Identification of SEN Needs: Guidance for SENCos

Key points from the SEN Code of Practice: Identification
6.14: *'All schools should have a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN. The benefits of early identification are widely recognised – identifying need at the earliest point and then making effective provision improves long-term outcomes for the child or young person.'*
6.15: *'A pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.'*
6.25: *'Information on these areas of need and support is also collected through the School Census and forms part of the statutory publication 'Children and Young People with SEN: an analysis' which is issued by DfE each year.'*
6.20: *'…parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by children and young people themselves.'*
6.24 *'Identifying and assessing SEN for children or young people whose first language is not English requires particular care. Schools should look carefully at all aspects of a child or young person's performance in different areas of learning and development or subjects to establish whether lack of progress is due to limitations in their command of English or if it arises from SEN or a disability. Difficulties related solely to limitations in English as an additional language are not SEN.'*
6.27: *'The purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil into a category. In practice, individual children or young people often have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change over time…A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual's needs is identified, not simply the primary need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs.'*
6.45 *'In identifying a child as needing SEN support the class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, should carry out a clear analysis of the pupil's needs. This should draw on the teacher's assessment and experience of the pupil, their previous progress and attainment, as well as information from the school's core approach to pupil progress, attainment, and behaviour. It should also draw on other subject teachers' assessments where relevant, the individual's development in comparison to their peers and national data, the views and experience of parents, the pupil's own views and, if relevant, advice from external support services.'*

Communication and Interaction Needs

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD):
- ASD can only be used if the child or young person has a diagnosis of ASD.
- If a child or young person is on the neurodiversity pathway and has not yet received a diagnosis, you need to ascertain the current primary need. For example, consider whether the pupil presents with Communication and Interaction needs, or Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. Avoid recording as 'Other' or 'SEN Support No Specialist Assessment' whilst awaiting diagnosis.

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN):
6.28 *'Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication… They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives'* (SEN Code of Practice)
- It is important to consider not only pupils with involvement from Speech and Language therapy, but also those who may have wider difficulties associated with language, communication and social interaction.

Resources:
- ➢ Neurodiversity Pathway for ASD/ ADHD diagnosis: SEND Local Offer | Autism Spectrum Education Team (ASET) - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)
- ➢ SALT toolkit: SEND Local Offer | Speech and Language Toolkit - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)
- ➢ ASET Toolkit: SEND Local Offer | Autism Spectrum Education Team Toolkit - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)

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Cognition and Learning Needs
6.23 'Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN and should not automatically lead to a pupil being recorded as having SEN.' *6.30 'Support for learning difficulties may be required when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs'* (SEN Code of Practice)

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD):
The following definition was devised in consultation with the Educational Psychology team:

'*Children and young people with **mild** to **moderate** learning difficulties demonstrate:*
- *Significant delay in acquiring a range of skills at the same pace as their peers.*
- *Progress is developmental.*
- *At the end of KS2 and at secondary at end of KS3 such pupils are working at significantly lower levels.*
- *They require a highly differentiated curriculum and on some occasions in secondary education a modified curriculum.*
- *They require teaching and learning to be focused and offering opportunities for high levels of overlearning, leading to mastery learning and may require earlier key stage targets to be achieved at a later age than expected.*
- *MLD is about a **range** of cognitive domains and cannot be measured through literacy or speech and language assessments on their own.'*

The above definition was devised to aid SENCos with identification of MLD. It is not meant to be prescriptive, nor does a pupil need to meet all of the criteria listed. Its purpose is to provide you with a 'best fit' guide.

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD):
'*6.31: Specific Learning Difficulties affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.'* (SEN Code of Practice)

- A diagnosis is <u>not</u> necessary to identify a pupil as having a Specific Learning Difficulty.
- Even if a screener/ toolkit does not confirm a pupil show signs of Dyslexia/ Dyscalculia, it may still identify other Specific Learning Difficulties, for example, barriers to learning linked with processing speed, phonological awareness, or working memory.
- Consider whether the pupil has barriers to learning across the curriculum or whether it is specific to one area.

There are a range of resources, screeners, toolkits and guides available to support you with identification of

➢ The Neurodiversity checklists (Early Years, Primary & Secondary): [Neurodiversity SpLD checklist -Primary w instructions.pdf (helenarkell.org.uk)](helenarkell.org.uk) [Neurodiversity SpLD checklist -Secondary w instructions.pdf (helenarkell.org.uk)](helenarkell.org.uk) [NeurodiverseSpLDchecklist_PB_EYFS.pdf (patoss-dyslexia.org)](patoss-dyslexia.org)
➢ Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia screeners.

Severe Learning Difficulties (**SLD**): '*where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication'*

Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (**PMLD**): '*where children are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.'*

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Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

'6.32 Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder' (SEN Code of Practice)

6.21 *'Persistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviours do not necessarily mean that a child or young person has SEN. Where there are concerns, there should be an assessment to determine whether there are any causal factors such as undiagnosed learning difficulties, difficulties with communication or mental health issues. If it is thought housing, family or other domestic circumstances may be contributing to the presenting behaviour a multi-agency approach, supported by the use of approaches such as the Early Help Assessment, may be appropriate. In all cases, early identification and intervention can significantly reduce the use of more costly intervention at a later stage.'* (SEN Code of Practice)

Resources:
  ➢ Neurodiversity Pathway for ASD/ ADHD diagnosis: SEND Local Offer | Autism Spectrum Education Team (ASET) - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)
  ➢ SEMH Toolkit/ Screener: SEND Local Offer | Behaviour Toolkit - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)
  ➢ There are a range of alternative screeners for pupils with SEMH available. For example, the Boxhall Profile, The SNAP-IV Teacher and Parent Rating Scale, or the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Physical and Sensory Needs

'Many children and young people with vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habilitation support. Children and young people with an MSI have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties… Some children and young people with a physical disability (PD) require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.' (SEN Code of Practice)

Resources:
  ➢ Hearing & sight checks. SEND Local Offer | School Nurse Toolkit - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)
  ➢ Sensory toolkit: Sensory-Toolkit-Aug-2019-a.docx (live.com)
  ➢ Occupational Therapy Toolkit: SEND Local Offer | Occupational Therapy Toolkit - SEND Local Offer (northlincs.gov.uk)

SEN Support No Specialist Assessment (NSA) and Other

This clarification comes directly from the Department of Education:
  • **NSA**: *'The No Specialist Assessment code ('NSA') should only be used in those very rare instances where a pupil is placed on SEN support (Code 'K'), but the school is still assessing what the primary need is. This might occur, for example, where a child on SEN support has transferred into the school shortly before school census day. Where code 'NSA' is to be used, the pupil MUST have SEN Provision of code 'K'. Code 'NSA' must not be used without the pupil having an appropriate SEN provision in place.'*
  • **Other**: *'Other difficulties/ disabilities to be applied in exceptional circumstances where the primary type of need has not yet been established.'*

  ➢ Ordinarily Available Education Provision Document: SEND and Inclusion Plan 2020-2024 (northlincs.gov.uk)
  ➢ SEN Code of Practice: SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
  ➢ The census date is Thursday 19th of January 2023.
  ➢ Dfe SEND statistics: Special educational needs in England, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

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National/ Local Comparisons (January census 2022)			
The following grids show the national and local comparisons for SEND. This is for your information; they should be used as part of your ongoing SEND self-evaluation practices. Where you significantly differ from these, further analysis would be needed to provide you with evidence to substantiate your judgements.			

	13%	12.7%	11.9%	14%
	2.3%	1.6%	2.2%	2.2%

Primary Schools (January 2022 census)	National	NLC
Visual Impairment	0.9%	1.1%
Speech Language and Communication Needs	33.7%	31.2%
Specific Learning Difficulty	9.1%	13.9%
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	16.8%	16.7%
Severe Learning Disability	0.5%	0.1%
SEN Support but no specialist assessment	4.4%	8.6%
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	0.2%	0.0%
Physical Disability	2.6%	3.6%
Other Difficulty/ Disability	3.2%	2.1%
Multi-Sensory Impairment	0.3%	0.1%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	16.9%	10.5%
Hearing Impairment	1.5%	2%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	9.8%	10.1%

Primary Schools - % Primary Type of Need
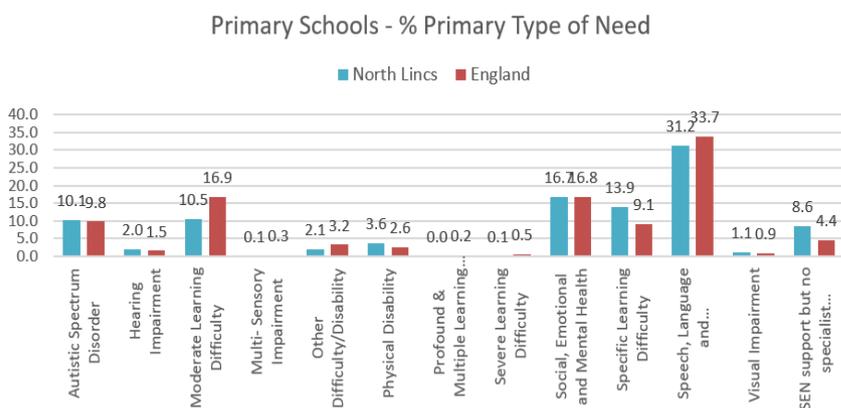
Secondary Schools (January 2022 census)	National	NLC
Visual Impairment	1.3%	1.3%
Speech Language and Communication Needs	12.3%	7.7%
Specific Learning Difficulty	18.9%	19.5%
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	22.6%	27.1%
Severe Learning Disability	0.4%	0.2%
SEN Support but no specialist assessment	2.8%	2.7%
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	0.1%	0%
Physical Disability	2.8%	3.1%
Other Difficulty/ Disability	5.3%	4.6%
Multi-Sensory Impairment	0.3%	0.2%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	18.6%	21%
Hearing Impairment	2.1%	1.9%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	12.5%	10.8%

Secondary Schools - % Primary Type of Need