

# The SEND Code of Practice?

**By Laura Dobson**

The SEND code of practice: **0 to 25 years (revised January 2015)** explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

In total, the SEND Code of Practice is 292 pages long. So how can it be used by teachers to help inform their practice?

Key parts for educational settings relate to chapters 5, 6 and 7:

Chapter 5 outlines expectations for early years settings such as nurseries. Chapter 6 outlines expectations for schools, this includes identifying SEND, describing the four broad areas of need and special educational provision in schools including SEN support and requests for EHCPs as well as working with pupils, parents and external agencies. This chapter also details what should be included in the schools SEN Information Report and details the role of the SENCO. Chapter 7 outlines statutory duties in post 16 institutions.

The four broad areas of need 6.28 to 6.35 is helpful as it outlines some of the barriers some pupils may experience in the learning environment.

The broad areas of need are:

**Communication and interaction** – this is where a pupil has speech, language and communication needs. For example, they may have difficulty communicating what they mean or understanding the rules of social communication. There may also be issues relating to social interaction and not be able to understand the needs of others.

**Cognition and learning** – this is where young people learn at a slower pace than their peers. Young people might have a moderate, mild or severe learning difficulty which impacts on them accessing the curriculum. This extends to profound and multiple learning difficulties – also known as PMLD - where young people experience profound barriers to accessing the curriculum if there aren't significant adaptations made to the lesson or additional resources provided.

**Social, emotional and mental health barriers** – this is where young people experience social and emotional challenges which can manifest in a multitude of ways. For example, some behaviours may be disruptive and attention seeking whilst others might be more withdrawn. Some behaviours may reflect underlying mental health barriers such as depression or anxiety.

**Sensory and/or physical needs** – this is where young people have a disability which impacts on them accessing educational provision provided for them. This may include a hearing impairment or visual impairment resulting in the young person requiring additional resources or support to access the curriculum. It may also be the case that a young person has a physical disability which again requires additional resources or support to help them access educational provision.

An important consideration for you, as their teacher, relates to the steps you take in order to deliver high quality teaching. Part of this involves identifying barriers that pupils may experience and considering how these will influence planning, use of resources, style of delivery and general interaction with pupils.

In part, the Code of Practice encourages teachers to take a step back and consider the information that already exists. Essentially, you are not starting with a blank page, there will be data and other key information that can support you in adjusting your approach to help pupils access the curriculum. For example:

- Primary schools will have the early years profile to draw on and gauge the areas of development for a pupil. There will also be information from the phonics screening as well as internal assessments which show a learner's profile.
- Secondary schools will have data and information from feeder primary schools as well as that produced by the assessments, they run e.g. CAT scores, reading assessments and again will have their own in-house assessment systems.

There may also be additional information by way of reports from specialists which detail where an individual's relative strengths and weaknesses lie.

Parents will also be an invaluable source of information relating to their child. They will be able to share their own observations and experiences of the child's development. This insight might also include strategies and approaches that work as well as highlighting key areas of difficulty so make sure you invest time in communicating with them to involve them in the process.

The Code of Practice encourages a consultative approach which can help support you to gather information from a range of sources and then synthesise this information with the support of other key stakeholders such as, parents, colleagues and external professionals. Rather than be data rich and limited with analysis, the Code of Practice encourages you to be reflective, to make sense of the information to hand and use it to inform your teaching.

Equally, the Code of Practice highlights that classroom teaching is effectively the first line of intervention or support so before seeking to place a pupil on a provision that is different from or additional to normal provision, you should aim to understand what is going on in the classroom first of all. Only once you have a clearer understanding of what is happening within the classroom and have gathered evidence of what is working and where barriers persist, can you then make more informed decisions of what would constitute the most appropriate provision in the future.