

IATEFL Edinburgh 2025

Rethinking the place of SEND labels in the YL classroom

Darshika Saxena

Some quotes...

 She is gifted but she won't say a word.

 They definitely have SEND.

 I think he's not normal.

 She's definitely on the spectrum.

 The student doesn't look like he has ADHD.

 He's a bit strange, if you know what I mean.

 Can we talk about some students I think have SEND.

 I need to tell you about my problem student.

Session aims

- What is SEND
- Inclusive education
- Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive
- Use of IEPs/LSPs to support learners



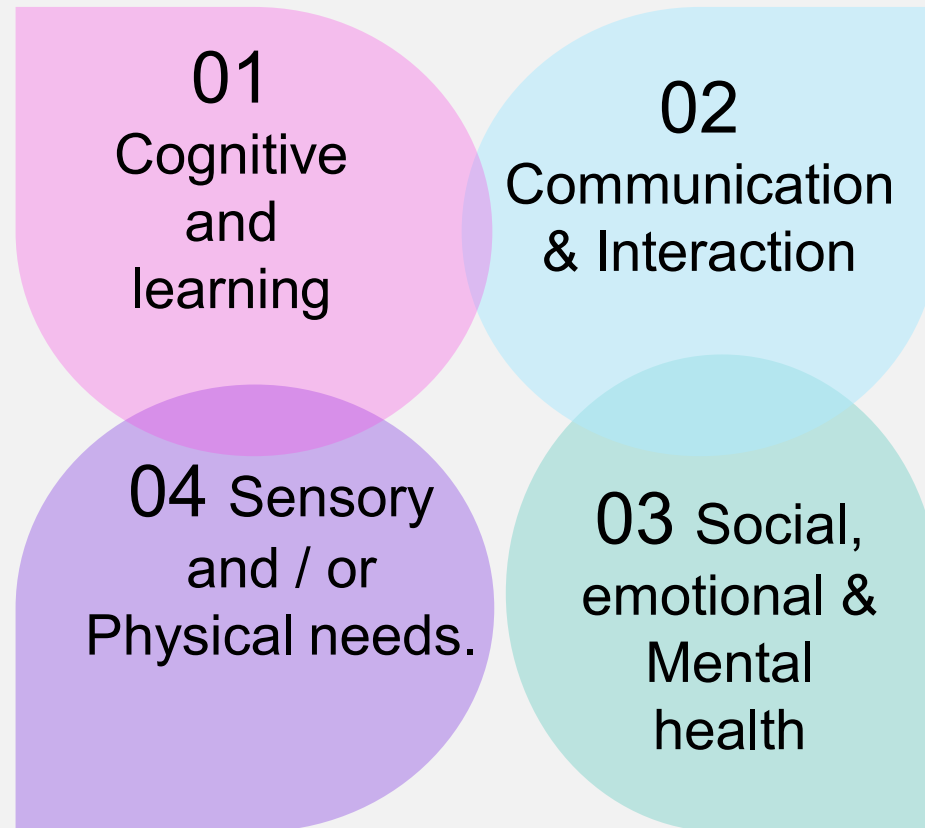
What is SEND?



What is SEND?

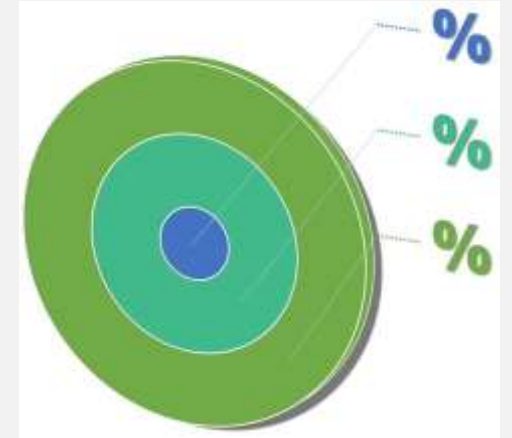
A person is defined in the UK as having a special educational need (SEN):
“... if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.”.
(Children and Families Act 2014. c6. s20(1))

Areas of SEND



SEND statistics

- Around 1.4 million pupils in English schools have an identified special educational need (SEN). These range from the most severe to comparatively minor (SEND Code of Practice, 2015).
- The number of children with disabilities globally is estimated at almost 240 million, according to a UNICEF report in 2021.



Medical v/s Social Model of Disability

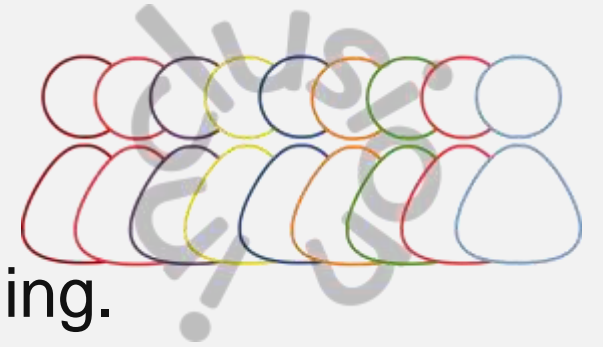
The **medical model** views disability as an individual problem stemming from a condition or impairment that needs medical intervention.

The **social model** sees disability as a societal issue caused by barriers and attitudes that exclude people with impairments.

Inclusive education



What is inclusive education



Every child has the right to quality education and learning.

Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded – not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too.

(Inclusive education, UNICEF)

What is inclusive teaching

It is not a special way of teaching simply to accommodate learners with special educational needs. Inclusive teaching is about **practices that facilitate and support the participation and achievement of all the learners in a group.**

Rather than teaching to an **imagined ‘norm’** or an **‘average child’**, it is about teaching **all the unique individuals** we work with.

Sarah Mercer, 2024, p.54).



Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive



Needs analysis

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Name (姓名): _____

Students ID: _____

Languages spoken (會講的語言): _____

When I Learn...

Please tick all that are true for you. (請在適合的選項前加 ✓ 號)

- I like to work (我工作時喜歡):
 - ☐ alone (單獨工作)
 - ☐ with a partner (與一位同學合作)
 - ☐ with a small group (與一個小組合作)
 - ☐ with the whole class (與全班同學一起)
- I work well when I _____ (做甚麼更有効地學習):
 - ☐ read about things (閱讀)
 - ☐ use hands-on materials (動手做的活動或練習)
 - ☐ talk to other people and get their ideas (與其他人士交流和獲取意見)
 - ☐ use the computer / ipad / phone (使用電腦/平板電腦/智能手機)
 - ☐ listen and watch (聆聽和觀看)
- When I'm learning I need (我學習時需要):
 - ☐ quiet (安靜的環境)
 - ☐ music or quiet noise (音樂或白噪音)
 - ☐ to be able to move around (可以活動的環境)
 - ☐ to be able to talk with others (可以聊天/討論)
- When I need help (當我需要協助時, _____):
 - ☐ I will ask the teacher or classmate for help (我會主動向老師或同學求助)
 - ☐ I don't like to ask for help (我不喜歡向人求助)
 - ☐ I'm afraid people will laugh or judge me when I ask for help (我擔心向其他人求助時會被取笑或批評)
- These things make it difficult for me to learn are: (以下的情況/環境會使我難以學習):
 - ☐ music (音樂)
 - ☐ people moving around me (有人在周圍活動)
 - ☐ noise (噪音)
 - ☐ quiet (安靜的環境)
 - ☐ bright light (明亮/刺眼的環境)
 - ☐ not enough light (昏暗的環境)
- I like to write or do activities on the MMB (我喜歡透過互動電子白板或電腦板作教學活動):
 - ☐ yes (是)
 - ☐ no (否)

Contributed by SEN Champion, British Council Hong Kong

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- When I do a task, I would like to (如果要完成一項課業, 我會比較喜歡以這種方式進行):
 - ☐ make up a song/rap (創作歌曲/聯言音樂)
 - ☐ write a report (撰寫報告)
 - ☐ do a role-play (角色扮演)
 - ☐ play a game (玩遊戲)
 - ☐ make a presentation on the computer (運用電腦作報告或報告)
 - ☐ make a poster (製作海報)
- What kind of movies do you like to watch (我喜歡的電影類型):
 - ☐ non-fiction (令故事/令虛構)
 - ☐ mystery (推理/懸疑)
 - ☐ sad (悲劇)
 - ☐ funny (喜劇/喜劇)
 - ☐ historical (史實/歷史故事)
 - ☐ action (動作)
 - ☐ romance (浪漫)
 - ☐ science fiction (科幻)
- I like to learn about (我有興趣學習以下主題):
 - ☐ food and drink (食物和飲料)
 - ☐ shopping (購物)
 - ☐ work (工作)
 - ☐ travel and holidays (旅遊與假期)
 - ☐ giving directions (引導方向)
 - ☐ family and friends (家人與朋友)
 - ☐ greetings (問候)
 - ☐ places (地方)
 - ☐ hobbies (興趣/愛好)
 - ☐ time and numbers (時間及數字)
 - ☐ others "please mention" (其他"請說明")
- I want to study English because (我學英語的原因是):
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

• Teachers Notes:

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Emotional wellbeing 情緒健康

A: Feelings About School: How do you feel when you go to school each day? Are there things that make you excited or nervous?

對學校的感受: 你每天上學的時候感覺怎樣? 有什麼事情讓你覺得興奮或緊張?

B: Friendships: How do you feel about your friends? Do you feel comfortable talking to them about your feelings?

友誼: 你對朋友的感覺怎樣? 你覺得和他們談論你的感受是否舒適?

C: Coping Strategies: When you feel sad or upset, what are some things you do to feel better?

應對策略: 當你感到傷心或不安時, 你通常會做些什麼來讓自己好過一些?

D: Support System: Who do you talk to when you're feeling down or stressed? Do you feel like they understand you?

支持系統: 當你感到沮喪或有壓力時, 你會跟誰談話? 你覺得他們了解你嗎?

E: Positive Experiences: Can you share a recent experience that made you really happy? What made it special for you?

正面經歷: 你能分享最近讓你非常開心的經歷嗎? 是什麼讓這個經歷特別呢?

Contributed by SEN Champion, British Council Hong Kong

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Draw a picture of a house, tree, and person.

Draw a picture of anything you like

Contributed by SEN Champion, British Council Hong Kong

Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive

Classroom expectations

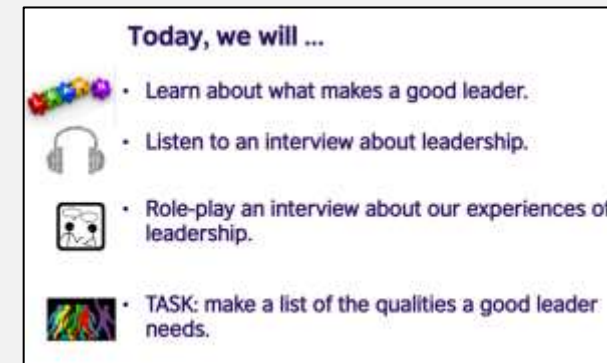


Language cards

Walking cards

Brain break cards

Signposting and lesson menus



Brain breaks and movement breaks



Student Support

Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive

Offering choice

Listen again and answer.

A

2A – Listen and fill in the gaps.

Welcome to my flat!

It is _____ and _____.

I live here with my mum, my brother and my rabbit.

There is a _____.

There is a _____.

There is a _____.

We don't have a _____.

but we do have a _____ balcony.

There are two _____.

I share a bedroom with my brother.

There is a computer in our _____.

B

2B – Listen and circle the correct answers in bold.

Welcome to my flat!

It is **big** / small and old / **new**.

I live here with my mum, my brother, and my rabbit.

There is a **living room** / garden.

There is a **balcony** / kitchen.

There is a **bathroom** / living room.

We don't have a **balcony** / garden.

but we do have a **small** / big balcony.

There are two **kitchens** / bedrooms.

I share a **bedroom** / kitchen with my brother.

There is a computer in our **garden** / bedroom!

Music – 432Hz

promote a sense of calm and well-being.

Brain Break Choice Board

1. box breathing
2. 5-4-3-2-1 grounding
3. follow a ball (good for focus)
4. change chairs
5. riddles
6. watch Mr Bean
7. draw / colour

Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive

Seating plan and interaction patterns



Breaking down
information into
smaller chunks

Social stories – imagining stories - empathy



Emotions/feelings scale



Showing compassion

Assessments

Strategies to make classrooms more inclusive

Accessible resources - SCULPT

- **Structure (heading styles):** Use heading styles in your document
- **Colour contrast:** Use sufficient contrast between text and background colour
- **Use of images:** Use alternative (alt) text on images
- **Links:** hyperlinks should be embedded in text which in isolation would describe what the link was to. Avoid nondescriptive text for links, such as "click here"
- **Plain English:** Use clear uncomplicated language, keeping jargon to a minimum
- **Table structure:** Use simple tables without merged or split cells

Sensory needs



Reasonable adjustments/accommodations

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2008) defined reasonable accommodations as:
"... necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms"

Accessibility standards

AA Standard in WCAG guidelines

Importance of collaboration to foster inclusion

- **Establish inclusive goals**
- **Encourage open communication**
- **Provide training and resources**
- **Use technology**
- **Celebrate achievements**
- **Solicit feedback**
- **Involve the community**

Use of IEPs/LSPs to support learners



LSP - Learner Support Plan

Collecting and recording learner information



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Learner Support Plan (LSP)

Student ID		Current class	Observation duration
Name – 0060		P4	Sem A + B (2024-25)
Teacher(s)	Previous teacher(s)	Enrolment start date	
		Sept 2024	
SEND (if disclosed)		Additional Care & Remarks	
Refer to notes on student management system (SMS) or this link (limited access).			

Learner Support Plan (LSP) - brief description

A Learner Support Plan (LSP) is a strategic document that provides tailored support for students who may require additional assistance in their learning environment. It is a valuable tool in education that helps ensure that all students receive the necessary support to thrive personally and academically based on their abilities and preferences. It fosters an inclusive environment where diverse learning needs are recognised and addressed. It ensures that all learners, regardless of their challenges, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

The development process includes identifying students in need through a needs analysis, assessments, and observations; collaborating with educators and families with the support of the Senior Teacher and SEND Champion; drafting a comprehensive plan outlining the support strategies and goals; implementing support strategies, and regularly reviewing progress to assess effectiveness and make necessary adjustments based on the student's progress. The Graduated Approach will guide this process.

4.8 Graduated Approach

The Graduated Approach¹⁷ is an intervention framework which takes a cyclical approach to identifying¹⁸ and responding to learning needs.

Figure 3: The Graduated Approach.

It is introduced in the UK's SEND Code of Practice (2015) as:

Please refer to our [Inclusion Policy p43 – 4.8 Graduated Approach](#) for more information and guidance on how to use this approach.

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Support Strategies (general) – Tick the strategies tried. Mention when they were used

<input type="checkbox"/> Use clearly defined routines / visual <u>timetables</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Use 'concrete' language, avoiding <u>idioms</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid lengthy verbal <u>instructions</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Allow extended waiting time after posing a question, then rephrase if necessary (8-12 secs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Use Information Checking Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed Questions with limited choices
<input type="checkbox"/> Use Visual support (pics on IWB) to reinforce Instructions and <u>signposting</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Break down into small, manageable <u>tasks</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep classroom <u>uncluttered</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Use non-verbal communication (eye contact, gestures) to reinforce acceptable <u>behaviour</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Use communication <u>cards</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a sensory corner/table with tasks like drawing, Lego, activities learners enjoy.
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider non-verbal forms of participation (drawing, gestures, <u>mini-WBs</u>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Get them involved in <u>goal-setting</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider interaction preference and allow to work alone (encouraging, not enforcing, participation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Have <u>movement/brain breaks</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Allow self-pacing rather than teacher-directed pacing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider seating – semicircle or small <u>groups</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Behaviour sorting task</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Use timers and/or give time warnings to reduce anxiety expressing understanding whatever the <u>outcome</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Functional language in the classroom</u> – support	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Calm strategies</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>More support strategies</u>	

Current Student Specific Support Strategies

Strengths/Interests/Hobbies

Things to avoid / consider

Overview / updates

Handover summary

LSP - Learner Support Plan

Support strategies

Support Strategies (general) – Tick the strategies tried. Mention when they were used

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use clearly defined routines / visual timetables | <input type="checkbox"/> Use 'concrete' language, avoiding idioms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid lengthy verbal instructions | <input type="checkbox"/> Allow extended waiting time after posing a question, then rephrase if necessary (8-12 secs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use Information Checking Questions | <input type="checkbox"/> Closed Questions with limited choices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use Visual support (pics on IWB) to reinforce instructions and signposting | <input type="checkbox"/> Break down into small, manageable tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep classroom uncluttered | <input type="checkbox"/> Use non-verbal communication (eye contact, gestures) to reinforce acceptable behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use communication cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Have a sensory corner/table with tasks like drawing, Lego, activities learners enjoy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consider non-verbal forms of participation (drawing, gestures, mini WBs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Get them involved in goal-setting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consider interaction preference and allow to work alone (encouraging, not enforcing, participation) | <input type="checkbox"/> Have movement/brain breaks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allow self-pacing rather than teacher-directed pacing. | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider seating – semicircle or small groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour sorting task | <input type="checkbox"/> Use timers and/or give time warnings to reduce anxiety expressing understanding whatever the outcome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Functional language in the classroom – support | <input type="checkbox"/> Calming strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More support strategies | |

Questionnaire for Parents

1. General Information

Student's preferred name: _____ Student ID: 0060 _____

Questionnaire filled by: ☐mother ☐father ☐other (please specify) _____

2. Understanding student's Interests

A. What are some specific songs that s/he enjoys singing?

B. What types of toys does s/he like to play with? (cars, Lego, etc)

C. Are there any specific activities or games that engage her/him the most?

D. What does s/he like to watch on TV/online?

3. Attention Span

How would you describe your child's attention span during activities?

A. ☐ Very focused (long periods) How many minutes? _____

B. ☐ Generally focused (some distractions)

C. ☐ Frequently distracted (short periods)

D. ☐ Very short attention span (easily loses interest)

In what types of activities does s/he show the most focus?

How does your child react when her/his attention is not engaged?

A. ☐ Becomes restless

B. ☐ Starts playing with other items

C. ☐ Leaves the activity

D. ☐ Becomes aggressive

E. ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. Supporting your child's Learning

• What strategies have you found helpful at home to support your child's focus or engagement?

• Are there particular rewards or incentives that motivate her/him (e.g., stickers, praise, extra playtime)?

• How does s/he respond to structured routines? Does s/he like consistency?

- What kind of support would you like from us?

- What are your expectations for your child from our course(s)?

5. Classroom Environment

- Are there any specific accommodations that you believe would help your child in the classroom? (A quiet area for breaks, frequent movement breaks, visual supports like charts and pictures etc.)

- How does your child react to group activities? Does s/he prefer working alone or with others?

- Is s/he receiving any support from her/his school? Please share details.

6. Emotional Support

- How does your child typically express frustration or restlessness? (Select all that apply)
 - A. ☐ Withdraws
 - B. ☐ Becomes disruptive (e.g., turning over chairs)
 - C. ☐ Cries or shows distress
 - D. ☐ Other (please specify): _____
- What strategies have worked best for calming your child during these moments? (Select all that apply)
 - A. ☐ Talking it out
 - B. ☐ Giving him space
 - C. ☐ Redirecting his attention
 - D. ☐ Breathing exercise
 - E. ☐ Other (please specify): _____

7. Communication and Feedback

- Are there specific concerns you have regarding your child's social interactions?
 - A. ☐ Yes (please specify): _____
 - B. ☐ No
- How can we work together to ensure the best outcomes for your child in the classroom?

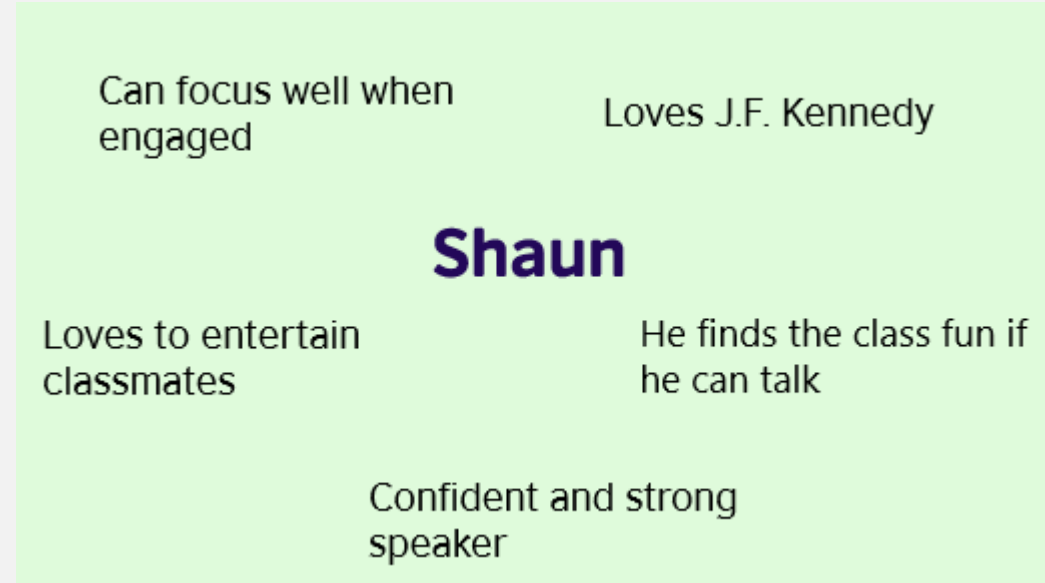
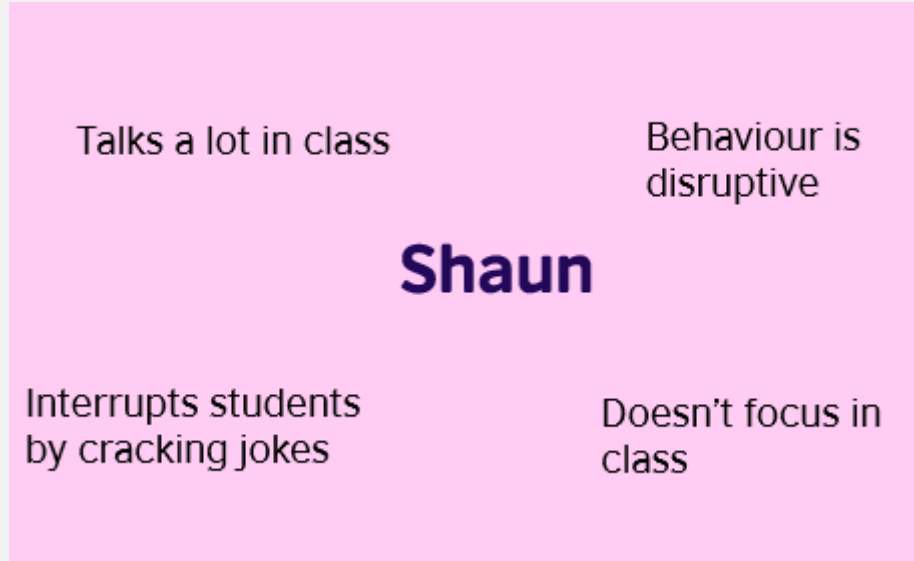
8. Additional Comments

- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your child that might help us support her/him better?
 - A. ☐ Yes (please specify): _____
 - B. ☐ No

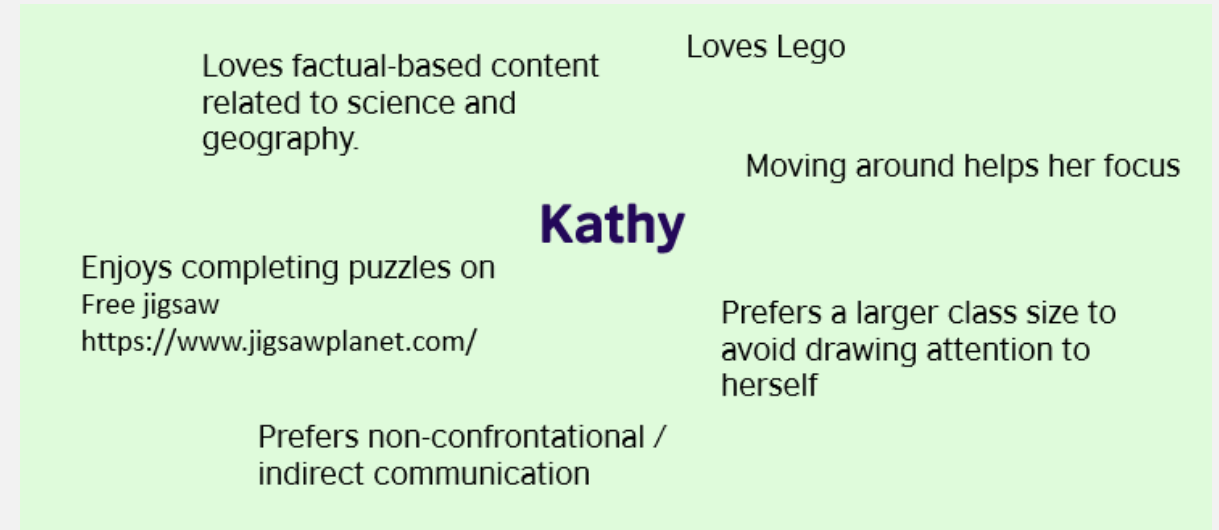
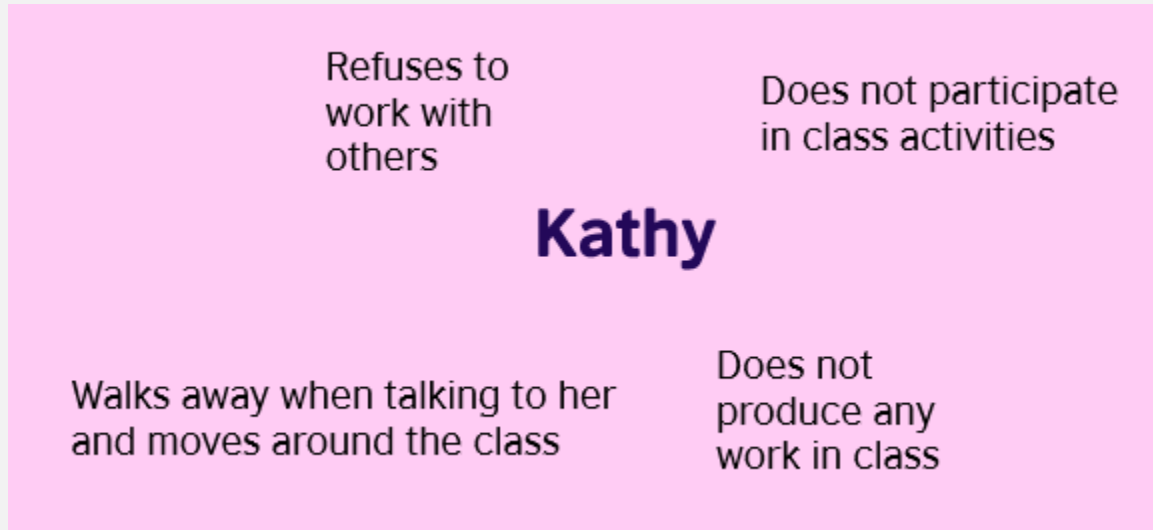
Any other comments

This questionnaire aims to gather insights that will enable teachers to create a supportive learning environment tailored to your child's needs.

Strengths over deficits



Strengths over deficits



Using language and labels

- Many people with impairments do not want to identify either as impaired (with a label) or disabled (with a batch): they want to be seen as ordinary members of society, free of limitations or classifications. **(Shakespeare, 2014, p.97)**
- Language changes and a label can be inclusive but over time shifts into being a slur (differently abled)
- **It is not our place to diagnose or suggest labels**

Do we really need to use labels to support our learners?
Do we really need a disclosure or diagnosis to support learners?

IATEFL Edinburgh 2025

Rethink the place of SEND labels in the YL classroom

Darshika Saxena

Thank you for coming

We would love your feedback

Darshika.Saxena@britishcouncil.org



References

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https://www.noplaceforhate.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Responding%20to%20Bias%20Incidents%20Guide_030321.pdf
- ndss preferred language - <https://ndss.org/preferred-language>
- [Supporting SEND - GOV.UK](#)
- [The Four Broad Areas of Need](#)
- Building on the Strengths of Students with Special Needs: How to Move Beyond Disability Labels in the Classroom by Toby J. Karten
- The Science of Reading and Its Educational Implications – PMC
- “Now, Discover Your Strengths” (2001), Donald O. Clifton and Marcus Buckingham

References

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- Inclusion in the primary classroom, Beaney and Kershaw (2009)
- National library of medicine - <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9554924/>
- Inclusive education - <https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>
- [NEURODIVERSITY: SOME BASIC TERMS & DEFINITIONS • NEUROQUEER](#)
- Online timers - <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/classroom-timers/>