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## SEN Matters

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# Transforming SEND

## Leadership and culture at Talavera Junior School

At Talavera Junior School, our motto is that **every learning minute counts**; we want our children to be curious, life-long learners. As everyone in education knows, this is particularly important for the most vulnerable groups.

*“Every learning minute counts”*



Ensuring that our pupils with SEND are included in mainstream learning, are supported, and challenged appropriately, and make exceptional progress to close the gap to expected or greater depth are all encapsulated by this motto.

When developing a strong culture of inclusion in our school, we knew that we needed to start with our staff; it was imperative that every adult in our school knew that every child deserves an excellent education. Continuous professional development for both teaching and support staff is fundamental to success for all. We run weekly training sessions for all learning support assistants (LSAs), ensuring that they are confident in how to support pupils with SEND.

This may range from how to accurately assess pupils' reading, to running an intervention for a pupil with a motor difficulty. Sometimes, these sessions are based on the curriculum; for example, we regularly run grammar support sessions which ensure that all support staff have the skills and knowledge in this area. We need to celebrate these LSAs who have the ability to support pupils from pre-Key Stage all the way up to greater depth and understand that a pupil with SEND should not be capped by their label. We have the ultimate goal of moving children off the SEND register where possible and appropriate, giving them the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful with universal support.

Our teachers also have a weekly CPD meeting which may cover anything from subject knowledge to creative ways of teaching concepts. We moderate both within and across year groups, making the most of subject experts who support this process. We also receive training from external providers which means that we benefit from the most up-to-date expertise. We highly value training for all staff and prioritise sending teachers on courses that will benefit all; when they have attended a training session, they will disseminate the key information back to staff.

In this time of stretched budgets though, we make the most of our internal subject knowledge. One of the most valuable models that we use is team teaching – where one adult observes or co-teaches with another to share knowledge and expertise. This may be within or across year groups and may be focused on particular lessons or across the school day. This supports SEND pupils by ensuring that all teachers are confident in their delivery of all the teacher standards and ensures that outstanding delivery is the norm.

Our SENDCo is always available for advice and support, including observing pupils in the day-to-day. Our expectations remain high for all pupils. Where SEND pupils may not be able to respond to traditional methods of classroom management, we understand that these may need to be addressed in a different way. To support this, extensive training has been delivered both internally and externally to all staff. We use our valuable EP time as well as free training available from the speech and language team to support all staff in their understanding of different SEND needs.



### We can all achieve culture



Most importantly, just as we expect children to be life-long learners, we expect that from our staff too. There is no sense of failure when a teacher is supported by another member of staff; we celebrate those who ask for additional support, who recognise that every child is different and that we need to pool our skills and knowledge to ensure the best for each one of them.

Regardless of the pupils' attainment, they are all valued – and know that they are. We achieve this in a number of ways. We use careful class grouping to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to *go backwards before they go forwards*. This attitude means that we believe in securing the basics, developing a depth of understanding in all areas, before supporting pupils to move onto the next curriculum area.

Pupils enjoy these lessons, feeling successful in their learning and able to celebrate their own achievements. It also means that all pupils are accessing the same learning with careful and specific adaptations where necessary. However, there is no attention brought to those who may benefit from additional support. Indeed, because we challenge all pupils, support is evidently given to every pupil. There is no sense that our SEND pupils are being singled out or left out.

Assessments, both formative and summative, are used where appropriate to identify areas of need for all pupils. Due to this, we have fluid groupings, understanding that no subject is a monolith – different pupils will find different areas of subjects easier or harder.



Assessments for pupils with EHCPs and individual education plans (IEPs) may be used to inform their specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound (SMART) targets, alongside year group discussions and moderations. Pupils are involved in the setting and discussion of these targets, allowing them to feel engaged and invested in their learning.



We also hold termly meetings with the parents of pupils with IEPs and EHCPs to ensure that they are engaged with their child's learning and feel confident in how to support them at home. To further support parents, we target and individually invite parents to be involved in training to support their child at home for spelling, reading and mathematical skills such as number bonds – where this is the child's particular weakness. Parents are aware that it is a school expectation that they engage in offered training to support their child at home.

### Making every minute count

One area that we have found has had a huge benefit to our pupils is directed, specific pre-teach homework for both language and text drivers. This replaces those photocopied (and not always relevant!) sheets which have no impact on learning and a negative impact on both parents' and children's home engagement – and sometimes even on their mental health. Our directed homework, on the other hand, has increased parental support and engagement, allowing parents to feel involved in their child's learning. This has even seen a decrease in the need for SEND pupils to access our homework support club as parents are able to provide that support at home.

The homework has enabled pupils to develop their confidence in themselves, using advanced and technical language. Even where pupils may still not find this language easy to use, they are more able to access inputs with new learning. This, in turn, allows them to be more successful in lessons. It is a positive feedback loop that benefits everyone!



We know that not all parents will feel able to provide this support and some pupils will need to overlearn the language and skills. For these reasons, we also pre-teach in early morning work. Children come in when the school doors open and there is always a fun and engaging task ready for them, which is either pre-teaching or overlearning from the previous day's work. This work is not marked but gives teachers and support staff the opportunity for informal assessment as the children settle into their day.



These morning sessions may also be used for immediate intervention, which is time when an adult addresses misconception that a child may have developed from previous learning. It may also be a chance for the child to have more practice or to edit previous work. Immediate intervention is crucial to ensure that no one falls behind – it feeds directly into our belief that every single child should make exceptional progress. Due to the CPD programme described earlier, all adults are confident in delivering high-quality immediate intervention.

### Enabling independence

In lessons, we encourage a blend of support and independence. Having an LSA working solely with one child can happen all too easily. This is to the detriment of other pupils in the class who may need support but also of the SEND pupils who need to develop their confidence and ability to work solo. One of the ways that this is achieved is through adaptations. When we plan, we work from the top down. This means that we have high expectations of all and then consider the misconceptions that could arise or the foundational building blocks of knowledge that must be in place.

Adaptations are added only where necessary and vary hugely depending on the need. We know that SEND pupils are not a homogenous group and would not expect to see an adaptation that would benefit a child with a language difficulty used to support a child with a motor problem. The most important message our teachers know is that adaptation does not mean smaller numbers or complete fewer examples; instead, they are specific and targeted. They are always designed with the aim of allowing pupils to complete them independently. Not only does this ensure that they are learning but develops their confidence too.

### Small hub provision with targeted learning needs Communication support systems

Some pupils are not able to access a mainstream education. We all know that this can be stressful for everyone: parents want the best for their child and know that they are falling behind; teachers and support staff are struggling to help them keep up; children are frustrated and finding the school environment stressful or upsetting. However, it is not always necessarily right for these pupils to be in an alternative provision.

We have a Hub, a provision for a group of SEND pupils who are not able to access every area of the national mainstream curriculum.

Each of these pupils has an EHCP which is explored in-depth by the parents, SENDCo and teacher. We consider this to be a fluid provision, as some of the pupils may access their year group's learning, for example in one particular subject. Each of the pupils has a link class, meaning that they are able to develop meaningful relationships with their peer groups, as well as being part of whole school events with their class. This enables them to feel immersed in Talavera Junior School.

Their learning is differentiated, rather than adapted, based on pre-key stage curricula. We use, for example, Year 1's KPIs and have developed their own assessment grids and medium-term plans to reflect this. We deliver their learning in small chunks, the length of which has increased over the course of the year. Afternoons are generally dedicated to social skills, an area which all of these pupils are developing. They complete topic lessons, just like the rest of the school, though these are heavily focused on practical and interaction skills.



We use Makaton with the pupils; training for this was delivered to all staff, not simply those working in the Hub, as part of our dedication to every single staff member understanding the importance of inclusion. We delivered this training to parents to allow them to continue developing this communication skill at home. We also use the picture exchange communication system (PECS), which allows our children to communicate using symbols when they were not able to verbally communicate. These images are used across the school.

Typically, one might expect that pupils accessing such an adapted curriculum would not be able to take part in what can be difficult conversations about relationships and puberty. However, pupils with SEND are extremely vulnerable to abuse and, in fact, it's most important that they are given quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Due to this, we have developed a specific curriculum, which is delivered to pupils in the Hub before they then take part in the Year 3 RSE/SRE week if we feel that they are able to access this learning. This topic includes concepts such as how to demonstrate good friendship and being safe with others but in a way which is appropriate and engaging. It is relevant to their lives and how to be safe within it.



### Team passion and dedication

All of this could not happen without the incredible hard work that is put in every day by our teaching and support staff. However, this culture is developed and reinforced by leadership. It is vital that you are visible and engaged with the daily struggles in the classroom. Understanding that staff want the best for pupils even if they are finding it hard to deliver this means that your staff know that they can ask for help. We maintain an attitude of open curiosity, listening to what teachers and support staff say they are seeing in class. Ultimately, leadership creates the whole-wide culture of driving every child to make significant progress. It is about life chances for each individual child, opening doors to the world for them. Like everything that you do, it's relentless, pushing for something which is both individual and whole school, bespoke and mainstream. With quality-first teaching at the heart of everything that we do as educators, supporting our SEND pupils becomes not about if they can make it to Expected but how they will.

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