

"WHAT WORKS FOR ME"

BEST SEN TEACHING PRACTICE SHARED



St David's College

— Est. 1965 —

At St. David's College all staff are trained in Dyslexia studies, but the special educational needs teachers, many whom are long-serving, are extremely well-qualified, and provide the whole school with a vast bank of knowledge and expertise that is hard to emulate. The foundation of the school's success, these teachers daily use their wide experience to professionally and unstintingly support all individual pupils; encouraging them to achieve academic standards far beyond their expectations; especially those suffering from low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. The school as a whole manifests itself as a truly unique and inspiring environment, that nurtures every aspect of a pupil's academic, social and emotional well-being.

Above all, our pupils leave school with unique personalities and individual strengths, having learned that developing the values of Honesty is appreciated, Respect has to be earned and Loyalty is returned; they also know that determination leads to success.

In this document we will share some of the teaching practice and advice that has worked best for our staff working with our SEN students.



LISTENING AND LEARNING

Listening to stories was a favourite pastime in our parents' and grandparents' generations—before television arrived! Audio books cannot match when real people are telling us something exciting they have experienced, of course not. But they are a modern and convenient way to appreciate stories.

Why do we offer audio books to our pupils?

During early speech development the key element to learning language is hearing it spoken and experimenting with sounds and words. In foreign language teaching we know that immersion in the target culture through exchange visits and work experience is by far the most effective element. Sentence structures and vocabulary have chance to form patterns in our memory through frequent listening. Listening to good quality language is equally valuable to pupils with Speech and Language difficulties.

Pupils with reading difficulties avoid reading at all cost. The mechanical decoding of words is such an effort for them that comprehension often is lost in the process. These young people would not only end up missing out on sampling the delights of our literature - they are prohibited from accessing an essential part of our heritage.

Listening to books is not cheating! Studies have shown a high correlation of reading and listening comprehension. Listeners remember facts as accurately as readers do. There are pupils who struggle with auditory processing and short term memory difficulties but they often enjoy the experience of audio books away from time and performance pressures.

Pupils need imagination for writing creatively, solving problems and understanding what teachers explain in lessons. When listening, we visualise characters, their behaviours, motives and plots. Listening to narration means making pictures in our minds – practising understanding language whilst exclusively relying on our auditory learning channel. This type of making sense of language is a vital cognitive challenge for our brains in our overwhelmingly visual world.

So - relax, click 'start', close your eyes, immerse yourself in thrills and adventures - and learn!



HANDWRITING

As a one to one teacher of the younger children in the school one area which I feel very passionate about is handwriting. Even in this modern age where we are surrounded by technology I feel the skill of handwriting remains important in education, employment and in everyday life. Many children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties can have very immature writing styles. By improving this style, and introducing a joined script as early as we can, we not only improve the presentation of the child's work but also their spelling, speed of writing and sometimes the ability to express themselves. With a joined script children are also a lot less likely to reverse letters which are commonly difficult (such as b/d and p/q). Many studies have found the connected letters and fluid motion of joined handwriting are especially beneficial to students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Naturally the child's pride in their work and confidence also improves.

To do this it is important to work on the basics first; posture, pencil grip and paper position. For children who have been writing since they began school this is sometimes difficult to correct as habits are hard to break. Each child may need a different approach so we work hard to find which strategies work for each pupil. For instance; some pupils respond well to using a writing slope of some description, some may like a particular type of pen or use a grip to help.

For many children it is essential to go right back to basics and learn letter formation correctly. Although this might initially seem like a backwards step to them it is hugely important. Learning the starting positions of letters and their correct position on the line is crucial. As with so many lessons in the Cadogan Centre I find it is important to use a multi-sensory approach for this stage of learning. Using various different types of writing equipment, materials, colours and sometimes ICT. Over sized writing, drawing in sand or paint with their finger or sometimes physically walking the shape out on the floor. I find the best approach is to teach children how to form letters in certain groups where they have things in common such as 'c,a,d,q' which all have the same starting position. I find it is also beneficial to teach a joined script alongside phonic work. For example when learning the blend 'ch', this is best taught joined. With this approach the child learns the spelling as a unit, rather than a series of separate strokes, and correct spelling is more likely to be retained.

It is important to remember that each child will develop their own handwriting style that works for them. More crucially, in Cadogan, we recognise that, for some pupils, there are other learning styles which are more appropriate such as using ICT for dictation.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Within the Assistive Technology Centre we have programs such as Inspiration a mind mapping tool, Read and Write 11.5 which has various options that assist with reading, spelling and study skills, Touch Typing and Dragon Speech Recognition a dictation program.

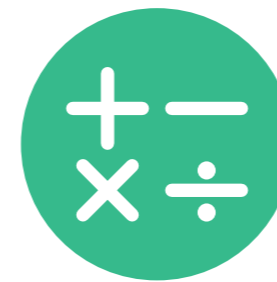
At the moment we are combining some of the programs, for example using the text from IGCSE English, we are able to use Read & Write to listen to the text, and then use the highlight icons to identify key points. This information can then be dictated by Dragon into Inspiration, creating a mind map. The audio icon within Inspiration will enable it to be to read back to students so they can check what they have said. Once the student has their main ideas it can then be transferred into a Word document, this acts as a guide to help create essays etc. Dragon will then be used again to create a text document.

As a teaching tool Inspiration can be set up to give the student specific information using text or images, hyperlinks can be created so that the student has a direct link to information on the Internet. Notes can be added to clarify meaning of difficult words and hidden or displayed as required.

Using a variety of teaching methods Assistive Technology stands out as being an essential part of any students learning, we have seen students struggle to express themselves as well as having difficulty coping with exams. The fact that Read & Write is now accepted in the reading section exam papers must make it an essential tool for our learners. Alongside this Dragon should also be considered as being another must have program for our learners.

MULTI-SENSORY TEACHING USING GAMES

A simple but effective way to include pupils in their own learning is to use games made by the pupil. At the start of the year, the pupil makes a basic, blank game track and after each unit of work, makes a set of cards with which to play the game. They can also be used as flashcards, pelmanism cards, etc. and can incorporate multisensory methods – visual cues, words written in glue glitter/sand for sensory enhancement. Technology can play a part here too; a number of apps allow for vocabulary to be inserted to fit with the current theme or spelling pattern. Five minutes at the end of a session is all that is needed to reinforce and consolidate learning in a fun and motivating way. Cards can be kept and reviewed at intervals to ensure each set is installed into long term memory. Encouraging pupils to play a part in ‘overcoming the forgetting curve’ motivates them, makes repetition fun and ensures that success is an integral part of every lesson.



MANGA HIGH – MATHS

Manga High is an online anime style site for learning Mathematics from Y1 to Y11. The site is free for teachers. Mangahigh.com a games-based-learning sites, where students learn Mathematics via purpose-built casual games that balance fun and learning.

Mangahigh is effective for the following reasons:

1. Adaptivity:

Each game covers certain learning topics and is designed to dynamically adapt in difficulty to the ability of the student – the level of difficulty that is neither too hard nor too easy, and is the level at which optimal learning takes place.

2. Automaticity:

It is usually the result of learning, repetition, and practice.

All Mangahigh games have an objective that the players strive to achieve by repeating a simple step (game mechanic) over and over again. By overlaying the game mechanic with the core learning concept

3. Discipline and self-learning:

Games develop students’ ability and curiosity to observe, hypothesize, test, evaluate, conclude and refine ideas.

4. Application of theory:

The games provide powerful contexts that often bring out the ‘real-world’ application of the topic at hand, thereby increasing the students’ interest in the content and encouraging them to explore further.

Manga High is a good place to support the teaching of Mathematics, especially for pupils who dislike the traditional approach to learning. When games are introduced into learning, it makes it seem more enjoyable for pupils. The best feature about this site is the adaptability of questions. If the question is too hard, it reverts to an easier one. This stops the pupil from feeling frustrated and giving up when they feel that the questions are getting too hard or even impossible.

As a 1:1 teacher I can look at the challenges set by the class teachers for the pupils so that I can support them working on skills that they are currently reviewing, or general year-long needs.

The site is divided between challenges and games. The games are great practice for certain skills. The challenges support several elements of gamification into the practice. First, questions only get harder if the player is successful. If questions are too hard, they get moved down to easier questions. This doesn’t discourage them, merely making them try harder to get up to a higher level, and it is really motivating.

There is also a Gold, Silver and Bronze badge system where you are awarded for getting a certain score on the activity. You can also compare your progress with that of your classmates.



MATHS

In the Solar department, we focus mainly on mathematical skills. We generally use a kinetic style of learning so that students can see the physical properties of mathematical operations and need not be hampered by having to use pencil and paper. We have a specially written assessment of cross-curricular skills, (following consultation with colleagues in many disciplines,) that helps us to focus on how to improve their achievement across the board: for example, many students have great difficulty in reading two way tables, a common feature in many subjects and it is often assumed that they know how to use them. Even very academic students have been identified as finding these difficult as it would appear that educators have assumed that skill is inherent.

Similarly, a wide range of students have had difficulty using mathematical instruments effectively. Helping them to improve in these skills enhances their confidence and success, enabling wider access to the curriculum. We also use spatial reasoning resources which help them to develop their problem solving skills; these are sufficiently challenging to produce a real sense of achievement when solved and give them the chance to rotate, reflect and translate in a meaningful way. Magnetic number boards (Hirogana) help them to understand place value. Naturally, we also have a wide range of appropriate interactive online resources with meaningful graphics and highly motivating activities in addition to the collection of practical activities.

A FAVOURITE RESOURCE ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Asperger syndrome (AS), also known as Asperger's, is a developmental disorder characterised by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests.

Favourite resource - a book called 'Seeing through the Eyes of Another' by Lars Collmar.

This is an excellent book because it has 14 small chapters set within different everyday scenarios. Each situation is written through 2 different viewpoints, as the title implies, followed by questions from each perspective. This stimulates thought and discussion. There are no right or wrong answers. At the end there are questions to answer after both stories have been read. Hopefully at this stage the students are aware that not everybody thinks as they do and the opposing point of view is also very logical!

This thought provoking book teaches all students, but especially Aspergers students, to be more tolerant and not jump to conclusions, but rather look for what lies behind the opinion, behaviour and reactions.

e.g. 'Who can you trust', -discussion points - trust, freedom, guilt and suspicion.

'Computer Games' - discussion points - violence in games, consideration for others.

'Staying the Night' - honesty, trust, compromise, age of consent.



GROWTH MINDSET

RESEARCH BY CAROL DWECK

Carol Dweck, a professor at Stanford and the author of Mindset, studies motivation theory: asking what drives people to succeed, why people succeed (or not) and how we can foster success in others and ourselves. Her work is influential in education and increasingly followed in the business world, too. Dweck discusses the power of the word "yet" and how simply believing that you can improve impacts your ability to succeed.

Dweck describes a school in Chicago where students receive a new kind of grade if they don't pass a test: instead of an "F," they'll receive a "Not Yet." The latter fosters a "growth mindset," or an understanding that abilities can be developed, rather than a "fixed mindset," where skills and knowledge are thought of as static. Dweck explains that by framing low grades or mistakes as an opportunity to improve, instead of a final result, we provide ourselves and others with the confidence to continue learning — "yet" provides a path to the future.

"Praise wisely."

Instead of praising talent and intelligence, Dweck argues that we should praise the process: effort, strategy, focus, perseverance and improvement. Process praise, she explains, leads to more persistence and, ultimately, better results.

She references a study in which she partnered with game scientists at the University of Washington to create a new online maths game — while a typical game rewards players for correct answers, this game awarded players for their process. Dweck shares that the "process" players exhibited more effort, more strategies, more engagement and more perseverance when they hit hard problems.



READING ENRICHMENT

The resource I would like to share with everyone is the weekly magazine/newspaper entitled The Week. It is called The Week because it contains a very wide selection of articles from the week's newspapers. It has a standard format beginning with the main stories and telling us what the editorials and commentators said. There is a section written by the editor on a topic of interest to him personally and there are always three small columns which come under the heading of: It Wasn't All Bad, where good news is reported. This is followed by the controversy of the week and then there is little part on the spirit of the age and what's been measured in the polls recently. There is a section called Europe at a Glance followed by the World at a Glance, followed by articles about people who are in the news, then best articles Britain, best articles from America. There is then the most popular item for most students, the page entitled Health & Science. Then it gets to be a bit more gossipy, thence to something on the arts, latest books to be published, fiction and non-fiction, what is going on in London, theatre reviews and exhibitions and a business section.

Most of my work is with the older pupils and therefore much of the time is devoted to cross curricular support, however I usually like to include a space of time devoted to word recognition, word analysis, pronunciation and the broadening of vocabulary generally. In fact some research has shown that our range of active vocabulary has a bearing on overall intelligence. Naturally if we want to motivate our students to incorporate a broader range of vocabulary and an increased ability to spell the longer words, we need to choose subjects that are of interest to them.

I find The Week admirably suited to all these purposes. To begin with, there is such a broad range that it is highly likely there will be a topic of interest to the students. As I've said, this is often on the science and health page but by no means exclusively. Of course I get them to choose a topic so already they are taking some ownership of the way the lesson will go. I then get them to read aloud and at each point where they struggle, I stop the reading and we discuss the word in question. If it is a pronunciation problem we practise it. If it is a vocabulary problem we analyse the word. We look at its constituent parts. Quite often we look into the etymology of the word, searching on the Internet. I have found that when students, particularly the older and brighter ones, when they begin to see how a word has been built up over time from either Anglo-Saxon, Latin or other influence, they become more tolerant about the idiosyncratic way in which a lot of words are spelt. Sometimes I include the root Latin word and its meaning in order to facilitate the learning of groups of words. For example the prefix com or con, as we all know, means with or together. I then add the Latin word "fero" which means to do or to bear or carry, then it is quite easy to see how we have arrived at the word conference: to carry together, or if we know the word "panis" in Latin means bread and com means together, when we combine them we get companion which means of course: having bread together. There are many ways of grouping words. The word vox in Latin means voice or call. This can lead to a discussion of the words: invoke, revoke, provoke, invocation, and so on. Another example might be the prefix dis which means apart or departed from. Interestingly the prefix dis can be put with a word like aster (from which we get asterisk) which means a star so we get the word



READING ENRICHMENT CONT.

disaster meaning parted from your star. Another might be "traho" the Latin verb to draw or drag.

The past participle is "tractum" from which we derive tractor, retract, protract, detract, intractable, contract, this last meaning?... to draw together. When students can see the organic nature of the language, the way words grow, branch out and build up, it is more satisfying for them. And this is my main point. Many of our students very much appreciate structure and I think it is part of the problem for dyslexics and those on the autistic spectrum that in the spelling and make up of our language, they do not see structure. Once they begin to see structure they take an interest in words and their meaning and how their meaning has grown.

The other advantage of reading The Week is of course that they are being familiarised with current developments in science, current events, politics, all things which one would hope our students would be taking an interest in and beginning to form their own opinions about. Because a large part of the content comes from serious newspapers, two things follow: one is they get used to the style, or should I say the various styles, of the more serious newspapers and, two, they cease to be afraid to read them and to tackle the longer words in them. They are therefore incidentally developing themselves as citizens aware of the world around them.

All of my students have a vocab book where they put spellings and new words, which I test them on from time to time, the idea being that the broad range of vocabulary that they learn is not for passive understanding only, but will become part of their active vocabulary, words which they will use themselves.

I'm aware of the social problems involved in speaking with a broader range of vocabulary, particularly when you're in your teens but we always discuss this and I'm glad to say most of them give me the impression that they're able to rise above any negative reactions when they use what they have come to regard as the right word in the right place.



MULTI-SENSORY TEACHING

An idea I have used is to print out lyrics to a famous pop song - either old or new, or indeed a favourite of the pupil! Then use/play the song/ lyrics for a number of functions:

- For paired reading/comprehension.
- To identify specific phonic patterns/phonemes/graphemes.
- specific spelling and punctuation rules.
- syllable division.
- multisensory activities – listening/reading and identifying sounds/use of abbreviations/slang.
- poetic analysis - verse/stanza etc. The songs can also help with appreciation of historic/social events and political commentary for older pupils.

Eg – a good one for long vowels/homophones:

“The times are a changing” By Bob Dylan

Come gather around people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone
And if your breath to you is worth saving
Then you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changing

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no telling who that it's naming
For the loser now will be later to win
Cause the times they are a-changing

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's the battle outside raging

It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changing
Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
Cause the times they are a-changing

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slowest now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is rapidly fading
And the first one now will later be last
Cause the times they are a-changing



TEXT TO SPEECH

USING TEXT-TO-SPEECH WITH DYSLEXIC PUPILS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE GCSE EXAMS

Our aim at St David's College is to set a good example as an accessible school. All written material aimed at pupils should be accessible to those who can't read well because of their dyslexia or other SpLD.

With this in mind we have Texthelp's Read & Write software installed across the school network, and it can be installed on pupils' own laptops if wished. We also encourage those who need support with reading to use the built-in text-to-speech software on any Apple computers or other devices that they may have.

Read & Write can read aloud virtually any text if the appropriate tools and settings are used, so Word documents, Powerpoints, most PDFs, web pages and emails all become accessible and the Speak as I type tool enables pupils to check their own work. We have found that it is important, however, for pupils to get to know these settings and personalise them for their own needs. If the settings or voices are wrong for them, they may turn away from the software before they have fully explored its benefits.

Another important reason for practising with text-to-speech is the recent option of using it in GCSE English Language exams. Since 2013 computer reading has been an option, for those entitled to a reader, in the Reading section(s) of the papers, where many dyslexic candidates previously struggled.

As Malcolm Litten from the B.D.A. New Technologies Committee says, “The reasoning for allowing this access arrangement is that it is accepted that someone reading with the aid of text-to-speech is working independently. In exactly the same way as ... a blind person using a guide dog is acting independently when they go out into the world on their own, so is a person with dyslexia when they demonstrate their understanding of demanding, sophisticated text while using text-to-speech. Reading is far more than simply decoding”.

To use text-to-speech in an exam the centre should apply for a digital paper for the subject, which will be sent as a PDF, and must then put it on to candidates' exam areas. When used with Read & Write and Adobe, PDF Aloud will appear in the normal way via Extended in the top RH corner of the paper and can be used to read the passages as needed (other PDF reading systems may look different).

With Read & Write, exam settings for the software can be set up via the teacher's toolkit. Pupils should be confident in using PDF Aloud and should have gained experience of navigating an exam paper with it. There are several ways of using it; in our experience pupils with fairly fluent reading will need different settings from weaker readers; see the PDF Aloud video and/or Options below for suggested settings.

NB It is important for both pupils and anyone connected with setting up the exams to practise with past papers beforehand to minimise the chance of technical problems on the day (technical advice is available via videos or webinars from Texthelp). Our experience is that the extra effort is worth it, and the number of dyslexic pupils getting a grade C or above in GCSE English Language definitely increases!



MID-LINE EXERCISES

The Cadogan Department at St David's College is a place where we aim to provide pupils with a highly individualised learning experience. Our teachers possess a range of specialist qualifications together with a wealth of experience in teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties. Our holistic approach affords all our pupils the opportunity to achieve their potential in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

We place great importance on tailoring our teaching methods to meet the needs of each pupil, resulting in a highly individualised learning programme. Initial and ongoing standardised and non-standardised assessments, professional reports and pupil observations offer an insight into the pupil's needs and inform the detailed Cross-Curricular Individual Education Plan that is formulated thereafter. The Department works closely with the school's class teachers during this process, with class teachers evaluating and amending (where necessary) the C.C.I.E.P.s regularly throughout the year. The pupil's subject teachers refer closely to the targets on the C.C.I.E.P. when planning for differentiation.

1:1 sessions are centred on a multisensory approach to learning and use a combination of games, I.T., exercises and paper-based work – working to achieve every pupil's individual targets. We place great importance on using assistive technology as a learning tool throughout the year groups. This complements trusted traditional teaching methods and ensures an effective and modern approach to our Additional Learning Needs provision at St David's College.

A SPECIFIC

The term 'midline' refers to an imaginary line running from our brain to our feet, separating the body's left from its right. Since the brain has a bilateral functionality, it must transfer and share information from one side to the other and use the brain as a whole, in order to make sense of the information we take in. Crossing the midline of the body is vital to build pathways in the brain and is an important prerequisite for reading, writing, tying shoes and most athletic activities. Reading and writing both require that you start on the left side of a page and cross over the midline to finish on the right side. If a pupil cannot smoothly cross their midline, their eyes and brain, will skip in the middle causing them to lose their place, or train of thought. Many pupils with dyslexia are unable to effectively cross their midline. This barrier is a contributing factor for learners who are disorganised, unable to complete tasks, or uncoordinated. Poor mid-line crossing will affect how your child reads (tracking with the eye from left to right) and writes (using their dominate hand across the writing page).

There is evidence to support that exercises in crossing the midline can help to develop a pupil's bilateral abilities and this may benefit attention and concentration.

Since I usually have more than one lesson with each pupil in the course of a week, I find it an ideal opportunity to use some simple activities – just for a couple of minutes - at the start of each lesson, designed to improve a pupil's ability to cross their midline and with the intention of helping them to improve their reading, writing and other aspects of their daily life.

At the start of each lesson we always do a written midline exercise; in a book, a large piece



MID-LINE EXERCISES CONT.

of paper on the wall or just with fingers in the air. Sometimes it will be a figure of eight, sometimes it will be two halves of a picture but always, it will involve crossing the midline. Other exercises include rolling two pieces of playdoh into a ball on the table, with opposite directions and another favourite is the cross crawl, where you march in place while touching the opposite hand or elbow to the opposite knee – slowly and purposefully. There are all sorts of lesson starters you can use to challenge the midline. There are lots of resources online to dip into and adapt to suit each individual pupil. Here are just a few:



Lazy 8 Exercises

Using "Lazy-8"'s has long been a popular way to help a child to cross the midline. Vertical surfaces work best - use a blackboard, whiteboard or even an outside wall!



Make sure your child is positioned in the center of the "lazy 8" and has one hand on the board/paper for stability.



Rubbing It Out

Let your child rub out the "Lazy 8" with a scrubbing brush or large sponge. Using both hands and moving the brush/sponge in all directions, will subtly help your child to cross the midline with both hands.



Shaving Cream

A bit messy, but lots of fun... rubbing shaving cream on a wall with both hands, and then using the hands one on top of the other to draw a large circle or loop, will help your child to cross the midline with both hands.