



LEARNING BARRIERS TOOLKIT

Attention & Focus

What you may see: easily distracted; drifts off; needs frequent prompts.

Quick wins: short instructions (1–2 steps), visual cues, seat near teacher.

Use: timers, movement breaks, task chunking.

Language: “What's your next step?” / “Show me how you're starting.”

Check-in & praise for effort and focus.

Working Memory

What you may see: forgets instructions; loses track mid-task.

Quick wins: write steps; 1–2 step prompts; allow processing time.

Supports: checklists, word banks, worked examples.

Prompt: “Tell me the instruction in your own words.”

Overlearn & recap little and often.

Processing Information

What you may see: slow responses; confusion when pace is fast.

Quick wins: slow speech; pause between steps; rephrase.

Supports: Use visuals/diagrams and allow extra thinking time.

Prompt: “Let's break it into steps.”

Reduce non-essential language during explanations.

Executive Functioning

What you may see: difficulty planning, starting, checking work.

Quick wins: now/next boards; guided starts; clear success criteria.

Tools: checklists, visual schedules, timers.

Prompt: “Plan → Start → Check → Finish”.

Reflect briefly on what worked.

Language & Vocabulary

What you may see: word-finding issues; limited vocabulary; misinterpretation.

Quick wins: pre-teach 3–5 key words; visuals/gestures.

Supports: sentence stems, word banks, modelling.

Prompt: “Tell me in another way.”

Revisit and use new words in different contexts.

Recall & Retention

What you may see: learns today, forgets tomorrow; inconsistent recall.

Quick wins: start/end with a recap; daily retrieval warm-ups.

Tools: knowledge organisers, flashcards, dual coding.

Prompt: “How does today link to yesterday?”

Use spaced practice and celebrate remembered steps.

Attention & Focus

Pupils with attention and focus difficulties struggle to maintain concentration, filter distractions, and stay on task without frequent support.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
• Now/Next boards • Task chunking with mini-deadlines • Visual timetables • Movement breaks (e.g., brain gym, sensory circuits) • Fidget tools (approved, purposeful) • Use of timers (sand or digital) or countdowns • Reduced-distraction workstation • Pre-teaching of expectations • Proximity support (teacher stands close at key moments) • Keep instructions short and chunked • Gain attention before speaking (name, eye contact, visual cue) • Use clear lesson structure and routines	• Attention Autism (joint attention, engagement; ↔ Language & Vocabulary, Processing) • Sensory Circuits (alerting/organising sequence; ↔ Vestibular, Proprioceptive, Executive Functioning) • Vestibular activities (↔ Sensory Circuits, Gross Motor Skills) • Proprioceptive / "heavy work" activities (↔ Sensory Circuits, Fine Motor Skills, Regulation) • Zones of Regulation (self-regulation; ↔ Executive Functioning, Language for Behaviour & Emotions) • Think Good, Feel Good (CBT-style strategies; ↔ Executive Functioning) • TEACCH (structured teaching supports on-task, transitions; ↔ Executive Functioning, Processing) • Lego Therapy (shared attention, turn-taking; ↔ Language & Vocabulary, Executive Functioning) • ELSA (emotional literacy/regulation; ↔ Language for Behaviour & Emotions) • Drawing & Talking (calming/processing; ↔ Recall & Retention—emotional load) • Blob Tree (feelings identification; ↔ Language for Behaviour & Emotions) • Sensory Play (state regulation; ↔ Processing, Proprioceptive/Vestibular) • Squiggle Whilst you Wiggle • Dough Disco • Write from the Start • Theraplay	

BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Is easily distracted by noise, movement, or peers ☐ Drifts off during teaching input ☐ Dependent on adult prompts to return to task ☐ Rushes or avoids tasks that require sustained effort ☐ Shows inconsistent attention depending on task topic ☐ Struggles to focus without 1:1 support ☐ Appears fidgety, restless, or constantly moving	▪ To work for 4-6-minute focused intervals in 4-5 lessons using a timer. ▪ To use a fidget tool appropriately during input in 4-5 sessions. ▪ To return to task using a visual “back to work” card in 4-5 instances after distraction. ▪ To demonstrate active listening behaviours (eyes on speaker, still body) for 80% of carpet time in 4-5 days. ▪ To stay engaged in adult-led small-group activities for 8-10 minutes in 4-5 attempts.	▪ For [pupil name] to develop their ability to sustain attention so that they can remain engaged during whole-class teaching. ▪ For [pupil name] to develop their on-task focus so that they can complete independent activities within expected timeframes. ▪ For [pupil name] to develop their use of self-regulation strategies so that they can refocus when distracted. ▪ For [pupil name] to develop their listening attention so that they can follow verbal input more consistently. ▪ For [pupil name] to develop their ability to filter distractions so that they can work more effectively in a busy classroom environment.

Working Memory

Pupils with working memory difficulties find it hard to hold information in mind long enough to follow instructions, complete tasks, or remember multi-step processes.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
• Reduce instructions to 1–2 steps • Instruction repeat-back routine (“Tell me what you’re going to do first”) • Visual instructions (symbols or photos of steps) • Writing frames / guided templates • Anchor charts & word banks • Table-top prompt cards (e.g., maths methods) • Modelling + guided practice before independence	• Working Memory (targeted memory training, rehearsal, chunking; ↔ Executive Functioning) • Language for Thinking (guided reasoning reduces WM load; ↔ Language & Vocabulary, Processing) • Verbal Reasoning (Elklan Language Builders) (structured language demands; ↔ Processing) • 5-minute Box / 10-minute Box (short, cumulative practice; ↔ Recall & Retention) • Literacy Box (if used for stepwise phonics/spelling practice; ↔ Recall & Retention) • Assistive Technology (e.g., checklists, text-to-speech; ↔ Executive Functioning) • Touch Typing (reduces handwriting WM load; ↔ Assistive Technology) • Plus 1 / Power of 2 (short, cumulative practice; ↔ Recall & Retention) • RAN – Rapid Automatic Naming (↔ Recall & Retention, Processing)	
BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Forgets instructions (especially multi-step) ☐ Is dependent on frequent repetition or reminders ☐ Starts a task but quickly forgets what to do ☐ Struggles to copy accurately from the board ☐ Loses track during multi-part activities ☐ Has difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., days of the week, steps in a method)	• To repeat back a 2-step instruction accurately before acting in 4-5 opportunities <i>with support</i>. • To use a visual list to complete a five-part morning routine in 4-5 days. • To recall 3 key points with one prompt in 4-5 sessions following teaching input. • To follow a simple sequence (e.g., “first...then...”) during practical tasks in 4-5 attempts. • To use a note or symbol prompt to remember what to do next in 4-5 lessons.	• For [pupil name] to develop their ability to follow multi-step instructions so that they can complete classroom tasks more independently. • For [pupil name] to develop their capacity to hold key information in mind so that they can apply learning during independent work. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to remember sequences so that they can carry out routines and methods accurately. • For [pupil name] to develop strategies for recalling steps in a task so that they can remain engaged without repeated prompting. • For [pupil name] to develop their working memory skills so that they can participate more confidently in whole-class teaching.

Processing Information

Pupils with processing difficulties need extra time to understand, interpret, and respond to verbal or written information, especially when it is given quickly.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
• Slow instructional pace + pause between steps • Visual supports: diagrams, pictures, dual coding • Simplified language with reduced teacher talk • Clear modelling (I do → We do → You do) • Extra response/thinking time • Pre-teaching new content before whole-class lesson • Chunk tasks into small sections with check-ins	• TEACCH (clear structure, reduces processing load; ↔ Executive Functioning) • Language for Thinking (explicit steps; ↔ Working Memory, Language & Vocabulary) • Blank's Level Questions (graduated complexity; ↔ Language & Vocabulary) • Racing to English (explicit language for EAL; ↔ Language & Vocabulary) • Talking Mats (AAC to reduce linguistic processing demands; ↔ Language & Vocabulary, Executive Functioning) • Attention Autism (clear, highly structured input; ↔ Attention & Focus) • Assistive Technology (visual schedules, readers; ↔ Executive Functioning, Working Memory) • Total Communication	Using Visuals in the Classroom - 18mins https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVRCEQ761xY
BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Takes longer than peers to answer questions ☐ Takes longer than peer to process instructions ☐ Appears confused by new information ☐ Struggles to keep up with class pace ☐ Has difficulty interpreting visual information (charts, diagrams) ☐ Misinterprets questions or tasks ☐ Struggles with auditory processing	• To respond to a question within 8 seconds in 4-5 trials, with thinking time. • To follow chunked instructions correctly delivered in two parts in 4-5 instances. • To interpret a question (reading/verbal) correctly using a visual scaffold in 4-5 attempts. • To summarise new information in one sentence in 4-5 lessons. • To complete tasks within a set time when given structured pacing support in 4-5 lessons.	• For [pupil name] to develop their processing speed so that they can respond to questions more confidently. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to interpret verbal information so that they can follow instructions accurately. • For [pupil name] to develop their understanding of visual information so that they can access charts, diagrams and written prompts more effectively. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to keep pace with classroom tasks so that they can complete learning within expected time. • For [pupil name] to develop their clarity of understanding so that they can respond appropriately to new content.

Executive Functioning

Pupils with executive functioning difficulties struggle with planning, organisation, initiating tasks, managing time, and monitoring their own learning.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
- Checklists: “Plan → Start → Check → Finish” - Visual schedules for longer tasks - Now/Next or Task Maps - Modelling planning steps (“Watch how I plan my writing...”) - Time-management tools (timers, mini-deadlines) - Clean, uncluttered workspace - Scaffolded independence (e.g., guided start → partial independence → full independence)	Executive Function skills (planning, initiation, monitoring; ↔ Working Memory) TEACCH (visual structure, routines; ↔ Processing, Attention & Focus) Zones of Regulation (self-management; ↔ Attention & Focus) Lego Therapy (planning/problem-solving; ↔ Attention & Focus) Social Stories / Comic Strip Conversations (planning social responses; ↔ Language & Vocabulary) Socially Speaking (turn-taking, planning talk; ↔ Language & Vocabulary) Assistive Technology (timers, visual checklists, AT tools; ↔ Working Memory) Talking Mats (supports planning and reflection; ↔ Processing, Language & Vocabulary) Think Good, Feel Good (self-talk, cognitive strategies; ↔ Attention & Focus)	Social Communication & Autism https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIWwf9hcgt0
BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Struggles to organise belongings or resources ☐ Finds planning or sequencing tasks difficult ☐ Has trouble getting started with work (task initiation) ☐ Gives up quickly when tasks feel tricky ☐ Has difficulty adapting to changes or switching tasks	- To prepare their resources/desk for lessons within 2-3 minutes in 4-5 days independently. - To begin a given task within 2-3 minutes using a “start now” prompt in 4-5 lessons. - To follow a 3-step sequence using a visual prompt with no more than one adult cue in 4-5 tasks. - To use a coping strategy (e.g., visual timetable) when a change occurs, in 4-5 observed situations.	For [pupil name] to develop their organisational skills so that they can manage resources and equipment independently. For [pupil name] to develop their task-initiation skills so that they can start work promptly after instructions are given. For [pupil name] to develop their ability to sequence steps so that they can complete multi-stage tasks successfully. For [pupil name] to develop their flexibility in thinking so that they can adapt to changes in routine with reduced anxiety. For [pupil name] to develop their planning skills so that they can structure learning tasks effectively.

☐ Struggles to manage time or complete tasks on time

☐ Dependent on adult support to break tasks into steps

- To complete a simple plan (e.g., first/next/last) before starting a learning activity in 4-5 opportunities.

Language & Vocabulary

Pupils with language and vocabulary difficulties find it hard to understand, use, or retrieve words and language structures needed for learning, communication, and comprehension.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
• Pre-teach–Teach–Revisit vocabulary cycle • Word maps, Frayer models, semantic webs • Visual vocabulary (images + word + definition) • Sentence stems for speaking and writing • Modelling correct language naturally • Barrier games for receptive/expressive language • Daily vocabulary retrieval warm-ups	• Makaton (↔ Aided Language Displays, Speech & Language) • BSL (↔ Speech & Language) • Aided Language Displays (↔ Core Word Programme, Assistive Technology) • Core Word Programme (functional vocabulary/AAC; ↔ Aided Language Displays) • Speech & Language (general S&L programmes) • Cued Articulation (phoneme cues; ↔ Phonological Awareness) • Expressive Language (R&W) (general expressive programmes) • Receptive Language (Sp&L) (general receptive programmes) • Colourful Semantics (sentence structure; ↔ Expressive Language) • Shape Coding (grammar/syntax; ↔ Expressive Language) • Vocabulary Teaching (Tier 2 & HFW) (↔ Literacy for All) • NELI (receptive/expressive/vocabulary; ↔ Literacy for All, Processing) • Racing to English (EAL; ↔ Processing) • Word Aware • Language for Behaviour & Emotions (emotion words; ↔ Attention/Regulation) • Socially Speaking (pragmatics; ↔ Executive Functioning—social planning) • Comic Strip Conversations (pragmatics; ↔ Executive Functioning) • Social Stories (social understanding language; ↔ Executive Functioning) • Intensive Interaction (pre-intentional communication; ↔ Attention & Focus) • Talking Mats (AAC; ↔ Processing, Executive Functioning) • Total Communication	Vocabulary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So1IFCoGI0s Colourful Semantics pt1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvUn9z49lHw Colourful Semantics pt 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EDlmCyP8ig Social Communication & ASD https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4FdNHOMaZM Widgit Word and Spelling Lists

BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Has limited vocabulary for their age ☐ Struggles to explain ideas clearly ☐ Gives short or minimal verbal responses ☐ Misunderstands figurative language or classroom instructions ☐ Has difficulty answering “why/how” questions ☐ Finds it hard to follow discussions or whole-class input ☐ Makes grammar or sentence structure errors unusual for age	• To use sentence stems to produce full-sentence answers in 4-5 opportunities. • To learn and correctly use 3 new topic words each week for 4 weeks. • To describe a picture or event using at least 5 detail words in 4-5 attempts. • To follow a 2-part instruction containing a new vocabulary word in 4-5 trials. • To answer teacher questions using at least one descriptive adjective in 4-5 sessions.	• For [pupil name] to develop their expressive vocabulary so that they can communicate ideas with greater clarity. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to understand curriculum vocabulary so that they can access lesson content more fully. • For [pupil name] to develop their sentence-level language skills so that they can speak in full, meaningful sentences. • For [pupil name] to develop their understanding of spoken instructions so that they can follow tasks more independently. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to explain thinking so that they can participate confidently in discussions.

Recall & Retention

Pupils with recall and retention difficulties have trouble storing and retrieving information, meaning they may learn something one day but struggle to remember or apply it later.

Classroom Support	Intervention	Training & Resources
- Retrieval practice routines: “Yesterday / Last Week / Last Term” questions - Quick-fire quizzes - Low-stakes mini-tests - Knowledge organisers - Dual-coding notes (images + words) - End-of-lesson recap routines - Spaced practice timetable - Consistent vocabulary and method models	5-minute Box / 10-minute Box (spaced, cumulative practice; ↔ Working Memory) Literacy for All (umbrella for structured literacy; ↔ Phonological Awareness) Literacy Box (cumulative literacy tasks; ↔ Working Memory) Nessy (phonics/spelling overlearning; ↔ Phonological Awareness) SOS Spelling (consistent routines; ↔ Phonological Awareness) Reading Between the Lines (inference—recall of text details; ↔ Processing) Little Wandle Keep Up / Rapid Catch Up / SEND (systematic phonics overlearning; ↔ Phonological Awareness) Dyslexia Group (overlearning/strategies; ↔ Phonological Awareness, Assistive Technology) Plus 1 / Power of 2 (short, cumulative practice; ↔ Processing) OT activities – fine motor/gross motor	Using Visuals in the Classroom - 18mins https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVRCEQ761xY Widgit Word and Spelling Lists
BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Appears to learn something one day and forget it the next ☐ Struggles to recall key vocabulary or facts ☐ Cannot remember content previously taught (e.g., number bonds, phonics) ☐ Is reliant on repetitions more than peers to secure learning ☐ Has difficulty recalling stories, events, or instructions	- To correctly recall 5 curriculum vocabulary words at the end of each week for 4 consecutive weeks. - To retrieve and use correct number facts in 4-5 maths sessions with no more than one prompt. - To recall and summarise 3 events from a story in 4-5 reading sessions. - To demonstrate retention of yesterday’s learning in 4-5 morning recall reviews. - To remember and verbalise a newly taught concept after a 10-minute delay in 4-5 sessions.	For [pupil name] to develop their ability to retain taught vocabulary so that they can apply subject-specific language accurately. For [pupil name] to develop their recall of key facts so that they can access curriculum content more securely. For [pupil name] to develop their retention of learning over time so that they can build upon prior knowledge effectively. For [pupil name] to develop their ability to retrieve previously taught methods so that they can work with increasing independence. For [pupil name] to develop their skill in recalling story events and information so that they can engage more successfully in reading and comprehension tasks.

Emotional Wellbeing

Difficulties with managing feelings, confidence, self-awareness, and emotional regulation.

Classroom Support

✓ Predictable Structure

Use a **visual timetable** that is referred to regularly.
Give advance warning of changes (e.g., “In 5 minutes, we will tidy up...”).
Provide clear routines so [[pupil name]] knows *what to expect*.

✓ Reduce Environmental Stressors

Offer seating away from:
high-traffic areas, noisy peers, visual distractions
Use ear defenders or noise-reducing headphones if helpful.

✓ Prepare for Transitions

Use **Now/Next/Then** boards.
Provide a transition object or job (carrying resources, handing out books).

✓ Safe/Sensory Regulation Tools

A **calm box** (stress ball, textured item, fiddle toy).
Access to: weighted lap pad, chewable pencil topper, wobble cushion
A small **calm corner** or “regulation station” with visuals.

✓ Breathing Strategies

✓ Movement Breaks

✓ Emotion Check-In

Daily emotion check-in using:
Zones of Regulation, Colour monsters, Emoji emotions
Prompt: “How is your engine running today?”

✓ Reduce Fear of Failure

- Provide **errorless learning** opportunities.
- Offer ‘**I can ask for help**’ cards or “break cards”.

✓ Pre-teaching & Overlearning

✓ Provide Choice and Control

Intervention

- **Language for Behaviour & Emotions** (emotion words; ↔ Attention/Regulation)
- **Socially Speaking** (pragmatics; ↔ Executive Functioning—social planning)
- **Comic Strip Conversations** (pragmatics; ↔ Executive Functioning)
- **Social Stories** (social understanding language; ↔ Executive Functioning)
- **Intensive Interaction** (pre-intentional communication; ↔ Attention & Focus)
- **Friendship Formula**
- **Zones of Regulation** (self-management; ↔ Attention & Focus)
- **Lego Therapy** (planning/problem-solving; ↔ Attention & Focus)
- **Socially Speaking** (turn-taking, planning talk; ↔ Language & Vocabulary)
- **POOCH** – problem-solving
- **How big is my problem?** 5 point problem scale
- **Theory of Mind** – understanding someone else’s feelings
- **Managing Anxiety** - stepping stones and realistic thinking
- **EBSNA**
- Drawing & Talking
- ELSA

Training & Resources

Using Visuals in the Classroom - 18mins
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVRCEQ761xY>

[Widgit Word and Spelling Lists](#)

[Boxall Profile](#)

✓ Co-regulation Before Independence ✓ Emotion-Labeling Scripts ✓ Validate the Feeling, Guide the Behaviour “It’s okay to feel angry; it’s not okay to hurt others. Let’s choose a safe way to calm down.” ✓ Containment Phrases “You’re safe.” “I’m here to help you.” “Let’s do this together.” ✓ Reduce Cognitive Load Provide worked examples, Use colour coding, Break tasks into 3–4 small chunks, Provide visual steps for multi-step tasks ✓ Success-Based Entry Points Start with the easiest part of the task Begin with familiar concepts Provide scaffolds: sentence starters, key words, templates ✓ Minimise Trigger Tasks ✓ Reduce Demand When Dysregulated ✓ Non-Confrontational Strategies “Would you like to start with this part or that part?” “Let’s do one together first.” “Stand side-by-side, not face-to-face. ✓ Silent Support Signals	• Circle of Friends • Wake Up Club • Nest – nurture provision	
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BARRIERS	TARGET EXAMPLES	OUTCOME EXAMPLES
☐ Appears anxious about new tasks, transitions, or changes ☐ Worries excessively about getting things wrong ☐ Shows low self-esteem or avoids participating ☐ Becomes upset or overwhelmed easily ☐ Struggles to identify or name their emotions ☐ Finds it hard to calm down once dysregulated ☐ Shows signs of frustration (e.g., withdrawing, shutting down, tearing up) ☐ Has difficulty asking for help when needed	• To choose a regulation strategy from a visual menu in 4-5 moments of dysregulation. • To name their emotion in 4-5 check-ins, with adult support. • To try a challenging task for 4 minutes before asking for help in 4-5 lessons. • To take part in group activities without withdrawing for XX minutes. • To return to learning within 3 minutes using a familiar calming routine in 4-5 occurrences.	• For [pupil name] to develop their emotional awareness so that they can identify and label their feelings accurately. • For [pupil name] to develop their self-regulation skills so that they can manage difficult emotions during learning. • For [pupil name] to develop their resilience so that they can approach challenging tasks with increased confidence.

☐ Appears socially isolated or unsure how to interact with peers ☐ Demonstrates mood changes that impact learning ☐ Avoids tasks that feel challenging due to fear of failure		• For [pupil name] to develop their confidence in learning so that they can participate without fear of making mistakes. • For [pupil name] to develop their ability to recover from emotional setbacks so that they can return to learning more quickly.
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