

MANAGING SPECIAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

The Role of the SENCO

Edited by
John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner
and John Lee

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Volume 14

MANAGING SPECIAL NEEDS IN
MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

MANAGING SPECIAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

The Role of the SENCO

Edited by
**JOHN DWYFOR DAVIES, PHILIP GARNER
AND JOHN LEE**

First published in 1998 by David Fulton Publishers Ltd

This edition first published in 2019

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1998 David Fulton Publishers Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-58532-4 (Set)

ISBN: 978-0-429-46809-4 (Set) (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-59277-3 (Volume 14) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-48978-5 (Volume 14) (ebk)

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

Additional publisher's Note

These are re-issues of books published some years ago which are inevitably a reflection of the time in which they were published. The language used is indicative of that time and as such no offence is intended by the re-issuing of the books.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

MANAGING SPECIAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

The Role of the SENCO

Edited by

John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee



David Fulton Publishers
London

David Fulton Publishers Ltd
Ormond House, 26–27 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JD

First published in Great Britain by David Fulton Publishers 1998

Note: The right of John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Copyright © David Fulton Publishers Ltd 1998

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 1–85346–526–7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset by FSH Ltd, London
Printed in Great Britain by BPC Books and Journals, Exeter

Contents

Contributors	v
Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	ix
1 Operating in the context of zero tolerance	1
John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee	
2 An extremely demanding agenda	12
Hazel Bines	
3 The problems of interpretation and guidance: the consequences of SENCO action from a legal point of view	24
William Evans	
4 SENCOs and the Code: no longer practising	36
John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee	
5 The impact of LEA policy on the role of the SENCO	50
Roy Evans and Jim Docking	
6 The early years: Luke's story	71
Sue Rice	
7 Small is special: making the best use of scarce resources	80
Veronica Lee	
8 Managing to cope: special needs in a large primary school	86
Kathy Bale	
9 Two pupils, two SENCOs: same story	95
Peter Russell and Sheila Russell	
10 Spanning the divide: the SENCO and transition	103
Tony Duckett	
11 Establishing an effective relationship between SENCOs and educational psychologist	114
Lesley Kaplan and Alison Scott-Baumann	
12 The role of the SEN governor	128
Gillian Blunden	

13 Partnership in practice: governors and SENCOs working together	134
Stephen Grant	
14 Writing and implementing Individual Education Plans	138
Janet Tod and John Cornwall	
15 Compiling school policies for special educational needs: the role of the SENCO	151
Jane Tarr and Gary Thomas	
16 More than just managing	165
John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee	
Bibliography	173
Index	180

Contributors

Kathy Bale is SENCO at Trafalgar Junior School, Twickenham.

Hazel Bines is Professor and Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Health, Social Work and Education at the University of Northumbria.

Gillian Blunden is Director of Research at the Faculty of Health and Social Care, University of the West of England, Bristol. She is also the governor with responsibility for special educational needs at a maintained infant school.

John Cornwall is a senior lecturer in the Special Needs Research and Development Centre, Christchurch College, Canterbury.

John Dwyfor Davies is Principal Lecturer and Director of Studies (CPD) in the Faculty of Education, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Jim Docking is a Researcher at Roehampton Institute, London.

Tony Duckett is Learning Support Coordinator, Queensmead School, Ruislip, Middlesex.

Roy Evans is Research Fellow in the Centre for Comparative Studies in Special Education at Brunel University.

William Evans is a solicitor and was formerly secretary and solicitor to the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Philip Garner is Reader in Education in the School of Education, Brunel University.

Stephen Grant is the Vice Chair of Bristol Council's Education Committee and also serves on its Social Services Committee. He is Chair of Governors of a maintained secondary school and a newly amalgamated primary school.

Lesley Kaplan is a district senior educational psychologist in Bristol.

John Lee is Principal Lecturer in Education at the Faculty of Education, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Veronica Lee is the head teacher of a small primary school in the West Country.

Sue Rice is the deputy head teacher of a nursery school in the West Country.

Peter Russell is SENCO in a middle school in East Anglia.

Sheila Russell is SENCO in a first school in East Anglia.

Alison Scott-Baumann is an educational psychologist in Bristol and also Senior Lecturer at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education.

Jane Tarr is Senior Lecturer in Education at the Faculty of Education, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Gary Thomas is Professor of Education in the Faculty of Education, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Janet Tod is Principal Lecturer and Head of the Special Needs Research and Development Centre, Christchurch College, Canterbury.

Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder
ASB	Aggregated School Budget
AWPU	Age Weighted Pupil Unit
CoP	Code of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
EBD	Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EWO	Education Welfare Worker
GEST	Grants for Education Support and Training
GSB	General School Budget
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IHE	Institution of Higher Education
INSET	In-service Education and Training
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
KS	Key Stage
MA	Master of Arts
MDA	Mid-day Supervisory Assistant
MEd	Masters in Education
NCC	National Curriculum Council
NNEB	National Nurses Education Board
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PANDAS	Performance and Assessment
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education

PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SAT	Standard Assessment Tests
SDP	School Development Plan
SEAT	Special Education Advisory Team
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SENSC	Special Educational Needs Support Centre
SENTC	Special Educational Needs Training Consortium
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SMT	Senior Management Team

Introduction

Sarah Bowman is viewed by her colleagues at St Vincent's Primary School as a pivotal figure in school organisation. She is frequently called upon to provide guidance and support to teachers in the school, whilst at the same time managing a class of her own. The period before school, during morning break and at lunch-time are her favoured times for the practice of what she refers to as 'collaring' those she works with to discuss SEN matters.

At other times, frequently in the evenings and weekends, Sarah's time is taken up with maintaining the school's documentation for the staged assessment under the Code of Practice and planning and monitoring IEPs. She has a full meeting schedule, comprising senior management team meetings, review meetings, meetings with parents, meetings with collaborating professionals, and what she refers to as a 'normal' diet of assessment meetings, curriculum discussions and other gatherings.

Sarah's wide-ranging role and its commensurate heavy workload will be familiar to those primary school teachers who occupy the post of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Hers is a fairly typical story, which confirms the paradoxical impact of the creation of the role following the Education Act, 1993. What has subsequently become apparent is that the status of a new breed of teachers, the SENCO, has been significantly enhanced.

Such are the wide-ranging responsibilities of SENCOs in the 1990s that they seem light years away from the frequently marginalised role that 'remedial' teachers held just 30 or so years previously. There is an increased level of responsibility and status which Sarah gladly accepted when she was offered the post of SENCO at St Vincent's in 1996. Her belief was that 'I would have been foolish not to accept it. Of course I knew that there would be a lot of extra work, but I realised that the position was really influential. I could do something to change things because I had the power.'

At the same time, however, this enhanced position of the newly established role of SENCO within the decision-making machinery of

primary schools was accompanied by a level of responsibility and an increase in workload which have become salient features of the professional culture of the post. It is unlikely that those who first assumed the role were fully aware of the extent to which their job would become so time-consuming and, at times, frustrating.

So, whilst Sarah recognised the potential for an increase in her workload, she admits that there are times when she feels overwhelmed: 'I can take the pressure of the responsibility that being a SENCO involves, but I sometimes panic when I realise how many people depend on the bits of paper I have to process.'

Both perspectives do much to articulate the concerns of SENCOs in general. Concomitant to this situation is that the SENCO has a statutory requirement to fulfil certain duties and this has legal ramifications, as William Evans points out in this book and as is now becoming evident as individual parents litigate against local educational authorities (LEAs) or individual schools. Little attention was initially given to the degree to which the persons appointed as SENCOs were familiar with the legislation underpinning the role (notably the 1993 Education Act and the 1994 Code of Practice). Some held no additional qualifications in SEN and others had received little associated training or professional development relating to SEN. In consequence, there was ample evidence to support the anxiety felt by SENCOs, in the period immediately following the implementation of the Code, regarding their ability to fulfil their new role effectively. And whilst LEAs, often in partnership with Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) were quick to provide training courses for SENCOs, such experiences may not have been tailored to meet the needs of SENCOs in a wide variety of primary schools; the Code and the role of SENCO were a new departure for all concerned, not least for the trainers themselves! Subsequently, of course, the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to undertake the role of SENCO successfully have become the subject of much discussion and reflection. The Special Educational Needs Training Consortium (SENTC) has been active hereabouts (SENTC 1996) and the TTA has published its proposals for programmes of study specifically designed to delineate the numerous elements of the SENCO role.

Excellent though these initiatives may be, we need to remind ourselves that, in the majority of primary schools, teachers are not simply responsible for pupils with special educational needs, but, like Sarah Bowman, teach a class and often manage at least one other curriculum area. Hazel Bines, in her contribution to this book, has quite rightly, if somewhat reservedly, described this as 'an extremely demanding agenda'. The content of this book represents the thinking, on the part of SENCOs

themselves and a range of other professionals, on what it is to be a SENCO in a primary school at the present time. The role has now become culturally embedded in the practices of the primary school, and is approaching some kind of maturity. Individual schools, and the SENCOs within them, have discharged their responsibilities differently. Thus, whilst the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice have largely been accommodated, the way in which SENCOs choose to operate has varied according to the requirements and capabilities of individual schools, thus amplifying the 'guidance' of the Code that it should be seen as a flexible set of recommendations which can (and should) be adapted according to the needs of individual contexts.

In this book several SENCOs discuss the manner in which they have adapted the role to meet the needs of children, their school and, perhaps most important, their own vision of special needs provision. Peter and Sheila Russell, for instance, show how they make the 'system' work for individual pupils and, in doing so, argue for a particular educational orientation. Kathy Bale uses the bureaucratic nature of the role in a very different way from Sue Rice, who is somewhat sceptical of IEPs and all that comes with them. And Veronica Lee describes how a small school not merely copes but enhances the educational experience of very special pupils.

One aspect of the SENCO's duties which has come under considerable scrutiny is, as the role-title makes explicit, its coordinating function. The SENCO, for example, is in a unique position in linking individual pupils to resources and support agencies, both within and outside the school. Tony Duckett reminds us that there is a particular role that the primary SENCO plays in communicating with colleagues in secondary schools at the point of transfer, whilst communicating something of the excitement of the move for individual pupils. The maturation of the role of SENCO has been paralleled by the refined relationships which now frequently exist with educational psychologists (EP). This link has often been a delicate one, with teachers viewing the EP (in many cases wrongly) as being too removed from the reality of the classroom and as gate-keepers to further resources. Too often this resulted in conflict between the two parties. The chapter by Alison Scott-Baumann and Lesley Kaplan describes one approach that has been successfully implemented, incorporating the kind of collaborative approach which is becoming more indicative of 'second generation' SENCO practice.

Although William Evans has noted that the role of SENCO is potentially a legal minefield, it should be emphasised that it is the governing body of a school that is ultimately responsible for SEN provision. It has, therefore, become increasingly apparent that primary

school teachers have to establish an effective working relationship with their governing body. For instance, the language coordinator will, in future, have to form a close and special relationship with the literacy governor. In many schools SENCOs already provide a role model for the establishment of such a relationship. It is a requirement that all schools identify a named governor responsible for monitoring and ensuring that the school's SEN policy is actively followed and that appropriate provision is in place to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Gillian Blunden and Stephen Grant discuss this potentially thorny issue.

At the time of writing, the teachers' associations are urging the government to reduce the paper work required of teachers. They argue, and the government agrees, that it is better to spend less time on paperwork and more time planning and teaching lessons. Admirable though such sentiments are, it remains difficult to see how the paper workload of the SENCO can be radically reduced. Jane Tarr and Gary Thomas point to the challenge of writing SEN policies and the crucial role of the SENCO in that. Janet Tod and John Cornwall, as well as Kathy Bale, remind us that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) do not come ready made, but are the result of many hours of careful work. It is easy to take the view that the role of SENCO in primary schools is fraught with difficulty, heavy workload and the spectre of litigation. Each of these is an important concern and they have featured repeatedly in SENCO discussion and debate, and in the initial research studies on the role, in the period immediately following the implementation of the Code. Nor would we want to underestimate the volume of work and the pressures involved – both personal and professional – in being a SENCO.

Since 1988, LEAs have had to function in a new and challenging context. In many ways, the introduction of the Code of Practice was the first real test of the new relationship which had evolved between schools and the LEAs. Prior to 1988, the LEA was the fulcrum for coordinating inter-agency work, but this has since been largely devolved to individual SENCOs and has consequently become one of the key features of that role. Roy Evans and Jim Docking, in their chapter, examine in some detail this new relationship between SENCOs and the LEA.

The views of the contributors to this volume are, perhaps, indicative of the evolving and maturing nature of the post. They demonstrate that, in accepting a challenging role, SENCOs find a way through. They solve problems in a variety of imaginative ways which crucially reflect the context within which they work. If the remaining years leading to the millennium result in a similar level of innovation and commitment, it seems likely that the position occupied by SENCOs at the heart of provision for those with learning difficulty will be confirmed and enhanced.

Chapter 1

Operating in the context of zero tolerance

John Dwyfor Davies, Philip Garner and John Lee

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act Act marked the beginning of a period of remarkable volatility in English and Welsh education policy. Since that time, the system has been subject to an extraordinary range of centrally generated policy initiatives. All schools and teachers have been subject to this 'bearing down' of the central state, but it will be argued that this pressure is especially severe on SENCOs. In parallel with legislation and administrative orders, we have seen the development of fierce ideological debates around the concepts of integration and inclusion, with their accompanying rhetoric. The purpose of this chapter is to place the SENCO's role and operation in the context of broad policy and administrative changes since the General Election of 1997.

The change of government in 1997 has brought about a flurry of new policies and legislation. Elected on the slogan 'education, education, education', it has declared itself to be committed to raising standards for all pupils in all schools. It has produced two major education green papers, a white paper, and currently two bills are progressing through parliament.¹ The general welcome given to the change of government by the teachers' professional associations and their old 'partners' the LEAs, was to some extent predicated on the notion that the new government would be less interventionist, and more trusting of the profession. This has proved to be ill-founded. This government, rather than 'getting off teachers' backs', has been equally, if not more, aggressive than the previous in directing what teachers must do and how schools should be organised. Some of these policies and the institutions that are related to them are a continuation from the previous government, others are new. We identify the following as impacting in particular ways on the role of the SENCO.