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Graduated approach - initial observations

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If you have a concern about a pupil you teach, please look at the following statements and then refer to the suggested strategies before taking the next steps into any areas of SEND in the Graduated Approach Toolkit.

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Difficulty completing work
- Struggles to work independently
- Inability to follow instructions
- Failure to generalise skills and knowledge
- Difficulty working out problems and puzzles
- Difficulty retaining information

Initial strategies:

- Keep instructions clear and simple, tasks are clearly explained, modelled or scaffolded, and staff check for understanding
- Allow for over learning practice through recall and repetition
- Specific activities are differentiated appropriately, eg words for spelling practice, times tables practice, methods of recording. There are opportunities for practical and interactive, as well as paper and pencil tasks
- A range of lesson activities are planned to take account of different learning strengths, and practical activities offered where possible, eg learning from pictures, diagrams, mind-maps, using practical equipment, handling objects, moving and doing rather than sitting.
- Link new learning to what pupil already knows, for example, start a lesson with a class mind-map of what they already know about a subject
- Introduce new material through small steps in a multi-sensory way – show it, listen to it, look at it, hear it, say it, write it

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Difficulty in attending to a task possibly not of their interest
- Difficulty in following instructions
- Difficulty in understanding verbal information
- Difficulty in expressing ideas, thoughts or sequencing events
- Unclear speech
- Difficulty in understanding or expressing emotions
- Inability to make and retain friendships
- Unusual play patterns solitary play, repetitive play

Initial strategies:

- Consider where the child or young person is sitting - don't place children near noisy equipment, doors, windows
- Ensure they are able to see your face and the board clearly
- Keep all distractions to a minimum
- Have visual prompts on display to reinforce the rules of good listening, good sitting and turn taking – refer to these often
- Ensure all the children know what is expected of them, allowing extra time for processing information (10 second rule - Elklan Chunk, Chill Check)

- Use visual supports (objects, pictures, multi-media clips, gestures and visual timetables/calendars) and ensure the child or young person has a way to express themselves
- Create a predictable and consistent environment, ensuring routines are followed
- Keep language clear, concise and unambiguous – don't use sarcasm/idioms
- Use the child or young person's name at the start of any instruction or information given
- Recap relevant vocabulary. Pre-teach vocabulary before introducing a new topic
- Use clear adult models of speech and language including social phrases, and repeat, emphasise and expand, as needed
- Respond positively to what the child or young person says, not how clearly they speak, e.g. stutter or lisp. Don't pretend to understand
- Encourage discussion and prediction about stories

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Written work does not sit on the line and is unusually larger
- Needs to bring work closer to the face in order to access
- Bumps into stationary objects when moving around the environment
- Holds head at unusual angle when working
- Complains of discomfort, rubbing eyes appears more tired
- Short attention span
- Frequent headaches

Initial strategies:

- Check if the child or young person should wear glasses and that they are worn consistently and they are kept clean
- Consider where children and young people are seated within the learning environment to enable them to see visual prompt
- Ensure that floor clutter is removed and that all coats, and bags or chair legs do not form obstacles in the classroom
- Keep classroom furniture in a fixed position
- Ensure window blinds are drawn in bright light
- Position the child centrally

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Low level disruption
- Refusal to participate
- Unexpected aggression
- Other known types of learning difficulty or language difficulties causing frustration
- Temporary emotional need (bereavement, parent in prison)
- Ongoing emotional need (Child in Care, Child Protection Plan)
- Unexplained mood swings

Initial strategies:

- Key member of staff to develop a relationship with the child or young person
- Consider seating and grouping of children and young people and adult influences
- Monitor your own body language, facial expression and tone to project calm and consideration
- Build in time for 'emotional check-ins' during the day, and listen without judgement
- Develop a growth mindset approach to learning
- Give them responsibilities or ask the child or young person to help others
- Use available adults to model, coach and reinforce social skills

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Mishearing and mispronouncing words.
- Not hearing what is going on if there's background noise.
- Not responding when their name is called.
- Saying "What?" and using a louder voice more often
- Problems with concentrating, tiredness and frustration that affects their behaviour for example becoming withdrawn or frustrated.
- Asking for the volume on the speakers to be higher which is then uncomfortable for the majority of the other pupils

Initial strategies:

- Relay your concerns to the parent/carers and give them specific examples of when you have noticed the pupil struggling and advise them to see their GP for a referral to an audiologist or ENT
- Place yourself where the child or young person can see your face, making sure that you are not in a shadow or covering your mouth. Speak clearly at your normal pace, avoid shouting and whispering as this makes lip patterns more difficult to understand
- Use natural body language, gesture and facial expressions to help a pupil to understand what you are saying
- Use visual aids to give context to what you are saying such as: demonstrations, pictures, objects, concept maps linking ideas etc. Make sure that there is a visual reminder of the task so they have something to refer back to if they forget what to do next e.g. on whiteboard or paper handout
- Rather than asking Can you hear? check the child or young person understands by asking them to repeat task instructions e.g. Tell Tommy what he has to do
- Use clear and simple instructions, breaking down longer instructions and giving one at a time and allow time for the pupil to process the information

Demonstrates some of the following:

- Illegible or untidy handwriting unusual for age
- Difficulty organising resources or planning work
- Frequent falls or bumps, lack of awareness of surroundings

Initial strategies:

- Ensure child is facing the front of the classroom so that they can see the teacher and board without twisting
- Break down tasks into steps with visual reminders of each step
- Build in opportunities to practice handwriting in short, frequent sessions, provide paper with additional guidelines, mark starting points with stickers
- Limit the amount of copying of written work required
- Allow the use of ipads or phones to take photos of information off the board
- Teach good sitting posture at both carpet time and at the desk

What next

Please remember some pupils may not have a Special Educational Need, they may just take longer to understand the concept being taught or may need it to be taught in a different way.

If a pupil is making consistent progress even it is slower than average this may not be an indication of SEND they may just require differentiated Quality First Teaching.

However if you still have concerns refer to the introduction areas for each area of need. It is essential at this stage you do not try to ‘diagnose’ the difficulty but look at a few areas of difficulties as we need to look at the root cause of the difficulty.

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