SEND Bulletin NO.3

Differentiation by classroom organisation

Different kinds of classroom organisation need to be used for different purposes. It can sometimes be a useful strategy to share the criteria for organisation and grouping with pupils. In this way they can be encouraged to become more aware of their own needs as well as the needs of their peer group. Classroom organisation may include:

- **Whole class** - (mixed ability) for modelling new skills and techniques, shared reading, writing and speaking and listening sessions, mental/ oral maths sessions, circle time or introducing new concepts across the curriculum.

- **Guided group work** - (same ability groups) for teaching specific skills and concepts in all areas across the curriculum.

- **Group investigation and practical activities** - (same/mixed ability groups) are useful for identifying pupils' learning styles and assessing their ability levels.

- **Group games/activities** - (same ability groups, sometimes with a teaching assistant) to help pupils to consolidate, transfer and generalise skills, knowledge and understanding, in order to retain them in their long-term memories.

- **Pairing** - (same ability) for two pupils of the same ability to work together on an extension or support activity, an ICT program or a practical project.

- **Think, pair, share** - (mixed ability) for open-ended tasks. Give pupils some thinking time before asking them to work with a partner on the task. At a given time each pair can share their ideas with another pair or with the whole class.

- **Peer group tutoring** - (mixed ability but compatible learning needs) for a variety of purposes:
  practising and consolidating new skills across all curriculum areas.

- **Carouselling** - this can be used when pupils are researching information about a project in any area of the curriculum. Pupils can be organised in groups of four or five with the numbers 1 to 4 or 5 assigned to each person in the group. Each group has an aspect of the topic to research. At a given time all number ones should be asked to move into a different group and share their information. Then all number twos should move, and share. Carry on until everyone has had an opportunity to share their information with the other groups.

- **Illustrated talks** - this can be used as part of a homework project or as a way of sharing knowledge relating to different areas of the curriculum. Pupils need to prepare a two-minute illustrated talk to give either to a group or the whole class. A limited number of talks can be given each day of the week to avoid overload of information.

- **Demonstrations** - pupils can be asked to demonstrate specific skills to a partner, a small group or the whole class.

- **Snowball** - this is useful when teaching pupils how to use a new computer program, particularly when only one or two computers are available. An adult teaches two pupils how to use the program and then asks them to teach another two and so on. This method of organisation can be used when teaching pupils how to use different tools and media in art and design.

- **Reading buddies** - in order for this to be effective a specific time during each day needs to be set aside for this activity (10 to 15 minutes is adequate). The reading buddies can be older/younger pupil, confident/not so confident reader, retired adult/pupil, teaching assistant/pupil, volunteer parent/pupil.

Differentiation by resources

- **Visual resources** - for pupils whose preferred learning style is visual; useful when introducing a new topic to your class. Many pupils benefit from having visual images as a support when learning new ideas and searching for information. Visual resources may include: pictures, diagrams, maps, charts, posters, mind maps, cue cards, prompt sheets, wall charts, puzzles and computer graphics.

- **Audio-visual resources** - can be used across all areas of the curriculum. They may form part of the core lesson or they may be used as support materials for individuals and groups. Resources may include: CDs, DVDs, television programmes, IT programs and musical instruments.

- **Practical/concrete** - for pupils whose preferred learning style is kinaesthetic. Others in the class may also benefit, particularly when they are learning new skills and concepts. Practical resources may include: maths apparatus, science investigation materials, constructional apparatus, individual whiteboards, highlighter pens, magnetic letters and numbers, IT control activities, art and design tools/media, musical instruments and language/word games.

- **Graded language** - If pupils are to work without support, then readability needs to be at independent level. If pupils have some support, then readability can be at instructional level. For some, particularly those with a language disorder, you may need to produce resources using IT software such as Communicate: SymWriter (which has replaced Writing with Symbols), published by Widgit Software.

Differentiation by task

Some suggested activities in developing specific learning skills can be used as differentiated tasks. Tasks may be organised as:

- **Core, support, extension tasks** - Most pupils work on the core task. A few may need to work on a support task first. Support tasks may involve using alternative methods of recording such as pictures, comic strips, writing frames, diagrams, maps, charts, posters and mind maps. Some pupils may progress from the core task to the extension task. A few may be ready to work on extension tasks from the outset.

- **Open-ended tasks** - These tasks give pupils opportunities to explore a range of possibilities, use their own preferred learning styles, set their own challenges, develop their thinking skills and appreciate that everyone's ideas are valid. Open-ended tasks can include maths and science investigations, history and geography research, design and technology projects, narrative writing and musical composition.

- **Stepped tasks** - These are longer tasks broken down into smaller steps. Each step forms part of the larger task and pupils can be given opportunities to be successful at each stage. Some may not complete all the steps independently, and a few may only complete the early steps. It is important that each step has its own clear learning objectives and that pupils are aware of the steps on which they can work independently, as well as those where they need a great deal of support.

- **Assessment tasks** - Formative assessments are those used by teachers to gain an understanding of what pupils know or have not understood about a specific area of learning or unit of work. The information gained should help you to respond, and adapt your teaching to your pupils' different educational needs. When taking part in formative assessment tasks pupils need to understand the learning objectives and the assessment criteria associated with the task. These need to be differentiated so that pupils are working at instructional level. Neither independent nor frustration levels would give a true assessment of their abilities. Formative assessments can include end of unit tasks in subject schemes of work, problem-solving and investigation tasks, open-ended questioning during class discussions, compositional writing tasks and open-ended homework tasks followed by 'think, pair, share' discussion.

Differentiation by support

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities often require different types of support.

• **Teacher support** - through differentiated questioning and responses during class sessions, guided group teaching and diagnostic assessment.

• **Teaching assistant support** - supporting groups during a range of learning activities, supporting pupils with physical/sensory impairment, promoting positive behavioural, social and emotional development, counselling, supporting the use of ICT in the classroom or acting as a reading buddy.

• **Peer group support** - Peer group tutoring can be very successful in supporting less confident pupils, who respond well to support from other pupils rather than adults.

• **ICT support** - using programs designed to help pupils develop specific skills.

• **Learning aids** - audio/visual, alternative or augmented forms of communication, tactile or kinaesthetic materials, specialist equipment.

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin please e-mail them to me:
 ari@st-peters.bournemouth.sch.uk

Many thanks

Anne