



What adaptive teaching looks like at St. Mary's...

According to Standard 5 of the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011) adaptive teaching is when teachers “adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils”. Specifically, adaptive teaching requires teachers to:

- Know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively.
- Have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn and how best to overcome these.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children and know how to adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development.
- Have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils – including those with SEND, those of high ability, those with English as an additional language – and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

Adaptive teaching also forms part of the new Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019). Section 5 says that new teachers should learn that:

- Pupils are likely to learn at different rates and to require different levels and types of support from teachers to succeed.
- Seeking to understand pupils' differences, including their different levels of prior knowledge and potential barriers to learning, is an essential part of teaching.
- Adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil success.
- 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.
- Flexibly grouping pupils within a class to provide more tailored support can be effective, but care should be taken to monitor the impact on engagement and motivation, particularly for low attaining pupils.
- There is a common misconception that pupils have distinct and identifiable learning styles. This is not supported by evidence and attempting to tailor lessons to learning styles is unlikely to be beneficial.
- Pupils with SEND are likely to require additional or adapted support, working closely with colleagues, families and pupils to understand barriers and identify effective strategies is essential.

According to the ECF, new teachers also need to learn how to:

- Develop an understanding of different pupil needs, including by identifying pupils who need new content further broken down, using formative assessment and working closely with the SENCO and others.
- Provide opportunity for all pupils to experience success, including by maintaining high expectations for all and making effective use of teaching assistants.
- Meet individual needs without creating unnecessary workload, including by planning to connect new content with pupils' existing knowledge or providing additional pre-teaching; building in additional practice; reframing questions to provide greater scaffolding; and “considering carefully whether intervening within lessons with individuals and small groups would be more efficient and effective than planning different lessons for different groups of pupils”.
- Group pupils effectively, including by applying high expectations to all groups, changing groups regularly, and ensuring that any groups based on attainment are subject specific.

Focusing on the whole class

Whereas traditional differentiation focuses on individual students or small groups of students, adaptive teaching focuses on the whole class.

It is, in effect, the difference between teaching up to 30 different lessons at once, matching the pace and pitch to each individual student and providing different tasks and resources to different students, and teaching the same lesson to all 30 students, and doing so by “teaching to the top” while providing scaffolds to those who need additional initial support in order to access the same ambitious curriculum and meet our high expectations.

Crucially, additional support offered in the guise of scaffolding should be reduced over time so that all students can become increasingly independent.

The problem with the former approach – teaching up to 30 different lessons – is that, as well as it being hugely time-consuming for the teacher, it can translate in practice as expecting less of some students than we do of others – in other words, as dumbing down or reducing the curriculum on offer.

There is another problem with differentiated teaching, too: ED Hirsch in his book *Why Knowledge Matters* (2016) says: “When a teacher is attending to the individual needs of one student in a class of 20, 19 are not receiving the teacher’s attention.”

Unlike traditional forms of differentiation which can perpetuate attainment gaps by capping opportunities and aspirations, adaptive teaching promotes high achievement for all. In fact, according to the 2015 PISA results, “adaptive instruction” is one of the approaches most positively correlated with student performance. In fact, it is second only to ensuring students are from wealthy backgrounds!

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.

Teachers at St. Marys’:

Provide opportunity for all pupils to experience success, by:

- Adapting lessons, whilst maintaining high expectations for all, so that all pupils have the opportunity to meet expectations.
- Balancing input of new content so that pupils master important concepts.
- Making effective use of teaching assistants.

Meet individual needs without creating unnecessary workload, by:

- Making use of well-designed resources (e.g. textbooks).
- Planning to connect new content with pupils' existing knowledge or providing additional pre-teaching if pupils lack critical knowledge.
- Building in additional practice or removing unnecessary expositions.
- Reframing questions to provide greater scaffolding or greater stretch
- Considering carefully whether intervening within lessons with individuals and small groups would be more efficient and effective than planning different lessons for different groups of pupils

The [EEF](#) suggests Five evidence-based strategies to support high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND

- **Scaffolding**

This has been explained in previous articles and links are included above. Scaffolding instruction is a fundamental skill in teaching and can help **all** students to succeed and achieve, not just those with special educational needs. 'Scaffolding' is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required. Initially, a teacher would provide enough support so that pupils can successfully complete tasks that they could not do independently. This requires effective assessment to gain a precise understanding of the pupil's current capabilities.

- **Explicit instruction**

Explicit instruction refers to a range of teacher-led approaches, focused on teacher demonstration followed by guided practice and independent practice. Explicit instruction is not just "teaching by telling" or "transmission teaching". One popular approach to explicit instruction is [Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction'](#).

- **Cognitive and metacognitive strategies**

[Cognitive strategies](#) are skills like memorisation techniques or subject specific strategies like methods to solve problems in maths.

[Metacognitive strategies](#) help pupils plan, monitor and evaluate their learning

- **Flexible grouping**

[Flexible grouping](#) describes when pupils are allocated to smaller groups based on the individual needs that they currently share with other pupils. Such groups can be formed for an explicit purpose and disbanded when that purpose is met

- **Technology Use**

[Technology](#) can assist teacher modelling. Technology, as a method to provide feedback to pupils and/or parents can be effective, especially when the pupil can act on this feedback.