Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in mainstream schools

- The SEN Coordinator (SENCO), in collaboration with the Headteacher and governing body, 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.
- The SENCO takes day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the SEN policy and co-ordination of the provision made for individual children with SEN, working closely with staff, parents and carers, and other agencies.
- The SENCO also provides related professional guidance to colleagues with the aim of securing high quality teaching for children with SEN.
- The SENCO, with the support of the Headteacher and colleagues, seeks to develop effective ways of overcoming barriers to learning and sustaining effective teaching. This will be through the analysis and assessment of children’s needs, by monitoring the quality of teaching and standards of pupils’ achievements, and by setting targets for improvement.
- The SENCO should collaborate with curriculum coordinators so that the learning for all children is given equal priority, and available resources are used to maximum effect.

SENCO Responsibilities

In mainstream primary schools the key responsibilities of the SENCO may include:
- Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school’s SEN policy.
- Coordinating provision for children with SEN.
- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers.
- Managing Teaching Assistants.
- Overseeing the records of all children with SEN and Disability.
- Liaising with parents of children with SEN.
- Contributing to the in-service training of staff.
- Liaising with external agencies including the LA’s support and Educational Psychology services, health and social services, and voluntary bodies.

The role and responsibilities of all Teachers

The LA recognises that planning for progression and differentiation are fundamental to successful teaching and learning, and that high expectations of progress must apply equally to children working above, at, or below age-related expectations, including those who have SEN. We have an expectation of participation, fulfilment and success for all our children.

Good teaching and learning is characterised by ambitious objectives, challenging personal targets, rapid intervention to keep children on trajectory and rigorous assessment to check and maintain progress. There should also be clear plans to support those who are struggling.

This is consistent with the ‘Quality First Teaching’ approach, the key characteristics of which are:
• Highly focused lesson design with sharp objectives.
• High demands of pupil involvement and engagement with their learning.
• High levels of interaction for all pupils.
• Appropriate use of teacher questioning, modelling and explaining.
• An emphasis on learning through dialogue, with regular opportunities for pupils to talk both individually and in groups.
• An expectation that pupils will accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently.
• Regular use of encouragement and authentic praise to engage and motivate pupils.

"All teachers are teachers of children with SEN."

SEN Code of Practice

"Good progress for pupils with special educational needs is the same as good progress for all pupils."

Philippa Stobbs, Assistant Director (Education), Council for Disabled Children

Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Deployment and recent research findings

'Deployment and Impact of Support Staff' (Institute of Education, 2009) reports on a five-year study of 8,200 children. The study found that children who received the most support from TAs consistently made less progress than similar children who received less TA support.

"There has been a drift toward TAs becoming, in effect, the primary educators of lower-attaining pupils and those with SEN. Teachers like this arrangement because they can then teach the rest of the class, in the knowledge that the children in most need get more individual attention.

But the more support pupils get from TAs, the less they get from teachers. Supported pupils therefore become separated from the teacher and the curriculum. It is perhaps unsurprising then that these pupils make less progress."

These results are now widely recognised and fed into the Lamb Enquiry on SEN, and the Government's SEN Green Paper, which resulted in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The researchers recommend:
• TAs should not routinely support lower attaining children and those with SEN.
• Teachers should deploy TAs in ways that allow them to 'add value' to their own teaching.
• Initial teacher training should include how to work with and manage TAs.
• Schools should have a formal induction process for TAs.
• More joint planning and feedback time for teachers and TAs.
**Best practice**
Local good practice evidence shows that where there is clarity about the following, TAs can make a significant difference to outcomes:
- Responsible recruitment and induction, according to need.
- Clear line management.
- Clarity of role, including an agreed job description.
- Effective deployment based on rigorous analysis of the needs of pupils – e.g. clarity about where teacher input will have more value to learning than TAs; how TAs can support whole class learning and not just the most vulnerable learners.
- Ongoing training/development including whole school continuous professional development.
- Performance management linked to job role, professional National Occupation Standards for Supporting Teaching Learning (TDA, 2010) *(see link at the end of this section)* and school priorities.
- Support and training for teachers – e.g. how to manage TAs most effectively.
- Time allocated for TAs to participate in other relevant activities (e.g. regular teacher and TA time).

**Effective Teaching Assistant Support**
The LA expects the following good practice from all schools in the following three areas:
- Supporting teacher input (i.e. supporting the effective inclusion of all children in high quality lessons).
- Supporting learning in group work (i.e. small-group intervention programmes).
- Supporting learning of individuals (i.e. specific targeted approaches for individual children identified as requiring SEN intervention).

**Teaching Assistants support teacher input by:**

- Working **collaboratively** with the teacher during input e.g.:
  - Jointly model speaking and listening ‘pair’ tasks.
  - Scribe for teacher on board.
  - Help operate interactive whiteboard.
  - Demonstrate activities.
- Scanning class for **inappropriate behaviour**, use **eye-contact/visual prompts** to communicate and re-focus child’s attention.
- **Encouraging reticent children to answer** (verbally e.g. ‘I think Kati has a good idea’ or silently, using nods or encouraging smile! Providing question cards).
- Using **observation checklists** when relevant e.g. for behaviour, participation, and for assessment purposes, to inform future planning.
- Providing **resources** if necessary.
Teaching Assistants support learning in group work by:

- **Facilitating access to task** by the following:
  - Ensuring physical access.
  - **Ensuring understanding** (concept/task/instructions) and facilitating understanding through use of ‘mother tongue’ if necessary.
  - If necessary, **going over teaching** from an earlier part of the lesson – clarifying, using further explanation and examples.
  - If necessary, providing **resources** to support learning [**Ensuring that support has an impact on learning**].
    - **Visual**: e.g. alphabet strip, word-mat, table square, number square, vowel chart, key words/tricky words/new words list/cards, visual prompts and support.
    - **Aural**: e.g. taped story.
    - **Kinaesthetic**: e.g. mini-whiteboard, number fans, place-value cards, counters, cubes, shapes.
  - **Scribing** or providing **alternative methods of recording**.
  - Specific support e.g. signing, helping children use ICT, providing adapted resources.

- **Scaffolding learning** by using:
  - Mind-maps.
  - Spider-grams.
  - Writing frame e.g. ‘Writing skeletons.’
  - Talking/Speaking Frame.
  - Role-play.

- Encouraging children to **explain thinking** to TA/others in group.
- **Modelling**.
- **Demonstrating**.
- Reminding pupils of **previously learned strategies**.
- Supporting work on teacher-planned **differentiated activities**.
- Encouraging/modelling correct/appropriate use of **language**.
- **Pre-tutoring/rehearsing** for plenary task.
- Modelling/coaching appropriate **behaviour and social skills**.
- Working with children to help them to **prepare to answer** a question the teacher has given them time to think about.
- Providing appropriate **praise and encouragement**, and using Pause/Prompt/Praise.
- **Encouraging independent learning** - use timer if necessary.
- **Monitoring pupil progress** in order to feedback to class teacher.
- **Reminding pupils of targets** and helping them to **assess their own work**.

**With pupils in targeted intervention groups**
- Helping pupils to relate to and **transfer skills and knowledge** from withdrawal context to main lesson.
- Coaching pupils in skills needed for **cooperative group work** by explaining and describing, modelling and praising appropriate behaviours.
- **Assessing progress** and giving **feedback** to the teacher.
Teaching Assistants supporting the learning of individuals by using strategies as above, plus:

- Providing support which is clearly focused on moving the pupil on.
- Ensuring objectives and expected outcomes for session are clear to the pupil.
- Ensuring that there are strategies to reduce over-dependency (e.g. when task has been made clear, pupil set to work independently on task for specified period of time – use timer if necessary - while TA works with other pupils).
- Ensuring that support facilitates interaction between pupil and peers and doesn’t inadvertently act as a barrier to interactions.
- Ensuring support is discreet and does not embarrass the child.
- Sometimes using support to pre-tutor child and/or go through unusual or technical vocabulary for future lessons.
- Identifying progress and knowing when to move the child’s learning on.

Although TAs provide support for both pupils and teachers, the teacher remains accountable for the progress of every pupil in their classroom, their learning, assessment and planning.

Duties of Governing Bodies for SEN

- Governing Bodies have statutory responsibilities for pupils with SEN – they are set out in primary and secondary legislation
- The governing body must do its best to ensure that the school makes the necessary provision for every pupil with SEN.
- As part of its policy for SEN, the governing body should let parents know how they can raise concerns about provision for children with SEN and how their concerns will be investigated.
- They also have responsibility, in reviewing the schools' budget, to consider the employment of SEN support staff and monitor the levels of resources spent on supporting pupils with SEN.
- The governing body thereby assists in the development and monitoring of the school’s policy and strategy for SEN.
- The governing body also has a responsibility not to discriminate against disabled pupils and prospective pupils, to plan to increase systematically the access of disabled pupils and prospective pupils both to the curriculum and to the facilities of the school and to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils to have access to the curriculum and facilities of the school.

Guidance on the role of the SEN Governor

- There is no statutory rule that governing bodies should appoint a special educational needs (SEN) governor. However, governing bodies of maintained schools have legal duties in relation to pupils with SEN. The Governors' Handbook says that if a governing body delegates this responsibility to the headteacher it is advisable to have one other governor with an interest in SEN. (Ref: Governors Handbook 2014 pg 39-40).

SEN Governors have a strategic, rather than operational role

- The role should not be concerned with day-to-day management - a SEN Governor should not intervene in the teaching of individual pupils.
• If parents approach a Governor with a complaint or a problem, they should be encouraged to talk to the Headteacher first. If the problem leads the parents to make a formal complaint, the first appeal is to the governing body.
• An SEN Governor does not have the right to see a pupil’s statement of SEN / Education Health and Care Plan without permission of the parent / young person (over the age of 16).
• SEN Governors should not normally need to identify which children are receiving support.
• It would normally be expected that when an SEN Governor visits the school, the visit would be led by the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) or whichever member of staff takes the lead on SEN. This visit should be conducted with a view to discussing the school's systems and processes for supporting pupils with SEN, rather than assessing and commenting on provision for individual children.
• It may be appropriate to discuss a particular child where specific concerns have been raised by a parent. It might also be appropriate where a child’s needs require extra equipment, and this would draw upon the school budget.