Inclusion in Practice

Case Study:

The Academy at Shotton Hall

How Shotton Hall prioritised quality first teaching to support all pupils

A key principle of SEND practice this case study exemplifies:

Great teaching is the foundation of strong provision for pupils with SEND, and vulnerable pupils must access support from our most experienced and qualified members of staff.

At a glance

The Academy at Shotton Hall has prioritised a 'quality first teaching' approach for all pupils, including pupils with SEND.

In practice, this includes:

- Focusing on adaptive teaching so almost all needs are met in the classroom.
- Moving away from targeted support delivered by teaching assistants.
- Developing teacher-led interventions in literacy and numeracy.

This approach has supported consistently strong outcomes at Shotton Hall, including pupils with SEND exceeding national progress benchmarks.

Background information

Shotton Hall is a secondary school in the North East of England. It is the lead school in the North East Learning Trust. The school has around 1,200 pupils aged 11 to 16. In 2024, 29% of pupils were eligible for pupil premium and 13% had SEN support.

What challenges were you trying to address?

Shotton Hall's key focus is around the quality of the education offer for all pupils 'excellence for all'. To achieve this, they are guided by three principles:

- One curriculum for all pupils, with teachers adapting work so the needs of all are met.

- All pupils are taught by teachers.

- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is critical and must be strategically planned for all pupils, both at a whole school level and for individual pupils.

- These principles have informed Shotton Hall's approach to SEND and inclusion. SEND pupils follow the same curriculum as the rest of their pupil population. Leaders aim to support pupils specific or particular needs in a way that avoids creating separate or different spaces.

What challenges were you trying to address? (continued)

How the project started:

The school has historically ranked 38th out of 39 secondary schools in Durham, highlighting the scale of the challenge it has faced over the years (it now ranks second for Progress 8 score). Leaders observed that some of the factors contributing to this were:

- While well-intentioned, teaching assistants did not have the qualifications, experience or deep understanding of pedagogy to be able to provide high quality academic support to pupils in lessons.

- Pupils were becoming more dependent on teaching assistants, impinging on their learning and wider development. This was a particular problem if pupils were already missing age-related milestones.

- Pupils were arriving at Shotton Hall with different starting points. Many pupils were grappling with difficulties in reading, numeracy, knowledge gaps, or low motivation and engagement. These were not necessarily pupils with formal diagnoses of SEND, and these pupils did not fit neatly into traditional SEND categories.

The approach:

Shotton Hall's ethos is that all teachers are teachers of SEND. Leaders aim for their most vulnerable pupils to access high quality teaching from the most experienced and qualified members of staff.

The Education Endowment Foundation's conclusion that the best available evidence indicates that great teaching is the most important lever schools have to improve outcomes for their pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged has certainly been evident in the work that has taken place within Shotton Hall. This means pupils who struggle most should spend at least as much time with the teacher as other pupils, if not more.

What does it look like in practice?

Shotton Hall prioritises high quality teaching by:

- Focusing on adaptive teaching so almost all needs are met in the classroom.
- Moving away from targeted support delivered by teaching assistants.
- Developing teacher-led interventions in literacy and numeracy.

1. Adaptive teaching

Leaders have embedded adaptive teaching into their core professional development annual offer, with dedicated input each half term.

- Leaders focus on supporting teachers to adapt classroom work, so the needs of all pupils are met, from the most to the least able. The key mechanisms they use to ensure this are:

- Having individual learner plans for every child stating any specific needs or strategies that need to be accommodated. These are reviewed regularly by teachers...

- Requiring each teacher to show in their lesson planning or context sheets how content will be adapted to pupils in their subject area.

- Equipping each classroom with an 'adaptation station', where pupils access practical resources like coloured overlays, pen grips, and reading rulers. Leaders deliver assemblies to pupils to raise awareness of the resources available and encourage their use as part of developing independent, self-regulated learners.

- Returning daily in staff meetings to a regular 'menu' of different adaptations, to encourage staff to try new strategies, such as those in the table below:

Example subject	Example strategies for adaptive teaching in this subject
English	Targeted reading interventions
	Active modelling
	Writing frames
	Writing prompts or starter sentences
	Vocabulary banks
	'What a good one looks like' models
	Retrieval and revision homework to consolidate and overlearn topics covered in class
	Chunking of learning, followed up by targeted questioning for understanding and comprehension of activities

What does it look like in practice? (continued)

2. Moving away from teaching assistants delivering targeted support

Shotton Hall originally employed 12 teaching assistants and three learning support assistants (LSAs), who mainly delivered in class or 1:1 support to pupils. Leaders have gradually shifted this model, with a focus on how to deliver high quality, targeted support for the pupils who needed it most.

Initially, targeted support changed to small-group interventions, with pupils temporarily withdrawn from non-core lessons. Two LSAs were trained to lead this work, one specialising in maths, the other in English.

Over time, some LSA roles were not replaced and leaders began to rethink how best to deploy staff to meet the changing needs of pupils. This included redeploying teaching assistants into other roles, such as managing statutory administrative task to better support pupils with SEND. While provision is still made for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans, teaching assistants are no longer routinely deployed in classrooms.

Instead, leaders have invested in building larger teaching teams in the English and maths departments. This has increased teacher capacity to deliver targeted support in core subjects and has proven more cost-effective overall. As pupils' needs continue to shift, leaders are committed to ongoing evaluation and refinement to ensure support remains both effective and sustainable.

What does it look like in practice? (continued)

3. Developing teacher-led interventions in literacy and numeracy

In addition to a strong universal offer of high quality teaching, Shotton Hall has developed a structured suite of targeted interventions at key stage 3. These are delivered in small groups and tiered according to the level of pupil need. Crucially, all interventions are led by qualified staff with strong subject knowledge.

Initially, these were delivered by teaching assistants with degrees in their respective subjects, particularly in maths and English. While the teaching assistants brought valuable content knowledge, they lacked pedagogical expertise. To address this, teaching staff from the English and maths departments played a greater role in designing materials and overseeing delivery.

Rather than remaining part of the SEND team, these trained staff were integrated into the English and maths departments. This shift brought with it the full accountability structures in place across the school, including regular lesson observations, half-termly work scrutiny and planner checks, and termly data reviews. These mechanisms allowed leaders to monitor impact and identify further training needs.

Over time, what began as a support role evolved into part of the core teaching capacity within departments, embedding targeted intervention as a shared responsibility among subject teams, rather than a separate function. Interventions are timetabled, monitored, assessed and reviewed in line with the whole school monitoring schedule. At certain points in the year, there is a focus on pupils with SEND but this will be a sampling across all subjects.

What does it look like in practice? (continued)

3. Developing teacher-led interventions in literacy and numeracy (continued)

For example, the targeted interventions implemented for literacy and numeracy included:

Need level	Intervention	Summary
Universal	**High quality teaching for all pupils**	
Targeted	Moving Up	• Aims to ensure all pupils have a secure grasp of the essential skills required to access and succeed in the mainstream curriculum for both English and maths. • Content includes consolidation of literacy skills and numeracy operations. • Delivered in two lessons per fortnight over the school year, with half the year focused on English and half on maths.
	LINK	• Aims to help pupils meet their attainment goals in English or Maths. • Content is bespoke and designed by Shotton Hall, building on skills pupils cover in their English and maths lessons. • Delivered in three lessons per fortnight over one term, or further terms depending on assessment results.
Intensive	20:20:20	• Aims to help pupils develop basic literacy skills. • Content is bespoke to the needs of the pupil, and a range of resources are used and adapted (such as phonics programme Read Write Inc.) • Delivered in 20-minute lessons over one term, or further terms depending on assessment results.

What has been the impact?

Overall, pupils' academic outcomes at Shotton Hall are consistently higher than national and regional averages.

For example, in 2024, Shotton Hall's pupils had a Progress 8 score of 0.58. This indicates the school's pupils made significantly more academic progress between primary school and the end of GCSEs, compared to other pupils nationally with similar prior attainment.

	2024 results for pupils at Shotton Hall, compared with national results	
	Shotton Hall's pupils	**England (pupils in state funded schools)**
Progress 8 score (and confidence interval)	**0.58** (0.39 to 0.77)	**0 on average**
Attainment 8 score	51.7	45.9

What has been the impact? (continued)

Shotton Hall's disadvantaged pupils also make greater progress than their non-disadvantaged peers locally and nationally:

	2024 results for disadvantaged pupils at Shotton Hall, compared with non-disadvantaged peers		
	Shotton Hall's disadvantaged pupils	Local authority (non-disadvantaged pupils)	England (non-disadvantaged pupils)
Number of pupils	60	3,782	462,737
Progress 8 score (confidence interval)	**0.26** (-0.11 to 0.62)	**0.03**	**0.16**
Attainment 8 score	46.7	48.1	50

To measure the impact of their targeted support, leaders consider the results of pupils who were 'low' or 'middle' prior attainers at key stage 2. These pupils have predominantly accessed the targeted support available at Shotton Hall. Results show pupils in these groups make significantly more academic progress compared with other pupils with similar starting points.

	2024 results for pupils at Shotton Hall by prior attainment			
	All pupils	Low	Middle	High
Number of pupils	221	53	120	45
Progress 8 score (confidence interval)	**0.58** (0.39 to 0.77)	**0.56** (0.18 to 0.94)	**0.67** (0.42 to 0.93)	**0.37** (-0.05 to 0.78)
Attainment 8 score	51.7	35.5	52.6	68.3

What has been the impact? (continued)

Leaders also have internal data which demonstrates improvement following the targeted interventions. In the last rotation, all students in all targeted programmes made progress, some significant.

Shotton Hall has consistently received Outstanding judgements from Ofsted, in 2010, 2013 and 2024. The most recent report noted "the high standards throughout school help pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make rapid progress". It highlighted a particular strength in how "trained teachers support pupils to rapidly close gaps in their reading ability".

In a recent parent survey, respondents were asked whether the school supports the needs of pupils with SEND. 79% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the school provides effective support. These results indicate a broadly positive perception, with some areas identified for further communication or improvement.

Next steps

Leaders highlight the importance of staying up to date with evolving SEND standards and expectations to ensure their provision remains both relevant and effective. They continue to refine the model in response to:

- A growing complexity of pupils' needs.

- Increased expectations of parents and families around SEND.

- Increased formal diagnoses of SEND needs among pupils - particularly in areas such as emotional and social development, autism spectrum conditions, and learning difficulties.

The key factors that make it work

Leaders have identified the following key behaviours and content which have made this approach effective in their setting.

Staffing

Developing expertise through professional development: SEND is embedded within the school's ongoing professional development programme, with all teaching staff completing 20 hours annually through a mix of compulsory and elective sessions. Topics include supporting executive functioning and strengthening engagement with parents of pupils with SEND

Maximising existing expertise: Ensure teachers with specific skills, such as those trained in early literacy or executive function are fully utilised to support pupils with SEND. For example, the school uses a primary-trained teacher to deliver LINK interventions, given their experience in early reading and small-group teaching.

Delivering targeted support

Individual plans for pupils: The school uses individual learner plans to highlight specific needs and monitor progress. Leaders view these as essential to creating bespoke, tailored packages of support for pupils.

Early diagnosis of need: Leaders intend to provide targeted support from the outset of pupils' time at the school. They use a wide range of data sources to identify pupils' needs early, such as SATs results, in house literacy and numeracy tests, and teacher assessments.

Regular assessment of need: Leaders aim to be responsive to need, recognising this can change and evolve over time. Interventions are generally not long-term, and regular assessments each term inform whether pupils remain in them.

Advice for school leaders

Leaders have reflected on lessons learnt along the way, to support others looking to implement similar practices in their settings.

Be cautious of overemphasising labels: The school does not identify every pupil getting an intervention as SEND. Leaders have observed how SEND labels can have unintended consequences, limiting pupils' aspirations.

Go upstream: Leaders highlight the importance of intervening earlier to manage the symptoms of issues. Interventions are focused on in key stage 3 so that pupils are key stage 4 ready. They have found the success of these interventions mean that very few pupils require them in key stage 4, and prevent needs becoming more profound.

Prioritise parental engagement: Parents are invited to review their child's SEN support plan termly, are kept updated via an online platform, and offered practical guidance to support pupils' learning at home. Leaders view this collaboration as key to success.

Monitor physical needs: The school recently found that all eighteen of its lowest performing readers were struggling with undiagnosed visual impairments. Since then, the school offers all Year 7s a basic eye test, and adjusts seating for pupils based on results.

Resources

Leaders have shared some examples of resources they consulted throughout this process, which they would recommend other school and trust leaders to consider in their own contexts.

- See **The Education Endowment Foundation's summary of high quality teaching** to learn more about the evidence behind this, including adaptive teaching.

- See **The Shotton Hall Research School Guide** to learn more about leading targeted interventions at secondary school.

- See Shotton Hall's explainers on the **202020**, **LINK**, and **Moving Up** interventions if you are interested to find out more about the purpose, content and structure of these interventions.

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