SEND Reviews carried out in secondary schools across the city of Southampton, October 2018 to May 2019.

Summary of findings

Introduction

Following outcomes from the SEND Strategic Review published in July 2018, Southampton City Council commissioned Southampton Inclusion Partnership to carry out a piece of research into secondary school provision for pupils with SEND and behavioural needs across the city. As part of the city's planned drive for improvement, the purpose of this work was to identify models of working and to highlight examples of good practice that could be shared. This report is a small part of the whole research, summarising key themes generated from SEND reviews undertaken collaboratively with twelve schools within the city.

The context for Southampton

As outlined in the SEND Strategic Review (2018), the city of Southampton, with its diverse and ever changing population, continues to experience high levels of deprivation and to achieve relatively poor educational outcomes. It is within this context, that the city provides mainstream education to students across twelve secondary schools. As identified by school census data, the most common primary areas of need at secondary level are moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs which are above the national average, as well as specific learning difficulties. Whilst awareness of SEND in schools has improved, there are still concerns over the rigidity of the curriculum and challenging environments, which are a particular concern for young people with a range of special educational needs, including those with Autism and social communication difficulties (Cooke & Robinson, 2018). Their report built on findings from a joint local area SEND Inspection carried out by OFSTED in 2017 which highlighted the varied schooling available in secondary schools and the mixed experiences of its students, with too many young people not accessing an education.

Key lines of enquiry

In order to provide a city wide overview in which good practice and expertise could be shared, the following key questions were explored:

What are the strengths of secondary school practice in providing for pupils with SEND and behavioural needs and how are some schools seeking to overcome barriers and challenges?

What are the current challenges for secondary schools in providing for pupils with SEND and behavioural needs and how can provision for these pupils be developed?

STRENGTHS

Some examples of effective practice evidenced in secondary schools across the city included:

Leadership and Management of SEND

- A SEND working group, represented by a range of stakeholders, focusing on the development of SEND provision across the school and raising awareness of whole school accountability.
- A 'key lines of enquiry' approach to action planning, providing a clear rationale for school improvement which is impacting positively on SEND provision.
- '*Test and learn*' methods used to establish appropriate approaches, ensuring change is measured and collaborative. In contrast, improvements to SEND provision are implemented at a fast pace where needed.
- Engaging an external perspective to validate self-evaluation in relation to SEND and support school improvement, including quality collaboration with other services.
- Access to support for SEND from a range of leaders within school to maximise support and accountability e.g. subject teachers, progress leads, leading practitioners, Heads of Departments etc.
- Effective succession planning in schools where SENCos are known to be retiring or moving on, ensuring provision for SEND pupils is uninterrupted.
- Regular meetings between pastoral and SEND departments to ensure vulnerable pupils are well supported e.g. school inclusion panel meetings.
- SEND Champions identified across all subject departments to provide advice and support for pupils with special educational needs.

Quality of teaching and learning for pupils with SEND

- A wide range of interventions and flexible pathways to support pupils with SEND which are not limited by rigid processes and do not reduce opportunities for pupils with SEND.
- Good practice guides for teachers, identifying good practice and inclusive strategies for SEND pupils across different areas of need.
- A proactive focus on teaching students new skills to bring about positive changes in behaviour
- Lessons delivered in alternative provision within the school delivered by subject teachers.
- Year 7 and 8 nurture groups that stay together for most lessons to provide consistent and targeted support.

Working with pupils and parents/carers of pupils with SEND

- Reasonable adjustments made for more vulnerable pupils clarified in school policies.
- High quality transition planning with additional visits to schools as early as Year 5.

Monitoring, Tracking and Evaluation

- Provision for SEND supported and monitored by school leaders other than the SENCo e.g. Heads of Department, Progress Leaders, Senior Leadership Teams.
- Lead professionals or mentors/key workers assigned to all pupils across the school, including those with SEND, responsible for supporting and monitoring a pupil's progress against attainment, behaviour and attendance.
- Exemplary provision mapping to ensure additional support for pupils is identified, monitored and analysed for impact.

The efficient use of resources

- Additional interventions required by some pupils organised so that they do not impact on access to mainstream lessons.
- Opportunities for SENCos to support other schools and networks as part of own professional development and impacting positively on their own school's capacity to improve.
- Streamlined, purposeful documentation and record keeping to reduce duplication and teacher workload.

For a detailed description of what constitutes best practice for SEND, see the *SEND Review Guide* (London Leadership Strategy.)

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

In order to develop provision and maximise positive outcomes for pupils with SEND, secondary schools are invited to consider the following:

Outcomes for pupils with SEND

- Whilst there is a necessary focus on attainment data across secondary schools, this does not fully capture the small steps of progress or holistic progress that pupils with SEND make. This means that pupils are not always clear about the specific skills they need to improve and what success should look like. The development of specific target setting for learning and/or behaviour would provide clarity for pupils around next steps, enable teachers to assess progress more accurately and evidence impact of intervention.
- In a minority of settings, pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, accessing alternative provision within the school, do not receive their entitlement to a broad curriculum delivered by subject specialists. These schools would benefit from collaborative partnership working with other schools who have found ways to overcome the barriers presented by alternative provision. This includes having clear entry criteria and referral systems within a graduated approach to support, time limited intervention with a focus on reintegration back to mainstream lessons, high involvement from senior leadership teams and quality first teaching from subject specialists.

Leadership and Management of SEND

- In a number of schools, the vision and aims of SEND provision are clearly driven by the Headteacher, in partnership with the whole senior leadership team. In schools where this is not in evidence, SENCos struggle to communicate whole school responsibility for the outcomes of SEND learners and have less impact on improving their provision at classroom level.

- There is clear evidence of strong pastoral support provided by schools across the city, with detailed behaviour policies and a focus on restorative practice. However, it is important that school policies demonstrate the reasonable adjustments that need to be made to include pupils with SEND.

- The majority of schools have improvement plans that outline actions planned to improve provision for SEND. However, less strong is schools' ability to self-evaluate provision and evidence the impact of actions taken. For example, can schools evidence the difference a particular intervention has made to the progress of pupils and provide a robust rationale for allocation of these resources within the whole school budget? School action plans need to be clearer about outcomes and the measures that will be used to evaluate progress. The *Self Evaluation Tool for SEND* (Southampton City Council) produced by professionals across the city would support this.

- The continued progress of pupils with SEND is dependent on the efficient running of SEND departments, where clearly identified systems are understood and followed at all levels. An up-to-date SEND Policy and SEND Information Report that accurately describe systems and practices will help to ensure that during periods of change, the progress of pupils with SEND continues to be tracked and monitored. Such systems need to be streamlined and joined up to ensure they are purposeful and do not negatively impact on teacher workload.

Quality of teaching and learning for pupils with SEND

- A number of schools have understood the importance of adaptive and responsive teaching as a first response to pupils with special educational needs. This needs to be led by senior leadership teams to ensure that the progress of pupils with SEND is everyone's responsibility. Documentation already under development within the city will ensure all staff can recognise and use a range of inclusive teaching strategies within lessons, as well as supporting leaders to monitor the quality of teaching.

Assessment and Identification

- A well defined graduated approach to support, within a cycle of assess-plan-do-review, would ensure pupils with SEND receive early identification and intervention. This should outline provision and accountability at all levels.

The efficient use of resources

- In terms of organisation, a number of schools operate separate departments for pastoral support and SEND support which can be a barrier to communication and information sharing. Schools operating separate departments need to consider how a more joined up approach would benefit more vulnerable pupils with complex needs.

Future support and development

These findings will be used to inform wider research due to be published in Autumn 2019. The Local Authority, in partnership with Southampton Inclusion Partnership, will be working collaboratively with schools and SENCos to identify how these findings can be used to support further school improvement, alongside other developments and resources already being developed within the city.

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