

Maximising potential

Extended rationale for Units 1 & 2

Taking account of individual learning needs

Adapting and managing programmes of work so that they better meet the needs of learners can be approached from a number of different angles. This development programme begins by considering individual pupils who are struggling to learn and who are at risk of failing unless we can find a way to better meet their learning needs.

These pupils may have cognitive, behavioural or physical characteristics which prevent them learning, or they may be disaffected and lack motivation to achieve their potential despite being able or even gifted pupils.

By identifying and removing or reducing barriers which are preventing them from learning, we can help pupils to become more successful learners; as a result, their confidence and motivation improve, and often their behaviour as well.

Individual needs are considered first, for the following reasons:

- The ability to identify barriers to learning correctly is the first step towards developing effective measures to reduce or eliminate them. Without this awareness and the ability to identify individual needs with some precision, any attempt at differentiation is likely to be a hit-or-miss affair.
- Individual barriers are often easier to identify than whole-class ones.
- If the learning needs of individual learners are ignored, the success of any whole-class development is likely to be compromised by pupils who are unable to cope with what is expected of them.
- The strategies developed to assist individual learners in difficulty often prove to be helpful to other learners as well, so the whole class benefits anyway.

The first two units, therefore, concentrate on identifying and responding to individual needs.

Unit 1 focuses on learners at risk. It suggests a starting point for identifying barriers that may be hindering learning for individual members of your target group.

Unit 2 focuses on teaching. It proposes a co-operative framework for devising strategies to eliminate or reduce those barriers.