

# ECT Mentor session

Module 1: Enabling pupil learning

Week 5: Understanding pupils as learners

## Session Elements



analyse  
artefacts



discuss with a  
mentor



collaborative  
planning



rehearsal

## Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn that:

- 7.3** The ability to self-regulate one's emotions affects pupils' ability to learn, success in school and future lives.
- 7.4** Teachers can influence pupils' resilience and beliefs about their ability to succeed by ensuring all pupils have the opportunity to experience meaningful success.
- 7.5** Building effective relationships is easier when pupils believe that their feelings will be considered and understood.
- 7.6** Pupils are motivated by intrinsic factors (related to their identity and values) and extrinsic factors (related to reward).

Your ECT will learn how to:

### Motivate pupils by:

- 7m** Supporting pupils to master challenging content, which builds towards long-term goals.
- 7n** Providing opportunities for pupils to articulate their long-term goals and helping them to see how these are related to their success in school.

**7o** Helping pupils to journey from needing extrinsic motivation to being motivated to work intrinsically.

## Introduction

In their self-directed study session this week, your mentee explored the role of resilience, self-regulation and motivation in pupils' learning and behaviour. They learned about strategies for motivating pupils; they reflected on pupils they teach and drafted vignettes that encouraged them to think more deeply about pupils as individual learners.

In this ECT mentor meeting, you will work with your mentee to review their planning and explore opportunities to improve their pupils' resilience, self-regulation and motivation.

## Research and Practice Summary

### Observations and conclusions

After another difficult Year 8 geography lesson, Amy is concerned about her pupils. She hoped that her enthusiasm for geography would quickly develop pupils' love of learning geography, but this does not seem to be happening.

Amy has decided that, as some pupils seem unwilling to complete challenging activities, she needs to make her lessons more exciting in order to appeal to them. After their first end-of-topic assessment had disappointing results, Amy concluded that her pupils must lack motivation to learn. She decided to explore ways to improve their motivation.

Amy's mentor challenges Amy to more clearly separate out what she observes in her pupils' behaviours and the conclusions she draws about why they behave in this way. The mentor cautions Amy against drawing unfounded conclusions about pupils' experiences, as she has done here, and reminds her that there are many plausible explanations for why pupils behave as she is observing.

What might be going on for Amy's pupils in the situations she is experiencing?

What factors might be behind what Amy is observing in her class? What strategies might she use to engage her pupils more effectively in their learning?

**Self-regulation** refers to a pupil's ability to monitor, evaluate and modify their emotions and behaviours. This includes, for example, controlling emotions of anger, frustration or embarrassment – all common emotions experienced by pupils across their school career. The most effective learners are able to effectively regulate their own emotions, meaning they are better able to learn well and to form positive relationships with others. If pupils struggle with this, it can affect their own learning and future lives and may also negatively affect their peers.

The Education Endowment Foundation reports that – on average – pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and lower attaining pupils are less effective at self-regulation than their peers. Therefore, explicitly teaching self-regulation may be particularly beneficial for these pupils.

Pupils' self-regulation depends on their prior knowledge and their stage of development. However, developing pupils' self-regulation is as important for early years practitioners as for teachers of older pupils – especially as it relates to the regulation of emotions, which supports successful learning.

Approaches to developing pupils' emotional self-regulation include:

- using storybooks and discussing how characters may feel and why
- developing pupils' vocabulary to describe their emotions
- teaching self-calming techniques like deep breathing
- supporting pupils to recognise their own body clues linked to strong emotions like a changing tone of voice, hot face and increased heart rate

**Resilience** refers to the ability to cope with and overcome challenges. Supporting pupils to overcome challenging goals and understand the connection between effort and success can support the development of resilience. Meeting goals that are not sufficiently challenging or where pupils do not have to work hard is unlikely to

develop resilience.

Resilience is linked to pupils' beliefs about their **ability to succeed** – they are more likely to persist in the face of challenge or adversity if they believe that they will, eventually, achieve their goal. An important way that teachers can influence their pupils' beliefs in this area is to create regular opportunities for pupils to experience meaningful success. 'Meaningful success' could mean different things to different pupils – for some, it will be working through a tricky activity on their own; others may value answering questions correctly in front of their peers. Where challenge is too low, success is unlikely to be meaningful. Challenge is a function of the learning goal of the lesson and the degree of support available to help reach this goal.



To help all of your pupils experience meaningful success on a regular basis and develop resilience, you should:

- pitch the learning goals of your lessons to be challenging enough for pupils that success has meaning (i.e. that it's not too easy to succeed), but not so challenging that success seems out of reach
- adapt the level of support, or scaffolding, available to all pupils – including lower and higher attainers. This will help all pupils to master the challenge in the lesson, with sufficient effort to make success meaningful, and learn what you want them to learn
- consider the range of activities in your lessons and how these play to your pupils' respective strengths – if some pupils are more able to express their ideas orally than in writing, for example, exploit opportunities for them to 'succeed' through discussion at the same time as you work to develop their written literacy
- be specific in your use of praise so that it is clear to pupils when and how they are 'succeeding' (e.g. 'that was an excellent answer because...' or 'what an improvement since last week. You've really improved your...')
- praise pupils' attitude and effort as well as outcomes of their work – emphasise the importance of learning behaviours that lead to success in the longer term

## Supporting pupils' resilience and beliefs about success

Amy reflected on her mentor's feedback and decided to explore her pupils' behaviour some more. She observed them with another teacher and was impressed at how engaged the class was in their learning, but she also noticed that many of the class seemed to 'give up' when they found some more difficult activities quite challenging. This led Amy to reflect on where the pupils might be struggling.

Amy has decided that she needs to develop pupils' resilience so that they are more able to keep going with suitably challenging learning activities. After learning more about how teachers can develop pupils' resilience, Amy decides that the first thing she needs to do is to pitch the learning goals appropriately. The school's Year 8 geography curriculum is insufficiently challenging for some of Amy's pupils so she plans ways to raise the challenge for these pupils.

Next, Amy reviews the support that she gives to pupils. After reviewing pupils' exercise books, Amy observes a group who seldom complete activities in full and often make quite significant errors in their work. Their exercise books are covered in red pen and points for improvement. Putting herself in these pupils' shoes, Amy understands how rarely they must experience success in her class. Amy resolves to more effectively scaffold learning for these pupils and create opportunities for them to feel successful in their learning.

Amy is already confident with how she uses praise – especially when it comes to praising effort and perseverance. Even so, Amy realises that she could be more specific with some of her praise and compare what pupils are doing now with what they have previously done to highlight improvements.

Together, these new approaches will help to develop pupils' resilience and self-belief, which will help all pupils experience meaningful success.

**Motivation** is important for pupils' success at school and later life chances. It is usually defined as a kind of driving force that influences the selection, direction, and continuation or discontinuation of behaviours.

It can be helpful to think of two types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, related to pupils' identity and values, and extrinsic motivation, related to reward and sanctions.

Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyse one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge. It is driven by an interest or enjoyment in a goal or task and derives from the individual rather than relying on external implementation. Pupils who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in learning willingly, as well as work to improve their knowledge, skills and performance. Conversely, extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour that is driven by external factors such as grades, praise or the avoidance of punishment.

Some forms of extrinsic motivation can very powerfully influence pupil behaviour, but it may also have undesirable consequences if pupils focus too much on the competition and on 'winning' at the expense of intended learning. For example, pupils who rush to finish work 'first' may not think as carefully about their learning as if they were less motivated by the reward offered for speed.

In any scenario, pupils will be influenced by both types of motivation, but developing pupils' intrinsic motivation linked to learning will support their success because they will engage more willingly in their learning without the need for external validation. It is important to recognise that motivation is not visible and that it is easy to make assumptions about the motivations behind pupil behaviours that may not be correct. It is helpful to remain mindful of the difference between observable actions and hypotheses about the drivers of these actions. For example, a pupil who appears 'lazy' may in fact be struggling to focus because of events happening outside school in their family or friendship group, or because the work they are completing is not sufficiently challenging.



To increase pupils' motivation, you can support them to:

- **master challenging content, which builds towards long-term goals** – success is motivating, especially when it is challenging to achieve and links with pupils' long-term goals. For instance, accurately and judiciously using challenging, technical vocabulary in writing will motivate an aspiring journalist
- **explore their long-term goals** – whether or not they articulate them freely, most pupils have long-term goals. However, there is often a mismatch between these goals and what pupils think they need to do to achieve them.

Discussing long-term goals with pupils and linking this to their learning can be highly motivational. For instance, you may be able to make connections between pupils' goals and their current learning that they are not aware of such as between the digestive system in biology and a pupil interested in becoming a chef. You might also highlight to pupils the value of transferable skills that they are developing and where qualifications are a prerequisite to the career path that they wish to follow

- **develop intrinsic motivation** – extrinsic motivation can be a very powerful driver, but it is not always sustainable for pupils in the long term – into adulthood - because it relies on an external source of reward and sanction. You should help your pupils to journey from needing extrinsic motivation towards having the intrinsic motivation to work without external input. As well as supporting pupils to master challenging content and connect learning to personal goals, you can help them to find interest and enjoyment in their studies. For instance, by demonstrating your own enthusiasm for what you are teaching or through the pedagogical approaches you use

### **Motivating reluctant learners**

Much of what Amy is now doing will help to increase her pupils' motivation as well as their resilience and self-belief. As pupils experience meaningful success more often, they will likely experience increased motivation, too.

Like Amy, many teachers think that improving the motivation of pupils who are struggling will improve their learning. In fact, it often works in reverse – improving pupils' learning improves their motivation.

### **Mentor Meeting Activities**

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions, and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan sections of this session.

## Review: 5 mins

- (1) Start this session by briefly following up the actions that the mentee set at the end of last week's session. Ask your mentee to summarise
  - a. what they did
  - b. the impact of this on pupil learning (including how they are evaluating this)
  - c. what they will do going forward to build on these actions
- (2) Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

## Plan: 5 mins

At the start of this module, you looked at all of the *learn how to* statements for Standards 1 and 7 and conducted a module audit with your mentee: in some areas, they will already be confident and skilled; in others, they will want more practice and support from you and others. Look back at this audit now and use it to help decide how you and your mentee will make the most productive use of the suggested Theory to Practice activities below.

## Theory to Practice: 35 mins



### 1. Analyse artefacts/discuss with mentor

Review the vignettes that your mentee drafted in their self-study session this week. Use your knowledge and experience to discuss with your mentee why this sort of in-depth reflection on pupils is valuable, including why it is a necessary starting point for teachers who want to develop their pupils as independent, self-regulating learners.

To support this activity, you could:

- highlight strengths and areas for development in how your mentee has approached the vignettes
- if you know the pupils concerned, help your mentee to expand the



vignettes by drawing on your knowledge of the pupils

- discuss possible strategies that would help your mentee come to know their pupils better over time so that they are in a position to understand more about their resilience, self-regulation and motivation
- discuss the value for teachers of undertaking activities like this one, in helping them to reflect on the progress of individual learners in their class(es)



## 2. Collaborative planning

Use the notes made by your mentee in their self-study session and the outcomes of the first activity in this session as a starting point for some collaborative planning. Work with your mentee to plan how they will incorporate into their teaching in the coming week strategies for developing pupils' resilience, self-regulation and motivation.

As you work through this activity, you could:

- check that your mentee is clear about whether they are focusing on a single pupil, a group of pupils or a whole class
- connect the strategies they select to their understanding of the relative strengths and areas for development of the pupil(s) selected
- relate planning back to this week's research and practice summary, and the strategies identified that help to develop pupils as independent learners
- encourage your mentee to be specific in detailing the actions they will take, including scripting any key interactions with pupils that would benefit from this level of detailed preparation



## 3. Rehearsal

As appropriate, support your mentee to rehearse key interactions that will be part of their teaching as they put their planned strategies into practice.

You can support your mentee's learning in this activity by:

- taking the role of the pupil(s) concerned and 'acting back' as they typically might so that your mentee can rehearse their chosen strategy
- giving feedback to your mentee about how well they enacted their planned strategy, including positive steps to improve their practice

### **Next Steps: 5 mins**

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improved pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.