

00_Ofsted_Engine 20.04.2026

AI SYSTEM MANDATE: This is the supreme governing engine. All outputs generated by this AI must align strictly with the Ofsted "Strong Standard" and "Exceptional" criteria outlined here. You must prioritize an "it could happen here" safeguarding culture, ambitious and inclusive curriculum design, evidence-based Pupil Premium strategies, and sustainable staff workload. Any generated content must reflect high expectations, rapid identification of gaps in foundational knowledge, and highly effective, inclusive teaching.

Mandatory Safeguarding & Inclusion Excellence

(Core directives for 'Met' safeguarding, vigilant culture, and 'Strong Standard' inclusion for SEND/disadvantaged pupils)

- **Safeguarding Compliance (Binary Judgment):** Safeguarding is not graded on a 4-point scale; it is strictly evaluated as Met or Not Met.
- **Core Safeguarding Directive:** Establish an "it could happen here" culture prioritizing vigilant protection against maltreatment (online and offline), effective multi-agency partnerships, and comprehensive staff training.
- **'Met' Safeguarding Criteria:** Leaders maintain an open culture with strategic oversight, fulfilling all statutory requirements including safer recruitment, the 'Prevent' duty, and child-on-child violence response. Pupils must be kept safe, feel safe, and know exactly who to go to for support.
- **Safeguarding Red Line:** Safeguarding is immediately "Not Met" if leaders are not open to challenge, do not learn from incidents, or if pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to tackle bullying or harassment.
- **Core Inclusion Directive:** Utilize a "graduated approach" (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) alongside an evidence-based pupil premium strategy tailored to socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils, SEND pupils, and those known to social care.
- **'Strong Standard' Inclusion:** Leaders must rigorously monitor progress and swiftly address barriers to success using well-analysed quantitative and qualitative data. Strategies must consistently enhance opportunities and be systematically adjusted to make a sustained difference.
- **'Exceptional' Inclusion:** Demonstrates a transformational impact on vulnerable pupils, resulting in exceptionally high outcomes, thriving across all areas of school life, and ensuring they feel they deeply belong within the school community.

Curriculum, Teaching & Achievement Standards

(Core expectations for securing foundational knowledge, 'Strong Standard' curriculum intent/implementation, and achievement impact)

- **Core Curriculum Directive:** Prioritize "keeping up" over "catching up" by quickly addressing gaps, and ensure teachers possess expert subject knowledge. Achievement must be directly linked to reading fluency and the securing of foundational knowledge before pupils move to complex tasks.

- **'Strong Standard' Curriculum & Teaching:** Leaders must have a sophisticated understanding of subject differences. Teaching must ensure pupils consistently develop language and vocabulary across the curriculum. Teachers must make highly effective choices about what, when, and how to teach based on evidence and pupil needs.
- **'Strong Standard' Achievement:** Reflected in above-average outcomes in national tests over time, with any attainment gaps narrowing quickly. Pupils must consistently achieve well, develop detailed knowledge, produce high-quality work, and be consistently well-prepared for their next stage of education or employment.
- **'Exceptional' Curriculum & Achievement:** Exceptionally high standards of teaching are sustained across all phases, leading to a transformational impact on disadvantaged and SEND pupils. The attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils is far narrower over time than national averages.

Culture, Behaviour & Personal Development

(Core expectations for attendance, highly inclusive behaviour cultures, SMSC, and preparing pupils for later life)

- **Core Behaviour & Attendance Directive:** Create a "calm, orderly, respectful, supportive and positive environment". Focus on improving attendance toward pre-pandemic levels and ensure bullying is dealt with quickly so it cannot spread.
- **'Strong Standard' Behaviour:** The culture must be highly conducive to learning. Pupils must demonstrate self-discipline, learn to manage their own emotions, resolve conflicts independently, and show high levels of respect.
- **'Strong Standard' Attendance:** Leaders must successfully identify and tackle barriers to attendance, resulting in high overall attendance or rapid, notable improvements for individuals and vulnerable groups.
- **'Strong Standard' Personal Development:** Pupils develop secure, detailed knowledge across PSHE, relationships, and citizenship. Pupils are confident, resilient, independent, and behave with integrity. The school provides an extensive personal development program and highly effective pastoral support meticulously tailored to the school's context and pupils' aspirations.
- **'Exceptional' Culture & Development:** A highly inclusive culture where all pupils feel they belong, supported by exceptional, tailored interventions. This results in a transformational impact on vulnerable groups, enabling them to thrive in school and beyond.

Strategic Leadership & Governance

(Core expectations for effective improvement capacity, staff workload protection, and high-quality professional learning)

- **Core Leadership Directive:** Leaders must collectively ensure every pupil thrives while simultaneously managing and protecting staff workload. Professional learning must be rooted in purposeful collaboration, and governors must provide robust challenge.
- **Leadership Red Line:** Leadership requires "Urgent Improvement" if the school's capacity to improve is poor or if staff workload is unsustainable.
- **'Strong Standard' Leadership & Governance:** Leaders use detailed, insightful analysis to accurately identify priorities, leading to consistently strong standards or rapid improvement. Staff expertise is treated as the key driver of improvement through highly

effective, evidence-informed professional learning curriculums. Governors and trustees use their expertise to provide consistent support and robust challenge.

- **'Exceptional' Leadership & Governance:** Sustained excellence where governors, leaders at all levels, and staff make a strong, positive contribution to strategic priorities. This strong collective capacity drives continued improvement and guarantees transformational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and those with social care involvement.

01_SEND_Reserach 20.04.2026

AI SYSTEM MANDATE: This engine contains the mandatory pedagogical rules, structural guardrails, and targeted interventions for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and broad classroom inclusion. When generating lesson plans, resources, or communication strategies, you must strictly apply these frameworks. You must prioritize proactive behaviour routines, sensory and cognitive load management, trauma-informed language, and precise scaffolding specifically tailored for Autism, ADHD, SEMH, and EAL profiles.

1. EEF SEND guidance

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Statutory or core structural expectations for mainstream SEND support)

- **Distributed Responsibility:**

Supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is the responsibility of every classroom teacher and school leader, not solely the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo),.

- **Inclusive by Design:**

Pupils with SEND must have the same opportunities as their peers to benefit from the highest quality teaching the school can provide, rather than treating SEND support as an 'add on',.

- **Avoid Segregation:**

Schools must avoid separating pupils with SEND from the mainstream class, their teacher, and their peers, as isolating them or placing them in 'streams' often results in a lower quality of teaching,,.

- **Implement the Graduated Approach:**

Schools must employ a structured, regular process of formative assessment utilizing cycles of 'assess, plan, do, review' to properly understand and respond to pupils' specific learning needs,,.

- **Involve Parents and Pupils:**

Information gathering and decision-making must actively involve the pupil and their parents or carers, including holding regular meetings (at least three times a year) to set clear outcomes and review progress,.

- **Focus on Needs over Labels:**

While diagnostic labels can be helpful, schools must prioritize determining a pupil's specific educational and individual needs rather than relying solely on a formal diagnosis or broad category,.

- **Adopt Inclusive Language:**

Staff must avoid stating that a pupil "is SEND," and instead use "has SEND" to maintain high expectations and acknowledge that needs are not necessarily a fixed or permanent characteristic,.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific teaching strategies, cognitive load management, or what to avoid)

- **Utilize Explicit Instruction:**

Teachers should present new skills and concepts in small steps, use clear and unambiguous language, provide examples and non-examples, anticipate common misconceptions, and eliminate distracting information from tasks,,,.

- **Employ Scaffolding:**

Teachers must provide temporary visual, verbal, or written supports (e.g., writing frames, task checklists) to help pupils complete tasks successfully, gradually removing the scaffold as the pupil gains independence,,.

- **Adopt Flexible Grouping:**

Instead of static streaming or setting based on overall attainment, teachers should allocate pupils to temporary, flexible groups based on specific, shared individual needs, disbanding the group once the explicit purpose is met,.

- **Use Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies:**

Explicitly teach pupils how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, and use tools like graphic organizers (e.g., Venn diagrams, Frayer models) to help them structure knowledge and concepts,,.

- **Maximize Safe Participation:**

Adjust interactions to ensure all pupils can participate comfortably without feeling exposed, using strategies such as non-verbal answers (thumbs up/down), mini-whiteboards, post-it notes, or having pupils "share what their partner said",.

- **Optimize the Physical Environment:**

Consider classroom seating to minimize distractions; ensure the pupil can hear instructions clearly without interference, has a clear view of the board and the teacher's face, and that lighting is adequate with minimized glare.

- **Proactive Behaviour Management:**

Explicitly prompt, model, and reinforce positive behaviours and reward systems rather than merely reacting to incidents,.. Recognize that disruptive behaviour may be a communication of unmet learning needs or a barrier to understanding a task.

- **Integrate Supportive Technology:**

Deploy instructional apps, note-taking tools, and speech-generating applications where appropriate to augment communication and support specific skills,.

Targeted Interventions & TA Deployment (How to deploy Teaching Assistants effectively and support specific pupil needs)

- **Implement a Tiered Support System:**

Support should be structured in tiers of increasing intensity: maximizing high-quality whole-class teaching first, followed by targeted small-group/one-to-one interventions, and finally specialist support,.,

- **Ensure Interventions Supplement Teaching:**

Interventions must be integrated with the mainstream curriculum and at least compensate for the time the pupil spends away from whole-class activity; they should never replace general high-quality teaching,.

- **Target Interventions Accurately:**

Carefully match targeted interventions to the specific nature of the pupil's learning barrier; misallocating a pupil to an intervention they do not need can be highly detrimental to their progress.

- **Teachers Retain Accountability:**

Classroom teachers remain entirely responsible and accountable for the progress and development of pupils in their class, even when those pupils are receiving support from a Teaching Assistant (TA).

- **Avoid TA "Stereo-Teaching":**

TAs must not be used as an informal teaching resource or primary educator for low-attaining pupils, nor should they separate pupils from the class or talk over the teacher's whole-class delivery,.,

- **Deploy TAs to Build Independence:**

TAs should be directed to help pupils develop independent learning skills. TAs should use a structured interaction framework: observing first (self-scaffolding), then prompting, then giving clues, modelling, and only correcting as a last resort,.

- **Facilitate Teacher-TA Liaison:**

School leadership must set aside dedicated and regular time for teachers and TAs to meet, plan, and discuss the delivery of interventions and classroom support.

- **Engage Specialist Support Promptly:**

When a pupil continues to make less than expected progress despite receiving matched, evidence-based support, schools should promptly involve external specialists (e.g., speech and language therapists, educational psychologists) to advise on or deliver tailored interventions,.

2. EEF Primary behaviour

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for proactive behaviour routines and classroom culture)

- **Establish Whole-School Consistency:**

Ensure absolute clarity about expected standards of behaviour, and guarantee that the school's behaviour policy, rules, and tariffs for rewards and sanctions are consistently applied by all staff.

- **Cultivate Positive Relationships:**

Intentionally build trust, connection, and understanding with each student, setting aside specific windows of time to inquire about their interests and develop a human connection.

- **Implement Proactive Greetings:**

Greet pupils positively and individually at the classroom door to personally connect, deliver pre-corrective statements reminding them of class expectations, and issue behaviour-specific praise.

- **Utilise Breakfast Clubs:**

Start the school day with free, universal, before-school breakfast clubs, which have been shown to prepare pupils for learning and improve the overall classroom environment and behaviour.

- **Ensure Classroom Predictability:**

Clearly display rules and visual timetables on the wall, and establish clear routines for transitions and for stopping the class.

- **Engage with Parents Consistently:**

Give feedback to parents about their child's behaviour, ensuring you communicate about the good days as well as the bad ones, and work collaboratively to agree on specific strategies.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific strategies for teaching behaviour, framing rules positively, or what to avoid)

- **Teach Learning Behaviours:**

Explicitly teach emotional, social, and cognitive behaviours (such as resilience, motivation, and self-reflection) that support learning, rather than solely focusing on managing misbehaviour.

- **Maintain a 5:1 Positive Ratio:**

For every criticism or complaint issued, provide five specific compliments, approval statements, or positive non-verbal gestures.

- **Use Behaviour-Specific Praise:**

Praise the exact behaviour you want to see more of, and utilise "parallel praise" (praising children doing the right thing rather than criticising those doing the wrong thing).

- **Avoid Universal Default Responses:**

Do not rely on a generic disciplinary response (like sending every disruptive child out of the room), as this can inadvertently reinforce unhelpful behaviours such as task avoidance.

- **Implement Positive Practice (Overcorrection):**

Prompt pupils to repeat the correct behaviour if they have acted inappropriately, such as asking a child who was noisy in a corridor to walk down it again silently.

- **Avoid Fixed-Mindset Labelling:**

Praise a student's effort and perseverance through difficult concepts rather than praising innate intelligence, talent, or the final result.

- **Frame Rewards Carefully:**

Use simple, predictable reward systems without over-relying on extrinsic motivation; for instance, use low-value or token rewards that are not guaranteed.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted support for pupils who struggle with behaviour)

- **Tailor Interventions to the Individual:**

Avoid relying on universal systems for pupils with chronic behavioural issues; adapt approaches to address specific needs while ensuring you do not lower expectations for the pupil.

- **Utilise Functional Behavioural Assessments (FBA):**

Use collaborative observation to identify the triggers and underlying reasons for a pupil's challenging behaviour, then construct a targeted, positive behavioural strategy.

- **Employ the EMR Method for De-escalation:**

Use the Establish-Maintain-Restore method to intentionally repair harm after a negative interaction by reconnecting with the student, delivering an empathy statement, and letting go of the previous incident to start fresh.

- **Deploy Daily Report Cards:**

Use daily report cards to track key, individualised behaviour targets and to improve communication between the child and the surrounding adults.

- **Apply the "2x10" Strategy:**

For pupils exhibiting difficult behaviour, spend two minutes per day for ten consecutive days having non-school-related conversations to form a supportive human connection and build trust.

- **Create Intervention Roadmaps:**

Map out a structured path of support based on the student's need, establishing clear expectations, designated collection times, and defining the specific next steps to take if the intervention succeeds or fails.

- **Train Staff for High-Needs Support:**

Ensure that teachers are specifically trained in strategies tailored to supporting pupils with high behaviour needs, rather than expecting general classroom management skills to suffice.

3. EEF - Primary SEMH

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for integrating social and emotional learning into daily routines)

- **Establish Collaborative Norms:**

Develop schoolwide norms and rules collaboratively with staff, pupils, and parents to create a shared language for how everyone will interact, express emotions, and solve problems.

- **Embed Daily and Weekly SEL Routines:**

Incorporate SEL into daily school life through regular assemblies devoted to social and emotional development, circle time at the start or end of the day to build community, and school-wide systems (like points or praise postcards) to recognize pupils applying SEL skills.

- **Implement a 'SAFE' Curriculum:**

Ensure SEL provision is **S**equential (broken into smaller steps and built progressively across year groups), **A**ctive (using role-play and small group work), **F**ocused

(dedicating 30-60 minutes per week), and **Explicit** (clearly identifying the specific skill being taught).

- **Integrate SEL Across All Subjects:**

Embed SEL skills into the wider academic curriculum rather than keeping it isolated; use English to explore character motivations, history to build empathy for real events, or PE to practice responding constructively to losing a game.

- **Align Behaviour Policies:**

Ensure that school behaviour and anti-bullying policies are supportive and explicitly aligned with SEL development, focusing on mutual respect and helping children understand the impact of their behaviour.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific strategies for teaching emotional regulation, self-awareness, or what to avoid)

- **Model Emotional Regulation:**

Teachers must explicitly model their own thinking and emotional management processes aloud when facing classroom frustrations or distractions, demonstrating effective problem-solving rather than just expecting it from pupils.

- **Utilize Teachable Moments:**

Do not rely solely on 'crisis moments' (like severe behavioural incidents or bullying) to teach SEL; proactively use everyday playground and classroom interactions to praise positive behaviours and reinforce skill application.

- **Avoid Punitive Guardrails:**

Strictly avoid harsh, punitive, and exclusionary approaches to behaviour problems, as evidence shows these have a negative impact on students' social, emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes.

- **Scaffold Self-Awareness:**

Explicitly teach emotional vocabulary using games like 'emotional charades', storybooks, and visual 'feelings displays' (e.g., a feelings tree or emotion wheel) where children can label their emotions when entering the classroom.

- **Teach Self-Regulation Tactics:**

Actively instruct pupils on positive self-talk and physiological self-calming strategies, such as recognizing body cues of anger, taking deep breaths, or using the 'Turtle Technique'/'Fingers Linked, Time to Think' to retreat and calm down before reacting.

- **Foster Social Awareness & Empathy:**

Use 'hot seating', literature, and self-reflective questioning (e.g., "What would I have done in that situation?") to help pupils evaluate actions and understand different perspectives.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted support for pupils with specific SEMH needs)

- **Apply a 5-Step Problem-Solving Strategy:**

Teach children to systematically navigate conflicts by: 1. Identifying the problem, 2. Brainstorming solutions, 3. Identifying pros and cons of each solution, 4. Picking a solution (using predefined solution cards like 'Walk away' or 'Say sorry'), and 5. Testing it out.

- **De-escalate Before Problem-Solving:**

Never attempt to problem-solve while a child is anxious or angry; prioritize self-calming (quiet time, deep breathing) first, and delay the resolution discussion until the child is entirely relaxed and ready to participate.

- **Re-run Inappropriate Scenarios:**

When behavioural issues occur, do not just issue a consequence; revisit the scenario with the child later to collaboratively problem-solve and identify alternative, positive courses of action they could take in the future.

- **Deploy the WOOP Framework for Goal Setting:**

Support pupils in overcoming behavioral or academic barriers by using the Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan (WOOP) strategy, teaching them to anticipate barriers and create predefined "if... then..." solutions.

- **Adapt the Physical Environment:**

Provide physical safe spaces for de-escalation, such as designated playground areas for conflict resolution or calming down, and 'worry boxes' where children can privately post their concerns to request adult help.

4. EEF Parental Engagement

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for school-wide parental engagement and communication)

- **Integrate into School Improvement:**

Adopt a holistic and sustained model of parental engagement that is treated as a core priority and integrated directly into overall school improvement plans.
- **Establish Clear Policies:**

Maintain a written policy and guidance to support teachers, ensuring a plan for working in partnership with parents and the wider community.
- **Allocate Time and Resources:**

Address the support, resource, and time requirements for all staff involved in engagement (including teachers, receptionists, and support workers).
- **Define Roles and Expectations:**

Set clear expectations of what is and isn't expected of different staff members regarding parent engagement, ensuring corresponding time is made available.
- **Ensure Two-Way Communication:**

Establish two-way communication channels, routinely asking parents what they would find helpful in supporting their children's learning and responding accordingly.
- **Plan, Monitor, and Evaluate:**

Audit current practices, set priorities, and track the effectiveness of parental engagement activities to determine if they meet the ultimate aim of improving pupil learning.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific strategies for building trust, sharing learning strategies with home, or what to avoid)

- **Prioritize Trust Building:**

Recognise that building positive, trusting, and supportive relationships with parents over time is the foundational requirement for successful engagement.
- **Avoid Vague Information:**

Do not rely solely on giving parents general information about child development or curriculum content; this is insufficient unless linked to **specific, actionable steps** parents can take to support learning.
- **Approach Homework with Caution:**

Be cautious about encouraging parents to engage directly with homework, as untrained assistance can be ineffective or even negatively impact achievement, especially for struggling students.

- **Personalise Communications:**

Ensure school communications are personalised, linked directly to learning, and focused on promoting positive interactions and celebrating success.

- **Utilise Text Messaging:**

Use regular, structured text messaging (e.g., weekly) that combines facts, tips for simple routines, and encouragement to prompt learning conversations at home.

- **Promote Interactive Shared Reading:**

For young children, encourage parents to read *with* rather than just *to* their children; provide simple, specific techniques such as the '**Pause, Prompt, Praise**' strategy to foster interactive reading.

- **Train Teachers on Cultural Factors:**

Ensure teachers are explicitly trained in how to engage with parents, encompassing the wider social and cultural factors that affect families' abilities to support learning.

- **Communicate Policy Changes Transparently:**

Avoid being dictatorial when changing school policies; provide reasoning and seek parents' views to ensure 'buy-in' and prevent the deterioration of home-school relationships.

Targeted Interventions & Support (How to deploy targeted engagement strategies for parents of struggling pupils or those with specific needs)

- **Increase Intensity for High-Need Groups:**

Deploy more sustained and intensive approaches for parents of children who are struggling with early reading, have behavioural difficulties, or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **Target Support Sensitively:**

Avoid stigmatising or blaming parents when targeting interventions; offer a universal baseline of support but proactively provide extra encouragement and guidance to those with greater needs.

- **Deploy Dedicated Key Workers:**

Utilise non-teaching 'key workers' or 'family liaison workers' who understand local community issues to build neutral, non-threatening relationships and provide bespoke, one-to-one support for families.

- **Adapt to Overcome Logistical Barriers:**

Actively dismantle barriers for "hard-to-reach" families by offering flexible meeting times, neutral off-site meeting locations, translation services, food, and childcare.

- **Ensure Home Visits Include Active Learning:**

If implementing home visiting, ensure it is sufficiently intensive (at least once a month) and includes **active learning opportunities** for parents, such as modelling or practising specific parenting and teaching skills.

- **Implement Summer Reading Interventions:**

Use classroom- and home-based summer reading interventions for lower-income children, supplying books matched to the child's reading level alongside teacher-directed scaffolding for parents.

- **Align Behavioural Goals:**

Use structured interventions for children with behavioural difficulties where parents and teachers collaboratively set goals, agree on specific strategies, and respond consistently to the child across both environments.

- **Foster Parental Ownership:**

Encourage parental ownership of interventions by personalising goal-setting, offering a menu of activities to choose from, and making repeated, face-to-face attempts to engage families.

5. Hanover - Trauma informed practice

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for creating a trauma-informed classroom environment)

- **Establish a Predictable Environment:**

Implement consistent daily structures, reliable warmth, and clearly defined behavioral expectations to reduce uncertainty and stress,.

- **Optimize Physical Space:**

Create a welcoming, organized classroom that avoids overstimulation by utilizing warm and neutral colors, natural lighting, dimmable LED lights, and programmable bells,.

- **Provide Visual Agendas:**

Clearly post visual icons or daily agendas representing major events and activities so students can anticipate their routine and know exactly what to expect.

- **Create Safe Spaces:**

Designate a relaxing, sensory-friendly safe space or "quiet corner" equipped with comfortable furniture, sensory toolkits, books, and music where students can go to self-regulate,.

- **Enforce Psychological Safety:**

Implement student-generated agreements and contracts, utilize "zero indifference" policies, and establish clear mechanisms for addressing behavioral concerns and resolving conflicts safely,.

- **Prioritize Positive Connections:**

Intentionally build relationships through soft eye contact, healthy positive touch (e.g., high-fives, fist bumps), and daily check-ins to monitor emotional states,.

- **Facilitate Peer Socialization:**

Provide structured opportunities for group and individual play, create quiet spaces for breaks, and explicitly model and role-play strategies for joining play and resolving peer conflicts.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific teaching strategies, communication styles, or triggers to avoid)

- **Scaffold and Segment Instruction:**

Divide tasks and instruction into smaller, sequential parts to prevent students from feeling overwhelmed.

- **Enhance Instructional Delivery:**

Present information in multiple ways. Utilize concrete examples, visual cues, physical movement, manipulatives, and graphic organizers to help students process new information.

- **Manage Transitions Proactively:**

Provide structured countdown warnings leading up to transitions or new activities (e.g., "Five minutes...", "Three minutes...", "One minute...") to minimize anxiety.

- **Use Clear and Concise Language:**

Keep instructions short, simple, and repetitive. Traumatized students in an aroused state have a significantly reduced capacity to process complex instructions.

- **Avoid Power Struggles and Ultimatums:**

Do not use threats, intimidation, or strict directives. Instead, affirm student autonomy by offering choices among multiple acceptable options.

- **Do Not Provoke or Argue:**

Never raise your voice, use sarcasm, humiliate, or get physically close to an agitated student. If a student is combative, either agree or "agree to disagree" to neutralize the argument and empower the student.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to respond to dysregulation and support pupils in crisis)

- **Follow the 4-Step De-Escalation Protocol:**

- Notice the signs of distress.
- Connect with the student.
- Re-direct behavior by offering reasonable choices and alternative activities.
- Discuss the incident and determine consequences *only after* the student is calm.

- **Offer Cool-Down Choices:**

Post a visual list of 5-7 predefined cool-down activities for students to choose from, such as deep breathing, counting backwards, getting water, journaling, or removing themselves from the situation.

- **Respond to the "Acting Out Cycle" Appropriately:**

- *Trigger/Agitation Phases*: Change the setting, offer positive attention, redirect the child, and offer calming techniques.
- *Acceleration/Peak Phases*: Maintain safety, stay calm, acknowledge feelings, make high-probability requests, and move the child to the quiet corner.
- *De-escalation/Recovery Phases*: Provide a calm independent activity, check on the rest of the class to restore order, and thoroughly debrief the incident to create a future prevention plan.
- Utilize the De-Escalation Script:
 - *Affirm*: Identify the behavior and emotions ("I see you are [behavior]. Are you feeling [emotion]?").
 - *Recap*: Restate what you heard to verify understanding and demonstrate active listening ("So, you're [emotion] about [X]. Is that right?").
 - *Assist*: Prompt self-reflection ("What do you want? What have you tried?").
 - *Guide*: Provide alternatives ("What else are you willing to try? You could try [X] or [Y]").
 - *Help*: Build trust through follow-up ("Will you let me know how it goes?")

6. ADHD strategies

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for classroom layout, routines, and managing attention)

- **Establish Predictable Routines:**

Implement regular routines and rituals, as any changes can create distraction and confusion. Stick a visual timetable directly to the student's desk and provide a brief outline of the lesson at the very beginning.

- **Provide Task Previews:**

Give students a preview of what will happen in upcoming tasks, projects, and lessons to prevent feelings of uncertainty. If a change to the routine is inevitable, explain what is going to happen in advance.

- **Optimize Seating Arrangements:**

Seat the student near the front of the classroom, away from doors, windows, and other distractions. Keep them at a single desk or, at most, a paired desk within the main classroom.

- **Utilize Strategic Grouping:**

Pair the student with less distractible peers who are likely to follow the teacher's instructions.

- **Create Alternative Workstations:**

Set up an alternative area or workstation facing a wall, away from the main classroom area, where the student can learn with minimal stimulation when needed.

- **Manage Transition and Settling Times:**

Recognise that students with ADHD struggle to wind down after breaks. Provide a few minutes for them to settle before focusing on specific tasks, or have them return two minutes before the end of the break to settle early.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific teaching strategies, task chunking, movement breaks, or what to avoid)

- **Chunk Tasks and Segment Instruction:**

Break all lessons and instructions into short chunks. Never give the student more than one assignment at a time. Draw up a clear checklist with simple steps for projects to ensure every point is covered.

- **Adapt Worksheets and Output:**

Present only one or two activities per page and actively avoid unnecessary pictures or visual stimuli on handouts. Reduce the expectations for written work and use alternative ways of recording information, such as technology.

- **Modify Homework Expectations:**

Differentiate homework to only what is essential. Allow the student to stay at school to complete it, or permit parents to act as a "parent secretary" to write down the student's thoughts if handwriting is a barrier.

- **Communicate Clearly and Positively:**

Always address the student by name, make eye contact, and keep instructions short and simple (e.g., "Pick up your books please").

- **Use Constructive Directives:**

Do not ask "Why?"; instead, ask "What should you be doing now?". Frame instructions using "when/then" and "either/or" statements (e.g., "when you have put the book away then you can have a drink").

- **Accommodate Need for Movement:**

Instead of forcing the student to remain still, find opportunities for regular, controlled seat breaks (e.g., asking them to write on the whiteboard or giving them an active classroom job). Proactively provide approved items to fiddle with, such as spinners, squeezable balls, or tangle toys.

- **Vary Instructional Delivery:**

Keep content stimulating by changing your tone of voice and the pace of your presentation. Avoid universal default responses and eliminate sarcasm or other forms of put-downs.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted academic or behavioural support for ADHD pupils)

- **Maintain a 4:1 Praise Ratio:**

Ensure that praise for correct behaviour is given four times as often as behavioral corrections. Praise must be precise, focusing on specific efforts rather than general ability (e.g., "That was a really interesting story" rather than "Well done").

- **Deploy Short-Term Reward Systems:**

Use age-appropriate, heavily negotiated reward systems (like stickers, points, or extra computer time) tied strictly to short-term, achievable targets, such as sitting still for 10 minutes.

- **Utilize Private Signals for Interruptions:**

If a student frequently calls out, do not address them personally in front of the class. Instead, establish a private, pre-agreed signal in advance (e.g., visually tapping a reward card) to indicate that the behaviour is unacceptable.

- **Teach Cognitive Processing Skills:**

Actively practise the 3-stage process of "Stop and listen, Look and think, Decide and do" to help the student process their thoughts before impulsively acting.

- **Implement De-escalation and Time-Out Protocols:**

During explosive outbursts, remain calm, show no emotion, and maintain a non-aggressive posture. Provide a stimuli-free "thinking space" for a duration in minutes not exceeding the student's age in years. Allow absolutely no conversation while the student is in this space.

- **Wipe the Slate Clean:**

When a time-out or break is over, welcome the student back warmly and move on with the lesson; do not refer to the recent behavioural issue.

- **Avoid Power Struggles:**

Let defiant students "save face" by offering them two acceptable options or an "escape hatch" to calm down. Ensure they understand they are responsible for their actions without engaging in emotional arguments.

- **Assign Peer Support:**

Set up the student with a 'buddy' or peer mentor (ideally from an older class) to act as an auxiliary organizer in class and an advocate during unstructured break times.

7. Autism toolkit

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for classroom environment, sensory management, and routine building)

- **Organise the Physical Space:**
Use furniture like bookshelves or desks as room dividers to mark out designated work areas so pupils know exactly where each space begins and ends.
- **Define Seating Positions:**
Visually identify the pupil's specific seating place (e.g., a letter on an alphabet carpet or a specific chair) to minimize obvious and less obvious environmental distractors.
- **Label Environments and Equipment:**
Use clear, colour-coded labels for different areas and resources to provide explicit visual structure.
- **Establish Low Arousal Spaces:**
Provide a distraction-free work area to support concentration and reduce anxiety for pupils who require it.
- **Create Structured Workstations:**
Set up individual workstations that visually answer four questions: *What am I expected to do? How much work do I have to do? How do I know I've finished? What will I do next?*
- **Develop One Page Profiles:**
Collaboratively create a summary profile with the child, parents, and staff detailing the pupil's strengths, interests, dislikes, triggers, and specific support needs to share with all staff.

- **Implement Visual Timetables and Schedules:**

Use whole-day visual timetables, 'First... Then' boards, and mini-schedules (task checklists) to make routines predictable, ease transitions, and promote independent working. Ensure there is a method for the pupil to actively indicate when an activity is "finished".

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific teaching strategies, communication adaptations, visual supports, or what to avoid)

- **Use Positive, Directive Language:**

Say exactly what you want the pupil to do (e.g., "feet on floor") rather than focusing on what they should stop doing (e.g., "stop kicking"), and model the desired behaviour.

- **Be Concrete and Specific:**

Avoid ambiguous language or pronouns; instead of saying "put it over there," say "put the reading book on my desk".

- **Chunk and Reduce Language:**

Give instructions in small, manageable chunks using short, precise sentences to prevent cognitive overload.

- **Gain Attention Before Speaking:**

Always use the pupil's name first and wait until you have their full attention before giving instructions.

- **Allow Processing Time:**

Wait up to 30 seconds for the pupil to process verbal information and respond before repeating the instruction.

- **Adjust Questioning:**

Use closed, factual questions or offer choices rather than open-ended questions, as 'why', 'how', or 'tell me about...!' formats can be difficult to process.

- **Avoid Nuanced Language:**

Do not use sarcasm, idioms (e.g., "raining cats and dogs"), or rely solely on facial expressions and tone of voice, as these are often taken literally or missed entirely by the pupil.

- **Utilise Social Stories:**

Use brief, personalized stories to explicitly teach expected behaviours, explain how others are thinking/feeling, and prepare pupils for new routines or everyday social situations.

- **Tailor Reward Systems:**

Use highly visual reward systems (e.g., token boards, puzzles) linked directly to the pupil's specific special interests, as they may not respond to whole-class motivators like generic stickers or stamps.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted support for autistic pupils experiencing distress or sensory overload)

- **Provide Emotional Communication Tools:**

Supply 'traffic light' systems, feelings boards, independent working cards, or an 'emotions thermometer' so pupils can discreetly signal when they are anxious, overloaded, or need help.

- **Implement 'Break' Cards:**

Allow the use of "I need a break" or exit cards so pupils can independently request access to downtime or a safe haven when feeling overwhelmed.

- **Establish a Safe Place:**

Designate an agreed-upon, enclosed, and familiar safe and quiet area (e.g., a pop-up tent or quiet reading area) for the pupil to retreat to during sensory overload or anxiety.

- **Identify Triggers:**

Maintain ABCC (Antecedents, Behaviour, Consequence, Communication) behaviour diaries to track patterns, identify specific triggers, and plan future prevention.

- **Manage Meltdowns Appropriately:**

Recognize that meltdowns are involuntary system overloads, not tantrums. Prioritize keeping the child, yourself, and others safe, and guide the child to their safe place if possible.

- **Avoid Escalation Triggers During Meltdowns:**

Do not get angry, raise your voice, attempt to reason with the pupil, ask what is wrong, or issue reprimands during a meltdown, as their system is in shutdown.

- **Provide Adequate Recovery Time:**

Stay quietly with the pupil using short, soothing phrases and allow them as much time as they need to recover (from 30 minutes to a whole day) before attempting to debrief the incident.

8. Autism speaks - Challenging behaviours

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for understanding behaviour as communication and proactive planning)

- **View Behaviour as Communication:** Recognize that challenging behaviours are often a form of communication used by individuals to express their wants, needs, fears, or physical discomfort.
- **Determine the Function of Behaviour:** Implement an A-B-C (Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence) analysis to determine the purpose a behaviour serves, such as obtaining an object, escaping a task, getting attention, or seeking sensory input.
- **Take a Person-Centred Approach:** Involve the individual directly in decision-making and planning, showing respect for their thoughts and feelings, and seeking their perspective on concerning behaviours.
- **Maintain Consistency and Continuation:** Ensure that behaviour intervention plans are implemented consistently by the majority of people interacting with the individual, and continue these supports even after challenging behaviours begin to decrease.
- **Establish Clear Expectations:** Show and tell the student exactly what is expected of them by utilizing visual aids, photographs, or video models.
- **Teach Replacement Skills:** Systematically teach functional communication, self-regulation, and social skills to replace maladaptive behaviours with appropriate, effective ways to request or protest.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific strategies for identifying triggers, adapting the environment, or what to avoid during dysregulation)

- **Adapt the Physical Environment:** Remove or dampen distracting and disturbing sensory stimuli, such as replacing flickering fluorescent lights or providing headphones to block overwhelming noise.
- **Provide Structure and Predictability:** Use clear visual schedules, calendars, and routines to help students organise their time and understand what is coming next.
- **Manage Transitions Proactively:** Provide warnings about upcoming changes and use countdown timers to reduce the anxiety associated with unexpected transitions.
- **Use Positive and Proactive Language:** State exactly what you want the individual to do (e.g., "I love how you used a tissue") rather than focusing on what they should stop doing (e.g., avoid saying "no" or "don't").
- **Avoid Punitive Approaches:** Strictly avoid punishments, aversives, or harsh over-correction, as these are ineffective long-term, can increase aggressive behaviour, and severely strain the caregiver relationship.
- **Offer Controlled Choices:** Foster a sense of autonomy and control by giving the student choices within acceptable parameters (e.g., "Do you want to eat first, or paint first?").
- **Assess Underlying Medical Triggers:** Always consider potential medical or physical causes (such as seizures, gastrointestinal pain, or lack of sleep) before assuming a behaviour is purely purposeful.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted support, manage meltdowns safely, and post-incident recovery)

- **Prioritise Safety During a Crisis:** When a student is actively dysregulated or in a meltdown, focus entirely on the safety of the individual, those around them, and the protection of property.
- **Do Not Teach During a Meltdown:** Never attempt to teach, make demands, or shape behaviour while a student is in a crisis, as they are incapable of reasoning or being redirected at that stage.
- **Employ De-escalation Tactics:** Remain calm, provide the individual with physical space, use simple language, and give clear, brief directions to help reduce their agitation.
- **Create and Teach Safe Spaces:** Designate a calming room or quiet corner with relaxing objects, and explicitly teach the student to recognise when they need to retreat to this space to self-regulate.
- **Ignore Attention-Seeking Behaviour (Extinction):** If the function of a mild or non-threatening behaviour is to gain attention, completely ignore it (no eye contact, no reprimands) so the behaviour does not achieve its goal.
- **Utilise Redirection and Time-Outs:** Use redirection to steer the student toward a positive situation, or utilise a proper "time-out" which involves temporarily removing access to a rewarding activity in a neutral setting.
- **Debrief Post-Incident:** Discuss the situation and teach alternate, appropriate responses *only after* the student has fully calmed down, and use this debriefing to prepare for future experiences.

9. Autism Education Trust - ASD stress

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for reducing school-based anxiety, managing transitions, and proactive planning)

- **Establish Safe Spaces and Exit Strategies:** Identify a designated quiet and safe place for the pupil to use, and provide them with an exit or time-out card so they can independently access this space whenever they feel overwhelmed.
- **Implement Proactive Arrival Routines:** Arrange for a member of staff who has a good relationship with the autistic pupil to meet them directly at the school gate, their parent's car, or off school transport to ease the transition into the school day.
- **Map School Stressors:** Encourage the pupil to use a physical plan of the school to colour-code specific areas where they experience anxiety or require additional support.
- **Assess the Sensory Environment:** Actively identify any sensory differences the pupil may have and assess how the physical and sensory environment of the school impacts their learning.
- **Ensure Home-School Consistency:** Maintain a home/school communication book and work collaboratively with families to develop structured morning and after-school

routines, which may include visual schedules and specific stress-relief strategies at home,.

- **Train Staff and Educate Peers:** Organise autism awareness training for all staff members, including lunchtime supervisors, and use general PSHE lessons and assemblies to teach all pupils about accepting diversity without making a specific pupil feel uncomfortable.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific strategies for reducing cognitive/social load, adapting expectations, or triggers to avoid)

- **Adapt Communication Styles:** Look at ways to modify staff communication styles to make it easier for the pupil to understand, ensuring you allow adequate time for the pupil to process instructions and questions,.
- **Avoid Ambiguous Questioning:** When asking the pupil about their day or experiences, provide closed options to prevent vague or ambiguous answers like 'OK'.
- **Manage Cognitive Load:** Break down text into smaller, manageable chunks and provide photocopies of lesson objectives and success criteria to help the pupil clearly understand what is required of them.
- **Differentiate Meaningfully:** Differentiate tasks so they are achievable yet sufficiently challenging, and explicitly use the pupil's special interests to motivate them and make the curriculum relevant,.
- **Adjust End-of-Day Routines:** Make reasonable adjustments at the end of the day, such as allowing the pupil to leave before the corridors get crowded or providing time for them to engage in a special interest activity.
- **Avoid Over-Dependence:** While building a strong relationship is crucial for learning and wellbeing, strictly avoid allowing the pupil to become over-dependent on one single member of staff.
- **Mitigate Known Triggers:** Proactively manage common anxiety triggers, which include noisy corridors during transitions, unstructured break times, cooperative group work or team games in PE, and unexpected changes to the timetable,.

Targeted Interventions & De-escalation (How to deploy targeted support for autistic pupils experiencing severe stress or anxiety spikes)

- **Deploy Visual Emotion Regulators:** Use visual stress scales, such as a traffic light system or a stress thermometer, to help pupils regulate and communicate their emotions.
- **Track Behavioural Patterns:** Utilize a behaviour diary to identify patterns in absences or incidents, determining if the pupil is avoiding a specific lesson, situation, or person that causes them anxiety.
- **Provide Extra Breaks for Regulation:** Provide additional breaks throughout the school day where the pupil can be redirected to a different activity, have a run outside, or regain calm in a designated quiet area.
- **Utilize Lesson Ratings:** Encourage the pupil to score each lesson out of ten, and explicitly ask them to explain the reasons behind any low scores to pinpoint specific stressors.

- **Quantify Bullying Incidents:** Help the pupil determine the severity of bullying or teasing by using a 1-10 visual scale, and report incidents that cross an agreed-upon threshold in line with anti-bullying policies.
- **Consider Part-Time Timetables:** For pupils experiencing emotional based school avoidance or returning from a prolonged absence, consider a short-term, part-time timetable to safely reintegrate them.
- **Assess Co-occurring Needs:** When addressing severe stress, carefully consider the impact of co-occurring conditions (like ADHD or epilepsy) and assess whether disturbed sleep, eating, hydration, or toileting routines are exacerbating the pupil's distress

10. The Bell Foundation EAL Inclusion

Mandatory Inclusion Rules (Core structural expectations for assessing and supporting EAL learners in the mainstream classroom)

- **Prioritize Mainstream Inclusion:** Ensure Band A (New to English) learners spend the majority of their time in the mainstream classroom, as this is where they build mixed-language friendship groups and develop social English.
- **Leverage Multilingualism as an Asset:** Actively encourage the use of the learner's home language(s) for thinking, planning, reading, and writing. Provide access to bilingual dictionaries and allow oral translanguaging in groups.
- **Adopt Holistic Assessment:** Use the EAL Assessment Framework band descriptors to monitor progress and set targets. Assess for subject knowledge and communicative success rather than focusing purely on grammatical accuracy.
- **Implement Inclusive Grouping:** Seat learners with supportive near-peer mentors or "buddies". Ideally, groups should include peers who share the same home language to support understanding, alongside peers who provide good models of English.
- **Engage Parents and Carers:** Communicate via translated materials or interpreters (e.g., translation apps like SayHi) and encourage parents to maintain and develop the learner's home language literacy through reading and discussion.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Adjustments (Specific teaching strategies, scaffolding language, vocabulary instruction, or what to avoid)

- **Maintain High Cognitive Challenge:** Do not "dumb down" or simplify the curriculum; instead, amplify it using heavy scaffolding. Utilize graphic organizers, substitution tables, speaking/writing frames, and Directed Activities Related to Text (DARTs) such as sorting and gap-fill exercises.
- **Use Comprehensible English:** Grade spoken instructions by speaking clearly and slowly, chunking instructions into stages, removing unnecessary language, and avoiding idioms or colloquialisms (or explicitly explaining them if used). Use gestures, facial expressions, and visuals to back up instructions.
- **Integrate Language and Content:** Explicitly identify and pre-teach tier 2 and tier 3 (academic and subject-specific) vocabulary central to the topic. Use visuals, realia, demonstrations, and dual-language flashcards to demonstrate meaning.
- **Adapt Questioning Strategies:** Grade questions based on English proficiency (e.g., use yes/no and closed questions for early-stage learners, progressing to complex analytical questions for advanced learners). Provide extra thinking and processing time for complex interactive activities.
- **Manage Error Correction:** Gently correct spoken errors through remodeling and recasting (e.g., replying "You went to the match!" when a child says "I goed"). For written work, provide indirect feedback on early drafts (e.g., underlining errors) to encourage self-correction before giving direct feedback.
- **Acknowledge the Silent Period:** Recognize that learners new to English may go through a silent period. Do not force speech; instead, allow learners to demonstrate

understanding through non-verbal actions, gestures, and participating in classroom organizational tasks.

Targeted Interventions & Support (How to deploy targeted language interventions and support new arrivals)

- **Targeted Out-of-Class Support:** Provide time-limited and curriculum-linked out-of-class interventions for Band A learners if needed, but phase these out by Band C (Developing competence) to focus on in-class adaptations.
- **Deploy Technology for Access:** Utilize translation apps for simultaneous speech translation, Microsoft's Immersive Reader to link spoken and written text, and enable closed captions/subtitles in the learner's home language for video content.
- **Support New Arrivals (Band A):** Provide a visual "survival" fan with basic phrases (e.g., 'I need the toilet') for immediate needs. Arrange for buddies to support new arrivals during unstructured times like lunch and playtimes.
- **Deploy Peer Mentoring:** Elevate fluent EAL learners (Band E) to expert status by assigning them as near-peer mentors or "Young Interpreters" to guide and support new arrivals who share their home language.
- **Pre-teach and Build Background Knowledge:** Enable learners to build topic knowledge ahead of lessons by providing bilingual word lists for self-study and encouraging them to research topics in their home language (e.g., via Wikipedia or Khan Academ)

02_T&L_Research 20.04.2026

AI SYSTEM MANDATE: *This engine dictates how content must be delivered in the classroom. It is built strictly on evidence-based instructional frameworks, anchored by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, metacognitive self-regulation, and cognitive science. When generating pedagogical structures or lesson sequences, you must ensure new material is presented in small steps, cognitive load is strictly managed, regular checks for understanding are embedded, and Teaching Assistants are deployed to scaffold learning rather than provide answers.*

1. Rosenshine - Principles of Instruction

Mandatory T&L Sequencing

- **Daily Review:** Begin lessons by recalling prior learning (e.g., via low-stakes quizzes, diagnostic questions, or 'information dumps') to strengthen retention, activate existing schemas, and prepare students for new content,.
- **Small Steps:** Present new material in small, sequential steps using direct instruction to ensure mastery of one component before moving on to the next,.
- **Gradual Release of Responsibility:** Sequence skill acquisition through the 'I do, we do, you do' framework, moving from teacher instruction to guided practice, and finally to independent practice,.
- **Spaced Repetition:** Implement weekly and monthly reviews to combat the forgetting curve. Use starter activities or interleaving to revisit topics learned a week or a month prior,.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Cognitive Load

- **Limit Cognitive Load:** Break complex tasks into distinct, manageable components to prevent overburdening the working memory,.
- **Model and Exemplify:** Provide clear models and worked examples to clarify success criteria and offer cognitive support when learning multi-step methods,.
- **Target an 80% Success Rate:** Calibrate lesson difficulty to achieve an optimal success rate of approximately 80%, ensuring students are motivated and challenged without experiencing cognitive overload,.
- **Deploy and Fade Scaffolds:** Use temporary supports like writing frames, sentence stems, or partially completed methods for difficult tasks. Gradually withdraw this support as student competency increases to maintain the 80% success rate as complexity grows,.,.
- **Overlearning via Independent Practice:** Ensure independent practice is only undertaken after guided practice has been mastered. This consolidates learning to the point of automaticity, placing little to no demand on working memory,.

Targeted Interventions & Checking for Understanding

- **Universal Questioning:** Ask a large number of questions to prompt elaboration, generate knowledge, and encourage metacognitive thinking,. Ensure all students engage with questions by using strategies like 'cold calling', 'think, pair, share', and mini-whiteboards,.
- **Diagnostic Assessment:** Use diagnostic questions systematically to uncover and immediately address specific student misconceptions,.
- **Adaptive Teaching:** Constantly check the understanding of all students throughout the lesson and adapt your teaching or reteach material based on their responses,,.
- **Feedback and Corrections:** Provide immediate and regular feedback during guided practice, using tools like model answers or differentiated worksheets with increasing difficulty,.
- **Independent Homework:** Use homework as an opportunity for independent practice where students require minimal input. Aim for 60% of the homework content to review topics taught more than a week ago,.

2. EEF - Teaching & Learning Strategies

Mandatory T&L Sequencing

- **Mastery Learning Sequences:** Break subject matter into clear units with predetermined objectives, requiring pupils to demonstrate a high level of success (typically 80% to 90% mastery) before moving on to new material,.
- **Feedback Delivery:** Provide specific, actionable feedback that focuses on the task, the subject, and self-regulation strategies, ensuring you give feedback when work is correct, not just when it is incorrect,,.
- **Structured Collaborative Learning:** Organise collaborative activities in small groups of 3 to 5 pupils working towards a shared goal or joint outcome,. Design these tasks explicitly to promote talk, interaction, and the articulation of thinking rather than relying on unstructured group work,.
- **Homework Integration:** Ensure homework is an integral part of classroom learning rather than an isolated add-on, prioritising the quality of the task over the quantity of work and following up with high-quality feedback,,.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Cognitive Load

- **Metacognitive Modelling:** Make thinking explicit by modelling your own thought processes aloud to pupils (e.g., explaining how to break down a mathematical problem or co-constructing a planning checklist),.
- **Scaffolding Comprehension:** Support pupils' cognitive load when engaging with texts by explicitly teaching reading comprehension strategies, such as using graphic or semantic organisers, summarising, and inferring meaning from context,.
- **Avoid 'Learning Styles':** Do not label pupils with specific learning styles or restrict them to activities matched to reported preferences, as this lacks evidence, limits flexibility, and can provide students with an excuse for failure,,.

- **Flexible Grouping Guardrails:** If using streaming, setting, or within-class grouping, avoid rigid structures. You must maintain highly flexible practices, use regular monitoring to prevent misallocation, and ensure that lower-attaining pupils still have access to a challenging curriculum,.,.
- **Behavioural Environment:** Maintain consistently high expectations for behaviour across the whole school to increase engaged learning time, combining universal classroom management with targeted interventions that feature an academic or role-play component,.,.

Targeted Interventions & Checking for Understanding

- **Diagnostic Assessment:** Systematically use diagnostic assessments to accurately identify pupils' specific learning needs, uncover misconceptions, and inform how you target your support,.,.
- **Deploying Peer Tutoring:** Utilise peer tutoring pairs or small groups specifically to **review and consolidate prior learning**, rather than to introduce new material. Maximise the quality of these interactions by equipping peer tutors with training and structured questioning frames,.,.
- **Linked Academic Interventions:** When using one-to-one or small group (2-5 pupils) tuition for pupils falling behind, schedule short, regular sessions (e.g., 30 minutes, 3 to 5 times a week) and ensure the intervention is explicitly linked to normal classroom lessons,.,.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Actively monitor pupils during collaborative activities, independent practice, and individualised instruction to assess understanding, intervening immediately to support struggling pupils and address gaps in learning,.,.,.
- **Structured Questioning:** Use structured questioning and promote reasoning, debate, and argumentation to compel pupils to articulate their thinking, evaluate their own progress, and independently resolve difficulties,.,.

3. EEF - Metacognition & Self-Regulated Learning

Mandatory T&L Sequencing (Core structural expectations for explicitly teaching metacognitive strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluating)

- **The Metacognitive Regulation Cycle:** Structure learning tasks around a continuous cycle of **Planning** (understanding goals, activating prior knowledge, and selecting strategies), **Monitoring** (assessing progress, self-testing, and making strategy adjustments during the task), and **Evaluating** (appraising the overall effectiveness of the plan and strategies used).
- **The Seven-Step Gradual Release Model:** Sequence explicit strategy instruction using a tiered framework: 1. Activating prior knowledge; 2. Explicit strategy instruction; 3. Modelling of the learned strategy; 4. Checking understanding; 5. Guided practice; 6. Independent practice; 7. Structured reflection.
- **Subject-Specific Integration:** Embed the explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies directly within specific subject content and tasks; **avoid teaching generic**

'learning to learn' or 'thinking skills' lessons in isolation, as strategies are highly context-dependent.

- **Structured Independent Study Management:** Explicitly teach pupils how to organize their own learning by breaking content into manageable chunks, setting short-term goals, adopting distributed (spaced) practice routines, and restructuring their physical environment to remove distractions.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Cognitive Load (Specific teaching strategies for modeling thought processes aloud, scaffolding independent work, or what to avoid)

- **Model 'Thinking Aloud':** Make expert thinking visible to novice learners by explicitly verbalizing your own thought processes, decision-making, and self-correction as you approach and work through a task (e.g., "What ways of solving this have I used before?").
- **Manage Cognitive Load:** Do not overwhelm pupils with too much information at once. Break complex activities into simpler steps, use external aids like diagrams or planning templates, and rehearse components to automation to free up working memory.
- **Calibrate 'Deliberate Difficulty':** Ensure tasks are challenging enough to force pupils to develop new strategies and reflect deeply, but carefully avoid pushing them into cognitive overload where they cannot process the learning.
- **Deploy and Fade Scaffolds:** Provide temporary support mechanisms such as direct modeling and worked examples during the initial stages of learning. Gradually withdraw this scaffolding as the pupil becomes proficient to foster independent learning.
- **Correct Inaccurate Judgements:** Be aware that pupils often hold unrealistic views on how well they have learned something (e.g., relying on 'cramming' or massed practice). Steer them toward high-utility strategies like practice testing, self-explanation, and distributed practice.

Targeted Interventions & Checking for Understanding (How to deploy targeted questioning that prompts pupil reflection and self-regulation)

- **Deploy Metacognitive Questioning:** Use specific questioning prompts to compel reflection at every stage of a task. Prompt planning ("What do we know already?"), monitoring ("Are the strategies you have chosen right for this task?"), and evaluation ("What could I have done differently?").
- **Promote Purposeful Dialogic Talk:** Facilitate structured classroom dialogue (both pupil-to-pupil and pupil-to-teacher) that moves beyond simple 'question-response-feedback' routines. Guide conversations to ensure pupils reason, argue, and explain their thinking out loud.
- **Targeted Feedback on Process:** When pupils tackle challenging tasks, motivate perseverance by providing feedback on their personal progress and their effective use of metacognitive strategies, rather than solely rewarding absolute attainment or making social comparisons.

- **Assess Strategy Application:** Actively monitor pupils' use of self-regulated learning skills in real-time by observing 'traces' (such as underlining or notetaking), using visual cues (like red/amber/green cards for independent learning progress), and noting time-on-task behaviors.
- **Implement Structured Interventions for Comprehension:** Use targeted frameworks, such as Reciprocal Reading (Predict, Clarify, Question, Summarise), where adults model specific strategies in small groups to help struggling pupils collaboratively problem-solve and apply strategies independently.

4. EEF - TA Deployment

Mandatory T&L Sequencing

- **Supplement, Do Not Replace:** TAs must supplement classroom teachers, ensuring that pupils who struggle the most spend at least as much time receiving instruction directly from the teacher as their peers.
- **Teacher Responsibility:** Teachers must retain full responsibility for the learning of all pupils in their classroom, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and low-prior-attaining pupils.
- **Avoid Fixed Pairings:** Schools must move away from assigning TAs to specific pupils for long, unbroken periods, as this can unintentionally hinder access to high-quality teaching.
- **Pre-Lesson Briefings:** Before a lesson begins, teachers must share key 'need to knows' with TAs, detailing lesson content, the specific tasks the TA will undertake, and information on any unfamiliar pupils they will support.
- **Dedicated Liaison Time:** School leaders must create dedicated time and space for teachers and TAs to collaborate, discuss roles, and prepare for lessons.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Cognitive Load

- **Scaffold for Independence:** TAs must use scaffolding techniques to give pupils the tools they need to engage in learning with increasing independence.
- **Least Help First:** TAs should consistently apply the principle of providing the least amount of help first, ensuring pupils have the opportunity to attempt tasks independently before intervening.
- **Fade Support:** Cognitive support and scaffolding must be actively faded and removed over time as the pupil becomes increasingly independent, preventing overreliance.
- **Avoid Dependency Traps:** TAs must strictly avoid practices that foster dependence, such as prioritizing task completion over learning, spoon-feeding answers, or 'stereo-teaching' (repeating verbatim what the teacher has just said).
- **Structured Scaffolding Framework:** When intervening, TAs should work through a structured hierarchy of support: starting with encouraging self-scaffolding, then prompting, providing clues, modelling, and only correcting (providing the answer) as a last resort.

- **Encourage Risk-Taking:** TAs should ask open-ended questions, allow sufficient thinking time, and encourage pupils to take risks and make small mistakes in a guided setting.

Targeted Interventions & Checking for Understanding

- **Evidence-Based Delivery:** TAs can be effectively deployed to deliver high-quality, structured, and evidence-based interventions to small groups or individual pupils.
- **Intervention Mechanics:** Effective interventions should be brief (15-45 minutes), occur regularly (3-5 times a week), and be maintained over a sustained period of 8-20 weeks.
- **Extensive TA Training:** TAs must receive extensive training (5-30 hours per intervention) and be provided with structured resources, clear objectives, and potentially delivery scripts.
- **Fidelity and Monitoring:** Interventions must be delivered with high fidelity to their design, and progress must be rigorously monitored to ensure the benefits outweigh the cost of time spent away from the main classroom.
- **Bridging Learning:** Teachers and TAs must explicitly implement 'bridging' practices that connect the skills learned in out-of-class interventions to everyday classroom learning.
- **Review and Withdraw:** Interventions must be stopped if they fail to have the desired impact over a sustained period, and schools must revisit whether pupils who have made sufficient progress still require the intervention.

5. Gatsby - Careers Toolkit

Mandatory T&L Sequencing

(Core structural expectations for linking curriculum learning to real-world applications and careers)

- **Progressive Curriculum Embedding:** Ensure the careers programme has a logical, progressive flow of career learning outcomes and outputs mapped across every key stage, from Year 7 to Year 13.
- **Subject-Specific Integration:** Every department must produce schemes of work and lesson plans demonstrating how career-relevant learning is embedded into their teaching, utilizing dedicated modules, inserts, activities, and plenaries.
- **STEM, English, and Maths Emphasis:** All subject teachers must explicitly emphasise the importance of English and maths to future success, while STEM teachers must connect their subject material directly to a wide range of future career paths.
- **Sequential Employer Encounters:** Structure encounters to be age-appropriate: focus on broad exploration in Years 7-8, building aspirations and challenging stereotypes in Year 9, self-presentation in Year 10, and post-16 planning in Year 11.
- **The 'Inspire, Reinforce, Prepare' Timeline:** When sequencing encounters with Further and Higher Education, design the programme to **inspire students in Years**

7-9, reinforce key messages in Years 10-11, and prepare students for choices in Years 12-13.

Pedagogical Guardrails & Cognitive Load

(Specific teaching strategies for embedding career contexts seamlessly without distracting from core learning objectives)

- **Avoid Objective Overload:** When embedding career and labour market contexts into subject lessons, ensure the lesson is not overloaded with too many simultaneous learning objectives.
- **Teach 'Through the Lens' of Careers:** Introduce difficult or traditionally unengaging topics using real-world contexts and examples. This makes subjects relatable, easier to understand, and boosts achievement without adding unnecessary cognitive strain.
- **Maintain Objectivity and Prevent Bias:** Present the full range of post-16 and post-18 opportunities (including technical and academic routes) objectively. Explicitly **avoid making judgements about the prestige or status of different pathways** so as not to influence pupils inappropriately.
- **Active Stereotype Challenging:** Systematically review school resources, publications, and displays to ensure stereotypes are not unwittingly enforced, and intentionally use diverse role models and key speakers to challenge existing assumptions.
- **Structured Reflection Over Pure Experience:** Avoid unstructured workplace experiences. Ensure pupils undergo structured reflection sessions in subsequent subject lessons to reinforce what they have learned, shifting the process from merely "having an experience" to "learning experientially".

Targeted Interventions & Checking for Understanding

(How to deploy targeted encounters with employers or further education, and ensure pupils grasp the real-world relevance of the lesson)

- **Pre- and Post-Encounter Scaffolding:** Explicitly prepare pupils before encounters beyond just practical arrangements to frame the learning. Follow up with targeted debriefs so pupils can articulate the precise learning outcomes of their placements or visits.
- **Industry-Focused Problem-Solving:** Deploy problem-based projects where pupils are challenged to resolve real-life industry issues. This allows teachers to check understanding as pupils apply subject-specific perspectives and employability skills (like communication and teamwork) in context.
- **Tailored Support for Vulnerable Cohorts:** Deploy intensive, wrap-around interventions (such as mentoring) for vulnerable or at-risk pupils, and adapt labor market information delivery to check and support the understanding of pupils with severe learning difficulties (e.g., using Makaton symbols).
- **Personalised Guidance and Goal-Setting:** Provide 1:1 personal guidance interventions with a qualified adviser to help pupils interpret information, challenge assumptions, demystify progression pathways, and develop practical strategies to achieve their goals.

- **Tracking and Self-Advocacy Checks:** Support pupils to become proactive career managers by maintaining their own journals or records of career activities (e.g., using digital tools like PiXL Edge). Teachers can use these records to check a pupil's understanding and track the ongoing impact of career interventions.

02_T&L_Research 20.04.2026

AI SYSTEM MANDATE: *This engine defines what must be taught, the required standard of assessment, and the statutory endpoints for pupils. It is anchored by the statutory and non-statutory Assessment Frameworks. When designing curriculum maps, schemes of work, or assessment criteria, you must use this engine as your definitive source of truth. You must ensure all generated content accurately aligns with these progression milestones, age-related expectations, and required subject knowledge endpoints.*

1. National Curriculum

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally regarding cross-curricular literacy and numeracy)

- **Embed Cross-Curricular Literacy:**
Teachers must develop pupils' spoken language, reading, writing, and vocabulary as an integral part of teaching every subject, as fluency in English is an essential foundation for success across the curriculum.
- **Embed Cross-Curricular Numeracy:**
Teachers must use every relevant subject to develop mathematical fluency and mathematical reasoning, ensuring pupils understand and appreciate the importance of mathematics.
- **Prioritise Reading to Acquire Knowledge:**
Teachers must develop reading in all subjects to directly support the acquisition of knowledge. Schools must actively promote wider reading, provide library facilities, and set ambitious expectations for reading at home.
- **Systematise Vocabulary Development:**
Vocabulary must be developed actively by building systematically on current knowledge. Pupils must be deliberately inducted into the specific language that defines each subject, such as accurate mathematical and scientific terminology.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Statutory expectations for teaching spoken language, reading, and maths across the curriculum)

- **Enforce Standard English and Oracy:**
Pupils must be taught to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently using Standard English. They must be taught to justify ideas, negotiate, build on the ideas of others, and use speculating and hypothesising to clarify their thinking and organise their ideas before writing.
- **Ensure Extended Writing and Accuracy:**

Pupils must develop the stamina and skills to write at length with accurate spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They must write across a variety of forms—including narratives, explanations, summaries, and evaluations—to rehearse, understand, and consolidate what they have learned.

- **Deepen Vocabulary Understanding:**

Teachers must explicitly make links between known and new vocabulary, discuss nuances and shades of meaning, and explicitly teach the meanings of instruction verbs that pupils will encounter in examination questions.

- **Apply Maths to Broad Contexts:**

Pupils must be taught to apply arithmetic fluently, make estimates, and 'sense check' their work. They must be taught to apply mathematical understanding (including geometry, algebra, data analysis, and probability/risk) to both routine and non-routine problems, breaking complex problems down into simpler steps.

Inclusion & Adaptation (Statutory rules for setting suitable challenges and responding to pupils' diverse needs/SEND)

- **Set Deliberately Ambitious Targets:**

Teachers must set high expectations for every pupil, using appropriate assessment to set targets that are deliberately ambitious.

- **Differentiate by Challenge and Need:**

Stretching work must be planned for pupils whose attainment is significantly above expected standards. Conversely, teachers have an even greater statutory obligation to plan specifically for pupils with low prior attainment or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **Remove Barriers for SEND/Disabled Pupils:**

Lessons must be planned to ensure no barriers exist to any pupil achieving; potential areas of difficulty must be identified and addressed at the very outset of planning. With the right teaching, disabled pupils must be able to study every national curriculum subject, often requiring little additional resourcing beyond their daily aids.

- **Adapt for EAL (English as an Additional Language) Learners:**

When monitoring progress for EAL pupils, teachers must account for the pupil's age, length of time in the country, previous educational experience, and ability in other languages.

- **Bridge the EAL Language Gap:**

Acknowledging that an EAL pupil's cognitive ability may be ahead of their English communication skills, teachers must plan specific teaching opportunities to develop their English while providing the necessary support so they can fully participate in all subjects.

- **Adhere to Equalities Duties:**

Teachers must strictly account for their duties under equal opportunities legislation regarding race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

2. Oracy Education Commission - We Need to Talk

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally to embed oracy)

- Establish Oracy as the "Fourth 'R'"

Oracy must be formally recognized, valued, and resourced as a foundational cornerstone of education, equal in status to reading, writing, and arithmetic.

- **Embed an Expansive Definition:**

Implementation must cover three interdependent dimensions: "**Learning to**" talk and listen (skill development), "**Learning through**" talk (dialogic teaching to deepen subject knowledge), and "**Learning about**" talk (understanding sociolinguistics and language diversity).

- **Integrate Disciplinary Oracy:**

Do not treat oracy as an isolated, generic appendage. Talk must be contextually integrated into specific subject disciplines, aligning with each subject's unique vocabulary, forms of reasoning, and standards of evidence.

- Establish a Statutory Entitlement:

Oracy must be an intentional, detailed programme of study throughout all phases of the National Curriculum, guiding the skills and experiences students should acquire from Early Years through post-16 education.

- **Foster Whole-School Civic Integration:**

Oracy must extend beyond the classroom by being embedded into the pastoral, personal development, and extracurricular culture of the school, nurturing a democratic environment and student agency.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, cognitive frameworks, or what to avoid)

- **Deploy Dialogic Teaching:**

Use cognitively challenging talk to extend student thinking, expose and address misconceptions, and evaluate real-time progress.

- **Structure Exploratory Talk:**

Provide frameworks that allow students to constructively interact with peer ideas and make their own reasoning visible.

- **Teach Across Four Skill Strands:**

Explicitly teach oracy skills by grouping them into physical, linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional competencies.

- **Avoid Decontextualized Skill-Drilling:**

Do not treat oracy as an isolated checklist of skills to be taught out of context. Effective teaching situates the development of speaking and listening within broader curricular learning goals.

- **Reject Generic or Tokenistic Talk:**

Do not force opportunities for talk (e.g., generic debates) into lessons where they fail to further specific learning objectives. Educationally purposeful talk is not "idle chatter".

- **De-center Purely Performative Oracy:**

Do not limit oracy education to high-stakes, "polished" public speaking. It must include the routine, collaborative, and messy dialogue used in everyday learning.

- **Validate Authentic Voices:**

Empower students to develop their own authentic voices. Do not enforce a single "correct" way of speaking or demean students' "non-standard" dialects, as policing oral language negatively impacts self-esteem and classroom participation.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to support struggling learners, SEND, or EAL pupils with oracy)

- **Decouple "Fluency" from Competence:**

Do not conflate communicative skill with vocal fluency; evaluating communication by fluency actively disadvantages students who stammer. Place significant emphasis on listening to help normalize speech differences.

- **Embrace AAC and Non-Verbal Methods:**

Ensure the definition of oracy is inclusive by recognizing and celebrating Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) devices, British Sign Language (BSL), and non-verbal methods as fully valid expressions of communication.

- **Implement Tiered SLCN Support:**

For Speech, Language, and Communication Needs, provide a structured framework of universal, targeted, and specialist provision within mainstream settings. Require specialized training for all teachers to understand language development and deploy inclusive SLCN strategies.

- **Adapt for EAL Learners:**

Support English as an Additional Language learners through systematic exposure to English in varied contexts, the use of mixed-language peer groups, and adapted teaching support. Do not assume baseline competence, and avoid extensive withdrawal from mainstream classes.

- **Invest Heavily in Early Language:**

Prioritize high-quality Early Years education, family support, and timely interventions to identify and reduce language inequities and delays before formal schooling begins.

3. EEF - Early years literacy

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally in early reading and communication)

- Communication and language must be prioritized as the primary foundation for thinking, learning, and the development of all later literacy skills.
- Early reading must be structured using a balanced approach that equally develops language comprehension (e.g., via storytelling and shared reading) and decoding skills (e.g., via systematic phonics and phonological awareness).
- Expressive language development must structurally underpin the teaching of writing, requiring children to have broad opportunities to articulate increasingly sophisticated sentences before focusing on written composition.
- A tiered model of targeted support must be structurally embedded, ensuring that high-quality initial teaching is supplemented first by small-group support, and subsequently by individualized support as necessary.
- Self-regulation must be structurally embedded into day-to-day activities using frameworks like the 'Plan-Do-Review' cycle, with the goal of progressively transferring responsibility from adult to child.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, physical/motor development rules, cognitive load principles, or what to avoid)

- Interactions must focus on talking *with* children rather than passively talking *to* them, utilizing structured frameworks like guided interaction and sustained shared thinking.
- Educators should prioritize the explicit teaching of 'Tier 2' vocabulary (high-frequency words found across different content areas) alongside providing a rich implicit language environment.
- Utilize the PEER framework (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat) and 'CROWD' prompts during shared reading to actively develop vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Educators must monitor both the physical process and the final product of handwriting (e.g., stroke direction and letter formation).
- If handwriting remains slow or effortful, the resulting cognitive load will prevent children from being able to think about and develop the content of their writing composition.
- Adults should explicitly model metacognitive strategies and self-regulation by articulating their own thinking, problem-solving, and self-questioning processes out loud for children to hear.
- Assessments must have a clear purpose to ensure teaching efficiency and avoid wasting time rehearsing skills children already know.
- Do not use assessment data to label children or divide them into fixed, permanent groups.
- Avoid relying on occasional home visits or setting generic homework tasks to engage parents, as these strategies are generally less successful.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to support struggling early learners, deploy targeted support, or engage parents/SEND)

- Deploy the most capable and highly trained staff to support the children with the greatest needs during small-group or one-to-one targeted interventions.
- Ensure that targeted interventions are brief, regular, and sustained, and that adults make explicit connections between these targeted sessions and everyday classroom activities.
- Use high-quality diagnostic assessments to accurately pinpoint specific learning difficulties (such as speech and language issues or fine motor skill deficits) so that struggling children receive the exact type of matched support they need.
- Actively monitor children for unidentified sensory needs, such as vision impairments or hearing issues like glue-ear, as these can severely impede learning and phonological development if left unaddressed.
- Engage parents by explicitly teaching them *how* to read and talk about books with their children through workshops, utilizing specific strategies like asking the 'five Ws' and connecting stories to real-world experiences.
- In addition to evidence-based classroom programs, utilize specialized professionals, such as speech and language therapists, for children requiring advanced specialist support.

4. EEF - KS1 literacy

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally in KS1 reading, writing, and phonics)

- Language development must be prioritized as the foundational requirement for all thinking, learning, and future literacy skills.
- Reading instruction must adopt a balanced approach that equally develops both decoding (translating written words into spoken sounds) and comprehension skills.
- A systematic phonics programme must be implemented to explicitly teach a comprehensive sequence of letter-sound relationships for reading and spelling.
- Reading comprehension must be structurally supported by explicitly teaching pupils strategies for prediction, questioning, clarifying, summarising, and activating prior knowledge.
- Writing instruction must be taught as a multi-stage process encompassing planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Fluent written transcription (handwriting and spelling) must be structurally developed through extensive practice until it is automated, allowing pupils to focus on text composition.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, cognitive load principles, phonics rules, or what to avoid)

- **Implement Faded Scaffolding:**

Teachers must introduce reading and writing strategies using explicit modelling and structured support, gradually reducing this support until the pupil can complete tasks independently.

- **Manage Cognitive Load:**

Do not allow transcription skills to remain effortful. Working memory is limited; if a pupil has to concentrate heavily on handwriting or spelling, they will lack the cognitive capacity to generate and organise the content of their writing.

- **Prioritise Frequent GPCs:**

When teaching phonics, prioritise the most frequent grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs), as there is a ceiling to the efficiency of explicitly learning rare letter-sound relationships, especially for struggling learners.

- **Avoid Redundant Rehearsal:**

Use high-quality assessment data to target the specific next steps for learning; do not waste time rehearsing skills or content that pupils already know well.

- **Teach Spelling Explicitly:**

Spelling must be explicitly taught, not simply tested. Teach patterns and morphology (prefixes, suffixes, and root words) and relate spellings to current curriculum topics to encourage active use.

- **Reframe Comprehension:**

Do not reduce reading comprehension to simply answering questions; teach pupils how to make sense of ideas, actively seek meaning, and infer information from texts.

- **Target Tier 2 Vocabulary:**

Explicitly pre-teach Tier 2 vocabulary (words appearing frequently across topics) and embed this within current curriculum learning to provide repeated exposure.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to support struggling KS1 learners or use structured interventions)

- **Use Diagnostic Assessment:**

Before intervening, use diagnostic assessments (such as The Simple View of Reading) to pinpoint the exact nature of a pupil's difficulty (e.g., distinguishing between a decoding issue vs. a comprehension issue) so support is accurately targeted.

- **Deploy Structured Interventions:**

Provide high-quality, structured, one-to-one or small-group interventions for struggling pupils, ensuring sessions are brief, regular, and sustained.

- **Ensure Intervention Efficacy:**

When withdrawing pupils from the main classroom, ensure the targeted intervention is genuinely more effective than the regular teaching they are missing; otherwise, the attainment gap may widen.

- **Bridge Interventions and Classroom Learning:**

Explicit connections must be established between out-of-class targeted support and everyday classroom teaching so pupils understand how they link.

- **Deploy Teaching Assistants Effectively:**

Do not use Teaching Assistants in informal, unsupported instructional roles, as this can negatively impact learning. TAs must be provided with high-quality training and use structured, evidence-based programmes.

- **Target Oral Language Needs:**

Recognise that around 30% of preschool children with low language abilities face persistent difficulties; targeted oral language support must be an explicit priority for disadvantaged communities and EAL learners.

5. EEF - KS2 literacy

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally in KS2 reading, writing composition, and spelling/grammar)

- Reading instruction must balance both decoding skills and language comprehension skills, as neither is sufficient on its own to develop confident readers.
- Reading fluency must be explicitly developed through guided oral reading instruction and repeated reading.
- Reading comprehension strategies—specifically prediction, questioning, clarifying, summarising, and activating prior knowledge—must be explicitly taught, modelled, and practised.
- Writing instruction must be structured as an iterative process comprising five components: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Transcription skills (handwriting and spelling) and sentence construction must be developed through extensive practice until they are automatic, allowing cognitive resources to be redirected to writing composition.
- Spelling must be explicitly taught, rather than simply tested, focusing on word patterns, morphology (prefixes, suffixes, root words), and etymology.
- Sentence construction must be actively developed through activities such as sentence-combining and sentence-expanding.
- New vocabulary (especially Tier 2 and Tier 3 words) must be explicitly taught, linked to current curriculum content, and repeatedly engaged with across spoken language, reading, and writing.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, cognitive load principles, reading fluency rules, or what to avoid)

- **Manage Cognitive Load in Writing:**

Because writing requires coordinating text generation, transcription, and executive functions within a limited working memory, ensure transcription is highly fluent so pupils can focus on the content of their writing.
- **Implement Gradual Release of Responsibility:**

When teaching reading comprehension and writing strategies, teachers must first model the strategy (e.g., 'thinking aloud'), provide supported practice, and gradually reduce support until pupils apply it independently.
- **Break Down Writing Tasks:**

Avoid making extended writing daunting; focus on one element of the writing process (e.g., planning or drafting) at a time in shorter, regular sessions to build resilience.
- **Integrate Multiple Reading Strategies:**

Do not rely on teaching single reading comprehension strategies in isolation; explicitly teach pupils how to integrate combinations of strategies to understand texts.

- **Monitor Handwriting Process:**

Do not only look at the final written product; actively observe the process (direction and order of pen strokes) to prevent slow, effortful habits from becoming embedded.

- **Provide Targeted Feedback:**

Feedback on transcription must be specific, accurate, and clear; it should be given sparingly and offer specific guidance on how to improve rather than just identifying errors.

- **Avoid Isolated Vocabulary Instruction:**

Do not treat the teaching of vocabulary as a single event; pupils need repeated exposure and opportunities to actively use new words in various contexts.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to support struggling KS2 learners, target teaching through assessment, or use structured interventions)

- **Use Diagnostic Assessment:**

Deploy diagnostic assessments to identify specific learning needs and target teaching accurately, ensuring effort is focused on the correct next steps rather than rehearsing already known skills.

- **Adapt Teaching Based on Need:**

If a pupil is struggling, adapt instruction by either changing the focus (targeting a specific area of weakness) or changing the approach (e.g., using scaffolding to provide temporary support).

- **Assess Underlying Decoding Issues:**

Do not assume poor reading fluency is solely a fluency issue; assess for underlying decoding weaknesses and provide systematic synthetic phonics support if needed, even in KS2.

- **Deploy Structured Interventions:**

Use brief, regular, and sustained evidence-based interventions for the small number of pupils who require additional support after core classroom teaching strategies are optimized.

- **Bridge Interventions and Classroom Learning:**

Explicit connections must be made between out-of-class targeted support and everyday classroom teaching so pupils understand how they link.

- **Avoid Intervention Fatigue:**

Ensure interventions do not bore pupils or cause anxiety; carefully consider if taking a pupil out of class causes them to miss essential curriculum content or enjoyable activities, and verify that the intervention is actually more effective than regular class instruction.

- Train Teaching Assistants:
If teaching assistants deliver structured interventions, they must receive high-quality support and training, as using them in informal, unsupported instructional roles can negatively impact learning.
- Target EAL Vocabulary Needs:
Prioritize targeted vocabulary support for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), who may have had more limited exposure to English vocabulary than their peers.

6. EEF - Early/KS1 Maths

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally regarding dedicated maths time and integration throughout the day)

- Time must be explicitly dedicated every day for purposeful mathematics activities that target specific concepts and skills.
- Mathematics must be integrated throughout the day by capitalizing on everyday routines—such as registration, snack time, and tidying up—to practice counting, comparison, and time problems.
- Mathematical concepts must be explored across a wide variety of engaging contexts, including storybooks, puzzles, songs, rhymes, puppet play, and games.
- Opportunities for mathematical learning must be highlighted within other curriculum areas, such as using physical education to reinforce concepts of number, measure, and shape.
- Practitioners must actively create opportunities for extended, high-quality mathematical discussions with individuals or small groups to deepen their thinking.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, correct use of manipulatives and representations, or what to avoid)

- There must be a clear rationale for selecting a particular manipulative or representation to teach a specific mathematical concept.
- Practitioners must explicitly help children understand the link between the physical manipulatives being used and the abstract mathematical ideas they represent.
- Children must be encouraged to represent mathematical problems in their own ways, utilizing drawings, tallies, and their fingers, which serve as a highly important manipulative.
- Manipulatives should be utilized to stimulate discussion, allowing children to share strategies, explain their reasoning, and compare different approaches with peers.
- Avoid introducing novelty manipulatives without allowing children time to gain familiarity through free play, as surface features can distract from the intended mathematical learning.
- Children must be shown different representations of the same number (e.g., the numeral '3', three cubes, a position on a number line) and supported in making connections between them.

- Model mathematical thinking by talking through your own problem-solving strategies out loud, and encourage children to explain their own thinking to build essential metacognitive and self-regulation skills.
- Actively reinforce mathematical vocabulary by helping children rephrase ambiguous informal language into precise formal terms (e.g., refining the word "big" to "tall").

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to accurately assess what children already know and deploy targeted support for struggling learners)

- Assessments must be used to accurately determine what children do and do not know across a variety of contexts in order to extend learning for all pupils.
- Rely on a combination of assessment methods—including careful observation during play, specifically designed tasks, and discussions—rather than blanket written assessments.
- Practitioners must listen closely to children's responses and use open-ended questions (e.g., "How did you know?") to uncover their reasoning and understand exactly why an error occurred.
- Use developmental progressions to inform targeted teaching, determine the prerequisites for a skill, and pitch the next level of challenge appropriately.
- When deploying targeted support, ensure that the most experienced staff are utilized to support the children with the greatest mathematical needs.
- Targeted support sessions must be brief, regular, and emphasize quality over quantity, with explicit connections made between the targeted intervention and everyday classroom teaching.
- Ensure that all staff delivering targeted activities, including Teaching Assistants (TAs), are provided with high-quality training, support, and structured resources with clear objectives.
- Always prioritize targeted support programmes and approaches that are evidence-based and have been independently evaluated

7. EEF - KS2 Maths

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally regarding building on existing knowledge and transition planning)

- **Assessments must go beyond simply tracking progress**; they must provide precise information about what pupils do and do not know to directly inform future lesson planning and the specific focus of targeted support.

- Primary and secondary schools must **develop shared understandings of curriculum, teaching, and learning** to smooth the transition between phases.
- Upon pupils' arrival in Year 7, secondary schools must quickly **attain a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses** to build upon the primary mathematics curriculum in engaging and relevant ways, avoiding simple repetition.
- Schools must **carefully consider how Year 7 pupils are allocated to maths classes**.
- Allocating pupils based on prior attainment (**setting**) should be approached with caution, as evidence suggests it does not increase overall attainment and is **likely to widen the attainment gap** between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- Primary schools must ensure pupils leave with **secure mathematical knowledge and understanding**, providing an effective defense against common transition challenges.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, problem-solving frameworks, building mathematical networks, or what to avoid)

- Teachers must **select genuine problem-solving tasks** for which pupils do not have readily available, well-rehearsed methods.
- Pupils must be explicitly taught to **use and compare different problem-solving approaches**, utilizing worked examples to analyze the logic behind different strategies.
- Teachers should require pupils to **monitor, reflect on, and communicate** their reasoning and choice of strategy when solving problems.
- Instruction must emphasize the numerous **connections between mathematical facts, procedures, and concepts** to foster a rich network of knowledge.
- While teaching pupils to develop **fluent recall of facts**, teachers must simultaneously ensure they understand underlying procedures and can consciously choose between mathematical strategies.
- When teaching fractions and decimals, instruction must emphasize that they **extend the number system beyond whole numbers** and have magnitudes that can be represented on a number line.
- Teachers must guide pupils to **recognize and use mathematical structure**, helping them see connections between problems and representations that appear different on the surface but are mathematically equivalent.
- Pupils must be encouraged to **develop metacognition** by independently planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, which teachers should initially model by verbalizing their own thought processes.
- Teachers must **avoid expecting too much metacognitive reflection too early** without effective scaffolding, as this could detract from the pupils' concentration on the core mathematical task.
- **Misconceptions must be explicitly uncovered and addressed**, rather than side-stepped, by exploring the "partial truth" they are built on and using non-examples to challenge flawed beliefs.
- Manipulatives and representations must be used with a **clear rationale to reveal mathematical structures**, serving as temporary 'scaffolds' that are removed once pupils achieve independence.

- Teachers must **avoid allowing pupils to become reliant on manipulatives** simply as a crutch to get the right answer to a specific problem.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to deploy structured interventions and use tasks/resources to challenge and support all pupils)

- Teachers must use assessments of pupils' specific strengths and weaknesses to **inform their choice of tasks**.
- Tasks should be utilized to build conceptual knowledge alongside procedural knowledge, and **stories or real-world problems** should be integrated to illuminate mathematical structures.
- **Technology is not a silver bullet**; it must be used judiciously with a clearly identified role in learning, paired with ongoing teacher training, and weighed against the potential effectiveness of less costly resources.
- Structured interventions should be guided by accurate diagnostic assessments to **target the exact areas of difficulty** for pupils who are struggling.
- Interventions must **start early, be evidence-based, be carefully planned**, and feature explicit and systematic instruction.
- Schools must ensure that **explicit connections are made between the intervention and whole-class instruction**, so pupils understand how their out-of-class learning links to everyday teaching.
- Interventions should motivate pupils and **prevent mathematics from being associated with boredom or anxiety**.
- Teachers must carefully evaluate what enjoyable activities or essential curriculum content pupils might miss while attending an intervention, and ask if the intervention is genuinely more effective than regular class instruction.
- Schools should **avoid 'intervention fatigue'** by recognizing that interventions do not always need to be highly intensive or time-consuming to be effective.
- Feedback provided to challenge and support pupils must be **specific, accurate, and clear**, given sparingly, and encourage further effort by focusing on how to improve rather than just stating when an answer is incorrect.

8. Primary Science

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally regarding scientific vocabulary and real-world contexts)

- Categorise and Prioritise Vocabulary:

Science-specific vocabulary must be explicitly identified and grouped into priority areas: polysemous words (words with both everyday and scientific meanings), Tier 2 words (important across many science topics), and Tier 3 words (topic-specific vocabulary).

- **Explicit Vocabulary Instruction:**

New words and their meanings must be explicitly taught and directly linked to the current content being taught, building upon pupils' prior knowledge.

- **Create Meaningful Contexts:**

Scientific language must be connected to related concepts and pupils' existing knowledge or first-hand experiences to make the vocabulary meaningful.

- **Ensure Repeated Exposure:**

Pupils must be provided with multiple opportunities to revisit, engage with, and actively use new scientific vocabulary across all literacy activities over time to reinforce learning and recall.

- **Embed Real-World Contexts:**

Science concepts must be related to tangible, real-world contexts (such as local environments or everyday applications) to demonstrate purpose and relevance.

- **Sequence Contextual Learning:**

Real-world contexts must be carefully planned so they add substantively to the learning objectives. Key concepts and skills required for the real-world context must be pre-taught in preceding lessons to ensure accessibility.

- **Consolidate Contextual Learning:**

Learning achieved in real-world contexts must be explicitly connected back to the classroom to consolidate understanding and review any difficulties.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific teaching strategies, guiding pupils to work scientifically, or what to avoid)

- **Teach 'Working Scientifically' Explicitly:**

The knowledge, skills, and processes required to work scientifically must be explicitly taught rather than assumed. This includes addressing common preconceptions before they become embedded as flawed explanations.

- **Deploy a 7-Step Gradual Release Model:**

When guiding pupils to work scientifically, use a structured framework to shift responsibility from teacher to pupil: (1) Activating prior knowledge, (2) Explicit strategy instruction, (3) Modelling, (4) Memorisation, (5) Guided practice, (6) Independent practice, and (7) Structured reflection.

- **Capitalise on Structured Dialogue:**

High-quality dialogue must be planned. Teachers should prepare open-ended questions in advance, use strategic follow-up questions, and provide sufficient wait time (e.g., pausing for five seconds) to balance teacher and pupil voice.

- **Establish Collaborative Guardrails:**

Collaborative learning must be highly structured. Establish clear expectations for participation, model active listening, and carefully design tasks (e.g., keeping groups to no more than five pupils) to ensure effective collaboration.

- **Use Virtual Models Judiciously:**

Virtual models (simulations, animations) can make abstract ideas visible, but teachers must explicitly discuss the boundaries and limitations of these models to prevent the formation of misconceptions.

- **Focus Professional Development:**

When strengthening science teaching, do not try to support everything at once. Focus on a tight, impactful priority area informed by school data and ensure sustained senior leadership buy-in to prevent changes from becoming an unsustainable "add-on".

Inclusion & Adaptation (How to use assessment to support learning and encourage all pupils to explain their thinking)

- **Deploy Diagnostic Assessment:**
Before beginning a topic, use diagnostic assessments (e.g., mind maps, concept cartoons, 'odd one out') to uncover pre-existing ideas and misconceptions. Adapt planning to secure foundational knowledge or break down complex content for those who need it.
- **Scaffold Lower-Attaining Pupils:**
Support lower-attaining pupils to engage in scientific reasoning by first introducing scientific approaches (like linking evidence to an idea) in an accessible, non-scientific context where there is no right or wrong answer, before moving to science-specific content.
- **Elicit Evidence of Learning Formatively:**
Continuously monitor learning during lessons using quick checks, multiple-choice questions with distractor answers, and structured discussions to identify learning gaps and immediately adjust instruction.
- **Clarify Success Criteria:**
Share clear learning intentions and success criteria with pupils so that teachers, pupils, and peers can make informed judgements on learning progress.

- **Cultivate Reasoning through Stimuli:**
Use strategies like 'Odd one out' and 'Concept cartoons' (which present a range of viewpoints, including common misconceptions) to encourage all pupils to justify their choices and explain their reasoning.
- **Diversify Assessment Methods:**
To ensure all pupils can demonstrate their scientific understanding regardless of their English proficiency or writing abilities, use a variety of assessment methods such as annotated photographs, physical models, or mini videos, relieving the pressure to rely solely on written tasks.

9. Assessment frameworks

Mandatory Sequencing & Intent (What must happen structurally to meet expected standards in these subjects)

- **Assessment Purpose**

The frameworks are strictly for making statutory teacher assessment judgements at the end of the key stage following the completion of the curriculum; they must not be used as formative tools to guide daily classroom practice or track progress throughout the key stage.

- **Meeting Reading and Mathematics Standards:**

To judge that a pupil is working at a specific standard in KS1 English Reading and KS1 Mathematics, teachers must gather evidence demonstrating that the pupil meets *all* of the 'pupil can' statements within that standard.

- **Meeting Writing Standards:**

In both KS1 and KS2 English Writing, pupils must meet the standard *overall*. A pupil's writing should generally meet all statements, but a teacher's professional judgement takes precedence if a particular weakness prevents a pupil from meeting a specific statement.

- **Meeting Science Standards:**

To meet the expected standard in KS1 and KS2 Science, a pupil must meet *all* of the 'working scientifically' statements and *all* of the 'science content' taught in the final year of the key stage.

- **Science Content Sequencing:**

The 'working scientifically' statements must be taught through, and clearly related to, the substantive science content. Furthermore, there is no requirement to have classroom evidence for science content taught before the final year of the key stage; teachers should draw on assessments made earlier in the key stage.

Pedagogical Guardrails (Specific evidence or criteria teachers must use to assess a pupil's independent work)

- **Broad Evidence Base:**

Teachers must base their judgements on a broad range of evidence drawn from day-to-day work in the classroom, which can include cross-curricular work in subjects other than the one being assessed.

- **Independent Writing:**

Any pupil writing used by teachers to make assessment judgements must be produced completely independently.

- **Using Single Evidence Pieces:**

A single example of a pupil's work can be used to provide evidence for multiple 'pupil can' statements at once.

- **Testing as Supplemental Evidence:**

Pupils' answers to specific questions in end-of-KS1 tests or other classroom tests may provide additional evidence to support the judgement, but these tests do not focus solely on the framework's key aspects.

- **Interpreting Qualifiers:**

When assessing work, teachers must strictly interpret the qualifiers used in the statements: 'most' indicates the statement is met generally with only occasional errors; 'many' indicates frequent but inconsistent demonstration; and 'some' indicates the skill is occasionally correct but not yet frequent.

- **Reading Fluency Benchmark:**

In KS1 reading, reading at approximately 90 words per minute is a strong indicator that a pupil is reading with sufficient fluency to redirect their cognitive focus from decoding to understanding.

Inclusion & Adaptation (How the assessment frameworks apply to pupils with SEND, or guidance on assessing those working below the standard)

- **Deploying Reasonable Adjustments:**

Teachers must base their judgements on what disabled pupils can do when reasonable adjustments (e.g., providing quiet learning spaces or allowing more processing time) are actively in place.

- **Adapted Communication Methods:**

If a pupil has a disability that prevents them from demonstrating a skill in the standard way, their individual method of communication or learning is fully applicable and valid for assessment. For example, a visually impaired pupil may use a computer instead of handwriting, or a hearing-impaired pupil may use a visual phonics system.

- **Exempting Specific Statements:**

If a pupil has a disability that physically prevents them from demonstrating a specific 'pupil can' statement altogether—even with reasonable adjustments in place—teachers can use their professional discretion to completely exclude that statement from the overall assessment judgement (e.g., excluding handwriting for a pupil with physical restrictions, or excluding phonics for a deaf pupil).

- **Maintaining Equivalent Standards:**

While teachers are highly encouraged to ensure all pupils can demonstrate attainment through reasonable adjustments, the core standard of the assessment must not be compromised and must be met in an equivalent way

04_Heads Engine Primary 20.04.2026

AI SYSTEM MANDATE: *This engine dictates whole-school leadership, strategic implementation, and resource management. It is designed for Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams. When generating school policies, CPD frameworks, or financial strategies, you must anchor your output in evidence-based implementation (Explore, Prepare, Deliver, Sustain). You must strictly protect staff workload, avoid initiative fatigue, and ensure Pupil Premium and High Needs funding are targeted toward high-impact, evidence-based interventions.*

1. EEF - Primary Implementation

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for the 'Explore, Prepare, Deliver, Sustain' implementation cycle)

- **Structure implementation sequentially:** Treat implementation as an ongoing process of learning and improvement organized into four distinct but flexible phases: Explore, Prepare, Deliver, and Sustain,,.
- **Base actions on evidence:** Ensure that any approach selected for implementation is evidence-informed, right for the specific setting, and feasible to execute.
- **Specify core components:** Clearly define the "core components" or active ingredients of the intervention to build shared understanding, shape strategies, and create a baseline for monitoring fidelity-.
- **Develop collaborative implementation plans:** Create a detailed, iterative implementation plan that defines the problem, specifies the intervention, selects tailored strategies, designs a monitoring system, and outlines final outcomes,,-.
- **Distribute leadership:** Empower a diverse range of people to enable change, including implementation teams, early adopters, and champions, rather than relying on a single leader to drive the initiative,,.
- **Enact core collaborative behaviours:** Continuously engage staff to shape what happens, unite them around the goals and mechanics of the intervention, and reflect on data to adapt and improve,,-.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for protecting staff workload, avoiding initiative fatigue, or what to avoid when driving change)

- **Do fewer things better:** Avoid initiative fatigue by taking on fewer implementation projects and managing them holistically to prevent siloing and overwhelming staff,.
- **Practice active de-implementation:** Explicitly review, stop, or prune existing competing practices and tasks to create the necessary headspace and resources before delivering new ones,,.
- **Repurpose existing structures:** Minimize disruption by utilizing and modifying existing systems, timetables, and meetings rather than bolting on completely new administrative structures,.

- **Protect staff wellbeing during delivery:** Mitigate initial implementation dips and emotional stress by setting realistic goals, removing burdensome administrative tasks, and providing extra time for teachers to collaborate and learn together-.
- **Establish intelligent adaptation boundaries:** Encourage staff to make contextual adaptations to *how* a program is delivered to improve buy-in, but strictly forbid adaptations that omit or alter the intervention's agreed-upon core components,.
- **Frame monitoring constructively:** Ensure monitoring is viewed as a tool for continuous learning, problem-solving, and providing supportive feedback, rather than a punitive accountability or high-stakes performance measure,,.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to deploy time/funding effectively, monitor the impact of a new initiative, and ensure accountability)

- **Diagnose needs using triangulated data:** Before allocating resources to a solution, build a rich, reliable picture of the root causes of pupil needs by triangulating multiple data sources (such as national/internal test data, lesson observations, and stakeholder surveys)-.
- **Invest in continuous, follow-on support:** Do not rely solely on up-front training; allocate resources to ongoing professional development during the delivery phase through coaching, modeling, rehearsal, and formative feedback,.
- **Monitor dual sets of outcomes:** Track both *final outcomes* (e.g., pupil attainment or attendance) and *implementation outcomes* (e.g., staff buy-in, adoption, implementation fidelity, reach, and acceptability) to understand what is working and why-.
- **Build usable, low-burden data systems:** Create systems for collecting implementation data that fit naturally into school routines and do not over-burden staff, utilizing tools like observation proformas or brief check-ins,.
- **Deploy structural enablers upfront:** Ensure practical infrastructure—such as dedicated administrative support, protected time, technical equipment, and necessary funding—is fully allocated prior to delivery,.
- **Tailor resourcing dynamically:** Continuously gather feedback from staff, pupils, and parents to identify emerging barriers, and proactively redirect resources, professional development, or support strategies to address those specific pinch points-

2. EEF - Effective Professional Development

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for designing, delivering, and sustaining effective CPD programs)

- **Focus on core mechanisms:** Design and select professional development (PD) based on 14 observable, replicable mechanisms that are supported by research on human behavior.
- **Ensure a balanced design:** Structure all PD programs to include at least one mechanism from each of four fundamental categories: Building Knowledge,

Motivating Teachers, Developing Teaching Techniques, and Embedding Practice. Missing any of these areas can result in a "knowing-doing gap" or cause staff to revert to old habits.

- **Utilize evidence-based content:** Demand that the subject matter of the PD is drawn from trusted, robust research sources rather than anecdotal claims, to ensure the practices being taught are highly likely to improve pupil outcomes.
- **Align with school priorities:** Ensure the PD addresses a whole-school need or fits with the school development plan, and actively maintain leadership buy-in so that teachers have the permission and resources to prioritize the intervention.
- **Guide intelligent adaptation:** Clearly communicate to staff which elements of a PD program can be flexibly adapted to fit their specific context, while strictly protecting the core mechanisms that make the program effective.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for ensuring CPD is manageable, avoiding 'one-off' training fatigue, or what to avoid)

- **Acknowledge and adapt to time constraints:** Critically assess how PD fits into teachers' busy weekly routines. Acknowledge that time given to PD is time taken from other tasks, and adapt the delivery to minimize excessive pressure on teacher workload.
- **Manage cognitive load:** Avoid "overloading" teachers with new information. Strip away less relevant content, focus strictly on the most critical learning, and use strategies like dual coding (combining verbal and visual instruction).
- **Prioritize mechanisms over duration:** Do not select PD programs simply based on their length. Evidence shows no direct link between longer PD and greater impact; focus instead on what the time is used for and the mechanisms deployed.
- **Prevent training fade-out:** Avoid "one-off" training days that fade from memory by providing continuous, structured prompts and cues (e.g., a fortnightly email or one-page reminder) to nudge teachers to apply the behaviors learned.
- **Forbid adaptations that omit core elements:** While small tweaks to tailor a program are encouraged, actively prevent adaptations that drop the crucial mechanisms of the PD, as this will drastically reduce the program's likelihood of success.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to deploy coaching, allocate time effectively, and monitor the impact of training on teaching practice)

- **Deploy practical social support:** Allocate resources to set up coaching relationships or peer support networks. This allows teachers to discuss classroom practice, share common language, and provide emotional or informational assistance.
- **Separate feedback from high-stakes appraisal:** Deploy coaches or peers to observe lessons and provide formative feedback to support skill development. This monitoring must be explicitly separated from high-stakes lesson observations linked to performance management targets.

- **Resource active rehearsal and repetition:** Provide protected time for teachers to rehearse new techniques outside of the classroom (e.g., role-playing challenging scenarios) and prompt them to repeat the behavior multiple times in their actual classrooms to embed the practice.
- **Implement structured action planning:** Allocate time at the end of PD sessions for teachers to create specific action plans—detailing the context, frequency, and specific lessons where they will test out the new techniques.
- **Encourage and resource self-monitoring:** Equip teachers with the tools (such as reflective journals) to track their own performance and reflect on the success of their actions, which aids in effective habit formation.
- **Target motivation through goal-setting and reinforcement:** Work with teachers to set conscious, specific, and sufficiently difficult goals. Crucially, allocate leadership time to provide affirmation and reinforcement (e.g., recognition cards) *after* teachers have demonstrated progress or made an effort to change their practice.
- **Revisit prior learning:** Dedicate portions of future PD allocations to revisiting past topics. Use low-stakes quizzes, reflection tasks, and discussions about previous learning to ensure teachers retain the concepts over time.

3. EEF - Recruitment & Retention

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for building a supportive school culture, improving teacher quality, and leadership behaviors)

- **Demonstrate highly effective leadership:** Ensure school leaders are highly visible, actively listen to staff, are aware of their needs, provide support, and allocate work appropriately.
- **Cultivate professional autonomy and agency:** Empower teachers by providing classroom autonomy, offering a role in school-level decision-making, and fostering a sense of control over their working lives.
- **Foster a collaborative school culture:** Establish meaningful professional learning communities, cross-career stage learning teams, and formal opportunities for co-planning among colleagues.
- **Embed a shared focus on learning and discipline:** Actively build a positive school climate underpinned by a shared focus on learning, alongside clear and robust approaches to pupil discipline and behaviour.
- **Promote relational trust and cultural awareness:** Support positive relationships between teachers, students, and parents, and ensure teachers develop the cultural knowledge required to connect with diverse student bodies.
- **Elevate teacher status and leadership:** Recognise and actively promote the status and respect of the teaching profession within the school, and provide distributed leadership opportunities for staff.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for actively reducing teacher workload, preventing burnout, or what to avoid)

- **Protect and increase planning time:** Actively safeguard and increase the amount of dedicated time teachers have available for lesson planning.
- **Optimise teaching allocations:** Avoid assigning teachers to subjects outside their specialist expertise; strictly manage and limit the total number of different courses they are required to teach.
- **Manage class challenge levels:** Carefully monitor the challenge level of assigned classes, avoiding overwhelming teachers with disproportionately difficult groups without adequate support.
- **Improve core working conditions:** Clearly define and manage the length of the contracted day, leave entitlements, and the fair allocation of administrative or pastoral duties.
- **Mitigate emotional stress and burnout:** Implement policies specifically designed to reduce the emotional burden and stress associated with teachers' daily work, as these are direct causes of attrition.
- **Do not rely solely on intrinsic motivation:** Avoid leaning exclusively on teachers' sense of "vocation" or moral purpose; overemphasising this can discourage potential candidates and mask systemic issues.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to deploy resources, manage flexible working, and support early career teachers to improve retention)

- **Deploy substantial, targeted financial incentives:** Utilise significant annual awards, retention bonuses, loan forgiveness, or higher salaries specifically directed at recruiting and retaining high-quality staff in disadvantaged schools.
- **Resource comprehensive early-career induction:** Allocate specific resources to rigorous induction programmes, coaching, and mentoring for early-career teachers to mitigate initial workload shocks and improve self-efficacy.
- **Fund advanced professional development:** Go beyond statutory minimums by resourcing university-level teacher education, professional certifications, or continuous professional development (CPD) that boosts teacher efficacy.
- **Provide adequate support staff:** Deploy sufficient support staff and material resources to alleviate non-teaching burdens from classroom teachers.
- **Tailor retention strategies to career stages:** Target mentoring and induction support to early-career teachers; deploy autonomy-building resources to mid-career teachers; and invest in leadership opportunities and status-recognition to retain late-career teachers.
- **Monitor flexible working (Evidence Gap):** Note that while flexible working is a key national retention strategy, you must monitor its implementation locally, as current academic research lacks robust quantitative evidence on its direct effectiveness for retention.

4. EEF - Pupil Premium Strategy 2024

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for the tiered approach to Pupil Premium: high-quality teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies)

- **Adopt a tiered approach** to Pupil Premium spending that balances three essential ingredients: high-quality teaching, targeted academic support, and wider strategies.
- **Prioritise high-quality teaching** as the most powerful way to improve attainment, investing funding into professional development, early career teacher support, and staff recruitment and retention.
- **Align targeted academic support with the curriculum** by ensuring that structured one-to-one or small-group interventions complement and are explicitly linked to normal classroom teaching.
- **Address wider barriers to learning** by deploying strategies that tackle non-academic challenges such as attendance, behaviour, and social and emotional needs, tailored to your specific community.
- **Implement a sustained five-point plan** to guide the strategy: 1) Diagnose pupils' needs, 2) Use strong evidence, 3) Develop your strategy, 4) Deliver and monitor, and 5) Evaluate and sustain.
- **Take a long-term strategic view** by planning the Pupil Premium strategy over a three-year period, while ensuring the strategy statement is reviewed and updated annually.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for avoiding ineffective PP interventions, ensuring evidence-led decisions, or what to avoid)

- **Do not rely solely on interventions;** they are most effective when used alongside efforts to improve whole-class teaching and wider behavioural or attendance strategies.
- **Avoid cherry-picking data to confirm hunches;** school data identifies priorities, but high-quality, independent external evidence must be used to select the actual approaches.
- **Evaluate the independence and relevance of evidence** before adopting a strategy, remaining cautious of practices evaluated solely by their developers or tested in entirely different educational contexts.
- **Do not restrict funding to lower-performing pupils;** the Pupil Premium is meant to compensate for socio-economic disadvantage, which extends to supporting eligible high-attaining pupils.
- **Accept that non-eligible pupils will benefit** from strategies that improve whole-class teaching; this is acceptable as long as the primary driver for the strategy is the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- **Do not confuse observable effects with root causes** when diagnosing pupil needs (e.g., reading struggles might stem from poor text selection or a lack of background knowledge rather than a general inability to comprehend).

- **Ensure interventions do not inhibit access to the wider curriculum** when matching targeted academic support to individual pupils' specific needs.
- **Focus on fewer things and get them right** to protect staff workload, managing cognitive load and mapping out staff meeting time carefully rather than overwhelming teachers with numerous initiatives.
- **Ensure strategies align strictly with the DfE 'menu of approaches'** to meet national expectations.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to effectively allocate the PP budget, monitor the impact on disadvantaged pupils, and ensure accountability)

- **Diagnose needs using a rich, triangulated data picture** that includes attendance records, attainment data, behaviour logs, wellbeing information, and direct feedback from pupils, parents, and teachers.
- **Balance funding dynamically across the three tiers**, recognising that the specific allocation of resources between teaching, targeted support, and wider strategies will shift year-to-year based on changing school priorities.
- **Set clear short-, medium-, and long-term implementation outcomes** to continuously evaluate the strategy's impact on both academic attainment and the reduction of wider barriers to learning.
- **Deploy teaching assistants strategically** to deliver structured, evidence-based interventions that supplement—rather than replace—the provision of the classroom teacher.
- **Build usable, rigorous data monitoring systems** (such as tracking spreadsheets) to regularly evaluate impact, allowing leaders to celebrate successes, intervene swiftly when strategies wobble, and drop approaches that do not work.
- **Ensure robust governance and accountability** by appointing a Pupil Premium link governor to provide strategic oversight, challenge decisions, and evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the funding.
- **Plan for sustainability from the outset** by integrating effective approaches into everyday school practice, ensuring ongoing training for new staff, and reviewing annually whether to scale up, refine, or stop specific interventions.

5. EEF - Pupil Premium Spending Guide

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for making evidence-based financial decisions and aligning spending with school priorities)

- Prioritise funding on high-quality teaching, as evidence demonstrates it is the most powerful method for improving pupil attainment, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.
- Focus strategic spending on building teacher knowledge, pedagogical expertise, curriculum development, and the purposeful use of assessments.

- Ensure professional development is continuous, sustained, and rooted in the best available evidence, carefully balancing the need to build knowledge, motivate teachers, develop specific techniques, and embed new approaches.
- Invest strategically in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff by managing teacher workload and offering effective professional development opportunities, such as National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for avoiding low-impact spending, stopping ineffective interventions, or financial traps to avoid)

- Ensure that targeted academic support, such as one-to-one or small-group tuition, is provided strictly in addition to, and is explicitly linked with, normal classroom lessons.
- Ensure that targeted interventions are precisely matched to individual pupils' specific needs while strictly not inhibiting their access to the wider school curriculum.
- Deploy teaching assistants strategically to ensure that they are fully prepared and that their input complements, rather than replaces, the high-quality provision delivered by the main class teacher.
- When funding educational technology, ensure it addresses specific barriers for disadvantaged students and is driven by effective pedagogy, rather than simply purchasing software without pedagogical integration.
- When funding extended school time initiatives (such as summer schools or targeted after-school tuition), ensure they are clearly structured, linked directly to the curriculum, and led by well-qualified staff, while carefully considering the cost and the implications on teacher time.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to tactically deploy specific funds across the tiered approach and evaluate the impact of that spend)

- Assess specific learning gaps to effectively deploy targeted academic support, ensuring strategies like peer tutoring receive careful coordination, training, and teacher-led assessment to monitor impact.
- Target resources for disadvantaged pupils with SEND towards specific, evidence-based approaches such as explicit instruction, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, scaffolding, and flexible grouping.
- Deploy funds to support social, emotional, and behavioural needs using both whole-class approaches and targeted interventions, while rigorously monitoring the impact of these choices.
- Allocate resources to tackle poor attendance by employing targeted parental communication approaches and parental engagement interventions.
- Fund extracurricular activities (such as sports, arts, and culture), but explicitly monitor and plan how increased pupil engagement will be translated into improved academic outcomes.
- Deploy funding toward practical parental engagement approaches, such as supporting shared book-reading and tailoring positive communications regarding pupil learning.

- Resource free, universal before-school breakfast clubs to prepare pupils for learning while supporting positive behaviour and school attendance.

6. Gov - High Needs Funding 26/27

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for making evidence-based financial decisions and aligning spending with school priorities)

- **Prioritise funding on high-quality teaching**, as evidence indicates it is the most powerful way for schools to improve attainment, especially for socio-economically disadvantaged pupils.
- **Focus strategic spending on building teacher knowledge**, pedagogical expertise, curriculum development, and the purposeful use of assessments.
- **Ensure professional development is continuous and sustained**, balancing the need to build knowledge, motivate teachers, develop specific techniques, and embed new approaches based on the best available evidence.
- **Invest in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff** by managing teacher workload and offering effective professional development opportunities, such as National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).
- **Deploy mentoring and coaching** as an important source of support, particularly for early career teachers, by carefully considering the core components that make these strategies effective.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for avoiding low-impact spending, stopping ineffective interventions, or financial traps to avoid)

- **Ensure that targeted academic support**, such as one-to-one or small-group tuition, is provided strictly in addition to, and is explicitly linked with, normal classroom lessons.
- **Ensure that targeted interventions are precisely matched** to individual pupils' specific needs while strictly not inhibiting their access to the wider school curriculum.
- **Deploy teaching assistants strategically**, ensuring they are fully prepared and their input complements—rather than replaces—the high-quality provision delivered by the main class teacher.
- **When funding educational technology**, ensure it addresses specific barriers for disadvantaged students and is used in a way that is informed by effective pedagogy.
- **When funding extended school time initiatives** (such as summer schools or after-school tuition), ensure they are clearly structured, linked directly to the curriculum, and led by well-qualified staff, while carefully considering the cost and the implications on teacher time.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to tactically deploy specific funds across the tiered approach and evaluate the impact of that spend)

- **Assess specific learning gaps** to effectively deploy targeted academic support (such as one-to-one, small-group, or peer tutoring), ensuring these strategies receive careful coordination, training, and teacher-led assessment to monitor their impact.
- **Target resources for disadvantaged pupils with SEND** towards specific approaches such as explicit instruction, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, scaffolding, flexible grouping, and the targeted use of technology.
- **Deploy funds to support social, emotional, and behavioural needs** using both whole-class approaches and targeted interventions, while rigorously monitoring the impact of these choices.
- **Allocate resources to tackle poor attendance and support learning** by employing targeted parental communication approaches and practical parental engagement interventions, such as supporting shared book-reading.
- **Fund extracurricular activities** (such as sports, outdoor activities, arts, and culture), but explicitly consider and monitor how increased pupil engagement will be translated into improved academic outcomes.
- **Resource free, universal before-school breakfast clubs** to prepare pupils for learning while supporting positive behaviour and school attendance.

7. Gov - High needs funding 26/27

Mandatory Strategic Leadership Rules (Core structural expectations for managing High Needs blocks, statutory SEND provision, and commissioning places)

- **Co-produce strategy with stakeholders:** Ensure that all high needs funding arrangements, including place number changes, top-up rates, and central support budgets, are overseen in close consultation and co-production with schools, colleges, parents, and the local schools forum.
- **Apply fair and equivalent funding:** Treat children and young people with high needs on a fair and equivalent basis when making funding arrangements, regardless of whether they are placed in maintained schools, academies, further education, or independent and non-maintained provision.
- **Utilize a dual-funding structure:** Structure allocations using a combination of **core funding** (an annual allocation of place funding, typically £6,000 or £10,000 per place) and **top-up funding** (additional funding required to meet a specific individual's needs above the core funding).
- **Integrate funding into the local offer:** Maintain strategic oversight by collaboratively planning the available special educational provision and the overall levels of funding required across the local area, making sure this is published as part of the statutory SEND local offer.

Operational Guardrails & Workload Management (Specific strategies for navigating local authority funding rules, avoiding financial compliance errors, or what to avoid)

- **Protect the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):** Strictly prohibit using the DSG high needs block for non-permitted local authority expenses, such as SEND administration, EHC needs assessment functions, or health and social care costs.
- **Prevent placement delays:** Ensure that the admission of a pupil or the continuation of a placement is **never conditional on, or delayed by, the receipt or agreement of top-up funding.**
- **Separate non-educational costs:** When commissioning independent school placements, ensure only educational costs are funded by the DSG; actively identify and charge non-educational elements to the responsible integrated care board (ICB) or social care partners.
- **Avoid automatic double-funding:** If a school exceeds its funded high needs places mid-year, do not automatically pay an additional £6,000 or £10,000 place funding rate on top of top-up funding. Instead, negotiate to cover only the actual marginal costs of the additional provision.
- **Restrict top-up funding usage:** Ensure top-up funding explicitly reflects special educational provision costs. **Do not use it to subsidize general school overheads,** costs that would exist without high needs pupils, or the costs of legal actions against the local authority.
- **Enforce the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG):** Apply a 0% MFG for special schools, ensuring no school receives less funding per pupil on a like-for-like comparison with the 2025-2026 baseline, unless a formal disapplication request is approved by the DfE.
- **Ban unregistered school placements:** Never place a child full-time in an unregistered independent school. Ensure all independent settings are fully registered with the DfE prior to commissioning, as operating an unregistered school is an offence.
- **Ensure timely top-up payments:** Make payments of top-up funding in a timely fashion, which must default to monthly payments unless an alternative arrangement is formally agreed upon with the school or college.

Targeted Monitoring & Resource Allocation (How to effectively manage 'top-up' funding, allocate resources for pupils with complex needs, and track financial impact)

- **Implement transparent 'banded' frameworks:** Create structured, standardized top-up funding bands based on the type and complexity of a cohort's needs to create predictable financial models, reduce negotiation burdens, and simplify resource allocation.
- **Target mainstream inclusion funding:** Deploy targeted funding from the high needs budget (outside the main schools formula) to support mainstream schools that admit a disproportionate number of pupils with SEND or those with particularly complex needs.

- **Invest centrally in specialist support:** Retain specific funds centrally to commission specialist support services (e.g., autism, sensory impairment, or mental health specialists) who can advise, train, and build capacity among mainstream teachers.
- **Mandate Early Years SEN Inclusion Funds (SENIF):** Establish a SENIF to target resources toward early years providers, addressing the needs of children with low-level or emerging SEN taking up early years entitlements.
- **Manage fluid Alternative Provision (AP) funding dynamically:** Track AP placements by estimating expected places at the start of the year, paying top-up funding on account monthly, and conducting termly or year-end reconciliations to adjust funding based on actual individual pupil take-up.
- **Adjust funding for permanent exclusions:** Immediately redetermine and adjust mainstream school budget shares when a pupil is permanently excluded, ensuring funding flows in-year from the excluding school directly to the AP or admitting provision.
- **Base top-up agreements on evidence and outcomes:** Set top-up funding based on transparent evidence of actual costs. Consider deploying outcome-based top-up enhancements (e.g., additional funding paid after successful achievement of exam outcomes or employment) to encourage high-quality provision.