

Top Tips to Teach Qur'an to SEN students

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Introduction

- There are different types of special educational needs and disabilities that teachers and parents should be familiar with and have the skillset to recognise.
- The ultimate goal is to make the Qur'an accessible to everyone, regardless of one's ability levels.
- Pupils who have special educational needs require additional attention and more custom-built support systems to learn the Qur'an.
- In shā' Allāh, this section will provide deeper insights into teaching the Qur'an to SEND pupils, and will motivate you – as a parent
- or teacher – to learn more about this sensitive area of teaching.

Key Aims of this session

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Tip 1: “Know your learners.”

- Not every student with special educational needs (SEND) will require the equivalent amount of support.
- Every student is different, which naturally means that the required degree of support will vary from student to student.
- If you have detected that a student in your Qur’an class has a SEND, find out more about their condition by obtaining support from trained and certified individuals working in this field.
- It is crucial to find out what the exact learning needs are for the student in question

Tip 2: “Consider obtaining a diagnosis assessment.”

- An initial diagnosis assessment is essential to determine the form of support that is required for the student in question.
- This will help formulate expectations and enable the teacher to understand the specific learning needs that a student may have.
- Remember, you cannot help a SEND student if you are unable to identify the support mechanisms.

Tip 3: “Invest in SEND training and qualifications.”

- It is important to have a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDSCO), regardless of whether your child is studying from a madrasah setting or at home.
- Both professional training and academic coursework are widely available for this field, and it is extremely helpful to have a member of staff trained as a SENDSCO.
- Unfortunately, there have been numerous cases of students being unable to succeed because of the failure of their institutions to provide training and resources for the assistance of SEND students.

Tip 4: “What are the student’s strengths and weaknesses?”

- Once the diagnosis assessment has been completed, it is useful to draw up a list of strengths and weaknesses for the student.
- This will help to determine their current knowledge level and any additional support needed within the Qur’an class for that student.
- Communicating these findings with the student and their parents is essential, as it will allow the learning process to be transparent.

Tip 5: “Visual learning is very common for SEN students.”

- Using visual aids whilst teaching the Qur’an can be immensely helpful for SEND students.
- For example, using coloured Arabic flashcards to teach younger students the Arabic alphabet is a decent starting point. It will allow students to build confidence in identifying the letters and words correctly.
- Also, using diagrams may also be useful in garnering the attention of students during lesson

Tip 6: “Support students with hearing impairments.”

- When dealing with students suffering from hearing loss, try to use a normal voice whilst teaching and reciting the Qur’an.
- It is not necessary to shout or embellish one’s speech. Instead, the students may need to supplement their hearing with speechreading, so ensure that they are seated in a favourable position.
- For this reason, it is imperative to avoid speaking behind the student with the hearing loss.
- Also, remember not to speak while writing on the classroom board, as the student cannot speech-read without having any visual clues.

Tip 7: “Support students with visual impairments.”

- Using a braille translation of the Qur’an is an excellent starting point for Qur’an students with visual impairment.
- Remember, it is the right of every Muslim to have access to this beautiful book, even if they suffer from visual difficulties.
- Braillequran.org is one of the leading organisations around the world which provide Braille Qur’an services.
- The use of additional audio resources to assist visually impaired pupils with accessing the Qur’an can prove to be extremely helpful.
- Furthermore, providing Qur’ans containing larger size font will ensure that these students will be able to read with relative ease.

Tip 8: “Create resources which build upon the student’s learning.”

- Understanding the specific SEND which your student has is vital. Also, it is necessary to find out which resources work best for each learner.
- The main aim of creating Qur’anic learning resources is to not only engage the student, but to further develop the student’s knowledge as much as possible.
- If students cannot grasp the key learning outcomes for each session, they will struggle to progress further with their Qur’anic learning.

Tip 9: “Try not to panic, but keep on trying!”

- Do not allow yourself to be manipulated by the latest SEND education trend!
- You will not fail simply because your classroom lacks the latest Qur’anic software resources, or that your spending budget is extremely constrained.
- Stay calm, and try to be innovative. Think outside of the box and always make the commitment to look for accessible SEN resources.
- There are a lot of effective and cost-friendly avenues available for solving your predicament.
- You just have to carefully select the relevant resources for your Qur’an class!

Tip 10: “Break down the learning process.”

- For the vast majority of SEND students, too much information or content provided at once can often lead to sensory overload by making them feel extremely overwhelmed.
- A helpful tip is to always break down the Qur’anic learning process as much as possible, and to do so for each student if needed.
- For example, rather than providing a SEND student an entire page of Qur’an to learn for the next lesson, it may be more effective to break down the page into smaller sections.
- This may instil more confidence and develop their learning further.

Tip 11: “Use Islamic Studies Resources for SEND students.”

- Islamicstudiesresources.com is a very useful website which has a dedicated resources section on their website.
- Even more importantly, it provides details of institutions across the UK and around the world which provide Qur’anic educational resources for SEND students.
- Tuyoorul Jannah (SEN Madrasah)

Tip 12: “Support students with weak auditory and visual memory.”

- When it comes to the Qur’an, most SEND students will learn most efficiently in small portions.
- Always explain the aim and structure of each lesson from the beginning.
- Try to repeat verbal instructions in a slower fashion and ask students to repeat what you say. Be aware that students with visual memory difficulties can easily become frustrated.
- Some SEND students may require vital instructions and information repeated to them more frequently.
- Also, if the working memory is limited, try to divide the aural information into smaller chunks.

Tip 13: “Support students with poor concentration skills.”

- If you wish for your students to finish their tasks within the allotted time period, you might consider breaking up their work into tasks split into 10 or 15-minute intervals.
- Ensure to evaluate the progress of your students after the passage of each portion of time. Provide your students praise for their task completion during the Qur’an lesson.
- Providing regular feedback on performance within the Qur’an class can help to improve their concentration skills.
- Always ensure eye contact is given when providing key instructions to these students.
- Ask them regularly to repeat your instructions and to explain their understanding of a Qur’anic concept to a peer or teacher.
- Lastly, always ensure that the student is free from any distractions which may inhibit the Qur’anic learning process.

Tip 14: “Support students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.”

- Students with social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties may exhibit traits which make it difficult for them to function effectively within the Qur’an class.
- Their behavioural patterns may even disrupt the education of other students.
- Some students may be withdrawn, have low self-esteem, and exhibit anti-social behaviour.
- Many students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties have special needs greater than a physical disability, ultimately requiring special help.
- They desperately need to develop a sense of worth before they can benefit from their Qur’anic education.
- Subconsciously, these students want to be liked, accepted, and to feel successful.

Tip 15: “Build self-esteem within SEND students.”

- Always assign small, structured targets and responsibilities. Recognise student potencies, have realistic expectations, and give regular praise for effort within the Qur’an class.
- Encourage the student to recognise their strengths, as well as any areas of weakness.
- Negotiate targets and give a tangible reward whenever they are met.
- Recognise that if a student has good Qur’an recitation skills, then they should be placed with students of similar ability.
- Make it a habit to assign responsibilities within the classroom.
- Lastly, ensure all staff are informed of a student’s special needs and encourage positive comments.

Tip 16: “Implement strategies for giving verbal and written instructions.”

- Always stand in the same place when giving instructions. By doing so, students will recognise that you are about to give an instruction before you speak. Keep your instructions brief.
- To ensure that everyone promptly begins the lesson plan as required, allow students to repeat your instructions to the student standing next to them.
- Advise students to whisper the instructions to themselves so that they may meet the lesson requirements from beginning to end.
- For written instructions, write the key steps for the Qur’an lesson on the board.
- It is also important to give very clear instructions for homework, which should preferably not be left until the end of the lesson.

Tip 17: “Use effective strategies when providing Qur’an worksheets and learning materials.”

- Make sure that the font for a Qur’an worksheet is set at a minimum size of 12 or 14 points, while also ensuring to use 1.5 line spacing.
- Pick a font with an alphabet that mirrors a handwritten alphabet, such as Comic Sans or Century Gothic.
- Put the main keywords in bold and provide a list of the key terms at the bottom of the page.
- Leave enough space for the student to write their answers.
- In essence, always be fully aware of the learning needs and proficiency levels of the Qur’an class before drafting and distributing additional learning resources.

Tip 18: “Strategies for giving praise.”

- Praise is often more effective when given in private. In public settings, it can be issued in the form of unobtrusive signals, using simple phrases or positive body language. Some useful phrases for giving praise are:
 - – “Well done, mā shā Allāh! You looked at the Arabic word very carefully.”
 - – “I liked the way how you thought about what word would make sense in that sentence.”
 - “Brilliant! You realised something did not sound right in that Qur’anic verse, so you went back, reviewed, and corrected yourself.”
 - – “It was a good idea to sound out the beginning of the word and then read the rest of the Qur’anic verse to check what word would fit.”
 - – “I noticed you paused at each recommended stop sign. Good work!”
 - – “That recitation was very fluent and smooth, with very minimal stuttering.”

Tip 19: “Make the Qur’an accessible to all!”

- The bottom line is to make the Qur’an accessible to anyone and everyone. No learner should feel far removed from the Qur’an.
- It is our duty as Qur’an teachers to ensure that every SEND student can progress and connect with the Qur’an just as much as a learner without such a condition.

Tip 20: “They are human!”