

# Adaptive Teaching Case Study

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## **Reflections:**

- 1.** During the lesson, I focused on children previously classed as 'higher ability' who would have worked independently. I was surprised to be able to spot and address gaps in their learning as they were finding the questions to 'prove it' or show their working, quite challenging.
- 2.** Assessing learning during the lesson enabled me to adapt teaching and bring some children together for more support.
- 3.** After the lesson, one child (previously classed 'lower ability') was overjoyed to have completed the whole worksheet and ran over to tell the class teacher (positive impact on self-efficacy); previously he would not have been exposed to most of the questions as they would have been deemed too difficult.

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# Evolution of terminology

- ▶ Teachers' Standard 5: 'Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils'
  - ▶ 'know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively' (DfE, 2011)
- ▶ CCF Adaptive Teaching (Standard 5 – 'Adapt teaching')
  - ▶ The CCF, refers to 'adaptive teaching', moving away from the term 'differentiation' altogether (DfE, 2019)

Adaptive teaching is less likely to be valuable if it causes the teacher to artificially create distinct tasks for different groups of pupils or to set lower expectations for particular pupils (ITTECF)



**Danger:** differentiation by task ('the bottom group' receive an easier task to everyone else) ...can **lower expectations.**

(Eaton/EEF, 2022; NASEN, undated)

# The demise of 'differentiation'

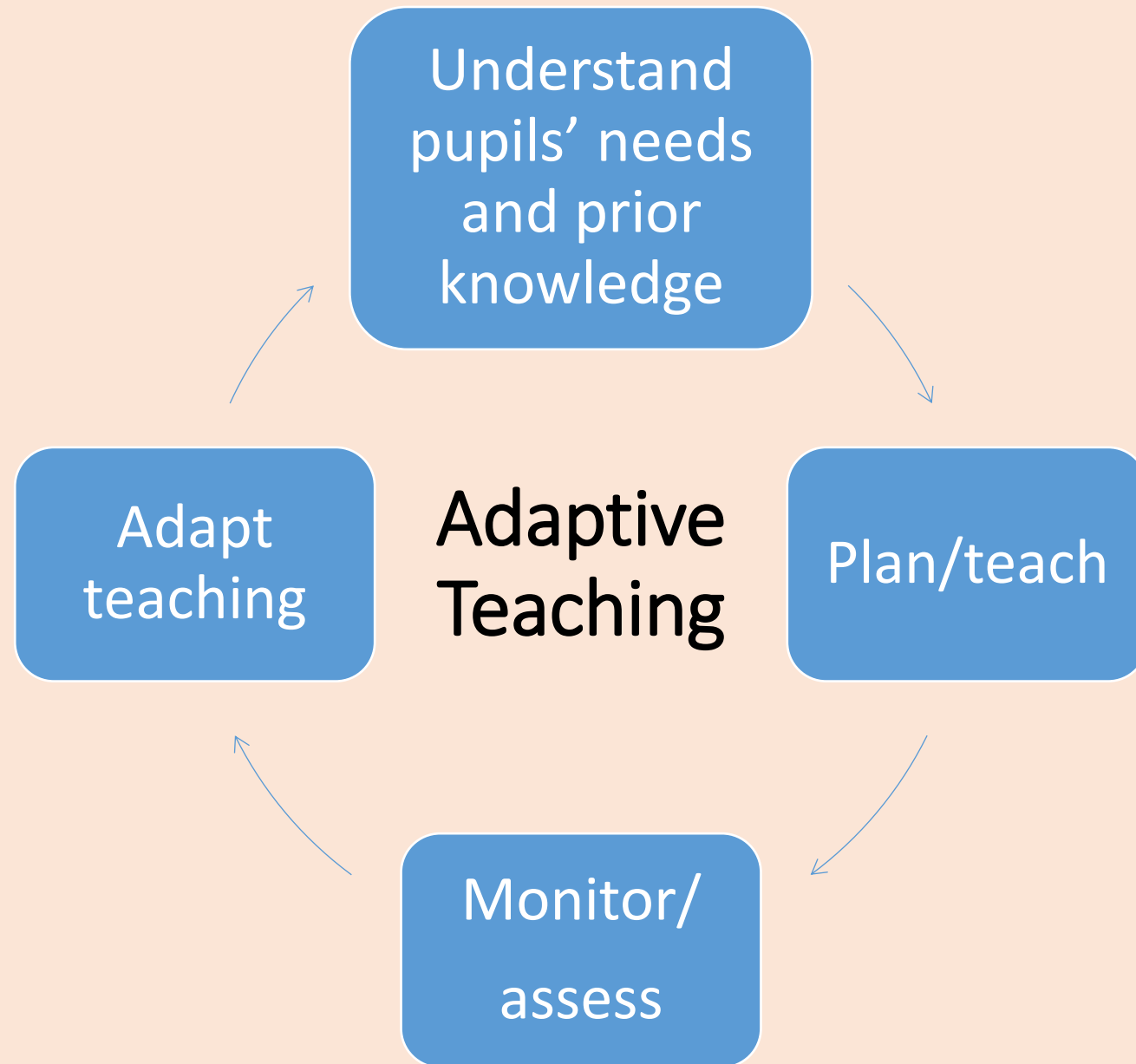
Learn why?

## Why is setting lower expectations a problem?

1. They know they are being given less-demanding tasks; this can help to form a **negative 'I'm no good at this' mindset**. [See also *The Pygmalion Effect and the Power of Positive Expectations*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjbL7zW-Wig>]
2. They miss out on some of the curriculum, their access to the knowledge and understanding is restricted, **so they get further and further behind**.
3. With low challenge, **children can get used to not thinking hard** about ideas and persevering to achieve success. (Strip, 2014, NCETM)

Teachers' expectations can affect pupil outcomes; **setting goals that challenge and stretch pupils** from their starting point is essential (ITT/ECF)

Social  
Justice



Adapted from The Education Development Trust/EEF

Pupils are likely to learn at different rates and to require different levels and types of support from teachers to **succeed** (ITTECF)

Understand pupils' needs and prior knowledge

Seeking to understand pupils' differences, including their different levels of prior knowledge and potential barriers to learning, is an essential part of teaching (ITTECF)

Adapt teaching

**Adaptive Teaching**

Plan/teach

Monitor/assess

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**LOW THRESHOLD HIGH CEILING TASKS**

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**HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

Adapt teaching

Adaptive Teaching

Plan/teach

**LOW THRESHOLD HIGH CEILING TASKS**

Adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by **providing targeted support** to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil **success** (ITTECF)

Monitor/ assess

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# Approaches to HIGH EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ Teacher expectations can affect pupil outcomes (the Pygmalion Effect/Hattie, 2023)
- ▶ High expectations **not easy** in a **data-driven culture**; data may *suggest* that from a particular baseline, a child is not likely to achieve highly (Ofsted, 2019)
- ▶ Ofsted (2019) recommends: a sensitive and informed approach to data use, combat stereotypes, awareness of **unconscious bias**.
- ▶ **Adapt** while maintaining **high expectations** (Ofsted, 2025)
- ▶ ‘Be prepared to **be surprised** and ‘**Do not presume**’: appropriate mantras to avoid adverse expectation effects (Hattie, 2023)

Convey high expectations *e.g. setting same task for all*

Avoid indirectly conveying lower expectations

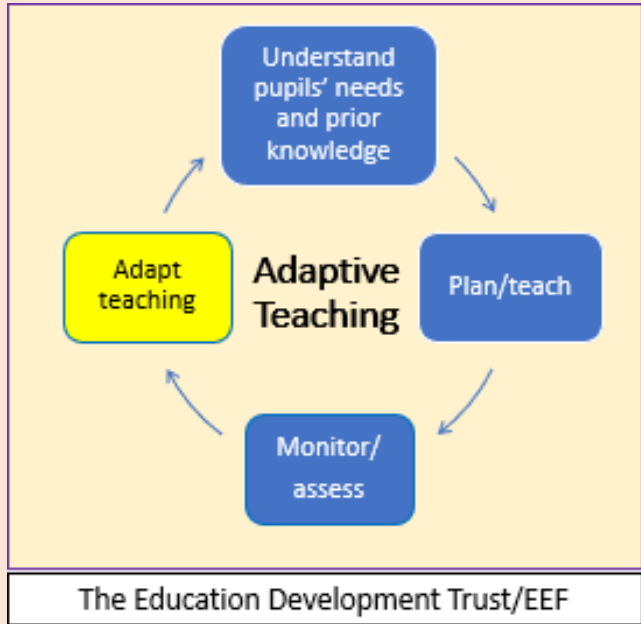
An environment of trust; being able to ask a lot; it's ok to not 'get it' or only get only part of it.

Encourage pupils to attribute success or failure to things they can change (e.g. how hard they worked, the strategies used) rather than to things out of their control (e.g. luck, 'fixed ability'. (Coe, et al. 2020)

Teachers' expectations can affect pupil outcomes; setting goals that challenge and stretch pupils From their starting point is essential (ITTECF).

Learn how to: set tasks that stretch pupils, but which are achievable, within a challenging curriculum (ITTECF).

# How do I adapt teaching?



Support

Resource

Pedagogy

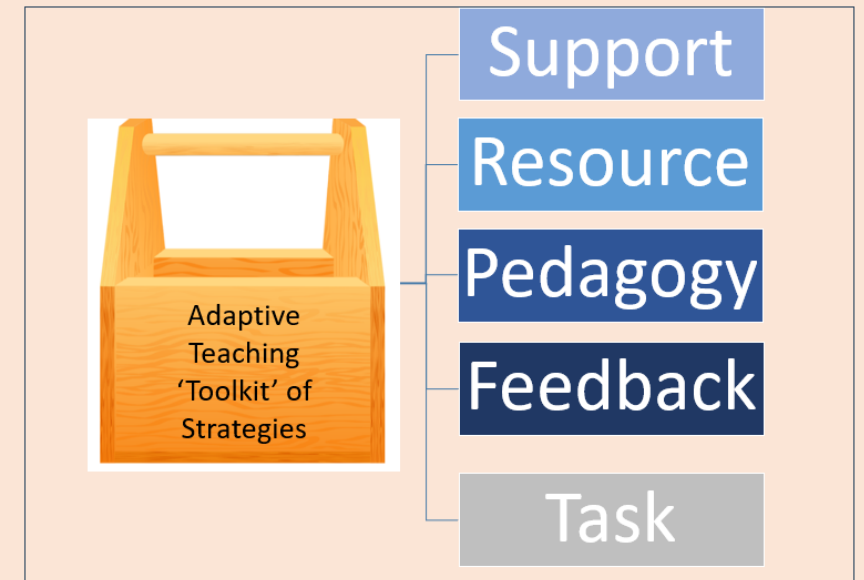
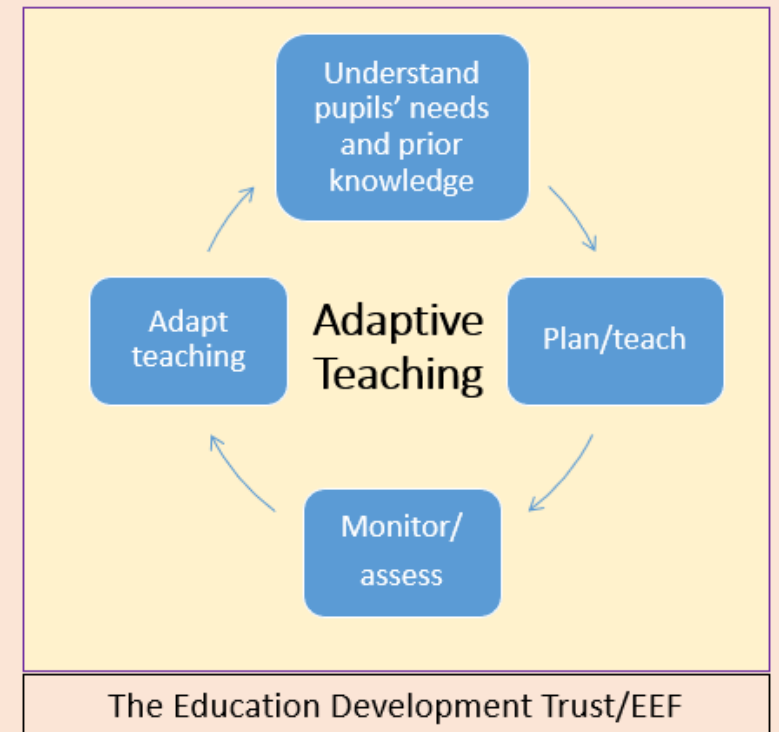
Feedback

Task

# Inclusion Conference

For your selected areas of interest, pay particular attention to:

- ▶ How **high expectations** are promoted
- ▶ How learners are **supported to success** through timely **adaptations**
- ▶ The importance of keeping an open mind and avoiding **unconscious bias**, **stereotypes** or **presumptions**.



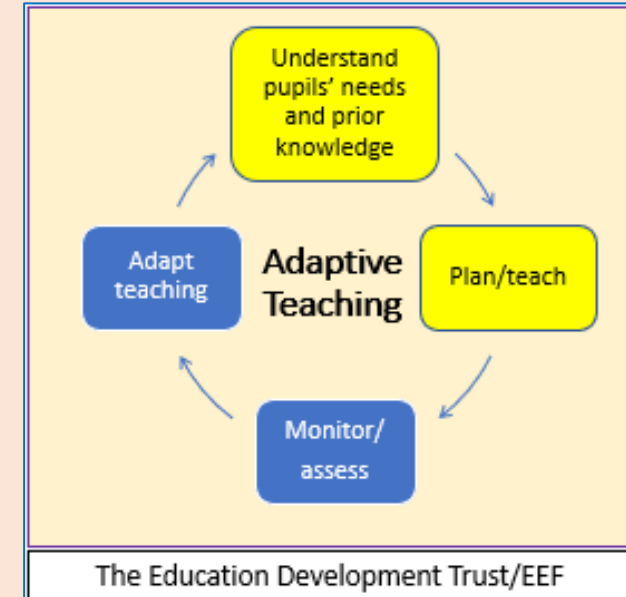
**Resource Pack: additional slides**

# Adaptive Teaching: When?

(Education South West, 2022)

## BEFORE the lesson

| ANTICIPATE   |   | PLAN   |
|--|---|--|
| Find out about children's prior levels of skills/understanding of today's learning | ➔ | Re-activate prior learning/supply background knowledge (in introduction or pre-teaching); use pictures/video to contextualise upcoming information |
| Be aware of likely misconceptions  | ➔ | Explicit teaching to address   |
| Anticipate barriers or a particular SEND need                                      | ➔ | Quality first teaching: improve accessibility (e.g., font size, visibility of whiteboard).   |
| Anticipate vocabulary demands  | ➔ | Model and ask children to rehearse/use key vocabulary; key word sheets   |
| EAL needs or cultural experiences  | ➔ | use pictures/video/visual prompts/culturally relevant context  |



Seeking to understand pupils' differences, including their different levels of prior knowledge and potential barriers to learning, is an essential part of teaching (ITTECF)

# Adaptive Teaching: When?

## DURING the lesson

*Assessment information informs subsequent planning and in-the-moment adaptations.*

ASSESS (for detail see AfL sessions)

ADAPT (HOW)

Assess to elicit evidence of learning *e.g. questioning, live marking, mini whiteboards*

Monitor responses

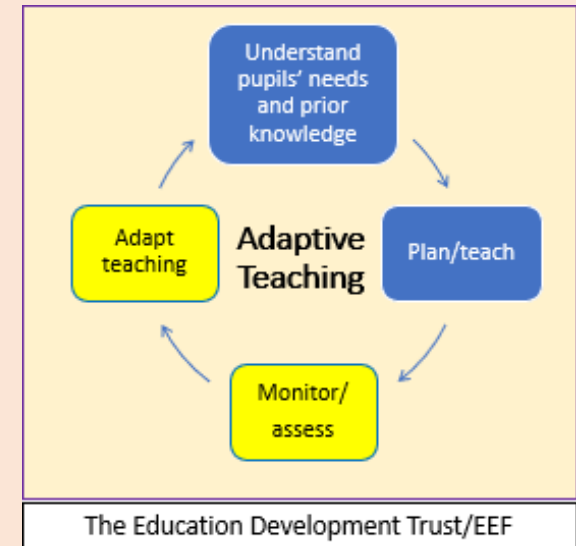
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### Considerations:

- What is the best strategy for the point of the lesson/information required?
- Are you checking understanding of all children or 1?
- Sampling strategy (Lemov, 2015)
- Ensure the *assessment* is not a barrier *e.g. allow processing time for a question*

SUPPORT  
RESOURCE  
PEDAGOGY  
FEEDBACK

(Education South West, 2022)



Effective **assessment** is **critical to teaching** because it provides teachers with **information about pupils' understanding and needs** ...teachers use information from assessments to **inform the decisions** they make... (ITTECF)

# 1. Adapting the **SUPPORT** for pupils



- Support comes from '*a human resource*' (Bearne and Kennedy, 2018)
- Assessment is required to determine the support required
- **Key principle**: give the least support 1st; ensure pupils have opportunity to be successful independently before intervening if pupils can't proceed (EEF, 2025)
- Support can be varied, consider:

**Pupils** are likely to learn at different rates and to **require different levels and types of support from teachers** to succeed (ITTECF)

## Who

Teacher, TA, SENCO, peers

## Type

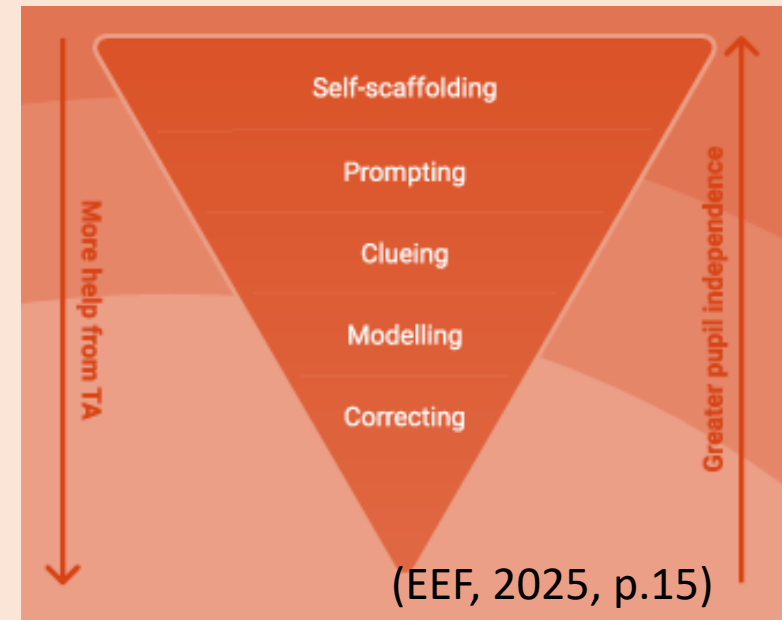
Pre-planned (e.g. pre-teaching) or responsive which avoids making assumptions about pupils

## Amount

How long the pupil is supported e.g. a short reminder or cue to get a pupil back on track, or a focus group to address an area of identified need (support strugglers)

## Level

Correcting, modelling, clueing, prompting, self-scaffolding



# 1. Adapting the **SUPPORT** for pupils

Learn why?

- It is important to provide the **right amount of support at the right time** (EEF, 2018)

## RISKS:

- Pupils can become dependent on support
- Do not learn to think for themselves or take ownership of their own learning (EEF, 2018)
- Expectations can affect outcomes: e.g. *pre-planning support*; aim to avoid pre-judging who will struggle and need support (Ofsted, 2019)
- Remember the ultimate aim is to 'Take the scaffolding down' and for pupils to **work independently** (Rosenshine and Caviglioli, 2020)

Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are likely to require additional or adapted support; working closely with colleagues, parents/carers and pupils to understand barriers to learning and identify effective strategies is essential (ITTECF)

## 2. Adapting Resources\* for pupils



### \* material resources

**Additional** or **adapted** resources can be made available to support all pupils to access, engage, understand, scaffold or stretch and to find success.

For example:

- Writing Frames, word banks and Phonics mats
- Different sized/coloured text/font/paper
- Writing materials – size of pencil/pencil grips etc
- Number lines/100 squares
- Maths apparatus – manipulatives and concrete materials (link: [concrete-pictorial-abstract](#))
- Technology – audio equipment/digital texts/apps

...provide resources in a non-stigmatising way e.g. *providing them at the whole-class level, allowing students to opt-in to a scaffold for a particular task*) (EEF, 2022).  
consider: autonomy and independence – how available/accessible are resources for all pupils?

# 3. Pedagogy



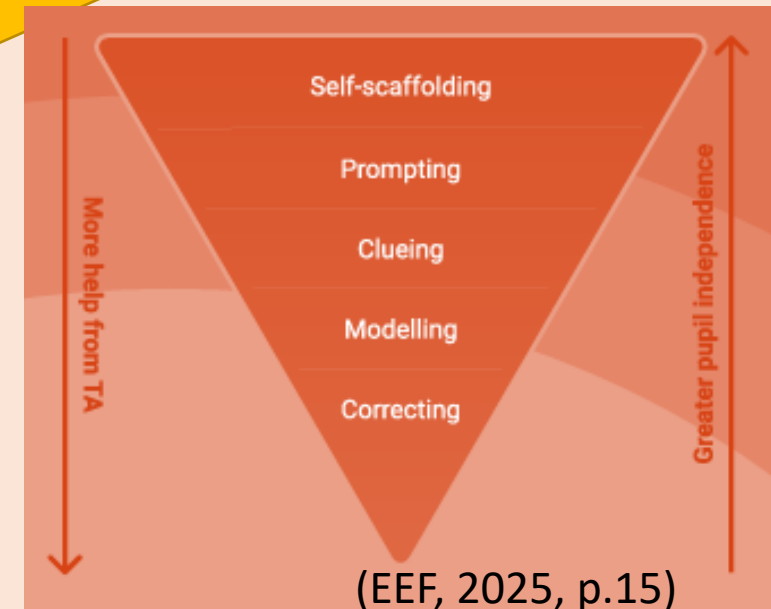
When we offer different **levels and types of support** to enable pupils to succeed effective **teachers** can adapt pedagogy or guide TAs to use specific pedagogy e.g.

- change our language/vocabulary
- clarify a task or provide steps
- clarify what 'good' looks like
- highlight essential content
- re-explain a concept or explain it in a different way
- use analogy
- give additional (or revisit) examples and non-examples
- work through an example together (worked examples)
- adjust the level of challenge *e.g. a reasoning problem for those learners grasping learning rapidly/if struggling, more practice for consolidation*
- elicit small steps of progress via prompting questions
- set an **intermediate goal to refocus** a learner

(Education South West 2022)

Pupils are likely to learn at different rates and to **require different levels and types of support** from teachers to succeed (ITTECF)

Adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil success (ITTECF)



## 4. Adapting FEEDBACK for pupils



- *‘information given by a teacher to pupil(s) about their performance that aims to improve learning.’. (EEF, 2021)*
- Not examining the topic of feedback itself... a focus of the AfL Lecture/workshops
- Focus on *adapting feedback* to meet the needs of individuals

# 4. Adapting FEEDBACK for pupils



- Feedback should be ‘meaningful, manageable and motivating
  - ‘Match the message to the student’ (p.105)
  - Learners respond to feedback in different ways
  - Nurture or push?
  - Promote specific learning behaviours
  - Learn how each student responds to feedback
- (Sherrington & Caviglioli, 2020)

High-quality feedback can be written or verbal; it is likely to be accurate and clear, **encourage further effort**, and provide specific guidance on how to improve (ITTECF)

...pupils must be able to **act on feedback** for it to have an effect (ITTECF)

**Contingent feedback:** **monitor** pupils’ progress in tasks, **assessing** which pupils may be **struggling unproductively** (who may require a hint or a steer in the right direction or may want some immediate feedback in order to feel more supported) and which pupils may be progressing well. (EEF, 2021)

‘...consider how feedback interacts with a pupil’s working memory, being careful not to overload it... teachers may need to **adapt** and provide simpler, clearer feedback to some pupils. (EEF, 2021)

# 5. Adapting the TASK for pupils



- Whilst you may see this approach being used in school **this is not an approach that is endorsed by National policy.**

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Teachers' expectations can affect pupil outcomes; setting goals that challenge and stretch pupils from their starting point is essential (ITT/ECF)

(effective teachers) respond and *adapt* their teaching as necessary, *without unnecessarily elaborate or differentiated approaches*  
(Ofsted, 2019)

- 'In its worst manifestation, this version of differentiation is represented by three different worksheets: one with mostly pictures and few words; one with more words more densely packed and one picture; and a third with lots of words and no pictures. This kind of 'worst-case' practice gives very powerful negative impressions to all the learners in the classroom. It is more like division than differentiation.'

(Bearne and Kennedy, 2014; 316)



## 5. Adapting the **TASK** for pupils

However, there *may* be times when it IS appropriate to adapt the TASK, e.g.

- To address specific gaps in learning (*e.g. arising from 'summative' assessment*) through group or *1:1 interventions*
- Where pupils are working on a different curriculum in the same class e.g. mixed age classes

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