



Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy



The Stour Federation

1. CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING AND BELONGING



In The Stour Federation, we believe that just as a gardener creates the best conditions for plants to grow, great teachers create the best conditions for learning.

We are dedicated to providing a well-rounded education that goes unreasonably beyond academic outcomes. Our RESPECT values are fundamental to our approach, grounded in the belief that every individual deserves the opportunity to live 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). We see each person as unique and precious, striving for the best for everyone and working collectively for the common good.

2. OUR DRIVERS

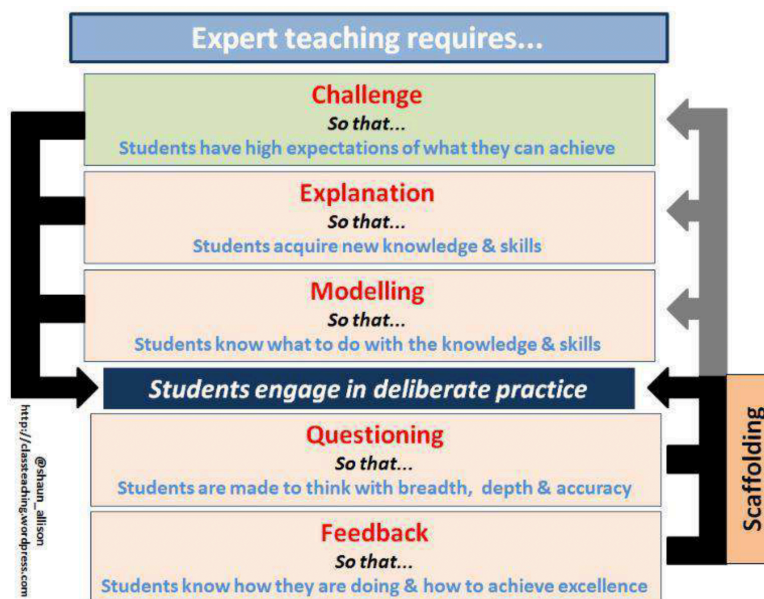
Our approach to teaching and learning is driven by interconnected drivers aimed at achieving human flourishing for all:



- **Wellbeing and Learning:** We believe happy, healthy children learn best, especially when staff are flourishing. Our curriculum is designed to spark curiosity and ignite a passion for learning, underpinned by an ethic of excellence where everyone strives for their personal best.
- **Human Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence:** We leverage technology thoughtfully to enhance learning, while crucially developing uniquely human skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, infused with hospitality, love, and connection.
- **Equity-Equality Investments:** We are committed to an equitable education for all, making strategic investments to address individual needs and close achievement gaps, championing dignity and respect for every child. Our Inclusion Strategy ensures every child, regardless of Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), is valued and celebrated.
- **Systemness:** We are stronger together, sharing best practices and continuously improving through collaboration across our Trust.

3. OUR PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Our pedagogical principles are based on 'Making Every Lesson Count' and 'An Ethic of Excellence' to ensure that great teaching leads to genuine learning. Along with 'Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction', these aim to lead children towards independence and celebrating excellence:



Challenge: Provide work that requires appropriate struggle and highest expectations to move children beyond their best.

Explanation: Clearly convey new, complex ideas by making them concrete.

(Live) Modelling: Demonstrate procedures and thought processes, making implicit decision-making explicit and modelling what excellence looks like.

Practice: Ensure consistent retrieval and deliberate practice to build secure memory and move towards independence and excellence.

Feedback: Provide regular, individual, and whole-class feedback to guide children, and receive feedforward to modify future work.

Questioning: Use questioning to test understanding, address misconceptions, and promote deeper thought.

4. DEEP LEARNING

We aim to empower children with the knowledge, skills & literacies, and attitudes & dispositions needed to be a force for good. Our focus is on developing **six global competencies (6Cs)**: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. These competencies are essential for preparing children for the challenges of the 21st century, fostering positive mental health, and levelling the playing field for disadvantaged backgrounds.

Oracy, defined as the ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding, and engage with others through spoken language, is a powerful tool for learning. By teaching children to be more effective speakers and listeners, we empower them to better understand themselves, each other, and the

world around them. It is also a crucial pathway to social mobility, enabling all children to find their voice to succeed in school and life. We firmly believe that high-quality oracy education, focusing on these vital skills of speaking and listening, is an entitlement for every child, and we are committed to ensuring systemic access to and excellence in spoken language development across our schools.

We explicitly teach **metacognition**, helping children become aware of how they learn, adapt their learning, and apply strategies. This includes the "plan, monitor, evaluate" cycle, which teachers model consistently.

Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development is integral to all learning, reflecting our commitment to nurturing ethical, responsible, and well-rounded citizens. We actively foster spiritual depth by cultivating their ability to reflect on their own beliefs and values, inspiring imagination and creativity, and igniting a sense of wonder and connection to themselves, others, and the wider world. Through varied experiences, we instill respect for diverse perspectives and a strong understanding of British Values, equipping every child to live life in all its fullness.

We strive to cultivate **intrinsic motivation**, encouraging children to learn because they are curious and genuinely enjoy it, find it interesting, or it provides personal satisfaction, rather than for an external reward. While praise and rewards can be used, they are delivered prudently and should emphasise process.

5. EXPECTATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Teachers and Teaching Assistants: You are expected to live our Trust values, model the 6Cs, be positive role models, deliver high-quality, engaging teaching, and recognise the unique needs of every child. Professional and personal development, collaboration, and contributing positively to wider school life are key.

Parents: We build strong, collaborative partnerships, expecting parents to ensure regular attendance, punctuality, and to reinforce learning at home.

Children: Pupils are expected to come to school ready to learn, work hard, and show respect to themselves and others.

6. CURRICULUM PRINCIPLES

Our curriculum is meticulously designed to ensure deep learning. It is ambitious, relevant, broad, balanced, and accessible for all, aspiring beyond the National Curriculum.

1. **Integrated Wellbeing and Learning:** Our curriculum integrates wellbeing and learning, offering an inclusive, all-round education that develops academic, non-academic, life, and character skills to build resilience and intrinsic motivation.
2. **Four Learning Stages:** Learning is structured through four research-backed stages: Engage (stimulate curiosity), Develop (deepen understanding), Innovate (apply knowledge), and Express (reflect and celebrate).
3. **Reading at its Heart:** Reading is central, prioritising early literacy and fostering a love for books as 'windows' (new worlds), 'mirrors' (familiar experiences), and 'sliding doors' (immersive stories).
4. **Ambitious, Broad, and Balanced:** Our curriculum is ambitious, broad, and balanced,

- extending beyond National Curriculum minimums with rich 'beyond the classroom' experiences to foster high aspirations and academic excellence.
5. **Progression Model for Learning:** The curriculum acts as our progression model for wellbeing and learning, ensuring coherent, interlinked lessons that help children retain knowledge and make connections over time.
 6. **Accessible for All:** The curriculum is accessible for all, with teachers committed to equality and making adaptations to ensure every child, including those most disadvantaged or with SEND, can engage and progress. Some children have an alternative curriculum as stated in their EHCP.
 7. **Continually Evolving:** The curriculum is continually evolving, driven by a growth mindset and ongoing teacher reflection to stimulate, challenge, and promote a love of learning.
 8. **Active Global Citizens:** We foster active local, national, and global citizens using the 6Cs framework (character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking) to develop well-rounded individuals of moral and spiritual depth.
 9. **Responsible and Values-Driven:** The curriculum is responsible for keeping children safe, promoting physical and mental health, and instilling fundamental British values (democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance) to prepare them as active citizens.
 10. **Guardians of the Planet:** The curriculum empowers children to be guardians of the planet by providing climate education focused on nature, climate change, and sustainability.

7. PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

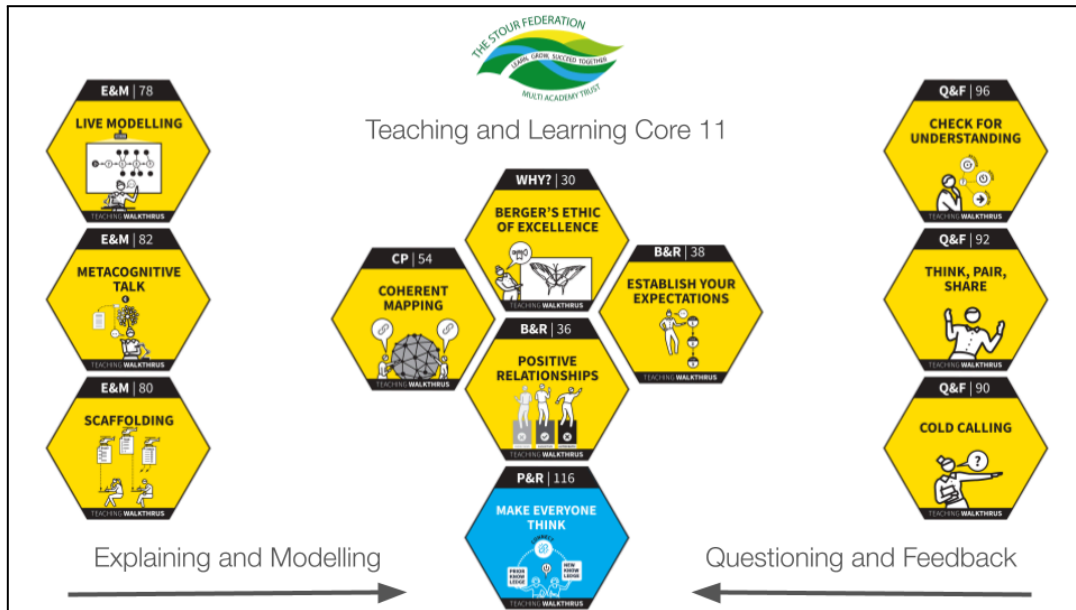
The best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve pupil attainment. Ensuring every teacher is supported in delivering high-quality teaching is essential to achieving the best outcomes for all children, particularly the most disadvantaged among them.

Securing [strong foundations in the Early Years and Key Stage 1](#) is paramount for ensuring every child's long-term educational success and wellbeing. Our curriculum in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 clearly identifies and prioritises foundational knowledge and skills, avoiding an overload of activities that leaves crucial learning to chance. Sufficient practice opportunities are essential to build fluency and embed foundational knowledge in children's long-term memory. Teaching methods are carefully chosen to suit the specific content and respond to children's diverse starting points, skillfully balancing direct instruction with well-planned play that develops language and executive function. Effective assessment is crucial to swiftly identify misunderstandings and inform early intervention. We are committed to proactively adapting our curriculum and pedagogy to ensure all children, especially those with lower starting points, receive equitable opportunities for learning, fostering strong language development, executive functioning, and positive behaviour as integral components of their foundational education.

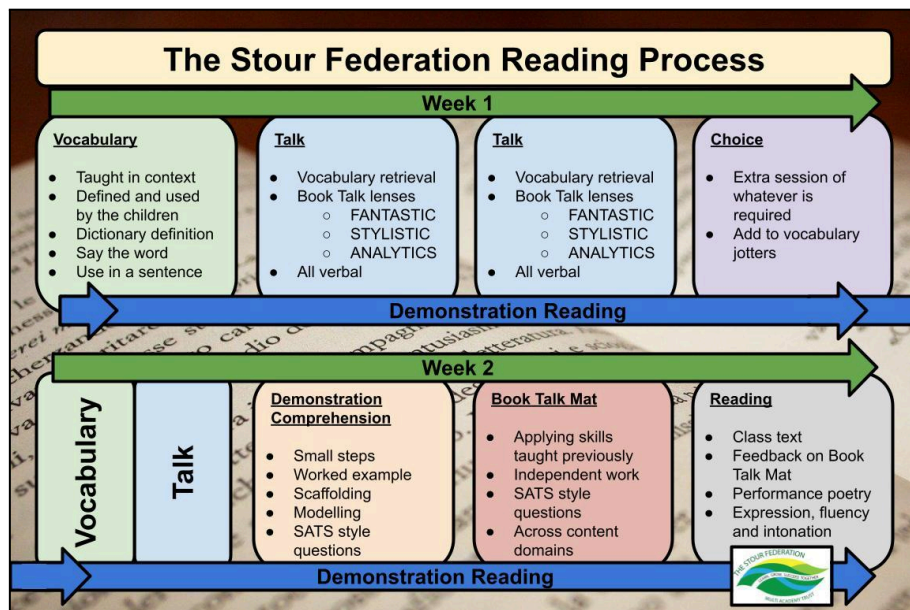
Our teaching practice must be evidence-informed, ensuring teachers have deep subject and pedagogical content knowledge. Classrooms are open, friendly, and communication-friendly environments where children are not afraid to ask questions or admit mistakes. We focus on careful information presentation, immediate success, deliberate and purposeful practice, and responsive teaching to address misconceptions. We use repeated quizzing for long-term learning and introduce desirable difficulties.

The Stour Federation has identified our [Core 11](#) key teaching strategies from the broader [Teaching WalkThrus](#) framework that have been identified as particularly high-impact and widely applicable. They include fundamental strategies that address common teaching challenges and contribute

significantly to student learning.



The Stour Federation has designed evidence-informed consistent processes for the teaching of reading, writing and maths, which are strongly recommended to all schools in the Academy Trust as they align with the Department for Education's [Reading Framework](#) and [Writing Framework](#), and Ofsted [subject report](#) and [research review](#) for maths.

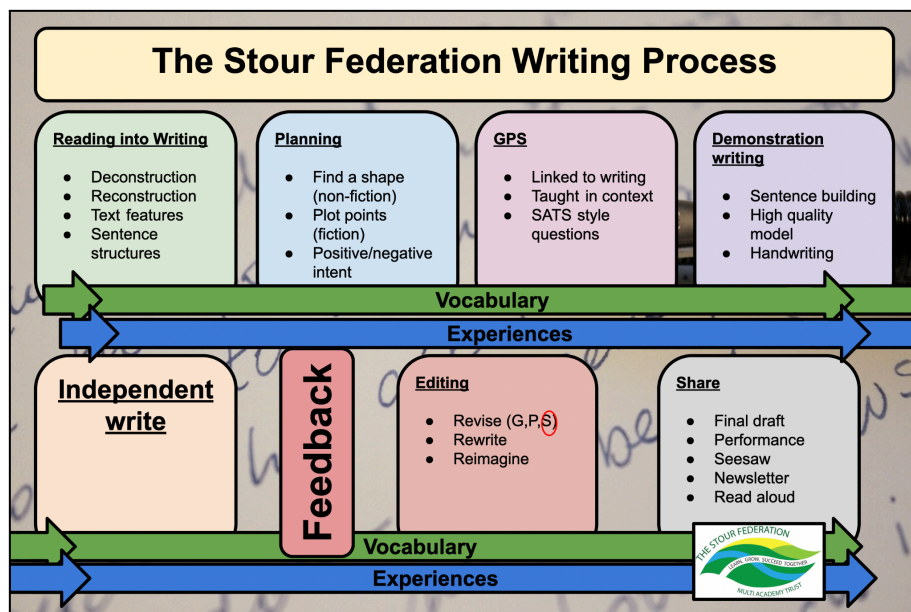


Our reading curriculum and culture helps every child become a confident, enthusiastic reader, able to access the whole curriculum and reach their full potential. We believe reading is fundamental to success in all areas of life. Our approach is based on The [DfE Reading Framework](#), which views reading as a combination of language comprehension and word reading.

- **Developing Language Comprehension:** We immerse children in high-quality texts, including stories, poems, rhymes, and songs, from an early age. Daily opportunities for talk and exposure to varied language structures help children develop a broad vocabulary and understand what they hear and read.
- **Mastering Word Reading (Decoding):** Daily, explicit phonics instruction starts in

Reception. Pupils learn grapheme-phoneme correspondences, blending, and segmenting. They practice these skills with decodable books that align with their phonics knowledge, building accuracy and automaticity. Handwriting is also linked to spelling.

- **Nurturing Fluency:** Consistent re-reading and teacher modelling of expressive reading help pupils develop reading speed and accuracy. This reduces the cognitive load, allowing them to focus on comprehension. As pupils become more fluent, their motivation to read increases.
- **Cultivating Reading for Pleasure:** We foster a love of reading by exposing children to a wide range of literature and providing time for independent reading. Teachers recommend books and create a culture where reading for pleasure is highly valued, as it's strongly linked to academic achievement and wider knowledge.
- **Targeted Support:** We provide timely and targeted interventions for pupils needing extra support. Well-trained adults offer additional daily practice to ensure all children keep pace, with early identification for those struggling with decoding or fluency.
- **Reading Across the Curriculum:** Reading is integrated across all subjects, recognising that strong comprehension relies on broad background knowledge. All teachers support pupils in accessing subject-specific texts and vocabulary, contributing to overall reading development.

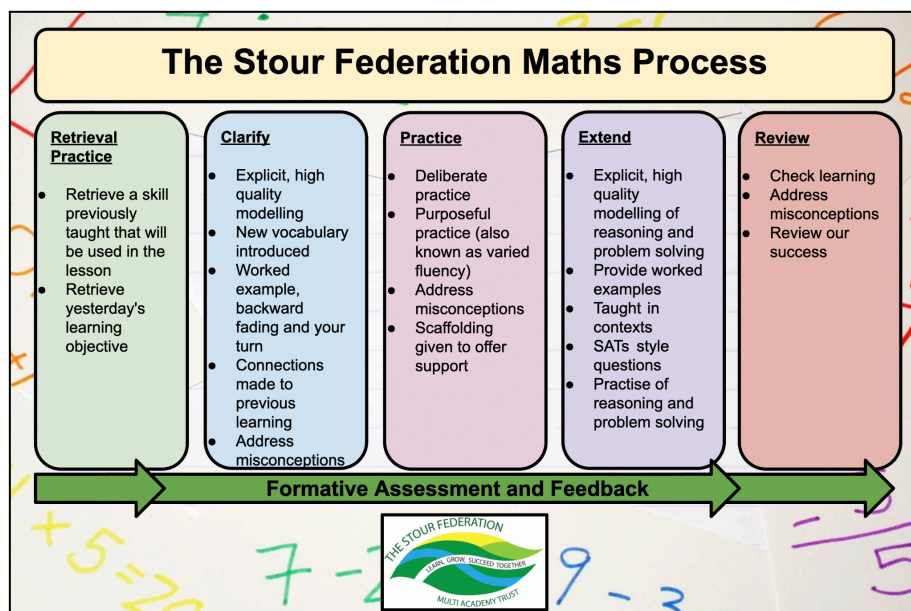


Our writing curriculum helps all children find their voice and express themselves clearly. Our approach is based on the [DfE Writing Framework](#), which sees writing as the combination of **transcription** (spelling and handwriting) and **composition** (vocabulary, grammar, and structuring ideas). Strong transcription skills free up working memory, allowing pupils to focus on their thoughts. We always start the writing journey by exploring high-quality texts, as reading and writing are deeply connected.

- **Reading into Writing:** Pupils deconstruct and reconstruct texts to understand different writing structures and author techniques. This provides models for their own writing and builds a broad reading repertoire.
- **Planning:** This vital phase focuses on generating and organizing ideas, setting clear goals, and considering the purpose and audience for their writing. This preparation helps manage the cognitive load of composition.
- **Transcription Mastery:** We prioritise daily, explicit handwriting instruction from Reception for automaticity, fluency, and legibility, covering posture and pencil grip. Systematic

spelling instruction begins with phonics and progresses to orthography, morphology, and etymology. Dictation is a frequent tool for spelling application and reducing cognitive overload.

- **Composition Focus:** Mastering sentences is key to teaching composition, often starting with oral composition before writing. Grammar and Punctuation (GPS) are taught in context, enabling pupils to apply grammatical knowledge for clear meaning and precise vocabulary choices.
- **Demonstration Writing:** Teachers model their thought processes and writing strategies through sentence building and providing high-quality examples. This includes shared writing, where pupils collaborate with the teacher to construct texts.
- **Independent Write:** Pupils get ample opportunities to apply their developing skills independently, fostering self-reliance and consolidating their learning.
- **Revising and Editing:** These are distinct, challenging phases where pupils enhance content and structure (revising) and accuracy in grammar, punctuation, and spelling (editing). Regular, specific, and actionable feedback, often oral, is crucial for guiding improvements.
- **Share:** The writing process ends with sharing final drafts through various mediums like performances, Seesaw, newsletters, and read-alouds. This reinforces the purpose of writing and celebrates pupils' achievements as authors.



Our Maths Process at The Stour Federation aims to build mathematical fluency, reasoning, and problem-solving using evidence-based teaching.

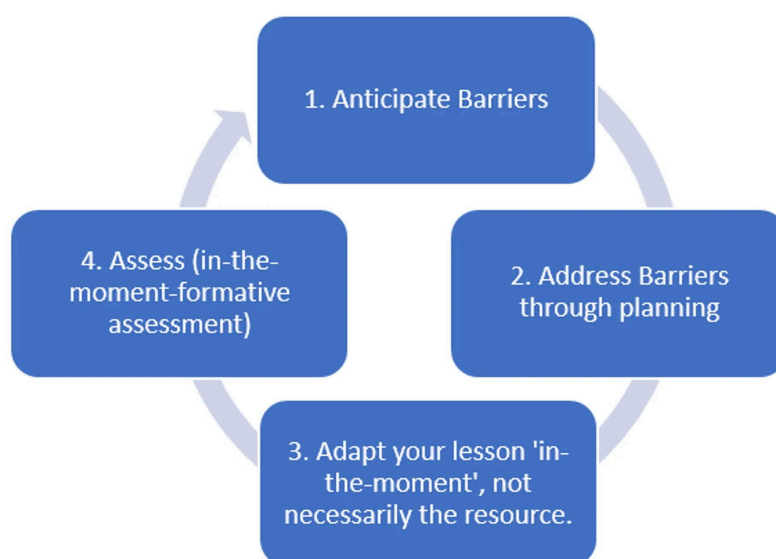
- **Retrieval Practice:** We regularly use retrieval practice to strengthen memory and promote automatic recall of facts and procedures. This frees up working memory for new learning.
- **Clarify:** New concepts are introduced through explicit instruction and high-quality modelling. We break down complex ideas into small, manageable steps and use worked examples with backward fading to address misconceptions.
- **Practice:** Children then engage in deliberate and purposeful practice to achieve automaticity and overlearning. This embeds procedural fluency in long-term memory and reduces cognitive overload.
- **Extend:** This phase focuses on reasoning and problem-solving. We explicitly model and practice these higher-order skills, applying them only after pupils are secure in the underlying facts and methods.

- **Review:** We check understanding, address persistent misconceptions, and provide formative assessment and feedback to continually refine learning.

8. LESSON PLANNING

Teachers plan sequences of lessons using a "backwards design" approach, starting with clear learning outcomes. In the context of lean lesson planning this means two things:

- Starting planning with the question: what do I want ALL my children to have learnt by the end of the lesson?
- Spending more time on this activity than you think you should.



Teachers must plan **sequences of lessons** which clearly link into each school's long and medium term plans. Staff are encouraged to use slide presentations as their plans for sequences of lessons, utilising the 'presenter notes' section and amending slides as the lesson progresses. We call this 'Smart planning'.

Teachers must utilise **spacing** and **interleaving** approaches in their planning. Learning is better when two or more exposures to the information are separated in time (spaced apart) compared to when the same number of exposures occur back-to-back. The **spacing** of the sessions causes students to begin the process of forgetting the material, which lowers the retrieval strength. Therefore, when retrieval is induced at a later date, the material benefits from a larger boost in storage strength. **Interleaving** is where students practise all of the problems in an order that is more random and less predictable. The latter approach has been found to enhance learning and transfer. Interleaving naturally produces spacing.

A single **Learning Intention** needs to be precise and discussed with the class to frame their learning and ensure high expectations.

9. DIFFERENTIATION AND ADAPTIVE TEACHING

In our approach to teaching and learning, we distinguish between traditional **differentiation** and responsive adaptive teaching. While differentiation has historically involved pre-planned

adjustments to curriculum and resources based on perceived pupil needs, this can lead to fixed activities and predetermined categories that may not fully address the evolving needs of learners. Such an approach can sometimes be less effective on its own, particularly for children who are struggling.

Feature	Differentiation	Adaptive Teaching
Focus	Pre-planned variations	Real-time responsiveness
Timing	Primarily before the lesson	During the lesson
Grouping	Often relies on predetermined groups	More flexible, responsive to individual needs
Assessment	Used for initial planning	Integral for ongoing monitoring and adjustment
Materials & activities	Varied but often pre-selected	Adaptable based on pupil response
Teacher role	Primarily instructor/facilitator	Responsive expert, adjusting to pupil needs

Adaptive teaching involves adjusting our teaching in real-time, based on the identified needs of all children as they emerge during a lesson. This requires continuous monitoring of pupil understanding and engagement, allowing teachers and teaching assistants to make informed decisions about methods, resources, and activities in the moment. This flexible approach recognises the dynamic nature of learning and ensures that the quality of adaptations genuinely supports individual progress. This responsive method has proven positive effects on both academic and non-academic outcomes, promoting a more effective and sustainable workload by focusing on responding to learning as it unfolds, rather than extensive pre-planning of multiple, separate activities.

High quality teaching benefits pupils with SEND

The 'Five-a-day' principle

The research underpinning the EEF's guidance report 'Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools' indicates that supporting high quality teaching improves outcomes for pupils with SEND. Five specific approaches—the 'Five-a-day' indicated below—are particularly well-evidenced as having a positive impact. Teachers should develop a repertoire of these strategies, which they can use daily and flexibly in response to individual needs, using them as the starting point for classroom teaching for all pupils, including those with SEND.

- 1 Explicit instruction**
Teacher-led approaches with a focus on clear explanations, modelling and frequent checks for understanding. This is then followed by guided practice, before independent practice.
- 2 Cognitive and metacognitive strategies**
Managing cognitive load is crucial if new content is to be transferred into students' long-term memory. Provide opportunities for students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.
- 3 Scaffolding**
When students are working on a written task, provide a supportive tool or resource such as a writing frame or a partially completed example. Aim to provide less support of this nature throughout the course of the lesson, week or term.
- 4 Flexible grouping**
Allocate groups temporarily, based on current level of mastery. This could, for example, be a group that comes together to get some additional spelling instruction based on current need, before re-joining the main class.
- 5 Using technology**
Technology can be used by a teacher to model worked examples; it can be used by a student to help them to learn, to practice and to record their learning. For instance, you might use a class visualiser to share students' work or to jointly rework an incorrect model.

More information about finding better ways to support pupils with SEND, including these five principles and more specialist interventions, can be found in the EEF's guidance report 'Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools'.

Accessible design

For teachers & schools

v1 APR25

✓ Do...

- Use sans serif fonts (eg. Arial)
- Use generous line spacing (eg. 1.5)
- Use left-aligned text

✗ Avoid...

- Avoid styled fonts (eg. Comic Sans)
- Avoid underlining, italics & upper case
- Use bold sparingly

- Use dark text on pale backgrounds
- Keep handwriting legible and big enough to read

- Avoid coloured font on coloured, textured, or smudged backgrounds (esp red/green combos)

- Use consistent slide/booklet design
- Highlight key points & use hierarchy
- Use whitespace liberally

- Avoid large blocks of text on slides
- Remove redundant words and images (eg. decorative graphics)

- Speak at a measured pace
- Use economy of language, pauses for processing & repetition for memory

- Avoid using ambiguous or complex language (eg. idioms)
- Don't digress

- Use simple & predictable pedagogical patterns (eg. I-We-You)
- Chunk instructions

- Don't force students to hold instructions in their heads
- Reduce distractions

For more, visit [pepsmccrea.com](https://www.pepsmccrea.com)

To effectively implement adaptive teaching and ensure inclusive and excellent outcomes for all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), we integrate a

consistent **"5-a-day" adaptive teaching approach**. This involves teachers planning and preparing for the needs of all learners in the class so they have the correct scaffolding and resources prepared before the lesson as part of their universal provision. Teachers and teaching assistants can then adapt as they go using practices such as activating prior knowledge, using targeted questioning, providing responsive feedback, and thoughtfully adapting instruction. By embracing these strategies, we ensure that every child, including those with SEND, is provided with appropriate support rather than reducing expectations, while maintaining access to challenging work.

Accessible design is a proactive mindset that enables us to create inclusive lessons that are usable for the widest range of children from the outset. This means ensuring our teaching is perceivable, understandable, and doable by all, thereby reducing the need for individual adaptations later. This approach strongly aligns with The Stour Federation's commitment to equity and inclusion, ensuring every child, including those with SEND, is valued and can engage fully with the curriculum.

By embedding accessible design from the start, we not only ease the adaptation burden on teachers but also benefit all children, fostering engagement and reducing frustration, complementing our adaptive teaching strategies to prepare necessary scaffolding and resources as universal provision.

10. IMPROVING TEACHING, LEARNING AND CURRICULUM

We foster continuous improvement through various strategies:

- **Teaching WalkThrus:** Used for instructional coaching and self-directed learning, creating a common reference point for shared understanding and rapid development.
- **Collective Teacher Efficacy:** We actively encourage staff collaboration and a shared belief that we directly impact children's learning, knowing this is the number one influence on pupil learning.
- **Coaching:** Underpins our strategic ambitions, fostering empowerment, collective growth, and relational trust through skillful dialogue and active listening, supporting staff development into future leaders.
- **Communities of Practice (CoPs):** Foster deep collaboration, sharing of ideas, and development of expertise across the Trust, boosting morale and driving innovation.
- **Digital Champions:** Empower staff to confidently integrate digital technology and AI into teaching, supporting colleagues and fostering innovation.
- **Regular Lesson Explorations:** Senior leaders conduct short focused observations with prompt feedback and return visits to drive rapid pedagogical improvement.
- **Pupil Book Study:** Used to evaluate the quality of education by studying pupil work and talking with children, providing insights into curriculum structure, knowledge acquisition, vocabulary, and feedback effectiveness.