

Practical Subjects: Information

Practical subjects or subjects that include significant practical components are integral to the educational experiences of pupils with SEND. For some pupils, practical subjects will be subjects in which they excel in light of their neurodiversity. For other pupils, a learning need or disability may be a significant barrier to accessing practical components without reasonable adjustments.

Considering barriers to inclusion and learning

Individual barriers to learning will depend on the needs of the individual pupils. Assess what these may be, along with the SENCO, professionals and importantly, the pupil and parent and co-produce an action plan or strategy to maximise learning in the subject.

1. Communication and interaction

Where children and young people have speech, language and communication difficulties which make it difficult for them to make sense of language or to understand how to communicate effectively and appropriately with others, This can make group and team work more challenging, particularly when coupled with competitive sports and a common shared goal. Consider how you can enable pupils with such needs to understand the structure of a team/group and their role within it. Pre-teaching and establishing set patterns for group work may be helpful here. Modelling social interaction and role-playing scenarios may also support learners who have difficulties with communication. Following verbal instructions without written cues or prompts can also prove difficult and stressful. Consider how questioning, dual coding and modelling may support learners who need support to follow a series of verbal instructions.

2. Cognition and learning

Children and young people may:

- learn at a slower pace than others the same age
- have difficulty in understanding parts of the curriculum
- have difficulties with organisation and memory skills
- have a specific difficulty affecting one particular part of their learning such as in literacy or numeracy

The term 'learning difficulties' covers a wide range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD). Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia come under this term.

The strategies outlined above to enhance communication and interaction skills resonate for pupils with cognition and learning needs. Given the wide range of potential needs in this category, you may wish to create a pen portrait and review specific advice in relation to the particular learning need.

3. Social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which present themselves in many ways. They may:

- have difficulty in managing their relationships with other people
- be withdrawn
- behave in ways that may hinder their and other children's learning or that have an impact on their health and wellbeing

This broad area includes attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attachment disorder. It also includes behaviours that may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, self-harming and eating disorders.

Practical subjects often contain a performance/competition element which can place significant stress on emotionally vulnerable learners. Pre-empting how instructions, grouping, changes to the learning environment, inclusion of spectators and/ or competition may influence the behaviour and performance of pupils with SEMH needs is the first step to creating an inclusive environment. Creating a safe learning environment, nurturing a supportive peer group and ensuring that due adaptations are made are the foundation of such support.

4. Sensory and/or physical needs

Where children and young people have visual and/or hearing impairments, or a physical need that means they must have additional on-going support and equipment.

It is particularly important to consider the learning environment here. How safe is it to move from task to task or place to place for different activities? Does the presence of an audience create sensory overload? What are the access arrangements for the task and what is the potential emotional impact of any proposed adjustments to meet the learners' sensory or physical needs?

Careful and considered reflection, inquiry and action can and should be taken to support pupils with SEND in practical subjects. Inclusive practical learning can be a transformative experience for pupils with SEND and there is both moral imperative and a legal requirement to ensure that.

Reasonable adjustments and practical subjects

You should be familiar with the reasonable adjustments duty which was first introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and now operates under the Equality Act. The aim is to avoid, as far as possible, by reasonable means, the disadvantage which a disabled pupil experiences because of their disability.

The duty requires you to take positive steps to ensure that disabled pupils can fully participate in the education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for all pupils.

Health and safety

Do seek advice and support from your SENCO if you feel that it is necessary. Risk-assessments are an essential feature of safeguarding and with your subject expertise and the SENCO's knowledge of particular learning needs, you may find effective strategies for inclusion that enable access in a safe and healthy way.

STEP process of modifying and adapting the curriculum

Advice for PE teachers advocates the STEP process. This process is highly relevant and can be applied across all practical subjects.

Step stands for...		How can I change...?
S	Space	Where is the activity happening?
T	Task	What is happening?
E	Equipment	What is being used?
P	People	Who is involved?

Whatever you want to achieve – e.g. making an activity more challenging physically or easier to understand – you can change the space, task, equipment or people to achieve this.

The inclusion spectrum

Further transferrable advice from PE to all practical subjects relates to the nature of the intended and actual practical activities.

Open activity	In an open activity, all pupils are included in the same task with minimal or no adaptation or modification. Open activities need to be adapted so that they consist of elements that everyone can do. If an activity has a component that is too hard for a pupil, STEP can be used to change that aspect of the activity.
Modified activity	In a modified activity, changes are made to the task so that all pupils are included and can take part at a level appropriate to their ability. Modifications can be made to equipment, space, rules, speed, interaction and/or position. Modified activities use STEP to make sure elements of the activity stretch all pupils. All pupils are at different skill levels, so the activity has to be pitched at different skill levels too!
Parallel activity	Everyone does the same activity but different groups do it in different ways according to their abilities. Parallel activities rely on STEP to adapt each game so that pupils are all playing a game at a level that challenges them, but also gives them a degree of success. STEP enables parallel activities to be planned and developed. Disability sport activities have often been adapted and pupils could be taught to understand the STEP process by swimming hybrid strokes.



Disability activity	Disability sports activities are developed or modified specifically with disabled people in mind. Non-disabled people can take part in disability activities.
Separate activity	Occasionally, it may be appropriate for some pupils to take part in activities separately from the rest of the class – eg when preparing for a disability sport activity. However, this should not happen at the expense of these pupils being included in outdoor and adventurous activities more generally as part of the curriculum. Disability activities need to continually use STEP to reinforce existing skills and work on new ones at the right level.