

adaptive teaching & reasonable adjustments

#justgoodteaching

1 COMPLEX NEEDS

What it means:

Complex needs refer to a combination of difficulties across executive function, language and literacy, and social and emotional areas. These overlapping challenges can significantly impact learning, behaviour, communication, and overall wellbeing in everyday life.

These are our **highest needs pupils**. They benefit from **consistent adaptive teaching strategies** from each box below, **every single lesson**. They are likely to require **consciously considered reasonable adjustments** and often **in-class adult support**, too. These pupils need you the most.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

What it means:

Executive function is a top-down set of cognitive skills that help you manage your behaviour and thinking. It includes remembering information, controlling impulses, and adapting to change. These skills help with planning, focus, staying organised, solving problems, and managing emotions in daily life.

Diagnoses commonly associated with difficulties with EF: ADHD, ADD, Dyspraxia, Autism.

Planning:

- Design **varied, chunked and scaffolded tasks**
- Revisit **prior learning and key vocabulary**
- Transitions/breaks at least **every 20 minutes**
- Use **visuals to support understanding**
- Use **task lists**
- Proactively teach **planning, organisation & remembering/revision**

Delivery:

- Keep instructions **short, simple, and accessible**
- Model tasks (**I do → We do → You do; WAGOLL**)
- Give **thinking and processing time**
- **Check in** to support understanding; **prompt**
- Use **timers and visual prompts**

Reasonable Adjustments examples:

- Careful seating
- Individual task board
- Pencil sharpening
- Handing out resources
- Writing an answer on board
- Drink of water
- Desk stretches
- Changing seats
- Sensory supports
- A short breather movement break outside the classroom (with an adult)

In-class adult support example strategies:

- Create individual task boards, checklists, now & next, maths grids and manipulatives
- General prompting (e.g. "Well done Name, keep going") before specific prompt (e.g. "Which word do you think goes there?")
- Model how to do the task

In-class strategies to avoid:

- Completing the task for the pupil; task completion over understanding
- Sitting next to the pupil (velcro effect)

LANGUAGE & LITERACY

What it means:

This refers to challenges with skills needed for communication. These include handwriting, spelling, reading, vocabulary, and oracy. These skills help with understanding others, expressing ideas, and accessing the curriculum.

Diagnoses commonly associated with this profile type: Dyslexia, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), Dyspraxia.

Planning:

- Provide **clear, readable resources**
- Reduce visual clutter on **sheets, boards & screens**
- Use **sentence starters and writing frames**
- Share and model **key vocabulary**
- Use **multi-sensory/dual coding approaches**
- Allow **sufficient time for tasks/answers**

Delivery:

- Explain **new or ambiguous vocabulary clearly**
- Provide **assistive technology**
- Provide **key words and materials in advance where possible**

Reasonable Adjustments examples:

- Visual aids to support language comprehension
- Literacy mat
- Extra time (25%)
- Assistive technology (e.g. Reader Pen, Laptop)

In-class adult support example strategies:

- Revisit and model vocabulary to support comprehension/memory
- Use questioning to support spelling (e.g. "What sound does it start with?")
- Paired and echo reading
- Hand out assistive tech

In-class strategies to avoid:

- Scribing without fading, preventing independence
- Jumping in too soon

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

What it means:

This refers to challenges linked to life experiences, insecurity, and relationships, affecting feelings, behaviour, confidence, and ability to engage positively with others and learning.

Diagnoses/experiences commonly associated with this profile: Poor attachment, anxiety, depression, ADHD, Autism

Planning:

- Anticipating **emotional triggers** in your lessons.

Delivery:

- Build **strong relationships, praise, welcome**
- Build **predictable routines and structures**
- Give **advance warning of changes**
- Use **clear signals for transitions**
- Allow **take-up time before responses**
- Model **calm and positive behaviour**
- Check in **regularly and encourage**

Reasonable Adjustments examples:

- As Executive Function
- Carefully considered expectations in response to stress
- Carefully consider partners/groups

In-class adult support example strategies:

- Notice and name early signs
- Model and support co-regulation before correction
- Offer choice/sense of control

In-class strategies to avoid:

- Public correction or sanctions
- 'Rescuing' pupils (the superhero)

5 UNIVERSAL

What it means: Everyone has needs; all people require support to learn and thrive. Think Maslow!

These are our students who will benefit from all of the strategies above in a general way.



NB This model necessarily simplifies a complex transdiagnostic research landscape for the purposes of supporting and developing classroom confidence and practice. For more information, please look into the CALM study.