Alexandra Primary School
Aspire, Perform, Succeed

Adapting the curriculum or adaptive teaching

Adaptive teaching is the process of adjusting teaching, resources and support so that all pupils can access the same ambitious curriculum and make progress, without lowering expectations.

Key message:
High-quality teaching is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, without lowering expectations.

Linked to:

- The Alexandra Teacher
- APS Pedagogy Cards
- Supporting a Young Person with SEND in a mainstream classroom document
- Staff handbook, Teaching and learning section Curriculum statement and The APS Curriculum documents.
- Schools Ordinarily Available Provision approach – WAVE documents on website and Staff Handbook
- Assessment documents
- Aspirational Curriculum Planning document
- Inclusion document

Ofsted's core position on adaptive teaching expects schools to:

- Teach the same ambitious curriculum to all pupils
- Adapt teaching to help pupils access it
- Avoid creating a watered-down or separate curriculum for pupils with SEND or other needs

This is a shift away from differentiation by task and towards responsive teaching.
Inspectors will look for evidence that teachers:

- Know their pupils well
- Anticipate barriers to learning
- Adjust teaching in the moment
- Use assessment to inform next steps
- Provide support that helps pupils achieve the same curriculum goals

What Ofsted says in its own words (summarised from EIF & SEND guidance)
Ofsted is explicit that:

- "Teachers adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils"
- "Pupils with SEND are not given a different curriculum but are enabled to access the same curriculum"
- "Support is additional to or different from the universal offer, not a replacement for it"
- "Leaders ensure teachers have the knowledge and confidence to adapt teaching well"
- "Assessment is used to check understanding and address misconceptions"

This is adaptive teaching in action, even if Ofsted doesn't always label it as such.

What adaptive teaching looks like in Ofsted terms (classroom level), Inspectors commonly expect to see:

Planning

- Lessons planned with common barriers anticipated
- Clear learning intentions shared by all pupils
- Scaffolds planned in advance (not bolt-on worksheets)

Teaching

- Teachers adjusting explanations, questioning or pace
- Use of models, visuals, worked examples, pre-teaching
- Flexible grouping and targeted adult support
- Teachers noticing when pupils struggle and responding immediately

Learning

- Pupils supported to be successful without removing challenge
- SEND pupils learning alongside peers
- Independence increasing over time
- No over-reliance on TA "velcro support"

Ofsted's view on SEND and adaptive teaching is very important. Ofsted is clear that **good SEND provision = good adaptive teaching first.**

Inspectors will ask:

- Is the classroom teacher responsible for SEND progress?
- Is **high-quality teaching** the first response to need?
- Are interventions used wisely and reviewed regularly?
- Can teachers explain how they adapt learning for individuals?

They are critical of over-dependence on interventions where classroom teaching should be adapted instead.

What Ofsted does *not* want to see, Ofsted is clear and increasingly so, that adaptive teaching **is not**:

- Differentiation by outcome only
- Multiple worksheets for different "ability groups"
- Lower expectations for SEND pupils
- Pupils working on completely different tasks
- TAs doing the learning for pupils
- Support that removes cognitive challenge

Leadership expectations, this is key for inspection, Ofsted expects leaders to:

- Have a clear shared understanding of adaptive teaching
- Train staff in adaptive practice
- Ensure consistency across classes and subjects
- Monitor impact on learning, not just provision
- Align SEND, PP, and curriculum strategy to adaptive teaching
- Ensure this is embedded in Ordinarily Available Provision

This links strongly to the new Ofsted focus on **curriculum coherence, inclusion and wellbeing.**

One-sentence Ofsted-ready definition (useful for staff and governors)

Adaptive teaching is the process of adjusting teaching, resources and support so that all pupils can access the same ambitious curriculum and make progress, without lowering expectations.

This approach supports the following:

- Inclusion and belonging
- High expectations for all
- Curriculum coherence
- Pupil wellbeing
- Staff confidence and consistency
- Reduced workload through clarity of practice

Adaptive teaching demonstrates that APS:

- Knows its pupils
- Knows its curriculum
- Knows how learning happens
- Uses evidence, not labels, to guide support

Adaptive Teaching at APS

Embedding excellence. Empowering learners. Children first.

Adaptive teaching means adjusting teaching so every child can access the same ambitious curriculum — without lowering expectations.

At APS, adaptive teaching looks like:

Before the lesson

- Common barriers anticipated and planned for
- Clear learning intention shared with all
- Vocabulary, models and visuals prepared
- Scaffolds planned, not bolted on

During the lesson

- Explanations adapted in response to pupils
- Flexible grouping and targeted support
- Questioning adjusted to check understanding
- Teachers respond immediately to misconceptions

For pupils with SEND

- Same curriculum, adapted access
- Support enables independence, not dependence
- Teaching first, intervention second
- Class teacher remains accountable for progress

We avoid

- Lowering expectations
- Different tasks for different pupils
- Over-reliance on TAs
- Removing challenge

"High-quality teaching is the first response to need." (Ofsted)

Adaptive teaching is a twofold approach:

1. Prior to teaching, teachers identify potential barriers to learning through effective planning and understanding the needs of the children in their class.
2. During the lesson, teachers continually adapt their teaching based on ongoing assessment and feedback, responding to pupils' learning needs in real time.

This ensures all children can access the same curriculum in different ways. All children make progress.

Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) – Adaptive Teaching

All pupils at APS are entitled to high-quality adaptive teaching as part of everyday classroom practice.

This includes:

- Clear explanations, modelling and worked examples
- Visuals, scaffolds and structured support
- Pre-teaching of vocabulary and concepts
- Flexible grouping and responsive questioning
- Adult support targeted to remove barriers
- Reduced cognitive load without reducing challenge
- Opportunities for overlearning and retrieval
- Explicit teaching of strategies for independence

Impact:

- Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum
- Independence increases over time
- Interventions are used precisely and reviewed
- Gaps close through strong teaching, not withdrawal

SENDCo / SLT Inspection Narrative (ready to speak or share)

“At APS, adaptive teaching is the foundation of inclusion. Teachers plan for common barriers, adapt teaching in response to pupils, and ensure all children access the same ambitious curriculum. SEND support begins with high-quality classroom teaching, with interventions used only when necessary and reviewed regularly. Teachers are accountable for the progress of all pupils, including those with SEND. This is embedded through our Ordinarily Available Provision, professional development and monitoring cycle. As a result, pupils with SEND learn alongside peers, develop independence and make sustained progress.”

Monitoring Checklist – What School and Inspectors Expect to See

Curriculum and Planning

☐ Same curriculum for all pupils

☐ Barriers anticipated in planning

☐ Vocabulary and models planned

☐ Scaffolds support access, not reduce challenge

Teaching and Learning

☐ Teaching adapted in the moment

☐ Clear explanations and modelling

☐ Responsive questioning

☐ Misconceptions addressed immediately

SEND and Inclusion

☐ Teacher accountability for SEND progress

☐ Support builds independence

☐ Interventions targeted and reviewed

☐ No separation from curriculum

Leadership and Governance

☐ Shared understanding of adaptive teaching

☐ Staff training in adaptive strategies

☐ Monitoring focuses on impact

☐ SEND, PP and curriculum aligned