

INCLUSION

SUPPORTING A PUPIL WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME

A CASE STUDY

S1 FRENCH

MARCH – JUNE 2006

INTRODUCTION

The following case study is based on a project carried out by a secondary school modern languages teacher as part of the MSc Chartered Teacher Programme in Scotland. The work later formed part of a claim for accreditation of prior learning submitted to the SGTC which resulted in the professional award of Chartered Teacher.

NOTE: Sarah has been used as the name of the pupil in this case study. This is not her real name. The author of this paper has remained anonymous in order to protect the identity of the pupil.

CONTENTS

SECTION 1	SYNOPSIS
SECTION 2	CASE STUDY
SECTION 3	FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS
SECTION 4	SAMPLE OF MATERIALS
SECTION 4	BIBLIOGRAPHY

Section 1: SYNOPSIS

The aim of my project was to adapt the Unit of Work being used to teach Leisure Activities to S1 French from ***Metro 1: Module 4 (McNab 1999)*** to enable a pupil with Down's Syndrome, to participate more fully in the work of the French class. The Unit was split into 4 Stages, each of which had 2 or 3 smaller steps:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Sports | Agreeing / disagreeing
Likes and dislikes |
| 2. Weekend Activities | Agreeing / disagreeing
Likes and dislikes |
| 3. Finding out what others like/dislike | Sports
Weekend Activities
Filling in a Questionnaire |
| 4. Weather | Agreeing / disagreeing
What you do when it's wet
What you do when it's sunny |

Emphasis was placed on producing visually stimulating materials and the work was delivered by her SEN Assistant, who also helped to review progress. She was encouraged to work with her 'buddies' and to fill in progress sheets with the help of her peers and was rewarded for her achievements by having work displayed on the wall alongside the work of others and by receiving praise stickers for work completed successfully. Her enthusiasm for French was supported by her parents, who often take her on holiday to France and by her SEN Assistant, who encouraged her to use the key phrases '***J'aime***' and '***Je n'aime pas***' in a variety of situations.

The adapted materials allowed her to play a more active role than would have been possible using the course book. It enabled her to work with others using materials suited to her capabilities and allowed others to contribute towards her learning while reinforcing their own knowledge of the topic. I feel that this has been of benefit to all pupils who have been able to use the materials produced and resulted in a more inclusive classroom environment for all.

Section 2: INCLUSION: CASE STUDY

MARCH – JUNE 2006

'The key component of an inclusive school is not the total sum of those who are included in itbut its ability to provide inclusive learning' (O'Brien 2001: 48)

O'Brien recognizes that being within the school building is only one level of inclusion. The key to enabling inclusion lies within the teacher and in her ability to identify and overcome barriers to learning. The aim of my project was to enhance the learning experience of a pupil with Down's Syndrome in the S1 French class and in doing so not only to effect progress in her learning and development but also to relate teaching to wider school aims and social values by encouraging her classmates to be involved in her learning and as a result to become more tolerant and aware of the problems experienced by others.

BACKGROUND

Sarah (not her real name) is the first child with Down's Syndrome to attend the school and therefore we have very little experience in this area and limited resources to assist her learning and encourage participation in the work of the class. In addition the French course being used, **Métro 1 (McNab 1999)**, is geared towards pupils performing at level C onwards and information provided by the PT Support for Learning indicated that Sarah was working towards Level A in Maths and English. This resulted in barriers to learning, which could only be overcome by adapting the work to suit her style of learning.

PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Before beginning my adaptation of the Unit I carried out extensive research into the problems associated with Downs Syndrome and strategies suggested to overcome barriers to learning in order to ensure a critical understanding of current approaches to teaching and learning in this area. **Bird and Buckley (1994)**, **Kumin (2001)** and **Lorenz (1998)** all state that there are many factors which characterise pupils with Down's Syndrome. Some of these factors such as strong visual awareness and visual learning skills can facilitate learning but others such as auditory and visual impairment, speech and language impairment, shorter concentration span and difficulties with consolidation and retention may inhibit learning. When adapting the Unit for Sarah my aim was to build on her visual strengths by producing worksheets in large bold print with bright pictures chosen from **Clipart** and a variety of simple matching games and picture word searches which helped to

overcome difficulties caused by her short attention span. I also produced a variety of **Language Master** materials to reinforce reading, listening, speaking and writing skills.

Research shows that pupils with Down's Syndrome vary as widely as any other developing pupil. They have learning difficulties which range from mild to severe and they develop more slowly than their peers but they are influenced by the same environmental advantages and disadvantages as all children. Many strategies suggested to support pupils with Down's Syndrome are simply good teaching practice and so will be equally suitable for other pupils with learning difficulties but when attempting to differentiate work for pupils with Down's Syndrome some important considerations for teachers suggested by **Hull Learning Services (2004)** are:

- The Learning Profile of the pupil should be taken into account
- Work should be at the appropriate stage of development
- Skills should be broken down into small steps
- Use concrete objects and visuals to support work
- Give small tasks which are appropriate to the pupil's level of concentration
- Allow time for planning and liaison between staff to prepare and differentiate materials

I took these suggestions forward in a number of ways in order to create a positive climate for learning and to develop strategies which would ensure progress.

- Before beginning the Unit of Work with Sarah I consulted the PT Support for Learning to obtain copies of her Targets for Language and Communication and for Social Development. I also asked about materials from other sources such as **Down's Syndrome Scotland** which were being used by support staff and I enquired about any medical problems and other relevant background information.
- I then spoke to Sarah and her Support Assistant to find out about her hobbies and interests any 'buddy' or 'circle of friends' systems which were in place and the strategies being used to support her learning in other areas of the curriculum.
- Finally I reviewed the Unit of Work being covered by the class **Métro 1: Module 4 (McNab 1999)** and broke it down into small steps extracting basic vocabulary and structures and setting target dates for completing each stage

For each Stage I intended to include basic Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing elements and a Checklist to be completed once Sarah had allowed the teacher or one of the more able pupils in the class to check that she had been able to master each step. Having successfully completed her Checklist Sarah was to be rewarded with a French praise sticker. In this way both Sarah and her classmates were involved in monitoring progress.

STAGE ONE

- I selected 6 sports for Sarah to learn as I had been told by her Support Assistant that she had six words to learn to spell for English each night and she was used to this number.
- The names of the sports chosen were mostly very similar to the English words although I also selected '**la natation**' as Sarah had told me that she loved swimming.
- The work was delivered by her SEN Assistant and she remained in class with the others, working on the same topic but using her own materials.
- Firstly she had to listen to the words and look at the writing and pictures. Then she had to read the words and match them with picture cards. Next she had to listen to the words and find the correct writing and picture cards. Finally she had to try to say the words.
- Once she had coped with her six words she then had to learn the words '**oui**' and '**non**' and decide which to choose when given a picture of each sport and told the name. A written exercise was then issued on this.
- Towards the end of the lesson another pupil checked that Sarah knew her 6 words. Her checklist was then ticked and she was given a praise sticker.

Hull Learning Services (2004) state that the pupil should have the opportunity to work with peers who can act as good role models and that praise should be given straight after the event and not some time later. Completing her Checklist increased Sarah's motivation to learn as she was delighted to be able to demonstrate to her classmates how much she knew and thrilled with her French sticker. Her SEN Assistant commented that this was the first time she had spent a full period working on a subject as usually her concentration lapses and she has to be given something else to do. She kept the completed worksheets for Sarah's file and asked for additional copies to give to her parents for revision at home.

- The following period the same vocabulary was revised and the same format of games was used. In addition '**J'aime**' and '**Je n'aime pas**' were added so that Sarah would be able to give her opinion about the sports.
- About 15 minutes before the end of the period the whole class was given posters of likes and dislikes to complete with drawings and writing. Sarah was able to work with some of the others to begin posters for the wall.
- She also took home a copy so that she could practise her new skill of handwriting and with the help of drawings by her Support Assistant she returned with her homework the following period and was pleased to be able to stick her poster on the wall alongside the rest of the class and show everyone what she had achieved.

Hull Learning Services (2004) stress that 'overlearning' will be necessary to consolidate skills and as the Easter holiday was approaching I didn't want her to forget her two new phrases so she was given two sheets of paper one headed '**J'aime**' and the other headed '**Je n'aime pas**'. Sarah's homework was to stick pictures to the '**J'aime**' sheet to show what she liked and to the '**Je n'aime pas**' sheet to show what she didn't like. She didn't have to know the names of the items, just if she liked them or not. This was to be supervised by her parents and she was asked to say '**J'aime**' or '**Je n'aime pas**' as she fixed the item to the correct sheet. I hoped that in this way she would remember the two key phrases. When Sarah returned after the holidays she had been helped by her parents to find pictures and colour in drawings of 3 things she liked and 3 she disliked. Her parents were also keen for her to practise her handwriting and had written out the names of the activities for her to copy onto her poster.

Bird and Buckley (1994) state that materials which include meaningful, local and personal information make the work more interesting and are likely to result in greater success than with some of the more formal published language teaching materials. Sarah proved this by including a holiday picture on her '**j'aime**' sheet and putting a lot of effort into telling me how much she had enjoyed her holiday at 'Oasis holiday park'.

STAGE TWO

- After Easter we moved on to the next stage and Sarah learned weekend activities.
- The same format of games and activities was used to reinforce vocabulary and likes and dislikes.
- I also added a word search for the new activities and one to revise sports.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS

At this point I decided to take some time to review and evaluate progress and to decide if any changes were required to improve Sarah's learning experience and her interaction with her classmates.

Hull Learning Services (2004) stress that support staff play an important role in the development of pupils with Down's Syndrome and that they should be recognized as valued members of a team and encouraged to participate in the planning and monitoring process. Sarah's SEN Assistant was responsible for delivering the materials which I had produced and at this point I asked her to complete an Evaluation Sheet to find out how she felt about the progress Sarah was making and how she was coping with the balance of Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing skills. When time allowed we discussed some of the comments and agreed strategies which would further increase her learning.

- The pace was still quite fast for Sarah as the class had three periods of French but she was only able to attend for two. Although it was felt that she could cope with one more French class this could not be changed as the third class was Per 6 on a Friday. This was Sarah's 'Golden Time' when she was allowed to choose an activity as a reward for working hard for the rest of the week.
- It was suggested that more activities which would allow Sarah to tick boxes rather than write words would help her work at a faster pace, as although handwriting is important it takes Sarah a lot of time and effort to produce good results. As a result materials produced for Stages three and four contain less writing.
- Sarah enjoys working in class with the others but we both felt that it would be a good idea for her to be extracted to use the **Language Master** as it provides variety and helps reinforce

listening, reading and speaking skills. As a result **Language Master** cards were produced for Sections Three and Four.

- Speaking is difficult for Sarah in English and although important we decided that it was best to concentrate more on her comprehension skills and a few key phrases which would allow her to progress more quickly. Sarah's SEN played a vital role here as she continued to reinforce spoken work by generalizing the key phrases to other situations throughout the day.

STAGE THREE

- The next stage of the unit was to find out what other people like and dislike.
- The **Language Master** was useful here to revise sports and activities which Sarah already knew and to introduce "Tu aimes.....?"
- Some of Sarah's 'buddies' were given interview sheets and they worked as a group for the second part of the period to interview each other about their interests and note the answers by ticking boxes.
- Two copies of the interview forms were also provided for Sarah to interview her parents for homework.

This stage was intended to allow Sarah to show that she could now not only express her own likes and dislikes but also understand the opinions expressed by others and note these by ticking the correct activities. The materials produced were also used by others to conduct interviews in class.

STAGE FOUR

- The final stage was to introduce Sarah to weather phrases.
- Four phrases were chosen to be introduced using the **Language Master**. Cards were provided for Sarah to match names of weather and pictures. She could then match the pictures and names of sports/activities she already knew with good and bad weather.
- This was to be followed with a poster showing what she likes to do when it rains and another showing what she likes to do when it is sunny.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Sarah has benefited in many ways from using the adapted materials. As stated in **'A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals'** (Scottish Executive 2006: 12)

'Children and young people enjoy making progress and find satisfaction in meeting the challenges posed by a curriculum that engages and motivates them'

The differentiated materials enabled Sarah to work in class on the same topic as her peers and she had the opportunity to work not only with her SEN Assistant but also with her buddies. She was able to boost her self-esteem by showing other pupils the skills she had mastered and allowing them to help complete her Checklists. She was also regularly rewarded with praise stickers and by having her work displayed on the wall with others. The main problems have been:

- Finding time to produce differentiated materials
- Finding time to liaise with colleagues
- Sarah's ongoing health problems which meant that the final part of the unit could not be completed by the end of May as she had to go into hospital to have her pacemaker replaced.

Nind, Rix, Sheehy and Simmons (2003: 7) state that:

'If we wish to develop inclusivity we must take time to explore our own views, to search out the views of others and to make sure that we listen and act upon things that are said.'

In carrying out this project I was fortunate in having a supportive principal teacher who assisted with reviewing the suitability of the materials produced and their effectiveness, an SEN Assistant who works with Sarah on a regular basis and was able to provide advice about the kind of work which suits her style of learning, SFL Staff who worked with Sarah in her free time using a variety of materials on the same topic supplied by **Down's Syndrome Scotland**, and pupils who accept Sarah as a welcome member of their class and are always willing to provide help and support.

It has been argued that for some pupils with SEN mainstream schools are not the best option. **Rouse (2007)** highlights the fact that many teachers have concerns about inclusion as they do not feel they have the necessary skills and training to be able to cater for the needs of all children. **Hornby (2001)** also expresses

concern that some pupils may be at a disadvantage in mainstream as their needs are not always met and behavioural problems can lead to them being excluded and having no education at all and **MacBride (2007: 8)** warns that:

'placing every pupil or student in a mainstream setting... leads to stress on the teachers and lecturers involved, to damage to the education of other pupils or students and to failure to meet the needs of the pupils or students involved'

Research shows however that pupils with Down's Syndrome do better academically when working in inclusive settings and I believe that by maintaining a positive attitude, using the resources available and working closely with support staff and others it has been possible not only to achieve further progress in Sarah's learning and development but also to encourage her classmates to become more understanding, supportive and tolerant of others, which will enable them to make a positive contribution to an inclusive society in the future. As stated in the report of *the Ministerial Action Group on Languages (2000) Citizens of a Multilingual World: Key Issues*:

'In a multilingual world a modern language has enormous benefit to offer all students at primary or secondary school regardless of their age or their aptitude, their starting or their finishing point, and including those with special needs'

Focusing on the development of Sarah's visual learning style has been of real benefit to my professional knowledge and understanding. It has led me to produce a variety of materials which can now be used for other pupils with learning difficulties and to investigate a variety of computer websites and become more familiar with software such as **Métro Electro** and **Taskmaster** which provide multisensory information and immediate feedback and can be used to increase motivation for pupils learning Modern Languages at all levels. In addition I am now much more aware of the benefits of individualised learning in catering for the wide variety of learning styles in any classroom and the role ICT can play in helping to overcome potential barriers to learning for all pupils. As **Kumin (2001: 8)** states:

'One of the benefits of inclusion is that it focuses on individual learning styles and what assistance each child needs to succeed in school. This is helpful for all children – typically developing children, children with learning disabilities and children with Down Syndrom.'

Section 3 FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Sarah progressed well throughout S1 and S2 and although moving from one building to another posed some problems she was able to participate well in many subjects in the normal classroom situation, however her skills continue to develop more slowly than her peers and S3 has proved to be more of a challenge.

She and her parents are now looking towards qualifications at an appropriate level and to preparing for life beyond school. With this in mind they decided to look for an alternative to mainstream.

A place recently became available at a local special school and the decision was taken that she should continue her education there. Sarah began S4 in this school in December 2007 with her SEN Assistant and she is delighted to be in a class of 7 pupils, two of whom were in her class at primary school. She enjoys all of the additional facilities available at her new school and will have the opportunity to be presented at Access level in several subjects and to work with others at the same level, which would not have been possible if she had remained in mainstream.

Sarah continues to maintain links with her former classmates by attending guides and a weekly sports club at the local leisure centre.

I feel that Sarah's school experience demonstrates the benefits of both special and mainstream schools and highlights the fact that the decision as to whether pupils with special needs should attend mainstream schools should always lie with the pupil and the parents and may change as the social and educational development needs of the young person changes.

Section 4: Sample of Materials

Checklist

I can.....

name 6 activities _____

say which I like _____

say which I dislike _____

oui ✓ **non** ✗

le football



le ski

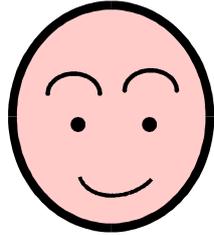


le cyclisme



Tu aimes.....?

oui,
j'aime



non,
je n'aime pas



le football _____

le ski _____

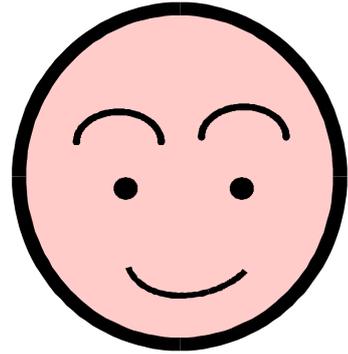
la danse _____

le cinéma _____

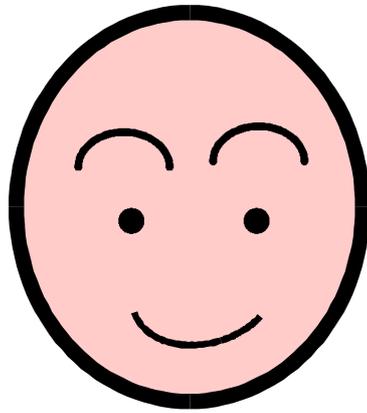
la télévision _____

la musique _____

Il pleut, j'aime...



J'aime.....



Je n'aime pas....



Unit Evaluation Sheet

Unit 4 Leisure

1. Pace of the work

too slow

just right

too fast

2. Time spent on the following areas

too little

just right

too much

speaking

listening

writing

reading

3. Progress

none

some

satisfactory

good

very good

4. Any particularly good aspects of the unit

5. Any particularly bad aspects

6. Any other comments

SECTION 5: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bird, G and Buckley, S. (1994). *Meeting the Educational Needs of Children with Down's Syndrome*. UK: The University of Portsmouth

Buckley, S. and Sacks, B. (2001) *An overview of the development of children with Down Syndrome (5-11 years)*. Southsea: The Down Syndrome Educational Trust

Hornby, G. (2001) *Promoting responsible inclusion: Quality education for all* in T. O'Brien (ed) *Enabling Inclusion. Blue Skies... dark clouds?* Norwich: The Stationery Office

Hull Learning Services (2004) *Supporting Children with Down's Syndrome*. London: David Fulton Publishers

Kumin, L. (2001) *Classroom Language Skills for children with Down Syndrome USA*: Woodbine House

Lorenz, S. (1998) *Children with Down's Syndrome*. London: David Fulton Publishers

MacBride, G (2007) *Promoting true inclusion. The Scottish Educational Journal* May 2007. 8

McNab, R. (1999) *Métro 1* Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers

Nind, M., Rix, J., Sheehy, K. and Simmons, K. (2003) *Inclusive Education: Learners and Learning Contexts*. London: David Fulton Publishers

O'Brien, T. (2001) *Enabling Inclusion. Blue skies dark clouds?* Norwich: The Stationery Office

Rouse, M. (2007) A broader view of inclusion. *The Scottish Education Journal* May 2007. 10 - 11

Scottish Executive (2000) *Citizens of a Multilingual World: Key issues* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2004) *The Education (Additional Support for Learning Scotland) Act* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2006) *A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals*. Edinburgh: the Scottish Executive