

# Narrowing the Gaps:

Guidance for literacy subject leaders



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## **Disclaimer**

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# Preface

This guidance is designed for literacy subject leaders in primary schools to aid the regular review of planning, to enable them to support inexperienced colleagues better in meeting the needs of all pupils in the class and to contribute to pupil progress meetings when asked for advice on appropriate next steps in learning. The guidance focuses on providing practical suggestions to meet the language and literacy needs of different vulnerable groups of children, in order to narrow any gaps between them and the rest of the children in the cohort. Such groups may include, depending on the context and situation of the school:

- children who are entitled to free school meals (FSM);
- quiet, 'undemanding' girls
- underachieving, white working-class boys
- children from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities
- children with a black African or black Caribbean heritage
- children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- children with Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- looked-after children
- pupils who are classed as gifted and talented (G&T), but are not fulfilling their potential.

The materials are organised into five sections:

**Section 1:** An introduction which links this booklet with other Narrowing the Gaps material and underlines the significance of Quality First teaching to the progress of all children.

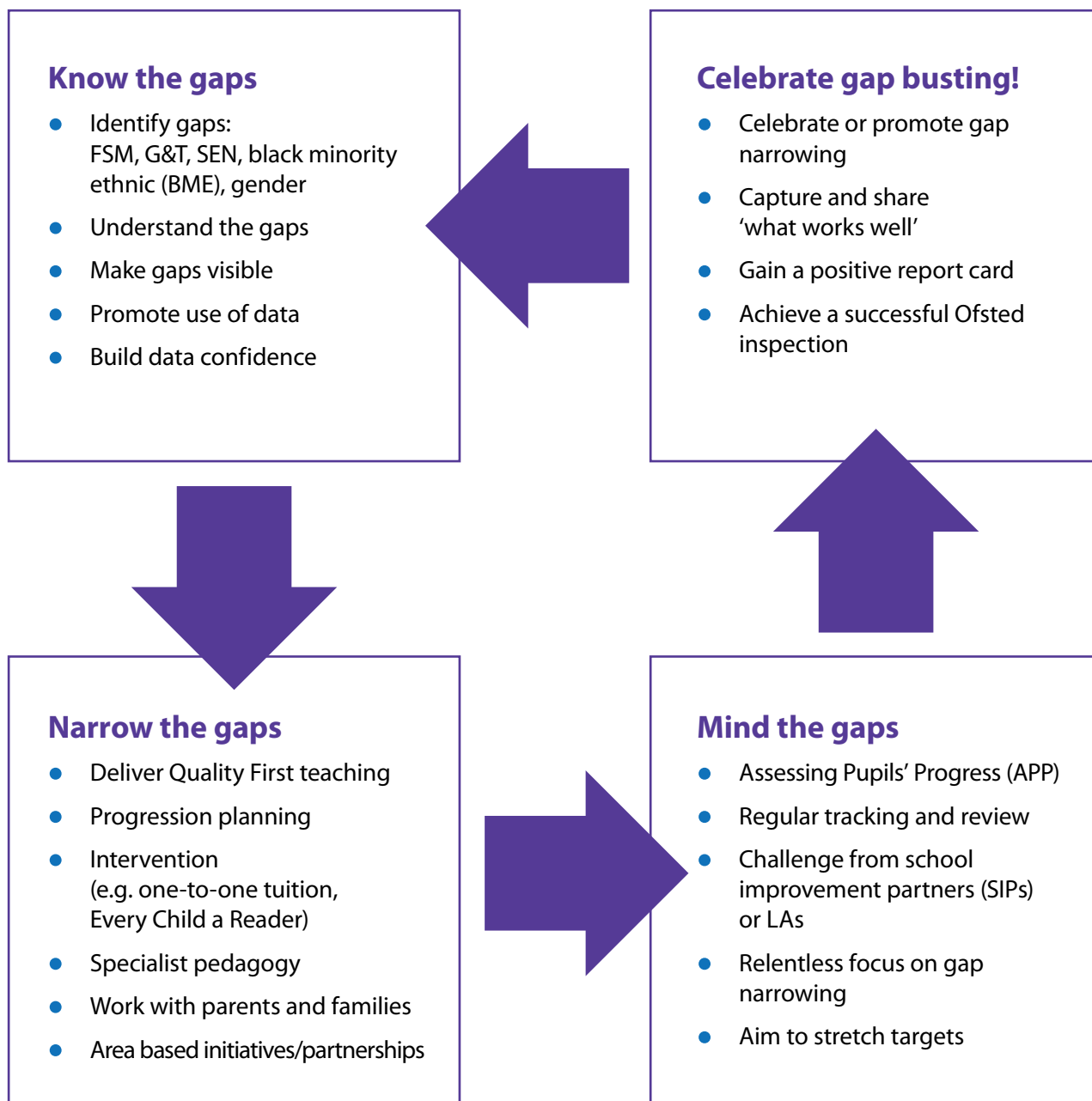
**Section 2:** A section summarising in table form some of the characteristics of different vulnerable groups of learners, and what is known from research and practice about their strengths and areas of difficulty. A set of prompts is given which the subject leader might use as an aid when reviewing planning to ensure that it takes account of the needs of these groups, or as the basis of an audit of provision on a wider scale. The tables also identify a set of possible outcomes, and positive signs that children are becoming more engaged with and successful in their learning. The section includes some prompts to support a professional dialogue between a literacy subject leader and colleagues, focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups of children.

**Section 3:** A number of adapted plans are presented in this section. These illustrate how National Strategies' unit plans can be modified to take account of the needs of different groups of children, by placing emphasis on particular objectives, drawing on different materials and resources and making use of known and effective strategies and teaching approaches to draw children into learning.

**Section 4:** This section gives a number of case studies from schools involved in the trialling of these materials, identifying how they made use of them to adapt existing planning and the outcomes which resulted.

**Section 5:** Some additional sources of information are identified in this section. These are intended to support further investigation into the challenges facing various groups of vulnerable children and will give a fuller picture than is possible in this summary.

**Figure 1: Strategies for success for schools, settings, and local authorities (LAs)**



# Section 1: Introduction

Every primary teacher, when talking about the children in their class, will emphasise how their teaching tries to address individual needs. Many teachers, for example, are using the APP materials effectively to identify gaps in children's learning and ensure that teaching considers these, perhaps by ensuring that children falling behind are given extra attention through focused guided work, or an intervention programme. This is an undoubted strength of primary schooling and most children respond enthusiastically to teachers who know them well, who are quick to offer help when it is needed, and who praise them for achievement and effort. This underpinning principle of the importance of individual needs has been reinforced at school level by increasingly effective tracking of individual progress to identify when children seem to have stalled in their learning, and to ensure that steps are taken to address any difficulties.

These materials seek to supplement this approach. Schools must continue to take every account of children's individual needs so that every pupil progresses in their learning as far as possible. Yet added to this, schools also need to look at different groups within each class and cohort in order to identify significant patterns of learning and weakness. At national level, data shows that many of these vulnerable groups, in particular children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), make significantly less progress than that of their peers. It is important that schools look at their own data this way, so that they can identify any potential underachievement and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of teaching and provision for these groups. *Narrowing the Gaps: Leadership for Impact (DCSF 01021-2009PDF)*, identifies some features of effective practice in relation to ensuring that every child makes as much progress as possible:

'Successful schools are single-minded in narrowing gaps. They:

- use data to identify gaps and to make them visible, pinpoint pupils at risk of underperforming, and challenge those whose progress needs to accelerate
- accept no excuses
- take time to understand the needs of each pupil, know what works best for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, and apply it consistently and relentlessly
- evaluate, celebrate and share success.

More widely, effective schools:

- recognise and unlock potential, including identification of G&T pupils eligible for FSM
- intervene early and effectively, track progress, and change approaches where necessary
- focus on transition, one-to-one tuition and progressive development of language and literacy skills
- search out the most effective ways of engaging parents and families
- listen to pupils and engage them in sustained dialogue about learning'.

The starting point is 'Knowing the gaps' (see figure 1). Schools need to use data and other information to identify where particular groups of children underperform, rather than focusing solely on individual children making less progress than other children in the class. By reviewing the progress of a particular group of children, for example quiet, undemanding girls entitled to FSM, schools may find that there are shared areas of need or underperformance which should be addressed at all levels within a school. By failing to look for these patterns and to treat children's weaknesses simply as individual issues requiring individual attention is potentially to miss opportunities to ask searching questions. Such questions may include how far the school's ethos promotes and supports learning for all children, or about the nature of the curriculum offered, the range of teaching approaches used and how effectively strategies like guided work are adapted to meet the needs of all children. It also means that schools and teachers are not necessarily working as effectively as they might; it is not efficient to provide additional intervention-

based support for children when modifications to the curriculum or to teaching approaches might have addressed difficulties earlier.

In part, these materials are intended to help schools, once data analysis has identified a group underperforming in literacy, to consider how to address their needs. They support a senior leadership team and, in particular the literacy subject leader, in reviewing provision and ensuring that teaching draws upon what is known from research and practice about what works well with different groups of learners. Section 2, where some of the characteristics of these groups are summarised, is intended to give a brief 'way in' to current understandings and to provide in accessible form some of the teaching implications of research and effective practice. They will be useful to a school that is looking to narrow the gaps (see figure 1 again) between the progress made by these vulnerable groups of pupils and the rest of the cohort. While these tables of characteristics cannot pretend to be an exhaustive account of everything that is known about these learners, they do provide an overview, in an easy summary form, which schools can use to review their provision and to challenge their thinking about what works in their own context.

## Taking steps to narrow the gaps

Knowing the data about your school and reviewing pupils' progress by group, not simply by individual, are important first steps in addressing the attainment gap between the identified vulnerable group and the rest of the children in the school. Once the gap is identified, the materials in section 2 will help suggest some ways forward in making proper provision to overcome these difficulties.

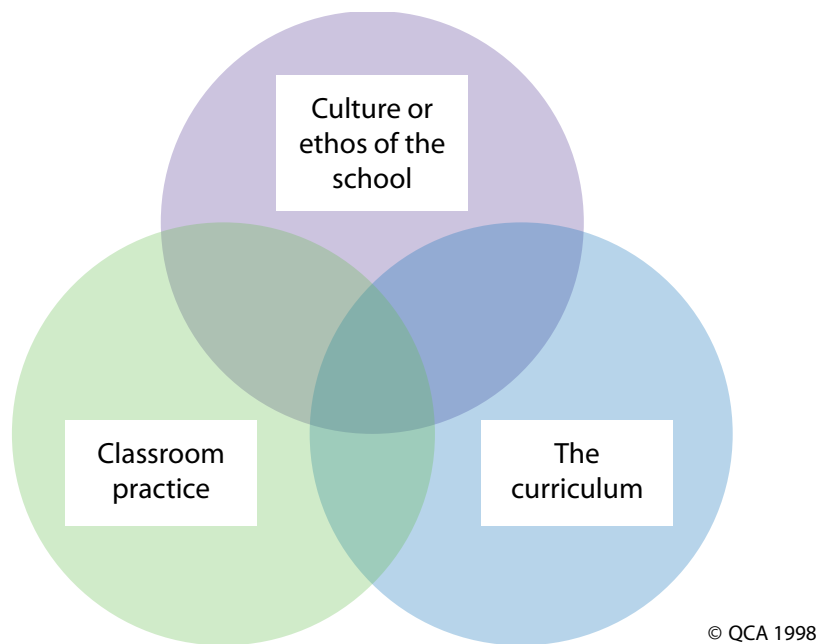
Subject leaders and senior leadership teams may want to audit the learning environment and review planning to ensure that the current provision and practice adequately support all children. Headteachers will want to be certain that effective practices are in place throughout the school and that the positive values which underpin provision are evident. In part this is about ensuring high-quality teaching in all classes – Quality First teaching. It is also about ensuring that the curriculum is adapted to take account of the needs of different groups, perhaps through the effective use of guided work, or by an emphasis on oral work, and that the culture of the school builds the confidence of all learners.

One way of looking at the effectiveness of a school's provision for its vulnerable children is to examine the provision in its constituent parts. Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of this way of looking, identifying how the elements of school ethos, the curriculum, and classroom practice need to be interwoven to provide adequately for all pupils. Originally developed by QCA in *Can Do Better: Raising Boys' Achievements in English* (1998), and addressing how to improve boys' performance, the diagram summarises how to sustain change by embedding important understandings into the culture of the school, by considering elements of the curriculum that might need to change and by looking to influence teaching to take account of what is known to be effective. As well as providing a model for embedding change in all aspects of a school's life, it also provides a useful starting point for reviewing current provision and practice.

A literacy subject leader or other member of the senior leadership team might use the understandings summarised in the diagram to review whole-school provision or indeed an individual teacher's planning for a literacy unit. Aspects of the school's ethos, whole-school decisions about the curriculum, and agreed teaching strategies and practices should be evident from learning walks and lesson observations, as well as from the scrutiny of planning and of children's work.



**Figure 2: A way of looking at school provision (from QCA: *Can Do Better: Raising Boys' Achievements in English, 1998*)**



The issues surrounding the achievements of different vulnerable groups are not simple; consequently a school's response needs to be multi-faceted. While there may be disadvantage which impacts on achievement, there may also be multiple issues in play which hamper progress. These can include those of perception, peer pressure, or disaffection. For these reasons, a school may seek to meet the challenge to raise attainment of groups of vulnerable children by promoting inclusion, or dealing with negative attitudes, ensuring that the curriculum it offers reflects rather than marginalises different cultural groups, as well as by addressing the quality of teaching.

From the summaries of the characteristics of vulnerable groups in section 2, and the implications from research and best practice, it is possible to draw out a number of underpinning principles which might inform the way that a school organises work with any group of underachieving children. Addressing underachievement cannot simply be focused at classroom level, important though this is. Certainly there are classroom strategies which support the inclusion and success of children but, to be effective, schools need a curriculum which is well adapted to all needs and promotes an inclusive, supportive culture or ethos where success is celebrated and promoted, for example by making use of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials. Effective provision includes high quality teaching but clearly stretches into all aspects of school life.

Figure 3 presents an example of some of these underpinning principles. Although these may need to be augmented by other equally important elements, derived from the local context, they provide a starting point for a school to review its current literacy practices against aspects recognised to make a difference to the progress of vulnerable and underachieving children. The principles are organised under the headings of culture, curriculum, and classroom practice.

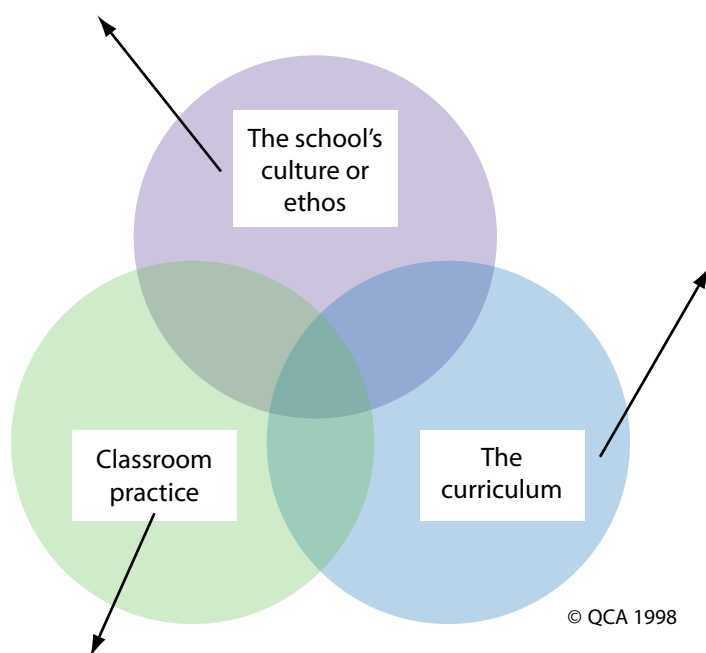
**Figure 3: All learners benefit from:**

**A culture or ethos** that encourages:

- Children to engage actively in their learning and where they are stimulated to learn.
- Teachers to have positive attitudes to all learners and are aspirational for them.
- Independence and choice.
- Children to make full use of the classrooms.
- The use of a wide range of materials and resources that are culturally and age appropriate.
- All adults in the school to model good literacy practices.
- The celebration of success.
- A positive view of literacy, e.g. through displays and library areas.
- Teachers to see themselves as learners, share good practice and discuss what has had an impact.
- The subject leader to follow up training and reviews or audits of planning by offering support and advice to colleagues as necessary.

**A curriculum** that is rich and stimulating and which is adapted to take account of:

- Children's needs and next steps, drawing on assessment information.
- The specific strengths and weaknesses of children and groups of children.
- The progress that is being made by most children, individual children and significant, vulnerable groups.
- The needs of vulnerable learners in each class.
- Whether any children are under achieving.
- Children's other needs, including medical needs, which should influence the curriculum.
- Individual or group targets and areas of the curriculum which children find difficult.
- The way that children are grouped and the impact that this has on how the curriculum is modified.
- The involvement of parents, e.g. provision is made for those children who get little support from home or who have difficulties completing homework.
- The appropriate balance between different aspects of the literacy curriculum, including speaking and listening and drama.
- The need for opportunities for repetition and rehearsal.
- Whether sufficient time is given to important objectives, including the teaching of vocabulary and comprehension strategies.
- The opportunities for good cross-curricular links.



**Classroom practice or teaching** that draws upon a range of successful strategies, including:

- Ensuring children know the 'big picture' of what they are learning.
- Extensive teacher modelling used as an opportunity to externalise the thinking process, demonstrating, for example, how writers make decisions.
- Guided work that is well focused on children's needs and used as a short term intervention to improve specific areas of learning. Grouping is flexible and varied according to need.
- Sufficient opportunities for children to talk in the course of a lesson, so that they have opportunities to rehearse ideas.
- Opportunities for children to edit and improve their work and act on their teacher's feedback.
- Specific praise used as a teaching strategy.
- Children reflecting upon their learning.
- Stimulating children's interest and motivating them to learn through, for example practical activities and drama.

## Quality First teaching

Recognising the importance of an inclusive ethos in the school and the classroom, and a curriculum which is well adapted to the needs of all children, does not diminish the importance of ensuring that all children receive high-quality teaching as a matter of course.

The features of good, inclusive, quality-first teaching include:

- highly focused lesson design with sharp objectives
- high demands of pupil involvement and engagement with their learning
- high levels of interaction for all pupils
- modelling and explanation
- an emphasis on learning through dialogue, with regular opportunities for pupils to talk both individually and in groups
- an expectation that pupils will accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently
- regular use of encouragement and authentic praise to engage and motivate pupils.

*Personalised Learning – A Practical Guide* (DCSF, 2008)

Quality First teaching is centred on learning and the learner and is underpinned by a belief that all children can succeed and make progress. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is a key element. Knowing exactly what the learner currently understands and what they need to know next is at the heart of Quality First teaching. Based on that understanding of the needs of learners, the effective teacher makes informed choices about applying different teaching approaches and structures (whole class, small group, and one-to-one) to promote particular outcomes. Good teaching is built on a clear idea of what success looks like, and this is shared with the children. Links are made between learning in different areas of the curriculum. The pedagogy poster, accompanying the headteachers' continuing professional development (CPD), gives further details.

In literacy, quality-first teaching includes strong, shared sessions where new learning is modelled and internal processes like reading and writing are externalised and made explicit by the teacher's actions and commentary. Guided work addresses specific needs and is driven by objectives, not just by resources or activity. Speaking and listening is emphasised, so that children have the opportunity to think through and rehearse new ideas and learning. There is a carefully planned move from modelling and scaffolded learning to independent application of what has been learned. A fuller list of strategies which support the learning of vulnerable groups in literacy lessons is included in the introduction to section 3.

It is important to understand that adapting planning for underperforming groups is not only a matter of choosing objectives from an earlier year or phase of education. In some areas of the literacy curriculum this is an essential approach, particularly within strands where there is a precise sequence or programme which needs to be followed to ensure that there are no gaps in the children's knowledge or understanding. This occurs most obviously within the literacy framework strands 5: word recognition: decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling), and 6: (word structure and spelling). In other aspects of the framework however there is a danger that if only prior attainment is considered and the next step identified accordingly, these children will never catch up with others in the class working at age-related expectations and on appropriate objectives. The choice of the next step objective can act as a 'glass ceiling' to narrowing the gap.

Teachers need to understand the potential of children from vulnerable groups to make rapid progress once they are motivated to learn. As a consequence, in some strands of the framework, adapting planning is less to do with differentiating objectives than considering how underperforming children can be helped to access learning at an age-appropriate level. It is essential that teachers have the highest expectations for all children and are able to refine their teaching approaches and use of resources, including their time and that of any teaching assistant (TA) or other adult, to enable children to catch up when previously they had underachieved. This aspect of planning is revisited in more detail in section 3.

## Section 2: Key prompts for literacy subject leaders

This section gives some prompts to support conversations between the literacy subject leader and class teachers. They could also be used to audit provision across the school, providing a number of questions which could be a starting point for finding out more.

The prompts here differ from those in the tables of characteristics in being more general, thus helping class teachers to pinpoint potential issues that arise from their provision. Once a particular vulnerable group is pinpointed as underperforming, or as a cause for concern, the specific prompts identified in the tables of characteristics will be useful.

### Building a profile of the learners

Questions to open discussion with class teachers:

- Tell me about the learners in your class?
  - Are the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils in the class known?
  - Are there known underachieving groups?
  - Is there a positive attitude to all learners? Is there aspiration for all?
  - Is the focus on progress? Which groups and individuals are making progress? Do some groups need to make accelerated progress?
- What approaches have you used for underachieving groups?
  - Can particular approaches or strategies be effectively matched to some learners?
  - Is it clear why the approaches work?
  - Which approaches have been less successful? What information does this give us about the group of learners?
  - Is knowledge of successful approaches shared between classes?
- What is engagement like for these children? Are they confident in the classroom? Do they participate well?
  - Has the teacher identified variations in confidence and engagement?
  - Can these variations be linked to particular learning situations, for example group tasks, independent work and so on?
  - How are children engaged in the learning? Are they motivated and stimulated to learn?

### Understanding the classroom organisation and environment

- How are the children grouped? Is this helping their progress?
  - Is grouping flexible and matched to experience and need?
  - Are individual and group targets supporting the learning?
  - What does guided practice look like? Is it effectively supporting the next steps in learning?

- Are parents involved? What communication channels are established to secure involvement?
  - Are parents encouraged to work with children in the classroom?
  - Are parents' views known and influencing learning in the classroom?
  - Are children being supported with their learning at home?
  - Is there provision for children who may not have the opportunity to work with parents at home?
- Do the children use the classroom to help them learn?
  - Is there evidence that the children make use of the layout and displays and so on within the classroom to support their learning?
  - Is the potential of the classroom modelled to the children by the adults?
  - How does the classroom scaffold learning in terms of writing and reading?
  - How much independence and choice does the classroom support?

## Adjusting planning

### Prompts for subject leaders reviewing planning

- Are objectives appropriate and are they demonstrating clear aspirations for all children?
- Does the planning reflect an engaging and motivating curriculum in terms of content and delivery?
- Does the planning reflect the appropriate range of teaching approaches? Is there sufficient emphasis on those approaches that have previously worked, or are known to work, for those children who are underachieving?
  - Is there an appropriate balance of shared work for both reading and writing?
  - Is guided work used to address appropriate next steps in learning?
  - Is the teacher planning for the explicit modelling of particular skills to support children's development?
  - Is talk planned within and across sessions?
- Is the classroom environment explicitly woven into the planning to scaffold and support learning?
  - Are there missed opportunities to make use of a good classroom environment?
- Are there opportunities for independence and choice?
- How can the 'characteristics grids' be used to make appropriate adjustments to planning to support identified vulnerable groups?

## Tables of characteristics

The tables of characteristics in this section draw together some of our current understandings from research and practice about different groups of vulnerable learners. The tables describe some of the features of these learners and some of the strategies and practices which have been used successfully to improve their learning in literacy. The tables also include sets of questions for use by literacy subject leaders or senior leadership teams to use directly with staff, as review prompts, when focusing on planning or when auditing provision in the school more widely. Some indicators of success and progress are also identified.

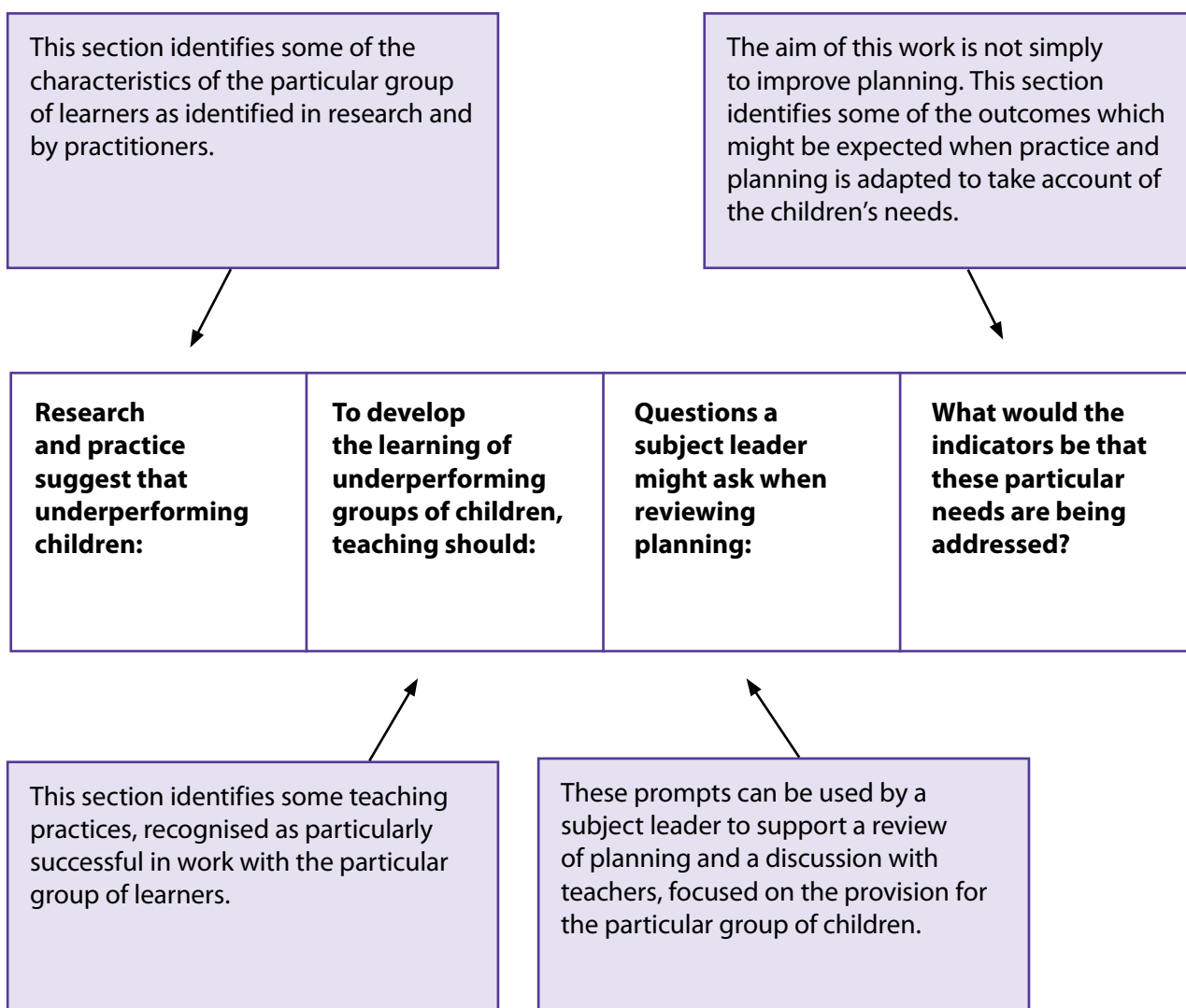
There is a danger that presenting information in this way risks over simplifying complex issues about underperforming groups of children and of reinforcing stereotypes. Obviously not all children who

belong to one or more of these groups, exhibit some or any of the learning characteristics identified, nor do all of the practices and suggested approaches work unfailingly in every class. We must be aware, of course, of children who achieve well despite the disadvantages which they face. Similarly, some teachers will successfully use strategies that may not reflect the practices identified here.

While recognising the dangers of stereotyping, providing these concise summaries of what is known of different learners will be helpful. Schools which piloted this material reported that the tables gave useful background information, and a readily accessible source of prompts to support professional dialogue, review, and investigation. Ideas about practice were seen as useful background material that helped schools to respond rapidly to shifting school populations, or to new concerns raised by re-examining data with a focus on a particular group. Subject leaders felt that the prompts enabled them to engage with colleagues' planning in a more professional way, supporting a move from simply checking curriculum coverage to providing advice which made a difference in the classroom. Several teachers welcomed the materials as a source of ideas to help them engage and promote the learning of particular groups of learners.

None of these tables is definitive or exhaustive. References to further reading and guidance are given in the final section of the booklet and many colleagues will want to look further into the complexities of engaging vulnerable children in learning. Nevertheless, these materials provide a starting point for engaging with and taking action to address the underachievement of vulnerable groups.

### How the tables work:



Tables of characteristics have been developed for:

- looked-after children
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children
- children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
- underachieving children who have been identified as Gifted and Talented (G&T)
- 'Undemanding' and underperforming girls from low-income backgrounds
- underperforming children of black African or Caribbean heritage
- underperforming boys
- children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).



## Looked-after children

Research and practice suggest that looked-after children:	To develop the learning of underperforming groups of looked-after children, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning: Does the planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May have suffered from a disrupted school experience</li> <li>● May have barriers to progress, perhaps developed over a long period of time</li> <li>● Don't want to be seen to be treated differently to their peers</li> <li>● Often have low self-esteem and lack confidence</li> <li>● May need support to further develop appropriate social skills</li> <li>● Often have lower attainment than their peers</li> <li>● Need challenges to build self-esteem and secure academic achievement</li> <li>● Need their progress to be viewed as fragile due to unpredictable events taking place in their personal life</li> <li>● Feel they do not have enough control over their own lives</li> <li>● Benefit from planned preparation to cope with change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assess a child's prior learning to ensure an appropriate focus on accelerating progress where attendance has been disrupted</li> <li>● Set high expectations for looked-after children despite their circumstances, and provide appropriate challenges</li> <li>● Use group and partner work to provide a context for developing appropriate social skills, as well as role-play to model effective relationships</li> <li>● Reflect good communication between the teacher and other key workers</li> <li>● Plan for appropriate time for preparation with the child prior to changes in routine</li> <li>● Encourage and support independent learning with clear opportunities to exercise choice</li> <li>● Be flexible and responsive to changing needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take account of a child's strengths and needs, using day-to-day AFL and APP to inform next steps?</li> <li>● Include opportunities for activating children's prior knowledge?</li> <li>● Indicate appropriate levels of challenge to secure progress of looked-after children?</li> <li>● Include regular opportunities for structured group and partner work to build and strengthen relationships?</li> <li>● Indicate opportunities for supportive preparation around particular activities?</li> <li>● Identify how children will be scaffolded to work independently without the involvement of another adult?</li> <li>● Offer children the opportunity to exercise choice and to control the direction of their work?</li> <li>● Allow for flexibility in case progress is fragile?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Looked-after children are making good progress and better-than-expected progress following a period of interrupted attendance</li> <li>● Attainment of looked-after children reflects their potential</li> <li>● All children have clear protocols to guide group and partner work and looked-after children are included in relationships which are effective and supportive</li> <li>● Teachers and key workers are alert to possible difficult situations involving change, and that looked-after children are well-prepared and know what to expect and have effective coping strategies</li> <li>● There is a good balance of supported and independent work across units of work</li> <li>● Looked-after children are confident participants in the classroom</li> </ul>



### Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children

Research and practice suggest that underperforming GRT children:	In order to develop the learning of underperforming groups of GRT children, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Often lack opportunities to share a book with parents at home</li> <li>● May have gaps in their learning due to mobility interrupting their attendance</li> <li>● Enjoy learning on a collaborative, rather than a competitive basis</li> <li>● Are happier learning through participation rather than through decontextualised verbal explanations</li> <li>● Work better when learning has a clear connection to everyday-life</li> <li>● Engage better in learning that enhances their sense of community identity and family membership</li> <li>● Respond well to active approaches to reading</li> <li>● Write better when care is taken to stimulate and motivate their interest</li> <li>● Belong to a community that has a very strong oral tradition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure that additional opportunities for shared reading are provided in school</li> <li>● Be supported through IT distance learning units</li> <li>● Look to utilise opportunities for family learning wherever possible</li> <li>● Include regular, planned opportunities to talk and to relate this directly to writing</li> <li>● Use visual approaches</li> <li>● Demonstrate simple and clear references to GRT everyday-life</li> <li>● Include regular opportunities for collaborative, inter-generational work</li> <li>● Use diagnosis and corrective reading recovery programmes for those GRT children with poor literacy skills</li> <li>● Relate writing directly to their home life and family background</li> <li>● Include opportunities for storytelling as a stimulus for writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are GRT children's strengths and needs being taken into account through day-to-day AFL and APP to inform next steps?</li> <li>● Do tasks draw upon GRT children's positive cultural knowledge and understanding to help build their confidence and motivation?</li> <li>● Is there sufficient speaking and listening, drama, rehearsing, storytelling, and extended pupil-pupil talk?</li> <li>● Do approaches reflect a GRT cultural preference for collaborative working?</li> <li>● Does guided work address weaknesses and gaps in phonics and grammatical accuracy?</li> <li>● Does planning take account of GRT children's cultural context and the possibility that other contexts are quite unfamiliar?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children are given opportunities through guided work to focus on identified gaps in understanding and specific areas of phonics in the context of their current work</li> <li>● GRT children can make the connection between their home environment and the speaking and writing work in school</li> <li>● The classroom contains resources and displays which support and reflect the current, vibrant, and changing GRT community</li> <li>● Some GRT children will begin to make accelerated levels of progress</li> <li>● GRT parents are seen as co-educators and they are engaged in supporting their child's literacy development at every stage</li> <li>● GRT children are confident and willing to share information about their cultural identity</li> </ul>

### Children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Research and practice suggest that EAL learners:	To develop the learning of underperforming groups of EAL learners, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning: Does planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show understanding of language differences and patterns at a young age as a result of bilingualism</li> <li>• Often make very rapid progress – their ability to articulate their understanding of concepts in English masking knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Take time to become fluent in English – in one to two years children will have basic interpersonal or social language</li> <li>• Take a further five to seven years to develop the formal language needed for academic success</li> <li>• Need continued support to develop a greater range and accuracy in the use of vocabulary, grammar, language structures and functions</li> <li>• Experience a greater tolerance of informal and fragmented sentences in spoken language, but a greater need for precision and accuracy in written language</li> <li>• Often experience difficulty with idiomatic and culturally embedded language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value, encourage, and allow the continued development of the first language as a tool for learning</li> <li>• Take account of prior learning and understanding of concepts</li> <li>• Use literacy in the first language to support development of English – allow note-taking and other writing tasks in the first language</li> <li>• Take account of children's individual assessment profile, experience, and background</li> <li>• Model, recast, scaffold, and plan for specific areas of linguistic development – explicitly teaching them</li> <li>• Plan explicit opportunities to support vocabulary development – range, appropriate use and precision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take account of children's strengths and needs relating to vocabulary and grammatical accuracy using day-to-day AFL and APP to inform next steps?</li> <li>• Address grammatical items which typically are challenging for EAL learners?</li> <li>• Show awareness of vocabulary items which may be difficult to understand (colloquial or phrasal verbs or cultural references and so on)?</li> <li>• Include opportunities for activating children's prior knowledge and the use of first languages, visual support, graphic organisers, and extended pupil-pupil talk?</li> <li>• Include explanation and practice of grammatical items in context and make links between sentence level grammar and text genres?</li> <li>• Take account of children's cultural context and the possibility that other contexts are unfamiliar?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are given opportunities through guided work to focus on identified and specific areas of grammar in the context of their current work</li> <li>• Unfamiliar, colloquial or culturally embedded vocabulary is introduced, for example during shared and guided work, explored through discussion, and understood by children</li> <li>• Children make connections between sentence-level grammar and writing genres</li> <li>• Increasing grammatical accuracy is evident in children's speaking and writing</li> <li>• Children use an increasing range of vocabulary with greater precision and understanding</li> <li>• Children understand, and use appropriately, an increasing range of language functions and sentence structures in their speaking and writing</li> </ul>

### Children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)

Research and practice suggest that some underachieving learners eligible for FSM may:	To develop the learning of this group of learners, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be of high, mid or low ability yet still be underachieving</li> <li>• Be adversely effected by peer group pressure or by prevalent attitudes within the neighbourhood in which they live</li> <li>• Lack some appropriate registers for speech and writing which limits their access to education</li> <li>• Have their attitudes to school influenced negatively by their parents and/or carers</li> <li>• Have low or declining attendance</li> <li>• May have limited experience of books and reading</li> <li>• May find it hard to find a space to complete homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for patterns in attainment, progress, and social and emotional development</li> <li>• Engage with parents wherever possible</li> <li>• Make links with the wider community and bring them into the classroom</li> <li>• Use SEAL approaches to address negative attitudes to themselves as learners or to others</li> <li>• Focus on the development of language and vocabulary to give access to more formal registers</li> <li>• Plan frequent opportunities for reinforcement so that important aspects of learning are 'over learned'</li> <li>• Raise aspirations and build confidence, for example through the discrete use of specific praise</li> <li>• Read to the class or individual children as often as possible</li> <li>• Offer particular support at transfer and transition points</li> <li>• Explore ways to provide them with the space and opportunity to complete homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the underachieving children entitled to FSM in this class?</li> <li>• How are language and vocabulary development promoted in the plan?</li> <li>• Could you draw on SEAL materials here?</li> <li>• How are high expectations of all children communicated?</li> <li>• Could parents be involved in this unit of work, for example in the celebration event?</li> <li>• What strategies are used to overcome any lack of support from home, for example when asking the children to research a topic?</li> <li>• Is there sufficient emphasis on speaking and listening?</li> <li>• How often do you read to the class? How are you promoting reading?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater engagement from FSM pupils</li> <li>• A sense of pride in their achievements</li> <li>• Children attempt to use a more formal register in appropriate oral contexts</li> <li>• More positive attitudes to themselves and their work and raised expectations of what they can achieve</li> <li>• Higher levels of achievement than previously and significantly less underperformance among pupils in this group</li> <li>• Increased communication between school and home</li> </ul>

### Underperforming Gifted and Talented (G&T) children

Research and practice suggest that G&T pupils may display some of the following characteristics:	To develop the learning of this group of learners, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a strong awareness of language; enjoy playing with words, exploring new vocabulary, and experimenting with its use</li> <li>• Ask perceptive questions to elicit information or to challenge others' points of view</li> <li>• Show creative flair but may also be reluctant to record their ideas or leave work unfinished</li> <li>• Read and understand texts advanced for their age or some may avidly read a narrow range of unchallenging texts</li> <li>• Enjoy writing and show an interest in the craft of writing</li> <li>• May have strengths in one area of English, for example drama, poetry, reading while underperforming in other aspects of English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with the diagnostic use of APP and AFL to ensure that teaching is matched to these pupils' needs</li> <li>• Promote excellence, encourage and value playfulness with language, risk-taking and originality of thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• Use a range of questioning techniques and provide opportunities for G&amp;T pupils to work in different groups</li> <li>• Encourage independence, discussion, evaluation and reflection</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for choice within tasks, for example in method of presentation, in viewpoint or in content</li> <li>• Ensure that pupils who demonstrate asymmetrical abilities are supported to achieve equally well in other aspects of English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have any G&amp;T pupils been identified as underperforming in one or all aspects of English?</li> <li>• What strategies are being used to support them?</li> <li>• Are there sufficient opportunities for speaking and listening activities, word play and drama?</li> <li>• Does planning include targeted questions, ability pairs and opportunities for G&amp;T pupils to work through investigative approaches?</li> <li>• Do the tasks set utilise higher-order thinking skills to ensure that G&amp;T pupils are challenged in relation to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation?</li> <li>• Does the planning include a range of texts to challenge G&amp;T pupils cognitively?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The oral and written work of G&amp;T pupils is of a higher standard and reflects their potential</li> <li>• All pupils enjoy a classroom that encourages and values risk-taking and originality of thought and ideas</li> <li>• A rich literary environment provides access to an appropriately challenging range of texts</li> <li>• Tasks are designed to engage, challenge and promote the use of higher-order skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation</li> <li>• Pupils are offered opportunities to work in a range of groups and situations</li> <li>• G&amp;T pupils who demonstrate a particular strength in one area of English are actively supported to achieve equally well in other aspects of English</li> </ul>

**‘Undemanding’ and underperforming girls from low-income backgrounds**

<p><b>Research and practice suggest that girls from low-income backgrounds:</b></p>	<p><b>To develop the learning of underperforming girls from low-income backgrounds, teachers should:</b></p>	<p><b>Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:</b></p>	<p><b>Possible outcomes:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are often quiet and well behaved in lessons but can become ‘invisible children’</li> <li>● Take care over the presentation of their work and are often neat writers</li> <li>● Lack confidence in their own abilities and seem ‘happy to be average’</li> <li>● Are reluctant to speak in class</li> <li>● Rarely read with parents and carers at home</li> <li>● May have attendance issues, including unauthorised absences</li> <li>● May reflect low expectations of parents and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make use of a wide range of teaching approaches</li> <li>● Encourage collaborative working arrangements</li> <li>● Make use of group work for speaking and listening to encourage greater involvement</li> <li>● Provide additional opportunities for independent and paired reading, including with an adult, to develop interest in books</li> <li>● Use guided work as a specific intervention to target areas of weakness</li> <li>● Develop as many real audiences and purposes as possible for speaking and listening and writing activities</li> <li>● Use real-life experiences for writing where possible</li> <li>● Communicate appropriate expectations of attainment to parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can learning mentors and TAs support this group of children?</li> <li>● What opportunities are being created for children to work collaboratively?</li> <li>● Are there more opportunities for rehearsal prior to whole-class work?</li> <li>● What additional reading time is being made available? How is this used?</li> <li>● Are you planning to work explicitly with this group of underperforming girls in the class? What will be the focus?</li> <li>● Does this group get enough of the teacher’s or TA’s time?</li> <li>● Could parents be involved in the celebration of the work involved in this unit?</li> <li>● Can guided group work be used to feed back to the group, focusing on praising their achievements to build confidence?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Greater levels of involvement in whole-class discussions</li> <li>● Greater confidence in contributing to speaking and listening activities</li> <li>● Group are engaging in independent reading as a free choice activity</li> <li>● More engagement in writing lessons, shown in, for example enthusiastic response to a stimulus to write, joining in actively with storytelling activities</li> </ul>



### Underperforming children of black African or Caribbean heritage

Research and practice suggest that underperforming black children:	To develop the learning of underperforming groups of black children, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indications be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be confident and fluent speakers</li> <li>• Often have access to a range of language or dialect forms (which might be based on English, French or Spanish)</li> <li>• Find that their interest is piqued by content which is familiar (characters or contexts)</li> <li>• May make, as a group, slow progress in reading within Key Stage 2</li> <li>• Respond well to Talk for Writing (TFW) approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer opportunities for developing and using talk in a range of ways – both creatively and instrumentally</li> <li>• Ensure that there are opportunities to examine and develop different language or dialect forms in writing, reading, and performance</li> <li>• Be aware of texts and scenarios which are particularly challenging or inaccessible, due to context or cultural representation</li> <li>• Explore and value the richness and creativity of children's languages, Creoles/patois and dialects</li> <li>• Find out about the language experiences, expertise and needs of the children</li> <li>• Invite children's views of their own language proficiency and repertoire</li> <li>• When using events, stories or sequences which are not personally familiar, check to ensure their authenticity and acceptability to the children to be taught (and their families, where necessary).</li> <li>• Work with parents, carers and the wider community to share views on language and learning and the use of African and Caribbean languages in a classroom context</li> <li>• Increase opportunities to develop talk or writing using artefacts or photographs as stimuli</li> <li>• Use ICT (photography, audio recording, oral history work) to produce resources which expand the cultural range in school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there opportunities for performance, response, and persuasive speaking?</li> <li>• Are there activities which promote playing with words (puns, ambiguity), language forms and organising language for meaning?</li> <li>• Does the planning include opportunities to explore the roots or origins of words?</li> <li>• Has there been an appropriate assessment of the (non-English) language repertoires of the children (including children of African Caribbean heritage)?</li> <li>• Is knowledge of the children's language repertoires used in planning, teaching, and assessing children's learning?</li> <li>• Are there specific aspects of language (vocabulary and linguistic structures) which are more challenging for children in the class? If so, have these challenges been addressed in planning?</li> <li>• Are opportunities provided for children to experience a range of writing, through modelling and scaffolding?</li> <li>• Do the texts and artefacts which support this planning accurately convey the current or historical contexts of the children to be taught?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some previously underperforming children achieve to better than expected levels</li> <li>• Children, especially boys, are keen to write</li> <li>• Children's writing increasingly shows a greater range and includes confident and coherent extended pieces</li> <li>• Children talk more about their experiences and are able to frame these in interesting and compelling ways for performance or other readers, or in other forms of communication</li> <li>• Children are flexible in their use of a range of language forms, including Creole/patois and can use these to enrich written and oral work</li> <li>• The classroom environment provides a permanent reference base for children's literacy development through the available resources, the display, and the evidence of work in progress</li> <li>• Staff use a range of language forms appropriately and know when language variants are being used by children, in writing or in oral work</li> <li>• Assessment of children's progress in literacy addresses the specificity of children's language repertoires, their use of grammar, synonyms, and homonyms and their understanding of idiom and colloquialisms</li> </ul>

## Underperforming boys

Research and practice suggest that underperforming boys:	To develop the learning of underperforming groups of boys, teaching should:	Questions a subject leader might ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indicators be that their particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often have skills in speaking and listening and drama</li> <li>• Respond well to active approaches to reading</li> <li>• Write better when care is taken to stimulate and motivate their interest</li> <li>• Write better when work is carefully structured</li> <li>• Tend not to want to write at length, although succinctness can be a strength</li> <li>• May avoid spending time on activities that they find difficult</li> <li>• Can try to disguise their low attainment by negative attitudes to their work, to others and to themselves</li> <li>• Often can but choose not to read</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include frequent opportunities for talk in many activities</li> <li>• Use drama as both a stimulus to writing and as a means of developing and structuring ideas</li> <li>• Use visual approaches, e.g. film, drawing, as a means of engaging interest</li> <li>• Promote engagement with reading and provide opportunities for independent reading</li> <li>• Include lots of active ways of responding to text</li> <li>• Make use of boys' interests, including their interest in technology, to stimulate and motivate them</li> <li>• Place emphasis on providing interesting stimuli to build motivation and confidence</li> <li>• Develop real and realistic audiences and purposes for writing, so that writing is seen as purposeful</li> <li>• Include explicit instruction on how to structure their writing</li> <li>• Include opportunities for choice in writing tasks</li> <li>• Find appropriate ways of valuing and celebrating successes</li> <li>• Address specific needs as necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are you signalling that you have high expectations of all learners, particularly the underperforming boys in the class?</li> <li>• How is interest and motivation built in at each phase of the teaching sequence and in each lesson?</li> <li>• Does the plan include sufficient speaking and listening and drama?</li> <li>• How are the boys' independent reading skills being developed?</li> <li>• Will the texts chosen for reading at phase 1 interest and engage all learners, including underperforming boys?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for choice in this phase of the teaching sequence?</li> <li>• Who is the audience for the writing? Why are they writing it?</li> <li>• How can guided work be used to target support and to address identified weaknesses in (for example) sentence construction?</li> <li>• Can you find a way of celebrating the final outcomes from this work?</li> <li>• Are there ways of making a good use of ICT resources to support this work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys responding positively to engaging stimuli and showing commitment to their work</li> <li>• Boys reading independently, making use of libraries, volunteering to read with younger children</li> <li>• Boys taking pride in their written work, as shown by their willingness to improve upon a first draft</li> <li>• Boys' increasing confidence and higher expectations, fewer instances of distracting behaviour in class</li> <li>• Boys able to explain and justify the choices they make in reading and writing and working a project through to completion</li> <li>• Engagement with tasks which involve problem solving</li> </ul>

## Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Research and practice suggest that children with SEN:	To develop the learning of underperforming children with SEN, teaching should:	Questions to ask when reviewing planning:	What would the indicators be that these particular needs are being addressed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are a diverse group</li> <li>• Are not identified consistently by different teachers, schools and LAs</li> <li>• Cannot have any general rules applied to them across the group but...</li> <li>• Like all children, make better progress when taught effectively</li> <li>• Need Quality First teaching with carefully planned personalised learning as a starting point</li> <li>• Should have their needs accurately assessed as this is essential to securing and measuring pupil progress and planning next steps and intervention</li> <li>• Make more progress when interventions are linked to class teacher's planning and connections made with in-class learning</li> <li>• Make better progress when expectations are high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure high expectations as they are a key to securing good progress</li> <li>• Ensure accurate assessment as this is essential to securing and measuring pupil progress</li> <li>• Use benchmarked data to set targets, based on age and prior attainment (link to progression guidance)</li> <li>• Ensure barriers to learning are removed by adapting the curriculum, planning, teaching and the learning environment</li> <li>• Consider research and evaluation of particular approaches that have been proven to increase rates of progress for pupils with particular types of SEN</li> <li>• Ensure the pupil's voice forms a central part of the assessment, planning, and target-setting process</li> <li>• Include frequent opportunities for talk</li> <li>• Use drama as both a stimulus to writing and as a means of developing and structuring ideas</li> <li>• Use visual approaches, e.g. film, drawing, as a means of engaging interest</li> <li>• Include lots of active ways of responding to text</li> <li>• Develop real and realistic audiences and purposes for writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the teacher base their planning on accurate knowledge of each individual child and on the assessment of what each child already knows?</li> <li>• Is there flexibility of teaching styles which ensures the needs of groups and individuals are considered so that all children are engaged?</li> <li>• Does the planning build on the curriculum, interventions and provision available in the school?</li> <li>• Does planning include what each child with identified SEN will learn from the success criteria?</li> <li>• Does the planning establish the access strategies that will help overcome the potential barriers to learning?</li> <li>• Has the planning been a collaborative exercise where the teacher has drawn on the skills and knowledge of others, for example, TAs, SEN coordinator (SENCO), the parents and other professionals working closely with the child?</li> <li>• Does the plan include sufficient speaking and listening and drama?</li> <li>• How does the planning use guided work to address identified weaknesses or gaps in individual pupils' learning?</li> <li>• How does the planning link with any interventions for individual children?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are engaged in a range of learning activities appropriately targeted to their needs</li> <li>• Children make appropriate small steps of progress</li> <li>• The classroom environment supports sensory learning as appropriate</li> <li>• Appropriate access strategies are identified and allow children increased access to the wider curriculum</li> </ul>



## Section 3: Adapting planning to the needs of underperforming groups

This section gives some examples of how class plans can be adapted to take account of the needs of particular groups of vulnerable pupils. All of the plans relate directly to unit plans available on the National Strategies' website ([www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)) and then follow links to literacy and unit plans for the appropriate year.

The focus of these examples is to identify how general class planning needs to take account of both different levels of attainment and different levels of confidence, motivation, and engagement among individuals and groups of children. In each example, the teacher has used their knowledge of the attainment levels in the class and their understanding of the lack of progress and underperformance of certain groups, to modify both what is taught and how it is taught. Modifications fall into two broad categories:

- **Differentiated objectives** are identified for the focus group of vulnerable learners;
- **Varied teaching approaches and curriculum choices** are made to promote or support the focus group's access to learning.

Both sorts of modifications are evident in many of the examples and there are strategies and methods in common. The main approaches are:

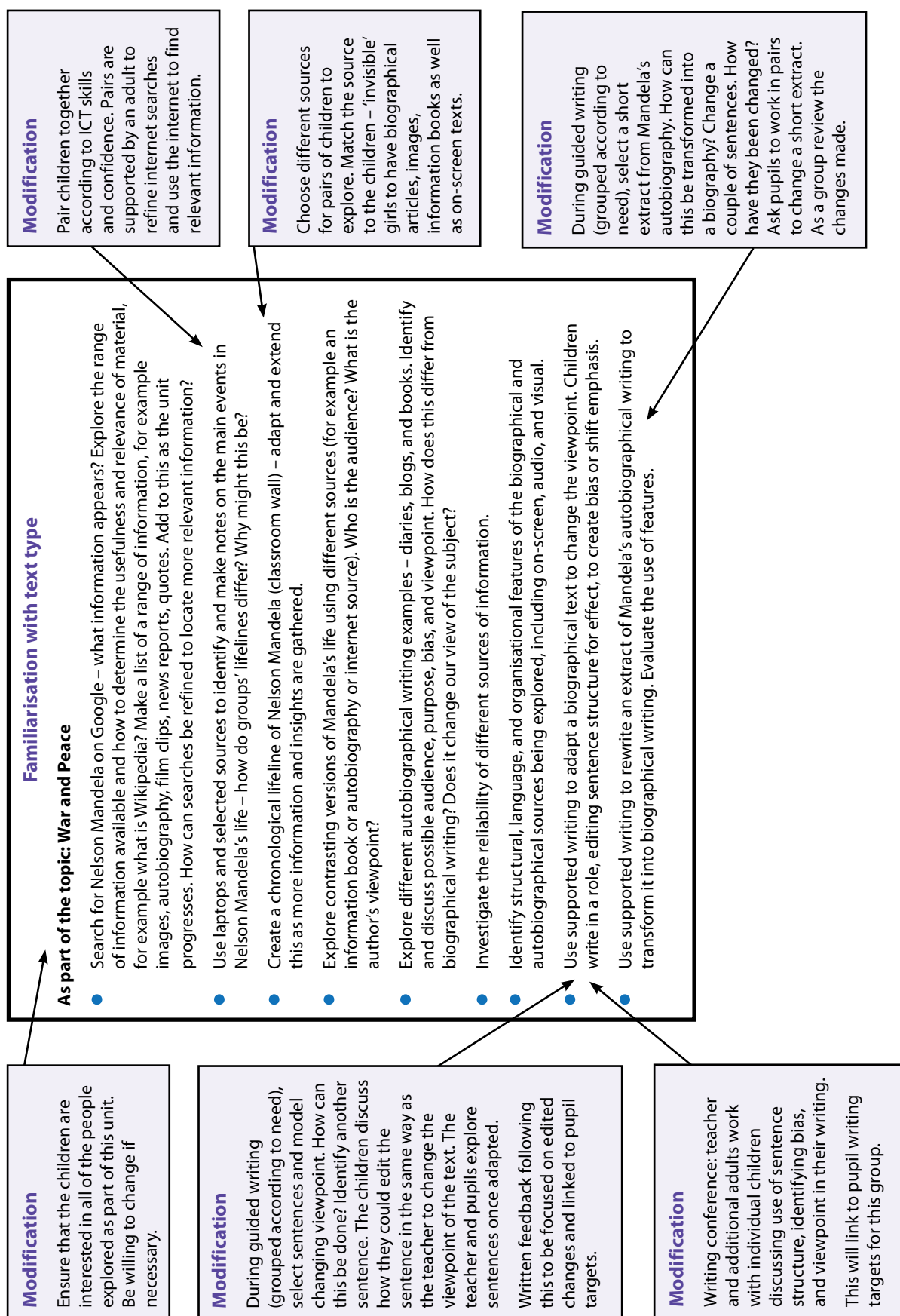
<p><b>Differentiated objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organising teaching in strands 5 and 6 (the vital skills of decoding in reading and encoding in writing) according to children's progress against assessment focus AF1 in reading and assessment focus AF 6 in writing (see APP assessment guidelines).</li> <li>● Teaching, at an appropriate level, from a programme of learning with distinct phases or stages of progression, for example teaching phonics using <i>Letters and Sounds</i> or an equivalent programme or with spelling, using <i>Support for Spelling (SfS)</i> or equivalent programme.</li> <li>● Teaching to specific targets or steps towards an objective, drawn from the <i>Support for Writing (SfW)</i> materials.</li> <li>● Focusing on specific objectives, which may be more or less challenging than those for the rest of the class according to the needs of the group, during guided reading and writing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Varied teaching approaches and curriculum choices to promote access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An emphasis on stimulus and motivation throughout the different phases of the plan.</li> <li>● Use of pre-teaching opportunities, using a TA or the teacher with the group to introduce a topic ahead of the rest of the class.</li> <li>● An emphasis on speaking and listening and drama.</li> <li>● Provision of opportunities for repetition and rehearsal, rather than an emphasis on coverage of multiple objectives.</li> <li>● Frequent opportunities created for the teacher to model new learning and to 'talk aloud' about the processes involved.</li> <li>● Questions and requests for responses targeted at different groups of children.</li> <li>● The celebration of successes.</li> <li>● The use of the full range of teaching approaches including shared and guided work. Regular guided work, in particular, was used to provide additional time and support for the focus group.</li> </ul>

The objectives for each of the plans exemplified are drawn from a particular unit, identified below, and have not been reproduced here. (See the Objectives section of the unit plan for details.) These examples focus on the delivery of the objectives, although at times reference is made to how objectives have been adapted to take account of the focus group. The plans are:

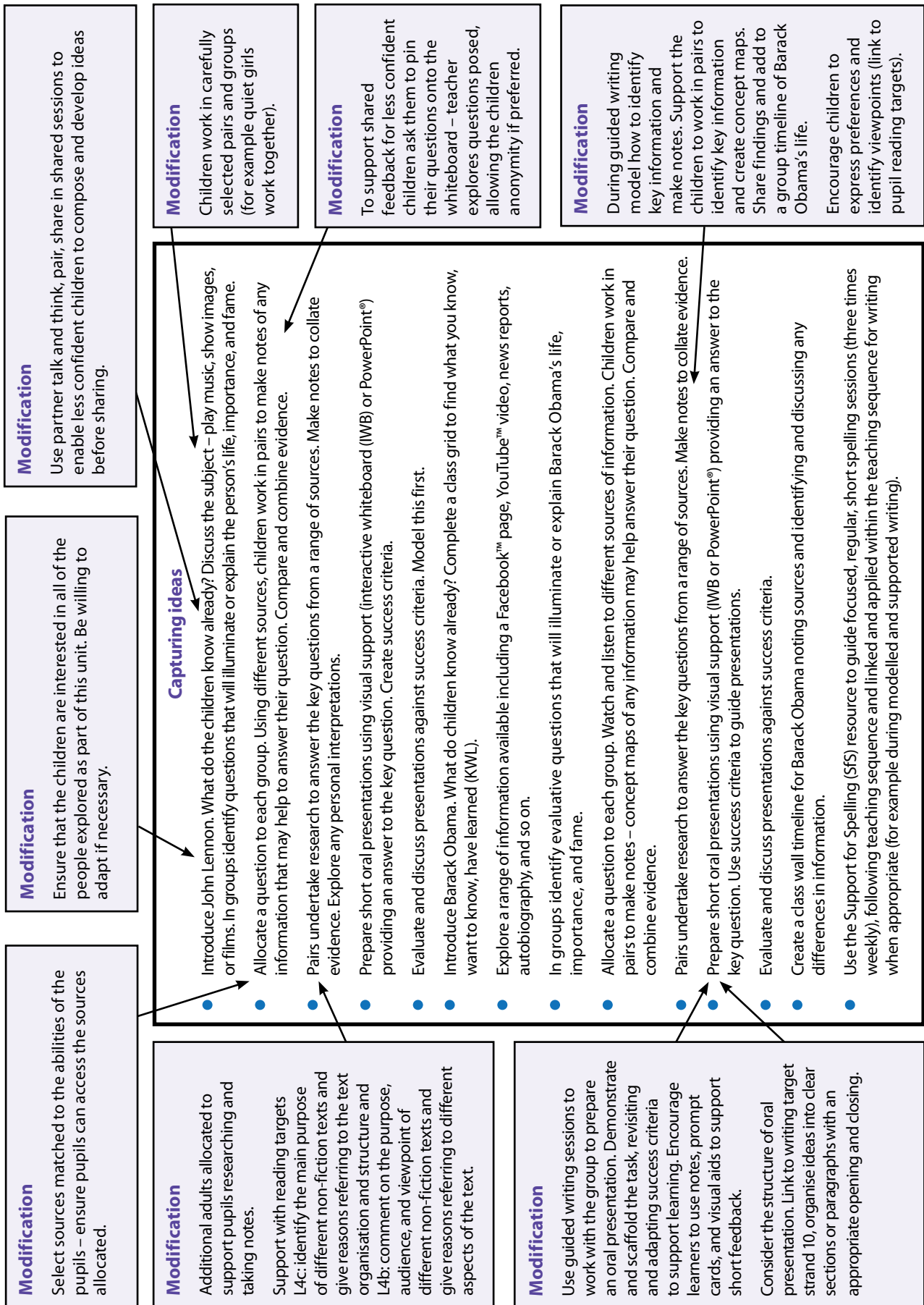
Year	Unit plan	Group focus	Main adaptations
6	Non-fiction unit 1 – Biography and autobiography	Quiet, undemanding girls entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) Children working at secure and high level 3 Writing targets drawn from Support for Writing (SfW) strands 9 and 10	Guided writing grouped flexibly according to need One-to-one support, including writing conferences Carefully selected pair and group work for talk activities
5/6	Poetry unit Additional text-based unit – ‘The Highwayman’ by Alfred Noyes	Underperforming boys working at various attainment levels	Increased use of visual media, in particular Increased opportunities for speaking and listening Planned opportunities to reconsider views and perceptions explored in previous sessions through use of video footage.
5	Narrative unit 2 – Traditional stories, fables, myths, legends	Girls entitled to FSM, working at secure level 3 in reading and writing Targets drawn from SfW strand 11	Daily focused guided writing sessions Success criteria adapted for group to focus on complex sentences
4	Narrative unit 3 – Stories from other cultures	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT)	Emphasis on learning through participation and talk Support for reading provided Stimulus material linked to GRT culture
3	Narrative unit 2 – Myths and legends	Gifted and Talented (G&T) group felt to be underperforming	Flexible groupings – G&T children join higher ability group, even though current attainment is below their standard Targeted questions Directed support from Teaching Assistant
2	Poetry unit 1 – Patterns on the page	Mixed group of FSM entitled children, achieving at low or secure level 1 against a class average of low level 2 with Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Emphasis on speaking and listening and drama Frequent opportunities for reading created Pre-teaching, TA support and specifically focused guided writing
1	Narrative unit 4 – Fantasy worlds	Children who speak English as an Additional language (EAL) with some verbal fluency but who need to develop a greater range of registers in written and spoken language	Use of home language, strong emphasis on modelling and creating opportunities to practise learning Focus on modal verbs
1	Narrative unit 1 – Stories with familiar settings	Three children identified with SEN and working at P levels in reading and writing within a Year 1 class	Emphasis on visual support and prompts, the sequencing of stories Significantly differentiated outcomes for children working at P levels in literacy

## Y6 Non-fiction unit 1 Biography and autobiography – Familiarisation with text type

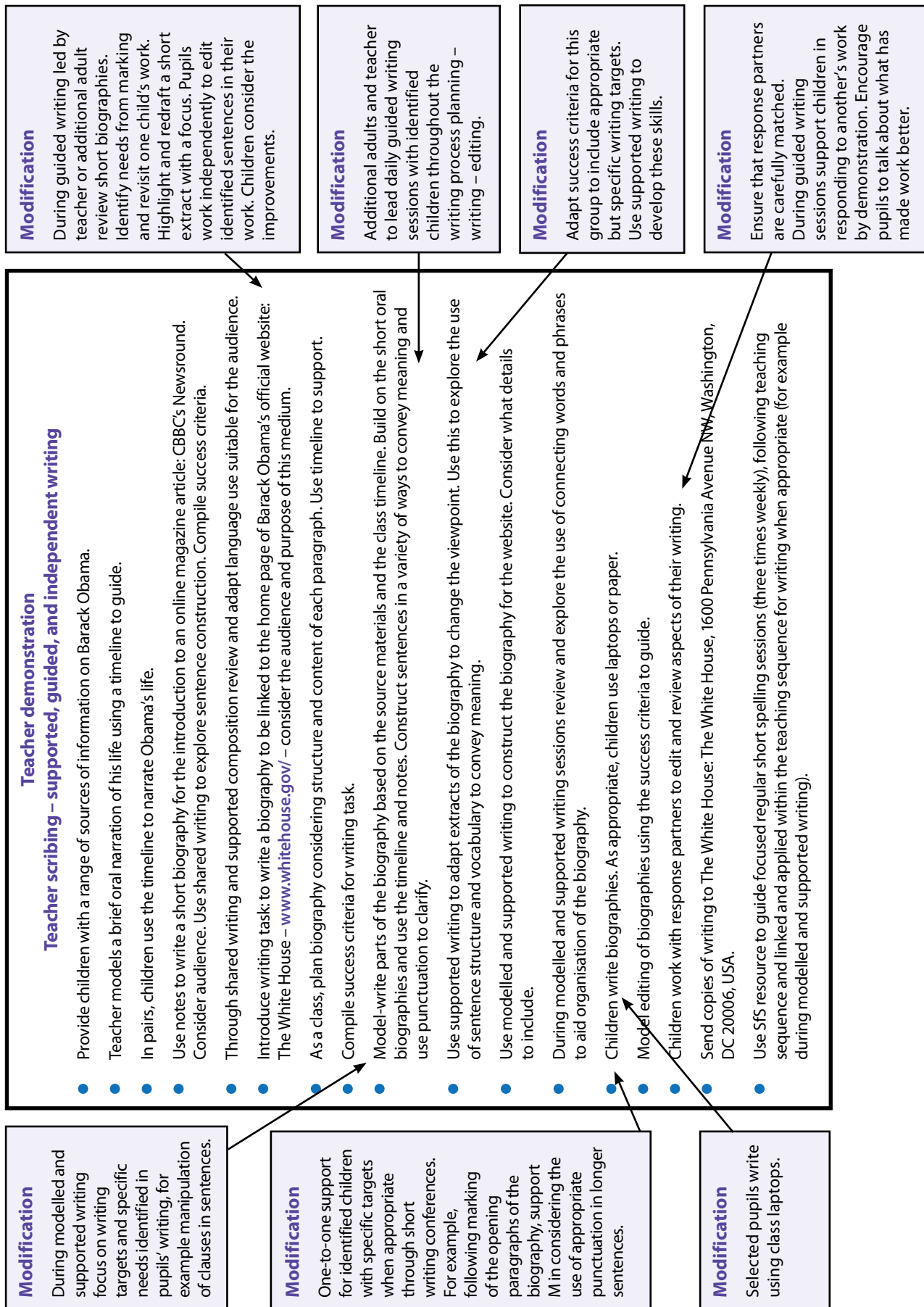
**Focus of the modifications:** A group of quiet ‘undemanding’ girls



**Y6 Non-fiction unit 1 Biography and autobiography – Capturing ideas**



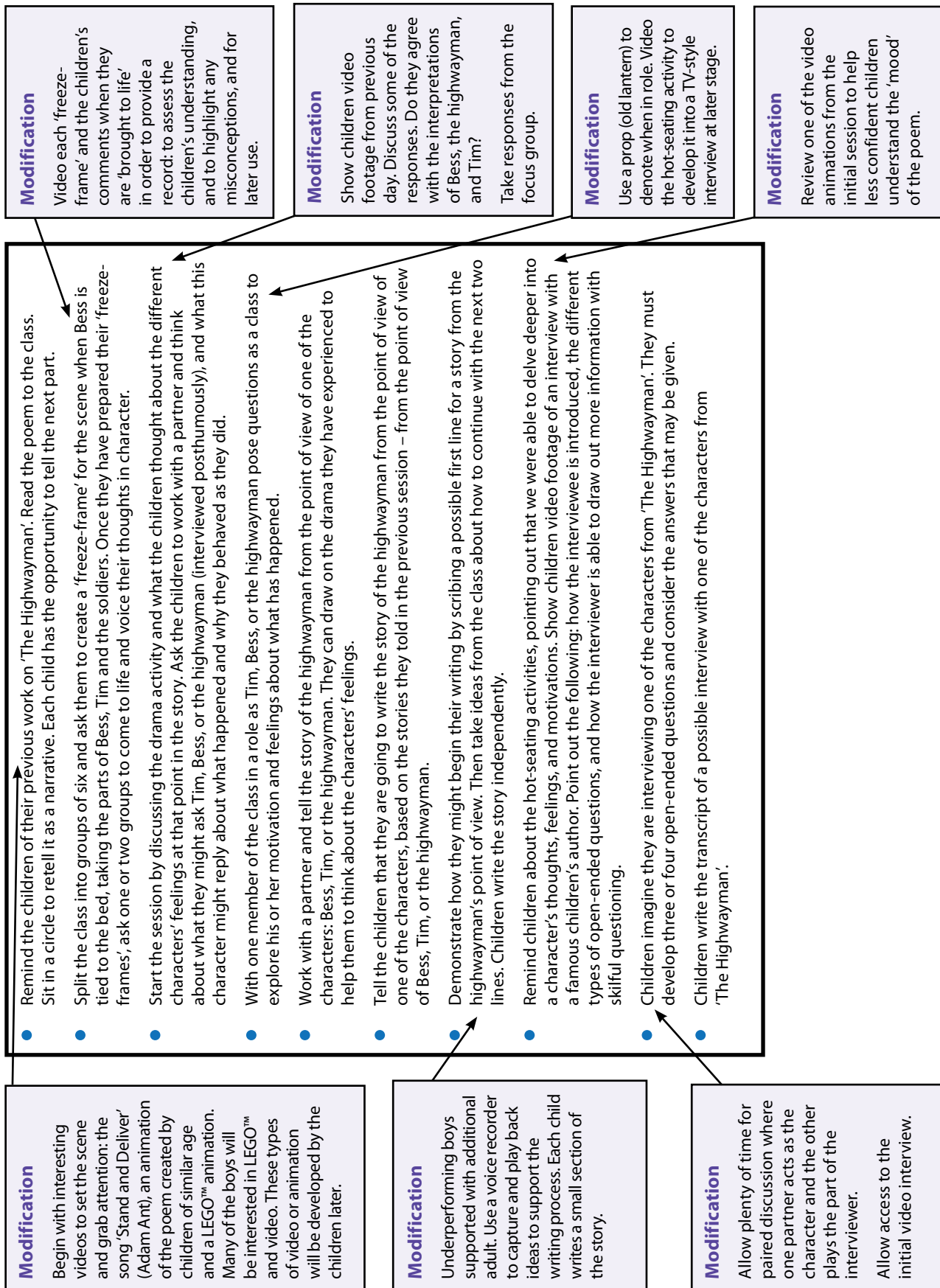
**Y6 Non-fiction unit 1 Biography and autobiography – Teacher demonstration**





**Mixed Year 5/6 class poetry unit – ‘The Highwayman’**

**Focus of the modifications:** Underperforming boys



## Y5 Narrative unit 2 Traditional stories, fables, myths, legends – Familiarisation with text type

**Focus of the modifications:** ‘Undemanding’ girls entitled to FSM who were under achieving

**Modification**

Ensure that pupil groupings and talk partners are suitable, so that the children are confident to discuss and develop ideas and that roles in groups are clear.

**Modification**

During a guided writing session, led by an additional adult or teacher, take an example of a simile and model how to improve it considering the impact on the reader. Children work in pairs to construct similes considering the effect on the reader. These are swapped and edited by other pairs in the groups before being shared during the class plenary. Make links to the pupils’ targets for reading.

**Familiarisation with text type**

**As part of the topic: The Greeks**

- Begin with some pomegranates. Give the children an opportunity to look closely at the pomegranates, and to taste and describe them.
- Display the Pre-Raphaelite painting of Persephone by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Allow the children to discuss the painting, describing aspects of it and considering what they think the subject of the painting might be.
- Watch the Story Spinner Y5 DVD of the myth of Persephone ([www.thestoryspinner.co.uk](http://www.thestoryspinner.co.uk)).
- Use a puzzles grid to collect ideas about the myth and add to this as the unit progresses.
- Explore the myth through talk and visualisation, for example ask pupils to describe which part they found most exciting or the most tense; draw the Underworld. Watch the myth again as appropriate.
- Ask questions to support discussion and exploration of the myth and use drama and role-play (for example thought tracking, freeze framing). Plot the myth; display on the working wall.
- Explore through the medium of storytelling. The storyteller acts as a model, modelling the structures and cadences of English. Discuss aspects of the medium of storytelling (facial expression, use of voice: variation of pace and volume, use of pauses, body language). Watch an extract of the DVD again making notes on a given aspect.
- Compare with other versions of this myth. Investigate how stories change over time and ways in which narrative viewpoint can be manipulated for different purposes.
- Encourage the children to comment critically on language, style, and success of examples for the chosen audiences.
- Identify key features of the myth as a text type by annotating and exploring textual features of the different versions of Persephone.
- Read and explore other myths (Greek or other cultures) to identify and reinforce key elements.
- Compare key elements with those of fables and legends.
- Explore the use of similes in myths. Devise a list of similes for the gods and their powers and to describe settings in Persephone.

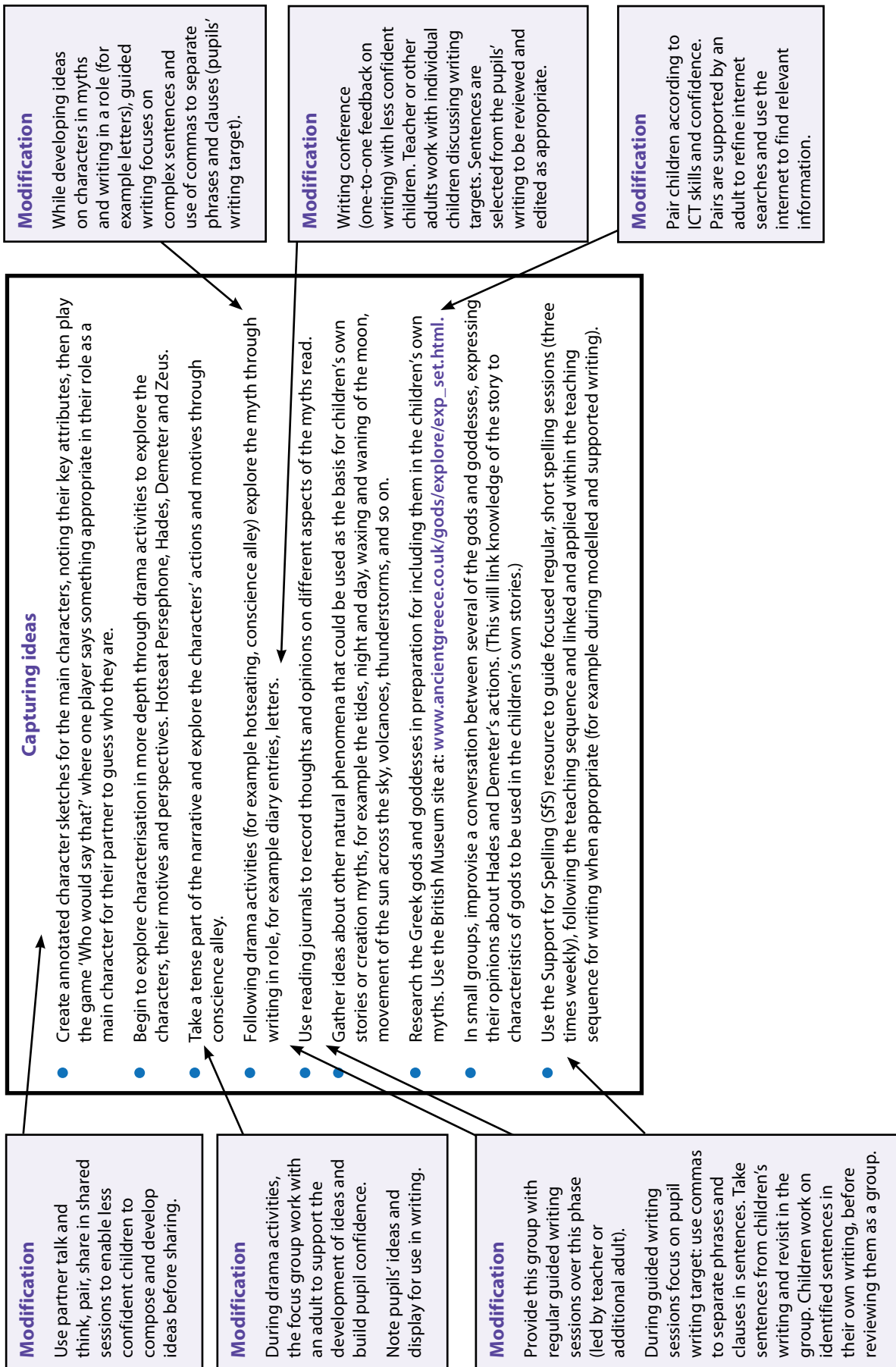
**Modification**

Explore myths during guided reading (pupils are grouped according to ability). Explore a writer’s use of language in chosen sentences by considering the effect of alternative words, phrases, and punctuation before considering the effect on the reader of the writer’s choice. Link to pupil reading target for narrative, L3a: understand the differences between literal and figurative language, identifying and commenting on writers’ choices.

**Modification**

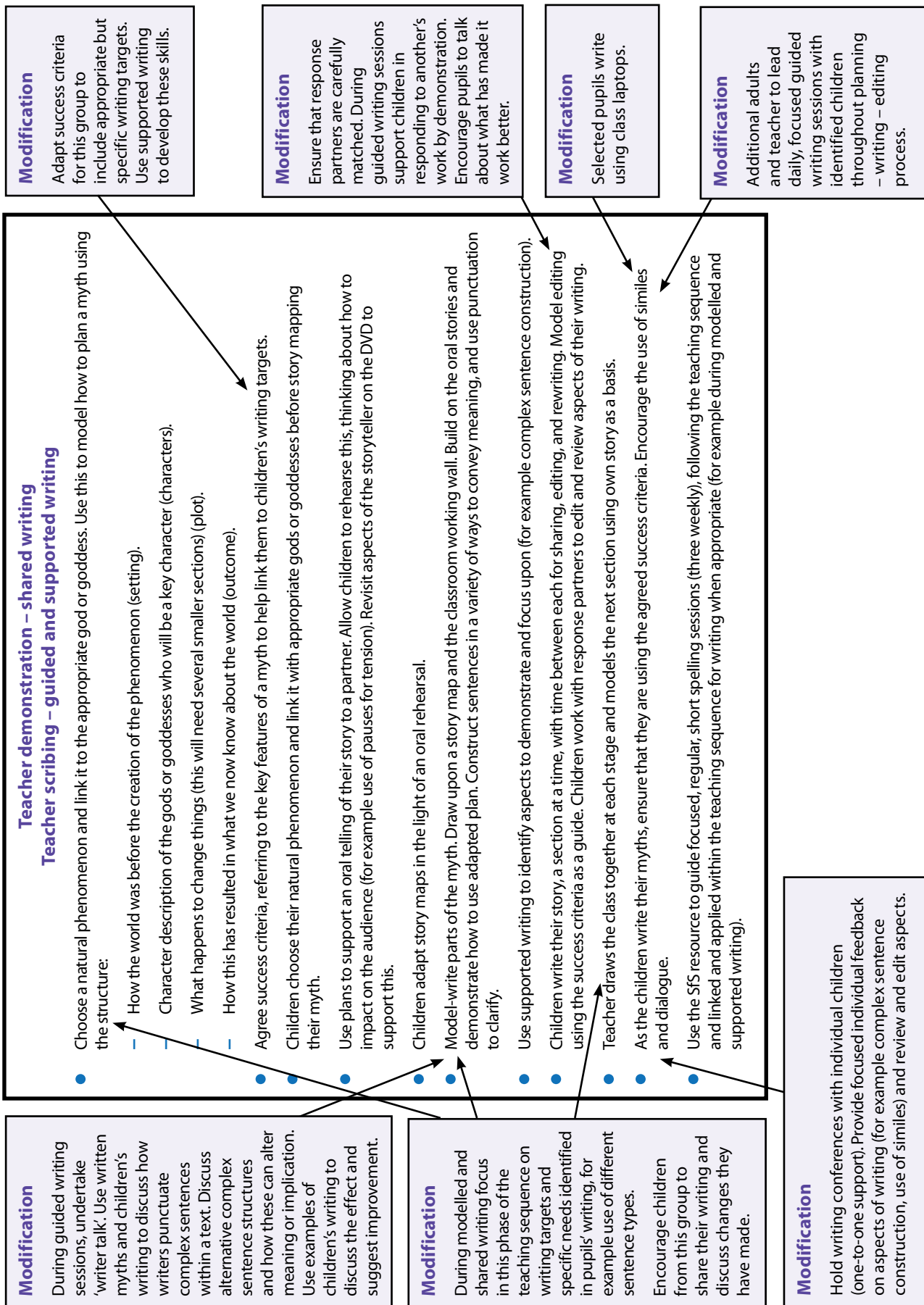
Encourage this group to feed back during shared time. For example, following a guided session their work is shared and discussed with the class.

**Y5 Narrative unit 2 Traditional stories, fables, myths, legends – Capturing ideas**



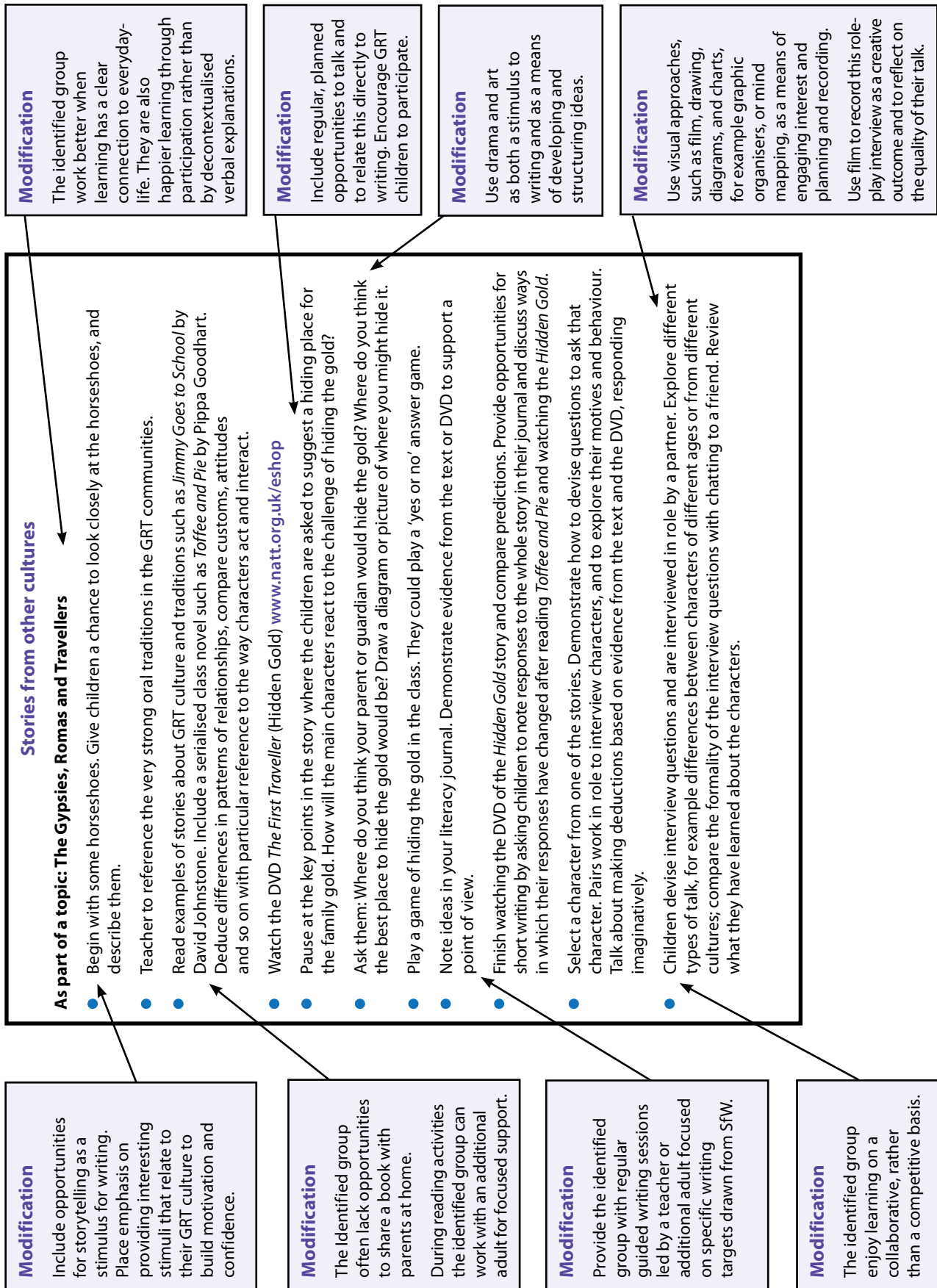


**Y5 Narrative unit 2 Traditional stories, fables, myths, legends – Teacher demonstration**



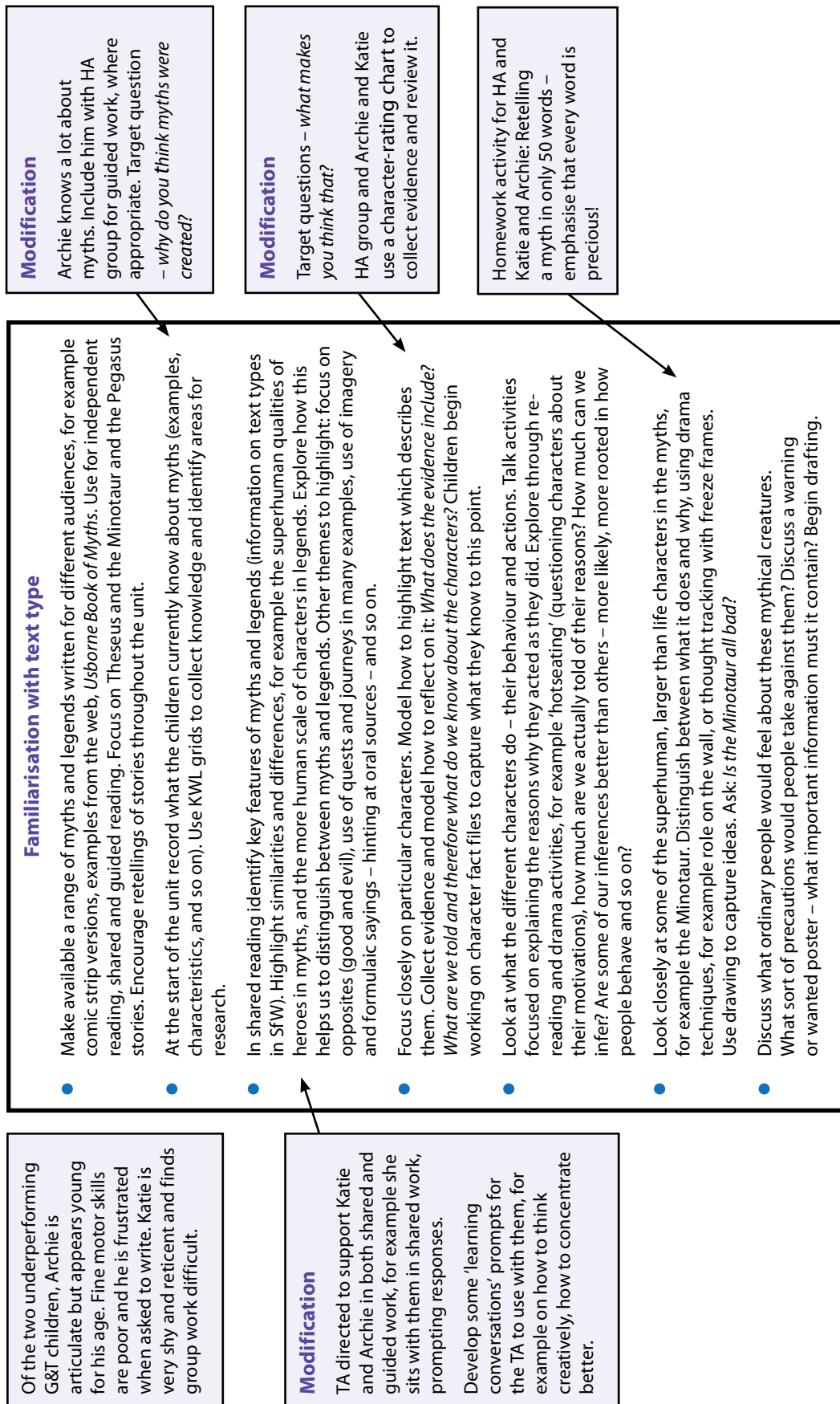
**Year 4 Narrative unit 3 Stories from other cultures**

**Focus of the modifications:** GRT children

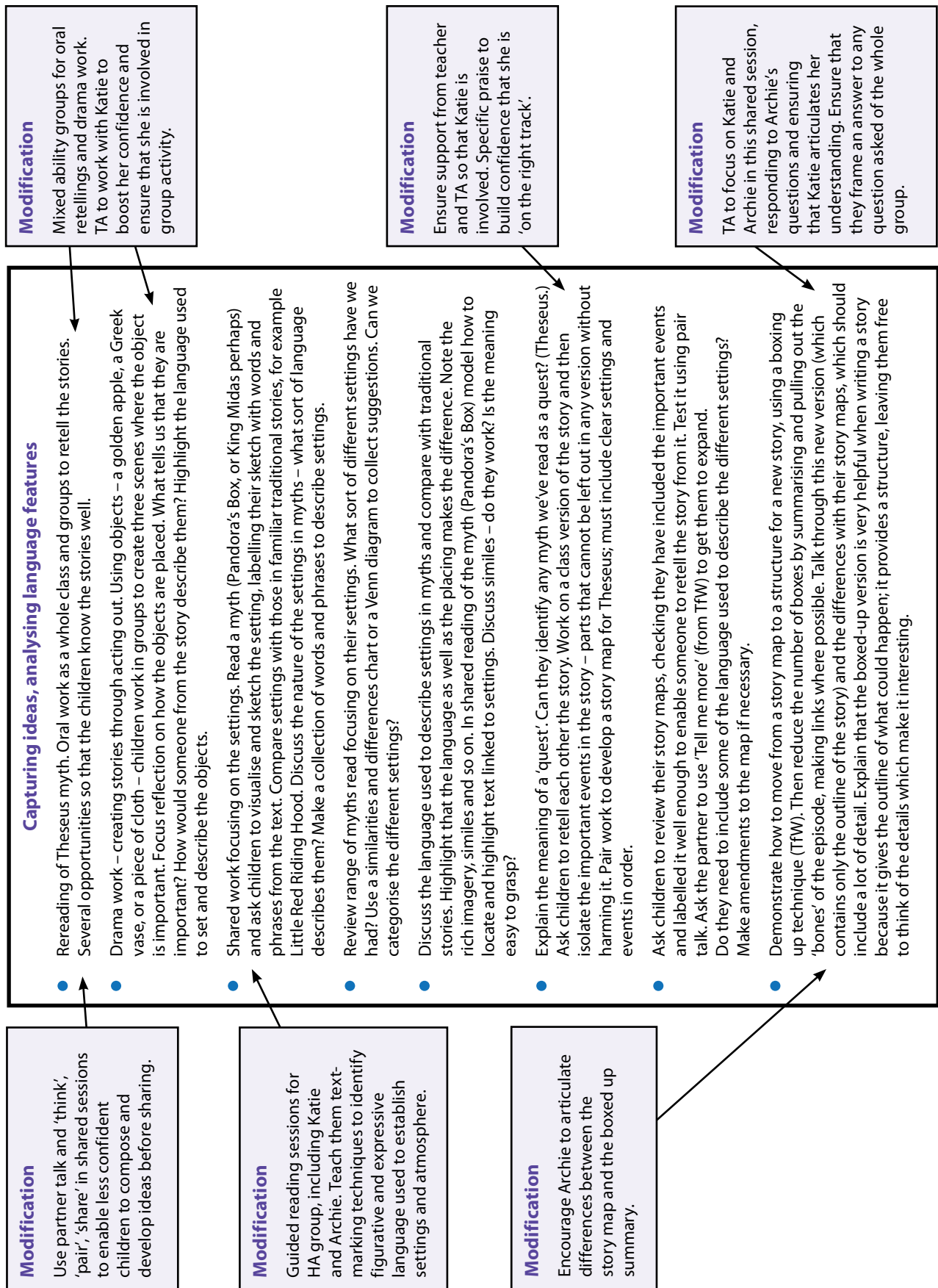


### Y3 Narrative unit – Myths and legends (phase 1) – Familiarisation with text type

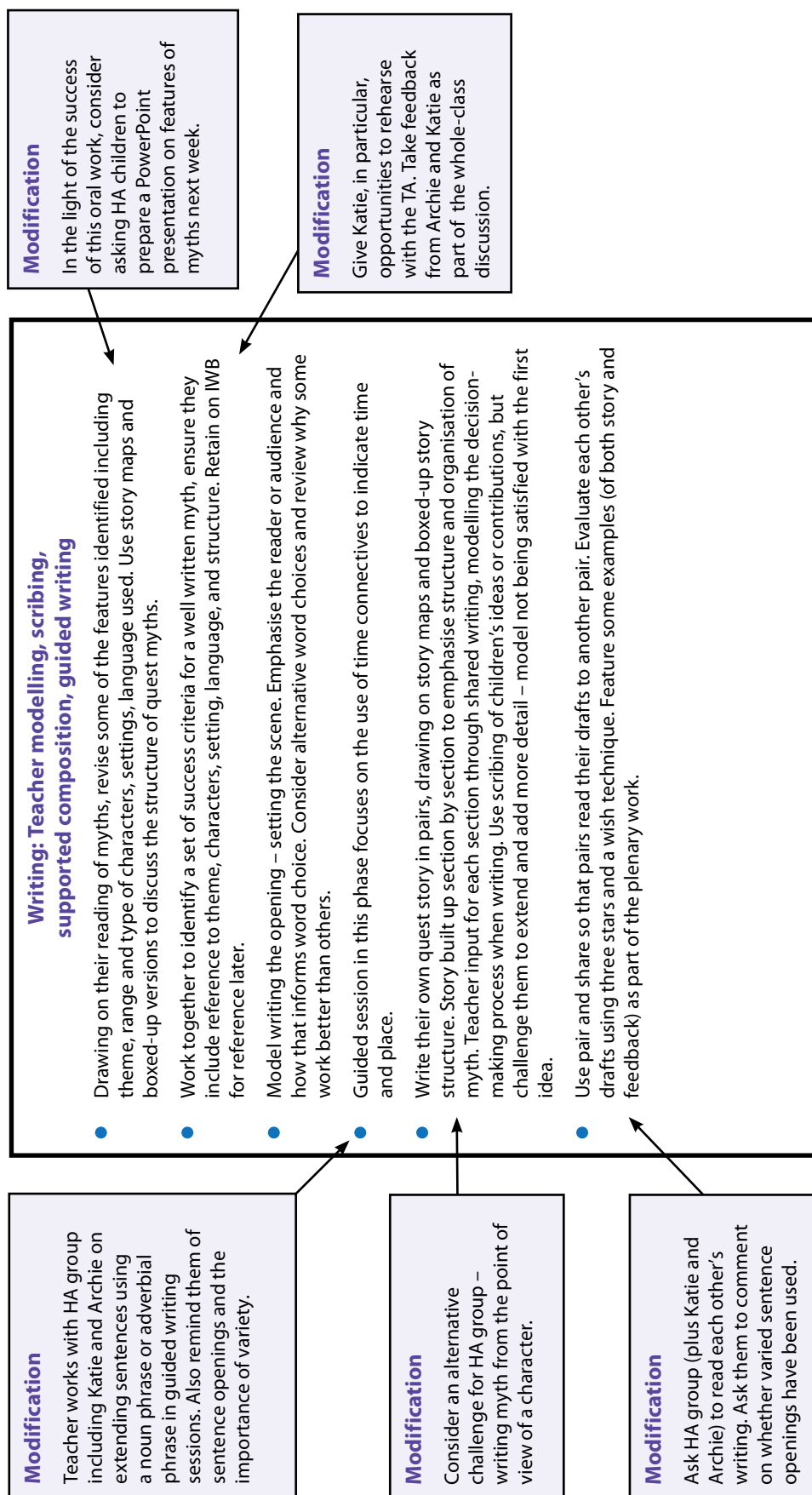
**Focus group:** Underachieving G&T children



**Year 3 Narrative unit – Myths and legends (phase 2) – Capturing ideas, analysing language features**



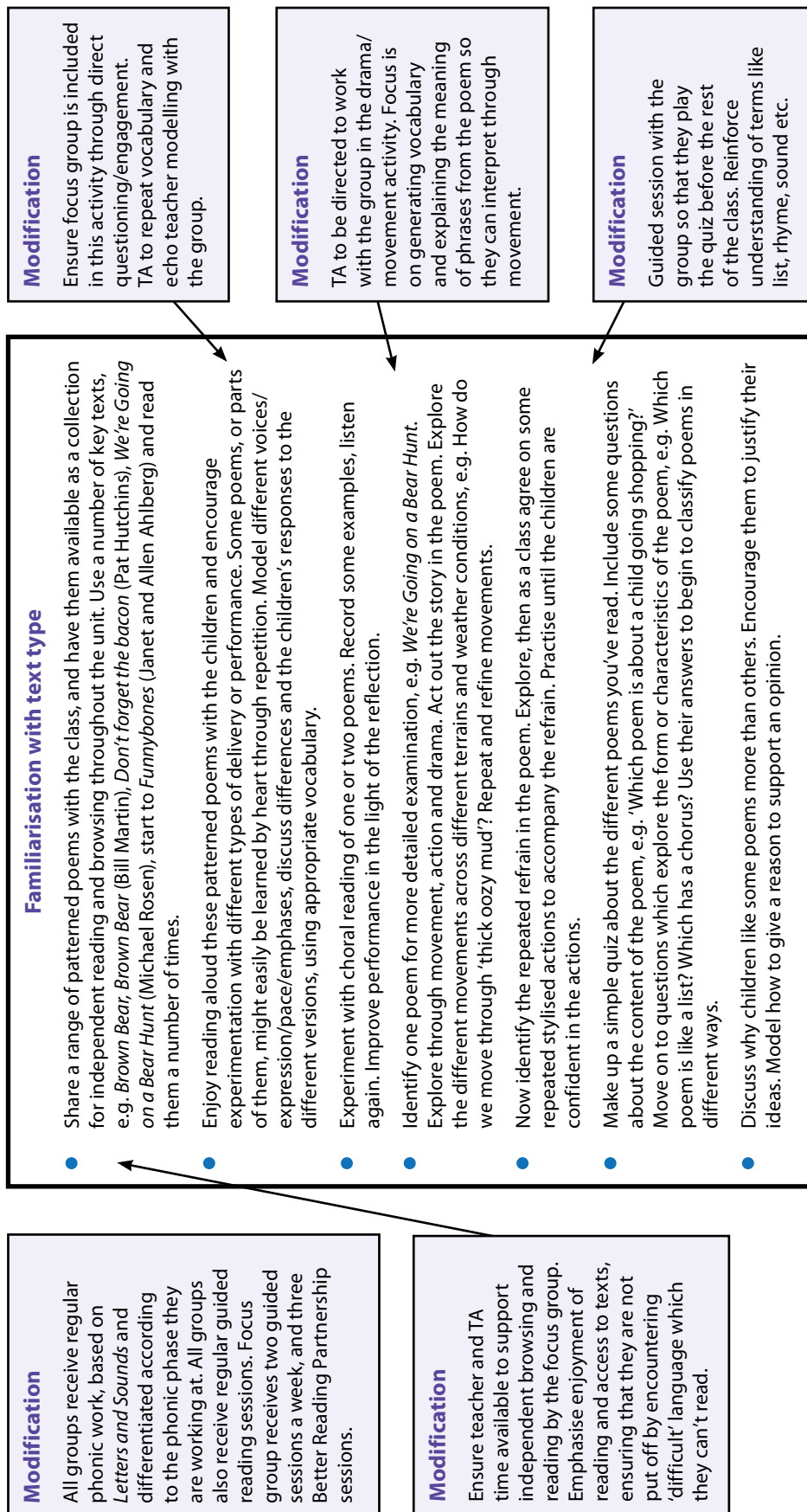
**Year 3 Narrative unit – Myths and legends (phase 3) Writing: Teacher modelling, scribing, supported composition, guided writing**



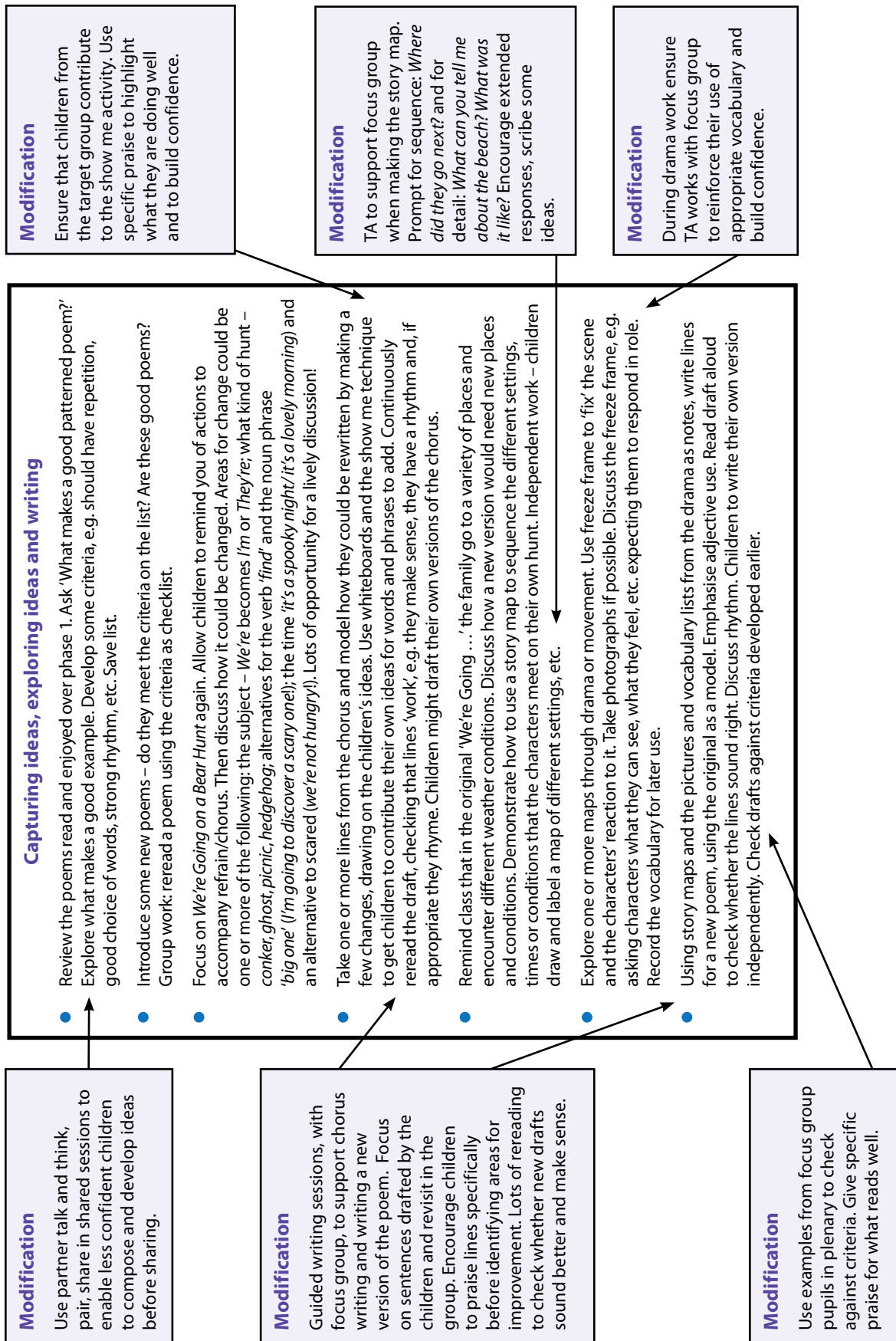


**Y2 Poetry unit: Patterns on the page – Familiarisation with text type**

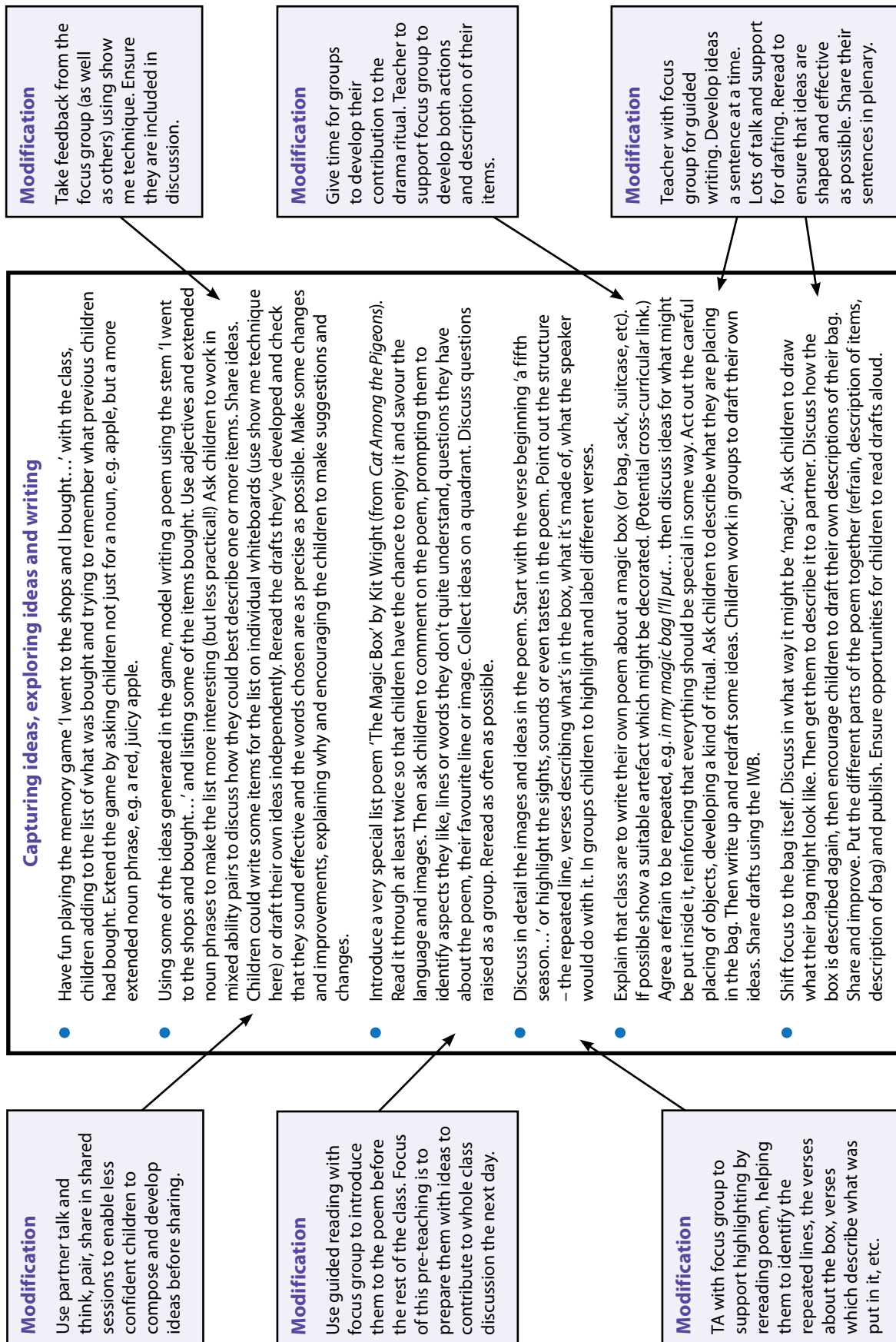
A mixed group of under achieving children, entitled to FSM



**Y2 Poetry unit: Patterns on the page (phases 2 and 3) – Capturing ideas, exploring ideas and writing**



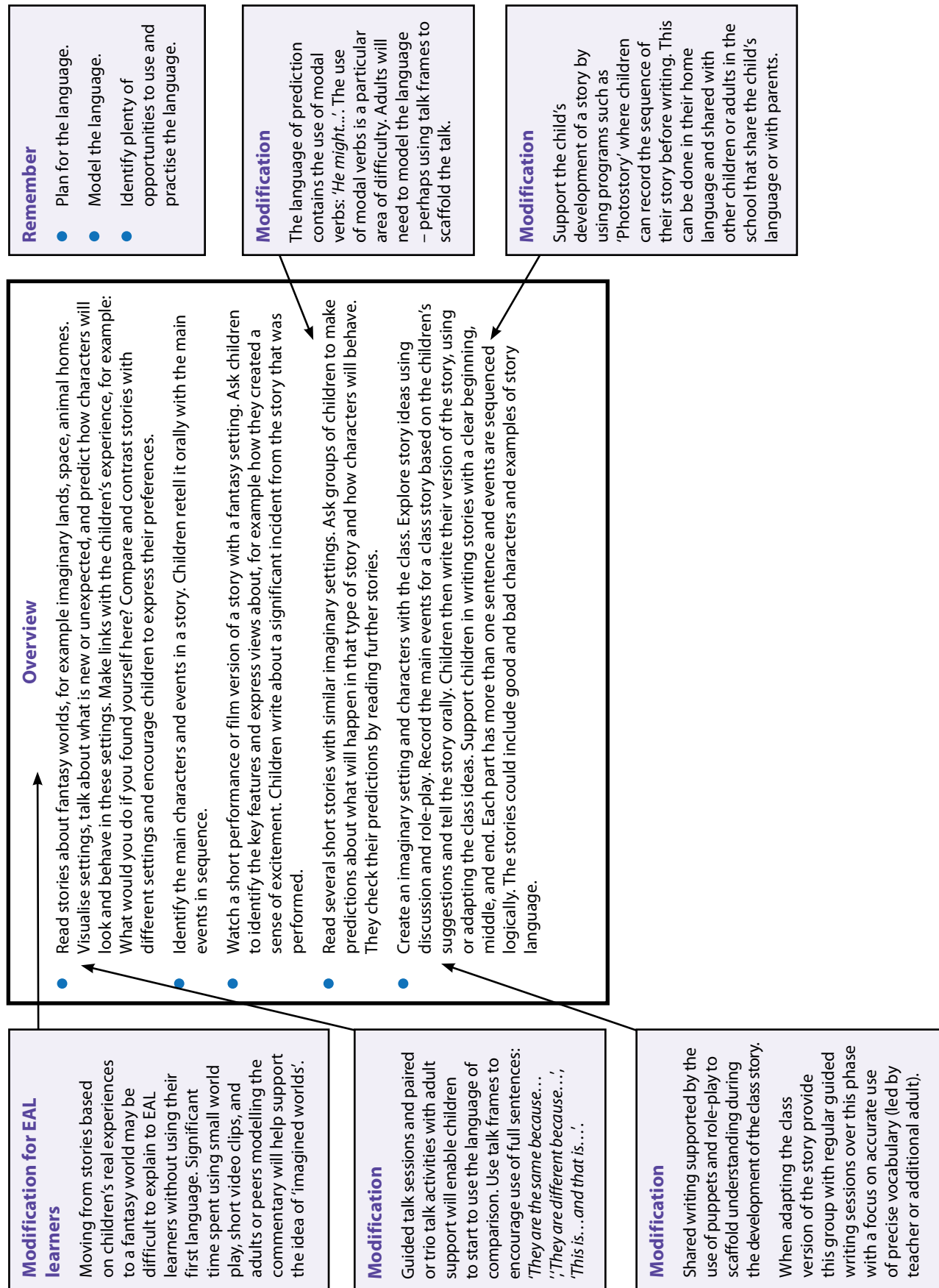
## Y2 Poetry unit: Patterns on the page (phases 2 and 3) – Capturing ideas, exploring ideas and writing





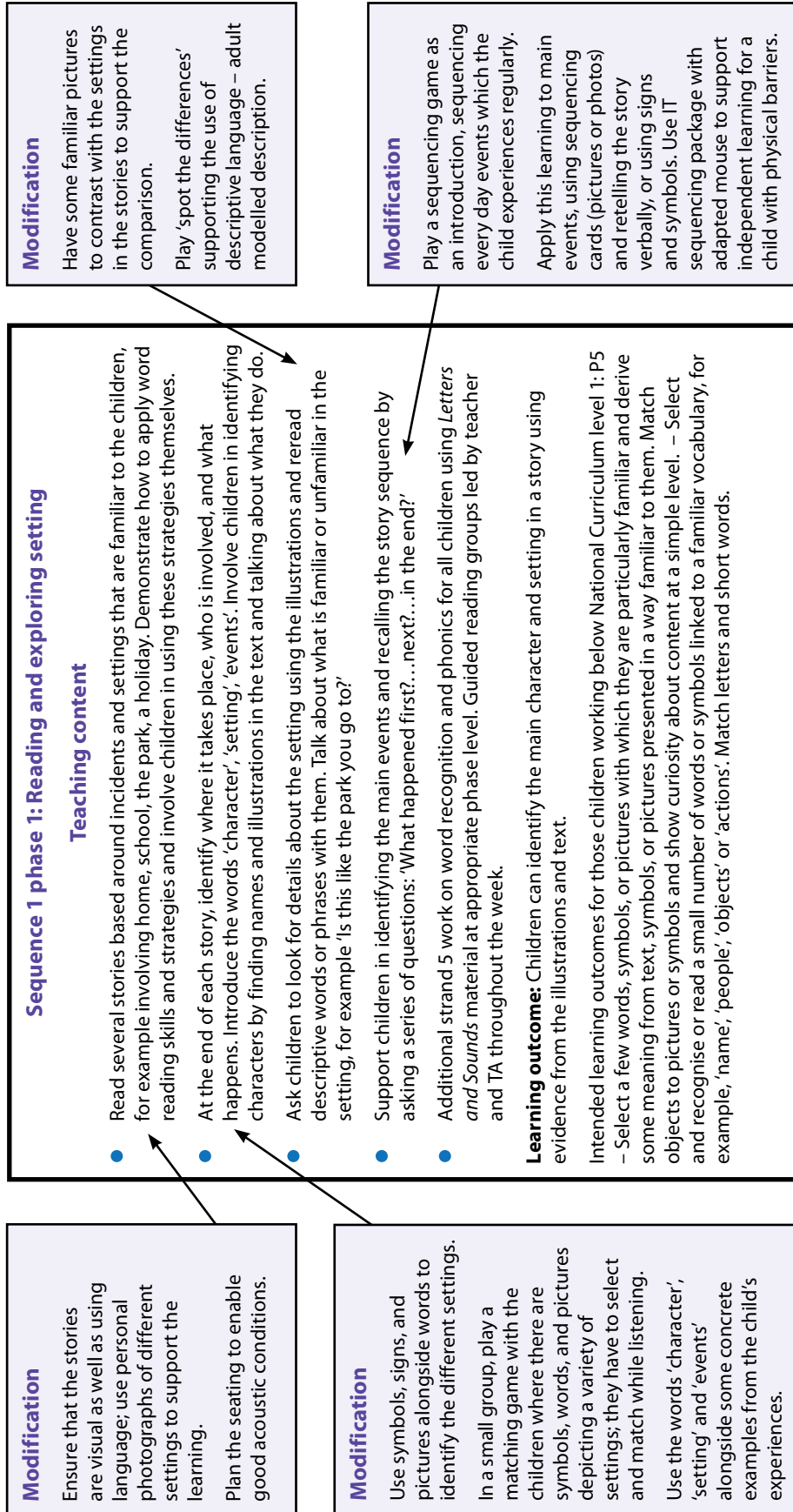
## Y1 Narrative unit 4 – Stories about fantasy worlds

**Focus of modifications:** Children who speak EAL, who are orally fluent in English

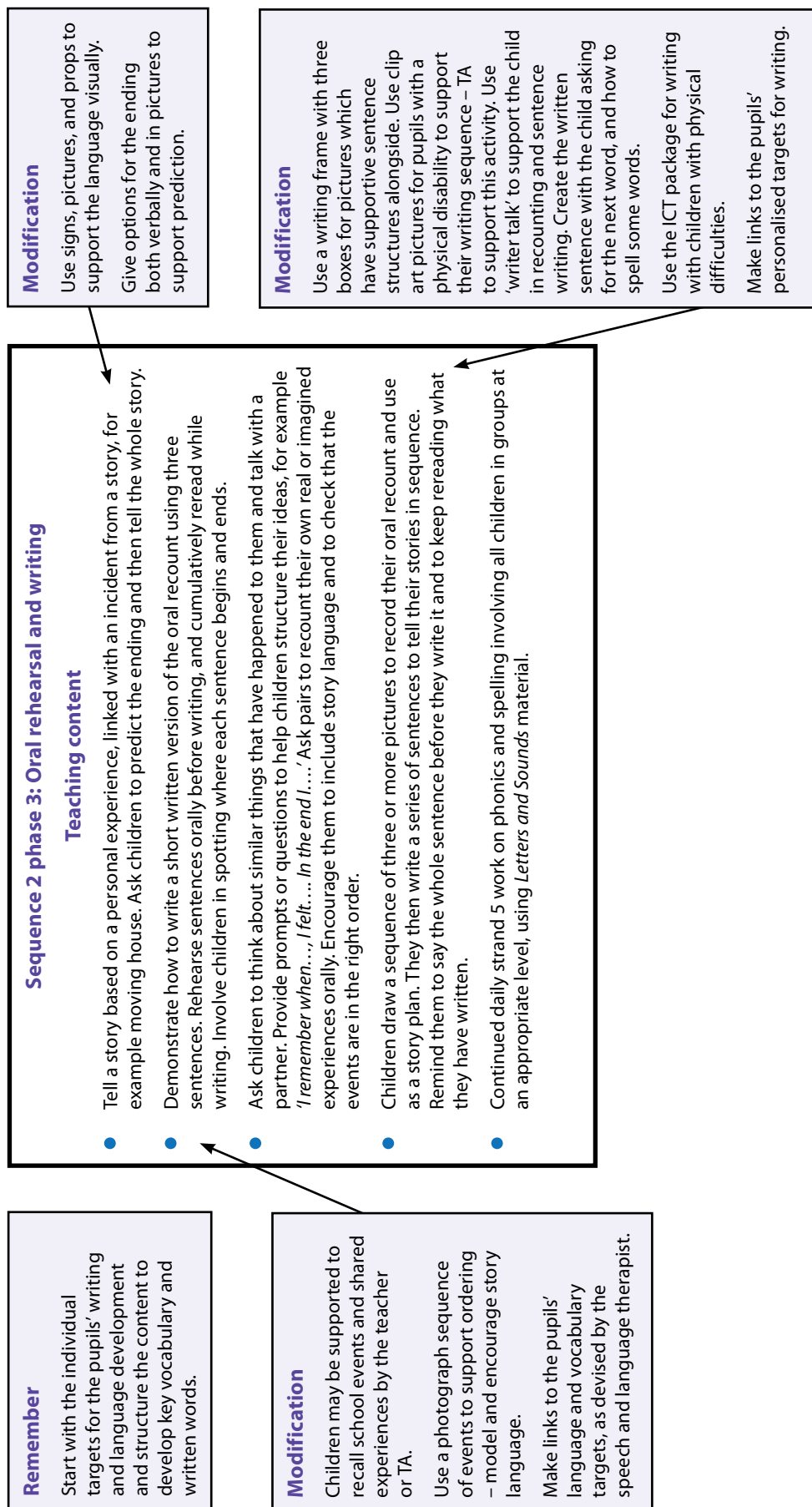


**Year 1 Narrative unit 1 – Stories with familiar settings – Sequence 1**

**Focus of modifications:** Children who have been identified with particular SEN



**Year 1 Narrative unit 1 – Stories with familiar settings – Sequence 2**



## Section 4: Case studies

### Case study: Adapting planning for EAL learners in a Year 6 classroom

#### Introduction

Much of the pedagogy and practice used to support the learning of EAL learners is generic and good practice for all learners. There are however distinctive areas of linguistic difficulty that are shared by many children learning EAL. This case study explores the practical strategies used to support an experienced teacher, who is inexperienced in the specific needs of EAL learners. This teacher had moved to a school where the majority of children are EAL learners and who on the surface appear fluent in English.

#### Who

An urban primary school with a high number of EAL learners.

- 262 children on the roll
- 98 per cent BME
- 95 per cent EAL – with 11 languages spoken in the school
- 86 per cent of children from a Pakistani background
- 24 per cent FSM.

#### What

The study focused on a Year 6 class over a period of five weeks at the beginning of the autumn term. The class of 30 children all have EAL; two children arrived recently, one of whom is new to English. At the end of Year 5, 26 of the 27 pupils had made at least the expected progress, with 15 making better than expected progress in writing with a distribution of children working at level 2 (4), level 3 (9), level 4 (11) and level 5 (3). The children were already motivated and enthusiastic writers.

The class teacher recognised that, although experienced, she needed to develop her knowledge and understanding of EAL pedagogy and practice. Through listening to children's talk and analysis of their writing, she identified the following specific linguistic areas of difficulty for the children:

- Spoken language often contained inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the use of tenses and was reproduced in writing, for example:
  - 'He be's happy when he plays out'
  - 'Yesterday I will...'
- Children struggled to move from the literal to the inferential when reading and required more time and explanation to access texts. Generally children made less progress in reading than writing.
- The use of formulaic phrases and collocation of words was another area of difficulty which was represented as an awkwardness in the flow of children's writing.
- Although developing wider vocabularies there was often inappropriate use and understanding of the fine meaning of words.

- Adverbial sentence beginnings were used by children but not with appropriate accuracy, for example 'Amazingly, our school has a playground'.
- Inappropriate use of connectives which changed the intended meaning was also common.

The literacy subject leader and headteacher recognised these areas as issues common across the school. The class teacher was supported to try out some ideas related to vocabulary development, particularly on developing children's understanding of word meanings to support children's writing. The planning of the unit of work, based on the Year 6 additional unit using *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* by Louis Sachar, was advised to include:

- Increased time spent on talk activities and discussion about language prior to writing.
- Use of talk frames to scaffold the use of specific language structures.
- Use of a vocabulary continuum or cline to support the fine grading of meaning, and hyponym and collocation activities.

It was evident from lively pupil feedback that they enjoyed the book and had confidently explored and discussed the differences between American and English vocabulary. Three forms of writing were completed during this unit of work, each incorporating specific activities related to meaning:

- Diary writing
  - Used thought tracking to enable children to talk about Bradley's feelings.
  - Used a cline of 10 agreed words to help them select appropriately and use them in their diary entries, for example, 'I feel unhappy about...'; 'I feel devastated about...'
- Letter writing
  - Used a set of clear questions to help formulate ideas to explain Bradley's feelings and actions.
  - Wrote a letter that was scaffolded and modelled by the teacher.
  - Used a talk or writing frame using the language of explanation which gave a variety of appropriate sentence structures, for example 'Because of...x happened', 'To begin with...'
- Report writing
  - Used previously scaffolded language structures of explanation to say how and why Bradley had changed throughout the book, as an oral rehearsal prior to writing. This was a group activity where children used a large sheet of paper listing the people and events that had affected him.
  - Supported the retelling of events with key adverbial phrases to help them formulate their writing, for example 'First of all', 'In the beginning...'; 'Later on...'; 'By the end...'

## Impact

The key impact of this work was on the teacher's personal development of knowledge and understanding and classroom practice with regard to the particular needs of EAL learners. She identified a number of key areas for continued development:

'From a personal point of view I now know more clearly that the children need more precise support for specific writing activities.'

'I can already see that the children are much more aware of the shades of meaning in the language they use.'

'In diary writing, for example, the outcomes were good in that the children successfully incorporated the main features of diary writing, but in taking this forward, I would now provide a written model based on the text, so that children could read and analyse a diary entry that was clearly linked to their task.'

The teacher identified areas where she would adapt her teaching in future to respond to the needs of the EAL learners in the class:

- Focus more clearly on specific language; the use of particular words for impact to describe, for example, emotions and support this with a game or activity that allows children to play with the language first.
- Build more opportunities to develop writing stamina into planning and teaching, so that children have time to understand the features of a specific type of writing and then consolidate this by writing using that structure. This needs to continue to be supported with scaffolding, so that children have an accessible checklist to support them with self-evaluation. This could be differentiated with less confident writers having fewer key features to address than the more comprehensive list for more able writers.
- Careful thought must be given to selecting texts which support children's understanding. Texts must be accessible to all, although texts can contain some challenging or unfamiliar language. Children who speak EAL should be provided with opportunities to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary and be supported with glossaries.
- Ensure when planning that the volume of new vocabulary introduced at any given time is monitored so that it doesn't overwhelm children. Focused attention needs to be given to a manageable amount of new vocabulary being explored or developed at a time.

## Summary

The work undertaken in this study resulted in small changes in classroom practice to offer better support to advanced EAL learners and which will thus influence attainment. The errors in the children's writing identified were similar to those highlighted in the work of Lynne Cameron (2004) and which need to be addressed through explicit teaching. The teacher reflected that she felt that the children were already more aware of shades of meaning, but recognised she needed to do more to support vocabulary development. The literacy subject leader and headteacher recognised that many of the issues explored were whole-school ones and that the teacher should be given an opportunity to share her work with the rest of the staff so that it can be further developed across the school.



## Case study: Taking account of the needs of underperforming boys and girls entitled to FSM in Year 2 and 4 classes

### Introduction

This small (131 on the roll), urban, federated infant and junior school serves a mainly white working-class area. In the school as a whole, 54 per cent of children are eligible for FSM, although there is some variation between year groups. The school pays particular attention to improving the outcomes for underachieving boys and groups of undemanding girls.

When piloting these materials two teachers from the school worked together; the literacy subject leader, who teaches a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class (27 children), and a teacher working with Year 3 and Year 4 (25 children). In both classes more than 60 per cent of the group is entitled to FSM.

### Who

In both classes the teachers focused on a specific group of children entitled to FSM. There was a mixed-gender group of four in the Year 1 and Year 2 class and a group of seven, of whom six were boys, in the Year 3 and 4 class. In both cases these groups, although underachieving significantly, did not include the lowest-achieving children in the class. Most of these children exhibited some personal, social, or emotional difficulties which had an impact on their learning. Some get little or no support from home and some are frequently absent.

### What

Following an introduction to the characteristics grids the two teachers agreed to work together on their planning, by sharing initial ideas and drafts. The focus in both classes was on improving the children's motivation for reading and writing and having an impact on the quality of what they achieved throughout the unit of work. They held a number of brief discussions over a four-week period, and offered each other advice, suggested resources, and reflected on successful strategies and curricular emphases which had a positive impact on the children's work. These discussions led them to review long-standing teaching routines, such as the arrangements for guided reading, and the use of some new resources, for example Support for Spelling (SfW) and Talk for Writing (TfW).

Both teachers use the unit plans from the framework site as the basis of their planning, augmenting these whole-class plans with plans for phonics and spelling, and for guided reading in which children are ability-grouped. Some children also receive one-to-one reading support with adults. Both teachers read regularly to their classes. The Year 1 and Year 2 class used unit plans on instructions and poetry (*Patterns on the page*) during the course of the pilot; the Year 3 and Year 4 class worked on instructions.

Following a periodic review of the children's current levels of attainment, using the APP guidelines, and their discussions of the implications of the characteristics grids, both teachers made a number of amendments to their plans to give more weight to the strategies and practices which support these groups of underperforming boys and undemanding girls. When reflecting on the pilot, they highlighted the following features as being particularly important:

- A very strong practical and cross-curricular element was provided to act as a context and stimulus for writing in both classes. In Year 3 and Year 4 activities in PE, art or design and technology and science became the raw material for the instructional writing. In Year 1 and Year 2 an educational visit and subsequent topic work underpinned both reading and writing. Real stimuli were threaded through each phase of the plans, the teachers recognising that practical work kept interest and motivation levels high.

- Emphasis was given to the audience and purpose of the writing. In Year 3 and Year 4 the children tried out their instructions for making a 'smoothie'; in Year 1 and Year 2 drafts were frequently read aloud to gather responses from others. In Year 1 and Year 2 TfW suggestions, for example innovating from a known story or rhyme, were introduced.
- APP assessments were used to identify particular areas of weakness that the children had in common as well as specific targets (drawn from the writing targets in SfW) which were shared with them. Outcomes from work were reviewed on an ongoing basis and plans were further adapted as necessary.
- The group was offered extensive teacher and TA support over the unit, particularly through consecutive guided activities. Using guided work in this way, rather than only working with the group once a week, gave opportunities for them to receive some pre-teaching and support as they developed their ideas, and for the teacher to target specific areas of weakness. Groupings were kept flexible and different children were drawn into the group when the opportunity arose.
- Considerable emphasis was placed on oral activities throughout the unit, enabling the children to rehearse ideas and their expression, and to try their ideas. Drama, movement and dance activities were used wherever possible to engage children actively in their learning, to develop ideas, and to extend their vocabulary. In Year 1 and Year 2, for example, the children acted out the patterned poem 'I walked to school this morning and I (hopped) like' this as a prelude to drafting their ideas.
- The teacher found as many opportunities as possible to build the confidence of the children in the target groups, for example by praising them specifically for successes however small, using their work as exemplars for the rest of the class, and by sharing their published versions in assembly and with other classes.
- Reading resources were reviewed and more books were made available for children to take home to read for pleasure. Further opportunities were made for the focus groups of children to read to adults and they were encouraged to make independent and informed choices about their reading.
- The school made further attempts to involve these children's parents in their learning and to encourage a more consistent approach. The home-school liaison worker made contact with several parents. Learning mentors, including the headteacher, discussed work and progress with the focus children.

## Impact

Both teachers reported positive outcomes from their units of work. The emphasis on practical and oral work and on making links across the curriculum, allied with a focus on audiences and purposes, and targeted support through guided writing, meant that children sustained their interest and were given an impetus to improve their work. Many of the children recognised their success and expressed pleasure at their improvement.

In Year 3 and Year 4, virtually all of the children in the class, including most of the target group, completed a set of instructions which worked in practice and which included the appropriate language features. In Year 1 and Year 2 the half-term pupil progress meeting identified that from the target group, both boys had made progress in terms of attitude towards reading and writing; they were reading more and were contributing to oral work. Aspects of AF7 (vocabulary) and AF8 (spelling) improved over the half-term. Unfortunately neither of the two girls made progress: one missed much of the half-term with illness, the other, formerly an elective mute, contributed very little. In both cases the school felt that the curriculum needed further adaptation to meet their needs, including the use of one-to-one work.

In terms of their professional development, both teachers were positive about the impact of this shared way of working and their discussions about planning. One teacher noted that keeping a focus on these children meant that 'my knowledge of them as individuals has improved. I felt more keyed into the children's needs. But in trying to meet their needs, I felt that it influenced the way I worked with all the children'.



The other teacher too was positive about how the professional discussions had influenced her work: 'The content of the unit was broadly the same, I think, as it would have been without these discussions. What was different was the input; the teaching approach was much more varied and interesting. And what was great was how well all the children responded to it. It was such a stimulating unit in the end, and so many children seemed to make good progress.'

For the Year 1 and Year 2 teacher the pilot also gave ideas for her subject leader role in working with colleagues. It helped her to see a new focus to extend the school's practice of collecting planning on a weekly basis. 'I'd love to have the opportunity to work in this way again, so that we talk about planning and how it works. We need to look a little more microscopically about how our teaching leads into children's learning.'

## Summary

The pilot work undertaken by the school, based around the characteristics grids and the professional discussions between the subject leader and the class teacher, led to some small yet significant changes in classroom practice. These included focusing guided work on specific learning objectives, greater use of speaking and listening and emphasising the importance of engaging children in their learning. In addition, TAs were deployed to more effectively support these vulnerable learners. These changes motivated the children in both classes and improved the quality of the work produced.

## Case study: Planning for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children in Year 4

### Introduction

In a small rural primary school in the east of England the GRT pupils are the largest minority ethnic group, forming 15 per cent of the school population. The school sees the use of data as key to informing planning for teaching and learning. Analysing their data showed that some GRT pupils were not making progress in line with the other pupils in the school.

### Who

The subject leader for literacy decided that Year 4 would be targeted initially, to see how a unit of work could be modified to make a difference to the attainment of GRT children. The Year 4 class was chosen, as in this class there was the largest number of GRT children who were falling behind in their progress.

### What

The literacy subject leader worked with the Year 4 teacher to develop a unit of work which would engage the GRT children and make their learning more relevant to them. The proposed unit of work (*Stories from other cultures*) was modified with these objectives in mind. It was aimed over the short term to increase the GRT children's motivation, and their involvement and engagement, by allowing them to recognise their culture reflected in the activities. The aim ultimately was to move the children towards achieving age-related expectations.

The modifications included:

- Greater use of collaborative group work throughout the unit.
- Regular opportunities to talk and tell stories and relate this to writing.
- Use of drama and art as both a stimulus and a means of developing, sequencing and structuring ideas.
- Plentiful supported opportunities for oral rehearsal prior to writing.
- A varied approach to teaching writing using a wider range of teaching strategies, including modelled and shared writing leading into paired and independent writing.

During shared work care was taken to use resources which included positive reflections on aspects of GRT culture, drawing on DCSF resources available on the internet. Particularly useful was *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement* (DCSF 00710-2009FLR-EN).

Among significant features which underpinned the work was the support received from the LA Traveller Education Support Service Advisory teacher who offered advice on modelling writing, storytelling, and coaching, as well as identifying appropriate resources. By demonstrating strategies often useful in engaging GRT children, the advisory teacher increased the teachers' confidence in working with a culture and history about which they knew very little.

### Impact

The impact of the project was measured by looking at pupils' work, speaking to the children, undertaking learning walks and meeting with the class teacher. Both the teacher and the children were clear about the value of seeing GRT culture reflected in their schoolwork and the impact that this had on their level of engagement. 'I enjoyed these lessons 'cause I wanted to learn and do the work. It's the first time we've done anything about Travellers in school. It made me feel proud 'cause I am one.' And 'I can

go home and tell my mum and dad what we're doing in school and they think it sounds great and I want them to come and see our display on the walls in school'.

The teacher felt that the quality of work produced was of a much higher standard than previously achieved, reflecting the children's significantly greater level of involvement. She commented that the children were keen to keep up their progress and to tell their parents about what they had done. Although the written work did not achieve age-related expectations, careful scrutiny did reveal an improvement in a number of areas.

The teacher was keen to develop more units of work which could reflect GRT culture to sustain the higher level of engagement and the improvement in standards. 'There's an air of excitement now, I am able to capture the interest of all the children. Relationships and behaviour are so much better now. I've learned a lot and feel so much more confident around their way of life. It goes beyond the classroom. We seem to be engaging the whole community better now.'

The literacy subject leader too felt that the project had significant lessons for the whole school. It was decided, for example, to carry out a curriculum mapping exercise to identify other ways of reflecting aspects of GRT culture across the whole curriculum. 'We are now more confident that we can begin to increase the opportunities to reflect positively the culture of our largest minority ethnic group in school. In the future we plan to ensure that every year group, starting from Early Years, will have these opportunities planned for and built into the curriculum. Capturing the interest and allowing these pupils the chance to see themselves within the lessons will make learning and teaching far more successful.'

## Summary

By reviewing data the school identified an issue with the achievement of GRT children in literacy, specifically with writing. Drawing on the support of outside expertise and the literacy subject leader, the teacher reviewed the curriculum she was offering to enhance its relevance and extended her range of teaching strategies to engage the children more actively in their learning. Ensuring the resources she used reflected the diversity of her class also supported improvements in attitudes, which in turn led to improvements in writing.

## Case study: Year 5 planning with a focus on underperforming boys

### Introduction

Last year, Year 5 took part in a Creative Partnership project involving multi-media. They produced a DVD film of our school, looking at four different periods. I wanted to tap into their enjoyment and growing enthusiasm for sound and video recording, and decided to use this new-media approach to enhance teaching and learning.

### Who

The focus group consisted of eight underachieving boys who were highlighted through data tracking and teacher assessment. Apart from two children with special educational needs (SEN), the majority were slightly below national expectations and making slow progress. In most cases, the boys were disengaged from the writing process and had limited speaking, listening, and concentration skills. Two boys in the group were able to produce a large amount of work, but they lacked confidence and coherence in their writing.

I began by talking to the focus group to ascertain their preferred way of learning and the type of interests they have. Drama activities were very popular as a way of developing understanding of a text, and they liked having time to talk with a partner about their work. They also liked experimenting with sentence work using a mini-whiteboard before having to commit to paper.

### What

The children had begun work on the poem 'The Highwayman' during Year 5, covering phase one. I wanted something to stimulate and motivate their interest, and draw them into the poem before we set to work at analysing the story. I found several useful video clips, including many types of quality animation produced by children of a similar age. I was pleased to find one particular animation that used LEGO™ figures to recreate the story of the poem 'The Highwayman'. This immediately caught the attention of some of my underperforming boys. The use of visual approaches as a means to engage interest was something I would use throughout the unit.

### Drama activities

Once we had reviewed the poem and the children's previous knowledge of it, I decided to use a variety of drama activities to deepen their understanding of the story and the motivations of the characters. The transition unit suggested freeze-framing certain verses of the poem and interviewing the characters. I decided to video record these sessions to show the children during subsequent lessons. These video clips allowed me to assess the children's levels of understanding and to address misconceptions. I was particularly impressed with the responses of some of the underperforming boys who managed to access the character's motivations. One boy (playing a soldier) commented that 'they were using the landlord's daughter as bait' to capture the highwayman. There were other benefits too as children not wishing to act became directors, positioning and giving instructions to fellow pupils.

Hotseating provided further opportunities for speaking and listening and drama, with children deepening their understanding of the characters and the story. It was interesting to see how some of the children wished to explore the thoughts and feelings of some of the peripheral characters, such as the landlord and the soldiers. During this activity, I encouraged the children to think about questions that would explore what was happening in the background, and in situations not directly referred to in the poem.

## Building to the writing process

We then moved on to retelling the story from the different characters' points of view. For this activity, the children worked in mixed-ability groups with more confident writers acting as scribes and other children being encouraged to give ideas verbally.

The idea of the highwayman and Bess telling the story gave rise to an interesting debate among some of the children about what would happen once the character died: How could this be conveyed in the first-person? Some decided to invent another character to be the highwayman's accomplice and to narrate from that perspective, while others decided to continue the first-person account as a ghost.

The children in the focus group were encouraged to record some of their ideas on a voice recorder while engaged in the writing process; visual images were used throughout.

Before we began to write our stories, we discussed our priorities and decided that the story should have a dark mood and contain description of the characters' thoughts and feelings. We also developed a toolbox of grammatical features such as connectives, adjectival phrases, and paragraphing. Toolboxes are also useful for pupil self-assessment.

We reviewed the first drafts and decided that we needed to spend more time on conveying the feelings of the characters. We also required work on creating more of a mood through description, particularly with weather and setting. I used guided-writing opportunities to support the group of children struggling with this, during the redrafting process.

## Interviews with the characters

The previous drama activities afforded the children greater insight into the thoughts, feelings and motivations of the characters. The hotseating process takes the form of interview-style questions, so I decided to take that into a formalised interview piece of work.

I introduced this section with a video clip of an interview, conducted by children, of a famous children's author. As we watched the video, I paused at various sections to highlight certain teaching points, such as how the interviewer rephrased a question to obtain a more developed answer from the interviewee.

We also looked at transcripts from interviews of popular celebrities taken from the radio and magazines.

## Impact

The focus group engaged with the drama activities, acting out parts and stating the opinions of the characters. I was very pleased with the confidence shown by the group when answering questions directed at the characters. The hotseating developed their understanding, and the review of video footage help to clear up misconceptions.

The speaking and listening activities aimed at retelling the story before the writing process, coupled with the planning stage in mixed-ability groups, helped to develop a clear structure for the eventual written work. The use of voice recorders to capture ideas helped these pupils to structure their sentences with greater confidence. Finally, the use of ICT, in particular video and sound recording, offered a stimulating experience for the children and created further avenues for development throughout the year.

## Case study: Modifying planning in Year 6 to take account of the needs of black African and black Caribbean heritage children

### Introduction

This urban primary school, in the south of England, has a roll of 660 children. It has a very diverse cohort that includes Eastern European (predominantly Polish or Roma) and Somali children. About half of the school population comprises children of Pakistani heritage. Pupil mobility is high at about 70 per cent. In 2008 10.5 per cent of children had statements of special educational need or were at School Action Plus; 21.1 per cent were supported at School Action. Having previously worked below national and local averages the school is now improving. Staff development and work with local authority advisers has focused on meeting the needs of these diverse groups. A school improvement priority this year is to ensure that teachers plan in detail to engage and extend all children, but particularly children of black African and black Caribbean heritage who are seen to be under achieving. This work has been led in the school by the assistant headteacher. The focus of this project was Year 6.

### What

The three Year 6 classes were all working on a unit about journalistic writing. The project was intended to impact on the writing attainment of all children – but particularly that of the target group – and to improve the quality of written recounts and children’s writing skills, including using an extended vocabulary and spelling accurately. This was to be achieved through providing lessons which are both interesting and supportive. A secondary but nonetheless important aim was to increase teachers’ confidence in planning and teaching a unit of work closely tailored to the needs of the children. The assistant headteacher worked with the teachers in a coaching capacity to support the changes in planning and teaching, for example discussing how to make the lessons more engaging through interactive strategies and the use of culturally appropriate resources.

Strategies which were used included:

- Planning for children to exceed expectations – as well as being precise about next steps in aspects of the curriculum, planning recognised that these children had a history of underachieving and had, if switched on to learning, much potential to improve. It was important therefore that planning did not set an artificial ceiling on what they could achieve, by setting the objectives bar too low.
- Integrating Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) and SEAL materials into literacy lessons – in this work on journalism, classes explored ways of resolving conflict without the use of violence through discussion, role-play, and texts. They used drama to explore non-verbal language; the teachers recognised that it is possible that gestures may be misunderstood and may involve conflicting messages.
- Extending the use of oral work, in pairs and collaborative groups, in as many lessons as possible. Group selection was carefully managed by the teacher to develop cooperation. They used drama at all phases in the teaching sequence to explore texts, develop situations and resolutions, and to rehearse vocabulary.
- Using children’s home language in oral activities like presentations and role-play, for example when reporting from a conflict zone in a drama. Engaging in simultaneous translation valued the child’s language and gave opportunities for reflection, explanation, and vocabulary work. Teachers and pupils learned to use a range of languages and dialects and to explain their use to help children access the curriculum.



- Extending the range of resources used to reflect children's cultural and social backgrounds and their interests. Use of resources and strategies to engage children's curiosity as a starting point for learning required teachers to ask about the children's interests, noting their enthusiasms and bringing in topical sources. Texts chosen, for example, should include positive images of black people and not always represent them historically as in need of help or in the midst of conflict or disaster.
- Ensuring homework tasks reflect the child's culture – use of culturally appropriate resources helped to engage parents' interest and encouraged greater support from home.
- Making use of ICT to promote activities like blogging and podcasting – this was used to give status to writing, and to make real links with other schools and to promote research.

## Impact

The school is confident that the work will contribute to continued improvement in the standards achieved in writing, particularly that of boys. Pupil progress meetings indicate that more children are working at age-related expectations and many are achieving more level 4 criteria on the APP guidelines against specific assessment focuses.

As important was the clear impact that the work had on the Year 6 team of teachers. A review of planning after this focused work indicated better preparation, a more varied and appropriate range of resources being used, and much greater confidence in tailoring planning to take account of need and of the cultural background of the children. Teachers felt that they had made progress in fine-tuning their daily planning. They also reported that classroom relationships with the target group improved and their productivity increased.

## Summary

By focusing on the special features in the Year 6 classes, the school identified patterns and trends in achievement and attainment for individuals and groups. Responding to these trends, this work focused on adapting planning to suit the children's needs and to have an impact on their levels of engagement. Resources which reflected cultural diversity, positive images of different groups, and the reality of children's lives affected motivation and behaviour which in turn improved learning. Teachers reported that the work in this project made them rethink their approach to planning and gave them confidence to adapt their plans.

## Case study: Planning for the needs of underperforming Gifted and Talented (G&T) children in Year 6

### Introduction

This primary school has 220 pupils who are drawn from a semi-rural catchment area. The number of pupils eligible for a FSM is low. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and those with a statement of SEN is below the national average. The school's CPD focus this year is meeting the needs of their G&T pupils, particularly identifying and providing for those who are underperforming.

### Who

The focus of this work was the Year 6 class: of a cohort of 27 (19 boys and eight girls), seven children are on the autistic spectrum continuum; two children have statements and are supported by a TA. The range of needs is unusually wide for the school, and this makes planning and teaching challenging. The class teacher feels that a small group of more able children, who although working at level 4, are underperforming in terms of their prior achievement and potential. It was agreed that they needed targeted input to help them make more progress.

### What

To translate a general concern about these more able children into a specific understanding of what challenges they needed, the subject leader and class teacher first analysed samples of writing, using APP assessment guidelines, and discussed these children's abilities and attitudes to writing at length. One child, on the autistic spectrum, writes in a lively original style, but finished pieces lack focus and structure. He often assumes a shared context with the reader. He is reluctant to redraft or develop any of his ideas. A second boy is highly articulate but unwilling to commit ideas to paper; his writing too lacks structure and often drifts into oral speech patterns linked by simple connectives. A third boy has outstanding ability in drama, but is less motivated to write. He can produce imaginative pieces but the writing tends to tail off or become bogged down in irrelevant details. He writes very slowly. The only girl in this group of able children writes well but tends to play safe, returning to a similar style of writing. She includes too many irrelevant details in her work.

Through discussion, the subject leader and class teacher agreed that the group's writing was often inconsistently structured and that sentence structure within paragraphs lacked variety. Working together they adapted the next unit of work, on autobiography or biography, to provide additional challenges to address the weaknesses identified. The main adaptations in terms of the curriculum were:

- Increased focus on the audience and purpose of the writing by structuring two writing tasks, on the same topic (a biography of Roald Dahl), for two very different audiences – a Guardian reader and a Year 1 child.
- Emphasis in reading, on analysing and comparing texts written for these audiences, in terms of the text structure, language choices and tone.
- Closer attention to making word choices and constructing sentences appropriate to the two audiences.

To focus on these elements of the curriculum and to help the children access the increased level of challenge, but without disrupting the learning of the rest of the class, the teacher also made a number of adaptations to his teaching and class organisation. These included:

- Focused and frequent guided sessions for this group, planned by the class teacher and subject leader working together, after the previous session. These guided sessions centred on the children's sentence construction and allowed the teacher to intervene at the point of writing to improve the quality of the writing.
- Opportunities for self- and peer- assessment, with the children working in pairs to review their work.

## Impact

The challenge, of using the same information for two different audiences, motivated the children and helped them to structure (and complete) their writing. The more focused guided sessions resulted in a greater variety of sentence structures being used. Examples of writing collected at the end of the unit showed an improvement in writing skills, but the teacher was more pleased with the improved attitudes to writing shown, particularly by the three boys. The subject leader commented: 'The impact on this group of children has made me rethink my own approach to guided writing and its impact on teaching and learning'. The subject leader and class teacher are planning some lesson-study sessions to observe the group's learning further.

## Summary

Addressing the relative underperformance of a small group of able children is perhaps a less obvious, but nonetheless important element of narrowing the gaps. In this class, the teacher and subject leader worked together to plan work and support which would allow able children to access a more challenging curriculum. Both the curriculum and teaching approaches were modified. Specific objectives linked to sentence construction were addressed within the context of a highly motivating and stimulating writing topic. Providing audiences and purposes for writing which mixed the real and the intriguing enabled these teachers to begin to change children's attitudes to writing and, consequently, to improve the quality of what was written.

## Case study: Planning for the needs of English as an Additional Language (EAL) speakers in a Year 6 class

### Introduction

This primary school is located in an inner-city area that has relatively high social and economic deprivation. The area served by the school is in the lowest 20 per cent of average income levels for Lower Super Output Areas in England. Eligibility for FSM is relatively low (12 per cent), because many parent or carers are employed in low-paid factory work or in textile home working. The majority of children are of Indian heritage and are Gujarati or Kutchi speaking Muslims. There are also small numbers of Pakistani-heritage pupils (7 per cent) and Bangladeshi-heritage pupils (3.5 per cent). A high percentage of children make two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and results are consistently above 77 per cent at level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2. The school identified improving the quality of speaking and listening opportunities while maintaining the range of the curriculum as a priority.

### Who

The Year 6 cohort consists of 32 pupils. Twenty-five of them are users of EAL and 10 have joined the school during Key Stage 2. Of the 30 children for whom the school has Key Stage 1 records, half achieved level 2b or above in Year 2 assessments in writing. The school's expectation is that 29 out of the 34 pupils will attain level 4+ at the end of Key Stage 2.

The Year 6 cohort is divided between two classes of mixed Year 5 and Year 6 children.

### What

One of these classes read *Boy* by Roald Dahl over the first half-term, using the biography as the stimulus for literacy work. The intention was to engage the pupils, particularly the boys, by using a good quality text which is both relatively accessible yet challenging in its use of language.

The teacher made further adaptations to the framework unit plan to take account of the needs of EAL users by

- Allocating additional time to the unit – the suggested time scale of three or four weeks was, in the view of the teacher, too short to exploit fully the historical and cultural context of the novel, and to provide a shared experience, and a frame of reference, that the children could draw upon throughout the year. However non-fiction writing has been incorporated in the half-term's work, and writing tasks have included persuasive writing and instructions, as well as narrative story writing.
- Emphasising building vocabulary as a key objective for the unit – the text is a valuable source for developing children's vocabulary. By giving them more time for exploration, the children have more opportunities to understand, explore in depth, and use the newly encountered vocabulary. Teaching includes: looking at synonyms and antonyms; examining the different forms of a root meaning as it appears in different forms and word classes, for example nervous, nervousness, nerve, unnerving, nervously and so on; consideration of colloquialisms such as 'get on my nerves', 'you have the nerve to ...', 'he touched a raw nerve'; and discussing the way that particular words collocate with other words, for example a pain can be sharp, stinging, agonising, excruciating and so on, but is not usually big, strong, heavy, or pointed.
- The use of strategies such as mime, role-play, drama, and guided talk – this enables the teacher to explain and model vocabulary and allows pupils the opportunity to understand, respond to and use the vocabulary. The children are encouraged to think of vocabulary as focusing on precision and appropriateness, rather than the gratuitous use of unusual words.

- Guided work or one-to-one conferencing – this is used to feed back and address grammatical errors and omissions made by the children (as users of EAL) in their writing, as identified by formative AfL.
- An emphasis on teaching complex sentences – this was done through oral work which emphasised their use in speaking and writing with economy and clarity, prior to the children using complex sentences independently in their writing. This teaching included giving careful attention to the meaning and use of subordinating connectives.

The teacher worked with the subject leader who prompted him to look closely at his planning, considering whether the texts, resources and activities chosen offered a balance between engagement and relevance, the readily comprehensible and the challenging, and whether sufficient attention was given to speaking and listening as a way of addressing the needs of EAL users.

## Impact

Although this project was undertaken early in Year 6, the success of these strategies is already seen in the consistent results achieved. In this school, poverty and using EAL are not barriers to success.

## Summary

By adapting the curriculum in terms of objectives and timing, placing a significant emphasis on speaking and listening, and making use of teaching strategies like guided writing to give rapid feedback on areas of difficulty, the teacher made a significant impact on the children's levels of confidence with oral and written English and improved their expression. Such approaches are already embedded in the school and the subject leader's review of planning ensures that class teachers maintain their focus on meeting the needs of EAL speakers.

## Section 5: Further reading

### Underperforming boys

- *Boys' Writing flyers*, Primary National Strategy (2005), Ref: 1170-2005G
- *Can Do Better: Raising Boys' Achievements in English*, QCA (1998), QCA/98/08
- *Raising Boys' Achievement in Writing*, UKLA/ Primary National Strategy (2004)
- *Raising Boys' Achievement* (DfES Research Report, RR636), Mike Younger and Molly Warrington
- *Yes he can! Schools where boys write well*, Ofsted (2003) Ref: HMI505

### Pedagogy

- Go to [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies), search for and select 'Headteachers' and senior leaders' continuing professional development (CPD)', select 'Day 4', then select 'Day 4, session 2: Fit-for-purpose pedagogy (poster)' from the list of 'Attachments'.

### GRT Children

- *Building Futures: Developing trust, A focus on provision for children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Booklet and DVD-ROM Ref: 00741-2009BKT-EN
- *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Resources Catalogue*, books, packs, DVDs, posters, videos and CD-ROMS  
This catalogue funded by the DCSF is available from [claire.lockwood@educationleeds.co.uk](mailto:claire.lockwood@educationleeds.co.uk) or from the NATT+ website [www.natt.org.uk/eshop](http://www.natt.org.uk/eshop)
- *Moving forward together: Raising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller achievement*, The National Strategies, Cross Phase guidance. Ref: 00710-2009FLR-EN  
Booklet 1 *Introduction*, Ref: 00660-2009BKT-EN  
Booklet 2 *Leadership and management*, Ref: 00661-2009BKT-EN  
Booklet 3 *Learning and teaching*, Ref: 00662-2009BKT-EN  
Booklet 4, *Engagement with parents, carers and the wider community*, Ref: 00663-2009BKT-EN
- *Raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils*  
This short booklet and DVD looks at examples of effective practice in a range of primary settings using three 20 minute video essays (Ref: 00102-2008DVD-EN).

### Children of black African and Caribbean heritage

- *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years: introductory guide*, Ref: 00058-2008BKT-EN
- *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years: unit 2A*, Ref: 00060-2008BKT-EN
- *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years: unit 2B*, Ref: 00061-2008BKT-EN
- *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for Black children in the primary years: building futures, e-learning module 4*, Ref: 00058-2008DVD-EN
- *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years: unit 2*, Ref: 00068-2007FLR-EN



### Children who speak EAL

- *Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years*, 0013-2006PCK-EN
- New Arrivals Excellence Programme
- 1. *New Arrivals Excellence Programme Guidance*, 00650-2007BKT-EN
- 2. *NAEP DVD – Case studies*, 00426-2007DVD-EN
- 3. *NAEP CPD modules*, 00041-2008DOM-EN
- 4. *NAEP management guide* – web-based publication, 00041-2008DWO-EN
- 5. NAEP – New arrivals e-learning course – available on the National Strategies area of the Standards website: [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies)
- *Supporting children learning English as an additional language: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage*, 00683-2007BKT-EN
- *Teaching units to support guided sessions for writing in English as an additional language* (pilot material), 00068-2007FLR-EN
- *Writing as an Additional Language at Key Stage 2*, Professor Lynne Cameron and Dr Sharon Besser, University of Leeds, (2004) Ref: DfES RB586

### Children who have SEN

- Inclusion Development Programme Phase 1 *Dyslexia and Speech, Language and Communication Needs* [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using the refs: 00070-2008DVD-EN; 00215-2008BKT-EN
- Inclusion Development Programme Phase 2 *Supporting pupils on the autism spectrum* [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using the refs: 00041-2009DVD-EN; 00040-2009BKT-EN
- Pedagogy and Personalisation Ref: 00126-2007DOM-EN
- Progression Guidance SEN/LDD
- To access the Progression Guidance 2009–10 and its accompanying data sets please visit: [www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies) and search using the ref: 00553-2009BKT-EN  
Copies may be available to order by telephone on 0845 60 222 60 or at [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) publications – quote reference: 00553-2009BKT-EN
- *What Works for Children with Literacy Difficulties?*, Greg Brooks ISBN 1 84185 8307

### Looked after children

- Improving the attainment of looked after children in primary schools – Guidance for Schools DCSF 01047-2009

### Gifted and Talented Children

- *Gifted and Talented Children Guidance on addressing underachievement: planning a whole school approach*, Ref: 00378-2009BKT-EN
- *Gifted and Talented Education Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on exceptionally able pupils*, Ref: 00066-2008BKT-EN
- *Gifted and Talented Education Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on children and young people in care*, Ref: 00873-2007BKT-EN
- *Gifted and Talented Education Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on dual or multiple exceptionality*, Ref: 00061-2007BKT-EN

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Figures 2 and 3: Diagram from *Can Do Better – Raising Boys Achievement In English* (QCA/98/081)  
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