

# St. John's Special School & College

## Policy Paper on Pedagogy- Paper 2 Practice

### Preamble

All specialist strategies and interventions employed at St. John's derive from either the behaviourist or the interactionist approach to teaching.

The behaviourist approach produces strategies such as task analysis, target setting, reward and reinforcement. These strategies are usually task or skill specific. Targets are designed to be pre-defined, observable and measurable. (Farrell 1997)

The interactionist approach produces interventions which emphasise the nurturing and development of meaningful relationships within the pupil's environment instead of teaching skills in isolation. The pupil is encouraged to gain from positive experiences of communication and interaction. The pupil is supported to solve problems and to use a variety of increasingly complex communicative intentions and strategies. (Collis & Lacey 1996, Farrell 1997)

Strategies and interventions from the distinctive disciplines are however not mutually exclusive. Research into teaching strategies and SEN note,

'The review found that there is evidence that a multi-method approach is promising. Research on the efficacy of multiple approach strategies reports that a combination of strategies produces more powerful effects than a single strategy solution.' (Davis & Florian 2004)

Some schools adopt a single strategy solution such as TEACCH or ABA to the teaching of pupils presenting with autism. At St. John's we believe that real personalisation of teaching requires a deeper understanding of individual learning needs. A pre-determined prescription of procedures based on, for example a diagnosis of autism, is not sufficient.

Davis & Florian go on to say,

'The question is no longer which approach is best but how can we apply what has been learned from each of these models in ways that produce positive outcomes such as increased attainment and achievement?'

As a school we have carefully selected a set of strategies and specialist interventions that have proven efficacy within settings similar to ours. Teachers with support and through professional dialogue will select an appropriate combination of strategies and interventions from those identified and will

implement such in line with St. John's own specialist standards of practice. Teachers and other class-based staff will be supported in this process through whole school systems of appraisal, training, mentoring and coaching.

## **Process**

What follows is a series of selected specialist strategies and interventions available to teachers at St. John's School.

Included is a brief description of each strategy or strategies and intervention along with recommended reading all of which is available in the school's staff library.

It is important to note that these are briefing notes and provide only a simple summary of the strategy in question. They do not provide the necessary knowledge and skill for teachers to employ the strategies without professional support from senior teachers or appropriate therapists. The school's induction and ongoing training programme will provide teachers with the required insight and understanding and the in-class coaching system will ensure effective delivery in terms of teaching and learning.

Strategies and Interventions include:

- Attention Autism
- Behavioural Strategies
- Intensive Interaction
- Personalised communication systems
- Rebound Therapy
- Sounds Write
- Sensory Circuits
- Sherborne Movement
- Sign Supported English (SSE)
- Social Stories
- Structured Teaching
- Tactile Approach to Communication (Tacpac)

## **References**

Collis M. & Lacey P. (1996) 'Interactive Approaches to Teaching' Fulton

Farrell, P. (1997) 'Teaching Pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties: Strategies and Solutions' Cassell

Davis, P. & Florian, L. (2004) 'Teaching Strategies and Approaches for Pupils with Special Educational Needs: A Scoping Study' DfE Research Report RR516

## Behavioural Teaching Strategies

### What are behavioural teaching strategies?

The following is a summary of the key aspects of the strategies which emerge from the behaviourist approach to teaching:

- Behavioural psychology in terms of teaching new skills is concerned with observable behaviour and how to understand and change it.
- Behaviour does not occur in isolation but is influenced by the context in which it occurs- the *setting conditions*, by what happens immediately before the behaviour- the *antecedents*, and by what happens after it- the *consequences*. The assumption is that we can change behaviour by changing the setting conditions, the antecedents, the consequences or a combination of all three.
- It follows that only after careful observations of the setting conditions, antecedents and consequences will enable accurate descriptions of what change is to be made. The more accurate the description, the easier it will be to decide on where changes should be made in order to improve the teaching and learning situation.
- In using a behavioural approach to teaching the first step is to decide on the skill area in broad terms. This will emerge from assessment and knowledge of the pupil.
- The skill area is then refined into a specific *teaching target or target behaviour*. This defines in observable terms the skill the pupil will perform after teaching has taken place.
- *Baselines* are then carried out to establish the exact level at which the pupil performs in relation to the target behaviour.
- *Task analysis* is used to break down the target behaviour into manageable steps for teaching and learning.
- Each step of the task analysis is then taught to a *criterion of success*.
- Teaching is undertaken on a *trial by trial* basis. Each trial consists of *presenting* the task (step), using *demonstration* and/or verbal/signed *instruction*, followed by *prompting*. Each trial ends with positive *reinforcement* or reward.
- When teaching new tasks it is important to *model* the behaviour to be learned, *shape* the correct performance by reinforcing *successive approximations* to the desired behaviour and to use prompting if the pupil needs help.

(NB. *italic* denotes strategy)

Behaviourist strategies are fundamental in the behaviour support planning and intervention process at St. John's. The key strategies are outlined in the school's Behaviour Support Access Document.

Behaviourist strategies are very effective in the teaching of a range of academic, physical and practical skills, particularly at the acquisition stage of learning. These strategies are shared with teachers at St. John's through the Educating the Developmentally Young (EDY) course which is part of the school's in-house Precision Teaching course.

**Reading:**

Farrell P. (1997) 'Teaching Pupils with Learning Difficulties- Strategies and Solutions' Cassell

Farrell P, McBrien J, & Foxen T. (1992) Teaching people with severe learning difficulties- EDY handbook' Manchester University Press

Kearney A J. (2008) 'Understanding Applied Behavioural Analysis' Jessica Kingsley