

Parents Forum – The March C of E School – Jan 2015

Date – 21.01.2015

Topic – SENCO

SENCO – Mrs Smallwood

Chair – Mr Jackson (Deputy Head)

Governor Attendee – Mr John Proctor

Further attendees – parent attendees

Minutes – Gael Emmett

Follow up to previous meeting – Topic **Behaviour**

The question of whether low level disruption in classrooms has an impact on learning. The answer is that it can have an impact. The solution is to treat the issue with the sanctions normally applied to inappropriate behavior to resolve the matter. If the behavior persists, this can be treated as 'excludable'

SENCO

Mrs Smallwood led this topic with a presentation –

'A Parents Guide to Special Educational Needs', An outline of the topics covered, as follows

- The 'Code of Practice' (overview – document is 281 pages long)
- The main goals of the new code of practice
- 'Special Education needs or falling behind'
- Clear definition of when a child has Special Educational needs – two key factors
- Changes to how Special Educational Needs are assessed and Action Plans put in place
- Four key areas of SEN
- Its all about the Classroom
- A parents first step
- Outcomes
- Support
- SEN parents groups

PLEASE NOTE – the notes taken at the meeting will provide an overview of these topics. For further information the following links are very informative

<http://www.nasen.org.uk>

<http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/help-and-advice/special-needs-advice/sen-professional-help/29/the-special-educational-needs-coordinator-senco>

[http://www.specialeducationalneeds.co.uk/uploads/1/1/4/6/11463509/senco - key information guide 3.pdf](http://www.specialeducationalneeds.co.uk/uploads/1/1/4/6/11463509/senco_-_key_information_guide_3.pdf)

Code of Practice - *the policy applies for 0-25 years*

Link to the document can be found on this government website – please note Chapter 6 is recommended as the relevant section

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Changes to the code of practice

Main Goals

- 1.to involve children and parents in the decisions that are made
- 2.to spot issues early and make sure something is done about them
- 3.for education, health and social care to communicate and plan support together
- 4.to make sure schools offer high quality support for children with SEN.
5. to focus on removing barriers to learning
6. to prepare children for being adults – getting jobs and living independently – **‘HAPPY, ABLE AND ENGAGED’**

Special Education needs or ‘falling behind’

The term ‘special educational needs’ is used too widely. Around half the schools visited (by Ofsted) used low attainment and relatively slow progress as their principle indicators of special educational needs - 2010

Many pupils are being wrongly identified as having SEN – 2010

Note – the Governments theories on the drives behind behavioral issues have changed. It is now believed that behavioral issues are a symptom of ‘unmet’ needs

SEN

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for SEN provision to be made for him or her

A child has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of other of the same age, or
- Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools

Changes to SEN

Previously – School Action and School Action Plus and Statement of SEN
NOW – SEN Support and EHCP (Educational Health and Care Plan)

Four Areas of SEN

Communication and Interaction
Cognition and learning
Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
Sensory and /or physical needs

Its all about the classroom

High quality teaching differentiated for individual pupils is the first step to responding to pupils who may have an SEN. Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching.

Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN. Equally it should not be assumed that attainment in line with chronological age means that there is no learning difficulty.

The first response to slow progress should be high quality teaching targeted at a child's area of weakness. Lessons should be planned to address any potential areas of difficulty and to remove barriers to achievement.

A Parents First Step

Make an appointment to speak to the class teacher. Remember, you know your child best. Let the teacher know your concerns. Arrange a follow up appointment to discuss the concerns and find out what the class teacher has observed.

Outcomes

Improving outcomes – high aspirations and expectations for children and young people with SEN

All children and young people are entitled to an education that enables them to make progress so that they

- Achieve their best
- Become confident individuals living fulfilling lives
- Make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education or training

Support

www.westsussexparentsforum.co.uk/

www.westsussex.local-offer.org

Special Needs Agenda

Key elements are -

Inclusion

Confidentiality

all policies and planning at schools must support this

Whilst parents may have many concerns and enquiries based around SEN in the school, the school is bound by these guidelines. Not all questions raised at a forum can be answered without contravening these policies. It is possible to make an appointment with the Head teacher to discuss your concerns.

Notes from meeting discussions

Schools SEN policy

Schools must write their own internal Special Needs Policy

As a 'Goodwood Area School (GAS) school we wrote a general local offer (generic 'code of practice') to enable all schools in the local area to be equal in the SEN policies. No one school would be identified as a 'specialist' SEN school in the local area.

The question as to whether the March school has a higher level of SEN pupils than the norm was raised. It was confirmed that this is not the case. The recent Ofsted report also confirmed this. The above statement supports a strong approach to ensuring this responsibility is shared equally by schools in this area.

A separate document of SEN for each identified child is produced in consultation with parents.

The question of how long SEN record remains active was raised. An ECHP will remain until the person reaches 25. Further enquiries are being made to confirm how long a SEN record remains.

There is a legal obligation to provide the support required for each SEN child, whether the funding needed to back it up is available or not. If a child is 'statemented' the funds available to support that child may be only a portion of the amount needed. Juggling of funds and resources is then required. This is part of the role of the school governors.

The question of whether the school had the funding needed to support required for each SEN child was raised (answer outlined as above). The suggestion was also raised as to whether there are other ways parents can support the school to aid in this matter. Volunteer Parent Readers is an ideal opportunity to help provide support. Mrs Smallwood is in the process of setting up training for parents in 'Reading Support'.

Sometimes the school will need to seek further specialist support or advice from outside the school. The Local Authority has some remaining services such as the Speech and Language Service (SALT). They do not provide speech therapy, but can assess a child and provide a plan to be put in place by the school. There is an inclusion team and there are Learning and Behaviour advisors. There is an Educational Psychology Service (EPS), however they are primarily available for the Education Health Care Plan process, although they do have a telephone service which the school can access by appointment. There is also the school nurse.

The following link is to 'Early Help' a Family Support Offer made available through West Sussex government services

<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=38117>

'Early Help' views children's needs in terms of a 'scale' of need. It involves a 'holistic' approach towards the child, considering education, health and social services. A decision to instigate help for a child will involve the agreement of a parent and will be in collaboration with a parent.

The Children and Young People's Planning Forum (CYPPF) is held twice monthly at varying venues. It is a panel of multi agency professionals that convenes with the sole purpose of assisting schools/families in managing the challenging needs of some children. The school, with family agreement, can ask for help from the panel. They suggest possible courses of action, with the main aim being to 'Remove barriers to learning'.

Provision maps are written by class teachers. Provision maps show how children with additional needs are catered for within each class. Some children may be catered for within usual classroom differentiation. Other children may be withdrawn for additional assistance, either individually or in groups.

Teachers provide their SEN plans to the schools Head teacher each week. On average 10-20% of pupils may struggle with access to the curriculum. This must be catered for in the plan. When the need arises above this level within a class, this must be 'flagged' and the Head teacher will approach the Governors for additional 'needs' support.

SEN & EHCP

Approx 20% -30% of children have a SEN in school. Very few children with SEN will need what is now called an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) - this used to be called a 'Statement'. If a family and the school submit an application for an EHCP to the Local Authority, the Local Authority has 20 weeks to respond. If a child has an EHCP, it is a legally binding document and is monitored by the Local Authority. There is an Annual Review process.

In a class where there are a high percentage of SEN &/or EHCP needs the school must ensure these are met.

Role of the SENCO in a school

Low level needs can be differentiated as 'can' access the schools programs and systems. The SENCO specialist can be approached for support with these children. The SENCO will assess and develop programs and systems to support this child. These could range from 'booster' or 'nurture' groups to 1on1 support.

Involvement of parents and children in decision making processes around SEN are key. The process of assessment of a child can be instigated by a parent.

It is important to highlight issues as early as possible with a child prior to 'entrenchment'. Training of teachers, TAs and parent readers is vital to the support of SEN children.

Accessing your Special Educational Needs Coordinator

The school **SENCO, Mrs Smallwood**, is available for parents to access via the following methods

- Available in the playground for parents to approach
- Parents Evening – appointments can be made at Parents Evenings to meet with Mrs Smallwood
- General appointments – parents are able to initiate an appointment with Mrs Smallwood to discuss any concerns they may have
- There is discussion of creating a set time for drop in appointments or an 'open door' afternoon in order for parents to easily access their SENCO and create a supportive environment around SEN.

NEXT MEETING – 10.03.2015

TOPIC – **School Improvement Plan & National Curriculum**

FUTURE TOPIC – Progress & Attainment (Date TBC)

OTHER ITEMS *now concluded*

Parent Forum – Objectives, Scope and Conduct DOC – Ashley Hatton

- Final document – ***published***

Guidelines for Topics at future Parents Forums

- Outline of *School Improvement Plan* to be provided as aid to setting future Topics for discussion – ***next topic at Parents Forum***

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Publication of Minutes from Parents Forums

- All Minutes of Parents Forums to exist as archive on school website, as reference tool for parents/carers – ***now published***