

SEND

Adapting the resources for all learners

Inclusion

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The Importance of Inclusion

Inclusive learning and teaching creates a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation and removes barriers. My work to improve understandings of lived experiences of disability in sub-Saharan Africa over the last twenty years has firmly underscored to me the fundamental importance of equity, equality and diversity in educational settings. Recognising and valuing diversity not only enables the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It teaches all young people to be mindful of the needs and requirements of those around them and values the unique contributions of each individual. Respect for differences and principles of fairness and equality not only contribute to inclusion in educational settings, but in society more broadly.

Professor Charlotte Baker, Lancaster University

Research into SEND children and outdoor learning

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 sets out the need for quality education for all children, including those with specific needs or disabilities. It is our responsibility to ensure that children with SEND have access to the same experiences as their neurotypical peers and are not disadvantaged in any way.

For sustainable and environmental education, which may involve field trips, outdoor learning, complex problem solving or group work, this can potentially seem problematic. Teachers may be concerned over the pupils' safety, or ability to access the tasks, both cognitively and physically. However, it is often within these alternative settings and opportunities that students with SEND have the potential to thrive and benefit significantly. Here are just a few examples from the research field:

- Outdoor learning: Taking learning beyond the classroom can have a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem, relationships with peers and teachers, and motivation to engage in learning. Whilst this is true for all children, studies have found that those who are the 'hardest to reach' in class and who struggle with formal lessons, may actually benefit most from the informal and less hierarchical structure outside of the classroom.

- Blue and green spaces: Natural outdoor environments, such as the beach, have been shown to be beneficial for alleviating stresses and helping to regulate thoughts and emotions. This is also the case for those with SEND, who may struggle with behaviour in the classroom but find the natural environment a calm space, where they can find some respite from their day to day school experience.
- Group problem-solving tasks: Children with SEND, including those with both learning and behavioural challenges, have shown the ability to take on leadership roles in group tasks. Open ended problem solving in alternative settings can allow students to excel in ways that teachers may not predict, increasing their motivation and social confidence and engendering increased empathy between all members of the group.



Research into Environmental Education and SEND

In the field of environmental education, it has been recognised that there can be a lack of diversity in terms of the pupils who choose to engage. Below are some principles for best practice, which can support all children and young people in participating:

- **Flexibility and adaptation**

Take time to consider the specific needs of your children and adapt the resources to suit their needs. There are some practical considerations shared in this resource but remember you know your students best! The MBC resources are there as starting points to prompt your thinking so change and adapt them for your own unique groups.

- **Connect with students' starting points:**

Environmental education needs to be relevant and speak to pupils' lives. Use local issues and contexts with which they will be familiar. Explore their prior understanding and build upon this.

- **Promote cooperative and collaborative methods** Incorporating group discussion tasks can have positive results in terms of developing pupils' social skills, increasing the quality of their peer-to-peer interactions and facilitating their participation.

- **Acknowledge barriers and biases:**

Take time to acknowledge and understand the community biases and barriers which may be present in delivering environmental education. Explore these issues with students and value their perspectives. Be aware that some may experience anxiety so remember to keep coming back to messages of hope.

Promoting access to learning activities: reducing physical and cognitive barriers

Questions to consider

Is the venue for learning as level access as possible?

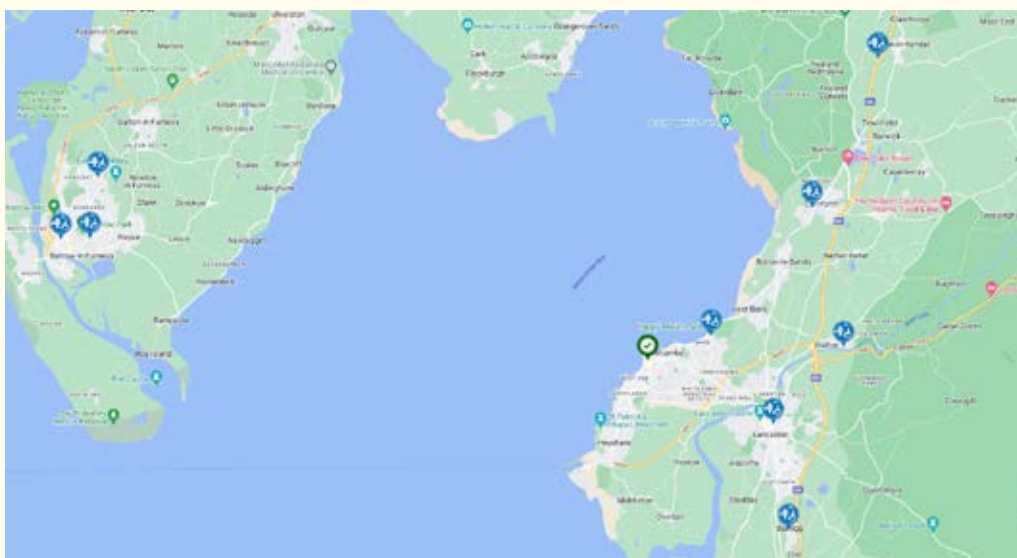
If not level access, are there sufficient supports available to promote access?

Will some learners need assisted change facilities?

The location of these facilities can be found on the [Changing Places Toilets](#) website.

Will some learners' needs be more easily met at public disabled/accessible toilets?

Radar keys are available from online retailers.



Visual supports

Including images within adapted learning resources can help to:

- Reduce the cognitive load
- Reduce the information needing to be processed
- Aid retention

Where possible

- Support simple sentences with visually supporting images
- Support simple sentences with images of the real objects if possible

Strategies to consider

Many people can become anxious before accessing a new event or location they haven't been to before. Anxiety levels are heightened for learners with SEND due to their cognitive processing being challenged.

Here are three strategies that can help learners overcome their anxiety prior to and during the visit. Students with SEND need to be supported to prepare for visits and learning outside the classroom.

1) Visual timetable

Students can access these before departure and during a trip. Examples are available to 'snip' from, on Twinkl.



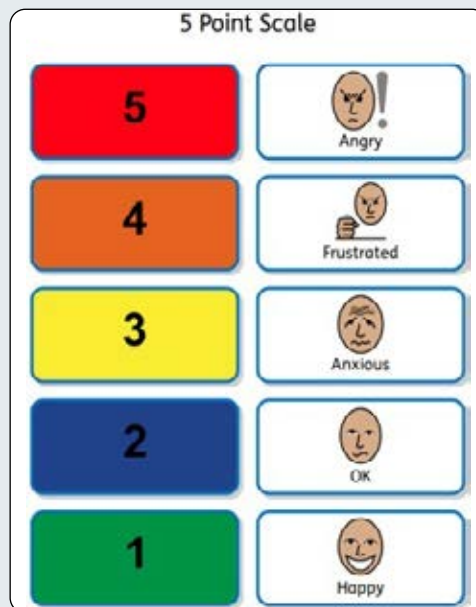
2) Social stories

Many museums are now producing these and at the most basic form they are a series of photographs of the location to be visited. Glasgow Museums produce excellent examples. They call them Visual Storyboards. You can find an example of a Social Story related to Sunderland Point on the MBC Moodle.

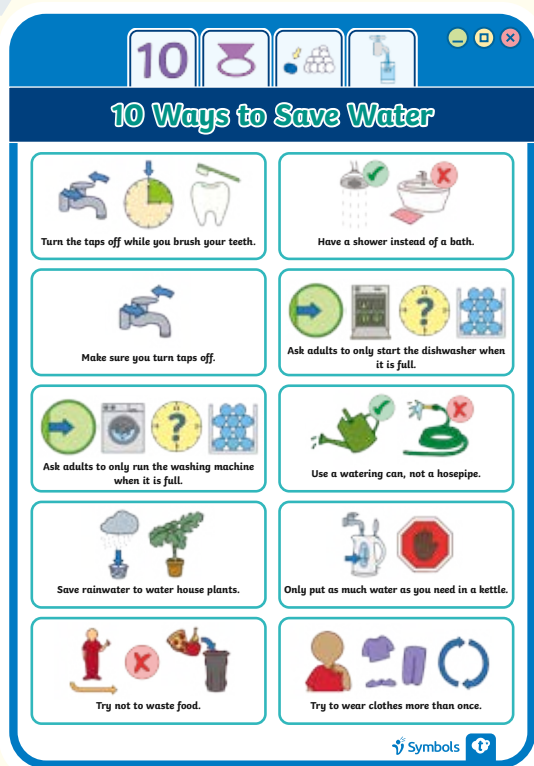


3) Scaling

Students can be asked to 'scale' themselves before and during an activity.



Resources to assist your planning



Symbols at Twinkl help support symbol-based communication

How to make beans on toast

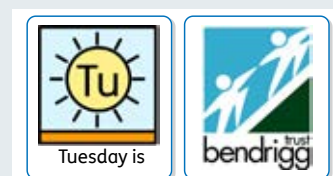
Ingredients:

- Bread x 2
- Butter
- Beans
- Bowl
- Spoon
- Toaster
- Microwave
- Plate

Method:

1. Open the can of beans and place the beans in a bowl.
2. Place the bowl in the microwave and set it to heat on high for 1 minute.
3. Place your bread in the toaster, set to the dial to toast and press the handle down
4. When the toast is ready, spread a little bit of butter on it.
5. Evenly spoon the beans on the toast and enjoy.

Real images of the items your pupils will use are best practice.



Widgit or Symwriter can be used to create visual instructions

Tell us more!

At present, children with SEND remain an under-represented group in terms of research findings related to outdoor and environmental learning and there is a need for more studies to be conducted with them. This is important so we can all understand how best to include everyone in this movement. We aim to prioritise the voices of all children across the Bay and would love to hear from you or your pupils if you have adapted or used our resources with SEND groups.

- How did they experience the learning activities?
- What were the outcomes?
- Were there any challenges that might not be anticipated?

This will be an ongoing conversation and we want the voices of everyone to be included in this, including those in our communities with SEND.

Share your experiences with us at MBC@lancaster.ac.uk

We recognise that environmental education is a field which is constantly changing and have provided these resources as starting points. Become part of the community and continue to develop your understandings through further training and CPD.

