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## **A trust-wide approach to embedding pupil voice at the heart of the graduated approach**

Title	A trust-wide approach to embedding pupil voice at the heart of the graduated approach
Publisher	nasen
Publication date	2026
Download date	2026-03-05 11:57:15
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Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1101">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1101</a>



## A trust-wide approach to embedding pupil voice at the heart of the graduated approach

### What's the BIG Idea for SEND?

## Project Focus

This initiative, developed within the Diverse Academies Trust, focuses on embedding pupil voice into SEND practice. By conducting structured, one-to-one conversations with pupils on the SEND register, the project aims to ensure that adaptations and support strategies are shaped by the learners themselves—leading to improved wellbeing, confidence, and academic outcomes.

## Introduction

The project began in a primary academy within a small town, led by an experienced SENDCo who now serves as Strategic Development Lead for SEND across the Trust. With a background in both primary and secondary education, she recognised a recurring issue: pupils with SEND were often given support based on adult assumptions rather than their own expressed needs.

The BIG Idea was to flip this dynamic by placing the pupil at the centre of the conversation. Through structured, termly one-to-one interviews, pupils were invited to reflect on their learning, discuss the adaptations they found helpful, and suggest changes that could better support their progress. These conversations were grounded in their One-Page Profiles and their own workbooks, creating a natural and meaningful dialogue.

## Implementation

The implementation followed a clear and replicable structure:

### 1. Preparation Phase

A standardised interview template was developed, and staff received training on how to use it effectively. Interviewers were taught to refer to pupils' books and profiles during the conversation to prompt reflection and discussion.

### 2. Conducting Interviews

Interviews were held in quiet, familiar spaces with trusted adults—typically the SENDCo, class teacher, or TA. Each session lasted 20–30 minutes and was designed to feel like a conversation rather than a formal interview.

### 3. Action Planning

After each session, the pupil's requests were documented and shared with their class teacher. An action plan was created outlining the adaptations to be implemented.

## Implementation (continued)

### 4. Monitoring and Review

Regular check-ins ensured that agreed adaptations were in place and effective. These sessions formed part of the school's termly Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle.

### 5. Scaling and Sustainability

Initially piloted with 12 KS2 pupils, the project was scaled to include all 32 pupils on the SEND register. The SENDCo conducted all interviews and maintained ongoing communication with staff and pupils to ensure fidelity.

### 6. Trust-Wide Expansion

Two additional primary academies adopted the model, supported by training and moderation from the original SENDCo. Plans are in place to expand to three more primaries and one secondary academy next academic year.

## Outcomes and Impact

The impact of the project was both measurable and meaningful:

- Pupils reported feeling **valued and listened to**, which led to increased confidence and improved wellbeing.
- Teachers observed **more positive attitudes to learning** and greater engagement in lessons.
- Academic outcomes improved by **1–3 months more** than peers on the SEND register who did not participate.
- The initiative became embedded in the school's **quality assurance calendar**, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.

## Key Learning

The project revealed several key insights that are essential for successful replication:

- **One-to-one interviews are vital.** Pupils are more relaxed and open when speaking with a trusted adult in a quiet space.
- **Concrete resources support meaningful dialogue.** Referring to pupils' work and profiles helps ground the conversation and makes it more natural.
- **Consistency and fidelity matter.** Regular interviews and follow-ups must be built into the school's QA cycle to ensure the pupil voice is acted upon.
- **Empowerment drives progress.** When pupils feel heard and involved in shaping their learning, their confidence and outcomes improve.
- **Scalability requires training.** In larger settings, multiple staff must be trained and moderated to maintain consistency and quality.



Better outcomes for learners with SEND



Increased engagement of learners with SEND



Improved mental health and wellbeing of learners with SEND

## Conclusion

This pupil voice initiative from Diverse Academies Trust offers a powerful model for inclusive SEND practice. By listening to pupils and acting on their feedback, schools can create learning environments that are truly responsive to individual needs. The approach is low-cost, high-impact, and scalable—making it an ideal strategy for Trust-wide adoption.

For schools seeking to strengthen inclusion, wellbeing, and academic outcomes for pupils with SEND, this case study provides a clear and practical roadmap.



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