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## Improving the quality of SEND provision through establishing a model of distributed leadership

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**Whole School SEND:**  
Peer Mentoring for School Improvement 2022–2023

**Improving the quality of SEND provision through establishing a model of distributed leadership**

## School: Secondary

### Overview of the Project

This Peer-to-Peer project was undertaken to support a secondary mainstream school, The School, graded as Requires Improvement (RI) to improve the quality of SEND provision and was undertaken by a Whole School SEND (WSS) Regional Lead.

### Background

The school was judged Requires improvement (RI) by Ofsted in October 2021. In this inspection the team recognised that the school was already making significant changes to address a previously narrow curriculum (a response to the former Inspection framework). However, with the disruption of Covid and the time taken to work changes through the school population the legacy effect of the former curriculum meant that quality of education was deemed to be RI, this impacted on judgements made around leadership and management.

In relation to learners with SEND Ofsted noted:

- Despite the recent changes to the curriculum, it continues to lack the necessary depth, breadth and ambition for pupils, including some pupils with SEND. Older pupils continue to be negatively affected by the previous curriculum. As a result, these pupils have insecure subject knowledge. Leaders should ensure that they continue to plan the curriculum so that it is appropriately ambitious for all pupils. They should also consider more carefully how the revised curriculum will help older pupils to catch up with lost learning.
- In some subjects, leaders have not identified with sufficient precision what they want pupils to learn. Where there is less precision, some teachers do not know how to ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, learn and remember the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders must improve how the curriculum is planned and delivered by teachers.
- Leaders have not designed assessment systems that enable teachers to check where pupils have missing or insecure knowledge in their learning. As a result, some teachers do not adapt the curriculum effectively enough to enable pupils to catch up, or to address pupils' misunderstandings. Leaders must strengthen their assessment systems so that teachers can check precisely what knowledge pupils have learned.

## Background (continued)

- Subject leaders do not routinely check how effectively teachers are implementing the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This is because some subject leaders have not finalised their curriculum plans. They are unclear about exactly what should be taught. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they should. Leaders need to ensure that all subject leaders have appropriate curriculum plans in place so that they can check how well the curriculum is being delivered for pupils with SEND.

The inspection took place in October 2021 and on joining the WSS Peer Mentoring Project the school had already made improvements to address some of the issues raised, including working with external consultants. It was therefore important that the proposed support from WSS dovetailed with existing support. To date work had centred on communication and information sharing, deployment of teaching assistants (TAs) and improving the effectiveness of Learning Support.

The areas of focus identified for this Peer-to Peer project were:

- Developing shared vision and language with clarity around of levels of provision
- Strengthening Subject Leadership
- Identification & Analysis of SEND Register
- Golden Thread Exercise - Tracking EHCP objectives through levels of paperwork
- Embedding High Quality Teaching
- Refining Quality Assurance Systems

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## Implementation

To include the vision, direction setting, building a shared understanding, common tools, and shared ways of working.

Leaders at the school have always had a strong vision for learners with SEND. Leaders are passionate about inclusion and meeting the needs of a complex catchment area. Ofsted identified issues with curriculum design and teaching and learning. Leaders are committed to securing positive school improvement.

In terms of the implementation of the Peer Mentoring Project the areas of focus for implementation were:

### Senior Leadership:

- Establishing **shared language** to meet leadership vision. This work involved the introduction of a **levels of provision approach** clearly establishing the Universal Offer (provision made for all pupils who attend the school), the Targeted Offer (provision made for learners with SEND support needs which is 'additional to' and 'different from' the Universal Offer) and the Specialist Offer (individualised provision made for learners undergoing Statutory Assessment or in receipt of an EHCP).
- **Identification and analysis of need.** This work involved the school in the process of comparing identification patterns to the national pattern.
- **Review of 'teacher facing' documentation** and establishing the 'golden thread' from EHCP to classroom practice

## Implementation (continued)

### Middle Leaders:

→ SEND Subject Leadership Training

### Teachers:

→ High Quality Teaching Training

Governors were not included in the core offer, but resources were supplied to support Governor development.

### The following implementation feedback was highlighted by school leaders:

The Headteacher identified that the **global impact** was the successful, strong reinforcement of the message that 'every teacher is a teacher of SEND' and 'every leader is a leader of SEND'. The school has long held the aspiration to be research based which is integral to the school's way of working. The Headteacher was appreciative of the fact that all initiatives, strategies and advice from WSS have been rooted in the current evidence base.

One of the Deputy Headteachers identified that the High-Quality Teaching training for all the Teaching Staff was a highlight. This training interlinked with the school's previous work on Rosenshine's principles and provided evidence-informed practical strategies for lesson adaptation, broken down in accordance with the four broad areas of need, whilst reinforcing the multiple and overlapping nature of SEND. He envisioned that the PowerPoint resource from this training would be a useful legacy tool to support teachers, including those new to the school.

The SENCo identified that the 'golden thread exercise' session had been particularly useful in providing challenge around the quantity and quality of teacher facing information and this has led to reform. However, there was also a recognition that more can still be done in this area.

The Peer Mentor identified that a key to successful implementation was the commitment from the whole leadership team, both pastoral and curriculum, underpinned by a recognition that the project was about school improvement, rather than a SEND improvement.

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## Building Expertise

Throughout the Project staff have felt that they were building on their expertise. The Headteacher commented that expertise has been developed throughout the organisation from the leadership team, through middle leaders to class teachers reinforcing the same concepts. Indeed, he commented that he has personally found the conversations to be developmental.

The scope of the project has touched every level of the organisation.



## Reviewing and refining implementation

Leaders commented that the work has demonstrated that SEND is not separate to the rest of the school. Teachers are already taking greater responsibility and using the graduated response more effectively. There is an understanding that everyone is looking to develop their own expertise.

Systems have been reviewed and refined, for example one of the Deputy Heads has met with the Assistant Head responsible for Quality Assurance to develop a strategy to track EHCP outcomes to ensure that teaching staff can see clear links.

Distributed leadership is a school strength, and middle leaders have had significant development work since Ofsted. Leaders believe they have come a long way and feel much better equipped.

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## Outcome and anticipated impact

Leaders believe that because of the project work undertaken shared language is in place and communication has improved. The levels of provision model and knowledge of need across the school supports subject leaders in planning their curriculum.

Documentation is already more streamlined and fit for purpose.

Improved knowledge around SEND including an embedded understanding that everyone is a teacher of SEND.

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## Next Steps to support sustainability

School has strong induction processes. Materials from the support, including inclusive vision, shared language and practical hints and tips will all be built into the induction process to ensure that new staff are able to sustain the inclusive approaches which have been developed.

SENCo sessions with early career teachers are to be widened to include teachers new to the school.

Drop-in sessions with the SENCo will be more formally established as part of pre-appraisal support following lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny and 'soft' intelligence gathered from teaching assistants.

The concept of 'Faculty SEND Champions' was discussed to raise the profile of SEND at a departmental level. The SENCo is already able to identify strong SEND advocates.

Leaders are considering SEND structurally through the timetabling process and are looking to prioritise the strongest and most experienced teachers to work with learners with SEND

The Annual Leadership Conference, held every July, will include a focus on SEND formally evaluating the work undertaken this year and prioritising SEND on the agenda for next year. The Peer Mentor advises that this activity would be supported with feedback from staff on what has worked well and how the work to date is impacting on confidence levels, workload and well-being.

## Other Information

The Headteacher reports that this has been a useful process. The approach has been genuinely tailored, flexible and adaptable. It has really helped to move the school forward.

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## Re-inspection February 2024

The school was re-inspected in February 2024. The overall rating was 'Good'. SEND was removed from the section 'What does the school need to improve?'

The following statements about SEND were made:

*'The school is ambitious for all pupils. Staff are determined that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain the knowledge and skills that they need to thrive in their future lives. The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Staff use the information that the school provides to support pupils with SEND to learn well. Teachers have benefitted from effective training which has helped them to adapt their teaching to meet the specific needs of pupils with SEND.'*