

THE EFFECTIVE ROLE OF THE SENCO

The role of SENCO has changed considerably in recent years due to an increased number of initiatives in both primary and secondary phases of education. The role has never been easy to define and has always been open to interpretation. It is a role that has evolved within schools, based on the needs of the individuals within each establishment.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

- Ensuring that all pupils, including those with special or additional needs receive their full educational entitlement and have access to the whole curriculum
- Managing staff - other teaching staff and non teaching staff (Teaching Assistants) - this includes timetabling, delegation of tasks, advising, supporting and monitoring
- Managing Wave 2 and Wave 3 Interventions and the development of alternative teaching strategies and individual programmes where necessary
- Strategic overview of SEN and Inclusion throughout the school including planning, policy writing, advising and supporting other staff. Where used this would also include writing of provision maps for individual /groups of pupils
- Preparing and managing statutory assessment paperwork
- Organising, attending, chairing and the administration of annual reviews (including writing the school's advice and the recommendation report)
- Meeting with parents and carers
- Preparing referrals and attending meetings with other outside agencies
- Teaching - in some cases whole classes but in many cases small groups or one to one
- Managing the transition process
- Tracking pupil progress using all available data and evidence
- Initiating and carrying out assessments
- Managing budget and resources including annual audit where this is necessary to secure additional funding from local authority
- Special arrangements for end of key stage tests and external examinations
- Leading CPD for all staff, governors and parents. In some instances also providing training for other SENCOs within cluster or local authority
- Contributing to and writing Individual Education Plans Supporting Teaching and Learning
- Acting as a role model for quality first teaching for all pupils
- Supporting staff in the differentiation of curriculum to ensure full access for all pupils- this includes working with colleagues on curriculum policies to ensure differentiation for each year group
- Implementing a variety of teaching styles to support the learning styles of individual pupils
- Providing support and training for all staff
- Monitoring class teachers, advising on and supporting their teaching and curriculum delivery for those pupils with special educational needs
- Supporting a positive school ethos and celebrating achievement for all
- Supporting colleagues with behaviour issues through training, in class support and strategies for classroom management
- Reinforcing the National Curriculum Statutory Inclusion Statement to ensure that all colleagues recognise that every teacher is a teacher of pupils with special educational needs
- Analysing data to ensure that teaching and learning is effective
- Providing support and training (where necessary) for teachers to manage and work effectively with other adults.

INTERPRETING DATA TO SUPPORT PUPIL PROGRESS

There is a wide and diverse amount of data collected by schools and it is used in a variety of ways. SENCOs should be actively involved with the analysis of data for the whole school and in the planning and intervention of those pupils not making expected progress.

They should:

- Know their school's data
- Track progress of all those pupils with special educational needs
- Plan appropriate interventions
- Monitor and review

The statutory collection of P Level data from summer 2007 and the introduction of RAISEonline should support this work.

MANAGING OTHER ADULTS

All teachers are teachers of pupils with special educational needs. Teaching such students is therefore a whole school responsibility, requiring a whole school response.... (DfES 2001)

It is the SENCO's responsibility to ensure that resources and support are allocated and maintained to all those individual pupils who may need additional provision. There are many different kinds of support staff in our schools today. Teaching Assistants, Learning Mentors, Behaviour Support Staff and many others are working together to provide alternative provision for those pupils requiring additional support. The SENCO will need to manage these staff in the most effective way for their school.

Staff need to feel part of a team, be given the opportunity to communicate with each other and feel that their contributions are worthwhile.

The work of other adults needs to be reviewed regularly. In reviewing pupil progress and tracking achievement, SENCOs should review targeted support on a regular basis.

All staff should have very clear job descriptions and an annual review process of their work and role within the school.

All staff should be trained and supported to ensure that they are providing the best quality support for all pupils. This may mean allowing planning and preparation time for all staff to discuss the best ways of working together within a classroom.

It is very important that parents are kept informed of any provision that is being made for their child. This can be effectively managed by ensuring that all staff who will be supporting the individual pupil meets with the parents and discusses the support they will be giving to their son/daughter.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED TO THE ROLE

- Child Protection
- Safeguarding
- Looked After Children
- Gifted and Talented
- Lead Professional (ECM)
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)

AN EFFECTIVE SENCO SHOULD HAVE THE FOLLOWING QUALITIES:

- Personal impact and presence
- A positive response to change
- Energy, vigour and perseverance
- Self-confidence
- Enthusiasm
- Intellectual ability
- Reliability and integrity
- Commitment

A PROGRAMME OF CHANGE

To ensure the SENCO is able to carry out their role effectively and efficiently they need to be aware of and have regard to a number of important legislative documents that are currently part of the Government's programme of change.

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- SEN and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001
- SEN Code of Practice 2001
- Removing Barriers to Achievement
- Every Child Matters
- School Self-Evaluation - Ofsted Framework
- Local Authority Formula Funding - delegation to schools
- Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners
- Children Act 2004
- National Service Framework for Children, young people and maternity services
- Ten year strategy for childcare
- Education and Inspections Act 2006

There is now opportunity for the role of the SENCO to be strengthened within the school. The Government have acknowledged that SENCOs should be qualified teachers and be part of the leadership team. SENCO accreditation is being developed and the role which is emerging will ensure that the overall management of SEN provision will have the status and authority in the school to impact directly upon policy and practice in teaching, learning, pupils' personal development (including behaviour management and care for pupils).

FURTHER READING

The SENCO Handbook:
Optimus Publishing, Edited by Sue Soan

Every Child Matters: A New Role for SENCOs.
David Fulton Publishers .Rita Cheminais

101 Essential Lists for SENCOs.
Continuum International Publishing Group.
Kate Griffiths and Jo Haines

How to survive and succeed as a SENCO: LDA