

What To Do... Advice & Guidance for SENCOs and Parents/Carers navigating some of the common learning challenges

I am worried about...

Area of Difficulty	What might be causing it	Possible tests to evaluate	What School can do	What Home can do
Anger/strong emotions	Overly powerful amygdala Fear – often around a sense of lack of control Anger/strong emotions modelled towards the child Traumatic experience(s) An unsupported learning difficulty	Thrive SDQ Medical/psychological assessments Lucid COPS/LASS	Help the child to understand the impact of their emotions on others – metacognition Mindfulness Social Skills group Use reading to help support empathy Carry out some screening assessments to see whether the frustration is linked to an unrecognised difficulty	Mindfulness Create a calm atmosphere Always speak nicely to each other – seek to resolve problems respectfully Do not watch films or play video games which are above their age range, limit screen time. Have a good sleep hygiene routine with age appropriate bed times. Include reading in this. Reduce high sugar and high caffeine food/drink consumption. Increase vegetable intake, esp broccoli. Eat fatty fish, e.g. salmon & mackerel
Attention/focus	Weaker working memory Hypervigilance Low self-esteem Hypersensitivities to sound/visuals	Lucid COPS/LASS Thrive Observation	Give task boards Write instructions on the board Chunk tasks into smaller steps Mindfulness Thrive	Mindfulness Create a calm atmosphere Do not watch films or play video games which are above their age range, limit screen time. Have a good sleep hygiene routine with age appropriate bed times. Include reading in this. Reduce high sugar and high caffeine food/drink consumption. Increase vegetable intake, esp broccoli. Eat fatty fish, e.g. salmon & mackerel
Friendships	Weaker empathy skills Weaker social skills Low self-esteem Fear	The Talkabout Series baseline tests Thrive SDQ	Small group intervention: The Talkabout Series Plenty of opportunities to play Mentoring Lego Therapy Thrive	Rock-climbing Cubs/Beavers/Scouts Play board games together, modelling good social skills and managing emotions
Handwriting	Pen grip Hand strength Poor posture Weaker fine motor skills Insufficient practice	Handwriting assessment – see a specialist Morrell's Teachers Guide	Use an easygrip pen/pencil eg. Stabilo Easy Regular handwriting practice – see Morrell's Handwriting Hand putty and finger exercises Core stability strengthening exercises Extra time for writing tasks Touch typing skills & use of IT for extended writing	<u>Up to the age of about 10 years old:</u> Use an easygrip pen/pencil eg. Stabilo Easy Regular handwriting practice – see Morrell's Handwriting Hand putty and finger exercises Core stability strengthening exercises Touch typing skills & use of IT for extended writing

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Organisation Skills	Weak executive functioning Undeveloped habits		Teach and use metacognition processes to tackle the area of need. Model and explain. E.g. planning an answer Thinking Maps or visual organisers can help a lot	There are lots of resources on understood.org which can help you tackle different areas of need – e.g. bag packing, tying shoe laces
Reading Accuracy and/or Speed	Insecure decoding skills Insufficient practice Weaker phonological awareness Visual Stress	WRAT 5 Single Word Reading Test Diagnostic Reading Analysis Lucid COPS/LASS Behavioural Optometrist/Irlen	Ensure letter/sound correspondences are secure Flashcards of common syllables Trial different coloured overlays Regular reading to a class support Extra time for reading tasks	Read together at home every night Purchase a yearly subscription to Listening Books for audio books Choose Barrington Stoke books from the library See a Behavioural Optometrist
Reading Comprehension	Insecure decoding skills Poor working memory Weaker empathy skills Underdeveloped vocabulary Insufficient practice	Diagnostic Reading Analysis Lucid COPS/LASS Hodder Reading Test WRAT 5 Sentence Comprehension	Focus on study skills: highlighting key words, summarising what's been read Attempt only small sections at a time Focus on teaching Tier Two and Tier Three vocabulary Extra time for reading tasks	Ask your child to tell you what they remember from each paragraph they read Ask them questions like, "What do you think might happen next?"; "How do you think that character feels?" - "How do you know?" "Which words were new to you today? Can you guess what it means?"
Spelling	Insecure letter/sound correspondence Weaker phonological awareness Insufficient practice	WRAT 5 Spelling test Lucid COPS/LASS	Teach common error spelling words through mnemonics Use multi-sensory teaching strategies Use dyslexia-friendly marking for spelling Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check Segmenting into syllables Extra time for writing tasks	Only aim to learn 2-3 spellings a night and expect spellings to need a lot of repetition Connect spellings to visuals or unusual analogies to help support memory Lots of praise and encouragement!
Times Tables & Mental Maths	Sequencing skills Poor working memory	WRAT 5 Maths	Times Tables to music Learning patterns Using a time table grid to support practice Practical and visual examples for learning	Only aim to learn 2-3 sums a night and expect to need a lot of repetition Connect sums to visuals or unusual analogies to help support memory Lots of praise and encouragement!

This advice is a starting point, not an exclusive or diagnostic resource, but I hope it's helpful! Any tests listed are also given as a suggestion and are not exclusive – please feel free to use others which evaluate the same skills.