

Vulnerable Students

Governors' Training 2011

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Vulnerable Students

There are three key areas of vulnerability:

Poverty (usually measured by a child being entitled to Free School Meals (FSM))

Looked After Children (LAC)

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A school has a responsibility to ensure that these groups are catered for and that the school is active in overcoming the barriers to these childrens' learning.

Poverty

Research shows us:

Children from Professional Families:

- had an 1100 word vocabulary by the age of 3
- engaged in an average of 487 verbal interactions per hour
- enjoyed some 500,000 encouragements in their first three years
- were given 80,000 discouragements in their first three years
- lived in a house with an average of over 100 books
- had an average IQ of 117

Whilst Children from Families on Benefits:

- had a 525 word vocabulary by the age of 3
- engaged in 187 verbal interactions per hour
- enjoyed just 75,000 encouragements in their first three years
- were given 200,000 discouragements in their first three years
- lived in houses with less than 20 books
- had an average IQ of 79

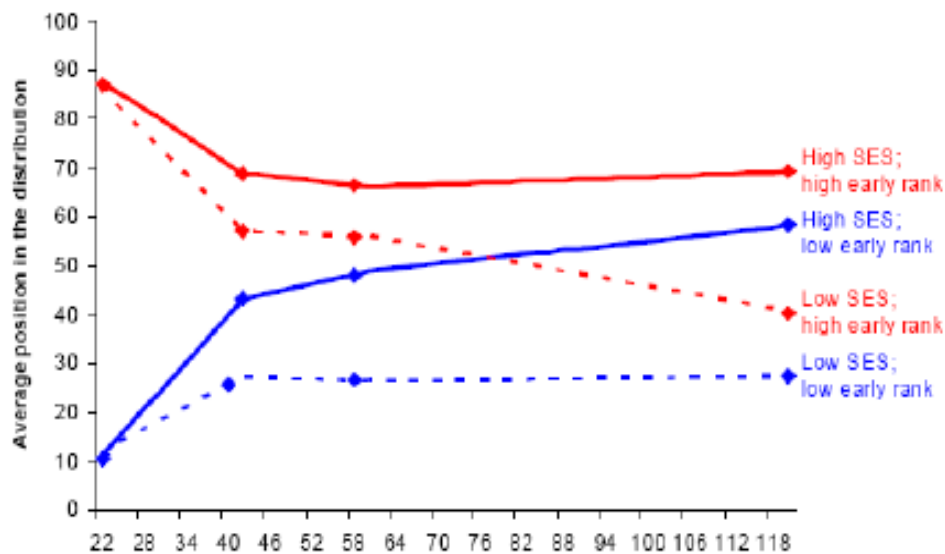
This means:

- By the age of 3, in vocabulary tests, the sons and daughters of graduates are 10 months ahead of children from families with few qualifications.
- They are 12 months ahead in the recognition of colour, shape and numbers.
- Bangladeshi children are 12 months behind in terms of 'school readiness' compared to white children.
- 25% of African and Caribbean children are delayed in their development.
- 66% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children come from families that have incomes below the poverty line.
- Across all ethnic groups, 72% of children with single mothers are growing up in poverty.

(These statistics are taken from the report by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the Institute of Education in London. This report followed the progress of some 15,500 children born between 2000 and 2002 noting circumstances of pregnancy and birth, parental background and their progress in the early years of their life.)

The impact of Social Economic Group (SES)

Figure 4-7 Differential trajectory of children by socio-economic group from 22 to 118 months



Source: Feinstein (2003)

As you can see by 8 years old a child from a wealthy family with a low ability starting point will have overtaken high ability child from a poor family.

These issues continue across a child's school career. So:

- At the Foundation Stage, only 35% of those pupils from the most deprived areas reach the expected level of attainment compared to 51% of pupils from other areas
- At the end of KS4 there is a 28% attainment gap between Free School Meals (FSM) and non-FSM pupils in both English and mathematics
- Only 21% of FSM pupils gained '5 A*-C' compared to 49% of non-FSM pupils
- FSM pupils are 3 times more likely to have unauthorised absences and become persistent absentees
- FSM pupils are 4 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school
- By the end of KS1 the odds of a non-FSM child reaching level 2 in reading and writing are 3 times that of an FSM pupil, this continues across KS2
- This gap widens further in KS3 and KS4 where the chances of a non FSM child making expected progress is 3.5 times that of an FSM child

Looked After Children

While looked-after children are no more or less able than the general population, their educational success is extremely low. They are more likely than other pupils to be excluded from school; SATs scores tend to be low and approximately 11% of these pupils achieve a minimum of five good GCSEs, compared with around 50% of all young people – only 1% go on to university. Six out of 10 children leave care without a single educational qualification. They are more likely to be unemployed when they leave school, become pregnant as teenagers, use drugs or go to prison. The NCH reports that about 20% of homeless people are care-leavers. Recent legislation has attempted to address these issues and several factors are recognised as contributing to the success of these learners:

- stable and consistent care
- early reading
- regular school attendance
- support from well-informed foster carers
- having a mentor
- understanding the importance of education for future life-chances

The Governors role

Governing bodies have a legal duty to promote high standards for all children and it is essential to cultivate an atmosphere of high expectations for LAC and FSM children, rather than to assume that they are less able to succeed because of their status. These children may require greater support or more formal planning processes than their peers, but they do not want to be treated differently – they want to appear, and to be treated, like other children, and not to be stigmatised as different.

There are many ways in which school governing bodies can champion and promote the needs of looked after children. In particular, governing bodies should be aware of the duty on local authorities, under section 52 of the Children Act 2004, to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. Governing bodies should ensure that designated teachers for looked after children and other relevant staff have access to the statutory guidance on the duty, and be aware that as part of the duty local authorities should provide training for designated teachers and governors.

Key Questions for Governors to ask:

The governing body should ensure that:

- the school has an overview of the educational needs and progress LAC and children on FSMs
- school policies are reviewed from the point of view of LAC and FSMs;
- resources are allocated to match priorities for LAC and FSMs.

Information you should know or your school should be able to give you quickly:

- the number of children in the school who are in care;
- the number of children who are entitled to free school meals;
- how LAC are performing compared to their peers.
- how FSM children are performing compared to their peers

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

What are special educational needs?

The 1996 Education Act (Section 312(2)) says that a child has a special educational need if she or he has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age, or a disability which makes it difficult to take advantage of normal school facilities.

It has been estimated that, nationally, some 20% of all children will have special educational needs at some time in their school life. Special educational needs can be catered for in many different ways. Depending on the individual child's needs, this can mean differentiation within the child's normal classroom work, it can mean extra help for the child taught in a mainstream class, or it can involve teaching the child separately in a special department attached to a mainstream school. About 1% of all children need more help than mainstream schools can normally provide.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO is a designated adult member of staff. In practice most schools have a teacher, responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy. He or she will coordinate provision for pupils with SEN, maintain the SEN register and liaise with parents, staff and external agencies. See National Standard for SENCOs at www.teachernet.gov.uk/_module/standardsframework

The 'Responsible Person'

The 'responsible person' has day to day management responsibility for special needs within the school. Given the sensitive and confidential nature of some of the information accessed by the 'responsible person', this role is generally fulfilled by the headteacher.

What are the duties of the governing body?

The governing body has a collective responsibility and corporate statutory duties for children with special educational needs. These include making sure that the necessary provision is made for these children and that your school takes account of the SEN Code of Practice. (COP 1:21)

In doing so, you should, with the headteacher, agree the school's SEN policy and the school's approach to meeting the special educational needs of children with and without statements. You should oversee the school's work and set up appropriate staffing and funding arrangements. You should review the policy and its effectiveness each year.

You have a duty to promote high standards relating to all children in the school, including those with SEN. Thus objectives for leadership, management, pupil achievement and progress and priorities in the school improvement or development plan should include objectives relating to SEN.

You must make sure that your school has a responsible person who makes sure that all those who are likely to teach a child with a statement of special educational needs are told about the statement. The responsible person is generally the headteacher, but may be the chair of governors or another governor appointed by the governing body to take this responsibility. When a statement of special educational needs is made, the LA informs the responsible person in a school. This person must then make sure that the child's special educational needs are made known to all those who will teach him or her.

You must see that children with special educational needs are encouraged to join in the activities of the school together with children who do not have special educational needs so far as is reasonably practical. The schools Self Evaluation Framework document (SEF) should set out the impact of the school's policy for children with special educational needs and any changes to the policy during the last year.

You are responsible for overseeing that parents are informed if their child has special educational needs for which special provision is being made. You will usually delegate this to the headteacher, who will decide how to involve other members of staff, as appropriate, in informing parents and encouraging their partnership.

You must ensure that the school does not unlawfully discriminate against a disabled pupil in the education or associated services provided for, or offered to, pupils at the school. see SENDA

The SEN Governor

The governing body of every mainstream school is encouraged to have a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Governor to champion the issue of special educational needs within the work of the governing body and to have specific oversight of the school's arrangements and provision for meeting special educational needs. This is a matter of good practice rather than a legal requirement.

Why does the Governing Body need an SEN Governor

The Governing Body has key responsibilities towards pupils with special educational needs. Governing bodies should, with the headteacher, decide the school's general policy and approach to meeting pupils' special educational needs. They must set up appropriate staffing and funding arrangements and oversee the school's work to facilitate inclusion.

In particular, the governing body has a legal duty to:

- Do its best to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs are appropriately catered for.
- Appoint a 'responsible person' to oversee the assessment of individual pupils' needs and to make sure that all staff likely to teach pupils with special needs are aware of those needs.
- Ensure that all teachers are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for any pupils with special educational needs.
- Ensure that pupils with special educational needs have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of school life.
- Ensure that parents are notified of a decision by the school that their child has special educational needs.
- Establish an SEN policy which is agreed by staff publicly available and can be easily understood by parents; and review that policy on a regular basis.
- Report on how the school's SEN policy is being implemented and how resources are allocated in the governing body's Annual Report to Parents. Via the SEF School Profile.
- Support parents who have Children with SEN.

What does the SEN governor (or Governors) need to know?

The SEN Governor should aim to meet the SENCO on a termly basis to keep up-to-date with SEN developments within the school and to review the implementation of the SEN policy on an ongoing basis. A good relationship with the SENCO is key to the effectiveness of the SEN Governor.

The sort of issues the SEN Governor might discuss with the SENCO and other school staff will include:

- Current numbers of the SEN register at the different stages (but not their names).
- Identification procedures for pupils with SEN.
- Staffing arrangements for pupils with SEN.
- Staff training. (The SEN Governor may be invited along to staff SEN training)
- Use of resources.
- Tracking progress of identified pupils, via the use of data and provision maps.
- How pupils with SEN are ensured access to the curriculum.
- Provision being made for individuals.
- Progress on any parts of the School Improvement Plan relating to SEN.
- Progress with the implementation of the SEN policy.
- Whether statutory reporting requirements are being met.
- Liaison with external agencies and support services.
- Links with special / cross phase schools and clusters.
- Communication with parents. (This may be at parent consultation or open evenings).

Whilst the SEN Governor is not responsible for the day to day management of special needs provision in the school, he or she may on occasion have access to sensitive information about the circumstances of individual children, particularly in smaller schools. It is essential that the SEN Governor respects the confidentiality of such information.

What does the governing body need to do?

The governing body needs to:

- request regular evaluative reports from key people in the school such as, the headteacher, SENCO, or SEN governor
- about the impact of the school's provision on the progress of pupils with SEN. What is requested will vary depending on the school's profile of needs and priorities. The focus might be on selected groups, e.g. children with SEN who are travellers, or looked after, or from an ethnic minority group, or those at School Action Plus.
- analyse external monitoring reports on SEN practice from the LEA inspectorate, OfSTED, or externally commissioned consultants and ensure that their recommendations are addressed.
- consider canvassing the views of parents of pupils with SEN, and of the pupils themselves (examples of questionnaires are in the Index for Inclusion, a copy of which is in the school).
- evaluate annually the deployment of SEN resources (human and financial) for Best Value.
- ensure that targets for improvement are inclusive of all SEN pupils.
- ensure that changes in provision for pupils with special educational this should be shared with parents and carers.
- ensure that staff have appropriate professional development opportunities.
- access training and monitoring provision and setting.

Vulnerable Students, How does the governing body ensure that targets are met?

If the success criteria for the achievement of the target are clearly set, it will be possible to measure whether the target has been successfully met. Schools should have targets for all of their vulnerable groups and these targets need to be:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time limited

This approach is helpful when setting the framework for monitoring progress. Governing bodies may wish to know which member(s) of staff will be responsible for tracking progress towards the targets. They will also need to agree and forward plan with the headteacher their consideration of progress and evaluate reports.

Appendices

SEN Jargon Buster

The list below is not definitive, they are explanations of some of the abbreviations commonly used in education-speak:

AD(H)D	Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder
AEN	Additional Educational Needs
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BESD	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development
BSS	Behaviour Support Service
CATs	Cognitive Ability Tests
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
ChYPS	Children and Young Peoples Services
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
EBD	Emotional and/or Behaviour Difficulties
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EWS	Education Welfare Service
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
GLD	General Learning Difficulties
HI	Hearing Impairment
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LDDs	Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
OT	Occupational Therapist
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
PD	Physical Difficulties
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
SALT	Speech And Language Therapist
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SENDA	Special Needs and Disability Act 2001
SENDIST	Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal
SI	Sensory Impairment
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
TA	Teaching Assistant
VI	Visual Impairment

SEN Checklist

- Who is your school's SEN coordinator?
- Do you have an overview of your school's work with children who have special educational needs?
 - How do you record this?
- Are you familiar with the SEN Code of Practice?
 - Do you have access to a copy?
- Is your school making the necessary special arrangements for children who have special educational needs?
 - How do you know?
- Do you know your LA's/schools policy on providing any extra funding for the teaching and support of children with statements and children who do not have statements but who need support from other agencies?
- Who is your school's responsible person – the person who is responsible for making all staff who are likely to teach a child with SEN aware of their needs?
- Are all the teachers at your school aware of the importance of identifying children who have special educational needs and providing appropriate teaching?
 - How do you know?
- What are the 5 OUTCOMES?
- Have all staff and governors received formal training in the 5 OUTCOMES?
 - How do you know?
- What steps does your school take to identify SEN early?
 - What evidence do you have of this?
- Is your school providing equal access to children including those with disabilities and special educational needs?
 - What is your evidence?
- Do children with special needs join in the everyday activities of your school as far as is practical?
 - Give some examples to support this
- Are the staffing and funding arrangements for SEN appropriate?
 - Give examples of budget and projections.
- Has your school set SMART targets for children with SEN at each Key Stage?
 - Have these SMART targets been met?
 - How do you know?
- How is your school's work in SEN monitored – is there quality provision?
- Which members of staff are responsible for tracking / monitoring progress towards targets?
- Is your school's SEN policy freely available to parents?
- Have you asked parents if they find this document accessible?
- Does your school profile include a section about the provision for SEN in your school?
- Is it easily accessible to all parents?
- How are the views of children who have SEN and their parents sought and taken into consideration?
- How is your school developing knowledge and securing training, advice and support for staff working in SEN?

- Where can you find evidence for this?
- When is your school SEN policy due to be reviewed and updated?
- Have you planned this time with the SENCO/senior management team and discussion time with staff?

Further resources:

SEN Code of Practice (www.teachernet.gov.uk)

SEN Toolkit (www.teachernet.gov.uk)

Inclusive Schooling (www.teachernet.gov.uk)

Supporting LAC (www.education.gov.uk)

www.governornet.co.uk