

The
PRIMARY SEND
HANDBOOK
for TRAINEE
TEACHERS

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The Role of the SENCo, Class Teacher and their Responsibilities

Chapter Aims

- To understand the role of the SENCo.
- To know the responsibilities that the SENCo has.
- To understand the responsibilities that a class teacher has and how they are supported in these responsibilities by the SENCo.
- To begin to understand the challenges of teaching a class with a high number of SEND pupils in.

Links to the Core Content Framework (CCF)

High Expectations

- **Learn that** a culture of mutual trust and respect supports effective relationships.
- **Learn that** teachers are key role models, who can influence the attitudes, values and behaviours of their pupils.

Adaptive Teaching

- **Learn how to** receive clear, consistent and effective mentoring in supporting pupils with a range of additional needs, including how to use the SEND Code of Practice, which provides additional guidance on supporting pupils with SEND effectively.

Professional Behaviours

- **Learn that** effective professional development is likely to be sustained over time, involve expert support or coaching and opportunities for collaboration.
 - **Learn that** reflective practice, supported by feedback from, and observation of experienced colleagues, professional debate, and learning from educational research, is also likely to support improvement.
 - **Learn that** SENCos, pastoral leaders, careers advisors and other specialist colleagues also have valuable expertise and can ensure that appropriate support is in place for pupils.
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Introduction

This chapter is going to have an in-depth look at the roles and responsibilities of key staff in school – the SENCo, your position as a class teacher – and how they work together.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the SENCo

It is required by law for every school to have a SENCo. They must be a qualified teacher, with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), or be actively working towards becoming a qualified teacher, with the likelihood to become one in the near future. The Special Education Needs Code of Practice (CoP), as discussed in Chapter 1, requires that all SENCos must gain the National SENCo Award within three years of taking on the role of a SENCo. This award is offered by some universities as a Post-Graduate Certificate (PGCert) leading to the NASENCo Award, and there is now the new National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in being a SENCo. There are pros and cons of each route in relation to workload,

the qualification itself and possibly carrying credits forward, for example towards a Master's, and the practical aspects of the qualifications. Although you are at the beginning stage of your teaching career and your teacher training, you may, at some stage in the next five years or more, consider becoming a SENCo yourself if you have an interest in working more strategically with pupils with SEND, and many of you will want to take this as a career progression route. It will therefore be important to have a good understanding of the role, and how it will develop and change, and the qualifications involved in pursuing this as your career. Most SENCos will be carrying out this qualification alongside their SENCo duties, and assignments will relate to their work, such as, analysing a case study, or developing their improvement plan.

The SENCo role is critical in ensuring that pupils with SEND receive the support that they need within the classroom and the wider school environment. The role has grown in importance over the last decade, and rightly so. The CoP outlines that the SENCo must be a qualified teacher and achieve the National SENCo Award, whereas previously, this was not the case.

The SENCo also has a key role in working with the Headteacher and the Governing body of the school to determine the strategic direction of the school SEND policy and improvement plan. They will report to the Governing body and will have a Governor member assigned to them to oversee the work that they do, who will visit the school throughout the year. The SENCo will be most effective if they are part of the school leadership team, but this is not always the case. With the status of being part of the leadership team, change can be implemented along with the capacity for the time needed to do the SENCo role for the best possible outcomes for the pupils. The CoP states that the SENCo should have the time and resources to carry out their role. This will differ in each and every school due to the size of the school, the number of pupils on role, and the number and type of SEND that pupils have.

PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION

Speak with your SENCo in school and find out:

- are they part of the leadership team?
 - how do they work with their headteacher to develop school policy and the SEND improvement plan?
 - what work do they do with their school governor?
 - how many SEND pupils are on the register?
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The responsibilities of the SENCo

The SENCo will oversee the day-to-day operation of the school's SEND policy. Although it is the SENCo's responsibility to oversee this, it is not their role to implement every aspect

themselves or to undertake every task relating to SEND. It is important that everyone in school takes the responsibility of supporting SEND pupils and implementing provision in and outside the classroom. Some of the activities that the SENCo will carry out are:

- supporting the identification of pupils with SEND;
- tracking and monitoring progress of pupils with SEND;
- co-ordinating the provision for pupils with SEND;
- liaising with parents and carer of pupils with SEND;
- liaising with outside agencies and professionals such as the Local Authority, family support workers and Educational Psychologists (EPs);
- ensuring that all records relating to a school's SEND pupils are accurate and kept up to date;
- leading on the development and implementation of the SEND development plan, which should link in with whole school priorities.

Some expectations for the SENCo role:

- That the SENCo is part of the leadership team.
- The SENCo regularly informs the leadership team and the Governors (including the lead governor for SEND) on current and changing policy and practice.
- The SENCo has a clear vision for SEND provision and outcomes within the school.
- The SEND report meets the legal requirements and is published on the school website.
- The SENCo has received training and is knowledgeable on policy and practice.
- The SENCo is involved (and potentially takes a lead on) making decisions relating to staff deployment and the use of resources for SEND pupils.
- The SENCo is challenged by the Governors/lead governor for SEND about the learning, progress and the use of resources for SEND pupils.
- To ensure that all staff know and understand their role in relation to supporting and implementing provision for SEND pupils.
- To ensure that staff CPD needs are met through identifying training needs of teachers and support staff such as Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs).
- To ensure that High Quality Teaching is taking place for pupils with SEND (discussed later in Chapter 8).
- Liaise with curriculum co-ordinators to ensure that the SEND pupils have access to every area of the curriculum, and that adjustments are made and resources that are needed to support this are available.

School need to ensure that they provide a SENCo time for:

- planning and co-ordination (away from the classroom);
- maintaining records;
- teaching pupils with SEND;

- observing pupils in classes;
- co-ordinating, managing and training Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs);
- liaising with settings either side of transition periods: nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and colleges.

For some smaller primary schools, it may be appropriate that a SENCo is shared across schools, or that the role is part time.

CASE STUDY

From a primary school SENCo.

My days are never 'typical' as a SENCo, there is always something new or different happening, or something I need to find out, or a problem to solve. But, I have tried to outline some of the more typical elements of my day!

I have been a SENCo for many years, and my role has changed more recently. Years ago, I would have spent most of my time conducting reviews and writing targets, but now, as everyone is responsible for SEND, I take a much more creative approach to my role, which is both strategic and front line facing. I have a lot of mental health challenges to support and work with since the pandemic, and we are still working out the best way to support pupils with this as a school.

My day starts with arriving at the school and checking up on staffing and support changes and challenges, sickness cover, and emails that need attention first thing. As staff and pupils arrive at school, I greet pupils and parents and I check in with some of them to see how their morning has started. This can be a really important part to the day to gain an understanding of whether there may be any potential challenges that we have not accounted for. Once pupils are settled into their morning register, I return to the office to begin with paperwork and liaising with agencies regarding referrals that need chasing up or following up from, such as the Child and Adolescence Mental Health Team (CAMHS) or the Local Authority (LA) SEND team.

Today is Tuesday, and this is our day when I gather together the support staff (TAs and LSAs) during an extended assembly to deliver a short burst of training. It is something we have implemented recently to ensure that all staff are receiving the training that they need. Today I have designed some training on working specifically with small groups of pupils that have varying needs, and how to manage these groups better.

After break is my open-door policy, this is a time for staff to come and have a quick check in with me, often these sort of chats can fix a problem, just talking something through can generate a solution and they are really valuable. In between meeting with staff, I am working through paperwork and referral forms and beginning to draft the report for the upcoming governor meeting. My morning finishes with observing a pupil in class who is having difficulty with sensory needs and discussing some possible strategies for the teacher and TA to try out.

Over lunchtime, I check in with support staff that have been delivering morning interventions, and those preparing for delivering interventions in the afternoon. The afternoon

(Continued)

consists of supporting staff with review meetings. Some staff complete these on their own, others are finding these challenging, so we are doing them together as part of my work and training with class teachers. The end of the day finishes with a senior leader meeting, covering whole school aspects.

My job can be very challenging, frustrating and exhausting, but I also gain such a sense of fulfilment. Seeing the pupils develop and grow over their time with us and develop their confidence as learners inspires me to continue developing myself, and supporting others to develop and support pupils in their classes.

Reflect

- What do you think the SENCo role looks like for your SENCo in your current school?
- What do you think the main challenges are that they face?

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Class Teacher

The implementation of the new SEND Code of Practice in 2014, was very much about a shift in culture and practice. At the heart of the CoP lay the understanding of the need that every teacher should be responsible and accountable for every pupil in their class, including those with SEND. This was a monumental moment in the move from the SENCo taking the responsibility for all of these pupils, to everyone having a whole school responsibility. Some would argue that this was always the case in their schools, but for many it wasn't, so that by making this explicit, it has ensured that all pupils are gaining access to the support that they need from qualified specialists and teachers.

For example, it is the teacher's responsibility for all pupils in their class in regards to the progress that they make. If a pupil is taken out for an intervention, then the teacher should know what the intervention is, what skills or knowledge is being worked on, and how much progress is being made. It is not good enough for a teacher to say that they don't know, or to speak with an LSA or TA and ask them about a pupil. It is the teacher's responsibility to speak with the person delivering the intervention, and to assess a pupil themselves too. It is also really important that a TA or LSA does not work with SEND pupils all the time themselves. Every child has a right to have teaching and input from the class teacher, and TAs and LSAs also benefit from working with the wide range of attainment levels within a class. More will be discussed around these aspects in later chapters.

Being able to support your SEND pupils in the classroom will be an essential part of your job. As a trainee teacher, you need to begin to understand what your role will be, and how you will undertake this. It can be a challenge when you are juggling lots

of elements of classroom practice such as planning lessons, marking work, and standing up in front of other professionals and being observed! But the sooner you begin to understand SEND and incorporate provision into your daily practice, the sooner this will become embedded. It is a key element of the Teachers' Standards, and learning about SEND and how to lead on this provision in your classroom is an entitlement within the Core Content Framework (CCF).

The number of SEND pupils that you have in your class will vary from school to school, and from year to year, but recent data (DfE, 2023) shows that for an average mainstream primary class, there will be approximately four to five pupils in each class that will need support for SEND; 2.5 per cent with an EHC plan and 13.5 per cent without, with an increase on the previous year (see Table 2.1).

One of the biggest worries for teachers is that they are not effectively supporting their SEND pupils, but research shows that the support that they gain from their classroom teacher has the greatest impact on the academic and social outcomes of their pupils with SEND (Efthymiou and Kington, 2017).

The Code of Practice (2015) outlines the responsibilities of the class teacher; these will seem vast at this stage of your journey, but be assured that you will be supported throughout your training year, and beyond this for a further two years as you continue to progress as an Early Career Teacher (ECT). These responsibilities are outlined below, and the link to the Code of Practice is in the further reading section of the chapter. You will not be expected to be an expert in all aspects of the teaching profession when you leave after your initial teacher training.

Table 2.1 The percentage of pupils with SEN support and EHC plans in primary schools (DfE, 2023).

Total SEN support		
	2021/2022	2022/2023
EHC plans	355,566	389,171
EHC plans (per cent)	4.0	4.3
SEN support/SEN without an EHC plan	1,129,843	1,183,384
SEN support/SEN without an EHC plan (per cent)	12.6	13.0
Headcount	9,000,031	9,073,832
State-funded primary		
	2021/2022	2022/2023
EHC plans	105,756	117,757
EHC plans (per cent)	2.3	2.5
SEN support/SEN without an EHC plan	606,086	629,184
SEN support/SEN without an EHC plan (per cent)	13.0	13.5
Headcount	4,655,513	4,647,851

Responsibilities of the class teacher

- Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff. *Include examples of this within your lesson planning.*
- The class teacher should remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis, even when interventions involve group or one-to-one teaching away from the main class or subject teacher. *Include examples of how feedback from interventions inform your lesson planning.*
- The class teacher 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. *Include examples of this within your lesson planning.*
- Working with the SENCo, the class teacher 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. *Include examples of this in your weekly mentor meetings.*

Class teacher responsibilities can be categorised under the three headings below.

- Directly to pupils at risk of or with special educational needs/disabilities (e.g. identification, assessment, intervention, monitoring and review).
- Working with families.
- Working with other professionals.

Activity

Open your copy of the Core Content Framework (CCF). As you read through the next section, highlight where it is explicit that you will be gaining training in these areas. Which areas will you be receiving direct training on, such as taught sessions from your training provider, or reading, such as working through this book and the related tasks? And which areas you will be working with your mentor or professionals in school on? - the 'learn how to' statements where you can discuss with practitioners and try out your practice with support.

In relation to pupils at risk of or with special educational needs/disabilities, class teachers should:

- ensure early identification of: special educational needs; barriers to learning; appropriate interventions and actions (e.g. the graduated approach which is discussed in Chapter 8) in consultation with the SENCo;
- have full knowledge of children's SEND support or Education, Health and Care Plans;

- provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- understand and provide high-quality teaching;
- have appropriate high expectations based on assessment;
- assume responsibility and accountability for their learning, progress and development;
- maintain responsibility for working with them on a daily basis, even when interventions involve group or one-to-one teaching/support away from the main class;
- Regularly assess, monitor and review their progress (academic, developmental and social-emotional) during the course of the year with a view to ensuring the ultimate outcome of a successful transition to adult life;
- through professional development, secure knowledge, understanding and skills around: identification of specific special educational needs in the context of monitoring all pupils' progress and development; appropriate basic or advanced understanding of specific special educational needs/disabilities; quality teaching for pupils with special educational needs.

Class teachers should apply the graduated approach (as outlined in Chapter 8) to suspected special educational needs pupils in consultation with the SENCo (and Designated Teacher if the pupil is 'looked after' by the local authority), parents/carers and young people. As a trainee teacher, you will be shadowing your mentor at first, then working with them, then leading on elements such as these depending on which stage of your course and training and development you are at.

They should:

- Confirm delivery of high-quality teaching as a first step.
- Identify evidence-based interventions related to the pupil's special educational needs, implement them strategically and evidencing impact.
- Carry out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs based on all available evidence (e.g. school documentation of the pupil's progress to date with reference to national and peer-group data).
- Assess pupil needs formally and informally (including parents'/carers' and pupils' views).
- Where necessary, gain more specialised assessments from external agencies and professionals (as agreed with parents/carers).
- Decide about the level of special educational support required (with reference to the Local Offer and external agencies as necessary).
- Decide on the form and nature of any special educational support (with reference to the Local Offer and external agencies as necessary).

Class teachers should:

- Inform and involve parents/carers at the point of their and the SENCo's initial concerns about a child's learning and possible special educational needs.

- Develop a positive dialogue with them around their child's special educational needs, progress and outcomes.
- Be aware of how to handle any potential informal complaints.
- When a pupil is receiving SEND support, talk to parents regularly in addition to general best practice (i.e. meeting with them three times per year; and must produce an annual report on pupil progress).
- EHCPs should be reviewed at least once per year. There should be no time when parents are unaware of a school's concern that their child has special educational needs. The teacher and the SENCo (and Designated Teacher if the pupil is 'looked after' by the local authority) should agree in consultation with the parent and the pupil:
 - the adjustments, interventions and support to be put in place;
 - the intended impact on progress, development or behaviour;
 - involvement of specialists;
 - a clear date for review. Parents should be given clear information about the impact of the support and interventions provided, enabling them to be involved in planning next steps.

Working with families, class teachers must:

- Formally notify parents where it is decided to provide a pupil with SEND support, although parents and pupils should have already been involved in forming the initial assessment of needs.
- Contribute at least annually to an EHCP review where necessary.
- Produce an annual report on pupil progress.

Working with other professionals:

- The SENCo (and Designated Teacher if the pupil is 'looked after' by the local authority) should advise and support the class teacher in assessment, problem-solving and the effective implementation of support.
- Working with the SENCo (and Designated Teacher if appropriate), class teachers should revise a pupil's support in light of their progress and development, deciding on any changes to the support and outcomes in consultation with the parent and pupil.
- Teachers and support staff who work with the pupil should be made aware of their needs, the outcomes sought, the support to be provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required.
- Teachers 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 whole-class teaching. Teachers should work with the SENCo to identify patterns in the identification of SEND.

- Teachers should work collaboratively with other professionals (including those from other disciplines) to improve special educational needs identification and support (e.g. approaches, strategies, resources, outcomes, review dates, etc).

Code of Practice (2015)

Chapter 7 will have a direct focus looking in detail at working with other professionals such as those outlined in the above section.

Activity

Review your highlighted CCF document. Can you generate some actions from this where you gain further experience to observe, shadow or lead on something that may be coming up? For example, a conversation with a parent or a review meeting.

Reflect

It is important to remember at this stage in your training that:

- Teachers have a responsibility to know about any additional support that a pupil may be having.
- Teachers need to understand the progress that their SEND pupils are making, and how this relates to their other lessons in class.
- Teachers need to understand that their SEND pupils should have fair and equal access to them as a class teacher during lessons.
- Teachers need to understand that although TAs and LSA make an excellent contribution to the progress of SEND pupils, it is their responsibility for the progress of their pupils. Support from other staff should supplement and not replace the class teacher.

Some of the other areas of the roles and responsibilities will be unpacked further and revisited as we progress through the chapters in the book.

Managing Classes with a High Number of SEND Pupils in them

As you have just read, for an average mainstream primary class, there will be approximately four pupils in each class that will need support for SEND. For some of you, this may seem a lot to manage; for others, you will have more than four pupils with SEND in your host placement class, and some classes may have up to a third or half

of pupils with SEND that need additional support and resources. So, how do you manage this?

First, it is important to remember that you are a trainee teacher! You will become more expert as you move through your course and into your ECT years. Your mentor and your teacher training provider tutors will be there to guide you through each step of your journey.

There will be many challenges to working with a class with a high number of SEND pupils. You might be managing a larger number of support staff in your classroom; this will be looked at further in Chapter 7 when managing staff to support SEND pupils becomes a focus.

There will be further implications such as needing to consider the individual needs of pupils and potentially the additional time for planning and for the personalisation of needs, such as ensuring access to the curriculum, how pupils will be scaffolded to ensure that they can make progress. You will also need to think about how and when you will gain feedback and assessment from support staff to gather and put back into your planning, and when you will work with each of the pupils.

Key things to follow up on will be:

- How will you work with the additional number of adults in your class? This may include planning for TAs/LSAs and discussing plans and feedback from work they have been doing with pupils.
- Ensuring access to the curriculum for all pupils, through the use of scaffolding and adaptive teaching and planning for these adaptations.
- Ensuring that you work directly with all of your pupils to ensure that you have a good understanding of where your pupils are, and what progress they are making, and what gaps they may have. It is important that you take full responsibility for the progress of your pupils.

Challenges will be:

- Finding time to discuss plans, progress and assessment of pupils with your support staff. Build this into your day, are there times that you can check in with each member of support staff? Or during an assembly, or during your Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time?
- Adapting teaching for a larger number of pupils, considering individual needs and supports and scaffolds that will need to be in place. Seek support from experienced colleagues and your SENCo to ensure that you put appropriate scaffolds in place.

Each of these will be supported by your mentor, and you will not be expected to take on a class with a high number of SEND pupils on your own while you are in training. It will be good experience to work closely with your mentor, and you may have a focus group of SEND pupils that you work with initially and your mentor leads the other group. As you become more competent and confident, you will be able to take on further

responsibility. As you move into your ECT years, you may work in a school that has particularly high numbers of SEND pupils in classes, and support for you as a developing ECT may be something that you would like to explore when visiting a school in preparation for a job application or at interview.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the long list of the roles and responsibilities of the SENCo as stated in the Code of Practice. It is important to understand the role of the SENCo, and how what you do within the classroom fits in to this larger model, and how the SENCo will be supporting you to support your SEND pupils. The chapter then progressed to outline your role as a teacher in relation to your SEND pupils, and again, there is quite a long list of elements for you to get to grips with as a trainee teacher – but you will be supported with this, and you will continue to progress and gain confidence as you move into your ECT years. This book will also support you with progression in your knowledge, understanding and developing your expertise as you move through the chapters.

The final section of the chapter considered the challenges of managing higher numbers of SEND pupils in class, and areas of this will be revisited and become a focus in the coming chapters.

Glossary of Key Terms

- NASENCO Award – National Award for SENCos; the qualification that SENCos must take within three years of undertaking the role as a SENCo.

Further Reading

- Department for Education (DfE) (2015). Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice; 0 to 25 Years. DfE. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf
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- Inside Government (2022). What is a School SENCo? Roles and Responsibilities. <https://blog.insidegovernment.co.uk/schools/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-senco>
- NASEN (2023). What is a SENCo? <https://nasen.org.uk/page/what-senco>

Links to the Teachers' Standards

- 2. *Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils*; be accountable for pupils' attainment, progress and outcomes, be aware of pupils' capabilities and their prior knowledge, and plan teaching to build on these.
- 5. *Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils*; have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these; have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.
- 6. *Make accurate and productive use of assessment*; know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas, including statutory assessment requirements; use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan subsequent lessons.
- 8. *Fulfil wider professional responsibilities*; develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support; deploy support staff effectively; take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues; communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being.

Part Two: Personal and Professional Conduct

- 3. Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.
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