

TRANSCRIPT: Differentiation in science lessons

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The class was a year 9 class. We have pupils who are working at Level 2 in terms of their science knowledge and understanding and their skills, and a group who were up at Level 3/4, so quite a mixed ability class.

We started the subject of forces last week with a brainstorm activity where pupils thought about what vehicles might be used to go into space and what forces there were that would stop that happening, and today's was the second lesson and the pupils did some investigation work.

It's very important when starting a new topic to understand what the pupils already know. So we often start with a mind map or a brainstorm activity, and it's important to keep hold of the pictures and the comments that pupils make, even to put initials by each comment so we know which individual pupils have made those comments, and that helps us to plan at a level which is suitable to each of the individual pupils within the class.

Because they're working at different levels in terms of their science knowledge and skills and understanding, today's lesson was very much focused on giving pupils as much opportunity as possible to investigate, and that's why the class was split into two. I'm very fortunate in having a specialist science assistant and we will sit down before a lesson and plan the lesson together and I can be confident in her abilities to lead a group herself, and we'll also sit down at the end of the lesson and I'll listen to her feedback to understand how well her pupils have done.

So the assistant led one group and I led another group and the idea was getting pupils to think about the forces involved in moving a balloon from one side of the class to the other, but it was differentiated in terms of the pupils who were working at Level 2 had much more simple objectives in terms of making a prediction and taking some measurements and a conclusion. Those who were working at a higher level had a more difficult concept, which is that of the fair test.