

Quality first teaching

High quality teaching is the foundation for progress for all learners. It is believed that the difference between poor teaching and highly effective teaching equates to just under half a year's extra progress for most learners. The effects of high quality teaching are especially significant for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds: over a school year, these learners gain one and a half years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared with half a year's worth with poorly performing teachers (The Sutton Trust, 2011).

The Code of Practice recognises that, 'high quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEN. Additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching' (Department for Education, 2014).

Quality first teaching in the early years

In assessing progress of children in the early years, practitioners can use the non-statutory Early Years Outcomes guidance as a tool to assess the extent to which a young child is developing at expected levels for their age. The guidance sets out what most children do at each stage of their learning and development. These include typical behaviours across the seven areas of learning:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design.

SEN support should include planning and preparing for transition, before a child moves into another setting or school.

The local authority services work across early years' settings, to ensure that there is:

- Expertise and experience amongst local early years settings to support children with SEND, including SEN Support where appropriate
- Guidance and advice available from an experienced practitioner
- High quality SEND related training available
- Impartial information for parents
- A strong link between health, education and social care
- Support for a clear and effective process of transition to full time education.

Identifying SEND

Appropriate intervention cannot be put in place if a learner's needs have not been correctly identified. It is important to take the time to reflect on a school's range of current screening and assessment tools and where necessary to engage with the relevant professionals to ensure precise identification. Schools sometimes use interventions based on their current or historic offer, or based on areas of staff expertise, rather than drilling down into the individual needs of the learner and then personalizing the intervention around them.

Children under two years

A child is considered to have a learning difficulty or disability if they are likely to need special educational provision when they reach school age.

If SEND is identified early, the needs of children are likely to be best met from locally available services. The health service and /or social care services provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The Local Offer sets out how agencies will work together to provide integrated support for young children with SEND, and how services will be planned and commissioned jointly to meet local needs.

Progress check at age two

When a child is aged between two and three, early years practitioners must review progress and provide parents with a short summary of their child's development, focusing on:

- communication and language,
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development.

This progress check must identify the child's strengths and any areas where the child's progress is slower than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns (or identified SEND or disability) practitioners should develop a targeted plan to support the child, involving other professionals such as, for example, health visiting team, speech therapists.

The summary must highlight areas where:

- good progress is being made
- some additional support might be needed
- there is a concern that a child may have a developmental delay (which may indicate SEND or disability).

It must describe the activities and strategies the provider intends to adopt to address any issues or concerns. If a child moves settings between the ages of two and three it is expected that the progress check will be undertaken in the setting where the child has spent most time.

Health visitors currently check children's physical development milestones between ages two and three as part of the universal Healthy Child Programme.

If concerns are then triggered by the health visitor, information should be shared with the setting that the child attends and a plan put in place to support the child.

Children 2-5 years

In addition to the formal checks, early years practitioners working with children should monitor and review the progress and development of all children throughout the early years. Settings using the Development Matters guidance should monitor progress and achievement through the age bands.

Where a child appears to be behind expected levels, or where a child's progress gives cause for concern, practitioners should consider all the information about the child's learning and development from within and beyond the setting, from formal checks, from practitioner observations and from any more detailed assessment of the child's needs. Parents and carers should be consulted and included at all stages and at any point of concern.

From within the setting practitioners should particularly consider information on a child's progress in

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development.

Where any specialist advice has been sought from beyond the setting, this should also inform decisions about whether a child has SEND. All the information should be considered together with parents/carers observations.

Example: At the age of 38 months the child is functioning at or below 22-36 month age band in at least 3 skill areas (i.e. listening an attention/understanding/expressive/social communication/ speech sounds)

Or at age 42 months the child is functioning at 22-36 month stage in at least 1 skill area

Following the identification of concern, settings should follow the assess, plan, do, review cycle as part of a graduated approach and ensure that processes are in place to underpin:

- A targeted plan involving relevant professionals and parent/carers
- Interventions based on information about the child's learning and development, using stages of intervention tool
- Formal checks and practitioner observations
- Parents carers involvement
- EHAP, if appropriate.

For Individual children, there will be:

- Clearly identified outcomes in place using SMART targets
- Targeted observations, with evidence of actions from the collated information
- Regular discussions with parents to share ideas successes, concerns and next steps
- Involvement with the child's health visitor
- Referrals to SALT / other health professionals as appropriate
- Risk assessments and care plans, as appropriate.

Working with parents /carers towards:

- An inclusive ethos and commitment
- Regular two-way communication with families
- Opportunities to work together and share good practice
- Evidence of including children in their own decisions, preferences and choice-making.

Quality first teaching (QFT) for school aged learners

Quality first or high-quality teaching is embedded within the SEND code of practice and primarily focuses on the inclusion of all pupils in high quality, everyday teaching. It is a graduated approach that goes above the normal differentiation and learning arrangements provided within personalised teaching and ensures every pupil can access every lesson in a way they are able to achieve and progress.

Generic Principles of Quality First Teaching

- Lessons are highly focused with clear learning outcomes
- High expectations of learner engagement
- Opportunities are in place for learners to succeed as well as being challenged
- Opportunities for interactions for all learners
- An emphasis on learning through dialogue
- An expectation learner take responsibility for their own learning
- Regular use of praise to engage and motivate learners
- Keywords visible and referred to within lessons
- The use of Literacy Mats, Dictionaries and Thesauri encouraged
- A range of resources and strategies evident in planning and delivery-visual aids, concrete and visual resources, hands-on and experiential opportunities, use of symbols, pictures and colour
- note taking and study skills are specifically taught to enable learners to develop independence skills
- Clear, structured lessons enable classwork to be varied including independent, pair and group work to support with developing independence as well as group work skills.
- Knowledge and understanding are not assumed. Clarity regarding tasks and learning objectives need to be shared with the learner. Examples and models support learners accessing tasks.
- Minimise talking time, simplify language and optimise pupils' talking time
- Links to prior learning: start the lesson with revision, refer to previous work on the same topic, use of mind maps etc. to show links
- Regular revision and repetition: Think of it as a spiral of learning where you keep returning to a topic, with increasingly long periods in between each return; this is sometimes called spaced practice
- Break up learning tasks: build in movement from one task to another where possible, change pace, change activity, use breaks; new learning needs time to 'bed in' and breaks can help that process
- Use memory aids: for example, visual stimuli, songs and rhymes, whatever works.

The code of practice outlines the four broad areas of SEND:

- Cognition and learning
- Communication and learning (including SLCN)
- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)

- Physical and sensory

Was this page useful?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No

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