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Embedding SEND as Whole-School Priority through a Peer Mentoring approach

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

Improving identification of SEND and appropriate provision through staff CPD and updating pupil plans

School: Primary

Overview of Focus of Peer Mentoring Support

The Peer mentoring project was undertaken to support a primary mainstream school, the primary school was graded as requires improvement (RI) with to improve the quality of SEND provision in the what the school needs to do to improve section. The peer mentoring support and was undertaken by a Whole School SEND (WSS) Regional Lead. The focus of the support was to support the development of accurate SEND Identification and well-matched provision through staff CPD, amended documentation and robust processes.

Background

The school was inspected by Ofsted in Spring 2022. SEND identification and provision were highlighted as areas for improvement during the visit.

'The needs of some pupils with SEND are not identified consistently well. Support for some pupils with SEND does not help them to develop independence and achieve well. Leaders should ensure that staff precisely identify the needs of pupils with SEND and use appropriate strategies to support them.'

Since the inspection the SENCO has stepped down from her post and the Lead SEND Specialist for the Trust became the SENCO in October 2024. The SEND Lead for the multi academy trust (MAT) recognised weaknesses in the school's approach to the implementation of the graduated response and identifying need and in January 2024 began working with a WSS Regional Leader. Together they formulated an improvement strategy to develop staff knowledge and understanding and bring SEND to the forefront.

Implementation

The journey began with a review of existing systems and paperwork and plotting the school's SEND needs against local and national figures. Time was spent time exploring how SEND needs were recorded formally and on SEND plans. There were errors in relation to the identification of SEND Needs for census information. These were reviewed and corrected; one focus was to ensure that the No Specialist Assessment (NSA) code on SIMS was not excessive or disguising accurate identification of SEND needs.

Implementation (continued)

It was clear from the SEND plans that these did not accurately reflect the needs of pupils and did not support the teachers to record provision and outcomes. The format of the SEND plans was edited to allow staff increased opportunity to describe pupil needs, outcomes and provision. A staff meeting was delivered with the aim of supporting staff to think more deeply about pupil needs and barriers to learning. They utilised resources from the Education Endowment Fund (EEF), plotting overlapping needs for pupils with SEN) graphics to revisit the main areas of need. A graduated response framework for the school was written, meaning that staff were clearer about the steps that need to be followed prior to a pupil being added to the register and after. This was also shared at the staff meeting. During the staff meeting resources such as 'The Teacher Handbook' WSS were shared as points of reference when thinking about pupil needs and possible intervention or provisions.

Building Expertise

Following the staff meeting, staff were asked to use the resources to complete a newly designed SEN Support Plan for one of the pupils in their class. The SENCO and WSS leader then completed joint quality assurance of the first draft to establish the ongoing needs with regards to staff CPD and to identify further support that maybe required.

Following the quality assurance meeting some feedback was shared with the Headteacher and a further two dates were added to the diary to develop staff confidence and understanding of the new documents and the important link between identified need, outcomes and provision.

Reviewing and Refining Implementation

Following completion of the newly written plans by individual class teachers, the SENCO and WSS leader completed a joint learning walk to review the plans in relation to classroom practice. This will be continued at least half termly by the SENCO, the headteacher and deputy head, school improvement leads. Other school leaders including phase and subject leaders will be asked to review how the needs of SEND pupils are being met in their learning walks and observations.

Outcome and Anticipated Impact

Staff have responded positively to the use of the new plans. They are more confident when describing and discussing pupil need, particularly when identifying specific barriers.

The plans are now robust, with needs clearly identified, outcomes linked to need and provision which matches and works towards the outcomes.

This project has led to staff thinking more closely about barriers to learning and how they support pupils to overcome these within their classrooms.

The plans demonstrate more clearly the graduated response, and it is hoped funding applications will now be more likely to be accepted.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN

Next Steps to Support Sustainability

The SENCO will continue to support and coach staff to develop their plans and is using the WSS CPD offer to support their understanding of different needs. Further work on eliciting pupil and parent voice will be necessary to further develop how the plans inform provision.

Re-inspection February 2025

The school was re-inspected in February 2025. The overall rating was 'Good'. SEND was removed from the section 'What does the school need to improve?'

The following statements on SEND were made:

'The school is highly ambitious for every pupil to be successful and achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).'

'The school, with the support of the trust, has strengthened its provision for pupils with SEND. The school acts quickly to identify pupils with SEND. Staff have received training to ensure they provide appropriately tailored work and carefully chosen resources. These improvements ensure staff have the expertise to provide the right support for pupils with SEND as they progress through the school.'



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