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## Preparation for adulthood and the curriculum pledge

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## Curriculum Through a SEND Lens in a Multi-Academy Trust

Professional Development Group

### School/Background Context

The Multi-Academy Trust comprises 24 primary schools and 3 secondary schools across eight local authorities. In September 2023, a Lead Practitioner for SEND was appointed to work across all settings as part of a centralised team. This initiative reflected the Trust's commitment to ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), access the full curriculum. As of January 2025, the Trust's pupil demographics include:

- SEND (SEN Support - K): **15.6%**
- SEND (EHCP - E): **2.5%**
- SEND (K + E): **18.1%**
- Pupil Premium: **35%**
- Free School Meals: **35.4%**
- English as an Additional Language (EAL): **28.7%**

Quality assurance processes revealed a varied level of SEND provision across the academies, with notable examples of best practice alongside areas requiring further development. Recognising the strong foundational understanding of SEND provision among most SENDCOs, the Trust sought to advance practice through an enquiry-based approach to the curriculum offer for learners with SEND. This aimed to strengthen curriculum leaders' roles in overseeing SEND provision and to empower subject leaders to integrate adaptive strategies throughout their curriculum areas.

Beyond the project this will have rolled out to wider curriculum teams using the piloted model.

### The Challenge

The project was implemented via a professional development group comprising middle leaders, predominantly subject and curriculum leaders from primary academies. The initiative spanned five sessions designed to:

- Gather evidence of existing SEND provision
- Analyse the SEND profile of each setting
- Evaluate staff confidence in meeting diverse needs
- Review the current curriculum implementation from a SEND perspective

## The Challenge (continued)

The project commenced with a two-hour launch event that established the project's objectives. This was followed by a two-hour online session where participants shared their settings' SEND profiles and received an introduction to the implementation cycle. Two subsequent full-day face-to-face sessions offered an opportunity to examine adaptive strategies, review current research, and commence project planning. A mid-project online session allowed for reflection on progress and an exploration of the theory of change. The final two-hour face-to-face celebration event provided a platform for participants to share their projects with the wider group, including headteachers and SENDCOs, while also reviewing national SEND developments.

Although overall engagement was strong, some scheduling issues were noted, particularly as the project extended into a new academic year. Concerns about encroaching on SENDCO responsibilities were mitigated through comprehensive briefings and a clear communication strategy emphasising a collaborative, whole-school approach.

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## What They Did

The professional development group adopted a structured approach to reviewing and enhancing SEND provision. Through a combination of group sessions, individual 1:1 meetings, and school visits, the Lead Practitioner for SEND was able to tailor support and gather critical insights regarding each setting's progress. This bespoke approach enabled participants to identify and address specific challenges, such as leadership changes that impacted decision-making within certain academies, and to share successful adaptive practices across the Trust.

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## Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

The project yielded several tangible outcomes:

- **Enhanced Understanding and Tailored Support:** Three 1:1 sessions allowed for an in-depth understanding of the SEND provision in each setting. These sessions revealed both systemic challenges and individual needs, which informed the tailored support provided by the Lead Practitioner for SEND.
- **Improved Curriculum Delivery:** The initiative raised the profile of vocabulary development and dual coding strategies, leading to increased consistency and confidence among subject leaders. As a result, adaptive strategies are now shared more widely within curriculum teams.
- **Empowerment and Collaboration:** Middle leaders reported feeling more empowered to refine and deliver an accessible curriculum. In settings where projects were particularly successful, adaptive strategies are now being extended to other subject areas. Collaborative practices have strengthened, with members frequently engaging across schools to share best practices, thereby alleviating some of the workload on SENDCOs.
- **Sustainable Change:** The involvement and support of senior leaders have underpinned the project's sustainability. Preliminary indications suggest that successful approaches are being integrated into daily routines and are forming the basis of a more strategic, team-oriented approach to SEND provision across the Trust.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting

## Next Steps

The Trust intends to build on the momentum of this project through several key initiatives:

- Continuing to facilitate networking opportunities within the established group to sustain collaboration.
- Engaging with the Trust's training lead to launch a subsequent cohort using the Whole School SEND model.
- Empowering leaders and SENDCOs to adopt a predominantly strategic role rather than an operational one.
- Identifying and championing innovative leaders who have embraced the project, thereby promoting best practice across the Trust.

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## Key Learning

The professional development group has significantly influenced both individual schools and the Trust as a whole. Where supported by the wider school community, members have successfully implemented adaptive teaching practices within their subject areas. This collaborative approach has not only elevated the profile of adaptive teaching but also fostered an environment in which successful strategies are shared and replicated across settings. The project's emphasis on a structured, evidence-based review of SEND provision has contributed to a more consistent, accessible curriculum, thereby ensuring that all learners are afforded the opportunity to engage fully with their educational experience.



**More inclusive high-quality teaching**



**More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting**