Teaching and learning for pupils with SEN/LDD

Introduction

Schools and settings are becoming increasingly inclusive. Many parents and carers are making positive choices for children with SEN to attend their local mainstream school and many classes now effectively include pupils with severe and or complex needs as well as the broader range of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Rightly, the focus is clearly placed on presence, participation and achievement for every child. This applies equally to all pupils with SEN/LDD including those with severe and complex needs.

It has been a question of academic debate whether there is a specific SEN pedagogy or whether good teaching is good teaching for all, but the DfES report Teaching Strategies and Approaches for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (Research Report 516 2004) concluded that:

‘... questions about whether there is a separate special education pedagogy are unhelpful … the more important agenda is about how to develop a pedagogy that is inclusive of all learners.’

and that:

‘The teaching approaches and strategies identified… were not sufficiently differentiated from those which are used to teach all children to justify a distinctive SEN pedagogy. This does not diminish the importance of special education knowledge but highlights it as an essential component of pedagogy.’

The central importance of the core principles outlined in Pedagogy and Personalisation (Ref: 00126-2007DOM-EN) and the supporting materials on the National Strategies ‘Supporting Pedagogy’ cross-phase site are central to effective teaching and learning for all pupils, including those with the most complex needs who may be working within the P levels and making very small and uneven steps of progress, making lateral progress – or even regressing due to a degenerative condition.

It is not generally helpful to concentrate on discrete approaches for children using categories of specific labels or disabilities. However techniques developed to overcome or minimise specific barriers (e.g. sensory impairments) often have much to contribute to our understanding of a ‘pedagogy for all’. What is clear, however, is that teachers do need ongoing support in order to respond effectively to the wider range of needs in the classroom and they also need access to specialist advice and expertise where necessary.

Assessment

Removing Barriers to Achievement: the Government’s strategy for SENs unequivocal in its message that:

‘Every teacher should expect to teach children with SEN – and we must ensure that they are equipped with the skills to do so effectively. This will require action at three levels.’
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- Core skills for all teachers
- Advanced skills for some teachers
- Specialist skills for some teachers in some local schools.

As part of the programme of action set out in *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is undertaking a programme of work designed to build the capacity of teachers and other staff to meet the needs of children with SEN and/or disabilities. SEN and disability modules have been developed for use in primary undergraduate initial teacher training (ITT) programmes from September 2008 (details will be posted on [http://sen.ttrb.ac.uk/](http://sen.ttrb.ac.uk/)). The materials include 18 taught sessions and a model scheme for extended (4 week) placements for trainees in special provision (special schools and specially resourced mainstream schools or units). The TDA will shortly approve new courses for teachers of children with sensory impairments to start in September 2009.

Materials are currently being piloted for secondary undergraduate and primary and secondary PGCE programmes with the intention of making these available to ITT providers in 2009. Resources for use with, and by, newly qualified teachers during their induction are planned for 2009. A modular course to develop the skills of serving teachers at postgraduate level is also being piloted and proposals are being developed for a framework of nationally accredited training for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) for 2009–10.

In addition, professional networks such as those led and managed by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) are also specifically exploring and contributing to the development of the ‘new pedagogy’.

**Assessment of pupils with complex needs**

It is acknowledged that within inclusive schools it is rare that monitoring and tracking systems for pupils with SEN are separate or different from that for all pupils. However for assessment to be effective for pupils with more complex needs it may also be necessary to consider what practice might need to be more individualised whilst not losing the more generic ‘Quality First’ principles of assessment.

For example, for pupils with more severe and complex needs, assessment will also need to take into account the changes in individual responses and behaviour as their early perceptions of experiences and their increasing involvement in the learning process develop into areas of knowledge, skills and understanding.

QCA have produced *Learning Difficulties: General Guidelines* which draws on effective practice across a range of schools which can be used in all phases of mainstream and special schools and settings to support the planning, development and implementation of the curriculum for pupils with SEN.

Included in this guidance is a framework for more finely tuned recognition of a broad range of attainment as follows:

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- Awareness
- Attention and response
- Engagement
- Participation
- Involvement
- Gaining skills.

Resources

The DVD and accompanying booklet Learning and Teaching for children with SEN in the primary years DfES-0321-2004 focuses on the conditions that will enhance the learning of all pupils and includes a section on Planning and Assessment for Learning.

Maximising progress- ensuring the attainment of pupils with SEN is designed to maximise the attainment of the growing number of pupils with special education needs and disability within mainstream secondary schools who are working within national expectations but currently under-attaining. Part 2 Approaches to teaching and learning in the mainstream classroom includes a section on a whole-school approach to assessment for learning. Part 3 Managing the learning process for pupils with SEN contains a section and case study on day-to-day assessment.

The Leading on Intervention CD-ROM has been designed to support leadership teams and leading teachers but is also of use to school leaders and managers and those leading interventions in schools.

Provision

All teachers will have some pupils who are, at times, not making progress. This may directly relate to an identified special or additional need. Alternatively, lack of progress may stem from factors in the way they have been taught, or from gaps in their learning. As a result many of these children will experience difficulties with particular areas of the curriculum.

To ensure that all pupils make progress schools are expected to:

1. Implement the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement, ensuring that inclusive strategies are used to secure curriculum access to high-quality first teaching of literacy and mathematics for all children.

Note that the three ‘Circles of Inclusion’, which is based on the National Curriculum inclusion statement, is a helpful conceptual model to support staff to develop provision for underachieving groups.

2. Ensure that inclusive Quality First Wave 1 teaching is available to all children.
3. Plan and map effective provision at individual pupil, cohort or whole-school level to provide a strategic solution to determining ‘additional’ and ‘different’ provision, often referred to as Wave 2 and Wave 3 provision, as a response to the identified needs of pupils with SEN/AEN. This will also provide a transparent overview of a pupil’s learning entitlement which supports the greater confidence of parents and carers.
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When schools plan systematically how best to match provision to need they are in a stronger position to evaluate the impact of resources on pupil progress. Auditing need, using a range of indicators and data sets as part of the regular cycle of school improvement, enables schools to make strategic decisions about gaps or duplications in provision and how best to deploy resources to maximise learning opportunities for pupils with SEN/AEN.

The SEN/AEN Value for Money Resource Pack for Schools contains a section on provision which will support schools in the identification, planning and evaluation of any additional and different provision. It also includes comprehensive guidance and examples of good practice for effective provision mapping.

Further curriculum support materials are listed on the National Strategies SEN website.

Removing barriers

Effective schools monitor and evaluate all pupils (including those with SEN/LDD) as part of a strategic, whole-school approach to tackling underperformance.

‘In the schools that were most successful with pupils with SEN, systems for assessment and planning were fully integrated with those for all pupils. This helped to ensure that planning for pupils with SEN was done by all staff and not only by SEN teachers and as a separate exercise.’

SEN & disability: Towards inclusive schools Ofsted 2004 (Ref: HMI 2276)

In effective schools it is rare for the system of monitoring and tracking the progress of pupils with SEN to be separate or different from that for all pupils.

The four key aims of the Assessment for Learning Strategy (2008) are that:

- every child knows how they are doing, and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there. They get the support they need to be motivated, independent learners on an ambitious trajectory of improvement.
- every teacher is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils’ attainment understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan, particularly for pupils who are not fulfilling their potential.
- every school has in place structured and systematic assessment systems for making regular, useful, manageable and accurate assessments of pupils, and for tracking their progress.
- every parent and carer knows how their child is doing, what they need to do to improve, and how they can support the child and their teachers.

These aims are relevant for all pupils including those with SEN/LDD and those with the most severe and complex needs. In recognition of this many of the more recent resources developed by the National Strategies, DCSF and QCA are inclusive and are important sources of support for all special schools and settings.

Key links:
A further commitment in Removing Barriers to Achievement was to sharpen the focus of the National Strategies. Part of this commitment was to develop practical learning and teaching resources with a focus on improving the presence, participation and achievement of pupils with special educational needs/learning difficulties and disabilities (SEN/LDD). Some of these include:

- **The 3 Waves Model of Intervention** and more recently the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) are key resources which underpin the delivery of effective provision for all pupils including those with the most complex needs. They help to maintain the focus upon continuously improving the inclusivity of Quality First Wave 1 teaching and further developing Wave 2 and 3 provision. The IDP is not intended to provide high-level specialist training. Rather, it is designed to increase the confidence of teachers and others when seeking to identify and address SEN – if possible, within the context of Wave 1.

- The DVD and accompanying booklet *Learning and Teaching for children with SEN in the primary years* (Ref: DfES-0321-2004) focuses on the conditions that will enhance the learning of all pupils. They highlight research findings as well as the intuitive and additional practices demonstrated by experienced teachers that help children who have difficulties to learn more effectively.

**Resources**

*Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching in the primary years: CD-ROM* is designed to support school based professional development by providing easy access to the sections of the materials that are most relevant to school development plans. The six units and video are professional development resources on improving learning and teaching across the primary curriculum. All units are as relevant for use with pupils with SEN/LDD as they are for all pupils. ‘Designing opportunities for learning’, pages 38–39 and 43–46 develop the thinking behind the statutory inclusion statement and the circles of inclusion.

*Maximising progress- ensuring the attainment of pupils with SEN* is designed to maximise the progress and attainment of the growing number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and disabilities within mainstream secondary schools who are working within national expectations but currently under-attaining. Part 2 covers approaches to learning and teaching for these pupils in the mainstream classroom.

The *Leading on Intervention* CD-ROM has been designed to support leadership teams and leading teachers but is also of use to school leaders and managers and those leading interventions in schools. The materials include a presentation on inclusive teaching.
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The Learning and Teaching for Dyslexic children CD-ROM (Ref: DfES1184-2005CDI) provides resources for school-based professional development. The aims of the materials are to increase understanding of dyslexia and its implications for teaching and learning and to develop the range of strategies used in school to enable dyslexic learners to succeed. As can be seen, many of the strategies and techniques recommended for those identified as dyslexic also benefit pupils with other categories of need, and thus contribute to the development of the pedagogy for all.

Secondary Intervention Site is designed to introduce the support and guidance available to help plan and deliver intervention strategies at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics.

Leadership and Management of SEN/LDD

Introduction

The senior leadership team, under the direction of the headteacher and governors, play a pivotal role in creating an inclusive ethos and setting high expectations for all pupils including those with SEN/LDD. All teachers have a responsibility for ensuring that the needs of all pupils are identified and addressed.

From September 2007 the Professional Standards for Teachers set out the core competencies relating to achievement and diversity. Core competency 19 indicates that competent teachers:

'Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.'

However the SENCO, if deployed effectively, can be uniquely placed to support teachers to differentiate planning, raise attainment and accelerate progress for pupils with SEN/LDD.

Resources

Useful information relating to SENCO standards can be found in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice DfES Nov 2001 pp6–15 and The Independent Review Unit: Statement on SEN and disability – Meeting need, Minimising bureaucracy, contains a useful section on school specific responsibilities in relation to the identification of SEN.

Minority Ethnic Achievement and SEN

The links between ethnicity and SEN are complex. Schools need to address:

- appropriate identification of special educational needs
- appropriate provision to meet the needs of the pupils.

According to the research report Special Education Needs and Ethnicity: issues of over- and under-representation (Ref: DCFS RR757 May 2006):
The report draws on analysis of pupil census data, literature review and discussions with LAs.

Key findings

- Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean pupils are around one and a half times more likely to be identified as having Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) than White British pupils.
- Bangladeshi pupils are nearly twice as likely to be identified as having a hearing impairment than White British pupils, and Pakistani pupils are between two to two and a half times more likely to be identified as having Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, a Visual impairment, Hearing Impairment or Multi-sensory Impairment than White British pupils.
- Asian and Chinese pupils are less likely than White British pupils to be identified as having Moderate Learning Difficulties, Specific Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils are over-represented among many categories of SEN, including Moderate and Severe Learning Difficulties, and BESD.
- Boys are over-represented relative to girls for most categories of SEN.

SEN and ethnicity report

The report draws on literature published in the UK and USA between 1990–2005 for suggested explanations of these patterns:

Black pupils
- Racism – but the difference between Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils compared to other Black pupils indicates the need for further research into the needs of these pupils.

EAL learners
- Difficulties in disentangling learning difficulties from issues associated with EAL
- Lack of early take up of health care among these groups
- A greater incidence of genetic factors related to consanguinity – the report suggests caution in over-attributing developmental difficulties to this factor.

Travellers and Gypsy/Roma
- Negative teacher attitudes, mobility – limited research base means findings are indicative.

Recommendations for LAs and schools

LAs and schools need to consider:
- their own data and identify patterns of identification
factors which could be contributing to the differential patterns of identification and address them
how practitioners can be supported to meet the needs of the pupils once these are identified appropriately.

The report on *Special Educational Needs and Ethnicity Issue of Over-and-Under Representation* can be found at:

Assessing EAL learners

The definition of special educational needs does not include pupils who are working below level 1 due to having English as an additional language (EAL), therefore pupils with EAL should not have P scale information submitted unless they have also been identified as having a special educational need that is unrelated to their language difficulties.
(Source: NAA)

Further information

For further information on EAL and SEN, refer to the unit in the National Strategies Inclusion Development Programme website.

For further information on Black pupils and SEN, refer to:


Role of the SENCO

To ensure that the school’s work on behalf of children with special educational needs, learning difficulties and disabilities (SEN/LDD) is effective, all schools are required (by the SEN Code of Practice, 2001) to have a SENCO. This is a key role within the school, whose primary function is to act as a champion of children with SEN and disabilities and their families, promoting their presence, participation and achievement across both the school and the wider community.
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Through their strategic and management role, it is envisaged that the SENCO:

- plays a key role in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school in order to raise the achievement of children with SEN/LDD
- takes responsibility for the operation of the SEN policy and coordination of provision for individual children with SEN, working closely with staff, parents and carers and other agencies
- provides relevant professional guidance, support and challenge (where necessary) to colleagues, with the aim of securing high quality teaching, improved outcomes and good progress for all children with SEN/LDD.

The government is currently consulting on regulations that are intended to further strengthen the role of the SENCO within schools. In particular, it is proposed that SENCOs must be qualified teachers and should be in a senior management position in the school. Where the latter is not the case, a member of the senior management team must be designated as champion of SEN and disability issues within the school.

Developing the role of the SENCO

Many schools are now developing the role of the SENCO in response to the need to develop a more personalised, integrated and extended provision for all pupils, in line with the five outcomes for Every Child Matters This leads to a broader remit as inclusion coordinator (INCO) or manager and enables schools to develop a more holistic response to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN/LDD – particularly through the school’s extended services. The TDA Extended Schools Case Studies provide some useful models for this.

Some of the key features of the developing role of SENCO/INCOs are:

- advising, supporting and guiding class and subject teachers in removing barriers to learning/differentiating the curriculum
- team teaching and modelling good inclusive practice
- monitoring and evaluating SEN policy and provision in relation to impact and outcomes for pupils’ learning and wellbeing – use of data and provision management strategies
- coordinating and leading multi-agency, parents, and annual review meetings
- supporting school in DDA improvements
- ensuring genuine pupil participation and representation
- providing CPD for staff
- further developing their own strategic management skills.
Further information on roles and responsibilities can be found on page 11 of The SEN Code of Practice.

Early Years and Area SENCO

Early Years SENCO

The role of the SENCO is crucial for Early Years settings in supporting early identification and intervention for children with special educational needs and disabilities. The SENCO is responsible for maintaining SEN records and documentation, liaising and working with parents, securing training for workers and liaising with outside agencies with respect to a child's SEN or disability.

Area SENCO

Area SENCOs are employed by local authorities and are responsible for supporting a number of non-maintained settings within their authority. The aim of the area SENCO is to support the work of the settings-based SENCO to promote inclusion, reduce any attainment gaps that are already beginning to appear and enable all children to maximise their achievements in all areas of their learning.

Resources

The Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group have produced guidance for local authorities and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships on the role of Area SENCOs, including the document, Area SENCOs: Supporting Early Identification of children with SEN.