

# Teacher Learning Academy

## Stage 1

### Nina

#### **Section 1 Preparing for the Learning Journey**

I work in a large village primary school. Pupils come from a diverse socio-economic community, where a large percentage of parents have not embarked on higher education and have low aspirations for their children. In the past, the school community has been fairly stable, but recent construction developments have led to an increase in migration both to and from the village.

I am a teacher in Year 4. My class contains children with a range of academic abilities and also a larger than average percentage of children with special educational needs. Analysis of Literacy and Numeracy skills has shown that in the past, this year group has made lower than expected progress. The social skills of a large proportion of the children are not of the level expected of Year 4 children. These children also find cooperating with others, adults and children alike, difficult.

I am an experienced teacher who has worked at the school for a number of years. I have taught in a range of year groups and have led a variety of initiatives within the school with other members of staff.

I will be working closely with my partner teacher in Year 4, members of the senior management team, SEN Coordinator, and also with professionals from outside agencies such as the Autistic Spectrum Disorder team, Behavioural Difficulties team and the Educational Psychologist. My partner teacher and I will be meeting regularly to plan and support each other in my/our learning journey to integrate a child with Asperger's Syndrome and behavioural difficulties, Child A, into the daily routines of my class and the year group. Meetings will be arranged with the other staff and professionals to provide a forum for discussion and support as needed.

This is an important and immediate focus for my learning, as the class need to settle to an effective daily working routine, supporting each other on their learning journey in year 4. This needs to include Child A as a cooperative and valued member of the class. I have had previous experience of working with classes of children whose learning behaviour has been a high priority and also with children on the Autistic Spectrum. However, although these children have had very different needs and have required a wide variety of approaches to enable them to reach their full potential, they had already been successfully integrated into the class. This experience has given me an insight into the possible thoughts and feelings of Child A, but obviously the approach will have to be tailored specifically to her and refocused regularly as her needs change. I hope to learn and develop behaviour management techniques that will successfully integrate Child A into the class and maximise the learning of all the children.

As a result of my learning journey, I hope that Child A will feel secure and supported within the classroom environment and will understand and appreciate the social rewards gained by being cooperative with both the children and adults. It is important that she understands and



accepts the community values and agreed classroom rules, to ensure that all the children can learn effectively.

Health and safety has to be a major consideration as Child A will throw objects, hurt children or run out of the building if feeling stressed. Plans will need to be in place to ensure the safety of all the children, and these will need to be flexible to meet with the changing needs of Child A. A major ethical issue will be to ensure respect for the emotional wellbeing of Child A, as well as the other members of the class. It is important all children feel included in the class group and are valued. Also, although Child A has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, she is unaware of the diagnosis and the impact that this has, and will have, on her life. In consultation with her parents and other professionals, this is an important issue to consider and, if suitable, also the needs of the other children to understand why Child A behaves differently to them.

## Section 2 Creating a Plan for your Learning Journey

### Confirmation of my intended learning and change focus:

To develop behaviour management techniques to integrate a child with Asperger's Syndrome and behavioural difficulties, Child A, into the daily routines of my class.

As a result of my learning journey, I hope that Child A will feel secure and supported within the classroom environment and will understand and appreciate the social rewards gained by being cooperative with both the children and adults. It is important that she understands and accepts the community values and agreed classroom rules, to ensure that all the children can learn effectively.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescales/ Key dates</b> September 2008 – April 2009	<b>Resources / People inc. sources of support and challenge</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Comments / amendments to plan</b>
Meetings with mentor (including review and evaluation)	Weekly September 2008 onwards	mentor	To discuss relevant issues	
Meetings with SEN coordinator (including review and evaluation)	September 2008 weekly	SEN coordinator	To draw up a behaviour plan To review evaluate and refine the behaviour plan	
Liaising with parents of Child A, colleagues and professionals from outside agencies (including	September 2008 onwards weekly or as needed	Parents of Child A, colleagues and professionals from outside agencies	To discuss needs of Child A and behaviour management techniques  To set and review targets	



review and evaluation)			for Child A	
Explaining diagnosis and coping strategies to Child A	Begin 11 November, 2 sessions	Specialist teacher from ASD team	To explain to Child A about her diagnosis and to help her to begin to understand coping strategies	
Explaining Child A's diagnosis and difficulties to year group	1 further session	Specialist teacher from ASD team	To help children to understand why Child A behaves/ responds differently	
Meeting with mentor	April 2009	mentor	To review and evaluate learning journey – to what extent has Child A been integrated into the daily routines of my class?	

### Section 3 On the Learning Journey

A new class in September always presents challenges. However, this year was to be an even greater challenge. The class were creative and generally keen to learn, but some of the children's social skills were under developed, creating difficulties with cooperating and group work. Child A posed a particular challenge, returning to the routines of school after six weeks of school holiday. Her anxiety levels were high and she was often out of control and very angry. She is an intelligent child who enjoys creative learning, particularly art. She was content if able to pursue her own creative ideas, but would not conform to requests to do anything that she did not want to do. She knew that she got very angry, but had no understanding of why she felt like this. She managed her anger by running out of the building, hiding under tables or throwing objects.

My initial task was to research information about Asperger's Syndrome. I accessed information from the National Autistic Society and could identify the main characteristics, and many of the additional characteristics, in Child A. I acted upon the advice given by the society to ensure that the classroom was 'Asperger's Syndrome friendly', and worked with the year 4 teaching assistants to ensure that a consistent approach was used towards Child A. A series of meetings were held with Child A's parents and members of the senior management team. The SEN coordinator (who had covered the post the previous Summer term) worked with me to research previous advice and strategies suggested by the behaviour support team when Child A was in KS 1. I also discussed the successful behaviour management techniques used in KS 1 with her KS 1 teacher, (all the year 3 teachers had moved to different posts during or at the end of the Summer term 2008). Together we devised a behaviour plan that was shared and agreed with all parties involved. This involved a rewards system to be implemented by a teaching assistant and myself. This supplemented the class charter and learning behaviour card system that the children in the class had devised to maximise their learning and to reward appropriate learning behaviour. This system was successful to a certain extent. The class were now more aware of what good learning behaviour looked like and were becoming more cooperative. Child A was a little less disruptive, and this was beginning to be noticed and commented upon by the other children. However, in discussions with the children, it became clear that the rewards system for Child A was unpopular with the other children, as it



was perceived as unfair. Reviewing my learning with my mentor enabled me to reflect on my practice, and this led to a change in direction after term 1.

As a result of this, in October I researched other reward systems that would involve all the children. The new SEN coordinator and Year 3 teacher had used the 1,2,3 Magic system successfully at her previous school, and had now begun to develop the Golden Time arrangements that were being used in KS1 at our school. In consultation with members of the senior management team, it was decided to continue with these strategies into Year 4. This was a much more popular arrangement with the children, as it meant that they all had the opportunity to have Golden Time on a Friday afternoon and they were all being offered the same opportunities and rewards. Also, they could work as a whole class to earn target ticks to gain ten minutes extra Golden Time. Target ticks are earned when the whole class are working in line with their class charter. The class set the target for the week and this is increased as they achieved their target.

After discussions with all people involved with Child A, arrangements were made for a specialist teacher from the ASD team to work one to one with Child A to explain her diagnosis and the implications, in a child friendly way. When Child A felt reassured and ready, the specialist teacher and I led a session to explain to the other children the difficulties that Child A was facing, and how they could best help her. This proved to be very successful, and has allowed further discussion and understanding to take place for many members of our school community. A staff meeting and several key stage meetings were held at which I explained the needs of Child A and the strategies that the teaching assistants in year 4 and I had developed and found to be successful. This enabled all teaching staff to have a greater understanding of Child A, and ensured a consistent approach to behaviour management strategies, irrespective of who was dealing with the situation. I also led a meeting with the Deputy Head teacher to ensure that Lunchtime Supervisors and teaching assistants understood Child A's difficulties and the agreed strategies to support her. Lunchtimes and playtimes are now much happier for all members of our school community, with Child A now able to cope with playing more cooperatively in a small group of children.

The wheels have now been set in motion for Child A to receive a statement of special educational need. Targets have been set and reviewed regularly and these have all been met. Child A now presents as a much happier child, who is in class and conforming for much of the time. A special moment occurred when Child A was chosen to be the child of the week and the rest of the class had very positive comments to put on her certificate. Child A responded by going up to the class charter and crossing out the word 'NOT' which she had written next to her name when she signed it in September. Such progress has been made that we, school staff and her parents, now feel confident that she will be able to cope with a change of routine and take part in the residential trip organised for May.

It will be a high priority to ensure that transition to Year 5 for Child A is as successful as possible. I will disseminate what I have learnt during my learning journey with Child A, to her new teachers and teaching assistants during term 6. Plans will need to be in place for opportunities for the class to take part in 'going up' sessions and for Child A to get to know the adults that she will be working with. Close liaison between the Year 4 and 5 teams will be needed to ensure that Child A's levels of anxiety are kept to a minimum and that the members of the Year 5 team can develop the successful strategies developed in Year 4, to make them appropriate for older children.