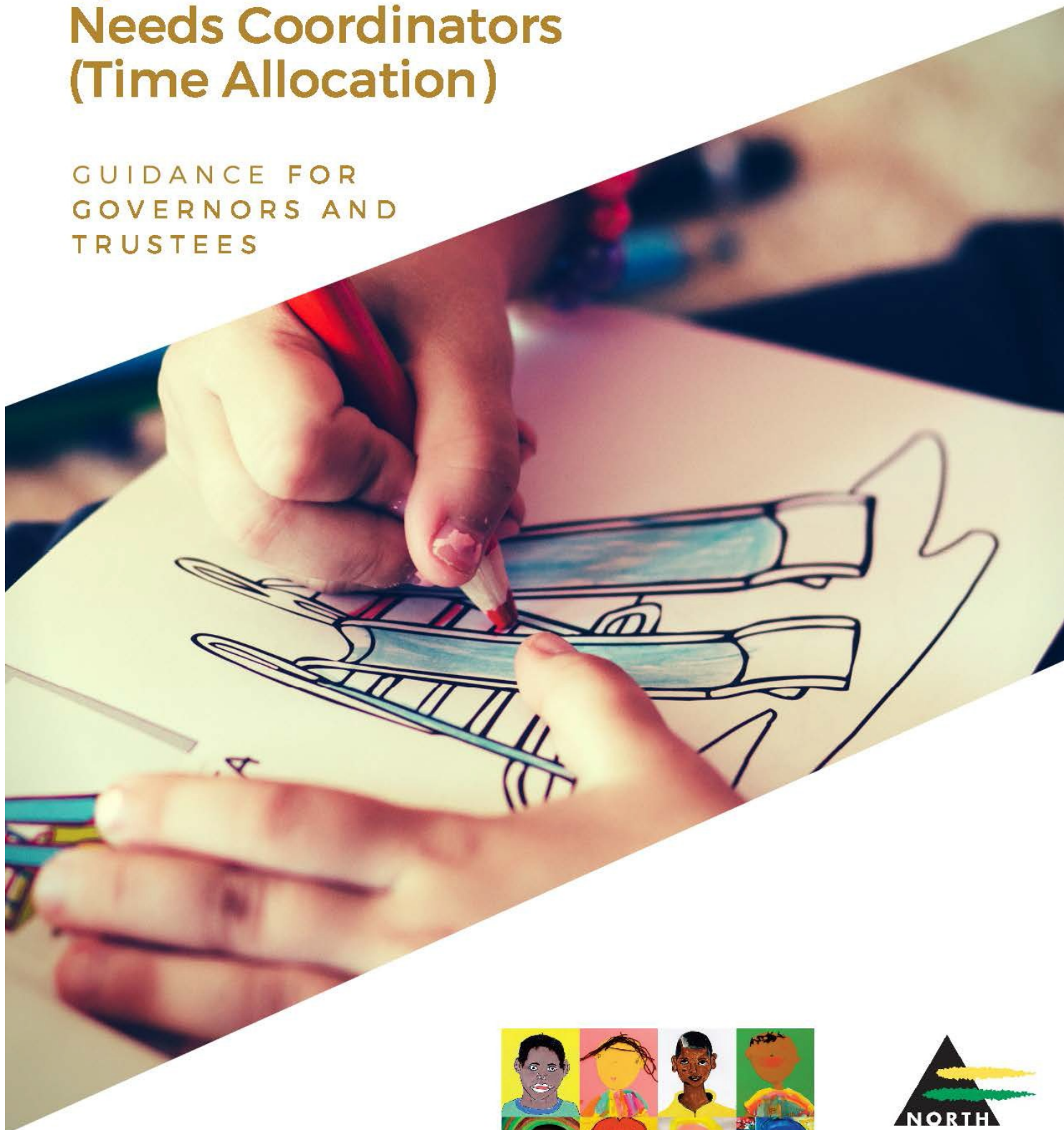


Special Educational Needs Coordinators (Time Allocation)

GUIDANCE FOR
GOVERNORS AND
TRUSTEES



Special Educational Needs Coordinators (Time Allocation): Guidance for Governors and Trustees

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Purpose

*Governing bodies of maintained mainstream schools and the proprietors of mainstream academy schools (including free schools) **must** ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school.¹*

This guidance aims to help governing bodies and school leaders to understand the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and its important contribution to determining the strategic development of SEND policy and provision in school.

It is particularly focussed on providing a local context to the SEND Code of Practice recommendation that every school... *'should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions...providing the SENCO with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.'*²

It will also offer recommendations that can be shared with SENCo's to help them carry out their duties and fulfil their responsibilities.

Statutory Guidance

There are two main pieces of recent legislation which help define SEND and the role of the SENCo. These are The Children and Families Act 2014 and The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2014.

The Children and Families Act, 2014:

Through the Children and Families Act the Government is seeking to effect cultural and systemic change within the area of SEND and education; specifically the development of an aspirational and outcome-based system for individuals with SEND, with the family at the centre.

The key messages from the Special Educational Needs part of the act are:

- The legal definition of special educational needs continues to be the same but is extended to young people up to the age of 25.
- Education, Health and Care Plans replace statements and focus on outcomes.
- School Action and School Action Plus are replaced by a single SEN Support category.
- Local authorities must produce a local offer of available education, health and care services.
- Personal budget are offered to families who want to have them.
- Schools must still have a SENCo who is a qualified teacher and must undertake the mandatory National Award for SEN Co-ordination if they are new to the role and have less than one year's experience in the role.
- The right to a mainstream education remains the same and all of the provisions of the act apply to schools, academies and free schools.

¹ DfE, 2014, The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, p108

² Ibid, p 109

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2014:

The SEND Code of Practice came into effect on 1 September 2014 and states that the SENCo has an 'important role to play' regarding the strategic direction of SEND in schools. Additionally the SENCo is typically responsible for the operational management of the SEND policy. Therefore the SENCo may be regarded as a key implementer of the SEND reforms.

The role of the SENCo is described thus:

The SENCO has day-to-day responsibility for the operation of SEND policy and co-ordination of specific provision made to support individual pupils with SEN, including those who have Education Health and Care Plans.

The SENCO provides professional guidance to colleagues and will work closely with staff, parents and other agencies. The SENCO should be aware of the provision in the Local Offer and be able to work with professionals providing a support role to families to ensure that pupils with SEN receive appropriate support and high quality teaching.

The key responsibilities of the SENCO may include:

- overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy
- co-ordinating provision for children with SEN
- liaising with the relevant Designated Teacher where a looked after pupil has SEN
- advising on the graduated approach to providing SEN support
- advising on the deployment of the school's delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils' needs effectively
- liaising with parents of pupils with SEN
- liaising with early years providers, other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals, and independent or voluntary bodies
- being a key point of contact with external agencies, especially the local authority and its support services
- liaising with potential next providers of education to ensure a pupil and their parents are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned
- working with the headteacher and school governors to ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) with regard to reasonable adjustments and access arrangements
- ensuring that the school keeps the records of all pupils with SEN up to date

The school should ensure that the SENCO has sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions. This should include providing the SENCO with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in a similar way to other important strategic roles within a school.

It may be appropriate for a number of smaller primary schools to share a SENCO employed to work across the individual schools. Schools can consider this arrangement where it secures sufficient time away from teaching and sufficient administrative support to enable

the SENCO to fulfil the role effectively for the total registered pupil population across all of the schools involved.

Where such a shared approach is taken the SENCO should not normally have a significant class teaching commitment. Such a shared SENCO role should not be carried out by a headteacher at one of the schools.

Schools should review the effectiveness of such a shared SENCO role regularly and should not persist with it where there is evidence of a negative impact on the quality of SEN provision, or the progress of pupils with SEN.

Difficulties of implementation

Despite its prominence in government policy the role of the SENCo in schools across the country continues to be considered unclear and that it is a role which is '*as varied as the schools and settings in which the post-holders are employed and the role is delivered*'.³

This could be due to a number of factors, such as:

- The phase, size and geographical setting of the school.
- The amount of available time to carry out the role, some SENCo's are part-time, others are full-time class teachers
- The expertise and experience of the SENCo
- The priorities and ethos of the school and headteacher.

The Local Context

Feedback from SENCo's in North Lincolnshire correlates with the sense of diversity identified at the national level and indicates particularly wide local variations in the amount of time schools allocate to the SENCo role.

In North Lincolnshire, all schools have a SENCo who is a qualified teacher. The majority of schools have a qualified teacher who combines the role of SENCo with a designated teaching commitment. A small number of schools have a qualified teacher who combines a school leadership role, often at the level of Assistant Principal, with that of SENCo. And less than a handful of head teachers in the infant/primary age-range undertake the SENCo role alongside their head teacher duties.

Designated SENCo time:

In Autumn 2016 SENCo's working in North Lincolnshire schools were given an opportunity to complete a survey as part of an attempt to gain a clearer picture how designated SENCo time varied from school to school. As expected, the returns confirmed that local school leaders provided SENCo's with very different amounts of time with which to undertake their functions. The survey returns also appeared to indicate that neither sizes of pupil cohorts with SEND nor levels of need were especially influential in the designation of SENCo time.⁴

³ The SENCo Handbook, Cowne, Frankl and Gerschel, 2015, Routledge

⁴ Data taken from a North Lincolnshire SENCo Survey Monkey open between September 1st and December 31st 2016. Available from the SEND Team, Hewson House, Brigg, DN208XJ

Table to show the breakdown of designated time allocation of 21 SENCo's who responded to the North Lincolnshire survey:

SENCo Response	Number of pupils: SEN Support	Number of pupils with an Statement or EHCP	Total number of pupils with SEND	Number of hours per week as designated SENCo time
1	76	8	84	24
2	24	3	27	18
3	55	7	62	16.25
4	18	2	20	12.5
5	78	4	82	12
6	9	1	10	12
7	69	4	73	6
8	31	2	33	6
9	57	3	60	5.5
10	17	4	21	4
11	52	9	61	3.25
12	98	4	102	3
13	29	0	29	3
14	25	3	28	3
15	13	2	15	3
16	29	6	35	2.5
17	15	1	16	2.5
18	13	1	14	2.5
19	25	2	27	2
20	10	0	10	1
21	7	0	7	1

Leadership

Sixty two percent of SENCo's who responded to the local survey considered themselves to be members of their senior leadership teams which indicates that a majority of SENCo's are in position to influence strategic SEND direction in North Lincolnshire schools.

Ofsted

Of the twenty-two schools that have been inspected since 2015, SEND pupils schools were judged to have been making at least good progress in nineteen schools and less than good progress in three schools.

The SENCo profiles in the nineteen 'good progress' schools reflect SENCo-only roles in all but one, which has a shared HT/SENCo role. Of the three schools with less than good progress, two have a SENCo-only role and the other combines SENCo responsibilities with those of Assistant Principal.

A recent telephone survey of 14 SENCo's in those schools identified by Ofsted as making effective provision for SEND similarly reflected a wide variance in designated times, making it difficult to recommend ascribed standardised amounts of SENCo time to pupil cohorts.

It may well be that the element of success in these schools is more focussed on the generation of a culture, by effective leadership, which places as its highest value the aspirations of all pupils, including those with SEND.

Literature Review

To ensure that SENCo's have sufficient time and resources to undertake their functions school leaders may find it useful to consider the following recommendations from well-respected leaders in SEND:

Gareth Morewood⁵

SENCO's need to:

- Allow themselves dedicated time to do the different aspects of the job, including paperwork and making phone-calls.
- Ensure they discuss the need for time with their headteacher.
- Make sure SEN is recognised as a shared responsibility and make time to train staff as part of a whole school approach.
- Have a clear line of communication to the head teacher to ensure that whole school ethos and leadership decisions support their vision.

Natalie Packer⁶

SENCo's should:

- Develop an SEND action plan that links with whole-school priorities.
- Review the SEND Policy and SEN Information Report with pupils, parents and governors annually.
- Clarify the school criteria for identifying SEN.
- Check that staff are making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
- Prioritise high quality, inclusive teaching.
- Support staff to remove barriers to access, participation and learning.
- Develop a clear overview of the SEN budget and spend.
- Use a range a data to evidence attainment, progress and achievement of pupils with SEN.
- Provide a range of CPD opportunities for staff.
- Monitor the effectiveness of TA deployment.
- Place parents and pupils at the heart of decision-making.
- Work with the SEN Governor.

SENCo Handbook⁷

It is recommended that SENCo's

- Join the School Leadership Team (SLT) or identify and work with someone on SLT who will champion SEND.
- Work with professionals and organisations beyond school.
- Work in partnership at transition periods.
- Identify leadership and management responsibilities.

⁵ See Gareth Morewood's website at gdmorewood.com

⁶ The Perfect SENCo, 2014, Crown House

⁷ The SENCo Handbook, Cowne, Frankl and Gerschel, 2015, Routledge

- Manage and facilitate change.

North Lincolnshire Council Support

North Lincolnshire employs a small team of Education Inclusion SEND Teachers to provide expert advice and guidance which helps SENCo's discharge their duties and enables schools to work more effectively with children and young people to achieve outstanding outcomes. SENCo's are offered support using a graduated approach which begins with a Good to Great focussed discussion to generate a strategic overview of SEND provision in each school and then determine targeted next steps. Records of visits by Education Inclusion SEND Teachers are sent to schools and academies and are expected to be copied to leaders and governors.

Recommendations for Governors and Trustees

Governors and trustees need to have a clear understanding of the SENCo role and will benefit from reading Chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice.

It is important that governors and trustees include '*sufficient time to carry out functions*' as an item for discussion with Principals, Head teachers and SENCo's.

It is also important that schools and colleges gather the views of families and children with regard to their experiences of accessing SENCo time.

In the wider context, governors and trustees should seek to establish a monitoring schedule which collects the following information:

Who is the SENCO? Is the SENCO a qualified teacher employed at the school? Do they hold the National Award for SEN Co-ordination or are they working towards it? Are they part of the senior leadership team? If not, why not? Does the SENCO get sufficient time to manage all their duties?

How inclusive is the school? How do you know? Is there a SEND policy, either stand-alone or threaded clearly through all other policies, or both? How well does policy reflect and meet the needs of pupils? Is the Equality Act 2010 being followed in the school?

How well are reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils being made? Are reasonable adjustments considered throughout all appropriate policies, including any for behaviour? Is there an up to date accessibility plan for the school? How are pupils with SEND enabled to attend all school extra-curricular activities and how are they ensured access to the same opportunities as pupils without SEND?

What are the attendance rates like for pupils with SEND? What action is taken where this is of concern? How effective is this action?

What are the exclusion rates for pupils with and without SEND? If there is a difference between the two groups, why is this? What action is being taken to address any concerns? How effective is this action?

What transition arrangements are in place for pupils with SEND? How effective are these arrangements? How do you know?

What is the quality of teaching like for pupils with SEND across the school? Does it meet the needs of all pupils with SEN? How do you know?

How is SEND identified in the school? How many pupils are on the SEND register? How are parents and pupils involved in the identification process? How does the number of pupils identified compare to the national data? How do the numbers of pupils identified according to their primary needs categories compare to national data?

What funding does the school receive for SEND? How is this spent? What impact is it having? Does this represent good value for money? Where pupils have SEND and are in receipt of the pupil premium, how is this money spent? How effectively are both streams of funding ensuring that pupils make good progress?

What progress are pupils with SEND making in the school? How do you know? Is progress accelerated so that attainment gaps are closing between pupils with SEND and those without? How effective are any interventions? Are they delivering value for money? Where there is a lack of progress for pupils with SEND, what action is taken? Who is responsible for monitoring the progress of pupils with SEND?

What use is made of external agencies for supporting the school's work with pupils with SEND? What impact does their input have?

What training have staff had on SEND? What impact has this had? How does the cycle of staff CPD plan for equipping all staff to better meet the needs of all pupils? How is the universal classroom provision being improved across the school?

Is SEND an integral part of the school's performance management process for staff?

Is the school's SEN Information Report on the school's website? How well does the SEND Information Report represent the vision, practice and provision for pupils with SEND in the school? Are all staff familiar with the contents of the report? How accessible (eg. in terms of location, language and structure) is the report for parents, carers and pupils? Have parents been involved in the production and review of the report?

How does the school use person-centred practice?

What do parents think about the school's provision for their children with SEND?

What do pupils think of their own educational experience?

How are the views of children and young people with SEND and their parents used? How are children and young people involved in the decisions about their own provision? How are parents involved in the decision-making about the provision for their child?

What support do you need from the Governing Body to help pupils with SEND make better progress?⁸

⁸ NASEN, Questions for governors/trustees to ask about SEND, 2017