within the class / school system allowing the use of frequent rewards. Ensure that the child is aware of expectations.
- ▶ Carefully consider the use of timers which do not allow for flexibility enabling the adult to 'control' the time.



**Written by Helen Long,
Specialist Advisory Teacher for Pupils
who have Down syndrome.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like any further information about Down syndrome, please don't hesitate to contact us.

There are also support groups across the UK who run a varied programme of training events through the year for professionals to understand more about working with children and young people with Down syndrome.

Links to further information about Down syndrome

www.positiveaboutdownsyndrome.co.uk

www.downsyndromeuk.co.uk

www.downsed.org

Additional information and support can be accessed via our DSUK Primary Facebook group for professionals:

