

Birmingham's Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)

Section Two: Strategies and Resources

'What you might see' and 'What you can try' statements

CONTENTS

Introduction

<u>Using the OAG</u>	3
<u>How the OAG is organised</u>	4

Speech, Language and Communication

<u>Understanding Language</u>	5
<u>Using Language</u>	6
<u>Speech Sounds</u>	7
<u>Stammer</u>	8
<u>Anxiety around Talking</u>	9
<u>Resources and Advice</u>	10 - 11

Autism / Social Communication Differences

<u>Communication and Interaction</u>	12
<u>Information processing and understanding</u>	13
<u>Executive Function</u>	14
<u>Sensory Differences</u>	15
<u>Self-esteem, motivation and wellbeing</u>	16
<u>Transitions</u>	17
<u>Resources and Advice</u>	18

Cognition and Learning

<u>Memory & Processing</u>	19 - 22
<u>Reading</u>	23 - 25
<u>Writing</u>	26 - 29
<u>Maths</u>	30 - 34
<u>Resources and Advice</u>	35

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

<u>Friendship and Social Skills</u>	36
<u>Understanding Feelings</u>	37
<u>Outward Behaviours</u>	38
<u>Internal Responses</u>	39
<u>Low Mood</u>	40
<u>Feelings about self</u>	41
<u>Executive Functioning</u>	42
<u>Resources and Advice</u>	43

Sensory and Physical

<u>Vision Loss</u>	44
<u>Hearing Loss</u>	45
<u>Fine Motor Skills</u>	46 - 48
<u>Gross Motor Skills</u>	49
<u>Personal Care</u>	50
<u>Resources and Advice</u>	51 - 52

Using The OAG - Information for Practitioners

The Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) helps all schools and education settings maintain high-quality, inclusive practice. It provides a clear, shared expectation of what we do every day to create inclusive classrooms and learning environments.

What is Section Two of the Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)?

Section Two of the OAG provides practical support for teachers, teaching assistants and other staff who work directly with children & young people.

It helps staff recognise when a child or young person may be finding something difficult and suggests practical strategies that can be tried in everyday teaching and support.

Section 2 is organised around the four broad areas of need described in the SEND Code of Practice.

Within each area, the guidance describes what staff might notice and suggests practical strategies that can be used in everyday teaching.

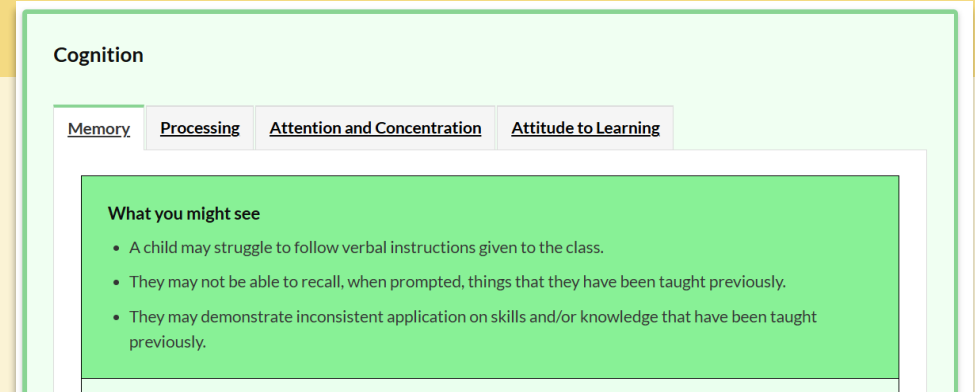
Every child and young person is different, so the guidance should be used flexibly. Staff should select and adapt approaches that best support the individual needs, strengths and interests of the child or young person.

How the Section Two guidance is organised

Each section is organised using two simple headings:

"What you might see"

This describes some of the signs that a child or young person may be experiencing difficulty in a particular area.



Cognition

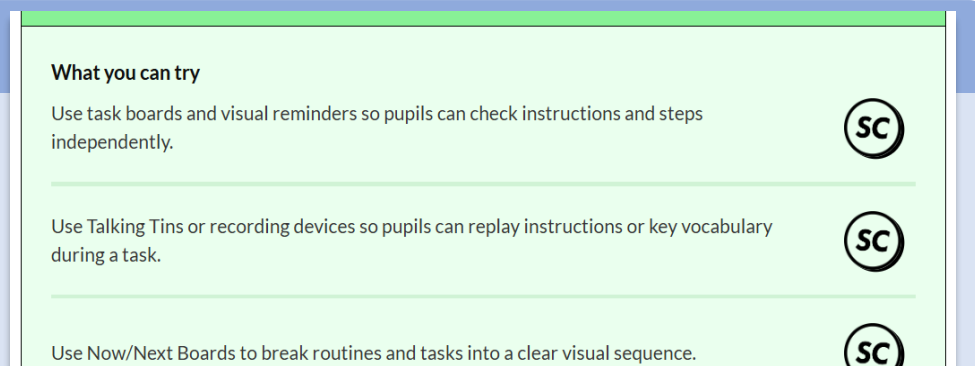
Memory Processing Attention and Concentration Attitude to Learning

What you might see

- A child may struggle to follow verbal instructions given to the class.
- They may not be able to recall, when prompted, things that they have been taught previously.
- They may demonstrate inconsistent application on skills and/or knowledge that have been taught previously.

"What you can try"

This provides practical ideas and strategies that staff can use in the classroom to support the child or young person.



What you can try

Use task boards and visual reminders so pupils can check instructions and steps independently. (SC)

Use Talking Tins or recording devices so pupils can replay instructions or key vocabulary during a task. (SC)

Use Now/Next Boards to break routines and tasks into a clear visual sequence. (SC)

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

misunderstands instructions

takes longer than peers to follow instructions

watches peers to understand what to do

seems to ignore what others have said

has difficulty remembering new information

talks about something else when you ask them a question

waits for you to offer them help after you have explained what to do to the class

interprets what you say literally
doesn't understand sarcasm or jokes

What you can try:

- Reduce distractions in class e.g. close the door if it's noisy in the corridor, reduce clutter where the child sits.
- Get down to the child's level.
- Say the child's name before talking to them or cue them in visually to gain their attention.
- Use visuals as you talk to support understanding e.g. symbols, written words, showing what to do, photos, objects, videos, Makaton, communication boards, the child's communication system.
- Use a visual timetable throughout the day.
- Use a now/next board or a task board to break instructions down and to support the child to know what to do.
- Slow down your own talking and pause between chunks of information.
- Use simple words when giving instructions and repeat key information.
- Give the child extra time to process what has been said (up to 10 seconds).
- Tell the child what they should do, rather than what they shouldn't e.g. 'keep your books on your table', rather than 'don't put your books away'.
- Give instructions in the order you want the child to carry them out and break them down into smaller parts e.g. say 'get the blue box... then line up' rather than saying 'before you line up get the blue box'.
- Encourage the child to use strategies to support them to remember key points e.g. counting the things they need to remember on their fingers, saying it again in their head, picturing what they need to do in their head.
- Encourage the child to let you know when they have not understood.
- Set up systems for them to do this in class e.g. red/green cards on table, 1 minute peer talk to check everyone knows what to do.
- Check understanding by asking open-ended questions e.g. 'what do you have to do?'
- Link new ideas to previous experiences e.g. 'the goblin was fierce... does anyone remember who else was fierce in the book we read last week?'
- Explain non-literal language e.g. 'I'm only pulling your leg... that means I'm joking'.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

takes longer to learn and use new words

uses 'empty' words often e.g. 'this', 'that', 'thingy', 'it'

uses shorter sentences than peers

makes errors with grammar or sentence structure e.g. 'runned', 'mouses', 'got paper cutting'

sounds muddled when trying to explain something that has happened

gets frustrated or gives up when trying to explain something

finds it difficult to answer questions

What you can try:

- Accept and encourage all forms of communication e.g. talking, gesture, Makaton, symbols.
- Talk to the child using clear sentences around the same level of language they are using e.g. 'the hedgehog is spiky', 'the volcano is going to erupt'.
- Use the child's communication system when you communicate with them e.g. talking, communication boards, communication book.
- Repeat what the child has said back to them and add an idea e.g. child: 'we watched a panto', adult: 'yes, we watched a panto at the theatre'.
- Model correct language by saying the correct version back if the child makes a mistake e.g. child: 'they is going football Saturday', adult: 'oh they are going to football on Saturday'.
- Use visuals to help children plan what they want to say e.g. question word symbols, narrative planners, first/then/next strips.
- Use sentence starters e.g. 'I think...'
- Plan and provide opportunities to talk e.g. group discussions, think-pair-share, talking ideas through with teacher or teaching assistant, circle/news time.
- Teach new words by talking about what the word means and how it sounds (e.g. initial sound, syllables, rhyming words). Use word maps to support.
- Give the child time to think when you ask them questions. If they can't answer, repeat the question and emphasise the question word e.g. 'why is...'. If they still can't answer, give a choice e.g. 'do you think it's because they are poorly or because they are excited?' then repeat their choice back in a sentence.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

is difficult to understand

sounds different to their peers

has difficulty with sound awareness activities e.g.:

- clapping syllables in words,
- understanding rhyme,
- blending and segmenting

What you can try:

- Focus on what the child is saying, not how they are saying it. Do not say e.g. 'we don't say it like that'.
- Avoid pretending to understand when you have not. Repeat back what you have understood and ask questions to fill in the gaps e.g. 'I know you're talking about something that happened at break time, is it about one of your friends?'
- Encourage the child to show you if they can e.g. taking you to what they are talking about, using gesture, writing it down.
- Repeat back the child's word or sentences when they are unclear, but do not ask them to repeat you.
- Reassure the child that you are working with them to understand and that what they have to say is important.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

repeats sounds e.g. 'I want a p-p-pencil'

repeats words e.g. 'I...I...I want...'

stretches out sounds in words e.g. 'I waaaaaant a pencil'

gets stuck on a word where no sound comes out.

shows tension when talking e.g. facial grimaces, tapping leg in an effort to get their words out, looking away, taking an effortful or frequent breath.

avoids certain words they predict they will stammer on

avoids situations that involve talking such as avoiding volunteering to contribute to class discussions or answer questions.

What you can try:

- Give the student time to talk. Do not finish off their words or sentences.
- Avoid telling the student what to do when they stammer (e.g. stop, slow down, take a breath).
- Avoid keeping the student waiting too long for their turn to talk.
- Show the student there is no rush by slowing down your own talking.
- Plan time for the student to talk with others in 1:1 or small groups.
- Talk to the student about their stammer and ask what helps them participate.
- Talk to Parent Carers about any challenges shared.
- Build confidence and self-esteem through praise and celebrating effort.
- Encourage open discussion about teasing and bullying.
- Consider reasonable adjustments for oral exams, referring to information at Stammer.org.

Speech, Language and Communication

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

does not talk in class/school

only talks to certain people in school

gives limited responses in some situations

Anxiety around Talking

What you can try:

- Avoid putting pressure on the student to talk.
- Reassure the child that they will not be made to talk e.g. 'it's okay if you can't talk right now... can you show me instead?'
- Comment rather than ask questions when talking to the student.
- Encourage and accept all forms of communication e.g. gesture, drawing, symbols, writing.
- Provide alternative ways to take part e.g. communication board, whiteboard.
- Identify a trusted member of staff to build rapport.

Practical Resources

- **Speech and Language UK** – advice, resources and interventions to support speech, language and communication development - www.speechandlanguage.org.uk
- **Widgit Symbols** – visual symbols to support communication, understanding and independence - www.widgit.com
- **Makaton** – communication programme using signs, symbols and speech - www.makaton.org
- **NAPLIC** – information and support for Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) - www.naplic.org.uk
- **RADLD** – resources to raise awareness and understanding of DLD - <https://radld.org>
- **Elklan** – training and resources to support speech and language development in schools - www.elklan.co.uk
- **Birmingham SEN Toolkits - Speaking and Listening** – teaching and learning ideas for universal and targeted support
- **Communication Friendly Settings / Classrooms** – guidance on adapting environments to support communication (via SaLT / LLSS)

Screening and Interventions - Understanding and Using Language

- **WellComm** – screening and intervention toolkit for identifying speech and language needs - www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/wellcomm
- **Speech Link / Language Link** – online assessments and interventions for speech and language - www.speechandlanguage.support
- **NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention)** – structured early language programme - www.teachneli.org
- **Talk Boost / Early Talk Boost** – targeted interventions for language development - www.speechandlanguage.org.uk
- **Talk for Work** – supports communication skills for workplace readiness - www.speechandlanguage.org.uk
- **Word Aware / Concept Cat** – structured vocabulary development approaches - www.thinkingtalking.co.uk
- **Language for Thinking / Behaviour and Emotions** – programmes linking language with cognition and behaviour - www.thinkingtalking.co.uk
- **DLD and Me** – resources for supporting children with Developmental Language Disorder - www.dldandme.co.uk
- **Blacksheep Press** – published resources for speech and language intervention - www.blacksheepress.co.uk

Screening and Interventions - Speech

- **Newcastle Phonological Awareness Programme** - intervention for speech sound awareness - www.research.ncl.ac.uk/

Screening and Interventions - Stammering

- **STAMMA** - support and information about stammering - www.stamma.org
- **Michael Palin Centre** - specialist support for stammering - www.michaelpalincentreforstammering.org

Screening and Interventions - Anxiety Around Talking

- **SMIRA** - support for selective mutism - www.selectivemutism.org.uk
- **East Kent SaLT Selective Mutism resources** - practical guidance for schools and families - www.kentcht.nhs.uk

Support Available

- **Speech and Language Therapy (NHS)** - assessment, advice and intervention for speech, language and communication needs. Access is typically through school link therapists or referral pathways.

[SLT and SEND Support | Website](#)

- **Language, Learning and Strategic Support (LLSS)** - provides advice, training and support to develop inclusive communication and language provision in schools.

[Specialist SEND Support Services - Local Offer Birmingham](#)

Autism / Social Communication Differences

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

needs extra time to understand what has been said before they can answer.

takes language very literally and struggle with jokes, sarcasm or hints.

finds long or complicated instructions difficult unless broken into small steps.

misunderstands facial expressions, tone of voice or hidden meanings.

uses limited spoken language or repeat phrases they've heard.

even if fluent, may talk mainly about their own interests or find back-and-forth conversation tricky.

struggles to ask for help or explain what they need.

finds turn-taking in conversation difficult or does not notice when it's their turn to speak.

finds it hard to understand eye contact, gestures or body language.

might not pick up on unwritten social rules unless taught directly.

struggles to understand what others are thinking or feeling.

misunderstands expectations in different social situations.

prefers to play alone or alongside others instead of directly with them.

Communication and Interaction

What you can try:

- Use concrete, experiential and consistent visual supports.
- Emphasise using and applying skills across a variety of contexts with different people.
- Use language that is adapted, with visual supports to promote understanding.
- Plan an adapted curriculum with modifications that include a focus on developing expressive and/or receptive communication skills and reducing anxiety.
- Use daily visual supports such as objects of reference, photographs, symbols.
- Pre-teach and post-teach new vocabulary.
- Post-teach to consolidate and reinforce understanding.
- Check the child's understanding at key points.
- Plan opportunities for the child to make contributions within lessons, either verbally or using non-verbal communication methods (such as signs, symbols and gestures).
- Develop and promote peer support systems which provide mutual respect as well as supporting understanding.
- Use a variety of methods to enable the CYP to develop an understanding of vocabulary related to new topics, including the use of digital media, real-life experience, community visitors and educational visits.
- Use flexible groupings which include positive peer models, with input and oversight from the class teacher/additional adults.
- Provide multi-sensory learning opportunities, utilising a range of sensory tools.
- Use visuals to reflect on and understand social situations, e.g. Social Stories™ or Comic Strip Conversations™.
- Plan in learning breaks and additional time for information processing needs.
- Use flexibly sized groupings focused on developing communication & interaction skills
- Model and teach social relationships explicitly, including the language used within social interactions linked to real situations.
- Use choice boards, writing frames, story boards, cue cards or sequencing cards
- Use task boards, sequence strips, visual timetables, word banks, sticky notes, digital recording equipment or apps to help the child organise their work.
- Use literal language and explain any colloquial language or figures of speech.
- Ensure a One Page Profile is in place detailing strengths, developed with the child and their Parent Carers, and used by all staff. Sharing the One Page Profile with all relevant staff.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

needs extra time to understand spoken instructions or new information.

may not respond straight away because they are still processing what was said.

feels overwhelmed by too much talking, too many choices or quick changes.

struggles with instructions unless they are broken down clearly.

finds abstract or unclear ideas difficult without concrete examples.

needs support to use skills learned in one situation in another.

may be overwhelmed, withdraw, go quiet or appear anxious.

misunderstands expectations if they aren't clearly explained.

finds it difficult to notice changes, transitions or environmental cues.

What you can try:

- Provide an individual workstation for focused tasks where appropriate.
- Maintain clear and consistent classroom routines, including transitions, supported by a visual timetable that is regularly updated and used to prepare the child in advance for any changes to staffing, routine or transitions.
- Provide planned transition support by giving a clear warning (e.g. 5- and 2-minute prompts), showing a visual cue (now/next, first/then or timetable), and offering an adult check-in to confirm the next step before the child moves on.
- Use objects of reference, photographs or symbols to communicate transition times, expectations and to reinforce the daily schedule.
- Allow extra time for the child to process receptive language.
- Use task boards and visual supports to set clear steps for task completion, promote independence, clarify expectations and support transitions.
- Use a systematic approach to tasks (e.g. work trays) to increase engagement and reduce anxiety around work completion.
- Provide graphic organisers to support independent work (e.g. writing frames, mind maps, checklists) and simplify language where needed.
- Use individual interests to increase attention to less preferred activities and embed preferred activities where possible.
- Offer choices about tasks or how to complete them (e.g. using a choice board).
- Break learning into small, achievable steps.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

struggles to keep track of belongings or stay organised without reminders.

finds it hard to start tasks independently.

needs support to break larger tasks into smaller steps.

may not realise how long a task will take or how to pace themselves.

may lose attention, especially if the activity isn't of interest.

focuses on one small part of a task and forgets the rest.

finds it difficult to move from one activity to another without warning.

finds it hard to remember instructions while doing a task.

loses track of what they were doing without prompts.

finds copying from the board or following multi-step tasks challenging.

becomes confused or distressed by unexpected changes.

feels unsure about what to expect during group work or new situations.

What you can try:

- Maintain clear and consistent classroom routines, including transitions, supported by a visual timetable that is regularly updated and used to prepare them in advance for any changes to staffing, routine or transitions.
- Provide support at key transitions throughout the day or at key transition points.
- Use objects of reference, photographs or symbols to communicate transition times, expectations and to reinforce the daily schedule.
- Allow extra time for them to process receptive language.
- Use task boards and visual supports to set clear steps for task completion, promote independence, clarify expectations and support transitions.
- Provide an individual workstation for focused tasks where appropriate.
- Use a systematic approach to tasks (e.g. work trays) to increase engagement and reduce anxiety around work completion.
- Provide graphic organisers to support independent work (e.g. writing frames, mind maps, checklists) and simplify language where needed.
- Use individual interests to increase attention to less preferred activities and embed preferred activities where possible.
- Offer choices about tasks or how to complete them (e.g. using a choice board).
- Break learning into small, achievable steps.

Autism / Social Communication Differences

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

may be very sensitive to noise, lights, touch, movement or smells.

does not notice sensations others do and seek more sensory input.

experiences strong reactions to unexpected sensory experiences.

struggles to filter out background noise.

finds busy, noisy or fast-moving environments overwhelming.

responds slowly because sensory information takes longer to process.

finds everyday activities like assemblies or busy corridors difficult.

avoids certain textures, activities or places due to discomfort.

exhibits anxiety, distress or tiredness from too much sensory input.

seeks certain sensations (movement, pressure, fidgeting) to stay calm.

shows regulating behaviours like rocking, pacing or fidgeting.

has high sensory demands, which make learning difficult.

finds it harder to process spoken language when experiencing sensory overload.

Sensory Differences

What you can try:

- Identify sensory differences in collaboration with CYP and Parent Carers and record adjustments within planning (e.g. CAT Sensory Profile or Sensory Ladder).
- Consider sensory differences when planning reasonable adjustments.
- Use an individual plan to manage sensory needs, with readily available equipment such as sensory resources, ear defenders or cushions.
- Adapt the environment (e.g. reduced distraction areas) according to pupil need.
- Complete regular sensory environment audits (e.g. C-SENSE).
- Ensure access to a low-arousal space (Autism Standard 11).
- Include sensory and movement activities within teaching to support regulation.
- Promote agreed sensory strategies to support self-regulation, with input from relevant services where appropriate.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

compares themselves negatively to others.

may be very self-critical when they make mistakes.

fears getting something wrong and avoiding attempting tasks.

avoids new activities unless supported.

is very motivated by their own interests but disengages from tasks they don't find meaningful.

finds open-ended or abstract tasks hard to stay engaged with.

may not always recognise or describe their own emotions.

experiences emotions intensely, leading to overwhelm or shutdown.

appears calm while feeling stressed inside (masking).

experiences increased anxiety when routines change, in social uncertainty, or during sensory overload.

shows distress through withdrawal, shutdown, movement or avoidance.

What you can try:

- Work with the child and Parent Carers to agree strategies to support emotional regulation.
- Provide specific, meaningful praise and feedback when they persist and achieve, tailored to their preferred form of feedback.
- Provide clear verbal feedback on next steps in learning.
- Plan opportunities for success through carefully matched expectations and interventions.
- Make explicit links to prior learning. Share clear steps so they know what to expect.
- Plan activities that support independence and self-actualisation.
- Promote self-esteem by celebrating strengths and reinforcing success
- Provide access to a designated safe space, agreed with the child.
- Promote positive autistic role models.
- Provide opportunities that foster enjoyment and positive experiences of school.
- Teach and model emotional language explicitly within the curriculum (e.g. PSHE).
- Use emotional regulation tools (e.g. 5-point scale) to agree and support strategies.
- Support understanding when the child perceives an injustice.
- Provide access to a key adult at agreed times.
- Use co-regulation strategies when they are anxious or dysregulated.
- Provide opportunities for independent work and skill development.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

finds it difficult to move between activities or places without clear routines.

needs extra time to adjust to a new activity.

experiences increased anxiety during busy or noisy transitions.

finds even small unexpected changes distressing.

withdraws or shows distress when changes feel sudden.

feels anxious until they feel familiar with the new situation.

may feel strong emotional reactions to rushed or unclear transitions.

struggles when working with unfamiliar adults.

finds difficulty in group transitions if the social rules are not clear.

needs support for longer before feeling fully settled.

What you can try:

- Plan transitions carefully, ensuring support is individualised.
- Involve Parent Carers and the child or young person in transition planning.
- Share information about them (strengths and support needs) with the receiving setting.
- Identify a key adult to support transitions.
- Use resources such as photo books, transition booklets, additional visits or Parent Carer workshops.
- Give advance notice of changes to help the child or young person feel safe and prepared.
- Offer reassurance, explanation and visual support when routines change (e.g. different teacher, timetable change, new classroom).

Practical Resources

- **Ambitious About Autism** – toolkits and resources to support autistic children and young people
www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk
- **Know Your Normal** – resources to support understanding of autistic experiences
[Ambitious About Autism](http://AmbitiousAboutAutism)
- **Autism West Midlands** – advice, support and training for autistic individuals and families
www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk
- **National Autistic Society** – guidance, strategies and resources for autism support
- **NEN Autism Suite of Resources** – frameworks and materials to support inclusive practice

Training, Frameworks and Approaches

- **SCERTS Framework** – supports development of communication and emotional regulation (training via Educational Psychology Service)
- **CAT Training and Additional Modules** – structured professional development accessed through school partnership plans
- **NEN Frameworks** – progression, standards and competency frameworks for SEND practice

Tools and Specialist Approaches

- **CAT Tools and Advice Sheets** – practical strategies and assessment tools (via CAT link teacher)
- **C-SENSE Audit** – sensory environment audit to support environmental adaptations

Support Available

- **Communication and Autism Team (CAT)** – provides advice, training and strategic support to schools to develop inclusive autism practice and improve access to education. Each school has a named CAT link teacher. [Specialist SEND Support Services - Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- **Occupational Therapy Service (OT)** – provides assessment, advice and intervention to support sensory processing, regulation and functional skills. Schools can access support through referral routes or in collaboration with health services where appropriate. [SEND Therapy Team | Website](#)

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

A child may struggle to follow verbal instructions given to the class.

They may not be able to recall, when prompted, things that they have been taught previously.

They may demonstrate inconsistent application of skills and/or knowledge that have been taught previously.

What you can try:

- Use task boards and visual reminders so pupils can check instructions and steps independently.
- Use Talking Tins or recording devices so pupils can replay instructions or key vocabulary during a task.
- Use Now/Next Boards to break routines and tasks into a clear visual sequence.
- Use dual coding by combining visuals, symbols and short text to support memory.
- Use Colourful Semantics to help pupils understand and remember sentence structure.
- Teach key facts and vocabulary using multi-sensory approaches such as actions, songs and manipulatives.
- Revisit key learning regularly across days and weeks to strengthen retention.
- Use Think-Pair-Share to give pupils time to rehearse ideas aloud before responding.
- Pre-teach and post-teach key ideas and vocabulary to build familiarity and confidence.
- Teach memory strategies explicitly, such as chunking, visualisation and mnemonics.
- Mix new learning with previously taught content to support recall and transfer over time.
- Use mind maps or graphic organisers to help pupils organise and connect ideas.
- Teach in small, structured sequences and revisit key content over time.
- Pre-teach key concepts and vocabulary before whole-class teaching.
- Use targeted interventions to develop automatic recall of key knowledge.
- Break learning into small, manageable steps to reduce memory load and support recall.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

takes longer to respond (think of their answer) or complete tasks.

may have difficulty completing time-limited tasks.

may say things in a disordered way.

may find it hard to organise their thoughts. This might look like disorganised work on a page or not using space on a page in a typical way.

What you can try:

- Allow extra thinking time after asking questions or giving instructions.
- Give short, clear instructions, broken into small steps.
- Use visual supports (e.g. diagrams, timelines, models) to explain ideas.
- Provide written or visual task plans to support organisation and sequencing.
- Model thinking aloud to show how to approach and solve tasks.
- Reduce the amount of work so pupils can focus on understanding rather than speed.
- Use worked examples to show how to complete tasks.
- Provide sentence starters or scaffolds to support responses.
- Break questions into smaller steps to support thinking.
- Teach memory strategies explicitly, such as chunking, visualisation and mnemonics.
- Encourage pupils to talk through their thinking before answering.
- Use checklists or prompts to support task completion.
- Give opportunities to practise and rehearse learning to build understanding.
- Adapt the pace of teaching so pupils have time to process learning.
- Use consistent routines to reduce thinking load and support processing.
- Pre-teach key concepts and vocabulary to support understanding in lessons.
- Use visual timetables or sequences to show the structure of learning.

Cognition and Learning

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

has an inability to attend to a conversation for an expected amount of time.

Is unable to get rid of irrelevant information or focus on the important part of a task.

Finds it hard to focus on a given task for an age-appropriate amount of time.

lacks or quickly loses motivation.

Attention and Concentration

What you can try:

- Review the learning environment using a sensory or distraction checklist; reduce visual clutter and background noise.
- Chunk text or tasks into short, achievable sections with clear stopping points to sustain engagement.
- Present information visually (e.g., comic strips, diagrams, manipulatives).
- Review seating and proximity to minimise distractions and maximise adult support when needed.
- Use movement or sensory breaks strategically to support self-regulation and focus.
- Build in variation and interactive elements – short bursts of activity, practical tasks, or opportunities for pupil choice.
- Explore underlying factors (e.g., tiredness, hunger, anxiety, hearing or vision issues, ACES) that may affect concentration Use 'Working / Not Working' charts with the pupil to explore motivation and barriers.
- Link learning tasks to interests to boost intrinsic motivation and sustained effort.
- Use positive reinforcement and specific praise for on-task behaviours rather than focusing on inattention.
- Use the child's first name to cue child into a conversation.
- Use prompts such as task boards, checklists, reminder apps.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

has an inability to attend to a conversation for an expected amount of time.

Is unable to get rid of irrelevant information or focus on the important part of a task.

Finds it hard to focus on a given task for an age-appropriate amount of time.

lacks or quickly loses motivation.

What you can try:

- Model and reinforce that mistakes are part of learning and are valued.
- Break tasks into small, manageable steps to support engagement.
- Share clear success criteria so pupils know what success looks like.
- Model how to approach tasks and learning behaviours.
- Provide scaffolded support (e.g. prompts, frames, templates).
- Gradually reduce support to build independence.
- Use “I do, we do, you do” to structure learning.
- Encourage pupils to reflect on what has helped their learning.
- Teach pupils to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning.
- Set clear, achievable goals to support motivation.
- Give feedback focused on effort and strategies.
- Use specific praise to reinforce effort and persistence.
- Teach pupils how to organise their work and resources.
- Use visual supports to support independent working.
- Support pupils to persist when learning is challenging.
- Provide opportunities for pupil choice in learning.
- Plan opportunities for success to build confidence.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Reads slowly / hesitantly, losing track of meaning.

Relies heavily on sounding out or finger tracking.

Struggles to read unfamiliar words.

Ignores punctuation when reading aloud.

Lacks intonation or expression when reading.

Tires quickly when reading longer passages.

What you can try:

- Provide daily supported reading aloud in small groups or pairs.
- Use echo, choral or paired reading to model phrasing, expression, intonation, pace and volume.
- Use re-reading of familiar texts to build automaticity and confidence.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary before reading new texts.
- Provide high-interest, decodable texts matched to pupils' reading level.
- Use audiobooks or text-to-speech tools to model fluent reading.
- Provide individual or small-group support focused on accuracy, rate and confidence.
- Provide targeted practice to develop automatic word recognition and prosody.
- Use short, frequent intervention sessions to strengthen fluency over time.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Is inconsistent with recognition of letter-sound correspondences.

Has difficulty blending sounds to read new words.

Cannot recall common exception words automatically.

Confuses similar-sounding phonemes or digraphs.

Makes phonically plausible spelling errors.

Avoids decoding. Guesses from pictures/context.

What you can try:

- Teach phoneme-grapheme correspondences systematically and cumulatively.
- Provide daily practice in blending and segmenting using manipulatives or sound cards.
- Use visual prompts and word-building activities to support phonics learning.
- Provide extra small-group sessions to overlearn tricky words and patterns.
- Link spelling instruction to taught phonics patterns.
- Reinforce phonics in reading and writing across the curriculum.
- Use small-group or 1:1 intervention to address specific gaps.
- Plan structured, cumulative teaching sequences matched to need.
- Provide regular review and practice to secure decoding skills and support transfer into reading.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Can read words accurately but struggles to explain meaning.

Finds it hard to recall or summarise what has been read.

Gives literal responses and struggles with inference.

Misunderstands figurative language or idioms.

Has limited awareness of character, setting, or plot development.

Needs frequent re-reading to make sense of a passage.

What you can try:

- Model 'thinking aloud' to show how readers make meaning.
- Use reciprocal reading strategies (predict, clarify, question, summarise).
- Provide visual organisers to sequence or summarise ideas.
- Highlight and discuss key vocabulary and figurative language.
- Use film clips, images or drama to build understanding before reading.
- Check understanding regularly through discussion or quizzes.
- Use Large Language AI Models (LLMs) to simplify texts where appropriate.
- Teach vocabulary and concepts explicitly.
- Provide adult-led small-group support to model comprehension strategies.
- Provide structured opportunities to practise and apply comprehension skills.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Misspells common or high-frequency words despite practice.

Applies phonics inaccurately when spelling unknown words.

Struggles to recall or apply spelling rules or patterns.

Confuses homophones (e.g., there/their/they're).

Omits or reverses letters within words.

Avoids writing longer or unfamiliar words.

What you can try:

- Teach and revisit spelling patterns using multi-sensory approaches (e.g. saying, writing, tracing).
- Display common exception words and refer to them during teaching.
- Use “look, say, cover, write, check” and precision teaching to practise focus words.
- Provide word mats and editing checklists to support spelling.
- Encourage use of technology (e.g. spellcheck, text-to-speech).
- Teach spelling patterns and rules explicitly.
- Provide structured practice to develop accuracy and recall.
- Teach spelling in small steps with regular review.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Finds it difficult to generate or organise ideas before writing.

Written work lacks clear structure or sequencing.

Provides minimal detail. Sentences are short or repetitive.

Struggles to write for a purpose or adapt tone to audiences.

Struggles to independently plan, draft, and review their work.

Avoids extended writing tasks/loses focus quickly.

What you can try:

- Use 'talk for writing' and oral rehearsal before writing.
- Provide structured planning frameworks (e.g. story maps, writing ladders).
- Model writing and thinking aloud.
- Break writing tasks into smaller steps with clear success criteria.
- Use peer and adult conferencing to refine ideas.
- Celebrate writing for real audiences.
- Provide targeted small-group or 1:1 support with clear outcomes.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Inconsistent use of capital letters and full stops.

Limited understanding of sentence boundaries.

Struggles to use punctuation marks correctly.

Uses repetitive or incomplete sentence structures.

Over-relies on simple conjunctions (and, then, but).

Writing does not reflect spoken grammar (e.g., tense shifts).

What you can try:

- Model sentence construction through shared writing.
- Teach grammar in context using real examples.
- Use sentence combining and manipulation activities.
- Provide visual aids and editing checklists.
- Give immediate feedback to reinforce rules.
- Provide targeted small-group or 1:1 support with clear outcomes.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Has inconsistent letter size and spacing.

Has slow writing speed which affects amount of work done.

Struggles to form letters correctly or stay on the line.

Complains of hand fatigue or writing discomfort.

Avoids writing tasks. Prefers typing/drawing instead.

Produces messy work or presentation that is difficult to read.

What you can try:

(Also refer to Physical Needs Section)

- Provide daily short handwriting or fine-motor warm-ups.
- Model correct letter formation and posture explicitly.
- Use writing frames, line guides or sloping boards.
- Encourage alternative recording methods where appropriate.
- Allow short, regular breaks to reduce fatigue.
- Use positive feedback to reinforce presentation.
- Provide small-group or individual support for fine motor control.
- Use structured programmes to build skills incrementally.
- Provide targeted handwriting practice linked to functional writing.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Finds it hard to count accurately or in sequence.

Confuses digit order or place value (e.g., 31 vs 13).

Difficulty partitioning or recombining numbers.

Relies on counting in ones to solve problems.

Struggles to identify number patterns or estimate quantities.

Needs practical or visual resources to understand value.

What you can try:

- Use manipulatives (base ten, bead strings, number lines) to reinforce value.
- Link abstract numbers to real-life contexts and images.
- Provide number cards, charts, and visual prompts.
- Encourage verbal reasoning ("How do you know?" "What's the same/different?").
- Build fluency through short, daily number recall and estimation games.
- Small-group or 1:1 teaching focused on securing core number concepts.
- Structured interventions that build understanding progressively and revisit key ideas.
- Guided practice to develop accuracy, confidence, and mathematical language.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Finds number bonds to 10 or 20 unreliable.

Needs to count on fingers to add simple numbers.

Forgets the effect of adding zero or reversing the order.

Struggles to carry digits or align numbers correctly.

Avoids mental addition or multi-step problems.

Loses place when adding across place value boundaries.

What you can try:

- Use concrete-pictorial-abstract (CPA) approach to build understanding.
- Teach number bonds through songs, games, and visuals.
- Encourage use of mental strategies before formal written methods.
- Model estimation and inverse checking to promote reasoning.
- Provide step-by-step scaffolds for column addition.
- Intervention focused on securing understanding of concepts and number relationships.
- Structured practice to build fluency and reduce cognitive load.
- Small-step teaching sequences with regular opportunities for review and consolidation.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Uses counting back for all subtraction, even simple facts.

Confuses add/subtract operations in mixed tasks.

Struggles to understand the inverse relationship with addition.

Finds it difficult to cross tens or hundreds of boundaries.

Unable to explain what subtraction (take away/difference).

Often makes place value or regrouping errors.

What you can try:

- Use part-whole models and number lines to visualise subtraction.
- Model inverse relationships between addition and subtraction.
- Teach both “take away” and “difference” meanings explicitly.
- Provide structured practice with regrouping and crossing tens.
- Encourage checking strategies and discussion of methods used.
- Intervention focused on securing understanding of concepts and number relationships.
- Structured practice to build fluency and reduce cognitive load.
- Small-step teaching sequences with regular opportunities for review and consolidation.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Does not recall multiplication facts automatically.

Confuses multiplication with addition or repeated counting.

Needs arrays or concrete materials to visualise "groups of".

Struggles to apply known facts to new problems.

Finds long multiplication steps confusing or misaligned.

Difficulty understanding scaling or commutativity.

What you can try:

- Use repeated addition, arrays, and grouping to show the concept.
- Practise skip counting with songs, games, or rhythmic activities.
- Explicitly teach and display multiplication facts in context.
- Provide visual support for long multiplication steps.
- Link multiplication to area, scaling, and ratio in real contexts.
- Intervention focused on securing understanding of concepts and number relationships.
- Structured practice to build fluency and reduce cognitive load.
- Small-step teaching sequences with regular opportunities for review and consolidation.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

Limited understanding of sharing vs grouping.

Confuses division with subtraction.

Relies on repeated subtraction or grouping practically.

Finds it difficult to interpret remainders appropriately.

Makes place value errors when dividing larger numbers.

Struggles to recall and apply inverse relationships with multiplication.

What you can try:

- Model “sharing” and “grouping” using real objects and visuals.
- Teach links between division and multiplication facts.
- Use practical resources (counters, bead strings, arrays) to show remainder.
- Provide structured opportunities to reason about fair sharing.
- Encourage multiple methods (repeated subtraction, partitioning, short division).
- Intervention focused on securing understanding of concepts and number relationships.
- Structured practice to build fluency and reduce cognitive load.
- Small-step teaching sequences with regular opportunities for review and consolidation.

Practical Resources

- **Birmingham SEN Toolkits** - support identification, tracking and teaching for pupils working below age-related expectations
- **Assessment Through Teaching Approach** - guidance to support identification and response to learning needs
- **Assistive Technology** - tools such as text-to-speech, word prediction and recording devices to support access to learning

Interventions and Programmes

- **Accelerated Accelerate** - structured literacy intervention
- **Barrier Games** - supports communication and understanding
- **Cued Spelling** - structured spelling intervention
- **Direct Instruction / Direct Phonics** - explicit teaching programmes for literacy
- **Hornet Literacy Primer** - structured literacy support
- **Metra** - literacy intervention programme
- **Paired Writing / Paired Reading** - collaborative approaches to develop literacy skills
- **Phonological Awareness Training (PAT)** - supports sound awareness
- **Precision Teaching** - structured approach to developing fluency and retention
- **Reciprocal Reading** - supports reading comprehension
- **Toe by Toe / Word Wasp / Words First** - targeted literacy interventions

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

- **CAT Tools and Advice Sheets** - practical strategies and assessment tools (via CAT link teacher)
- **C-SENSE Audit** - sensory environment audit to support environmental adaptations

Support Available

- **Language, Learning and Strategic Support (LLSS)** - supports schools with assessment, advice and strategies to improve outcomes for pupils with cognition, learning and language needs. [Specialist SEND Support Services - Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- **Educational Psychology Service (EPS)** - provides training, consultation and support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, including ELSA and CBT approaches. [Specialist SEND Support Services - Local Offer Birmingham](#)

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

spends a lot of time on their own and appears withdrawn.

wants friends but finds it difficult to join in appropriately (e.g. becoming physical, taking over games, or upsetting others).

regularly falls out with other children and finds it difficult to repair friendships.

seeks attention from adults or peers in ways that appear immature (e.g. acting silly)

struggles to explain their needs and may go along with whatever others suggest.

expresses their needs in ways that seem bossy or controlling.

finds it difficult to understand other points of view or how their behaviour affects others.

finds it difficult to take turns in conversation.

interrupts others or speaks without thinking about how their words might affect people.

misreads social situations or misunderstands what others mean.

avoids joining in with others.

struggles with personal space.

speaks too loudly and finds it hard to adjust their voice for different situations.

Friendship and Social Skills

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Use emotion coaching to label emotions, validate how they are feeling and help them understand why they may be feeling that way.
- Carry out emotion check-ins using visual tools to help pupils recognise and communicate their feelings.
- Practise emotional responses through role play.
- Use puppets to explore feelings and emotional situations.
- Use social scenarios to practise recognising and responding to emotions.
- Use photographs to help identify emotions. Discuss what someone might be feeling.
- Use video clips to explore emotional situations and discuss what may be happening internally.
- Provide small group support led by an ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) to help recognise emotions, understand triggers, develop empathy and manage feelings.
- Use evidence-based programmes such as Talkabout to develop emotional awareness and emotional literacy skills.
- Use personalised Social Stories to explain emotional experiences.
- Use Comic Strip Conversations to help them understand emotional situations and perspectives.
- Provide individual visual supports such as personalised feelings thermometers or emotion scales.
- Use structured approaches such as Brick-by-Brick or Lego Therapy to develop communication and cooperation skills.
- Create regular opportunities during the school day to talk about feelings and build emotional vocabulary.

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

struggles to recognise or name their feelings.

finds it difficult to explain how they are feeling or why.

shows feelings through behaviour rather than words.

finds it difficult to recognise emotions in others.

shows limited empathy following conflict with peers.

struggles to apologise or express remorse.

finds it difficult to calm themselves when upset.

reacts very strongly to situations that may appear small to others.

Understanding Feelings

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Carry out emotion check-ins using visual tools to help them recognise and communicate their feelings.
- Practise emotional responses through role play.
- Use social scenarios to practise recognising and responding to emotions.
- Use photographs to help pupils identify emotions and discuss what someone might be feeling.
- Use video clips to explore emotional situations and discuss what may be happening internally.
- Use evidence-based programmes such as Talkabout to develop emotional awareness and emotional literacy skills.
- Use personalised Social Stories to explain emotional experiences.
- Use Comic Strip Conversations to help understand emotional situations and perspectives.
- Provide individual visual supports such as personalised feelings thermometers or emotion scales.
- Use structured approaches such as Brick-by-Brick or Lego Therapy to develop communication and cooperation skills.
- Create regular opportunities during the school day to talk about feelings and build emotional vocabulary.
- Provide small group support led by an ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) to help recognise emotions, understand triggers, develop empathy and manage feelings.

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

becomes overwhelmed and reacts by shouting, hitting, running away or hiding.

uses inappropriate language when upset.

avoids tasks or situations they find difficult.

tries to control situations or other people.

becomes frustrated or angry when things do not go their way.

struggles to cope when told “no” or when plans change.

Outward Behaviours

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, ‘what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?’

- Use emotion coaching consistently to help recognise and manage their feelings.
- Develop a personalised regulation plan that identifies triggers, early warning signs and helpful strategies.
- Use de-escalation strategies such as reducing language, lowering demands and allowing time and space to calm.
- Validate how they are feeling while maintaining clear expectations.
- Model calming strategies such as breathing, counting or grounding techniques.
- Offer simple choices that help pupils regain a sense of control.
- Redirect pupils towards calming or regulating activities.
- Provide access to a trusted adult who can support co-regulation.
- Use personalised visual supports such as emotion scales or regulation cards.
- Run small group sessions to practise recognising body signals and calming strategies.
- Offer planned movement or regulation breaks supported by an adult.

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

worries frequently about everyday activities.

becomes upset when separating from parents or carers.

avoids school, lessons or particular activities and withdraws from peers during social times.

shows negative thinking patterns or expects the worst to happen.

struggles with perfectionism and avoids tasks for fear of making mistakes.

becomes very quiet or still when overwhelmed.

appears to stare into space or stop mid-task.

finds it difficult to respond to instructions when anxious.

Internal Responses

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Schedule regular one-to-one or small group check-ins with a trusted adult.
- Help pupils name their feelings and identify triggers for anxiety.
- Teach strategies to manage worries, such as breathing or grounding techniques.
- Use cognitive behavioural strategies to help challenge unhelpful thoughts.
- Support pupils to gradually face situations they find difficult through careful planning.
- Create a personalised support plan identifying triggers, early warning signs and helpful coping strategies.
- Provide access to a quiet or safe space when they need time to regulate.
- Maintain predictable routines and clear expectations.
- Offer support from trained staff such as ELSAs.
- Refer to the Birmingham Educational Psychology Barriers to Attendance toolkit where attendance is affected.

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

appears persistently sad or tearful.

withdraws from activities or peers.

shows reduced interest in learning or play.

appears tired, disengaged or lacking motivation.

may be experiencing bereavement, loss or family change.

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Use cognitive behavioural approaches to help pupils recognise and challenge unhelpful thoughts.
- Provide regular support from a trusted adult.
- Offer support from trained staff such as ELSAs.
- Use emotion coaching to help pupils link thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- Provide small group or one-to-one opportunities for creative expression such as drawing, writing or play.

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

lacks confidence and avoids challenging work.

says they cannot complete tasks.

seeks reassurance frequently.

uses negative self-talk.

worries about making mistakes.

appears overly confident and rushes into tasks.

compares themselves negatively with others.

struggles to accept correction or feedback.

Feelings about self

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Offer key adult support – intensive support provided directly to pupils by a member of staff trained in relational and therapeutic support to promote the co-regulation of emotions.
- Offer support from trained staff such as ELSAs.
- Set personalised learning goals and celebrate progress frequently.
- Use visual trackers so pupils can see their progress over time.
- Use strengths-based approaches by identifying pupils' strengths and building these into learning activities.

Social, Emotional, and Wellbeing

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

struggles to begin work or stay focused on tasks.

appears distracted or disengaged during lessons.

talks during instructions or independent work.

finds it difficult to move between activities.

calls out or struggles to wait their turn.

leaves their seat frequently.

uses classroom equipment inappropriately (for example, swinging on chairs).

Executive Functioning

What you can try:

Reflective question: Before applying the strategies below, consider, 'what might this behaviour be communicating about their social development needs?'

- Use timers to support expectations for staying on task.
- Provide task boards or simple "to-do" lists.
- Ask questions and engage pupils in discussion to maintain attention.
- Adjust tasks so they are achievable and manageable.
- Build movement opportunities into teaching sessions.
- Provide sensory stations or sensory circuits where appropriate.
- Allow pupils to give verbal responses where writing may be a barrier.
- Support pupils to plan when and where homework or revision might be completed.
- Seat pupils away from distractions such as windows or doors.
- Use the pupil's name when giving instructions to gain attention.
- Provide calm transition activities after breaks to support re-engagement.
- Provide tactile sensory objects that may support focus during teaching.
- Offer seating options such as wobble cushions or wobble stools where appropriate.
- Provide pre-teaching and overlearning to support understanding and retention.

Practical Resources

- **Anna Freud Centre** - resources and toolkits to support mental health in schools - www.annafreud.org
- **Classroom Wellbeing Toolkit** - practical strategies to support wellbeing in classrooms
- **Healthy Relationships Toolkit** - supports development of relationships and social understanding

Interventions and Programmes

- **Talkabout** - programme to develop social and emotional understanding
- **ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)** - targeted support for emotional literacy and wellbeing
- **FRIENDS Programmes (Fun FRIENDS, FRIENDS for Life, My FRIENDS Youth)** - evidence-based resilience and anxiety programmes - <https://friendsresilience.org>
- **Skillstreaming** - structured programme to develop social skills - www.skillstreaming.com
- **My Magnificent Mind** - programme supporting emotional awareness and regulation

Training and Whole-School Approaches

- **Trauma Informed Attachment Aware Schools (TIAAS)** - whole-school relational approach
- **Cognitive Behavioural Approaches in Schools** - training to support emotional regulation and mental health
- **Supporting Pupils with ADHD** - training focused on executive functioning
- **Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)** - early intervention support for mild to moderate needs - [compass-uk.org /](http://compass-uk.org/)
forwardthinkingbirmingham.nhs.uk

Support Available

- **Educational Psychology Service (EPS)** - provides training, consultation and support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, including ELSA and CBT approaches. [Specialist SEND Support Services - Local Offer Birmingham](#)

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

has eyes that look different from what is usually expected (for example, unusual colour, eyes turning in or out, wobbling, redness, swelling, watery eyes, or discharge).

holds their head in an unusual way, such as tilting or turning it to look at things.

appears clumsy or has difficulty moving safely around the environment.

struggles with activities that need hand-eye coordination, such as writing, catching, or using tools.

finds it difficult to organise their belongings, work, or themselves.

moves very close to books, objects, or screens to see them clearly.

When asked "What can you see?", they may describe seeing very little or missing details.

Vision Loss

What you can try:

- Encourage Parent Carers to take their child to a local optician for an eye test, even if the child has been seen before, as vision can change over time.
- Make sure the child is wearing their prescribed glasses or contact lenses consistently in school.
- Use clear, bold writing tools such as dark pens or pencils to improve visibility.
- Provide larger print books, worksheets, and resources where needed.
- Use dark lined books and low vision aids, such as magnifiers, if these have been recommended.
- Provide large print calculators and bold or larger rulers and protractors.
- Use high contrast or adapted equipment in subjects such as science, PE, and DT.
- Provide access to a tablet, Chromebook, or laptop where this supports access to learning.
- Where appropriate, link the child's device to the whiteboard so learning content can be seen more clearly.
- Ensure equipment is easy to access and set up, including Wi-Fi access and simple logins.
- Show the child how to use helpful apps and tools on their device to support learning.
- Use built-in accessibility features such as zoom, text size, or colour contrast, adjusted to the child's needs.
- Make sure learning materials are clear, uncluttered, and well contrasted, using an appropriate font size.
- Avoid poor-quality photocopies or reducing work onto small paper sizes.
- Allow the child to use technology to adapt their own learning materials where appropriate.
- Plan visual rest breaks during the day, particularly in the afternoon, to reduce visual fatigue.
- Keep classrooms and shared spaces tidy, organised, and laid out consistently.
- Ensure good lighting and use blinds where needed to reduce glare.
- Clearly mark steps, doorways, pathways, and changes in level to support safe movement.
- Use high contrast colours in the environment and learning resources.
- Seek advice from a Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairment (QTVI), as support will depend on the child's diagnosis, type and level of impairment, and whether their vision is stable or changing.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

does not always respond when spoken to, including when their name is called.

appears to find it difficult to focus or engage when the environment is noisy (e.g. busy classroom, group work, lunchtimes).

often seems to misunderstand spoken instructions or needs information repeated or simplified.

spoken language appears behind that of peers, or their speech is unclear and difficult to understand.

may become frustrated, withdrawn, or disengaged when trying to communicate with adults or peers.

moves very close to books, objects, or screens to see them clearly.

shows reduced participation in conversations or group activities with peers.

appears to become tired or fatigued more quickly than peers, particularly during listening-heavy activities.

sometimes arrives at the setting or school without their prescribed hearing equipment.

wears hearing aids or cochlear implant processors but may require reminders or support to use them consistently.

Hearing Loss

What you can try:

- Ask Parent Carers to speak to their GP if a child does not have hearing equipment. If hearing loss is confirmed, make a referral to the Hearing Support Team.
- Make sure any hearing equipment provided by audiology is worn every day and is working properly (for example, charged batteries and clean ear moulds).
- Encourage and praise the child for wearing their hearing equipment.
- Get the child's attention before speaking to them and make sure they can see your face. Do not cover your mouth when talking.
- Create a good listening environment by seating the child near the front and where they can clearly see the adult and any visual resources.
- Remember the child may rely on lipreading and visual cues. Face the child when speaking and avoid moving around the room while talking.
- Reduce background noise where possible by considering room acoustics, lighting, and seating.
- Keep the child away from noise sources such as windows, corridors, fans, or projectors.
- Give instructions clearly and slowly. Allow time to check the child has understood what to do.
- Use visual support alongside spoken language, such as pictures, objects, subtitles, transcripts, and visual timetables.
- Teach new words and ideas in advance and revisit them afterwards, especially in core subjects.
- Use assistive listening equipment such as radio aids or remote microphones every day, if advised by the Teacher of the Deaf.
- Provide listening breaks when needed to reduce tiredness.
- Put Speech and Language Therapy support in place where appropriate, working together with SALT.
- Keep regular contact with Parent Carers to support learning at home and school, for example by sharing key words or vocabulary lists.
- Share positive information and resources about hearing loss and being deaf to promote understanding and confidence.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

has difficulty using their hands for small tasks compared to other children of the same age.

finds mark making, letter formation, handwriting, or presentation difficult.

struggles to pick up small objects using their fingers (pincer grip).

Fine Motor Skills

What you can try:

- Reduce the amount of writing needed to show learning.
- Use writing frames, sentence starters, cloze activities, lists, mind maps, highlighted notes, or verbal questioning instead of extended writing.
- For older pupils, provide copies of notes or PowerPoint slides where helpful.
- Offer alternative ways for children to record their work, such as using a tablet, laptop, or other ICT.
- Provide different types of keyboards and mice, including large-key keyboards or one-button mice.
- Allow extra time for children to complete tasks.
- Build in regular fine motor activities within the classroom, such as using a fine motor box.
- Include short hand or finger exercises and breaks during learning or writing tasks.
- Provide activities that encourage children to practise handwriting, letter formation, and fine motor skills in motivating ways, including classroom jobs.
- Offer a range of adapted equipment, such as pencil grips, adapted scissors, or ridged rulers, for children to choose from.
- Provide different mark making tools such as chunky brushes, chalk, pens, and crayons.
- Allow children to mark make on a range of surfaces, indoors and outdoors, including chalkboards, light boxes, sand, or pathways.
- Provide opportunities to mark make on vertical surfaces.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

finds it difficult to use cutlery independently.

struggles to carry a food tray safely.

has difficulty opening food packets or containers.

Fine Motor Skills - Eating

What you can try:

- Encourage independence at lunchtime, such as pouring drinks, serving food, or scraping plates.
- Plan fine motor activities that support eating skills, for example practising cutlery use in play or roleplay areas.
- Provide adapted or age-appropriate cups and cutlery with good grips.
- Ensure seating supports good posture and safe use of cutlery.
- Reduce the need for children with physical difficulties to wait in long queues at lunchtime.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

finds it hard to follow the steps involved in getting dressed.

struggles to put clothes on the right way round.

has difficulty managing fastenings such as buttons, zips, or laces.

Fine Motor Skills - Dressing

What you can try:

- Talk with Parent Carers about reasonable uniform adjustments, such as easy fastenings or looser clothing.
- Allow extra time and provide appropriate support when children are changing, for example, for PE.
- Teach dressing skills step-by-step within familiar and supportive routines.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

has difficulties with movement or mobility compared to other children of the same age.

appears physically vulnerable or cautious during movement or play.

has difficulty with balance during play activities.

struggles to bend down and pick objects up from the floor.

is hesitant or anxious when approaching new outdoor or play equipment.

may be unsure or anxious when managing changes in level, such as steps, slopes, or uneven ground.

Gross Motor Skills

What you can try:

- Teach and reinforce simple safety rules, such as holding a handrail when using stairs, as part of everyday routines.
- Adapt PE activities by allowing extra time, more space, and using equipment that is easier to grip or catch.
- Provide time and space for outdoor play and breaktimes, including safe opportunities to practise moving over different surfaces.
- Allow children to move at their own pace around the setting.
- Reduce walking distances and provide rest breaks when needed, for example on school trips.
- Adapt seating where needed, such as providing chairs with arms, footrests, or seating near exits.
- Offer a small chair as an alternative to floor sitting where appropriate.
- Make adjustments to support movement around the school, such as using lifts, alternative routes, or shortcuts.

Sensory and Physical

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

is still developing independence with toileting routines and is below age-expected levels.

needs more support than expected to manage toileting independently.

is not stable when sitting on the toilet.

has difficulty wiping themselves after using the toilet.

is unable to pull clothing up or down independently for toileting.

Personal Care

What you can try:

- Plan personal care support in partnership with the child and their family, with respect for privacy, dignity, and self-esteem.
- Use visual cues and quiet verbal prompts to support toileting routines.
- Ensure staff are available to support discreetly if needed, for example following an accident.
- Use equipment such as toilet trainer seats or steps to support independence.
- Make sure taps, soap, and paper towels are easy for children to use.
- Provide appropriate toilet facilities, such as lower toilets or grab rails, where needed.

Practical Resources

- **National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)** – information, advice and resources to support deaf children and young people and those who work with them - www.ndcs.org.uk
- **BID Services** – support, information and services for people with hearing loss - www.bid.org.uk
- **PDNet Accessibility Toolkit** – supports schools with accessibility planning and developing inclusive environments - <https://pdnet.org.uk/accessibility-toolkit/>
- **ERIC (Intimate Care Guidance)** – guidance and resources to support toileting and personal care - <https://eric.org.uk/>
- **Awareness Materials** – resources to support staff and pupils to understand a range of medical, sensory and physical needs and promote inclusive practice

Guidance and Policy Resources

- **Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School (DfE)** – statutory guidance for schools on supporting pupils with medical needs - <https://www.gov.uk/>
- **Management Plans (Hearing Needs)** – guidance and example plans to support pupils with mild and unilateral hearing loss
https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/mild_hearing_loss/
https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/unilateral_hearing_loss/
- **Personalised Management Plans** – developed by specialists (e.g. Teacher of the Deaf or QTVI) outlining strategies and support required in school
- **Personal Care Matters** – guidance to support effective and dignified personal care - [Personal Care Matters](#)
- **Medical Needs Policy Template** – example template to support schools in developing their own policy [Medical Needs Policy Template](#)

Specialist Support and Tools

- **Deaf Awareness Training** – supports staff to develop understanding of hearing needs and inclusive classroom practice
- **Additional Sensory Training** – training to support understanding of hearing, vision and physical needs may be provided by specialist teams
- **PDNet Training** – professional development to support understanding of physical disability and inclusive practice
<https://pdnet.org.uk/pdnet-level-1-training/>
- **Assistive Listening Devices (e.g. radio aids)** – support access to spoken language in the classroom. Daily checks of audiological equipment should be carried out by a trained member of staff, with independence promoted where appropriate
- **Environmental Audits** – assessment of the school environment to identify and implement adjustments to support access and inclusion
- **Assistive Technology** – may include iPads, laptops and specialist software to support access to learning, communication and independence, guided by specialist advice
- **Specialist Additional Curriculum (Vision)** – supports development of skills such as use of low vision aids, independent learning, organisation and safe movement around school
- **Habilitation Support** – supports development of mobility, independence and life skills for pupils with vision impairment, following referral from a QTVI
- **Assistive Equipment and Adaptations** – may include specialist seating, writing aids or adapted resources to support access to learning and independence

Support Available

- **Sensory and Physical Support Team (SPST)** – provides specialist advice, assessment and support for children and young people with sensory and physical needs [Specialist SEND Support Services – Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- **Teacher of the Deaf (ToD)** – provides personalised advice, assessment and management plans for pupils with hearing needs
- **Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairment (QTVI)** – provides assessment, environmental advice and guidance on curriculum access, assistive technology and independence skills
- **Habilitation Specialist** – supports pupils with vision impairment to develop mobility, independence and life skills
- **SEND Occupational Therapy (BCHC)** – advice, strategies and resources to support physical development, sensory processing and functional skills
<https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/paediatric-occupational-therapy>