



SEN Support and the **Graduated Approach**

*A quick guide to ensuring that every child or young person gets
the support they require to meet their needs*



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SEN Support and the Graduated Approach

A quick guide to ensuring that every child or young person gets the support they require to meet their needs

This guide is for headteachers, SENCOs, class and subject teachers and support staff.

The definition of special educational needs

In the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2014) the definition of SEN remains the same: 'A pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, that is provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.'



This guide aims to:

- + introduce school staff to the graduated approach to SEN support, with the child and family at its heart
- + emphasise the role of class/subject teachers as teachers of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- + look in detail at each aspect of the Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle
- + explore ways of involving parents and carers throughout the support process.



The graduated approach – a spiral of support

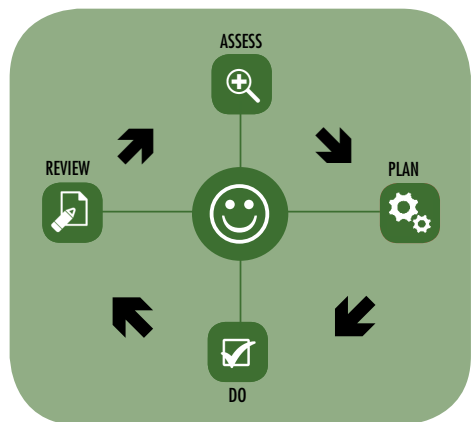
In the new SEND Code of Practice the categories of School Action and School Action plus have been replaced by a single category called SEN Support. Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, to enable the pupil to participate, learn and make progress schools should take action to:

- remove barriers to learning
- put effective special educational provision in place.

SEN support should arise from a four-part cycle, known as the graduated approach, through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised, leading to a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. The four stages of the cycle are:

- Assess
- Plan
- Do
- Review.

The graduated approach starts at whole-school level. Teachers are continually assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing their approach to teaching all children. However, where a potential special educational need has been identified, this cyclical process becomes increasingly personalised:



- Individualised assessment leads to a growing understanding of the barriers to and gaps in the pupil's learning.
- Continual reflection on approaches to meeting the pupil's needs leads to a growing understanding of strategies that



enable the pupil to make good progress and achieve good outcomes.

In this spiral of support, the graduated approach draws on more personalised approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to tailor interventions to meet the particular needs of children and young people.

Prerequisites for success

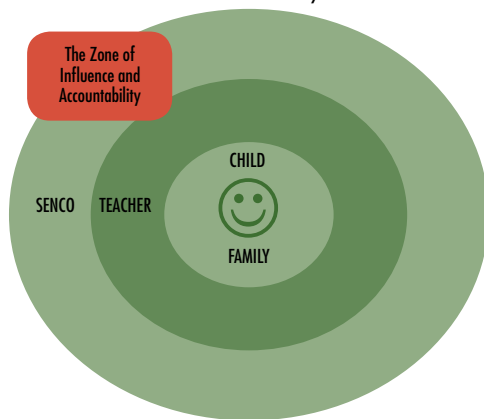
The role of class/subject teachers

The SEND Code of Practice makes it clear that class and/or subject teachers are

directly responsible and accountable for all pupils in their class(es), even when pupils are receiving support from a teaching assistant or other specialist staff, within or outside the classroom.

The responsibility and accountability for the progress and development of pupils with SEN lies with the class or subject teacher, not with the SENCO or the learning support department.

This is not a new concept. It is firmly embedded in the Teachers' Standards (2012) and the new Ofsted framework. This diagram illustrates clearly where influence and accountability lie.



Notice that:

- the child and the family are at the heart of the process
- the teacher sits around the child and the family and is the professional who is accountable and responsible for the child's progress
- the SENCO provides professional guidance to colleagues and works closely with parents/carers and with other agencies.

High expectations and aspirations

The graduated approach will only secure good outcomes for vulnerable pupils if:

- all those who teach and support pupils with SEN have the highest aspirations for them
- those who lead and manage provision demonstrate an ambitious vision and plan of action to enable this to happen.

An identification of SEN should not result in excuses for lack of expected progress or a lowering of expectations.



Assess

In the 'assess' stage of the graduated approach teachers gain a growing understanding of a pupil's needs. A clear understanding of a child's needs is a critical precondition to:

- planning effective teaching
- determining appropriate provision
- informing adjustments to teaching that will lead to good progress and improved outcomes for pupils.

However, too often for pupils who are identified as having SEN, the temptation is to move straight to the planning stage – writing targets and identifying provision – without spending sufficient time identifying precisely where pupils' gaps in and barriers to learning currently lie.

A whole-school approach

Assessment of need starts with a whole-school approach that can identify quickly

where a child is not making expected progress. Many schools use regular pupil progress meetings to identify this issue. For pupils identified as underachieving, further assessment may indicate the cause of their difficulties and suggest what might need to be done to enable them to get back on track.

When a pupil may have SEN and is not making expected progress despite high-quality, suitably differentiated teaching, the SEND Code of Practice suggests a range of sources of information that teachers can draw on:

- Teacher assessment and knowledge of the pupil.
- Data on the pupil's progress, attainment and behaviour.
- The individual's development in comparison with their peers.
- The views and experience of parents.
- The pupil's own views.
- Advice from external support services.

Sometimes it will be necessary to use more fine-tuned assessment to explore further the precise gaps in the pupil's learning and development and/or to clarify what the barriers to learning might be. There are several individualised assessment 'tools' and approaches the school can use to support this closer identification of need, such as:

- Standardised tests.
- Profiling tools, for example for behaviour and speech, language and communication needs.
- Criterion-referenced assessments and checklists.



- Observation schedules and prompt sheets.
- Questionnaires for parents.
- Questionnaires for pupils.
- Screening assessments, for example for dyslexia.
- Specialist assessments, for example from a speech and language therapist or an educational psychologist.

Individual, detailed assessments should be formative, resulting in greater clarity about a pupil's strengths and needs and

better targeted approaches to teaching and learning.

It is important to remember that it is teachers (not just the SENCO) who need to know and understand the outcomes of these assessments and to use them to inform adjustments to their day-to-day teaching or to targeted interventions. This is unlikely to happen if such assessment is predominantly identified as needed but is carried out by specialist SEN staff, with the results sitting in a file for reference only.



Schools who feel that this is an area for development may wish to consider auditing individual assessments using nasen's whole-school 'Continuum of Assessment' tool, which is available in the members' area of the nasen website (www.nasen.org.uk).

Identifying SEN – SENCO and teachers working together

The SEND Code of Practice states that in identifying a pupil as needing SEN support, the class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, should carry out a clear assessment of the pupil's needs.

A key responsibility for the SENCO is establishing a structured and agreed approach to the identification of SEN. It is good practice to:

- use a record of key concerns, where teachers who have identified a pupil as not making adequate progress, despite high-quality teaching targeted at their areas of weakness, can record their concerns, observations and any individualised assessments that may have been made
- make this information available to the professionals involved in the assessment
- seek and provide further clarification where there is not enough detailed information.

Evidence is key to identifying needs and ensuring that the appropriate provision is provided. Without a structured approach to identifying special educational needs, vital evidence is likely to be lost or incomplete and can lead to delays – a frequent complaint of pupils and parents.

Case study – Assessing need

Watch this video from Frederick Bird School in Coventry: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UpuTqp-oks&index=1&list=PLo71rs7uZTvV6ypZAM9VrMMX8D3BVF_x/

Notice how the SENCO:

- holds regular SENCO surgeries where staff can register concerns about children in their classes
- works with an educational psychologist and a clinical psychologist to consider the evidence, to get a shared understanding of the child's difficulties and to decide on the next steps.

Reflection and readiness – Assess

Use these questions to assess your school's readiness for this aspect of the graduated approach:

- How are we ensuring that we are identifying pupils' needs as early as possible?
- Can we improve our liaison with pre-school/feeder schools to prepare for pupils with SEN as soon as they arrive?
- Do we have systems, tools and expertise to support identification and assessment?
- Do class/subject teachers make effective use of these tools to identify pupils' gaps in and barriers to learning, adapting their core teaching in the light of these findings?
- Do we call on the support of a range of external specialists as and when we need it?
- Are there any areas where our staff need training to support identification?

An 'initial concerns checklist' is a tool that can:

- help class and subject teachers to collate summative assessment data, observations and any initial 'individualised' testing they have on a pupil in their class about whom they may have concerns
- help SENCOs to engage and communicate with teachers in the early stages of gathering information when initial concerns are being raised
- be used as the basis for considering adaptations to day-to-day teaching, further assessments and observations, and decisions about putting a pupil on the SEN register/record.

An example of an initial concerns checklist is available to nasen members on the nasen website.

Plan

In the 'plan' stage of the graduated approach teachers gain a growing understanding of what teaching approaches work. This part of the graduated approach cycle will be most effective when teachers, working with the SENCO, have completed a thorough assessment of a pupil's needs during the 'assess' phase described earlier.

For pupils requiring SEN support, there are two areas that need to be considered when planning provision:

- High-quality class and/or subject teaching
- Targeted provision.

First step – inclusive quality-first class and/or subject teaching

Once the need for SEN support has been identified, the first step in responding to a pupil's identified needs is to ensure that high-quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is in place. The SEND Code of Practice is clear that this is the *first step* in responding to pupils who have, or may have, an SEN: 'Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching.'

Teachers should consider, with the support of the SENCO:

- what they know from the individualised assessments they have undertaken, about the pupil's strengths, areas of need, barriers to and gaps in learning
- the views of the pupil and their parents/carers
- what changes or adaptations to day-to-day class/subject teaching this new information indicates that they need to make.

The SENCO's role

The SENCO's role here (or that of an appropriate specialist member of teaching staff directed by the SENCO) is to support the class/subject teacher(s) in determining the kind of adjustments to

the teaching that would be most effective. Every pupil is an individual and it is, therefore, the pedagogical discussion and reflection that is most important in tailoring provision to meet pupils' needs, along with a willingness to seek further advice if needed.

Schools should:

- review the quality of class and subject teaching, regularly and carefully, for all pupils
- where necessary, take steps to improve teachers' understanding of strategies to identify and support pupils with SEN.

Making all staff aware of a pupil's needs

The SEND Code of Practice states that: 'All teachers and support staff who work with the child should be made aware of their needs, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required.'

This can be a particular challenge in secondary schools where there can be many teaching and support staff who need to be informed. Some schools have adopted a 'pupil profile' approach to enable information to be disseminated as efficiently as possible and to ensure that pupils' individual needs and views are kept at the heart of class and subject teaching. There are examples of pupil passports on the nasen website at www.nasen.org.uk/

Involving pupils and parents/ carers

Compiling a pupil passport provides:

- an opportunity for engaging the pupil and their parents/carers in a discussion about learning and results in a single, agreed document
- a way to inform parents/carers about provision using the pupil passport as a discussion template.

Targeted provision

Targeted provision is provision that is additional to or different from that made for the majority of pupils in school. Once again, the analysis done at the 'assess' stage of the graduated approach will help to pinpoint the kind of provision that is likely to be most effective in meeting the pupil's needs. Schools would also be wise to draw on the latest research about the likely impact of particular interventions. An excellent summary is available from the Education Endowment Foundation at <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/>

One of the key themes from the SEND Code of Practice is the need to ensure that where additional/different targeted provision is planned for, there are clear and expected outcomes linked directly to the provision. Very often, targeted provision is planned to take place outside the classroom, away from the

class/subject teacher. If this happens, then schools need to:

- have a very clear reason for it
- be very clear about the purpose of the targeted provision
- discuss, agree and plan the expected outcomes for the pupil by the end of the intervention, for example after a term or half term.

Pupil passports

A pupil passport is brief and usually includes:

- **information about the pupil and a photograph**
- **a description of the pupil in the pupil's own words (I would like you to know that...)**
- **more information in the pupil's own words to inform teachers and others who work with them (This means that...)**
- **key areas that are difficult for the pupil, agreed after discussion (I find it difficult to...)**
- **practical strategies and tips to support the identified areas of needs (It would help me if you could...)**
- **agreed strategies and practical solutions for the pupil (I will help myself by...)**
- **any additional support the pupil receives, for example teaching assistant support, speech and language therapy**
- **access arrangements such as extra time, a reader/scribe**
- **a summary of key information for ease of reference.**

It is important to reiterate here that class and/or subject teachers remain directly responsible and accountable for all pupils in their class(es), whether pupils are receiving targeted support within or outside the classroom.

Pupils with EHC plans

The process of planning graduated provision for a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is firmly rooted in the graduated approach, the difference being that the needs of these pupils are likely to be more complex and the approach to meeting these needs will be even more personalised and individualised. Crucially, provision will be organised around the planned outcomes written in the pupil's EHC plan.

When planning provision for pupils with EHC plans, schools need to ensure that:

- all staff working with pupils have read and understood the EHC plan and any specialist reports
- a clear range of strategies and

approaches to support differentiated day-to-day teaching is agreed by all those involved, based on specialist advice

- targeted provision that addresses the pupil's needs is planned, with agreed outcomes and review points
- any additional training for teachers and support staff is arranged
- teachers monitor progress towards meeting agreed outcomes regularly, adjusting planning where needed
- the SENCO monitors progress at least once a term with all relevant staff, parents/carers and pupils.

Where a local authority indicates hours of additional (teaching assistant/specialist teacher) support on the EHC plan, schools should focus first on the agreed outcomes being sought and then on how the 'allocated hours' can be used to meet the agreed outcomes.



Reflection and readiness – Plan

Use these questions to assess your school's readiness for this aspect of the graduated approach:

- How are we ensuring that teachers and other key members of staff have the information they need about the SEN of the pupils they teach?
- Do teachers understand what is written in specialist reports and what that means in terms of high-quality teaching?
- Do teachers plan effectively to meet the needs of the pupils with SEN in their class?
- Are teachers at the heart of the process of planning targeted support for pupils with SEN?
- Is the SENCO supporting the development of staff skills, confidence and expertise in this area?
- Does the school draw on the latest research on the effectiveness of strategies and interventions for pupils with SEN?
- How do we ensure that provision and support link directly to pupils' areas of need and EHC plan targets?
- Do parents/carers understand and agree the targeted provision for their child and the expected outcomes?
- Do those delivering targeted interventions understand the purpose and expected outcomes and have time to prepare the sessions?
- Is there a system by which staff delivering targeted provision feed back to class/subject teachers?
- Have teachers planned how they will monitor regularly the progress that pupils for whom they are responsible and accountable are making within targeted provision?

Case study – Personalising provision and raising attainment

Watch this video clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=la4w9udD5a8&index=3&list=PLo71rs7uZTvU1ruuo7FWmcFnyAflMMFDG/

- Notice how the history teacher differentiates the lesson to ensure that Cameron, who has literacy difficulties, is able to participate fully in the lesson.
- What targeted support has been put in place to support Cameron?
- What has been the impact for Cameron and his family?



In the 'do' stage of the graduated approach teachers gain a growing understanding of effective support. The SEND Code of Practice (2014) emphasises that the teacher has day-to-day responsibility for the learning and progress of all pupils. It also sets out the role of the SENCO (see the table on page 12).

It is important that teachers work closely with teaching assistants or other specialist staff to plan and assess the impact of targeted interventions. This planning and review time should be planned for explicitly and take place regularly. Some schools use strategies such as:

- joint planning, preparation and assessment
- support staff paid to join planning and departmental meetings

Role of the teacher

'The class or subject teacher should remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis.'

'Where the interventions involve group or one-to-one teaching away from the main class or subject teacher, they should still retain responsibility for the pupil.'

Role of the SENCO

'The SENCO should support the class or subject teacher in the further assessment of the child's particular strengths and weaknesses, in problem solving and advising on the effective implementation of the support.'

- quick and concise communication tools to convey the outcomes of targeted provision
- work done during targeted provision being recorded in pupils' class/subject books so teachers can see what work has been done and to what standard and can pick up any emerging issues as soon as possible.

Outstanding teachers continually reflect on where pupils are in their learning, where they are going and how best to enable them to get there. For pupils with SEN the reflective process can be especially important because they can be the most challenging children to teach. Ensuring that there is a high level of pedagogical discussion around how pupils' day-to-day learning is developing is crucial to moving the skills of teachers and support staff on in a process of continual refinement and response to what is happening in the classroom. Having a forum in which professionals working with a child can reflect together on what is going well is vital, and can be both supportive and developmental.

Case study – Working with teaching assistants

Watch this video clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XcPVf1UPGU&list=UUOjOP_iHXg1RKfmPVRlkHpQ/

Notice how:

- the teacher takes responsibility for Hassan's learning and progress
- the teaching assistant describes her role
- the teacher and the teaching assistant plan together
- Hassan is included in the science lesson
- there is an impact on Hassan's learning and progress.

Sharing the learning journey with pupils

The SEND Code of Practice challenges schools to ensure that pupils are provided with the information and support necessary to enable them to participate as fully as possible in decisions that affect them. The challenge to teachers is to consider how, in day-to-day classroom practice, pupils can be supported to gain a better

awareness of how they learn best so that, over time, they are able to participate fully in decisions about their lives, particularly in reviews of their progress, assessments of their support needs and in decisions about their transition to adult life.

Review

In the 'review' stage of the graduated approach teachers gain a growing understanding of what approaches secure better outcomes.

Teachers continually review pupils' progress, formally and informally, and this should be no different for pupils with SEN.

Reflection and readiness – Do

Use these questions to assess your school's readiness for this aspect of the graduated approach:

- Are teachers confident and appropriately skilled to be able to meet the needs of pupils with SEN in their classes?
- Is the SENCO supporting the development of staff skills, confidence and expertise?
- Do teachers monitor the progress of pupils, within targeted provision for whom they are accountable?
- How can we ensure that the skills being taught and practised within targeted provision are improving the outcomes in class?
- Are additional adults being used effectively?
- Are pupils' developing independence, a growing awareness of how they learn and the confidence to participate in decisions that affect them?



It is not necessary for teachers to wait for formal review meetings before reviewing and, if appropriate, making changes to teaching approaches and other provision.

However, the SEND Code of Practice states that progress towards meeting planned outcomes should be tracked and reviewed at least once a term and the outcomes of the review should feed directly into the next planning phase of the graduated approach.

Whole-school monitoring and review processes

To make the best use of time, schools should consider how they can utilise whole-school approaches whenever possible, for example regular pupil progress meetings, to review the progress of pupils with SEN. For teachers to be ready to discuss the progress of pupils with SEN at this meeting, they should consider the following:



- Have the pupils met the expected end of term/year National Curriculum/ P-level targets – are they achieving this target independently and consistently? Evidence of progress and attainment can be taken from a variety of sources, such as observation, assessed work, scrutinising of work, use of Assessing Pupil Progress (APP), and tests, where appropriate.
- Are they on track to meet their end of year/key stage targets?
- Is there any improvement in the previous rate of progress?
- Is the gap narrowing (attainment and progress) between pupils with SEN and all pupils?

For more guidance on tracking pupil progress see nasen's quick guide *Tracking Progress and Monitoring Provision*.

Review meetings

In some schools, the progress of pupils on the SEN register/record may involve either a timetabled termly meeting between teachers, the SENCO, support staff, parents/carers and, perhaps, the pupil in attendance, or a process where the views of all those involved in teaching and supporting a pupil are sought and then reviewed in a meeting between the teacher(s)/tutor and the SENCO.

However it is managed, in a school the review process needs to be planned for as it is a crucial part of the graduated approach, providing a formal opportunity to evaluate the success of day-to-day teaching and targeted provision on pupils' progress and development. Once again, teachers need to drive this process, with

Case study – Working with families

You will find useful case studies on pupil voice and involving parents/carers on the nasen YouTube site:

- **Listening to children and young people –** www.youtube.com/user/Nasenonline/playlists?sort=dd&view=50&shelf_id=19/
- **Working with and listening to families –** www.youtube.com/user/Nasenonline/playlists?view=50&sort=dd&flow=grid&shelf_id=29/

the support of the SENCO. The meeting should consider the following:

- Has the child achieved the agreed targets?
- What is the evidence from day-to-day intervention tracking?
- Are the skills acquired through targeted support transferred back into class work?
- How have the pupil and parents responded to targeted provision?
- What are the views of support staff, parents and the pupil?
- How will the outcomes of this review feed back into the analysis of pupils' needs?
- What changes to support, provision and targets are needed?

Finding time to conduct a comprehensive, termly review will always pay dividends by providing an increasingly sharper focus on the nature of pupils' needs, leading to increasingly well-targeted support and improved outcomes.

Involving parents and carers

The SEND Code of Practice puts an increased emphasis on the contribution of parents/carers and pupils to the graduated approach. The SENCO will need to ensure that systems are in place in school for a 'real' student voice to be heard and for the development of self-advocacy to be part of a truly person-centred approach.

Reflection and readiness – Review

Use these questions to assess your school's readiness for this aspect of the graduated approach:

- Are teachers driving the process of reviewing the effectiveness of provision for pupils with SEN for whom they are responsible and accountable?
- Are teachers well prepared to discuss the term's outcomes (qualitative and quantitative) of pupils with SEN?
- Are we utilising whole-school tracking and review processes to support evaluation of the achievement of pupils with SEN?
- Are all key people meaningfully involved in the review process (parents/carers, pupil/support staff/specialists/peer advocates)?
- Are appropriate formats in place to collate the outcomes of review and future adjustments to provision?
- How can we provide opportunities for consulting parents/carers at least once a term?
- Are we supporting parents in understanding the difference they can make in supporting their child's learning at home and in how they can do this confidently?



There must also be a way to engage and involve parents and carers at the centre of planning and reviewing of provision.

The spiral of support

Class and subject teachers need to be at the heart of the graduated approach, driving the movement around the four stages of action with the support, guidance and leadership of the SENCO and, where appropriate, other specialist staff.

The graduated approach avoids pupils being labelled as 'School Action', 'School Action plus' or 'statemented'. Instead, provision for pupils with special educational needs is tailored to meet pupils' needs as it is continually revisited, refined, refreshed and revised.

Want to know more?

You can listen to key nasen staff talking about SEN support and the graduated approach on the nasen YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/nasenonline):

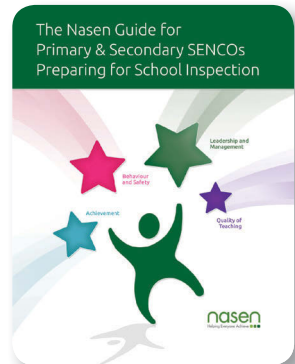
- Jane Friswell, nasen Chief Executive – Additional Support for SEN: Every teacher, every child – www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QCoL09tJ9U&list=PLo71rs7uZTvUembs8nGHxoiZYRIW-uYgp&index=3/
- Kate Browning, Acting Education Development Officer, nasen – SEN support and the graduated approach – www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CBGR11GOS8&list=UUOjOP_iHXg1RKfmPVRikHpQ/

This guide is based on material originally written by Kate Browning, Acting Education Development Officer with nasen.

The Nasen Guide for Primary & Secondary SENCOs Preparing for School Inspection

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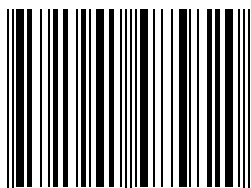
www.nasen.org.uk/schoolinspection

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Nasen is the leading UK professional association embracing all special and additional educational needs and disabilities. The organisation promotes the education, training, development and support of all those working within the special and additional educational needs and disabilities sector. Membership of nasen is an invaluable source of advice, offering an exclusive and vital range of benefits to support teachers, governors, teaching assistants and the entire education support network in the delivery of high-quality inclusive practice.

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