

The Graduated Approach and high-quality teaching

By Laura Dobson

Chapter 6.44 to 6.56 of the Code of Practice highlights the graduated approach that teachers can take in order to find out what may help a pupil and what might not help them.

From the outset it is worth stating that we are looking at the behaviours exhibited or experienced by the individual. We are observing where difficulties occur and how they manifest or impact on the individual accessing the curriculum. What we are not doing is trying to diagnose or label an individual as having a learning difficulty. At the initial stage of the graduated approach we are collecting evidence and then using this to help inform future practices, approaches and strategies that we might use with an individual.

Although we are referencing the SEND Code of Practice, good practice dictates that we review where a pupil is performing and look at what we can do to assist them in accessing learning within the classroom. This does not mean that we are saying that the individual has SEND it is more a case of looking to see what works, what doesn't and what needs revising.

Assess

At this point we are gathering/collating the evidence we have to hand; this might be from:

- our own observations within the classroom or around the school
- assessments we have carried out
- assessments from other members of staff such as previous class teachers or teaching assistants
- paperwork that may have been shared by the SENCO (also look on the shared area where info is often stored)
- the pupil themselves describing where they feel they experience difficulties but also explaining what they feel their relative strengths are
- views from parents (although this could come later, once you have more information and a clearer idea of the issues)

What is the issue? What are your concerns relating to the pupil, what is it that you have noticed within the classroom? What behaviours are we seeing? We are looking to gather evidence we are not looking to come up with a diagnosis – that might come up in a subsequent assess, plan, do and review cycle and would be the carried out by outside professionals.

Plan

Knowing what you feel the issue may be, the next step is considering what you need to do in order to help the pupil access the curriculum and engage with learning activities within the classroom.

Things we might do at the initial stage could be:

- Modelling tasks and making each step explicit for the pupil
- Having worksheets to look at rather than working from the board
- Giving pupils additional processing time
- Providing scaffolds to support writing or independent tasks

These plans need to be shared so that all staff adopt a consistent approach. For some of you that might be talking with teaching assistants so that they complement what you are doing.

Do

This is where you put into action what you have planned, trying out different approaches and seeing their impact. Most importantly, doing something rather than waiting for someone else to take responsibility.

Review

During 'review, you should ask yourself questions like:

- What did you notice?
- What have other staff noticed?
- What was the impact of specific approaches you used?
- What worked and what didn't work?
- In what situation or context did the approach work / not work?
- How did different approaches impact on the pupil accessing the curriculum and the progress they made?
- What does the pupil feel about the different approaches used?
- How does this information help us in having a clearer idea of where a pupil may be experiencing difficulties?
- What do we now know that we previously were not aware of?
- With our newfound knowledge and understanding of the pupil, what would we do differently?

We can then start again but we now have more information at the assess stage because we have our findings from our first cycle. It may be the case that if difficulties persist then after our own initial cycle, we may then go through the cycle again and involve other stakeholders such as the SENCO, parents, pupil, other professionals more intensively.

The more we know about a pupil then the more we can do to support the pupil by adjusting our practices, give strategies to the pupil and help ensure that all staff adopt a consistent approach to working with the pupil.