

Noticing

A permeating theme



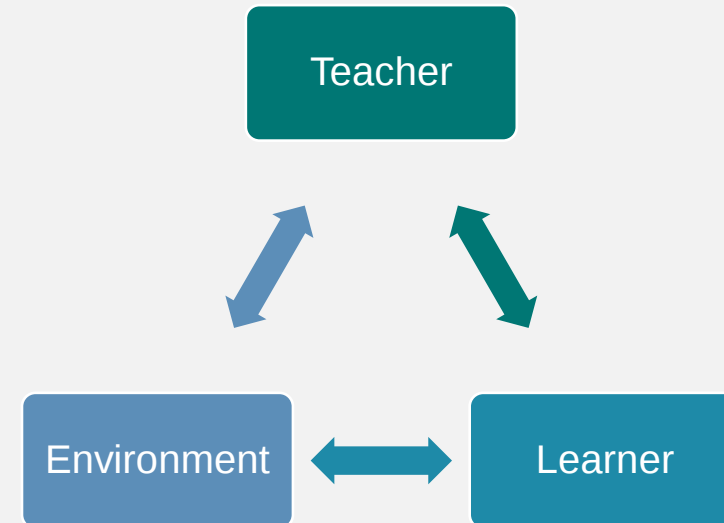
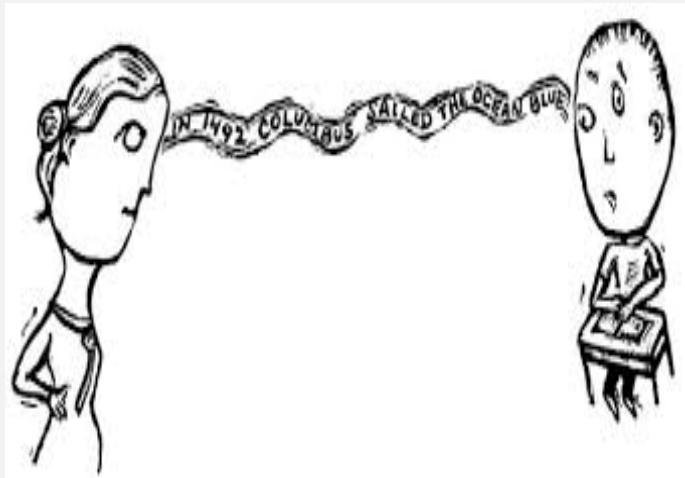
What is noticing and why is it important?

- Noticing enables teachers to better understand the learners in their class.
- The first step within noticing is to have an understanding of the learner's needs in relation to the curriculum. This provides evidence for teachers, informing how they adapt their teaching to effectively scaffold learning.
- Noticing is integral to the successful implementation of the graduated approach (assess – plan – do – review).
- Noticing is a continuous process, within lessons, across school days, over the course of the school year. Teachers do not stop noticing; teachers continue to improve through deliberate practice.

Noticing: the teacher's superpower

Teachers typically work with many students at once and constantly juggle many academic and social goals, requiring trade-offs from moment-to-moment and day-to-day.

*Teaching is not a simple exchange of knowledge.
It is a complex process.*

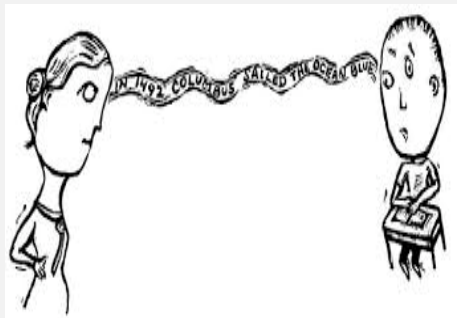


Noticing: the teacher's superpower

“Real teaching happens within a wild triangle of relations— among teacher, students, subject—and the points of this triangle shift continuously. What shall I teach amid all that I should teach? How can I grasp it myself so that my grasping might enable theirs? What are they thinking and feeling—toward me, toward each other, toward the thing I am trying to teach? How near should I come, how far off should I stay? How much clutch, how much gas?”

When we have a learner who struggles to access the curriculum, we start by trying to understand what is happening for them. The more detailed our understanding of what is working and what is not, the more likely we are to be able to support their access to curriculum.

Noticing is the teacher's superpower for gathering evidence to inform planning, adapting your teaching and supporting each learner to achieve.



Noticing: the teacher's superpower

Good teachers see the complexity and work to understand it step-by-step. They take the time to see, understand and reflect.

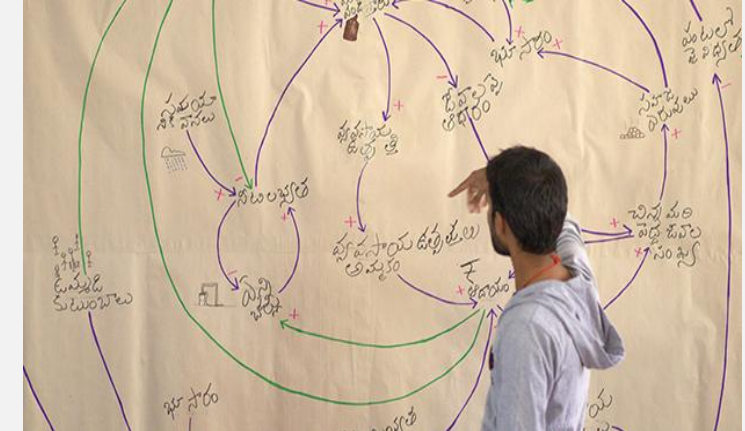
They are helped by the experts around them to feel excited by the multi-dimensional considerations. This juggle in the classroom is what Dylan Wiliam describes as akin to a '3D chess match'.

Mentors support new teachers to see diversity in the classroom as something to be embraced, not to be daunted by 'difference'.

“Teachers' instructional practice is pedagogically vulnerable when not anchored within detailed and comprehensive observation and understanding of students' immediate responses during instruction.”

You won't always immediately know the answer to every child's need. But you do need to know how to work that out.

Noticing is the job of finding out.



Today's classrooms

Classrooms are filled with learners who:

have different
language abilities

have different
attention spans
and interests

have different
cultural
backgrounds

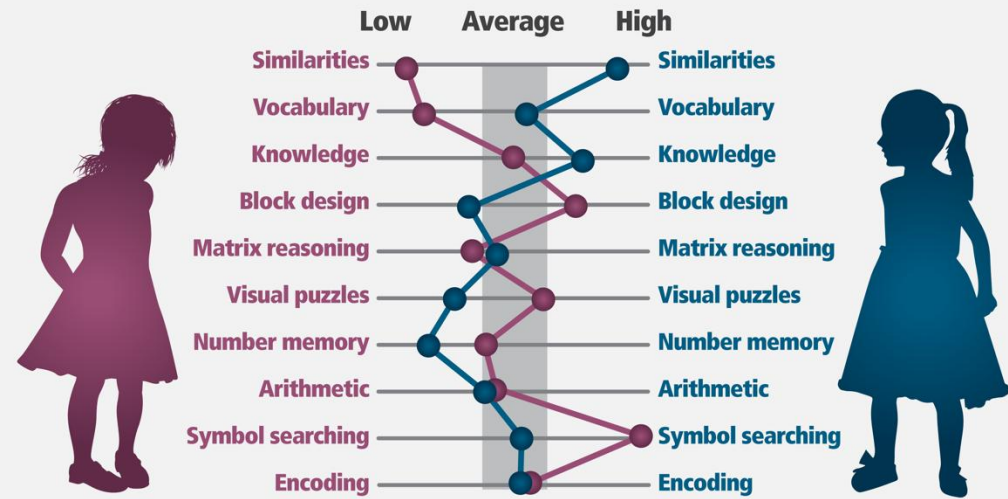


have different
needs

come from
different
educational
backgrounds

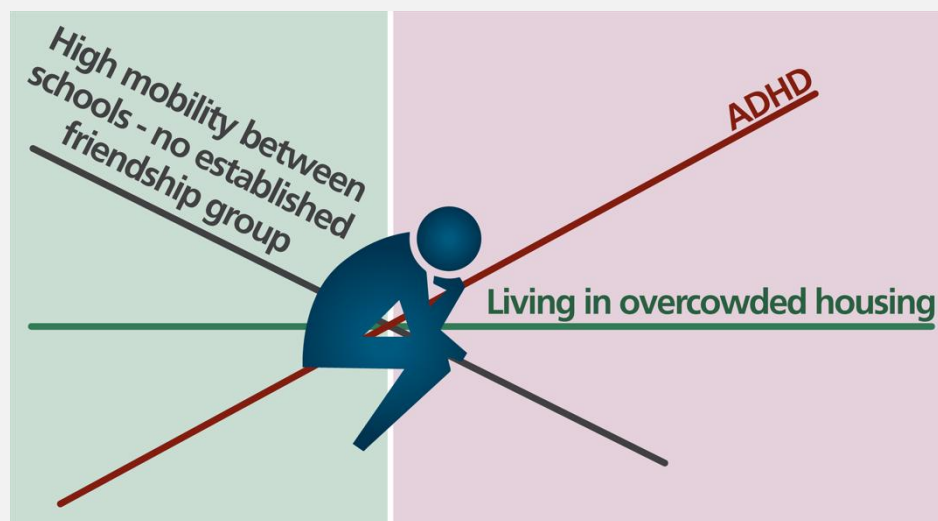
Today's classrooms

Evidence tells us the complexity of learning difficulties children in mainstream present with is growing.



More and more learners have what might be described as 'spiky' or 'jagged' learning profiles. Specific barriers to learning are not always easy to identify. We sometimes refer to these as being hidden disabilities, as they are cognitive and not immediately obvious. Learners will experience a range of difficulties with self-regulation, working memory, processing and so on.

Intersectionality



- When reflecting on our knowledge of learners and how to meet their needs, it is essential to consider how learners are experiencing the intersectionality of their needs.
- The lived experience of the overlap of multiple vulnerabilities will be equally individual, complex and dynamic.
- Two of the teacher's greatest tools when meeting the needs of our learners are **curiosity and openness**.

Today's classrooms

Diagnostic labels

- The range of complexity in the learner population is growing and there are a great many diagnostic labels that can be daunting.
- Whilst these labels are useful signposts, they don't offer the full picture. In fact they can sometimes act as a '**knowledge shield**' that stops teachers from looking for more evidence that will help work out how to help a child progress.
- Getting to know the learner helps to demystify the labels. We use noticing as part of the process of getting to know the child in relation to their learning.

sensory needs attachment disorder physical disability FSM working memory nutrition ADHD family history EAL gender autism social worker involvement hearing impairment mental health developmental delay processing speed depression hypermobility SEMH diabetes anxiety dysgraphia auditory processing maturity social skills socioeconomics medication

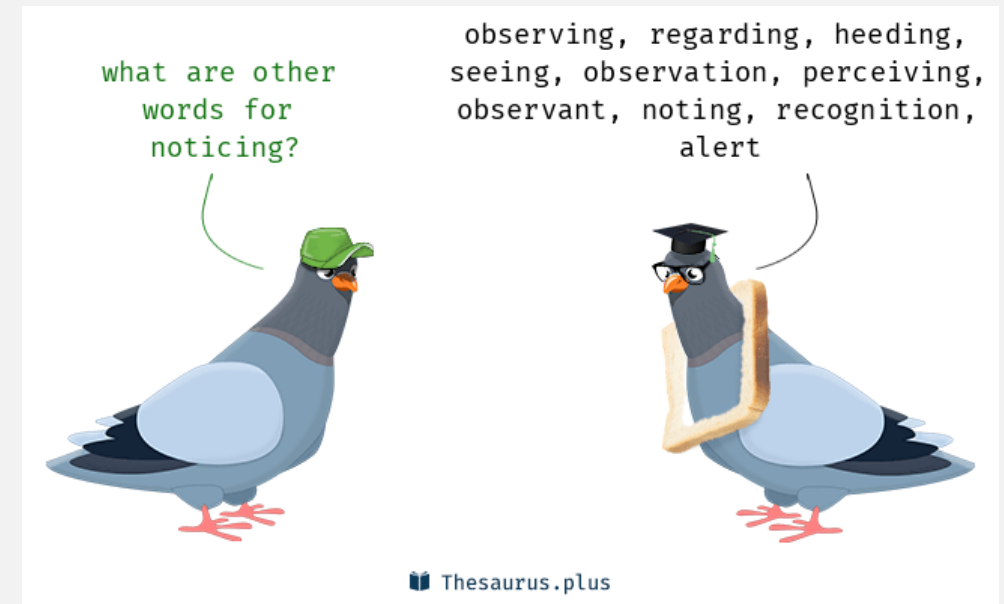
Today's classrooms

Knowledge shield

- Image and caption – reflective question on this image?

Why observe? Why notice?

- To understand what individual learners know and can do.
- To understand what individual learners are interested in and what works for them.
- To further develop our understanding of how children and young people learn, linking theory with practice.
- To spot learners who are getting stuck and inform the adjustments we need to make in how we will teach.
- To know what to prioritise (for managing, questioning, support).
- To inform and shape our curricula planning.



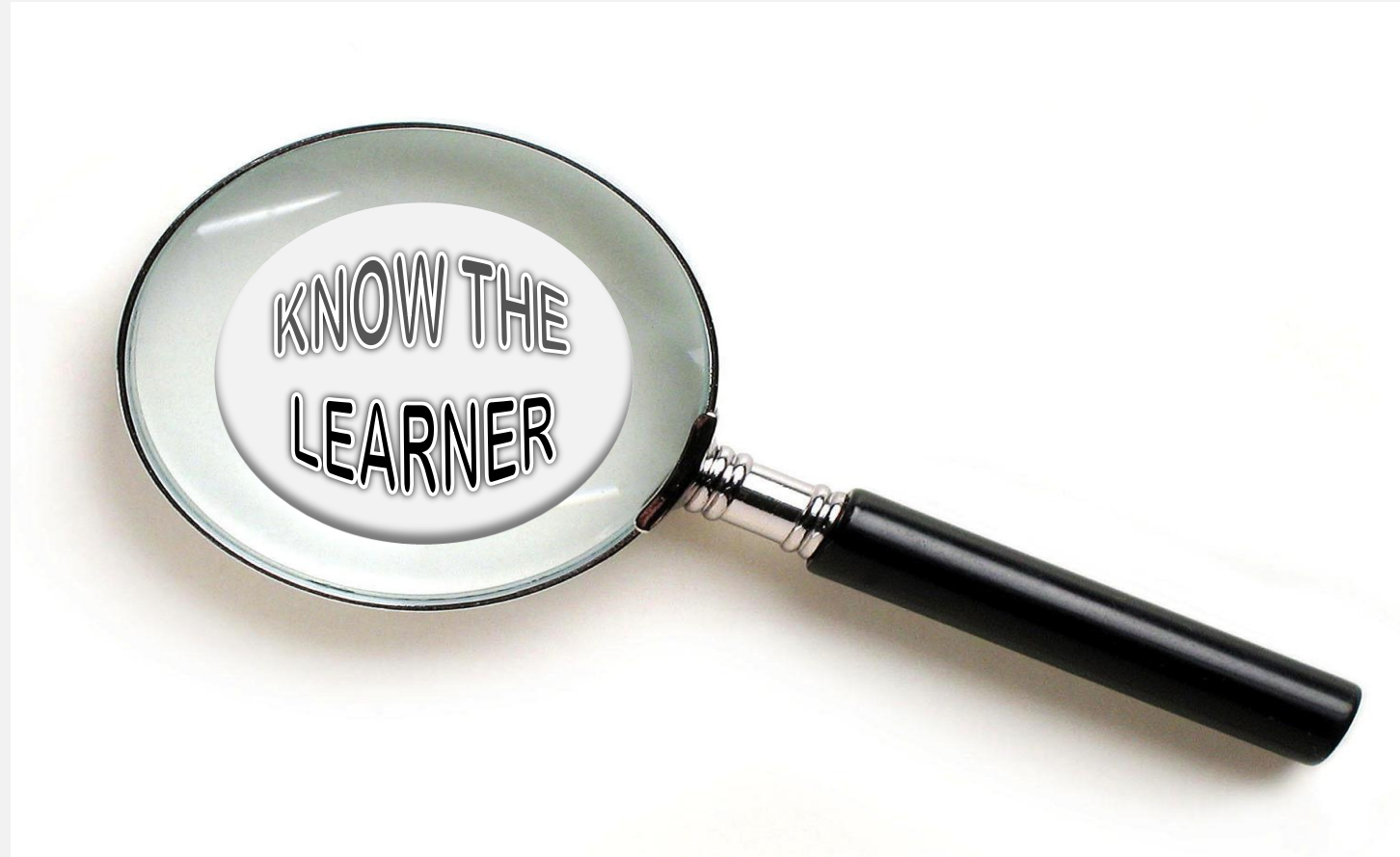
What can we learn from noticing?

- Where a learner is thriving.
- When a learner is struggling.
- What a learner is capable of within a particular area of development – physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social.
- Which schemas children are developing.
- What a child knows and can do which will establish a child's developmental progress/level.
- Identifying specific learning needs.
- What learners enjoy and what they are interested in.
- Ways to challenge our assumptions.
- What the relationship dynamics are within the classroom, including individual friendships.
- The importance of following up something that you have noticed informally and want to find out more.
- Information about a child or young person's wellbeing.
- Learning about a child or young person's relationship with the curriculum.
- Finding starting points for intervention.

Noticing more about a learner is ongoing and open-ended.

Learning to notice

Get to know the learner



Adopt an inquiry approach

Teachers become students of the pupils they teach, learning everything they can about the child or young person.



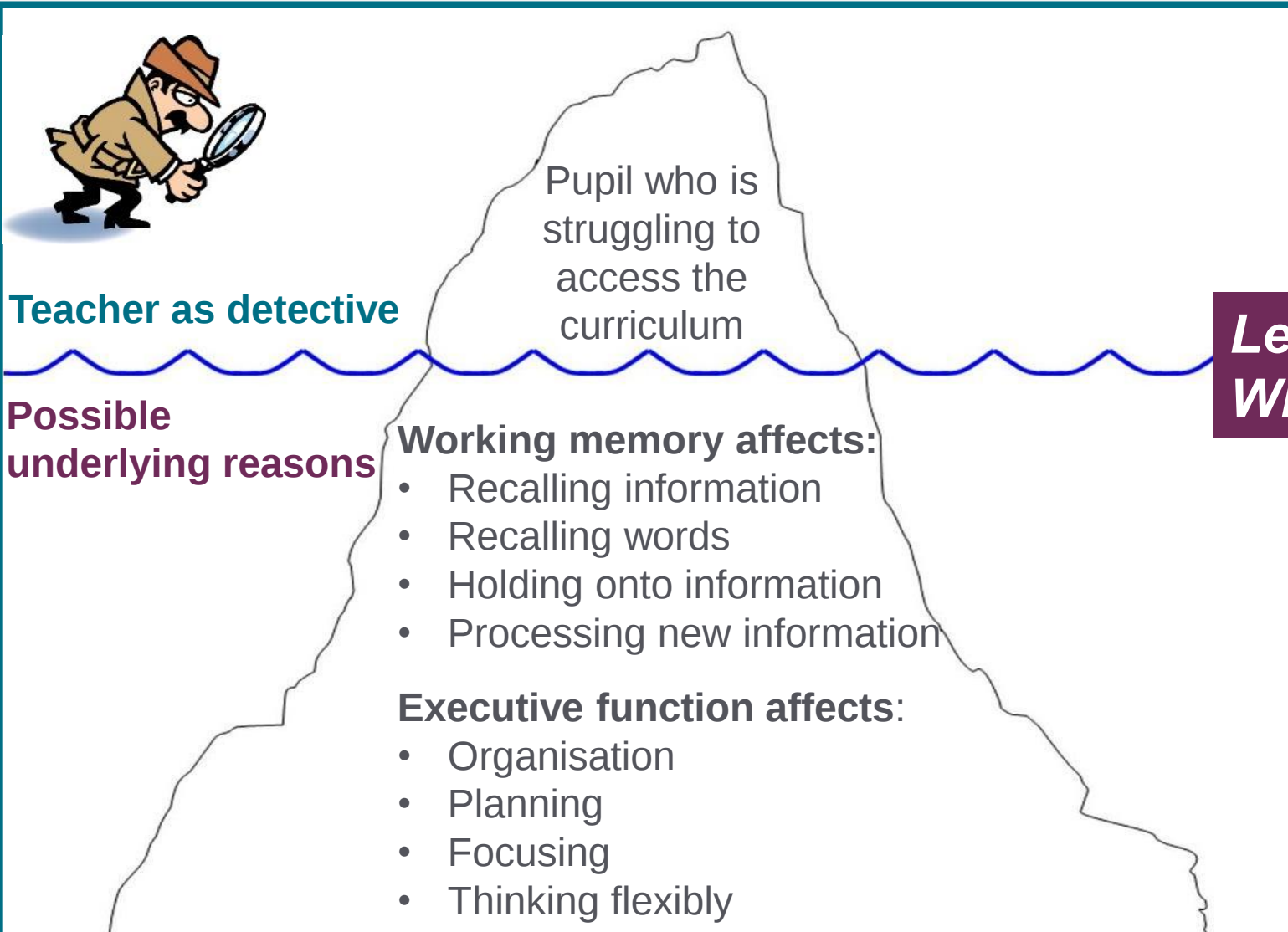
In order to adjust and adapt teaching to accommodate different starting points of learners, use formative assessment strategies to inform planning and teaching, moment-to-moment.

The quality of this knowledge for teaching is important. The better a teacher's detective work, the better informed their teaching will be.

Observing pupil's learning and engagement across the school day, e.g. in the classroom, playground, school gate, school trip, lunch club, is a powerful way of enhancing professional knowledge.

By being attentive and open to seeing what children and young people know and can do, teachers can learn from them.

Become a 'SEND detective'



*Let's look closer.
What's going on here?*

Gather evidence



How does paying focused attention (noticing, observing, listening) improve teaching?

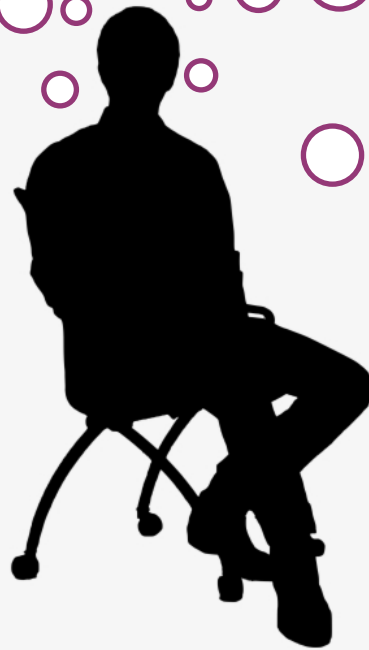
Identifying those who struggle in my classroom takes practice

Katie is so strong in class discussion but she consistently struggles to get her ideas on paper.

Sajid has trouble transcribing what's on the whiteboard.

I like to have fun with Year 9 but Josh just can't calm down afterwards and risks spoiling it for everyone. He doesn't seem to notice the others are frustrated by this.

Amelie is so studious but never quite interprets the homework correctly.



Noticing in context

Observing
Watching
Scanning
Listening
Tuning in
Questioning

An early activity for trainee teachers will inevitably involve observations; these will include watching both the teacher and learners.

This activity may come with a health warning – to watch but not to judge. What a difficult expectation that is!

We recognise that trainee teachers will not be ready on day one, to ‘read a room’ and to understand the craft of the teacher they are watching. Many Training Providers have begun to teach the skills of observation – starting with noticing. The capacity to notice is important for developing inclusive teaching.

Whilst watching teacher-learner interaction is an important part of learning to teach, we believe the development of inclusive teaching can be helped by putting a particular lens on the learner and their relationship with the curriculum as a focus for teacher learning.

Helping trainee teachers to develop the skill of noticing will involve watching teacher-learner interaction but will also focus closely on the learner themselves.

Building forensic inquiry skills

We suggest noticing comes before observing and is a skill that must be practiced. Noticing should be developed as an intentional activity. Observing can sometimes be problematic because it initiates analysis too quickly and can prompt judgement by novices too early.

Noticing

- Developing capacity for noticing is central to developing expertise for practice
- Noticing can involve watching, listening, questioning
- We need to develop our noticing if we are to build a strong picture of each learner.

Observing

- Observing suggests we ‘attend’ and analyse
- By breaking observation down into watching, noticing and scanning, it’s easier to recognise the behavioural practice needed to provide us with evidence on which we can inform judgements.
- Watching can feel quite passive, with a suggestion that we learn by osmosis.

Noticing tools and techniques
Deliberate practice

Technique

Different noticing techniques need to be used to elicit different information.

It is important that the information you gather through the process of noticing is appropriate and sufficiently detailed to enable you to make new and accurate assessments of children and young people's learning.

Selecting an appropriate focus to gather your information is an important part of this process.

The technique you choose depends on the difficulty the learner is experiencing, and on what you need to 'zoom in'.

For example, watching a learner in the playground, and then in a social situation, and then on a particular task, helps you build a picture of their whole experience.

Focusing – ‘zooming in’ on learners

These are just some tools you could use to help you identify needs. They are a scaffold (or starting point) to help you collect evidence and practice ‘noticing.’

- A simple narrative approach – recording what you see whilst watching the learner and their interactions in the classroom
- The Engagement Profile
- Development Matters observation frames (designed for EYFS but can be adapted for all stages)

Noticing a learner throughout the first day of school

Safiye entered the classroom with a smile – I noticed she made eye contact and gave me a small wave as she entered the classroom. When I replied to her wave with ‘Good morning, Safiye!’, she initially smiled and then quickly looked down at the floor in front of her.

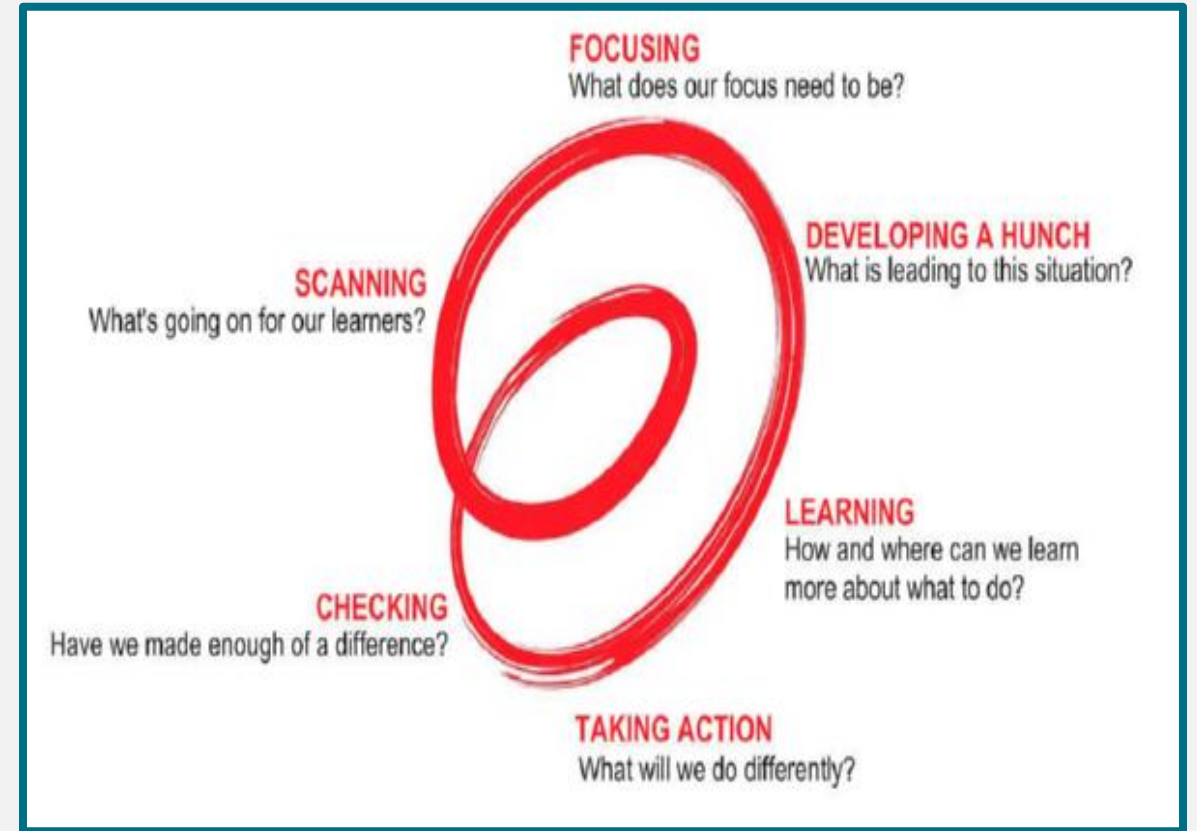
When I called her name she looked at me – I pointed to the the visual timetable, she nodded and walked over to the pegs to hang up her coat and bag by her name tag. She then walked to the carpet and started looking at a book with a peer.

Throughout the morning, I noticed that Safiye was kind and polite in all interactions with peers and teaching staff.

Safiye was quiet through-out the whole-class teaching inputs in both the English and maths lessons – she did not raise her hand once. she smiled widely when I told the learners it was play time. She lined up with classmates and I noticed she spent the entire play time engaged with peers, playing with three children in the class.

Create inquiry around each learner

The 'spiral of inquiry' is an effective professional learning tool that was developed by teacher educators to describe the effective inquiry processes used by experienced teachers to support their professional learning.



Assessing comes before planning

Teachers need to pay purposeful and deliberate attention to what happens in the classroom in order to plan effectively.

The teaching and learning cycle identified in the Code of Practice starts with assess, then plan!

How do we assess pupils in order to improve teaching?

This notion of paying attention as a teacher – of noticing and observing – all plays a part in the core function of teaching.

Teachers don't plan curriculum or lessons without being clear about what they expect the learners to already know. However, this is sophisticated knowledge and it's dynamic, so this means assessment needs regular revisiting. It is iterative.

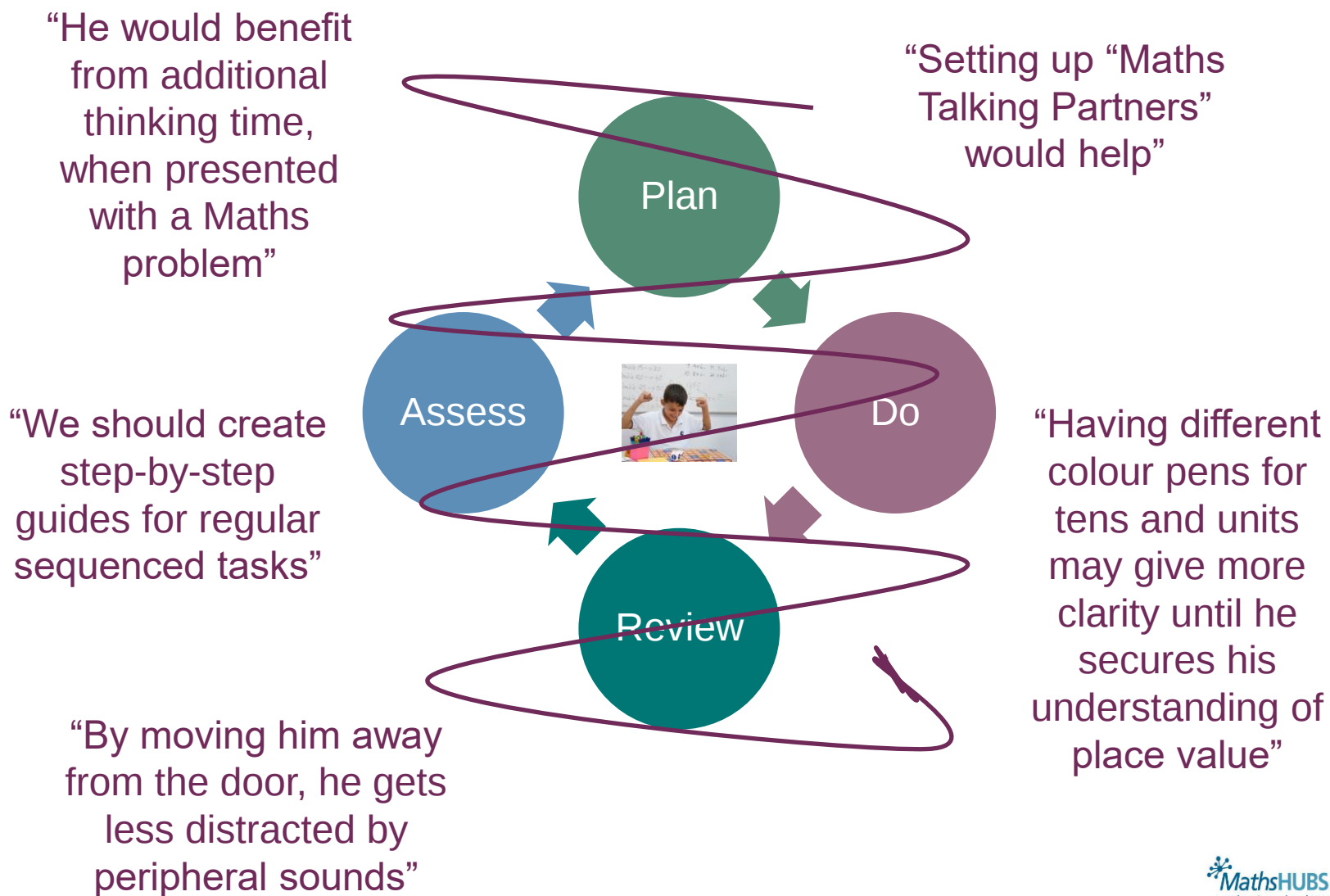
Teachers need to constantly review it. Teachers can't hold fixed views of learners. If a learner performs poorly in one lesson by failing to understand a core concept of the teaching, teachers don't write the learner off. We keep returning to them to help build that knowledge and to assess their progression in understanding that concept.



Use of **noticing** in the graduated approach in maths

In following the 'graduated approach', classroom provision in maths becomes more personalised and wraps more securely around each individual learner. This has sometimes been referred to as **The Spiral of Enquiry (or the Spiral of Support)**.

The 'graduated approach' is a process of inquiry that starts by using 'assessment' to collect evidence about how a teacher can then 'plan'.



Critical questions

When using noticing tools:

- Why might it be important to observe some learners rather than others?
- Who might be your priority and why?
- Are you observing their behaviours or their learning behaviours (relationship with the curriculum)?
- Can you define learning behaviours – what do they look like? Make a list to discuss with an experienced teacher.
- Consider anomalies. Are you surprised at how many there are? For example, the classic ‘learner who doesn’t look you in the eye when they answer a question’. Sometimes we attribute this to behaviours of those on the autism spectrum, but does it apply to others too?

Links to Handbook

Section 1: Understanding your role

- Your role as the teacher
- Intersectionality
- The language we use with colleagues

Section 2: Knowledge of the learner

- How we learn
- Pupil voice
- Working with families

Section 3: Planning inclusive lessons

- Quality inclusive pedagogy
- The language we use with learners
- Working with teaching assistants

Section 4: Creating an inclusive environment

- Barriers to learning and reasonable adjustments
- The language learners use
- Transition

Section 5: Subject-specific guidance

- *See subject-specific guidance*

Section 6: Graduated approach

- The graduated approach
- A teacher's role in identification
- Gathering a holistic understanding of a learner

Final reflections

Finally, noticing is not a generic skill.

The clue to our superpowers: ‘Noticing’ informs instructional decision making.

‘There is growing agreement that what teachers notice (or do not notice) impacts subject specific decisions in the classroom; profession-specific ways of “seeing and understanding events,” which connect knowledge of content and students in ways that supports their decision-making.’

Deliberate practice of ‘noticing’ and reflecting on what we notice with mentors can inform effective decisions and adaptations to our teaching moment-to-moment, week-to-week to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.



Signposting

- Girls and Autism: Flying under the radar, NASEN (2016)
- The Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Project: *Developing pathways to personalised learning*, SSAT (2011)
- Special Education in Mainstream Schools Guidance Report, Education Endowment Foundation (2020)

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