

## BRIEFING NOTE

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Date: December 2015

### **SEND CODE OF PRACTICE: SEN SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS APPLYING THE ASSESS-PLAN-DO REVIEW CYCLE TO PUPILS WITH MULTI-SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS**

#### **1. Introduction**

The SEND Code of Practice requires schools to apply a graduated response to meeting the needs of pupils based on the assess-plan-do review cycle.

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of children and young people.

Para 6.44 of SEND Code of Practice - DfE

This briefing note is intended to help schools follow this approach.

#### **2. Assessing what support is needed**

An accurate and thorough understanding of a pupil's needs and strengths underpins good planning and progress. A good assessment will need to include:

- the pupil's aspirations and his or her evaluation of any support requirements
- information on the pupil's progress and attainment (on transition to secondary this would include the information from their primary school)
- the aspirations of the parents/carers for their child and their views on appropriate provision
- the involvement of specialists such as a specialist teacher in multi-sensory impairment (MSI), perhaps with a Teacher of the Deaf and/or a specialist teacher in visual impairment, and medical and therapy professionals
- the use of appropriate specialist assessments
- identification of the need for access technology, individual support and required adjustments to the pupil's learning environments
- identification of support needed to meet any specific subject requirements.

Pupils with deafblindness/multi-sensory impairment (MSI) have impairments of both vision and hearing, of any type and degree. A key factor is that the pupil cannot, unaided, use visual information to compensate for the effects of his or her hearing impairment, or auditory information to compensate for the visual disability.

Multi-sensory impairment affects all areas of development, because most of the information used for learning comes through vision and/or hearing. The following aspects of learning are likely to be particularly affected:

- Access to information through hearing, vision and other senses
- Communication and language development
- Development of abstract concepts
- Social interaction and relationships
- Executive function
- Incidental learning
- Processing time
- Exploration and interaction with the physical environment
- Movement, mobility and orientation
- Emotional development and self-esteem
- Sensory processing and integration
- Independence skills
- Transitions and unfamiliar events or contexts
- Generalisation of skills and concepts

It is therefore likely that assessments will focus on these areas.

Many pupils with deafblindness/MSI have additional sensory, physical, medical or learning difficulties which compound the effects of multi-sensory impairment. Assessment should incorporate factors linked to additional disabilities, such as the impact of pain, fatigue or positioning on a pupil's ability to process information.

Pupils with deafblindness/MSI have little or no access to incidental information, so their learning is largely dependent on information deliberately presented via their physical and social environments. It follows that the learning context and opportunities available to the pupil during the school day should also be assessed.

NatSIP's document *Better Assessment, Better Plans, Better Outcomes*<sup>1</sup> sets out information that can be used to inform the assessment. Further advice on MSI-specific assessment can be found on the Sense website<sup>2</sup>.

Multi-sensory impairment is a very low incidence disability creating complex needs. In some instances, it will be valuable to supplement the assessment expertise of local settings and support services with specialist MSI input from neighbouring authorities or voluntary organisations such as Sense.

Children and young people with deafblindness/MSI are also entitled to a specialist assessment of their social care needs under the Deafblind Guidance issued by the Department of Health<sup>3</sup>. This assessment is likely to provide additional information of use in planning the pupil's educational and social support.

### **3. Planning the right support**

Plans should be developed with the pupil, parents and specialist professionals such as the specialist teacher in MSI, the Teacher of the Deaf and/or specialist teacher in visual impairment. Plans should include:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/cat\\_view/54-natsip-documents/134-better-assessments](https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/cat_view/54-natsip-documents/134-better-assessments)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sense.org.uk/content/childrens-assessments>

<sup>3</sup> [http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/adults-disabilities/departmentofhealth/171046Care\\_and\\_Support\\_for\\_Deafblind\\_Children\\_and\\_Adults\\_Policy\\_Guidance\\_12\\_12\\_14\\_FINAL.pdf](http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/adults-disabilities/departmentofhealth/171046Care_and_Support_for_Deafblind_Children_and_Adults_Policy_Guidance_12_12_14_FINAL.pdf)

- the outcomes the pupil is expecting to achieve at school (see Appendix for definition and example)
- the steps and shorter term targets required to achieve the outcomes
- the provision, specialist resources and adjustments required to achieve the outcomes and targets or steps to meet needs and overcome any barriers to accessing teaching and learning. This would include support strategies and intervention, access arrangements and support from external agencies
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing.

The challenges presented by multi-sensory impairment suggest that for many pupils with deafblindness/MSI their plan is likely to include:

- targets related to the development of communication, language, concept development, social skills, motor skills, orientation and mobility, independence skills and emotional development, and the support and interventions required to achieve the targets
- any necessary modifications to the curriculum
- ongoing support for learning and interaction from staff with appropriate training - often consistent 1:1 support from a trained intervenor<sup>4</sup> who supports all areas of learning
- access to support from specialist staff such as specialist teachers for MSI and possibly Teachers of the Deaf and/or specialist teachers for visual impairment, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and habilitation officers
- the provision of receptive and expressive communication support, including the routine use of alternative, adapted or augmented communication methods if appropriate
- the provision and maintenance of any specialist equipment such as hearing and visual equipment, mobility aids, communication aids and other assistive technology
- the provision of pre- and post-lesson teaching
- specific teaching strategies and resources to ensure access to teaching and learning
- measures to ensure teaching and learning take place in rooms which provide good listening and visual environments, with good acoustics, lighting and décor
- any support required to improve self-esteem and social skills
- measures to develop independence skills including independence as a learner, the ability to use and maintain equipment and self-advocacy/self-determination skills
- support for managing transitions
- if appropriate, orientation and mobility training under the guidance of an habilitation officer or mobility instructor, together with input to embed mobility skills across settings and activities
- access arrangements for assessments/examinations
- access to specialist careers advice and planning from Year 9 for adulthood
- any adjustments needed to meet additional physical, medical or other needs, such as the involvement of a specialist speech and language therapist to help with eating difficulties
- ensuring staff and other students are aware of the needs of the pupil with deafblindness/MSI and of what can be done to overcome barriers to learning and participation

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sense.org.uk/content/intervenors>

- details of who is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the plan, who is responsible for delivering key aspects of the provision and how liaison between the range of professionals and parents will be managed.

#### **4. Do: Implementing the plan**

The plan should set out who is responsible for its overall co-ordination and implementation. This would normally be the SENCO with support from the specialist teacher for MSI. A Teacher of the Deaf and/or specialist teacher for visual impairment may provide additional support, especially for pupils with acquired deafblindness. They will have responsibility for the following:

- Ensuring all staff involved in teaching and supporting a pupil with deafblindness/MSI receive the necessary information, advice, guidance and training to ensure the student is supported and can access teaching and learning.
- Ensuring the pupil's progress is monitored.
- Liaising with and obtaining feedback from the pupil and parents on what is going well and not so well.
- Ensuring that support and provision is in place (for example, employment of trained intervenors, equipment, adjustments to teaching spaces to improve the visual and auditory environments).
- Ensuring subject teachers and teaching assistants implement interventions and strategies agreed as part of the support.

Each pupil with deafblindness/MSI will have a unique combination of needs and support will need to be highly individualised. Some information on appropriate learning environments, curriculum and teaching strategies can be found on the Sense website<sup>5</sup>, but most adjustments will be decided by professionals from the school and sensory support services who know the individual pupil well.

Pupils with deafblindness/MSI often have multiple complex needs and considerable numbers of professionals involved with their support. Ongoing liaison and a shared understanding of the pupil's overall development is central to meeting needs.

Staff supporting pupils with deafblindness/MSI day by day will need time set aside for liaison with teachers and other professionals, for training and for the preparation or adaptation of resources. Resources may link to specific subject areas or be designed to help pupils understand and organise their learning, for example by using visual or tactile timetables.

Some pupils with deafblindness/MSI will benefit from the use of a personal passport or profile. This is a brief document, developed with the pupil to provide concise key information for others on aspects such as communication and support needs and learning strategies. More information on pupil passports can be found online<sup>6</sup>.

Social interaction and communication with peers is difficult for many pupils with deafblindness/MSI, especially those who use signing or other alternative communication approaches and/or who require 1:1 support to access information. Break times and other less structured parts of the school day may need careful planning to avoid students becoming isolated. Individualised risk assessments are likely to be needed to maintain the pupil's safety whilst ensuring full access to learning environments and experiences.

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.sense.org.uk/content/resources-professionals-working-children-and-young-people>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/>

## 5. Keeping the support under review

The effectiveness of the support and its impact on the pupil's progress should be regularly reviewed and evaluated, taking into account the pupil's and parents' views. It should attempt to identify possible barriers to progress and what can be done to address them. The school will have developed systems and processes for doing this. Key areas related to the pupil's deafblindness/MSI that may require consideration include the following:

- Attainment and progress in areas of communication, language, concept development, social skills, motor skills, orientation and mobility, independence skills and emotional development.
- Attainment and progress and whether any gaps with other students are widening or narrowing.
- The accessibility of the subject content - for example, checking if the pupil is able to understand the language and concepts used in lessons or able to sustain attention until the end of a lesson with high visual or auditory demands.
- The effectiveness of support for learning, from an intervenor or by other means. For example, is the intervenor able successfully to liaise with the class or subject teacher and present information to the pupil in appropriate formats?
- The effectiveness of technology and other equipment.
- Any changes to the pupil's level of hearing, vision, motor skills or other areas of development. This is especially important for pupils known to have progressive and/or life-limiting conditions.
- The success in communicating with others, socialising and forming friendships.
- The ability to learn independently, manage equipment and articulate their needs and preferences.
- The ability to plan and organise their learning and to manage transitions between activities and environments, including moving confidently around the school.

Where the pupil is not making expected amount of progress, all aspects of the plan must be considered in detail, especially the assessments of the pupil's needs, the factors affecting the pupil's performance and the characteristics of the learning environment. It is crucial to identify the source of difficulties and revise the plan and support strategies. A specialist teacher for MSI, Teacher of the Deaf and/or specialist teacher for visual impairment can again provide advice on this. This is now the beginning of the new assess, plan, do, review cycle.

## Appendix

### The Plan: A note on outcomes, steps and target

An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART).

When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided.

Para 9.66 of the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Outcomes are not a description of the service being provided – for example, the provision of weekly support from a specialist teacher for multi-sensory impairment is not an outcome. In this case, the outcome is what it is intended that the specialist teacher will help the individual to do that he or she cannot do now and by when this will be achieved.

To develop outcomes consider and list:

- the aspirations of the pupil and those of his or her parents
- the special educational needs/challenges for the pupil identified from the thorough assessment.

Together they will provide the areas of focus which can then be turned into SMART outcomes.

#### An example:

Ellie is in year four in a mainstream primary school. She has limited hearing and vision.

- **Aspiration:** Ellie wants to be in the classroom more often and withdrawn less often. Her parents want her to be more included and able to go to secondary school with friends.
- **Assessments** indicate Ellie is 2 years behind the average for her peers in most subjects but enjoys painting, creative arts and music with her friends.

#### Outcome

By the end of year 4, Ellie will be able to use her maths skills within creative art projects at school.

An example of a step towards achieving this outcome could be:

Ellie will learn to measure accurately in one-to-one sessions and apply this within the theatre making project at school.

The detailed *short term teaching targets* (for example, learning to use a ruler) would be set by the relevant teachers based on the assessment.