

apricot[®]

The Engagement Framework 2026

How we support, guide, and grow every learner

(Academic Year 2025–2026)



AN INSIGHT INTO APRICOT LEARNING

At Apricot Learning, our focus is on working alongside each student to find an approach to learning that actually works for them.

That approach matters more than ever. Recent data shows that around 1 in 5 students in England are now persistently absent, often linked to anxiety, SEND needs, or environments that simply don't work for them. Behind that number are thousands of young people who are not accessing education in a way that feels possible.

In 2025, Apricot Learning worked with 296 young people across the UK through live, online education, supporting those who needed a more flexible and accessible way to engage with learning.

This guide brings together how we support those students in practice, shaped by the day-to-day work between teachers and young people, alongside insights from coaching, feedback from families, and the realities of supporting students who have struggled in traditional settings.

It is not a formal framework, but a clear picture of how things work. We will continue to review and develop it each year, building on what we learn so we can keep improving the support we offer to young people who need a more accessible route into education.



APPROACH 1: FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Online education removes some of the barriers of traditional classrooms, but it also requires a different approach.

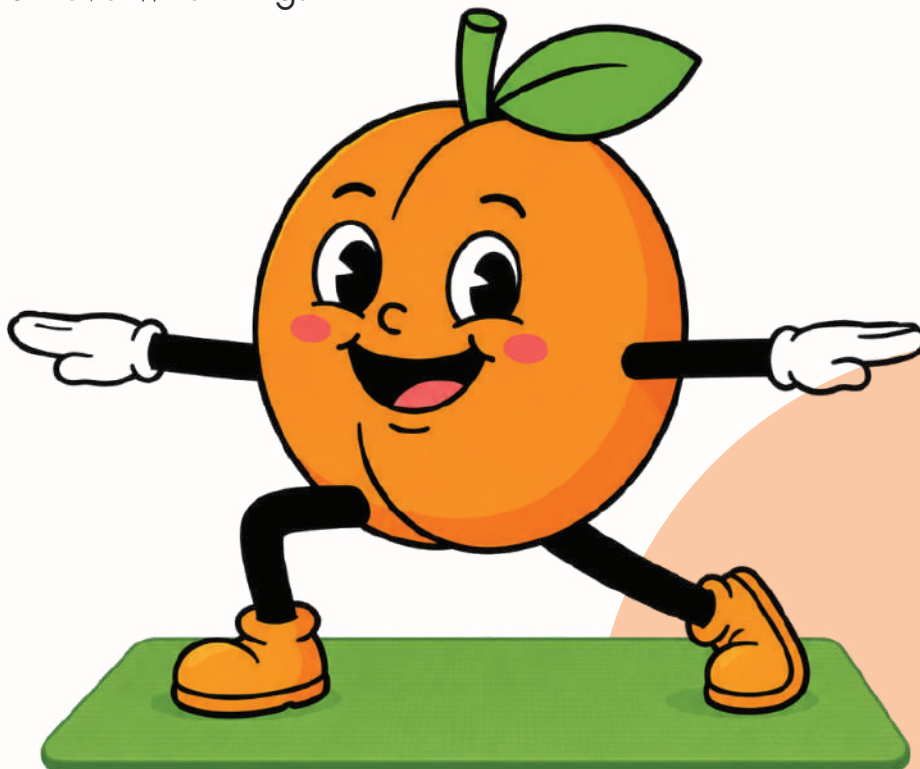
**Teachers at Apricot Learning
are continually adjusting:**

- Lesson pace
- Level of challenge
- Method of communication
- Expectations



This flexibility allows lessons to remain accessible without lowering standards.

Students are still challenged, but in a way that feels achievable rather than overwhelming.



APPROACH 2: STARTING WITH THE INDIVIDUAL

Most students who join Apricot have experienced disruption in their education, whether through time out of school, anxiety or medical needs, or not having found a setting that works for them. Rather than starting with the curriculum, we begin by getting to know the student, so learning can be shaped around what they need and feel able to engage with.

Teachers take time to understand:

- How a student prefers to communicate
- What they currently feel able to engage with
- Where gaps in learning exist
- What may be getting in the way of learning

This allows teaching to start at a level that feels manageable, rather than overwhelming for a young person.



One student we worked with had been out of education for several months due to anxiety and had found it very difficult to engage in a classroom setting. When they first joined Apricot Learning, they did not want to speak during lessons and were only comfortable using the chat. Rather than pushing for verbal participation, our teacher worked in a way that suited the young person, using short written responses and simple check-ins to build confidence.

Over time, the student began staying for full lessons, contributing more regularly, and eventually attempting longer pieces of work. While the progress was gradual, it was consistent, and it started with understanding what felt manageable for that student in the first place.

APPROACH 3: TEACHING AS COACHING

Teaching at Apricot is not about delivering content at a fast pace that could feel overwhelming for the students we work with. We see it sitting closer to coaching a young person through education at a pace that suits them.

Teachers guide students through learning in a way that builds:

- Independence
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Understanding over time

This means:

- Breaking learning into smaller, achievable steps
- Allowing time for students to think and respond
- Adapting in real time based on how a student is engaging

Teachers are not there to do the work for students, but to show them how to do it for themselves.



APPROACH 4: BUILDING TRUST THROUGH CONSISTENCY

For many students, trust in education has been disrupted. Rebuilding that trust does not happen through a single lesson, but instead through consistency.

At Apricot Learning, this includes:

- Regular timetabled sessions
- Familiar teachers
- Predictable lesson structures
- Calm, pressure-free environments

We never use webcams during lessons, meaning students are not required to turn cameras on during teaching sessions and they are not expected to participate in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.

Instead, they are given space to engage at their own pace. Over time, this consistency allows students to feel more comfortable, which is often where engagement begins to flourish.



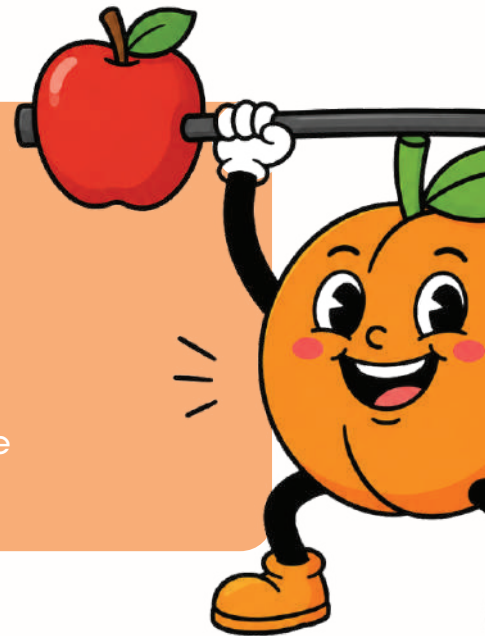
APPROACH 5: ENGAGEMENT BEFORE ATTAINMENT

In many settings, attendance and attainment are the primary measures of success.

At Apricot Learning, we recognise that for many students, engagement comes first. In fact, internal tracking across our provision shows that when students begin to engage consistently, lesson participation can increase by over 60% within the first few weeks, even for those who have previously disengaged from education.

Progress may initially look like:

- Logging into a lesson
- Staying for the full session
- Responding in the chat for the first time
- Attempting a task they have not done before



These may seem like small steps, but they are often the foundations that have been missing or disrupted in a student's education.

One student we worked with had very low attendance and would often log off early when lessons felt too much. Rather than focusing on completing full tasks straight away, our teacher adjusted expectations and introduced shorter, more manageable activities to help build confidence. Over time, the student began staying for longer parts of the lesson, engaging more regularly, and gradually rebuilding a routine around learning.

As engagement stabilises, academic progress begins to follow, often more quickly than expected once that initial barrier has been removed.

APPROACH 6: LEARNING THROUGH INTERESTS

Where possible, learning is linked to what already interests the student.

This might include:

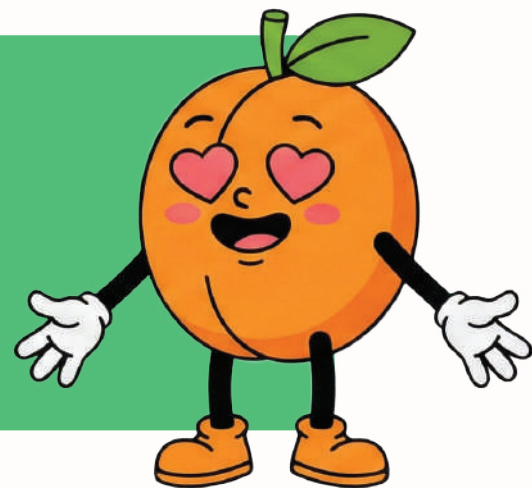
- Using real-world examples
- Drawing on personal interests
- Adapting tasks to make them more relevant



Internal observations across our provision show that when learning is linked to a student's interests, engagement can increase by up to 50%, particularly for those who have previously struggled to take part in more traditional approaches.

This approach helps:

- Rebuild motivation
- Increase engagement
- Make learning feel more meaningful



These principles can all be put into practice, while still keeping lessons aligned with the curriculum, so students are building confidence and continuing to move forward in their learning.

APPROACH 7: COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Strong relationships sit at the centre of our provision.

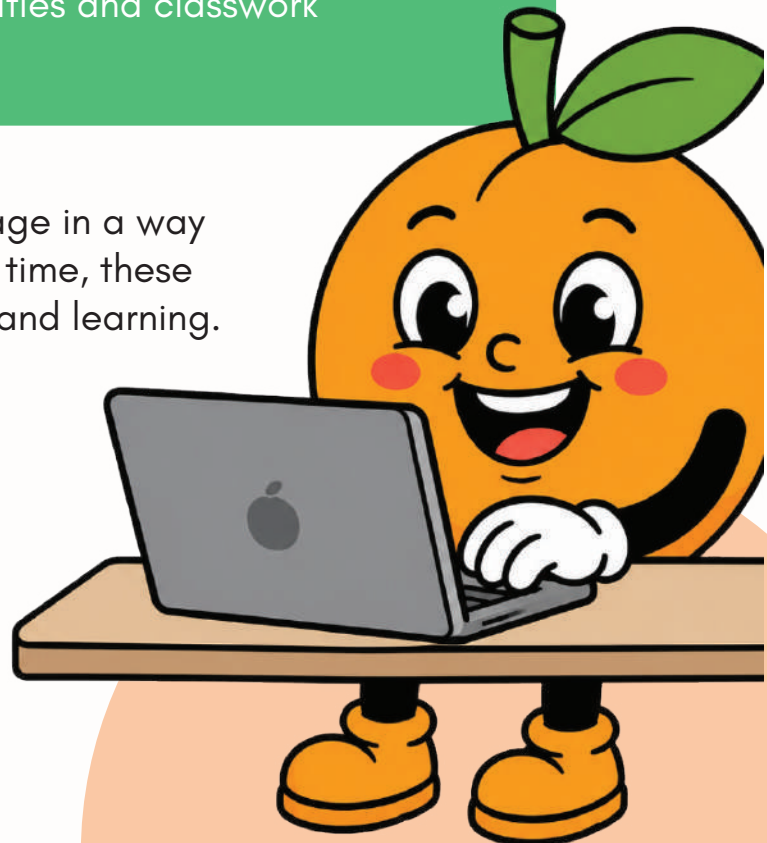
Teachers:

- Check in regularly with students
- Notice changes in engagement
- Create opportunities for students to communicate in different ways

Students can:

- Speak up during sessions
- Use the chat feature if they would rather type responses
- Respond through their activities and classwork

This flexibility allows students to engage in a way that feels comfortable to them. Over time, these relationships support both wellbeing and learning.



APPROACH 8: SAFEGUARDING AND WELLBEING

Safeguarding is embedded into everyday practice at Apricot Learning.



This includes:

- Close monitoring of attendance and engagement
- Recorded lessons for transparency
- Clear escalation processes
- Regular communication with schools, Local Authorities, and families

Alongside this, there is a consistent focus on wellbeing.

Teachers are attentive to:

- Changes in behaviour
- Communication patterns
- Overall engagement

This ensures students are supported both academically and emotionally.



APPROACH 9: PROGRESS OVER TIME

Progress at Apricot Learning is not always immediate or linear, but built gradually over time.

For many students, progress begins with:

- Feeling comfortable
- Engaging consistently
- Rebuilding confidence

From there, it develops into:

- Improved learning behaviours
- Increased independence
- Academic achievement

Outcomes vary depending on the student, but may include:

- Teaching and support across Key Stage 2 through Key Stage 5
- Functional Skills qualifications
- GCSE or A-Level progression
- Reintegration into mainstream education
- Continued Alternative Provision if required



APPROACH 10: WHAT MAKES APRICOT DIFFERENT

Apricot Learning sits between traditional education and alternative provision models.

What makes us different is not just the online delivery, but our approach behind what we do.

- Teaching is flexible, not fixed
- Engagement is prioritised, not assumed
- Relationships are central, not secondary
- Progress is recognised in stages, not just outcomes

Most importantly, students are supported as individuals, not as part of a system.



THE APRICOT APPROACH

Strong relationships sit at the centre of our provision.

This guide reflects how Apricot Learning works at the moment, shaped by the experiences of our teachers, the needs of our students, and the conversations we continue to have as a team.

The way we work will keep developing as those experiences grow and as we continue to learn from the young people we support, as well as from the schools, Local Authorities, and partners we work alongside across the UK.

If you are a school, Local Authority, or Virtual School exploring how to support a student who may need a different approach to learning, we are always happy to talk things through and share how we work in practice.

You can find out more at www.apricotlearningonline.co.uk, email the team at info@apricotlearningonline.co.uk, or call 01242 604985 if an initial chat would be helpful.





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