SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: USING THE GTT TO BUILD INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
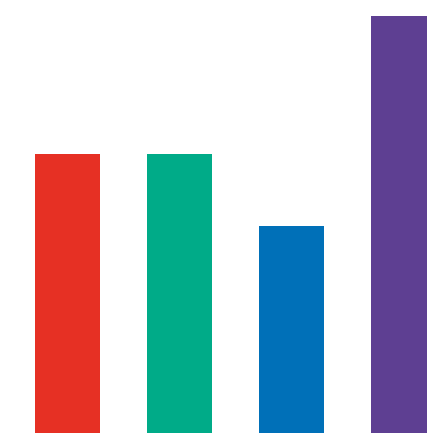
GTT
Great Teaching Toolkit

Evidence Based Education

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SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

If you are looking to improve inclusive practice and provision for pupils with special educational needs in your school, one of the key documents teachers should be aware of is this Guidance Report published by the Education Endowment Foundation. It draws on the best available evidence to set out five key recommendations for mainstream schools seeking to improve their provision for pupils with SEND.

These recommendations are summarised below and can also be found here.

1 Create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils, without exception

2 Build an ongoing, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs

3 Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching

4 Complement high-quality teaching with carefully selected small-group and one-to-one interventions

5 Working effectively with teaching assistants

High-quality teaching is likely to be the most effective way to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and this is where we believe we should focus our attention. There is no magical set of strategies to support pupils with SEND. In fact, teachers often already have the most powerful and effective strategies within their repertoire. What they should focus on is adapting these based on the individual needs of the students they teach.

Of course, there are some specific strategies and adaptations that work well for students with a particular learning need, for example learners with autism, and you may be directed to use these by a specialist. However, the evidence tells us that it is quality classroom teaching that has the potential to make the biggest difference.

The report suggests that great teaching should be underpinned by a deep understanding of the needs of individual pupils; a culture of high expectations for all and classrooms that foster positive relationships.

Schools should ensure that time spent outside of the classroom on interventions is meaningful and effective. There should also be a strong focus on upskilling and empowering the adults who work to support children with special educational needs on a daily basis, through one-to-one interaction or as part of group interventions.

This document highlights some of the ways in which you can use The Great Teaching Toolkit to develop knowledge and understanding of inclusive practice and enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs in your school. There is a strong argument for choosing this as an area for development as we know that, to a great extent, good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all.

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1

CREATE A POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PUPILS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION

- Promote positive relationships

- Promote active engagement

- Promote wellbeing

- Provide access to the best possible teaching

- Promote positive approaches to classroom behaviour

WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS...

Creating a positive and supportive environment for all pupils means placing support for pupils with SEND at the heart of school priorities—being inclusive by design. This approach to pupils with SEND should be reinforced in the language, activities, routines, and strategies across the classroom as well as whole-school settings.

An inclusive environment does not come by accident, it is achieved through design. Furthermore, it is imperative that leaders embed this culture proactively.

There is strong evidence that a proactive, positive, and supportive approach to behaviour will benefit all pupils and can reduce the amount of challenging behaviour they exhibit.
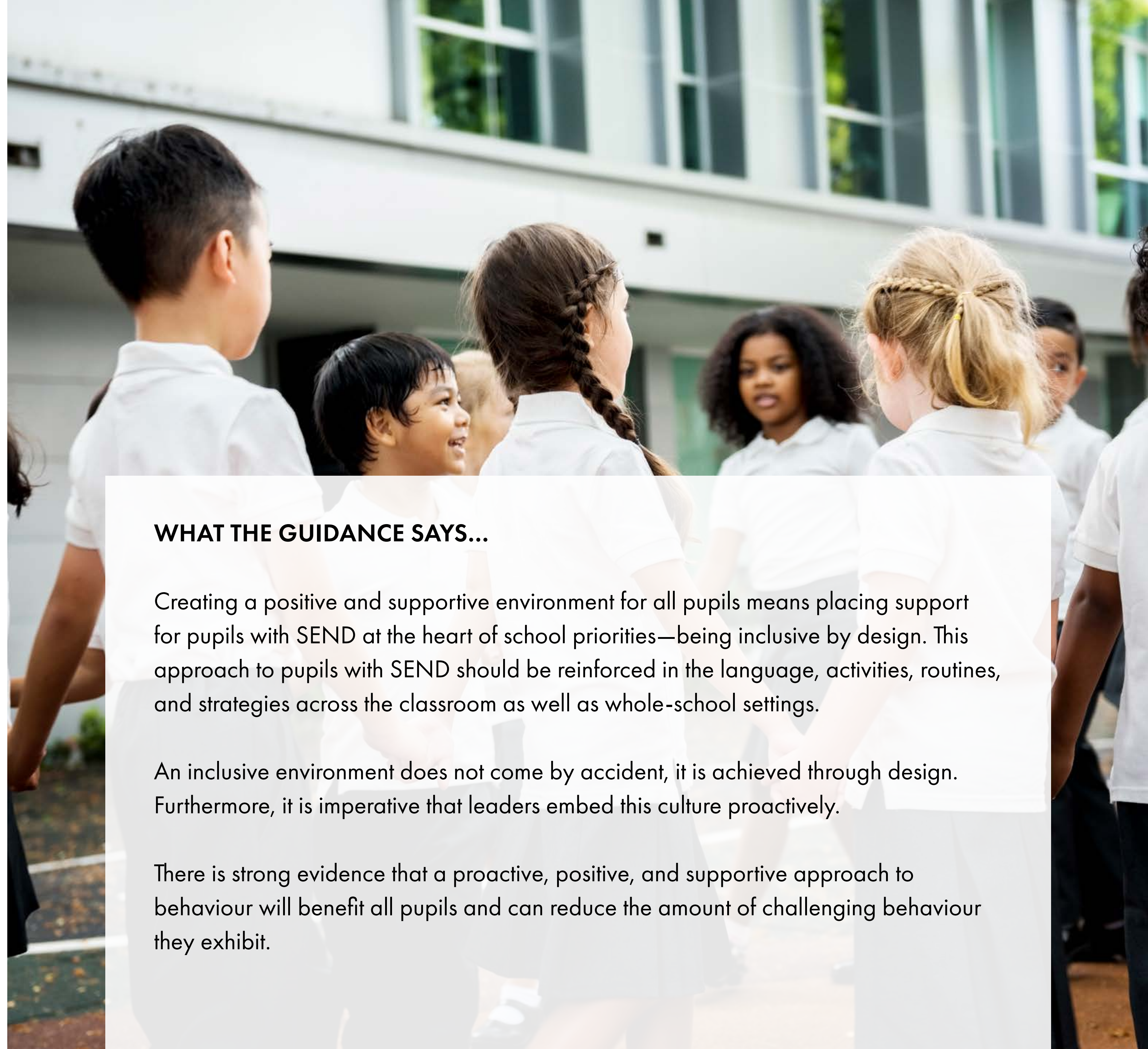
- What would a truly inclusive school look/feel like?

- How is a culture of inclusion fostered in this school? Who is responsible for this?

- Do teachers in this school believe that good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all?

- Do you think inclusion is embedded in the behaviour expectations and policies in this school?

- What could we do to ensure that all pupils are exposed to as much high-quality teaching as possible, especially those with SEND?

- What systems or strategies are in place to measure and monitor how pupils feel about their learning and being in school?

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`2.1` `2.2` `3.2` `3.3`

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES WITHIN THE GTT PLATFORM:**

COURSES: **Dimension 2:** Creating a supportive environment
Dimension 3: Maximising opportunity to learn
Behaviour and Culture Programme (for middle/senior leaders)

RESOURCES: Explore resources linked to elements: 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3

RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOUND IN THE GREAT TEACHING TOOLKIT COURSES:

Dimension 2: Creating a supportive environment

- Compassionate consistency
- Avoiding negative emotions in interactions with students (scripting)
- Logical and moral exceptions
- Culturally relevant teaching
- Clear behaviour expectations
- Autonomous motivation
- Rewards and sanctions
- Setting ambitious goals
- Powerful feedback
- Effective praise
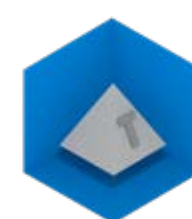
Dimension 3: Maximising opportunity to learn

- Effective seating plans
- Explicit teaching of routines
- Clear expectations around rules and routines
- Anticipating disruptive behaviour (scripting)
- Signalling awareness
- Targeted approaches to challenging behaviour
- Positive reinforcement

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2 **BUILD AN ONGOING, HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR PUPILS AND THEIR NEEDS**

- Understand individual pupils' learning needs using the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' approach (The 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle - West Sussex County Council and Assess, plan, do, review: The graduated approach to SEN)

- Assessment should be regular and purposeful (and include teachers, parents, pupils and specialists)

- Teachers are empowered and trusted to use the information they collect to make decisions about next steps

WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS...

Understanding pupils and their learning needs is essential if schools are to effectively support pupils to make progress, and is especially important for pupils with SEND.

It is important to acknowledge that there is so much to know about SEND that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to become experts in every aspect of such a broad and varied field. The focus, instead, should be on learning the skills required to understand pupils and their learning needs, gaining the confidence to make decisions based on observations and experience, and knowing when to seek specialist support.

There is a strong consensus across America and England that a structured process of formative assessment is a sound logic model for identifying, and then addressing, learning needs. The process needs to be repeated regularly as pupils' development is not linear and pupils' needs will vary in patterns of development over time.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

- Do you believe that teachers in this school have high expectations for all pupils? How can you be sure?

- Is it possible that unconscious bias leads teachers in this school to have lower expectations for their pupils with SEND?

- What are the most important things that a teacher should know about their pupils with SEND?

- Does regular, purposeful assessment take place for all pupils with SEND, linked to their individual goals?

- To what extent do we consult parents and specialists when making decisions about next steps for individual pupils?

- Do you think all teachers feel confident making decisions about next steps for pupils with SEND? How could they be supported to do this?

- Do teachers in this school have a strong understanding of the types of feedback that will have the greatest impact on pupil progress?

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`2.1` `2.3` `2.4`

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES WITHIN THE GTT PLATFORM:

COURSES: **Dimension 2:** Creating a supportive environment
            Behaviour and Culture Programme (for middle/senior leaders)
            Assessment Lead Programme (for middle/senior leaders)

RESOURCES: Explore resources linked to elements: 2.1, 2.3, 2.4

RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOUND IN THE GREAT TEACHING TOOLKIT COURSES:

Dimension 2: Creating a supportive environment

- Compassionate consistency
- Avoiding negative emotions in interactions with students (scripting)
- Logical and moral exceptions
- Culturally relevant teaching
- Clear behaviour expectations
- Autonomous motivation

- Rewards and sanctions
- Setting ambitious goals
- Powerful feedback
- Effective praise

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3

ENSURE ALL PUPILS HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING

- Good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all

- Teachers already have many powerful strategies – there is no 'magic bullet'

- Key group of teaching strategies: flexible grouping; cognitive and metacognitive strategies; explicit instruction; using technology and scaffolding

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WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS...

The evidence review for this guidance report identified a strong relationship between high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND and strategies that will either already be in the repertoire of every mainstream teacher or can be relatively easily added to it.

Flexible grouping

Recent research on the experience of pupils with an EHC plan found that they are often grouped together in classes with other pupils identified with SEND or considered as low-attaining and are segregated from the rest of their peers. Research has suggested that streaming can be detrimental to some pupils' learning and may have longer term negative effects on attitudes and engagement with education.

Cognitive and Metacognitive strategies

Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge. They should explicitly teach metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. They must regularly model thinking and promote metacognitive talk in the classroom. Teachers should set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition and schools should support teachers to develop knowledge of those approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately.

Explicit instruction

This includes teaching skills and concepts in small steps; using examples and non-examples; using clear and unambiguous language; anticipating and planning for common misconceptions; highlighting essential content and removing distracting information.

Using technology to support pupils with SEND

For pupils with SEND, technology can be a useful tool for supporting teaching. Successful approaches could include using:

- instructional apps—apps that provide instruction
- non-instructional apps—apps that provide tools to aid learning, such as note-taking apps
- speech-generating apps to augment the communication skills of pupils with communication difficulties.

Scaffolding

'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. Initially, a teacher would provide enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently. This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the pupil's current capabilities. Support could be visual, verbal, or written.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

• Do teachers in this school spend time developing their knowledge of evidence-based strategies? Are they given opportunities to adapt these strategies based on the needs of the pupils in their class/es?

• How much time do children with SEND spend outside of the classroom environment?

• How do teachers group pupils for learning activities in this school?

• Are all teachers encouraged to develop and reflect on their own practice?

• Are all teachers provided with professional development opportunities focused on pedagogy?

• Do teachers in this school have a strong understanding of scaffolding and when it should be reduced or removed?

• Do teachers in this school have a strong understanding of cognitive load theory and how this applies to pupils with SEND?

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1.3 **1.4** **4**

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES WITHIN THE GTT PLATFORM:

COURSES: **Dimension 4** (with a focus on 4.1: Structuring, 4.2: Explaining and 4.6: Activating)
The Science of Learning Programme (for middle/senior leaders)

RESOURCES: 1.3, 1.4 and Dimension 4
Dimension 1 reflection prompts

RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOUND IN THE GREAT TEACHING TOOLKIT COURSES:

| Element 4.1 Structuring	Element 4.2 Explaining	Element 4.6 Activating
Scaffolding	**Explicit instruction**	**Metacognitive strategies**
• Making meaningful connections	• Diagnostic questioning	• Desirable difficulties
• Scaffolding	• Segmenting	• Meaningful choice
• Worked examples	• Signalling	• Promoting feelings of relatedness
• Completion problems Interleaving and spaced practice	• Reducing extraneous cognitive load	• Orientation and goal setting
• Checking prior knowledge	• Contiguity principle	• Metacognitive planning
• Diagnostic questioning	• Modelling	• Think-alouds and scaffolding
• Sharing learning aims	• Examples and non-examples	• Self-observation
• Signalling	• Stories in the classroom	• Reflection and self-evaluation
	• Generative learning approaches	• Problem-based learning
	• Self-explanation	
	• Concept maps	

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COMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING WITH CAREFULLY SELECTED SMALL-GROUP AND ONE-TO-ONE INTERVENTIONS

- Choose interventions carefully to avoid creating a barrier to inclusion

- High-quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support

- Interventions should be increased with need

- Interventions should be targeted through identification and assessment of need

- Interventions should be applied effectively

WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS...

Unless interventions are well-matched to address the barriers that pupils are experiencing in their learning, they are unlikely to be effective. Does the pupil really need this intervention? Targeted support has the potential to be detrimental if a pupil has been misallocated to an intervention they do not actually need and, as a result, miss out on whole-class activity.
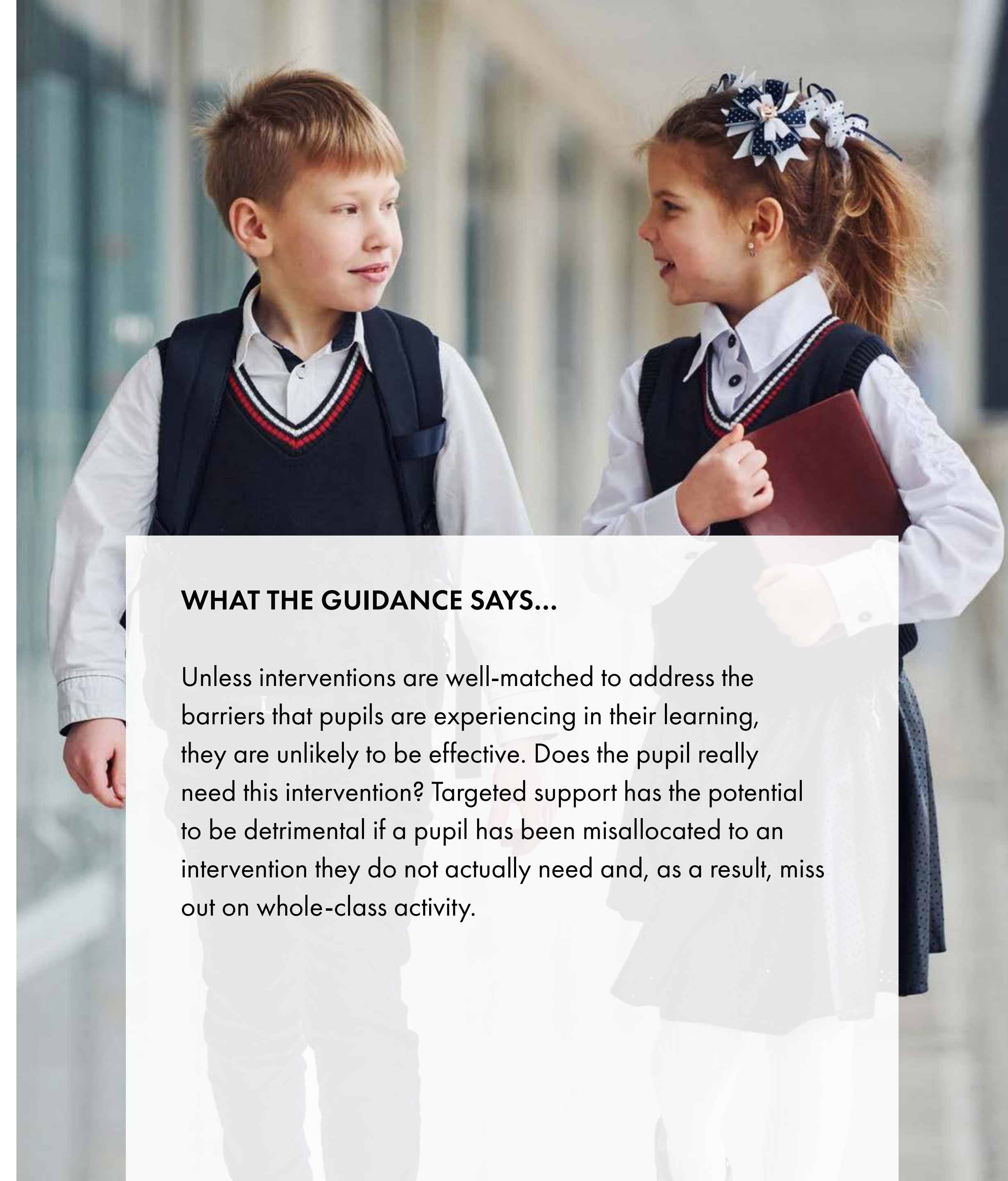
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER...

- How does this school balance the use of intervention with whole-class teaching?

- How are pupils grouped for intervention in this school?

- How do we ensure that intervention is purposeful and impactful?

- How do we ensure that we have a strong enough understanding of pupils' needs to ensure additional support is well-targeted?

- Do the staff delivering interventions generally have a good understanding of the teaching strategies required in the intervention?

- How are interventions and programmes of support selected in this school? To what extent is the evidence about their efficacy and relevance consulted in this process?

- Who is involved in decisions regarding when intervention should be increased, adapted or removed? Could this process be improved?

Some tips

- Ensure that interventions and programmes of support taking place in school are high-quality and backed by evidence. Both the EEF's Toolkits and the GTT's courses and resources are good places to start.

- Regularly monitor and review programmes of support, based on the needs of individual pupils.

- Take care to avoid interventions and programmes that cause high levels of disruption to a child's classroom learning.

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5 WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH TEACHING ASSISTANTS

- Effective deployment of teaching assistants is critical

- Teaching assistants should supplement, not replace the classroom teacher

WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS...

Support staff should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low-attaining pupils. They should add value to what teachers do, not replace them.

Teaching assistants are there to help pupils develop independent learning skills and manage their own learning. They should be prepared for their role in the classroom and for delivering evidence-based interventions to small groups, or through one-to-one instruction.

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- How do teaching assistants and teachers work together to maximise their impact? How could this be improved?

- What are some of the most effective ways support staff are deployed in this school? What are some of the less effective examples of support staff deployment?

- Do teaching assistants in your school have a positive impact on the learning of pupils with SEND?

- Do support staff in your school feel confident in their role/s? Are they clear about what is required of them?

- What is the current approach to professional development for support staff in this school? To what extent is this approach personalised based on the individual needs of the staff and the pupils they support?

- Do support staff in this school receive regular developmental feedback based on their specific role?

- What opportunities exist for support staff to engage in collaborative learning? How could this be developed?

Teaching assistants and the Great Teaching Toolkit

- Teaching assistants and support staff can and should have access to the same wide range of professional learning opportunities as teachers.

- They could benefit from any of the professional learning courses recommended in this document. What they choose to engage with may vary depending on:
  - The students they work with and their needs
  - The type of intervention or support they deliver
  - Their identified strengths and areas for development

- A collaborative approach should be encouraged, where support staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their professional learning with colleagues and receive guidance on how to adapt specific strategies for their own context.

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THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Even the best teacher cannot facilitate effective learning unless certain supports are in place – these require the collective actions of all staff, including the school leadership. The School Environment and Leadership survey is a tool in the Great Teaching Toolkit to provide feedback on these other school-level factors in your context.

The questions that follow are those that might provide insight into inclusive practice and SEND provision in your school, by looking at three key factors linked to the EEF Guidance report:

- Behaviour
- Inclusion
- Professional development

School leaders could choose to carry out the full survey with their teaching and support staff. Alternatively, these questions could be used to shape in-person discussion and feedback.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Behaviour

- How often are lessons disrupted by poor behaviour?

- How often does the need to manage student behaviour prevent you from using activities that would be ideal for student learning?

- How well do leaders in this school support staff in maintaining high standards of student behaviour?

- How consistently do you think whole-school rules and expectations are enforced by staff?

Inclusion

- How well do you think this school supports the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities?

- If a child doesn't learn something the first time, staff in this school will always keep working until they do.

- In this school, there are some students that no one can reach.

- To what extent do staff in this school believe that great teaching can overcome the challenges of home and community disadvantage?

- To what extent do staff in this school believe that great teaching can overcome the limitations of students' pre-existing abilities?

Developing Expertise

- In the last year, as part of your professional development, how often have you set yourself demanding goals for improving your practice?

- In the last year, as part of your professional development, how often have you spent time trying to understand the principles underpinning different classroom practices and reflecting on or discussing how they might apply in your context?

- To what extent do you feel trusted by the senior leadership to do your job well?

- To what extent do leaders in this school remove problems and distractions that would otherwise take your focus away from supporting learning?

- In the last year, as part of your professional development, how often have you tried out and experimented with different ways of working, with feedback to guide you?

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