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## Empowering support staff across the trust to confidently support SEND learners

Title	Empowering support staff across the trust to confidently support SEND learners
Publisher	nasen
Publication date	2026
Download date	2026-03-05 10:58:18
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Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1224">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1224</a>



## Empowering support staff across the trust to confidently support send learners

### Creating a shared trust approach to SEND support

## Trust Background/Context

The MAT currently consists of 20 schools located in the East of England; of which 9 are secondary schools, with 2 schools with Specialist Units and a 3rd school with 2 in-house specialist provisions. 17 of our schools are currently rated in all areas as either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

The MAT is an inclusive Trust which has placed SEND at the heart of its Trust Development Plan since July 2021. CPD for all stakeholders has been offered and successfully delivered over the last 3 years.

The impact review of the Trust Development Programme demonstrates significant impact of this where OFSTED inspection outcomes clearly define that SEND is a strength across the Trust:

### School A

Previously Inadequate on joining the Trust in September 2022 to RI with Leadership & Management rated as Good 18th June 2024.

*"The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving substantially and demonstrably. It is a strength of the school. Pupils with SEND have access to a range of school support, for example the social, emotional and mental health base, where they can receive additional help. Parents value the way the school supports their children to become more independent."*

### School B

Maintained Outstanding from January 2017 to October 2023 for both Education & Boarding inspection.

*"The education provision for children with special educational needs is exceptional. A parent said that staff provide excellent support for children with special educational needs. Another parent said that, without the school, her child would not be in mainstream education and would not have the opportunity to thrive as they do currently."*

### School C

Maintained Good in Ungraded Inspection November 2023 however "the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now".

*"Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well because of bespoke support".*

Two schools from a previous Trust have now joined our MAT, as requested by the DFE.

## Trust Background/Context (continued)

### New School

Previously Good in May 2018 to RI February 2024.

*“The school’s specialist provision, ‘The Forge’, provides a calm and purposeful environment for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).*

Here, these pupils can make progress in their learning. Pupils with the highest level of SEND benefit from access to mainstream lessons. In lessons, support for other pupils with SEND is typically effective. Most staff understand the needs of the pupils and provide effective support.”

However, we are conscious from our Trust staff survey results, school level analysis and workload analysis that there remained considerable need to further develop the skills, confidence, and knowledge of a wide variety of staff undertaking pupil-facing support roles.

The target audience for this PD Programme was all classroom based Secondary Support Staff with an extension to the wider pupil-facing support staff team including Pastoral, admin and boarding staff team members under the direction of their individual schools.

The programme was launched on 2nd September 2024 as part of a Whole Trust CPD Day and ran until February half-term 2025. The sessions provided by WSS Consortium Partners formed part of a wider programme as requested in the coproduction of this programme with all Trust secondary schools.

Within each school, the SENDCO carried out the role of facilitator to ensure engagement of staff within and beyond the training sessions provided. SENDCOs also led Quality Assurance to support and monitor the implementation of new learning and impact on learner engagement and progress.

Support staff are a key and vital part of our schools’ and Trust team. We envisaged that participants would feel valued and supported to be the best they can be in their role which places children and young people at the centre of everything we do.on and atmosphere. All staff involved are positive and use their learning everyday with the children.

## The Challenge

**The main, common SEND challenges experienced by schools are:**

- Increasing numbers of SEND learners within a cohort
- Increasing complexity of need amongst SEND learners including those requiring provision above both the whole school and SEND offer
- Lack of staff confidence, knowledge and expertise to meet a wide variety of needs
- Prioritising key CPD to ensure that we maximise impact on staff confidence, skills and knowledge to ultimately have greatest impact on SEND learner progress in all areas of development
- Stagnation or decrease in funding and therefore capacity to meet needs of SEND learners meaning a strategic review of staff impact and deployment is on-going
- Cost in time and funding for individual schools to arrange and implement individual school CPD SEND programmes
- Maximising use of Trust resources whilst still ensuring CPD needs of specific schools are met
- Impact of staff turnover on maintaining confidence, knowledge and skills levels across the team



## The Challenge (continued)

### Schools who were newer to the Trust reported the additional challenge of:

- Absence of high quality SEND CPD over several years for both long-term post-holders and those new to post

## What They Did

### All staff were given access to the CPD programme via:

- Trust and school direction to attend in-person Trust CPD day sessions on 2nd September 2024
- Direction and deployment to the live sessions at 11-12pm on the allocated Thursdays of the programme delivery
- Access to the recordings & training slides for all sessions which could be accessed independently in directed time via the Trust Gateway Intranet
- Use of recordings in Staff meetings where the recording was used as a resource and discussions/ response activities were facilitated live by the SENDCO to replicate the activities led in the live session by the WSS Trainer.

### In addition, all staff were provided with:

- A copy of the Programme Overview
- Learning Journal to record their learning and self-evaluation

*A copy of the Programme Timetable & the Learning Journal are attached for ease of reference.*

There was some variability of direction to staff from SENDCOs which were impacted by contractual restraints e.g. support staff from some schools who are not contracted for PD days or additional time outside of the student school day hours.

## Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

### Outcomes

#### Schools reported an overwhelming observation of:

1. Greater awareness and confidence in SEND knowledge
2. Increase in how best to support our SEND students in practise, particularly in relation to ASD/ADHD
3. Greater confidence in classroom practice and better delivery of interventions
4. Noticeably higher quality practice in classroom practice support and the better delivery of interventions;
5. Increased awareness of and use of individual reflective practice approaches by SEND staff as "Staff are more keen and able to reflect on what they can do differently" to meet needs effectively, "staff were put in the students' shoes for an hour which was quite helpful in understanding what it feels like to learn and to be unsure"
6. Increase in daily peer support for colleagues through informal but focussed discussions – adaptation in staffroom discussions
7. Positive development in use of consistent and specialised language in describing student behaviours or learning difficulties, e.g. accurate use of terminology when discussing different neurodiversity



## Outcomes and Anticipated Impact (continued)

8. Schools have a wider awareness of evidence-based interventions available to meet the need
9. Increased collaboration across the Trust to share good practice
10. Staff feel valued and invested in
11. Staff have begun to explore and identify the areas which they feel that they have specific strengths in and would like to further develop

### Impact

**As a result of the above, the following impact on SEND learners has been observed:**

- Increase in SEND learner engagement in learning activities
- Improved attendance for some SEND learners in specific schools
- Increase in staff confidence scaling from start to at the end of each session, as logged in learning journal
- Increase in understanding of SEND learners experience within their school setting leading to development of stronger inclusive culture
- Increase in positive staff views on CPD and its impact; staff are now viewing CPD positively and are more willing to actively engage, thus increasing the continual professional development culture within this group of staff as staff see CPD as “valuable for professional growth”
- SENDCO strategic review of Provision Map gaps have been identified and subsequently addressed in some schools where needed
- Use of the recordings as a newly developed addition to new SEND staff induction to ensure consistency of training, knowledge and skills

### Reflections for future PD Group Approaches

There were some additional challenges in empowering active participation within the programme reported across the schools. Common themes included:

- Choice of delivery time as chosen by Secondary SENDCOs in planning stage – this was 11-12pm Thursdays which meant that not all staff were able to attend the live sessions due to students needing support in school at that time

**Reflection for future programmes:** consider the choice of future session timings to ensure majority can access the live sessions through redirection of CPD days/time or other after-school meeting time

- Staff absence and unplanned situational pupil need

**Reflection for future programmes:** it is not possible to mitigate all such circumstances within schools despite the best planning and considerations. Positively, the recordings of the training sessions enabled staff to catch-up on their return, when staff absence was experienced.

- Learning Support Assistants proficiency in using technology. The team had to be taught to use QR codes, and how to access the training upon computers.

**Reflection for future programmes:** this has been highlighted as a training need for future CPD programmes for support staff to ensure that technology is not a barrier to accessing CPD or a barrier to effectively supporting students in their learning.

It is interesting to note that those schools who were newer to the Trust did not report many of the challenges above due to prioritisation of the training within their SDIP and SEND Action Plans.



## Impact (continued)

### Programme Content

It was felt across some schools that some of the sessions were aimed at primary school colleagues and were not adapted for secondary.

Reflection for future programmes: review the content of CPD sessions to ensure they are applicable in practice directly to secondary settings.

