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## Embedding strategic SEND leadership across a secondary school

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

**Strengthening SEND provision through peer mentoring in a primary school**

## School: Primary

### Starting Point

Following a Requires Improvement Ofsted rating, a primary school within a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) recognised the need to urgently improve its SEND provision. The inspection highlighted several key issues:

- The curriculum lacked ambition and was poorly sequenced, particularly in non-core subjects.
- Processes for identifying and supporting pupils with SEND were inconsistent and lacked rigour.
- Oversight of SEND provision and use of funding was weak.
- Attendance among disadvantaged and SEND pupils was below expectations.

The school is located in an area of high deprivation, with a diverse pupil population and a high proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium. Many pupils are transient, and multiple languages are spoken across the school community.

### What The School Did

With support from a Whole School SEND (WSS) Regional Lead, the school took a strategic and collaborative approach to improvement. The leadership team, including the MAT Director of Primary, Executive Head, and Head of School, worked together with a clear vision *“Getting it right for everyone.”*

### Key Actions Taken

#### Leadership and Vision

- Established a shared commitment to inclusive practice across the leadership team.
- Engaged MAT leaders and school staff in all mentoring sessions to ensure alignment and accountability.
- Staff Development and Resources

 More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting

 Increased attendance of learners with SEND

 Earlier and more accurate identification of SEN

## Key Actions Taken (continued)

### Staff Development and Resources

Delivered training using WSS resources such as:

- The Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) audit tool.
- The Teacher's Handbook.
- Webinars focused on supporting mental health.
- Introduced the "Nutshell" data visualisation tool to help staff understand and act on SEND data.

### Curriculum and Teaching

- Supported non-specialist teachers in delivering non-core subjects more effectively.
- Focused on embedding inclusive strategies into everyday classroom practice.
- Data and Systems
- Reviewed and improved systems for collecting and sharing SEND data.
- Ensured that staff had access to accurate, actionable information about pupils' needs.

### Attendance and Wellbeing

- Reviewed attendance procedures and engaged families to address barriers.
- Discussed mental health support and home tutoring regulations to better support vulnerable pupils.

## Changes Made

As a result of the mentoring and support, the school implemented several significant changes:

### Improved SEND Identification

- Processes were overhauled to ensure accurate and timely identification of needs.
- Staff now work collaboratively to understand and meet pupils' needs.

### Enhanced Staff Confidence

- Training improved staff understanding of how to support SEND pupils in mainstream classrooms.
- SEND is now seen as a shared responsibility across the school.

### Better Use of Data

- The "Nutshell" tool is now used to visualise and interpret SEND data, improving classroom impact.
- Data is more accessible and used to inform teaching and interventions.

### Stronger Attendance Strategy

- Robust systems were introduced to track and improve attendance.
- Staff work closely with families to promote the importance of regular school attendance.

### MAT-Wide Adoption

- The MAT CEO attended training and committed to rolling out successful strategies across all seven academies.
- A bespoke SEND handbook is being developed for use across the trust.



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



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## Outcomes and Impact

The impact of these changes was recognised in the May 2024 Ofsted monitoring visit:

*"This aspect of the school's work has been transformed. The coordinator for the provision of pupils with SEND works closely with all staff to ensure that these pupils' needs are accurately identified, understood and met... These pupils get the support they need and enjoy learning alongside their peers in the classroom."*

*"You and your staff have been tenacious in offering support and challenge to those families, focusing on communicating the importance of attendance with parents and carers."*

*"The school makes the most of external support and challenge. Leaders work collaboratively with external advisers..."*

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## Next Steps for Sustainability

To ensure long-term impact, the MAT has committed to:

- Producing a bespoke SEND handbook for all staff.
- Embedding the WSS Teacher Handbook into CPD across all schools.
- Monitoring SEND progress across all four areas of need.
- Reviewing identification processes, particularly for pupils initially categorised as ADHD, to ensure accurate primary need classification.

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## What Other Schools Can Learn

Key Strategies to Replicate:

1. **Use Data Effectively:** Visual tools like "Nutshells" help staff understand and act on SEND data.
2. **Train All Leaders:** Embed SEND leadership across all levels with structured CPD.
3. **Leverage External Resources:** WSS tools and webinars offer practical, accessible support.
4. **Focus on Attendance:** Combine data analysis with family engagement to improve attendance.
5. **MAT-Wide Collaboration:** Share successful strategies across schools for consistent improvement



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