The role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator

The provision of high quality teaching for children with special educational needs and disabilities is not a matter for the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) alone; all teachers are teachers of children with additional educational needs. However, each school is required to have a nominated SENCO who must be a qualified teacher. All staff and parents must know who the nominated SENCO is. The importance of this challenging and highly rewarding role in schools has been reiterated in the 2014 SEN Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act 2014.

Whilst the day to day role will reflect the phase, type and size of the school, the key features are:

- contributing to the strategic development of SEND provision;
- overseeing the day to day operation (and periodic review) of the school’s SEND policy;
- coordinating, tracking progress and evaluating the impact of the provision being made for pupils with SEND;
- ensuring the full inclusion of SEND pupils within the school community and access to the school’s curriculum, facilities and extra-curricular activities;
- liaising with and advising other teachers;
- the effective deployment and performance management of learning support staff;
- maintaining detailed records of the provision made for children and young people with SEND;
- liaising with parents and carers;
- contributing to the professional development of staff;
- liaising with external agencies;
- deploying the SEN budget and reporting on how it is spent;
- reporting on the progress of children and young people with SEND.

The Code of Practice envisages that the SENCO will provide professional guidance to colleagues with the aim of securing high quality teaching of pupils with SEN and that they will therefore lead teaching and learning and the coordination of provision for pupils with SEN in their school. It is recommended that SENCOs are members of the school’s Senior Leadership Team. There is an element of bureaucracy involved in SEN coordination and access to administrative support is essential to allow the SENCO to focus on the core and specialist aspects of the role.

In 2009 The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 made it a legal requirement that every new SENCO in a mainstream school gain the Master’s-level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination within 3 years of taking up the post. The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) (England) Regulations 2014 further prescribes the qualifications and experience the nominated SENCO must hold.


The National Award for SEN Coordination has nationally agreed learning outcomes and it is recommended that even SENCOs who are not new to the role consider studying for the award (which can contribute towards a Masters degree). Your school’s allocated SEN Monitoring and School Support Officer can provide further details.

The learning outcomes which form the National Award for SEN Coordination can be viewed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292826/130611_nasc_learning_outcomes_final.pdf

Early Years – Maintained nursery schools must have a designated teacher responsible for SEN provision.

Post-16 – Colleges should ensure there is a named person with oversight of SEN provision to coordinate support – similar to the role of a SENCO in schools.
The role of the Special Educational Needs Governor

Governing Bodies have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
b. Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and
c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The DfE’s Handbook for Governors was updated in January 2014 and can be viewed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governors-handbook

There should be a nominated link Governor, or Governors, for SEN, who plays a key role in the strategic leadership and development of SEN provision, offering appropriate support and challenge in relation to the above areas with a specific focus on SEN.

The SEN Governor will inform the Governing Body on all aspects of SEN in the school to ensure that SEN work is valued and well-supported in the school.

SEN Governors will need to carry out these responsibilities in a number of ways:

- informing themselves about SEN systems and practices in school through meetings and school visits;
- ensuring that the progress of learners with SEN is closely monitored through reviewing and understanding internal and external data;
- understanding how the notional (delegated) SEN budget is used and ensuring that wider financial decisions do not adversely impact on the support for pupils with SEN;
- understanding the national and local context of SEN support;
- using their school visits to inform themselves about the work the SENCO is leading;
- ensuring that the views of pupils and parent/carers in relation to the SEN provision that is being made, are sought;
- building a trusting and supportive relationship with their SENCO;
- putting together an annual report on SEN with input from SENCO and Governing Body Committee (if relevant) which is published on the website and updated annually.

As part of this role, the SENCO and the SEN Governor may meet periodically, alongside the more formal reporting systems that will be in place. This will enable the SENCO to update the SEN Governor on the progress of children and young people with SEN and how they are being supported, along with the priorities for whole school development that the SENCO may have identified. The SEN Governor’s interest should not be around the arrangements that are in place for individual pupils, but rather how the cohort is being supported as a whole.

SENCOs are advised to share the outcomes of the annual SEN Self Review exercise with their SEN Governor. The SEN Self Review tool (SSR) has been developed by the Local Authority to help SENCOs, Head Teachers and Governing Bodies record their effectiveness in relation to SEN provision and contribute to the overall development plan. This is updated in line with revisions to the OFSTED Framework and the current version can be viewed on SENCOSPOT.

In addition to the SENCO reporting to the Governing Body; Section 69 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on Governing Bodies to prepare an ‘SEN information report’ setting out information about:

- how the educational setting identifies children with SEN;
- the number of children with SEN;
- the implementation of the published SEN policy;
- the arrangements for the admission of children and young people with SEN;
- the steps taken to prevent children and young people with SEN from being treated less favourably than other pupils;
- the facilities provided to assist access to the educational setting by disabled pupils;
- details of the educational setting’s accessibility plan.

The outline of this information would form the basis of the Annual Governors Report on SEN to be published on the website.
SEN Support

Below are extracts from the Code of Practice which directly relate to SEN Support. This information makes it very clear regarding the ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ cycle.

SEN support in schools

6.44 Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil’s needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of children and young people.

Assess

6.45 In identifying a child as needing SEN support the class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, should carry out a clear analysis of the pupil’s needs. This should draw on the teacher’s assessment and experience of the pupil, their previous progress and attainment, as well as information from the school’s core approach to pupil progress, attainment, and behaviour. It should also draw on other subject teachers’ assessments where relevant, the individual’s development in comparison to their peers and national data, the views and experience of parents, the pupil’s own views and, if relevant, advice from external support services. Schools should take seriously any concerns raised by a parent. These should be recorded and compared to the setting’s own assessment and information on how the pupil is developing.

6.46 This assessment should be reviewed regularly. This will help ensure that support and intervention are matched to need, barriers to learning are identified and overcome, and that a clear picture of the interventions put in place and their effect is developed. For some types of SEN, the way in which a pupil responds to an intervention can be the most reliable method of developing a more accurate picture of need.

6.47 In some cases, outside professionals from health or social services may already be involved with the child. These professionals should liaise with the school to help inform the assessments. Where professionals are not already working with school staff the SENCO should contact them if the parents agree.

Plan

6.48 Where it is decided to provide a pupil with SEN support, the parents must be formally notified, although parents should have already been involved in forming the assessment of needs as outlined above. The teacher and the SENCO should agree in consultation with the parent and the pupil the adjustments, interventions and support to be put in place, as well as the expected impact on progress, development or behaviour; along with a clear date for review.

6.49 All teachers and support staff who work with the pupil should be made aware of their needs, the outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required. This should also be recorded on the school’s information system.

6.50 The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the outcomes identified for the pupil, based on reliable evidence of effectiveness, and should be provided by staff with sufficient skills and knowledge.

6.51 Parents should be fully aware of the planned support and interventions and, where appropriate, plans should seek parental involvement to reinforce or contribute to progress at home. The information set out in 6.39 should be readily available to and discussed with the pupil’s parents.

Do

6.52 The class or subject teacher should remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis. Where the interventions involve group or one-to-one teaching away from the main class or subject teacher, they should still retain responsibility for the pupil. They should work closely with any teaching assistants or specialist staff involved, to plan and assess the impact of support and interventions and how they can be linked to classroom teaching. The SENCO should support the class or subject teacher in the further assessment of the child’s particular strengths and weaknesses, in problem solving and advising on the effective implementation of support.
6.53 The effectiveness of the support and interventions and their impact on the pupil’s progress should be reviewed in line with the agreed date.

6.54 The impact and quality of the support and interventions should be evaluated, along with the views of the pupil and their parents. This should feed back into the analysis of the pupil’s needs. The class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, should revise the support in light of the pupil’s progress and development, deciding on any changes to the support and outcomes in consultation with the parent and pupil.

6.55 Parents should have clear information about the impact of the support and interventions provided, enabling them to be involved in planning next steps.

6.56 Where a pupil has an EHC Plan, the local authority must review that plan as a minimum every twelve months. Schools must co-operate with the local authority in the review process and, as part of the review, the local authority can require schools to convene and hold annual review meetings on its behalf. Further information about EHC Plan reviews is given in Chapter 9, Education, Health and Care needs, assessments and plans.

1. From a letter to parents from DfE in September 2014:

Support for those without EHC plans
For those with SEN or disabilities who do not need an EHC plan, we are introducing SEN support, which replaces School Action and School Action Plus. Schools and nurseries must work with the child’s parents or carers when agreeing what support they will provide and what this support will achieve, drawing in additional resources as needed, setting clear targets for progress, and tracking how it is working. Many schools are doing this through working with children and young people to develop one page profiles which explain what is important to the child or young person, what they want to achieve and how the school will help.

2. From the Council for Disabled Children:

Changes in assessment and planning
- School Action and School Action Plus has been replaced by SEN support: a graduated approach to identifying and meeting SEN, with schools involving parents in identifying needs, deciding outcomes, planning provision and seeking expertise at whatever point it is needed.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SEND funding arrangements in mainstream settings

This information relates to children and young people attending mainstream schools and academies.

The DfE and all Local Authorities are moving towards a shared goal of national consistency and greater transparency in the way school budgets are determined through a pupil led funding system. A national funding formula for schools is due for implementation from 2017-18, allocating funding to local authorities to distribute according to a local formula for the first 2 years, and then setting each school’s funding directly from 2019-20

At present the way SEN Funding is determined is agreed locally, through Schools’ Forum and is given to schools under three main headings:

Element 1: Core Funding

Schools get most of their funding based on the total number of pupils in the school. Every pupil in a school attracts an amount of money. This is called the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). The amount varies from one Local Authority to another, but there are minimum amounts set by the DfE: the value for primary pupils must be at least £2,000 and the value for both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils must be at least £3,000. There is usually more funding for each pupil in a secondary school than in a primary school. For the financial year 2015-16 the agreed Age Weighted Pupil Unit amount in Gloucestershire is £2,974.07 for primary aged pupils, £3,750.83 for pupils in Key Stage 3 and £4,499.58 for pupils in Key Stage 4.

This is the core budget for each school and it is used to make general provision for all pupils in the school including pupils with SEN. 80% of funding a school receives must be determined by pupil led factors. Other than the AWPU, the only other compulsory pupil led funding factor is based on a deprivation factor. Either free school meals or the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) can be used. The other pupil led funding factors are prior attainment, Looked After Child status, English as an additional language and pupil mobility.

Element 2: Additional Support Funding

Every school receives an additional amount of money to help make special educational provision to meet the needs of children with SEND, including some children with EHCPs. This amount of money is called the ‘notional SEN budget’. The SEN notional budget is used to support the needs of pupils with SEN, both at the ‘SEN Support’ level of the code of practice and also the initial costs of pupils with either Statement of SEN or EHCPs. The amount this contributes to the overall school budget is based on a formula which is agreed between Schools’ Forum and the Local Authority. It is important that the SENCO knows how the ‘notional SEN budget’ is calculated and how much this contributes to the overall budget. The Head Teacher or the School Business Manager will have this information. The ‘notional SEN budget’ is formed, by the money that comes into school under the “Prior Attainment” factor and also 2.5% of the school’s AWPU. In previous years this had been called funding for high incidence/low cost SEN.

As the title suggests the prior attainment factor generates an amount of funding based on the prior attainment of the pupils who were registered at the school when the October census took place. For children in the primary phase of education it is based on the level of development achieved at the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils will qualify for the prior attainment factor, where they have not achieved a good level of development. Going forward, this will include all those who had not achieved the expected level of development in all 12 prime areas of learning as well as maths and literacy by the end of Year R. For a secondary school the amount is based on the pupils registered at the school when the October census took place who had not attained a Level 4 in either English or maths at the end of Key Stage 2. This may not recognise the additional needs of some groups of pupils, for example those who have attained well but have physical needs or behavioural difficulties but this method is considered by the DfE to be a best fit model for now.

Deprivation funding and Pupil Premium grant funding may also help to support some groups of children who have barriers to learning, although not necessarily SEND, but have attained above the thresholds indicated above.
For the financial year 2015-16 a primary aged pupil who did not attain a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage would contribute £1,096.62 into the prior attainment element of the school’s budget and a secondary aged pupil who did not attain a Level 4 in English or maths at the end of key Stage 2 would contribute £1,790.32.

Part of Element 1 (Core Funding) goes towards forming the notional SEN budget alongside the prior attainment funding). It is expected that 2.5% of the overall Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding, referred to above, should also be used to support SEN across the school.

Most pupils with SEND will have their needs met through the “notional SEN budget”, especially where their needs are high incidence/low cost. Schools commonly use the notional SEN budget to fund lunch time clubs for vulnerable pupils, additional support to access after school activities, purchasing equipment such as laptops or specialist software, running small teaching groups in core subjects or providing in class TA support. Most of the Wave 2 and 3 (or targeted interventions) on a school’s provision map will be funded from the notional SEN budget and schools should not rely on the funding that comes through individual children’s Statement to run Wave 2 and 3 interventions as this may be an unsustainable funding stream.

The government has recommended that schools should use their notional SEN budget to pay for up to £6,000 worth of special educational provision to meet a child’s SEND. Most children with SEND require special educational provision that comes to less than £6,000. Pupils requiring additional provision totalling in excess of £6,000 per year are considered to be ‘high needs pupils’. The DfE definition of a ‘high needs pupil’ is one where the educational provision cost, including the basic provision given to all pupils exceeds the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) plus £6,000.

**Element 3: Top-Up Funding**

If it is determined that a pupil with SEND requires in excess of £6,000 worth of special educational provision, in addition to the basic provision available to all students, the commissioning local authority (ie the Local Authority in which the pupil lives) can provide top up funding above £6,000 to meet the cost of that provision (ie the difference between £6,000 and the agreed cost). The top up funding is provided from the high needs block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) held by the commissioning local authority and would require an EHC Plan to be in place for it to be made. Schools are expected to use this funding to supplement the funding in the ‘notional SEN budget’ to make provision for that individual pupil.

Currently, in Gloucestershire, a maximum limit is set on the number of high needs pupils schools are expected to contribute the first £6,000 for based on 1 contribution for every 75 pupils on roll (this does not include pupils in Post-16 provision in schools). This measure was put in place in Gloucestershire to protect schools with a disproportionate number of high needs pupils. This additional protection was agreed by the LA and Schools’ Forum and is not a statutory DfE requirement, however the DfE does require all Authorities to have some mechanism in place to make funding allocation as fair as possible.

The maximum limit is calculated by dividing the number on roll at the October census point by 75 (the resulting number is then rounded up or down to the nearest whole number). Schools with 37 or fewer pupils on roll at the October census point will not be required to provide the first £6,000 for any high needs pupil. A school’s 1 in 75 number does not change mid financial year so is set even if the number of pupils on roll changes.

The top up funding is adjusted monthly, so if the pupil receiving top up funding left the school part way through the year the funding would cease. If a pupil is due to leave at the end of the academic year the budget allocation would show the funding for the April to the end of the academic year rather than a full year cost.

It is easy to identify the amount of money that comes into school through top up funding as this is linked to named children. That amount, combined with the notional SEN budget (the prior attainment money and 2.5% of the overall AWPU amount) makes up the schools’ SEN budget. It is worth noting that academies receive their core funding based on an academic year and maintained schools receive their funding based on a financial year.

The DfE website explains the arrangements for the financial year 2016-17.

Further information is available on: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-funding-arrangements-2016-to-2017
Benefits of Provision Mapping

Provision mapping takes into account the full scope of provision, including high quality, whole class teaching, guided and group work and individual interventions in order to identify and overcome potential barriers to learning and meet the needs of all pupils within and beyond the school setting.

Provision mapping is a constructive process which enables settings to reflect on their resources in order to meet the needs of children and young people with additional needs effectively and efficiently. The provision mapping diagram below (Natalie Packer, 2014) highlights six key areas designed to support school leaders’ thinking about whole school improvement and to help them make informed choices to maximise the impact of pupil support at their schools. (Links to further information about provision mapping and examples can be found on SENCO Spot.)

Provision mapping has many benefits including enabling the school to:
- plan strategically to meet needs of pupils;
- audit how well provision matches need and recognise gaps;
- allow planning of staffing and skills;
- provides overview of provision for others and demonstrate how support is deployed;
- inform parents, Ofsted and others about provision;
- evaluate the effectiveness of interventions on pupil outcomes;
- cost provision effectively and demonstrate accountability.

(See page 40 for additional information about recording provision and monitoring and evaluating the impact).

Natalie Packer, 2014

Benefits of Provision Mapping

- Monitoring and evaluating impact
- Auditing need to identify vulnerable pupils
- Ensuring robust assessment and tracking
- Reviewing what works for all pupils
- Developing high quality provision
- Identifying suitable resources

Natalie Packer, 2014
An example of provision mapping available on SENCOSPOT
Reviewing Education and Health Care Plans

The Annual Review process is an essential tool in order to review and monitor an Education and Health Care Plan. It is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority to review an active plan at least annually in order to monitor and evaluate Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. Where there are extenuating circumstances that do not allow for the review to take place within the 12 month period, parent/guardian permission should be sought in writing and the educational setting should inform the Local Authority. The review process should reflect the natural circumstances of the child or young person’s situation at that time, for example review dates may need to be moved to relate more appropriately to a key stage phase transition.

The review process is a natural opportunity to ensure that the family of the child or young person is involved in planning and decision making with regards to provision and personal budgets where applicable. It is good practice for educational settings to be person-centred in their planning and implementation of the review meeting. There is further guidance about this model and approach in the Code of Practice and on Gloucestershire’s SEND website SENCOSPOT at http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/sencospot

The purpose of the review is to ensure that monitoring and planning focussed upon the child or young person’s needs and progress is in place. As a result it is essential that a variety of viewpoints are captured and inform the decision making in this process, with all relevant adults and professionals involved with the child or young person being invited to reviews. To aid this process invitations should be sent out at the earliest opportunity, but within 2 weeks of the meeting to all interested parties. Copies of the post-review paperwork should then be sent out to all parties who had been previously invited and any additional adults as agreed at the review. After the review, paperwork should be with the LA within 10 school days or before the end of a school term, whichever is the earliest date.

With transition reviews the receiving setting should also be invited to participate in the meeting to aid good transition planning for the child or young person with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

Annual Review paperwork is available on SENCOSPOT via the following link http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/sencospot or on the Practitioner area of the Family Information Service and more detailed statutory guidance can be found in the Code of Practice.
SEN Personal Budgets explained

**Essential Facts:**
- A SEN Personal Budget is not an additional amount of money. It is the money identified by the local authority (High Needs Block Funding/Element 3) to deliver parts of the provision set out in an Education, Health and Care Plan. If a SEN Personal Budget is agreed, the following options apply:
  - the setting or local authority will hold the budget and pay for all provision, or
  - the family will hold the budget and manage it as a direct payment, or
  - a third party organisation will manage the budget, or
  - a combination of any of the above options.
- A request for the LA to identify a personal budget can be made by a parent/young person at two specific times. First when a child or young person is undergoing an EHC needs assessment or secondly when the EHC Plan is being reviewed.
- SEN Personal Budgets are optional for parents and young people but the Local Authority is under a duty to prepare a budget when requested, unless:
  - it would have an adverse impact on services provided or arranged by the local authority for other EHC Plan holders, or
  - it would not be an efficient use of the local authority’s resources.
- A SEN Personal Budget is not a Direct Payment. A Direct Payment is for families who wish to manage the budget. This must be agreed by the Head Teacher/Principal if provision is on school/college site.
- A SEN Personal Budget can be used to purchase any provision on an agreed EHC Plan to support educational progress.
- A SEN Personal Budget cannot be used to fund a school place.
- A SEN Personal Budget may be available within an EHC Plan to support a child or young person who is home educated if the local authority and parents agree that home education is the right provision. If parents choose home education and the local authority does not agree, then a SEN Personal Budget will not be available.
- Provision funded by Personal Care Budgets and Personal Health Budgets may be included on an EHC Plan if the needs identified impact directly on the child or young person’s SEN.

**Useful Links:**
- www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schoolsnet/sencospot
- www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/localoffer
- www.gloucestershireccg.nhs.uk