

The Overstone Park
Independent Therapeutic School

Strategies for supporting
pupils with SEN

Strategies for supporting students with SEN

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1. Pupils with *general learning difficulties*

Pupils with learning difficulties have:

- difficulty acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills
- their speech and language development may be delayed in comparison to the majority of their peers
- pupils with learning difficulties will acquire and retain new concepts and ideas slowly

Implications for classroom practice

- break lesson down into small steps
- ensure that written text and spoken language is appropriately differentiated to take into account the pupil's learning difficulties
- base teaching on everyday experiences that the pupils will readily understand
- ensure that key concepts and vocabulary are revisited and reused
- encourage pupils to present information in a variety of ways
- recognise and reinforce effort and success by rewards and praise

Recommendation to support general learning difficulty:

Reading:

- consider the possibility of paired reading at home to develop confidence
- maintain a reading record book that monitors the pupil's miscues

and records phonic errors in word families

- encourage the pupil to expand his reading
- give technical vocabulary prior to the introduction of topics
- consider the readability of the text
- ensure that key vocabulary is recorded on the board before reading a text
- differentiate texts. With textbooks check the length of sentences and the number of polysyllabic words.
- draw the pupil's attention to important sources of information other than the prose, e.g. maps, diagrams and photos
- simplify instructions, summaries or diagrams which accompany written tasks
- teach study skills, i.e. ways of extracting information, eg 5-point plan, highlighting and word matching, spider diagrams sequencing, highlighting and prediction

Spelling:

- ensure that the pupil is using a multi-sensory method to learn spellings: read the word say the letters

- aloud, cover the word, write the word saying the letters aloud, check the word
- when learning spellings at home encourage the pupil to learn the spellings using the multi-sensory method and to check the words again 10 minutes later to ensure that the words go from the short term to the long term memory
- identify high frequency words being mis-spelt and proof read for these
- encourage the pupil to proof read for approximately 3 new words each week
- ensure that the pupil is recording own high frequency word errors
- use a range of ways of learning to spell words

Writing:

- record the steps to complete a piece of work on the blackboard
- give explicit directions for setting work out
- give detailed support with planning structures
- encourage a variety of ways of representing information to aid processing, e.g. cartoons, pictures, diagrams
- give extra time to take account of slower rate of reading and writing

2. Pupils with *specific learning difficulties*

Pupils who have specific learning difficulties (Sp.L.D.) may experience any of the following problems:

- poor fine motor co-ordination which will result in untidy handwriting and presentation of work
- poor working memory, both visual and auditory, which will affect their ability to follow instructions, take down dictation, and copy text from either book or board, learn spellings or tables
- poor organisation which will affect their ability to remember books or equipment, what homework they need to do and how to organise their thoughts into written work
- poor sequencing skills which can affect their ability to learn tables or spellings
- typically they are pupils who learn some things easily while other aspects of their work present them with persistent difficulties
- they will often be able to make valuable contributions to class discussions but find it difficult to present those ideas in the written form
- written work will often have taken these pupils much longer to complete than a similar piece written by their peers, or be incomplete

- The completed work often has a significantly restricted vocabulary when compared to the pupil's oral vocabulary. These problems can lead to frustration, poor self-image and sometimes result in behaviour problems.

Implications for classroom practice

- where there are fine motor problems encourage the use of ICT
- recognise that effort will not reflect output. Work may often be incomplete, or when complete, may be the result of substantial extra time and effort on the pupil's part
- to avoid unfinished work help the pupil to complete core elements of the work
- if copying from the board or dictating, allow the pupil additional time and speak more slowly to accommodate the pupil with a short working visual or auditory memory
- use techniques which require greater interaction with the text but require less recording, e.g. cloze, sequencing or prediction tasks
- if a pupil reads very slowly then encourage them when researching, to read the first and last sentences of a paragraph before deciding whether they need to read the paragraph in detail

- ensure that the pupil makes good use of his diary and records sequences of instructions and information to support their poor auditory memory. Clear, written notes of homework set, date due in and equipment needed next lesson, are essential
- encourage the use of planning activities before writing begins, e.g. concept maps, Key words, flow charts and writing frames. These techniques will help the pupil organise his or her ideas and reduce the need for re-drafting
- emphasise how indexes, chapter headings, words in bold type, pictures and diagrams can provide quick ways to identify information that is required from a text
- try to access as many different memories (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic - see it, hear it, write it or draw it) to give the pupil the maximum opportunity to learn new vocabulary
- ensure that there are regular opportunities to reuse/recap key concepts and vocabulary to help compensate for poor memory
- have spare pens, pencils etc. that you can lend
- praise and reward effort and achievement
- it can be helpful to enlarge text, cut a text into paragraphs or cover some of the text to reduce the amount of text that the pupil needs to focus on

2. Pupils with *specific learning difficulties* (continued)

- some pupils find blue or green paper for photocopied information helpful
- when making notes on the blackboard divide the blackboard to aid word recognition

Recommendations for specific learning difficulties

Reading:

- use Directed Activities Related to Text activities to encourage higher order skills particularly cloze and sequencing which will help in the predicting of outcomes
- encourage shared paired reading to develop fluency and understanding and to maintain enjoyment
- paired reading may also be useful to enable reading at a higher interest level
- give technical vocabulary prior to the introduction of topics
- texts may need to be differentiated
- teach study skills, ie ways of extracting information, e.g. 5 point plan, highlighting and word matching
- encourage personal reading and keep a record to highlight any words that need reinforcement
- encourage the pupil to read on to tape. The pupil then plays it back to check for accuracy

Spelling:

- use a supportive marking policy which identifies high frequency words that need learning
- ensure that a pupil is using a multi-sensory method to learn spellings - read the word, say the letters aloud, cover the word, write the word saying the letters aloud, check the word
- encourage proofreading; encouraging the pupil to identify words he thinks are wrong
- when pupils are learning to proof read encourage them to identify 3 miscues only.
- record into a personal spelling book and proof read for these
- where possible use pupil's own errors for developing word families - which then becomes a list for the pupil to learn
- continue using a spell checker at the proof reading stage
- encourage the pupil to establish and maintain a personal spelling dictionary
- encourage the use cursive handwriting to learn letter strings and word families

Writing:

- provide a word list to support free writing
- use planning and writing frameworks
- allow time for discussion with scribing as appropriate
- allow modified or limited outcomes
- allow represented materials, e.g. lists, charts, flow diagrams, cartoons
- encourage vocabulary extension and spelling correction at the planning stage
- use pair work with one partner writing
- give extra time to take into account the pupil's slower rate of reading and writing

Handwriting:

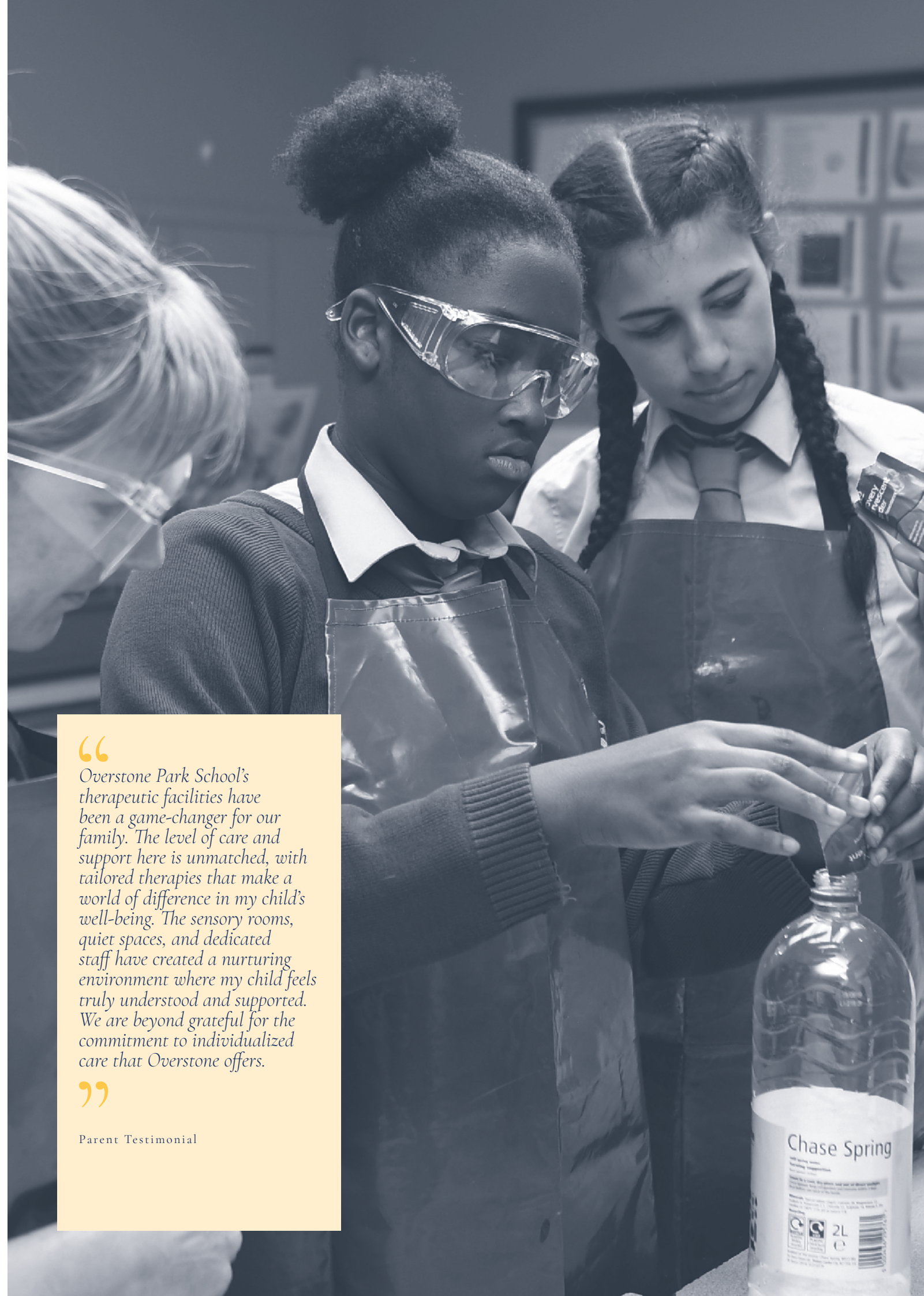
- check pencil grip, the pupil may benefit from using a triangle to correct hold
- encourage larger cursive writing
- if writing is slow, encourage the development of keyboarding skills
- give a range of ways of representing large chunks of information. For example, storyboards, resequencing activities, writing frames, cloze procedure and multiple choice
- use scribing to ease frustration if appropriate

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Parent Testimonial



3. Pupils with *hearing impairment*

This is usually a permanent hearing loss of the high frequencies or tones.

People with high frequency loss:

- may not hear some of the consonants, such as 's'. Consonants provide the intelligibility of speech.
- The severity of the problem depends upon which tones are affected. This type of hearing loss cannot always be helped with hearing aids; again, this depends upon which frequencies need amplification.
- A high frequency hearing loss can cause misunderstanding or mishearing, even though the pupil appears to be hearing normally because he or she responds to speech.
- It may also cause the pupil to make spelling and grammatical errors, such as omitting verb and plural endings.

Recommendations to support pupils with a hearing impairment

- use a normal voice. Do not shout or exaggerate speech
- the pupil may need to supplement hearing with speech-reading, so ensure that he or she is seated in a favourable position, i.e. towards the front and to one side, in such a position that the light falls on the speakers' faces and not in the pupil's eyes.

- The pupil will also need to speech read classmates if there is evidence of mis-hearing other pupils' responses, repeat their contributions
- try not to speak behind the pupil with the hearing loss
- remember not to speak whilst writing on the blackboard - the pupil cannot speech read from behind visual clues, such as pictures, diagrams, key words on the board, all help to reinforce the spoken word
- be aware that the pupil with a high frequency loss may have difficulty following audio tapes or television programmes. Some priming with key words beforehand may be very helpful
- pupils learning a foreign language may find tapes particularly difficult to listen to give clear instructions and check for understanding.

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Mrs. Brow's dedication as the SENCO at Overstone Park School is simply remarkable. Her expertise and knowledge have been invaluable in helping us navigate our options and secure a place for our child at the school. Mrs. Brow has gone above and beyond to advocate for parents like us, ensuring our voices are heard and our children's needs are met. Her commitment to inclusive education has made a world of difference for our family.

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4. Pupils with *weak auditory and/or visual memory*

Recommendations to support pupils with weak auditory and/or visual memory:

- multi sensory presentation of information
- the pupils will learn best in small steps with frequent review of the key points
- encourage small group reinforcement of key points
- reduce the amount of copying of information from the blackboard
- low key adult support as necessary
- encourage the pupil to use his homework diary and general work book as a planner
- provide routine support for key sequences e.g. months of year, days of week, tables by recording these for reference in the pupil's general work book
- write the key steps for the lesson on the board
- present the structure of the lesson at the beginning
- when the working memory is limited give aural information in short chunks
- encourage the pupil to develop a picture dictionary each lesson to support understanding and memory of subject specific vocabulary
- encourage the pupil/class to build up a concept map of a topic over a period of weeks to enable connections to be drawn
- look for times when a pupil is off task or distracted since this may be a signal that he has not heard or recalled instructions given earlier
- repeat verbal instructions slowly and ask the pupil to repeat them to a peer
- be aware that a pupil with memory difficulties can easily become frustrated
- for pupils with visual memory problems give the pupil small amounts of visual information at a time by covering part of a page with paper
- highlight or underline vital information and instructions

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6. Pupils with *poor concentration skills*

Recommendations to improve concentration skills:

- to finish tasks within allotted time
give 10 minute checks; i.e. outline amount of work you expect pupil to complete in this time and check
- give praise/rewards for completion of tasks
- use pupil self monitoring for certain lessons to identify whether work is being completed on time
- provide regular feedback on performance in class
- ensure eye contact when giving key instructions to these pupils
- ask pupil to repeat instructions/ explain their understanding of a concept to a peer or teacher
- ensure that the pupil is sitting away from distraction, e.g. traffic areas, materials
- work at availability/positioning of equipment which may distract
- give cues that vital instructions are about to be given
- ensure that the pupil is sitting in a suitable position in the classroom, close to teacher; with easy eye contact
- ensure that there is a quiet area where the pupil may work

7. Pupils with *organisational difficulties*

Recommendations to improve organisational difficulties:

- establish clear routines for handing in work
- establish a folder for keeping ongoing work in
- ensure that the pupil is given sufficient time to record homework, preferably not at the end of a lesson
- have established classroom routines
- ensure that the pupil has access at home to his timetable and has a list of any materials that he may need each day
- reduce the number of worksheets which are used by the pupil or establish clear routines for their storage

“

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Parent Testimonial

8. Pupils with social emotional and behavioural difficulties

Pupils with social emotional or behavioural difficulties exhibit behaviours which make it difficult for them to function effectively at school or disrupt the education of other pupils. Pupils may be withdrawn, have low self-esteem, exhibit anti-social or uncooperative or aggressive behaviour.

Many pupils with social emotional and behavioural difficulties have special needs as great as those with a more obvious disability and therefore need special help.

They desperately need to develop a sense of worth before they can benefit from their education. Underneath, these pupils want to be liked, accepted and to feel successful. In many cases such pupils also experience significant difficulty in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and often function at a frustration level and therefore feel that they fail all the time.

Implications for classroom practice:

To raise the achievement of pupils:

- make sure that work is at the right level so pupils can succeed
- take an interest in the pupil as an individual
- use humour to create a positive classroom atmosphere
- avoid confrontational situations - reprimand in private wherever possible, avoid sarcasm
- tactically ignore some unwanted behaviour while praising even small successes
- focus on the behaviour not the child's personality
- use school and year group reward systems
- in addition to the reward system it might help to use a contract and/or special rewards for individual pupils.
- ensure targets are very specific
- discuss problems with other staff, class teacher
- praise is often more effective in private or can be a series of unobtrusive signals - thumbs up, wink, nod
- set ground rules in the classroom so pupils know what is expected of them, be prepared to remind frequently
- emphasise the positive, individual praise for good behaviour as well as good work

- be fair and consistent, don't make idle threats
- target specific behaviour (e.g. calling out). Don't expect to put everything right at once - progress will be slow
- be sparing with consequences - they can be counter productive
- notice and respond positively to pupils good behaviour

Recommendations to improve behaviour:

- give direct modelling of acceptable behaviour and suggest alternative ways of dealing with a situation
- reinforce rules frequently
- give clear, precise instructions
- stress positive, desirable outcomes
- provide frequent feedback and reinforcement
- a home school link book or communication system with home may be useful
- to involve the pupil with recording in a home/school link book (age appropriate) the pupil could describe the day by drawing smiley faces with a short explanation by the teacher if necessary
- negotiate targets and reward the pupil for meeting them
- praise and encouragement should be used as much as possible
- ensure stars recorded in homework diary

- praise appropriate behaviour which is taking place nearby, to pupil who is behaving inappropriately
- target certain behaviour which all staff teaching pupil deem to be a priority and work on changing that.
- consider positive changes rather than negative ones
- give a clear message to keep a pupil on task
- negotiate a clear set of rules within the classroom
- ensure that rules are recorded for class viewing
- praise and reprimand based on these rules
- give a pupil a verbal warning and offer a strategy to avoid escalation of the problem
- reward a pupil for improved effort and attitude as well as achievement
- invalidate the behaviour at times by use of humour, redirection or isolation
- avoid confrontation
- for serious infringements, record antecedents so that consequences may be considered by pupil and staff
- for minor misbehaviour, eg off task:
 - i) check task is appropriate and understood by pupil
 - ii) give non-verbal signal, stare, move nearer to pupil
 - iii) ignore
 - iv) time out (up to 5 minutes which should then be taken from pupil's playtime) ensuring that thinking of new strategies are an essential part of the process
 - v) reminder of acceptable behaviour
 - vii) isolation within the classroom
 - viii) withdrawal of privileges

Recommendation to build self esteem:

- give small structured targets and responsibilities
- recognise strengths, have realistic expectations and praise for effort
- encourage the pupil to recognise his strengths as well as weaknesses
- negotiate targets and give a tangible reward when they are met
- recognise if a pupil has good oral skills and place the pupil with others of similar ability
- give responsibilities within the classroom
- identify core elements of topics to be completed so that the pupil is not overloaded
- give negotiated periods of working independently with peers
- ensure all staff are alert to pupil's sensitivity and encourage positive comments
- try to think positively about each pupil, to look for the best so that they may become aware of their good points
- provide opportunities for pupils to support each other as far as possible, admonish or discipline a pupil away from others

Recommendations for pupils who need attention:

The child who needs attention will look for whatever kind of attention he/she can get from the teacher whether its positive or negative. In order to help this child succeed you need to plan to give them the maximum amount of positive attention to reinforce the behaviour you want.

When you give lots of attention for positive behaviour and minimal attention for negative behaviour, the child will learn to get the attention they need in an appropriate way.

Common behaviours of a child who is attention seeking:

- Continually engages in behaviour that demands excessive attention from teacher and peers
- Frequently disturbs teacher and peers
- Talks out of turn
- Makes silly noises
- Constantly gets out of seat
- Interrupts lessons with attention seeking behaviour
- Works only when receiving attention

Teachers can determine these goals by analysing their own feelings and reactions to pupils' behaviour, such as:

- To feel annoyed
- To feel irritated
- "For goodness sake stop!"
- Feeling of relief when the annoying behaviour ceases.

Pupils misbehave because they know how teachers will react. Teachers' reactions can sustain and strengthen

undesirable behaviour, therefore they must learn not to follow their first impulse as this could feed the mistaken goal.

Having identified a mistaken goal a teacher can employ a number of strategies to help pupils develop better ways of behaving and one is to teach appropriate behaviour.

Step 1: Construct pupil behaviour profile

Children who have behavioural difficulties may not understand the teacher's expectations for different activities and may need to be taught specific appropriate behaviour. To help children be more successful you need to identify the exact circumstances in which they behave inappropriately and develop a behaviour profile. It will include the following information:

- The activities during which the child is non compliant
- The specific behaviour that occurs during those activities
- The appropriate behaviour you want the child to engage in

Step 2: Teaching appropriate behaviour

- Talk to the child individually when no other children are around.
- Discuss the exact nature of the problem.
- Choose 1 area to work on at a time.
- Give an explanation about behaviour eg "when you talk during individual work time you don't finish your work and you stop other children from getting on with theirs.
- State the exact behaviour that you expect from the child during a specific activity.

f) Check that the child has understood the instructions. Get them to repeat the behaviour you are expecting.

g) Remind the child of appropriate behaviour before each activity.

h) Reinforce the child as soon as they behave appropriately.

Other strategies for children who are attention seeking:

- Use planned ignoring. Ignore the child behaving inappropriately and praise a child nearby who is behaving appropriately.
- "What gets attention will increase." Acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behaviour.
- Sometimes do the opposite of what is expected - give permission to a child to continue unwanted behaviour. This works best where a behaviour was intended to irritate, antagonise or annoy the adult. If permitted openly the activity loses all its attraction.
- Make expectations about behaviour very clear. Establish rules and boundaries and reward compliance.
- Use stickers, certificates, badges and letters home.
- Develop a whole class reward system. This will encourage a feeling of belonging and working towards a common goal.
- Teach friendship skills to enable child to make and maintain relationships.
- Pair with good role model. Use a 'work buddy' system. Make them feel valuable by organising a special job or responsibility.
- Teach child new skills e.g. juggling, to achieve a valued role.
- Label the behaviour and not the

child as this will keep their self-esteem intact. Use "I" statements and acknowledge feelings: "When you talk during story time I feel very irritated and the other children cannot hear the story."

- Teach other children to use "I" statements: "I like you Wayne, but I don't like it when you push in the line."
- Offer consequences for misbehaviour as a choice: "If you continue to poke Michael you will have to sit by yourself. The choice is yours. "I am disappointed Wayne, but I did speak to you about letting Michael get on with his work. You have chosen to sit by yourself." This makes children responsible for their behaviour and takes the stress of failure away from the teacher.
- Take an interest in the child and their hobbies. Share relevant information about common out of school activities.
- Use Circle-time activities to encourage co-operative group work, and place problems in a social context.
- Foster a sense of belonging where every member is valued and valuable. Create an environment where it is safe to take risks and make mistakes.
- Introduce 'special person' once a week in Circle-time. This will provide another opportunity to affirm the positive attributes in the child.
- Give as much unconditional positive strokes as possible. This means the child gets lots of positive regard 'just for being themselves' - they don't have to do anything to earn it.

- Extend feelings vocabulary, as when expressed appropriately they will be a powerful tool in getting needs met
- Plan for success and celebrate when it happens.
- Focus on children's abilities and strengths rather than on disabilities and weaknesses.

Suggested strategies for children who need to be in control:

(These will also be effective for the child seeking revenge)

- Keep calm! Avoid a power struggle with the child.
- If the child is off-task, redirect and then walk away - as if you expect the child will do what you've directed. This is called 'expectation of compliance' (Bill Rogers 1992) and is powerful as it avoids a confrontational situation and allows the child to 'save face'.
- Be careful not to praise too soon. The child will not want to appear to be working to please you, so delay your reaction. A casual nod or smile will often reinforce the behaviour you want.
- Keep praise low-key. The child will not want to appear to conform and so a 'quiet word in the ear' will be more effective than praise in front of the whole class.
- Give power to the child in the form of special responsibilities.
- Organise opportunities for the child to feel important - help younger children with their work.
- Give control to the child by statements such as "You're working quietly", instead of "I like the way you're working quietly".
- Establish firm limits and boundaries. Negotiate rules so that the child feels ownership.

- Use logical consequences that are applied to the whole class and therefore seen as 'being fair'.
- Develop a positive friendly manner and don't take the child's behaviour personally.
- Be prepared to listen rather than accuse.
- Avoid audiences. Speak to the child about inappropriate behaviour privately.
- 'Reframe' their actions and attribute positive reasons for their behaviour. "I can see you're not joining in the group discussion but that's probably because you need some extra thinking time".

Suggested strategies for the helpless (avoidance of failure):

- Build confidence.
- Focus on improvement. Notice contributions. Build on strengths.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the task.
- Set time limits on tasks.
- Focus on past success. Analyse past success. Encourage and support child in order to repeat past success.
- Make learning tangible. Foster an "I can" atmosphere in the classroom. Get child to make a list of "I cans". Accomplishment albums. Checklist of skills.
- Provide tutoring. Extra initial help from teacher to get started. Peer tutoring.
- Group work to encourage co-operation and collaboration.
- Teach positive self-talk. Encourage positive self-talk before beginning tasks
- Put positive signs around the class room.

- Make mistakes OK. Everyone makes mistakes - we can learn from them. Our work doesn't always have to be good - good enough will do. Minimise the effect of making mistakes.
- Take the blame - "This must be my fault, I didn't explain it very well".
- Recognise achievement. Celebration assemblies. Certificates and stickers. Positive time-out. Selfapproval. Clapping and standing ovations.
- Modify teaching methods. Use concrete learning materials. Attractive computer programmes. Selfexplanatory worksheets. Self-correcting assessment. Teach one step at a time.
- Show the child that they are capable. This child will want you to do everything for them - "learned helplessness". Do not 'rescue' as this is unhelpful. Encourage child's attempts, not the end product. They are capable.

Parent testimonials

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Contact

To find out more information,
please use the following contacts:

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