



UNIT-3

Supporting Pupils With Special Educational Needs

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Define and discuss special educational needs in the classroom
- ✓ Provide invaluable support for teachers and pupils
- ✓ Understand the various different types of special educational needs



Unit 3

Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs

What does SEN mean?

The 1996 Education Act defines a child as having Special Educational Needs “if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them”. Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- a. Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age
- b. Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local authority
- c. Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at a. or b. above or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.

As 21% of pupils in the UK (approx. 1.7M children) have been identified as having special educational needs and the majority of these pupils are within mainstream education. Learning support and inclusive teaching enables the children to access the curriculum. Support staff can provide more intensive support for an individual or small group of pupils which allows the teacher to concentrate on the rest of the class. This ensures that the needs of all pupils can be met in an inclusive way.

The SEN Code of Practice

To provide practical advice and a framework for schools and LEAs to carry out their statutory duties, the SEN Code of Practice was introduced (originally in 1994 and then a revised version was issued in 2002). The Code of Practice provides a framework for developing strong partnerships between parents, schools, local education authorities (LEAs) and health and social services.

Its Statement promotes a consistent approach to meeting children’s Special of SEN Educational Needs and places the rights of children at the heart of Statutory Assessment of the process, allowing them to be heard and to take part in the decision making process whenever the need arise. The focus is on ensuring that special education needs are identified as quickly as possible.

How does it work?

The Code of Practice works to a ‘Graduated Response’ process. In order to help children who have SEN, schools should make full use of available classroom and school resources, before calling upon outside resources and specialist expertise.



This is a graduated approach, with the teacher using an array of strategies to support the child's special need before consulting the SENCO or before consideration is given to moving on to the register at School Action or School Action Plus.

Pre-SEN: Teacher concerns (Previously Stage 1)

In order to meet the needs of individual children and gain additional support from other agencies, the class teacher should monitor the progress of the pupil closely in the first instance, providing a range of intervention strategies and differentiated work.

Detailed records of observations, children's strengths and weaknesses, intervention strategies used and concerns must be maintained. Using this evidence, you might decide that the strategies used are not allowing the child to learn as effectively as possible and to make sufficient progress. In these circumstances, the SENCO may be consulted.

The starting point will be a review of the strategies used and the way they might be developed. In some schools, an Individual Education Plan (**IEP**) may be introduced at this stage.

The review could lead to the conclusion that the pupil requires help over and above that which is normally available within the class. Consideration should then be given to putting the child's name on the school's Special Educational Needs Register at School Action.

At this point, the school has a duty to inform the child's parents that special educational provision is being sought for the child, because the child might have SEN.

School Action (Previously stage 2)

When the class teacher or the SENCO identifies a child with SEN, interventions are provided which are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum. If this is the case, the child should move to School Action.

At this stage, it is the responsibility of the school to provide any support. The SENCO and the class teacher should decide on the action needed to help the child to progress, consulting the head teacher should extra resources be required.

Statement of Special Education Needs

When the LEA has completed its assessment of a child, it will decide whether to issue a statement. Provision will normally be quantified (e.g. in terms of hours of provision and staffing arrangements) although there will be cases where some flexibility should be retained, in order to meet the changing special educational needs of the child concerned.

All children with a statement should have short-term targets set out in an IEP, prepared by the SENCO with support from the external agencies and the class teacher.



Types of Special Educational Needs

There are many Special Educational Needs, many of which will fall within one of four categories. Although we have grouped needs together for the purpose of this section, the needs of many learners will span more than one group.

1. Cognition and Learning Needs
 - SpLD, MLD
 - SLD, PMLD
2. Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs
 - Supporting and Managing Behaviour
3. Communication and Interaction Needs
 - SLCN, ASC/ASD
4. Sensory and/or Physical Needs
 - HI/VI, PD, MSI

Cognition and Learning Needs

Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

Pupils with specific learning difficulties have a particular difficulty in learning to read, write, spell or manipulate numbers so that their performance in these areas is below their performance in other areas. Pupils may also have problems with short-term memory, with organisational skills and with co-ordination. Pupils with specific learning difficulties cover the whole ability range and the severity of their impairment varies widely.

Pupils should only be recorded as SpLD if their difficulties are significant and persistent, despite appropriate learning opportunities and if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum.

Specific learning difficulties include:

- **Dyslexia** — Pupils with dyslexia have a marked and persistent difficulty in learning to read, write and spell, despite progress in other areas. Pupils may have poor reading comprehension, handwriting and punctuation. They may also have difficulties in concentration and organisation and in remembering sequences of words. They may mispronounce common words or reverse letters and sounds in words.



- **Dyscalculia** — Pupils with dyscalculia have difficulty in acquiring mathematical skills. Pupils may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures.
- **Dyspraxia** — Pupils with dyspraxia are affected by an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement, often appearing clumsy. Gross and fine motor skills are hard to learn and difficult to retain and generalise. Pupils may have poor balance and co-ordination and may be hesitant in many actions (running, skipping, hopping, holding a pencil, doing jigsaws, etc). Their articulation may also be immature and their language late to develop. They may also have poor awareness of body position and poor social skills.

Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments significantly below expected levels in most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum.

They should only be recorded as MLD if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills.

Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)

Pupils with severe learning difficulties have significant intellectual or cognitive impairments. This has a major effect on their ability to participate in the school curriculum without support. They may also have difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication and perception and the acquisition of self-help skills. Pupils with severe learning difficulties will need support in all areas of the curriculum. They may also require teaching of self-help, independence and social skills. Some pupils may use sign and symbols but most will be able to hold simple conversations. Their attainments may be below level 1 of the National Curriculum much of their school careers.

Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)

Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have complex learning needs. In addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition. Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Their attainments may be below level 1 of the National Curriculum much of their school careers.



Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulty (BESD – previously EBD)

Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties cover the full range of ability and a continuum of severity. Their behaviours present a barrier to learning and persist despite the implementation of an effective school behaviour policy and personal/social curriculum. Pupils should only be recorded as BESD if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum.

At the milder end of the continuum, pupils may have difficulties with social interaction and find it difficult to work in a group or cope in unstructured time. They may have poor concentration, temper outbursts and be verbally aggressive to peers and adults. Other pupils may provoke peers and be confrontational or openly defiant and sometimes physically aggressive towards peers and adults. They are often off task and have a very short concentration span. Their self-esteem is low and they find it hard to accept praise or to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Some pupils may not be able to function at all in group situations and exhibit persistent and frequent violent behaviour which requires physical intervention. Other pupils may display similar signs of low esteem, under achievement and inappropriate social interaction, but without outwardly challenging behavioural outbursts. They will be withdrawn, quiet and find it difficult to communicate. Pupils with attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) should be recorded in this group if additional educational arrangements are being made to support them. Pupils with ADD may have reduced attention and impulsivity. Pupils with ADHD may also show signs of hyperactivity.

Communication and Interaction Needs

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Pupils with speech, language and communication needs cover the whole ability range. They should only be recorded as SLCN if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum. Pupils with speech, language and communication needs may have difficulty in understanding and/or making others understand information conveyed through spoken language. Their acquisition of speech and their oral language skills may be significantly behind their peers. Their speech may be poor or unintelligible.

Pupils with speech difficulties may experience problems in articulation and the production of speech sounds. They may have a severe stammer. Pupils with language impairments find it hard to understand and/or use words in context. They may use words incorrectly with inappropriate grammatical patterns, have a reduced vocabulary or find it hard to recall words and express ideas. They may also hear or see a word but not be able to understand its meaning or have trouble getting others to understand what they are trying to say.



Please note that pupils whose first language is not English are not recorded as SLCN unless they also have a special educational need in this area.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autistic spectrum disorder is a relatively new term which recognises that there are a number of sub-groups within the spectrum of autism.

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder find it difficult to:

- understand and use non verbal and verbal communication
- understand social behaviour which affects their ability to interact with children and adults
- Think and behave flexibly which may be shown in restricted, obsessional or repetitive activities.

Pupils with ASD cover the full range of ability and the severity of their impairment varies widely. Some pupils also have learning disabilities or other difficulties, making diagnosis difficult. Pupils should only be recorded as ASD if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum.

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders may have a difficulty in understanding the communication of others and in developing effective communication themselves. Many are delayed in learning to speak and some never develop meaningful speech. Pupils find it difficult to understand the social behaviour of others. They are literal thinkers and fail to understand the social context. They can experience high levels of stress and anxiety in settings that don't meet their needs or when routines are changed. This can lead to inappropriate behaviour.

Some pupils with autistic spectrum disorders have a different perception of sounds, sights, smell, touch and taste and this affects their response to these sensations. They may have unusual sleep and behaviour patterns.

Young pupils may not play with toys in a conventional and imaginative way but instead use toys rigidly or repetitively e.g. watching moving parts of machinery for long periods with intense concentration. They find it hard to generalise skills and have difficulty adapting to new situations and often prefer routine.

Pupils with Asperger's syndrome should be recorded in this category. These pupils share the same triad of impairments but have higher intellectual abilities and their language development is different from the majority of pupils with autism.

Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Visual Impairment (VI)

Visual impairment refers to a range of difficulties from minor impairment through to blindness. Pupils with visual impairments cover the whole ability range. For educational purposes, a pupil is considered



to be visually impaired if they require adaptations to their environment or specific differentiation of learning materials in order to access the curriculum.

Pupils should only be included if additional educational provision is being made to help them to access the curriculum. Pupils whose vision is corrected by spectacles should not be recorded as VI.

Pupils who are blind or have very limited useful sight require tactile methods of learning, such as Braille and 3-D representations, together with making optimal use of their hearing. Partially sighted pupils also need differentiated materials and may use enlarged print or a mix of learning methods.

Hearing Impairment (HI)

Pupils with a hearing impairment range from those with a mild hearing loss to those who are profoundly deaf. They cover the whole ability range. For educational purposes, pupils are regarded as having a hearing impairment if they require hearing aids, adaptations to their environment and/or particular teaching strategies in order to access the concepts and language of the curriculum.

A number of pupils with a hearing impairment also have an additional disability or learning difficulty.

Hearing loss may be because of conductive or sensori-neural problems and can be measured on a decibel scale. Four categories are generally used: mild, moderate, severe and profound. Some pupils with a significant loss, communicate through sign instead of, or as well as, speech.

Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)

Pupils with multi-sensory impairment have a combination of visual and hearing difficulties. They are sometimes referred to as deaf blind but may have some residual sight and/or hearing. Many also have additional disabilities but their complex needs mean that it may be difficult to ascertain their intellectual abilities.

Pupils with multi-sensory impairment have much greater difficulties in accessing the curriculum and the environment than those with a single sensory impairment. They have difficulties in perception, communication and in the acquisition of information. Incidental learning is limited. The combination can result in high anxiety and multi-sensory deprivation. Pupils need teaching approaches which make good use of their residual hearing and vision, together with their other senses. They may need alternative means of communication.

Physical Disability (PD)

There is a wide range of physical disabilities and pupils cover the whole ability range. Some pupils are able to access the curriculum and learn effectively without additional educational provision. They have a disability but do not have a special educational need. For others, the impact on their education may be severe. In the same way, a medical diagnosis does not necessarily mean that a pupil has SEN. It depends on the impact the condition has on their educational needs.



There are a number of medical conditions associated with physical disability which can impact on mobility. These include cerebral palsy, heart disease, spinal bifida and hydrocephalus, muscular dystrophy. Pupils with physical disabilities may also have sensory impairments, neurological problems or learning difficulties. Some pupils are mobile but have significant fine motor difficulties which require support. Others may need augmentative or alternative communication aids.

Ways to Help Students with Special educational needs

Learning disabilities impact the way children are able to process and understand information; they are neurological disorders that might manifest themselves as difficulty listening, thinking, writing, speaking, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, visual perception disorders, auditory processing disorders, and language disorders fall under the umbrella of learning disorders. Many children with ADHD also have comorbid learning disorders.

What an ideal teacher or teaching assistant must understand is that students with special needs such as learning disabilities need to be taught differently or need some accommodations to enhance the learning environment. Not everyone learns in the same way, and you can follow some tips to create a well-rounded learning atmosphere.

- ✓ Maintain an organized classroom and limit distractions. For students with special needs, maintaining a healthy balance of structure and unstructured processes is important. For example, on each student's desk, have a place for everything that is clearly labelled (use words or colours, for instance). Also consider using checklists and help students keep their notebooks organized; teach them how to do that on their own, but also check at the end of each day and offer suggestions for keeping it more organized. On the unstructured side of things, allow students with special needs to change their work area while completing homework or studying and assign tasks that involve moving around the room. For students with special needs and learning disabilities, hearing instructions or following directions can be made difficult if there are too many distractions. Schedule breaks throughout the day and seat students with special needs in an area of the classroom that limits distractions; for example, do not sit these children by a window, in front of an open door, or by the air conditioner, as people walking by or additional noises might be too distracting.
- ✓ Use music and voice inflection. When transitioning to an activity, use a short song to finish up one task and move to another. Many of us have sung the "clean up" while cleaning up before the next activity; use a similar approach in the classroom. Students with special needs might also respond well to varied voice inflection and tone, so use a mixture of loud, soft, and whisper sounds. Using proper pronunciation and sometimes slightly exaggerating proper speech will help a child model the same principles.



- ✓ Break down instructions into smaller, manageable tasks. Students with special needs often have difficulty understanding long-winded or several instructions at once. For children with learning disabilities, it is best to use simple, concrete sentences. You might have to break down a step into a few smaller steps to ensure your students with special needs understand what you are asking. You might even want to put the directions both in print and saying them verbally. Ask your students with special needs to repeat the directions and ask them to demonstrate that they understand. Do not give further instructions until a student has completed the previous task.
- ✓ Use multi-sensory strategies. As all children learn in different ways, it is important to make every lesson as multi-sensory as possible. Students with learning disabilities might have difficulty in one area, while they might excel in another. For example, use both visual and auditory cues. Create opportunities for tactile experiences. You might need to use physical cues, such as a light touch, when a student might get distracted or inattentive. Get creative with your lesson plans, and students with special needs will appreciate the opportunity to use their imaginations or try something new; use a balance of structure and familiar lessons with original content.
- ✓ Give students with special needs opportunities for success. Children with learning disabilities often feel like they do not succeed in certain areas, but structuring lessons that lead to successful results is a way to keep them motivated. Provide immediate reinforcement for accomplishments, be consistent with rules and discipline, correct errors and reward students when they make these corrections themselves explain behavioural expectations, and teach and demonstrate appropriate behaviours rather than just expecting students with special needs to pick them up.

While these suggestions are ideal for classroom settings, parents of students with special needs can also implement these principles. Helping children with learning disabilities both in and out of the classroom is the best way to help your students with special needs achieve success.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Rita Cheminals, (2013), Promoting and Delivering School-to-School Support for Special Educational Needs.*