

Message to SENCOs from the ISC SEND Group

Delivering basic SEND training to the whole staff using the simple materials on the ISC website which accompany this note:

Those in charge of learning support in ISC schools do a fantastic job, but they cannot do it on their own or just in their department. Each child spends the major part of his/her time in school in “ordinary” lessons and the effectiveness of the support that is put in to meet “needs” will, to a great extent, depend on the understanding of those needs by subject staff and the empathy and skills they use in their classes as well as their willingness to communicate what went well and what not so well with a particular student.

There is still a paucity of SEND training in ITT courses and some staff in schools will not have any SEND teacher training at all.

The ISC SEND Group has put together a “slide show” that may be used at INSET and a short booklet which may be distributed to all staff in a school, and to those joining later as part of their Induction.

The purpose of presenting this small resource to all ISC schools is to help SENCOs in delivering basic SEND training to all teaching and boarding staff in their schools so that all SEND children may experience more thoughtful support in all aspects of their life at school and gain better outcomes.

Both the booklet and the slide show may be adapted to the particular circumstances and needs of the staff of a school, so material may be added or removed.

The booklet is straight forward , but the Power-Point slide show has notes attached to each slide to aid delivery of the training being given. It is suggested that a presentation, taking about an hour, is given at INSET , questions are answered and then the booklet is given out as a “handout” at the end of the session.

But before looking at the other material, please think about the following:

Training the teachers (1)

- All staff need training in working with your SEND students who will spend most of their time in “ordinary” lessons.
- Staff must feel comfortable in owning up to their needs and problems
- It is good to share ideas
- Training given should be documented (Inspection) and regular

It should be included in the induction programme for new staff.

What might you have to overcome in delivering your training?

Every school is different. Some will have well developed in-house training of all staff , others will be less comfortable teaching SEND children or think of it as something “magic” which goes on in the Learning Support Department and is, consequently, nothing to do with “normal” teachers. The challenges that the trainer needs to overcome include:

- We do not want to lower our league table provision.
- We do not want to put off parents of normal children.
- They might tarnish our reputation.
- I was not trained to teach that sort of child.
- I get my satisfaction by teaching bright children at a brisk pace.
- I can't be expected to differentiate , whatever that means.

AND

What about their behaviour?

These “challenges” may be excuses and what the teachers might really mean include:

- They have not been trained to work with these children.
- There is a mystique about aspects of SEND.
- Some teachers do not like change! (but have had to deal with so much of it).
- They are all very busy with their “normal” workload , so how can they take on any more?
- It is easier to think of SEND as the problem of the SENCO and her staff.
- I want to remain king of my castle. Keep out!

Training the teachers (2)

- Let them know what you do.
- Neither you, nor they, are to diagnose conditions.
- Remind them that all the SEND children spend most of their time in “normal” lessons.
- So we are all responsible for their progress and for the outcomes.
- All that is needed is good teaching and a little extra knowledge.
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For good teaching always responds to individual needs, it is not just the delivery of content.

What level of training should you be aiming at?

You will know your staff and be able to judge this. It is likely that there will be a wide range of knowledge of SEND in any staffroom, some will have gone through their teaching career without showing any interest, or might even be hostile to the concept of having SEND children in their lessons, whilst others may themselves have SEND children in their families and be engaged in battles with the LA.

The idea behind this short INSET programme is twofold:

To ensure that the climate in the school is one where SEND children are welcomed and supported throughout their school day

and

to empower the staff so that they may offer a variety of methods in their lessons so that individual learning and social profiles may be properly supported.

All subject teachers and boarding staff will need:

- A little background knowledge of the distribution and identification of SEND children in the population.
- Possibly some legal references, especially to do with EHCPs if you have them.
- Who they might find in their classrooms and how to support them.
- Support of children in unstructured time outside the classroom.
- What to report and where to go for help.

This last point is so important. Sharing ideas, admitting when things are not going well, asking for advice, do not come easily for some staff in some schools.

More specifically, staff need to understand :

- That labels are but a starting point and of little practical use.
- Much more useful are NEEDS.
- Needs are not fixed and will change following personal development and changing curriculum demands.
- SEND children will have more than one label. Think Venn Diagram and each child will move between subsets over time.
- Knowledge does not have to be deep: the basics of the condition, the difficulties it generates and the ways that might help the student to engage and succeed.

Now, please, look at the “slide show”.