

TRANSCRIPT: REACH: Helping pupils to cope with uncertainty

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The first element of REACH is demonstrating to the child that their behaviour is acceptable so that they view you as somebody interesting to work with and interact with, and that takes quite a long time in the first instance. So, we use an approach called 'intensive interaction' to achieve that first stage and that's partly modified reflection of the child's own behaviour. So you don't reflect anything back to them that you want to discourage but, certainly, babble and movement.

Roisin spends a lot of time rocking from side to side so that's often a good way to start a conversation with her and then we move into the REACH elements, which would be to add a bit of challenge within that. We might then turn around so, if she wants to continue, she has to turn us back round, and just add that little step every time so she's doing a bit more rather than just having it reflected back at her.

And then we move into sabotage or putting obstacles in the way. So if Roisin was rocking to music, which is one of her favourite activities, we would join her and reflect her behaviour back to her, but then we would sabotage it slightly by making it more difficult for her to do the activity, but still in a humorous way so that she knew that it was OK. So we might turn our back, for example, so that if she wants the activity to continue, she has then to turn us around to get back to where we were. We might stop. We might go away and hide, we might fall asleep – we do that quite a lot! We might turn off the music or go towards it with a big exaggerated finger, so that she has to interrupt it, anything like that, but if you don't have a good relationship with the child, they won't tolerate that, and that's why it's so important to have that as your base really.