**Case Study 2**

**Situation**

Charlie (not his real name) is a looked after child, he lives with his grandparents who have legal guardianship. His mother will on occasions show up but often disappears shortly after. During these periods Charlie, understandably, tends to become agitated and unfocused in school.

Charlie has a small friendship group but he finds it difficult to maintain these relationships and will often distance himself from others. With adults Charlie is very reclusive, staring at the floor to avoid eye contact and will not volunteer to speak. Questions put to Charlie are often met with as few words as possible or a shrug, although as he has become older he is starting to become more vocal. Around school Charlie is the grey character, he understands the difference from right and wrong, rarely getting into trouble. Where possible he will avoid bringing attention to himself.

Charlie is a low level 4 (KS3 NC Level) and from year 7 to year 8 he was a stuck level 4. He is in the bottom set where students find basic number skills challenging. Charlie’s understanding the number system is low; he does not know his times tables up to 12, division is an abstract concept to him and he is often unable to retain new information.

Charlie’s personality in the Mathematics classroom is one of withdrawal. He is not confident in his work and as a result is unlikely to volunteer to answer questions put to the whole class. He completes minimal work and is usually of a low quality. He is not overly enthusiastic about group work tasks and when he has to he will normally choose to work with a student of a lower ability. Charlie is very disorganised; he rarely completes his homework and does not normally have a full set of equipment, furthermore his is unlikely to bring this to the attention of the teacher.

**Target**

* Build confidence
* Improve the quality of work
* Improve Mathematical understanding alongside building social skills

**Action**

To build confidence I tried the following approaches

* When appropriate he would be given the answers to a task 2 minutes before the end. This was to enable him to mark his own work first and then read the answers out to the rest of the class without the fear of being wrong
* Providing a starting prompt to a problem, either verbally or through a note. For example the first calculation that is needed

To improve the quality of written work I tried the following approaches

* Given a mini white board to complete his work in rough first, which he could then use to write up his work in neat into his exercise book
* Where appropriate providing the notes/example on sheet of paper that he could cut out and stick in his book
* Providing a framework for solving a problem or question (scaffolding). Given as a set of bullet points that he can follow

To improve Mathematical understanding alongside building social skills I tried the following approach

* Completing paired work with different students, promoting discussion of the task

**Response**

Building confidence

By having the answers to the questions Charlie was willing to speak in front of the class without hesitation. This approach had the biggest affect the first and second time it was applied and appeared to give him a sense of achievement when realising that a significant amount of his work was correct. However, I found that trying to implement this in most lessons actually resulted in Charlie becoming lazy; most likely because he knew that he would get given the answers. My suggestion would be to use this sparingly and use it with other students as well so that they do not expect to always be the one given the answers.

The prompt notes were successful in getting Charlie started. I found the most effective way of applying this was to have a short discussion with him at the start of a task and encourage him to explain what he needed to do first, whilst bullet pointing his response on a sticky note for him to refer to latter.

Improve quality of work

In using a mini white board the quality of Charlie’s work improved but also became less. He often found it difficult to use the white board for the sole purpose of doing in his work, instead becoming distracted and regularly drawing pictures. It also added tension with the rest of the class as, understandably, they then all wanted the use of a mini white board. My suggestion would be to use this approach as a whole class opportunity and ensure that you have firm guidelines with how you expect the pupils to use the boards.

Providing notes pre-printed worked extremely well. I would however say that for the case of Charlie having the notes already cut down was essential. In trying this strategy I also found it useful to have a couple of spare copies for other students. My next thought with this idea, although not unique, is to have notes with sections missing that could be filled in. As with everything though this may prove rather time consuming.

I found the best way to provide a framework was to display it on an interactive whiteboard or projector in the form of a few bullet points. Then demonstrate how to apply this on the whiteboard at the front of the class to everyone. Although not the most exciting way to teach and can require the students to sit quietly for 5 – 10 minutes whilst going through each step, I did find it extremely effective. On a further note keep the framework to the smallest amount of words as possible it should just be a reminder for if they get stuck not an essay.

To improve Mathematical understanding alongside building social skills

During paired work I would set the pairs to ensure that Charlie was working with someone of a higher ability. When working with a student he did not want to work with he was very reluctant to discuss the material and he had a tendency to rely on the other person to do all of the work. With those that he was more sociably happy to work with the quantity of work decreased. Furthermore I found that if the paired work was for the whole lesson he would often get into an argument. As of yet this approach has not had the desired response and so I am now considering a slight alteration. My thought is to try to include short paired work tasks, no longer than 10 minutes, where the emphasis is on the discussion and not the written work along the lines of the ‘Think Pair Share’ approach.

Finally, in completing this short single case study, 1.5 terms, I would emphasise the importance of consistency without over applying or having too many different approaches at once. I found that the strategies that worked the best were the ones that I regularly implemented a couple of times a week.