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## Using the 'Teacher Handbook: SEND' to embed inclusive leadership across a federation of primary schools

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## Using the “Teacher Handbook: SEND” to embed inclusive leadership across a federation of primary schools

Teacher Handbook: SEND

### Introduction

This case study demonstrates how the Whole School SEND (WSS) “Teacher Handbook: SEND” was used across two primary schools within a trust. The leadership team guided staff to plan for subject-specific inclusive learning using the handbook as their key guidance tool. It’s apparent that adaptive learning significantly improved, as can be heard through both teacher and pupil voice.

The federation that this case study focuses on, recently converted to an academy within a Partnership Trust, consisting of two primary schools located in Gloucestershire. The leadership team includes the Executive Head, Heads of School, and a strong Inclusion Team, composed of specialists in various areas.

#### School A:

- This large primary school features three classes per year group and two established Enhanced Provision classes: LEAP (Key Stage 2) and Little LEAP (Key Stage 1). These classes cater to learners with complex needs who struggled to thrive in mainstream settings, despite many adaptations. The learners have EHCPs, and most are awaiting a placement in a specialist setting.
- Consistently, learners entering Reception class have speech and language skills that are significantly below age-related expectations, with a SEND and pupil premium eligibility rate in line with national averages.

#### School B:

- Serves a community marked by high levels of deprivation, with many hard-to-reach families. The school recently introduced its Enhanced Provision class (LEAP) to support learners with complex needs. The school has double the national averages for learners with EHCPs. The school is part of the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project.
- Data reflects that learners enter with below-average starting points yet demonstrate significant progress during their time in Reception.
- The majority of learners are impacted by intersectionality; the complexity in which the effects of multiple vulnerabilities combine or intersect, such as race, gender, disability, socioeconomic status.

The federation emphasises a shared responsibility for SEND leadership. Leaders collaborate to ensure effective monitoring, support, and training, fostering a cohesive approach to teaching and learning. The Inclusion Team, comprising various specialists, has been enhanced to respond to increasingly complex needs. The federation is dedicated to developing future leaders who can extend their expertise beyond the local context. Leaders in various subjects have taken on roles to support other schools, contributing to local authority initiatives and sharing best practices to improve overall educational outcomes.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Increased engagement of learners with SEND

## Focus and Challenges

The Federation identified a significant need to support an increasing number of learners with diverse and complex needs. Recognising the importance that every teacher should be a teacher of SEND, the Federation aimed to establish inclusive practices for several reasons:

1. **Proactive Support:** Proactivity in ensuring that all learners receive the support they need, as learners have a diverse range of needs.
2. **Inclusive Environments:** Inclusive environments across the whole federation to ensure learners can access education, feel valued, safe and understood.
3. **Collaborative Approaches:** Working with specialists, parents, and support staff leads to tailored strategies that support the needs in individuals and develops holistic understanding of each learner.
4. **Adaptive Teaching:** Developing adaptive teaching strategies that benefit all learners and enhances the quality of education.
5. **Championing Learners:** Recognising learners' strengths while addressing their needs boosts self-esteem and achievement.

Inclusion became the focus for the Federation on the school/s development plan. There were three main priorities:

6. To develop **inclusive practice** through universal provision
7. To **improve assessment, identification and response** to need in each of the four areas of SEND
8. To **develop enhanced** provision to meet complex and significant needs

Number two and three were continuing to build on good practice, whereas priority number one was our key driver to develop inclusive practices in universal provision so that:

- All leaders are leaders of SEND, including subject leaders
- All teachers are teachers of SEND
- All support staff are supporters of SEND
- All staff adopt a positive and proactive approach to behaviour for learning

## Implementation

The implementation process was clearly planned to engage staff in shaping inclusive practices. Key steps included:

- Staff worked together within subject teams to explore the WSS "Teacher Handbook: SEND" and identified subject-specific strategies for their specific areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders and the Inclusion Team compiled insights into a comprehensive federation handbook (Inclusion Handbook: Adapting the curriculum subject guidance), guiding the adaptation of curriculum and teaching practices.
- Effective monitoring was integrated into leadership practices, ensuring that all leaders took an active role in monitoring and developing SEND in their area, not just the senior leadership team. Subject teams were supported by the Inclusion Team in their knowledge and understanding as well as with their monitoring activities.

## Outcomes and Impact

After two terms of implementation, a peer review involving external schools was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the adapted teaching strategies. Key findings included:

### Pupil Voice:

- All learners could explain the provision in place for them and how it helped them to progress
- There clearly were no ceilings on their access to learning. One learner described his adapted work as a 'warmup' and he can then continue to the main class learning.
- They were very aware that they have different learning opportunities but there were no negative feelings attached to this
- They talked with great enthusiasm for their learning and the members of staff interacting with them

### Teacher Voice:

- Record of Concern process is very supportive, answers come quickly based on severity of need.
- All felt they had improved their SEND practice this year and have benefitted from the single focus of SEND. Staff meetings have been useful, and teachers feel they have been given clear permission to slow down and give learners what they need.
- Wellbeing: Inclusion Team meetings are very useful, SLT are very approachable, can go to them with anything, colleagues check in with each other. Leadership team listen to feedback and are willing to adapt, they take time to explain why certain things are needed.

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## Impact

- All staff consistently demonstrate positive attitudes and practices towards SEND and inclusion without exception.
- Teachers are informed and empowered to decide next steps for identified students.
- Teachers and support staff better understand their learners, adapting practices to meet individual needs.
- Federation Leaders leverage best practices to develop new staff and ensure consistent inclusive approaches.

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## Next Steps

- PPA leads refer to the handbook with year group teams during planning
- Inclusion Team monitor its use in lesson design and delivery
- Subject leaders use it as point of reference when carrying out learning walks
- New subject leaders use it as support to maintain the focus on SEND

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## Key Learning

The learning needs for learners with SEND can, and should, be met through quality first teaching if teachers are skilled in adapting the curriculum to meet need. Strategies are quick to embed and those that are beneficial for some students are valuable for all, reinforcing the importance of inclusivity in education.



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Increased engagement of learners with SEND