Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – the UK context

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UK context – two key structures:

- The National Curriculum (revised 1999 and 2008 and ongoing . . .)
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (revised 2001 and ongoing . . .)
Inclusive National Curriculum:

• an entitlement curriculum for all

• full range of subjects, aspects, skills, knowledge and understanding taught to all learners

• access promoted through inclusion statement
Principles for inclusion:

• set suitable learning challenges

• respond to pupils’ diverse learning needs

• overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups
National Curriculum subjects:

• English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education at all ages

• plus history, geography, art and design in Key Stages 1 to 3

• plus modern foreign languages, citizenship in Key Stage 3
Other National Curriculum elements:

- schools must also teach religious education and sex education
- careers education is compulsory in Key Stages 3 and 4
- other elements include personal, social, health and economic education in Key Stage 3 and work-related learning in Key Stage 4
Skills taught across the curriculum:

• functional skills – communication and literacy skills, application of mathematical skills, information and communication technology skills

• personal, learning and thinking skills – independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team work, self management and effective participation
The SEN Code of Practice:

• focused on individual needs
• targets in key areas of learning
• regular reviews of progress
• interdisciplinary
• partnerships with pupils and parents
Individual education plans:

• progress in three or four areas

• smart targets focus on cross-curricular skills – communication, independence, behaviour etc

• match to priority needs – additional to and different from ‘differentiated curriculum’.
Provision mapping – an audit leading to plans for interventions:

• at whole school or whole class level – differentiated inclusive teaching for all – Wave 1

• additional interventions for groups of pupils – Wave 2

• individualised interventions – Wave 3
Provision mapping – an audit leading to plans for interventions:

• for School Action – the responsibility of school staff

• for School Action Plus – with input from other professionals

• for students with Statements – a collaborative approach planned with student input
SEN the responsibility of the principal, senior management and ALL teachers but also:

- the SENCo and/or an inclusion manager
- teaching assistants and learning support assistants
- outside agencies and parents
This system designed to promote the inclusion of pupils with:

- mild and moderate intellectual disabilities (and some severe)
- specific learning difficulties
- AD/HD, Asperger’s, physical disabilities, VI and HI
- challenging behaviour etc . . .
Working with both the National Curriculum and the Code of Practice can provide:

- breadth of experience – an entitlement for all
- relevance to individual needs for those with SEN – addressing priorities
- an integrated approach
The UK context:

• achieving Wave 1 teaching
• high quality inclusive teaching and learning for all
• the differentiated curriculum
Whole school long-term curriculum planning is used to:

• allocate subject content across key stages and year groups

• adjust curriculum balance in each age group

• adjust balance in the curriculum for pupils with SEN
Teachers can use medium-term curriculum planning in order to:

• differentiate objectives for learning
• differentiate key activities and experiences
• differentiate assessment opportunities
Twelve varieties of differentiation:

- content – interest – pace
- sequence – level – access
- response – structure – time
- teaching style – learning style – grouping (whole class, split class, small group, pairs, 1:1)
Differentiated objectives – ‘What do we want pupils to learn?’

- that food varies around the world
- about different festivals around the world
- to discuss similarities and differences between peoples around the world
Differentiated key activities – ‘What will pupils do?’

• listen to music from different parts of the world

• watch videos of different festivals

• research the role of NGOs and charities – e.g. on the web
Differentiated assessment opportunities – ‘How will pupils respond to demonstrate progress?’

• express a preference for one kind of music

• realise that all children ‘celebrate’

• write about similarities and differences among children
The UK context:

- addressing individual needs
- securing relevance to priority areas of learning for individual students
- integrating targets into shared experiences
Key tasks for the teacher in short term planning:

• differentiate curriculum plans – provide a context for learning

• integrate individual learning – 3 or 4 short term IEP targets

• prepare to record and assess – against both curriculum and individual targets
Integrated teaching and learning:

• Jamie’s IEP targets – few? relevant? additional and different? key skills?

• inclusive activity – motivating? fun? stimulating? appropriate?

• Jamie’s responses – progress? achievement? attainment?
Jamie’s responses:

• relevance to IEP? has Jamie made progress towards his targets?

• relevance to subject? has Jamie learned French?

• subject as a context for learning? valuable experience? for all?
Record keeping and assessment:

• in the context of classroom activity – no need for separate activity

• key role for teacher judgements – formative – no need for tests

• differentiated performance criteria – attainment for all
Outcomes of learning:

• report progress – to colleagues and parents

• review individual targets

• review curriculum plans – Jamie included? challenge for all?

• review school effectiveness in terms of inclusivity
The UK context – the role of the Teaching Assistant (TA) in supporting learning

What does a TA do?
according to the UK National Occupational Standards
The role of the TA includes:

Helping with the organisation of the classroom

Supporting individual pupils and groups of pupils with a range of needs

Contributing to behaviour management
The role of the TA includes:

Helping pupils access the curriculum

Helping the teacher with planning, delivery, recording and evaluation

Observing and reporting on pupil performance
The role of the TA includes:

Promoting safety, security, health, well-being and social and emotional development for pupils
Liaising with parents
Reviewing and developing their own practice
Evidence from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) report

Research carried out by Institute of Education, London

Research Report 148 (DCSF 2009)
DISS findings:
• MORE support staff being employed – n.b. TAs – mainly white middle-aged women
• dissatisfaction with levels of pay and training opportunities
• teachers NOT trained to manage support staff
• teachers NOT given time to plan with TAs
DISS findings:
• support still focused on 1:1 support (secondary) and group work (primary)
• in secondary, more contact with TA means less contact with teacher
• TA interventions focused on task completion (not learning and understanding) and tend to be reactive rather than proactive
DISS findings:
• teachers like having TAs – more 1:1 time and better control in class
• observation showed that TAs reduced disruption & distractibility and enhanced independence skills
• BUT as students received more support from TAs, they made less academic progress
DISS recommendations:
• provide training for NQTs and in-service teachers in managing adults in classroom
• provide training for TAs – especially in improving learning
• create time for teachers and TAs to plan together
• reconceptualise role of TA
DISS recommendations:

• encourage use of TAs to support teachers rather than individual pupils

• ensure that students with SEN get MORE teacher time, not less

• ensure all teachers plan learning for ALL pupils – including those with SEN
Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – other forms of support

The role of assistive technologies
Assistive technologies can:

• promote mobility for students with physical disabilities
• help to overcome barriers (for example, literacy skills for pupils with dyslexia)
• provide a ‘safe’ context for learning independence skills and problem solving
Assistive technologies can:

• enable communication for students with profound disabilities
• promote a sensory dimension in learning
• facilitate the recording and sharing of information (home–school notes, homework etc)
Assistive technologies can:

- facilitate student involvement in assessment, recording, reporting and review – through blogs, journals and online portfolios; inclusion of photographs, scans, images and video
Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – other forms of support

The role of the peer group
Support from the peer group:
• is preferred by students
• enables the teacher to optimise use of the ‘natural resources of the classroom’
• provides protection against bullying and victimisation
• can be promoted by ‘friendship mentors’ on the staff
Support from the peer group:

- supports learning effectively for both the highest and the lowest attainers
- can focus on personal, social and emotional issues (‘buddies’) and/or on academic progress (‘mentors’) and/or on study skills (‘learning coaches’)

Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – other forms of support

The role of other sources of support
Support from other sources:

• may come from professionals (for example, therapists, social workers, medics – at times of planning and review as well as in learning contexts)

• may involve the voluntary sector (for example, through support for parents and families)
Support from other sources:

• may focus specifically on times of transition (for example, through the roles of advocates and personal advisers)

• may involve peers, circles of friends, siblings etc to ensure that plans are personalised and reflect the views of students
Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – the personalisation agenda

Promoting inclusion through:

• person-centred planning
• person-centred learning
Person-centred planning
(Smull and Sanderson, 2005)

Person at centre of planning process – driving decisions

Focus on dialogue with person and planning for future

Action that enables person to have more control
Person-centred planning – key questions to structure process:

Who are the important people in the person’s life – who can make things happen?

What are the person’s gifts – things they like to do and are good at?
Person-centred planning – key questions to structure process:

What is important to the person now and in future – aspects to sustain and/or develop?

What support does the person need – to make things happen?

What do we need to do – action?
Person-centred planning – notes and issues:

An ongoing process – not outcomes

Must involve action – and monitoring to sustain changes

Supporters must be committed to sustaining planning process

Person must remain at centre
Person-centred planning – notes and issues:

Plans promote community inclusion

Supporters listen, learn, make things happen

Schools using process for Annual Reviews and Transition Plans

But concerns over time involved . . .
Good Practices in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools – the personalisation agenda

From person-centred planning to person-centred learning
Personalised learning not an SEN policy:

Personalisation – a policy associated with ‘specialist’ provision?

SEN provision – a tradition of focusing on the ‘individual’?

Best practice extended to all?
Personalisation not individualisation:

Trends away from ‘individual education plans’ and programmes

Critique of TA role and withdrawal

Participation in whole class

Key role for peers as co-learners, mentors, supporters etc
Personalisation, participation, inclusion and partnership:

Personalisation leads to increased participation

Participation as a key feature of inclusion

Inclusion dependent upon co-construction of learning in partnership with pupils
Beyond planning for the person:

Pupils as decision-makers – inclusive student councils?

Pupils co-construct curriculum – evaluation of teaching?

Pupils as governors – select staff?

Pupils as school improvement partners – driving change?