

Chapter 7

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Chapter 7

Key points

- Meeting individual needs within a school or setting can be a challenge, so consider ways of differentiating activities, tasks, resources, instructions, support and guidance to best address these.
- Understanding the reasons for inappropriate behaviour will help you to manage it within the classroom or setting. Ask for advice if necessary, and take the opportunity to observe and learn from other teachers.
- Ensure that you have an underpinning knowledge of child protection and associated issues, and that you know who to speak to if you have any concerns. Note and date accurately if a child or student discloses any issues to you.
- Working with other adults can be very rewarding and beneficial to the pupils and to you, but relationships need time, effort and the ability to listen, to work well.
- Effective communication, verbal and non-verbal, is vital for any placement – so be prepared to explore ways of communicating when and if there are barriers such as language or disability.

Chapter 7 Case Study

Case Study: Rachel – Gambia

The Gambian State, in response to the lack of resources, provided each school with a set of 3 text books per child; English, Mathematics and Social Studies. These books formed the basis of all teaching; the teachers educated the children using these books, taking learning objectives from them, until completed. They were similar to English schemes of work; however they offered no flexibility and no regular reviews. The head teacher informed me that teachers are 'encouraged to develop a scheme of work from which they can take their lesson plans'.

I did not see any differentiation of work in the Gambia. Classes were large and poorly resourced; the teacher had only one small chalkboard for the children to work from. To differentiate work would be have been very difficult; children would need to be split into groups and set different tasks, this would mean that only one group could work from the board while others would have to be taught verbally which may distract others from their work. The only way of providing children with the right level of work would be to individually set questions in their exercise books. This would be a significant change in teaching practice, and would be very time consuming for such large classes.

From my traditional placements I recognised that differentiation was vital when providing children with a quality education. However it was a lot easier to differentiate in English schools compared to the Gambia. Teachers create differentiated tasks for different groups or set individual targets to cater for the child's needs. The children are assessed against their own learning objective or against specific criteria. The resources and extra support provided in English classrooms make it easier to differentiate for the children. The Gambian classrooms we worked in had virtually no resources, very few teachers and there was certainly no extra help.

In the Gambia, the Department of State for Education (2006) suggested that teachers should teach using one of two methods, the presentation method or the enquiry method. The presentation method was regarded as the most efficient way of making sure all pupils can learn when they are part of a large class. Indeed other methods would be harder to use with very limited resources and very large classes.

The enquiry method includes problem solving, experimenting, role play, carrying out surveys and pupils posing their own questions, the children are told less but are encouraged to find out for themselves, to learn by doing and therefore to learn and remember. However, the children had outdated books as their only resource, which meant that using the enquiry method would be very difficult to implement.

Consider:

- What were the issues that Rachel faced with regard to differentiation, during her placement?
- How might such issues be addressed?

Case Study: Carolyn – Traditional

I began the planning process by addressing the first of my many challenges – how to plan for a mixed age class. Initially I didn't know where to start, as I was so used to taking topics from the National Strategies for the appropriate year group I was teaching and planning around those. Now, I had two year groups to accommodate and didn't have a clue which topics I should teach. I wasn't sure whether I should be looking at Year 3 topics, Year 4 topics or both.

Luckily for me, help was at hand. Teachers at the school informed me they worked on a two year cycle so that all of the topics recommended by the National Primary Strategy and QCA could be covered without any children having to do the same topic again during their second year in the same class. The idea was that during the year, you would teach half of the topics from year 3 and half of the topics from year 4. Then the following year, you would teach the other topics you had missed. And so on, the cycle would continue so that all of the children accessed all of the topics. The school was also registered with 'The Hamilton Trust' which provided examples of mixed age planning and access to resources. So there was plenty of help and resources available to me.

However, although the school had found a way to cover topics and curriculum areas for mixed-age classes, it hadn't provided for the fact that whatever topic you taught, you would have to teach it at multiple levels so that it was accessible yet challenging for all of the pupils in the class. For example, when teaching the Numeracy topic 'Rounding, Estimating and Measuring' I had to ensure I planned activities that were challenging enough for the more able year 4 children, appropriate for the less able year 4s and more able year 3s while still being accessible for the less able year 3s. All while covering the same objectives for everybody.

This was indeed, a challenge, but I did find a successful way of dealing with such extensive differentiation. The trick was to break each objective down into levels of success criteria for each lesson. In a lesson where the main objective was

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'To round numbers to the nearest 10, 100 & 1000'. I used different levels of success criteria to assess the children against at the end of the lesson, such as:

- I can round 2 digit numbers to the nearest 10.
- I can round 2 and 3 digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100.
- I can round 3 digit numbers to the nearest 100.
- I can round 3 and 4 digit numbers to the nearest 100 and 1000.

This allowed me to differentiate my teaching accordingly so that all of the children in the class could be challenged at an appropriate level within the same lesson. This was the most important thing I learnt about planning, that regardless of the topic or subject, the lessons must be differentiated so that all children are challenged appropriately while still maintaining a sense of inclusion by adapting the same learning objective to suit everybody.

Consider:

- What were the challenges Carolyn faced with regard to differentiation?
- How did she differentiate for a mixed age class?

Case Study: Sally – Special school

Behaviour management was a challenge I identified very early on in the placement. Most of the behaviours encountered were physical including biting, hitting, grabbing and hair pulling, although some others such as spitting and refusal were witnessed.

In order to prepare for this the staff taught me a few key techniques such as standing side on to the child, making sure you do not back yourself or the pupil into a corner and the use of key command words such as 'Stop' instead of the word 'No' which antagonised some children further. I was very apprehensive that this was all I was 'armed' with when facing such behaviours. However, the setting believed that having to react to the behaviours like those discussed above, was not a situation that should arise often. They took a very proactive approach to behaviour management and encouraged me to do likewise. The staff introduced me to a new way of looking at behaviour – the notion that every behaviour had an antecedent and that if records were kept of the behaviours and events leading up to the incidents then 'flash points' within sessions could be easily identified. By recognizing this I could plan strategies into my sessions to eliminate or reduce the chances of the behaviour occurring.

Prior to this placement my behaviour management had always focused on reacting once an undesirable behaviour had been displayed. While this notion of being proactive about behaviour was liberating, it was also challenging because with the realisation that every behaviour had a purpose and that it was often a

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reaction to something in the environment, came the realisation that effectively I had the biggest role in preventing it. When behaviours did occur it was uncomfortable to consider the incident and look for the antecedent as it often meant it was something that I, or other staff, could have done to prevent it happening. However, the Unit staff were very constructive and the supportive and positive atmosphere made the process very efficient and effective.

The most important thing I learnt about behaviour management on this placement was that if I look for antecedents and considered strategies for removing or avoiding known antecedents then undesirable behaviour does decrease and I can spend less time reacting to behaviour and more time teaching.

Consider:

- What were the challenges faced by Sally during her placement?
- How did she address these challenges?

Case Study: Sally – Special school

I began the placement by working with individuals and/or small groups of children. Towards the end of the first week I undertook team teaching with the class teacher. I particularly enjoyed taking part in, and contributing to, teaching teams in this way. It gave me the opportunity and the confidence to try new things, in a supportive environment and to learn from and draw on the experiences and expertise of those around me. It enabled me to understand more fully the importance of good communication between staff and the significant role that additional adults have in the classroom environment.

All of this helped me when I eventually progressed to teaching groups and ultimately the whole class independently and was having to plan for the deployment of additional adults. Many things were enhanced by the support of additional adults. For instance, when undertaking assessment many of them were able to take pictures or jot down notes about something a child had said or done which I might have missed– they were like a second pair of eyes and ears. However, in order to obtain optimum benefit from them it was important to have procedures in place for them to share their information with me.

The Unit had a scheme whereby each child had an A4 piece of paper on the wall and any notes made by the teacher or additional adults could be stuck up there. These were collected at the end of the session or day by the teacher and used to inform planning and then added to the child's assessment file for evidence in summative assessments. Additional adults also played a significant role in behaviour management. They were often able to spot antecedents and could offer different perspectives on any behavioural incidents.

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Consider:

- How can you try to develop effective working relationships with colleagues and adults in your placement setting?
- If there are potential issues with regard to a particular relationship, what strategies could you use to try to improve the situation?

Case Study: Jaz – India

The international experience has positively impacted on my professional development. Within S Public School, collaboration has proved to be an essential approach to teaching. By working together, we were able to develop, maintain, and progress not only learning, but also relationships with children. This allowed us to establish high expectations, which challenged us to consider the children's abilities and skills. In developing a mural project, in particular, I learned about how constructive the English National Curriculum can be when considering how to monitor, plan for, and evaluate children's learning.

This international experience contributed to my critical reflection of my pedagogy with regard to identifying potential barriers that can result when working with EAL children, but also highlighted alternative ways to communicate in order to understand the potential that the children possessed. Specific consideration was given to 'Q18 – Understand[ing] how children and young people develop and that the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic influences' (TDA, 2008, p.10).

Before this placement, I did not anticipate having difficulties in communicating with the children as I fluently speak English, Punjabi, and Hindi. However, I did not account for the variety of dialects and the impact these would have on misunderstanding. This made me reflect on the way that I communicate not only with children, but with all individuals and emphasised the need to use a consistent clear voice, supporting gestures, and visual aids. This experience has made me appreciate the international setting and the reasons for the differences in procedures that are followed. Fundamentally, this experience will improve my own pedagogy because it has strengthened my understanding of England's National Curriculum and how I can teach diverse learners more effectively.

Consider:

- Why was Jaz surprised that there were language issues during his placement?
- How can you develop and improve your language and communication skills prior to placement?

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Case Study: Naomi – Gambia

I spent ten weeks working in schools in the Gambia, and with a child protection officer. I knew from my first two visits that I wanted to complete a longer placement there to gain a better understanding of the culture and education. The children within the settings all spoke their tribal language first, and English second, sometimes third, so communication could be challenging at times. However I learnt many strategies to make the situation easier. I developed my ability to think and teach creatively, due to a lack of resources and communication issues, which meant I needed to be able to adapt lessons and activities on the spot, and change focus and teaching strategy, to enable learning. My placement was a life changing experience, and had a huge impact on me personally and professionally. I am a much more confident person and feel able to challenge pre conceptions and expectations, based on real life examples and situations. But more than that I think that we had an impact on the children's lives, and I hope to be able to continue to do this in the future.

Consider:

- What did Naomi learn during the placement that impacted on her personal and professional development?
- How can you develop 'creative' communication skills prior to placement?