

The Role of the SENCO

The SENCO, in an early years setting or a school, has the task of co-ordinating the support that is provided to pupils under 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus' (or Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus). The role of the SENCO has developed since it was first introduced and is redefined in the revised Code of Practice. It is recommended that the notes below are read in conjunction with the revised SEN Code of Practice which came into force on January 1st 2002.

The following sections are particularly relevant:

1.31, 1.39, 4.15 – 4.36, 5.30 – 5.73, 6.9, 6.18, 6.32 – 6.75, 10.6 – 10.13.

Further detail is also provided in the SEN Toolkit where Section 5 is especially useful.

Key elements in the role of the school-based SENCO are now seen as:

- Taking day to day responsibility for the operation and implementation of the school's SEN Policy;
- liaising with staff, parents and carers, and other agencies, to ensure co-ordination of the support provided to individual children;
- assisting the Headteacher and Governing Body in planning SEN policy and provision;
- providing professional guidance to those colleagues supporting pupils with SEN;
- helping to identify barriers to learning, within the school context and developing means of overcoming these restrictions;
- assisting with assessment and analysis of children's needs and in planning programmes of support to meet those needs;
- collaborating with curriculum co-ordinators, to ensure the learning needs of all children are given equal emphasis and that resources are well used.

It will be immediately apparent that the role of the SENCO is both varied and demanding. In the light of this, the revised Code of Practice makes several recommendations regarding the position of SENCO within a school.

It is suggested that the SENCO should:

- a) have non-teaching time available, to undertake the tasks involved;
- b) have access to a telephone and administrative support;
- c) have an interview room available;
- d) be regarded as a senior member of staff, with equivalent status to that of a Curriculum co-ordinator, and be part of the senior leadership team;
- e) have access to appropriate ICT equipment and links with other SENCOs, via the BECTa Discussion Forum, for example.

School Action

At the School Action stage the SENCO should:

- work with the class teacher, to consider the educational needs of an individual child causing concern and examine all existing relevant information;
- take a lead in further assessment of strengths and weaknesses, in planning future support and in monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of that support;
- assist with the production and review of Individual Education Plans;
- involve LEA support services, where it is thought advice or training may be beneficial, or where specialist equipment may be helpful, and where this will obviate the need for ongoing involvement from external agencies.

School Action Plus

At the School Action Plus stage the SENCO should also:

- co-ordinate and support the involvement of external services, in support of pupils with SEN;
- liaise with subject and other co-ordinators, the class teacher and any external specialists, regarding the range of different teaching approaches and strategies employed, to meet the special needs of the pupil;
- liaise with the parents or carers regarding the involvement of outside professionals and seek parents consent for this to happen
- when it is felt even school action plus provides insufficient help for a pupil, collate the information required to initiate a referral for statutory assessment.