STUDENT INDEPENDENCE

The evidence couldn't be clearer: pupils with SEND who experience high amounts of teaching asistant (TA) support are at risk of developing learned helplessness. None of this is a reflection on TAs, but a recognition of how a core part of SEND provision has evolved, largely unchallenged. The good news is that one of the most promising ways to get TAs to foster pupil independence — and dial down dependence — happens to be one of the least expensive to implement.
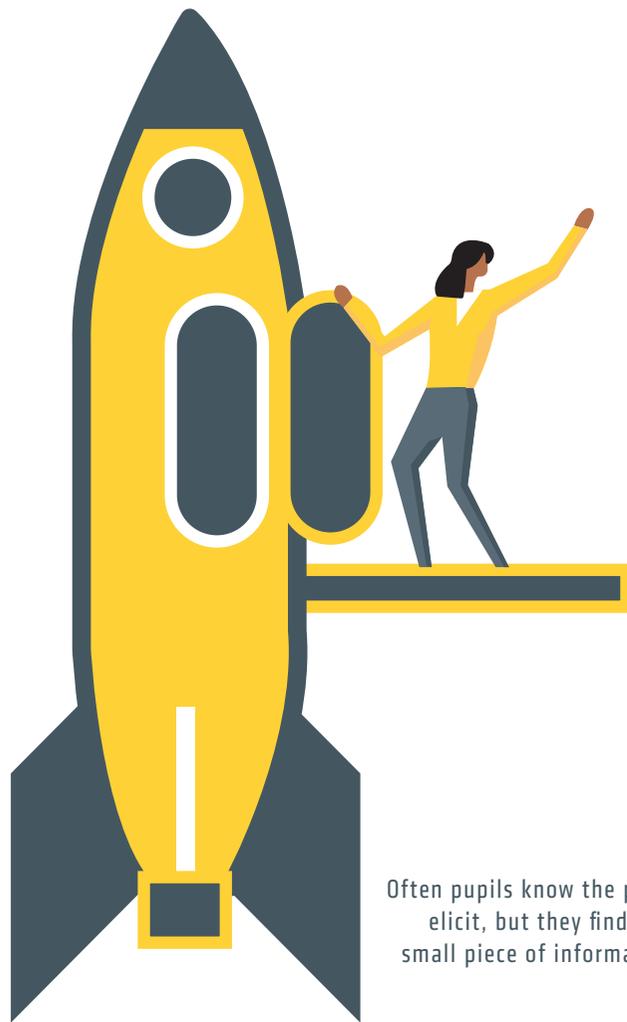
SELF SCAFFOLDING

The TA's default position is to observe pupil performance, allowing time and space for them to process, think and try the task independently. TAs need to get comfortable with pupils struggling a bit and recognise this as an essential component of learning.

PROMPTING

This is where TAs might intervene with a nudge: 'What do you need to do first?'; 'What's your plan?'; 'You can do this!'

Often pupils know the problem-solving strategies that prompts are designed to elicit, but they find it difficult to call them to mind. Clues are a question or small piece of information to help pupils work out how to move forward. They should be drip-fed; always start with a small clue.

CLUEING

Prompts and clues are less effective when pupils encounter a task that requires a new skill or strategy. This calls for layer four: modelling. TAs, as confident and competent experts, can model while pupils actively watch and listen, then try the same step for themselves afterwards.

MODELLING

Correcting is where TAs provide answers and requires no independent thinking. Avoid.

CORRECTING

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5 STEP TEACHING ASSISTANT MODEL TO INCREASE STUDENT INDEPENDENCE