Red Flags: Special Needs or Something Else?
What’s normal?
About 70% of all data points fall within one standard deviation of the mean.
Normal curve for class 24 students
If you see ...

- Often alone in playground
- Gets up out of seat frequently
- Can’t copy (from board) accurately
- Poor handwriting
- Bumping into things, accidents, stairs
- Rubbing eyes, squinting, headaches
If you see …

- Often alone in playground
- Ignoring instructions
- Difficulty in playground
- Poor spoken vocabulary
- Frequent shouting
- Slow phonics skill development
If you see ...  

... collect information

Make a list of red flags
In or out
Basics: Vision check – Why?
Basics: Hearing check – Why?
Basics: Birth History – Why?
Basics: Multiple births – Why?
Basics: Gender – Why?
Basic: Genetics – Why?
Basic: School history – Why?
Basic: Family history – Why?
Basic: Languages – Why?
A word about languages

Neuroplasticity
A (second) word about languages

E2L v. general language difficulties

- Vocabulary development
- Short assessment questions
- Grammar tests
- Strengths in book-reading tasks
- Differences between E2L and MTL
- Selective mutism
A (third) word about languages

‘Other’ 1L v. general language difficulties

- Score low in situation-specific vocabulary
- Grammar development is typical
- Curriculum ‘gaps’
What would you

... collect?

... teach and record?

Scenarios
If you see …

… collect information

… teach and record
Slow reading progress …

• Vision
• Language development/EAL
• Sight reading vocabulary
• Reading for meaning
• Working memory

✓ Reading intervention
✓ Optometrist
✓ Speech therapist
✓ Specialist teacher
✓ Ed Psychologist
Slow writing progress …

- Vision
- Core body strength and fine motor skills
- Written language in home
- Input, planning, output
- Working memory

- Writing support
- Optometrist
- Physiotherapist
- Specialist teacher
- Ed Psychologist
Slow maths progress …

- Number sense, place value
- Maths language, curriculum difference
- Maths rote learning of facts
- Visual spatial skills
- Working memory

- Repetition practice
- Maths aids
- Specialist teacher
- OT/PT
- Ed Psychologist
Attention wandering…

- Hearing and Vision
- Language complexity
- Sensory overload
- Auditory processing/filtering
- Working memory
- Tiredness

- Reduced stimulation
- Audiological Centre
- Speech therapist
- SI therapist
- Ed Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
Social difficulties…

- Hearing and Vision
- Language complexity
- Sensory overload
- Behavioural/cultural expectations

- Clear rules
- Playground support
- Speech therapist
- SI therapist
- Ed Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
Scattered progress…

- Hearing and Vision
- Language skills
- Working memory
- Anxiety, self-esteem, emotional stability
- Epilepsy

✓ Track patterns
✓ Audiological Centre
✓ Optician
✓ Speech therapist
✓ Ed Psychologist
✓ Paediatrician
All-round slow progress...

- Hearing and Vision
- Language development
- Move from concrete to abstract thinking
- Processing speed
- Working memory

✓ Audiological Centre
✓ Optician
✓ Speech therapist
✓ Ed Psychologist
✓ Paediatrician
If you see ...  

... collect information  

... teach and record  

... track for 6 months
Thank you!

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