

DIARY OF EVENTS – SPRING TERM

As proud sponsors of a number of key SEND organisations, Axcis are pleased to be involved with the following events during the Spring Term 2016 and beyond. So, if you need help with special needs recruitment matters, training or job hunting, come and speak to us – we'd be thrilled to help.

Nasen SEN Training for the Independent School Sector

11 January 2016, Birmingham

The Whole School Approach to Improving Access, Participation and Achievement training course is designed to deliver a foundation level of knowledge of additional and special educational needs and disabilities in applying the principles of quality first teaching for the independent schools' sector.

Nasen Collaborative Learning for SEN: The Role of the SENCo training

12 January 2016 – Essex

Free SENCO training for nasen members, equipping SENCOs to offer a range of support and guidance to all staff.

NAS Web Chat with Tony Attwood

14 January 2016

Organised by Network Autism and sponsored by Axcis, this online web chat will provide an invaluable opportunity to ask a highly regarded autism expert your questions about the condition.

Nasen School Inspection Training for SEN

18 January 2016, Birmingham

Ofsted have proposed some major changes to the inspection framework which will take effect from September 2015. This training day covers the new context for SEND, how the new common inspection framework will impact on schools, and how effective self-evaluation should be used to identify areas for whole school improvement.

Nasen School Inspection Training for SEN

25 January 2016, Watford

Ofsted have proposed some major changes to the inspection framework which will take effect from September 2015. This training day covers the new context for SEND, how the new common inspection framework will impact on schools, and how effective self-evaluation should be used to identify areas for whole school improvement.

Nasen Collaborative Learning for SEN: The Role of the SENCo training

02 February 2016, Bristol

Free SENCO training for nasen members, equipping SENCOs to offer a range of support and guidance to all staff.

Nasen Leadership Conference

05 February 2016, London

Securing Excellence and Building Confidence: Teacher Development for SEND. This nasen conference provides an opportunity for education leaders to examine strategies to support teacher development using evidence based practice to tailor teacher/practitioner support to the needs of the setting. The ambition to provide the highest quality teaching support for all pupils can be realised by a whole school SEND strategy with teacher development at its heart.

NAS Professional Conference

01/02 March 2016, Telford

As proud sponsors of the NAS, Axcis will be exhibiting and speaking at the NAS Professional Conference in March. Hear from experts on the latest developments in the field of autism research and enhance your understanding of the condition to support your professional practice.

Nasen Live

29/30 April 2016, Leeds

Always a popular event, Axcis are thrilled to be a key sponsor again for nasen Live. This conference is set to be a fantastic opportunity to hear from a range of experts in the field of special needs, develop your resource base and find out about free SEND training materials.

To find out more about any of these events, please visit <http://blog.axcis.co.uk/events/>

Axcis SEND NEWS

SPRING 2016

SEND REFORMS – ARE WE ANY FURTHER FORWARD?



As we approach the end of the first 18 months of SEND reform we can reflect on what has happened so far. Schools have been working hard to ensure that all of those pupils who are identified as SEN support are getting high quality differentiated teaching along with evidenced based interventions that are additional and different to anything their peers may be receiving.

Local authorities are embedding the reforms by having a Local Offer that reflects all of the SEND services they provide. They are undertaking the mammoth task of converting statements to Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans whilst at the same time carrying out EHC Needs Assessments for all the new children and young people brought to their attention. The transition process will last until March 2018 although there is still a great deal to do and many believe that this date will have to be extended.

So what has happened so far?

The move to SEN Support

All schools have now completed the transfer from school action and school action plus to the single category of SEN Support. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the numbers of pupils now identified as SEN. The Statistical First Release SEN in England statistics published by the DfE in July 2015 showed a 2.5% fall in the number of pupils identified as SEN Support. This is a significant drop and there are a number of theories as to why this reduction has occurred. Firstly the belief that schools have reduced the numbers of pupils they identified as SEN Support because they received no additional funding for these pupils, secondly, that pupils had been identified but no formal assessment of need had taken place and therefore they were not included in the figures. The third theory is that there had always been an over-identification of pupils with SEN and there has been a gradual reduction in pupils at school action and school action plus over the last 5 years although not as significant reduction as seen between 2014 and 2015, fourthly the removal of the category Behaviour, Social and Emotional Needs and the introduction of Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs may have made schools consider the underlying needs of their pupils and re-assess underlying needs that were manifesting in challenging behaviour. Finally, and the theory that I believe, schools are getting better at identifying pupils with SEN and teachers are taking greater responsibility for the education of these pupils – exactly what the SEND Code of Practice was emphasising.

Transfer of statements to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

The DfE Statistical First Release on Statements of SEN and EHC plans: England 2015 reported that there

were 235,980 pupils with a statement. By January 2015 only 2,765 transfers from statements to EHCPs had taken place. This is just over 1% - at that rate local authorities will be transferring statements until 2043. It has to be remembered that at the same time local authorities are having to carry out assessments for new EHCPs (1,360 new EHCPs issued by January 2015).

Local authorities began to implement the transfer process from September 2014. They should have an agreed time-table for all transfers and this should have been issued to all schools to ensure that they are able to support the local authority in this process. The transfer process is a local authority duty and schools have a duty to co-operate and therefore they need to be planned to ensure they have all paperwork up to date ready to support the process.

In September 2015, Edward Timpson, Minister of State for Children and Families extended the maximum time-scale for transferring individual statements from 16 – 20 weeks after many local authorities said they were unable to complete each transfer in the allotted time. It is hoped that during 2015/16 we will see more clarity and consistency across local authorities. What we need to ensure is that each transfer is done legally and in a timely fashion to ensure that no child or young person misses out.

The Local Offer and the SEN Information Report

All local authorities have published their Local Offer which provides parents and young people a comprehensive directory where they will be able to find all the information they need about the services they can expect to be available in their local area from education, health and social care. This will include information about the statutory assessment process, personal budgets and how to contact an Independent Supporter. It will also have information about local community organisations that can support SEND. By September 2015 local authorities should have reviewed their Local Offer and updated their websites with any comments from their stakeholders.

Schools were originally asked to contribute to the Local Offer by producing a School's Offer, this was succeeded by the SEN Information Report as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (6.79). Every school must have published their report by now and this must be reviewed annually, parents and pupils should be involved in this process. This is a compliance document for Ofsted so schools need to ensure this is easily accessible on their website.

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Underachievement or SEN

There are a number of barriers to learning that may result in a pupil underachieving and this may not always be that they have a special educational need or disability. Schools are required to use their best endeavours to make sure that all pupils get the support they need. It is important that teachers recognise these barriers and do their best to remove them as quickly as possible.

This might include ensuring that rigid systems, inappropriate curriculum and inflexible policies are not a barrier within the school.

Teachers, as part of their planning and assessment processes should always have regard to a pupil's individual needs and offer differentiated and/or personalised tasks and activities that will encourage and support the pupil's learning.

Many pupils require help with communication, language and literacy. In January 2015 over 190,000 pupils in England had a speech and language difficulty recorded as their primary need.

Teachers also need to be aware of individual learning styles. There will be pupils who need visual clues, some will need auditory clues or verbal clues and many who are kinaesthetic learners will need to be more active and frequently move and touch.

Some pupils will require support with their behaviour and this can be achieved by a consistently applied behaviour policy, through lesson structures and procedures or through a robust rewards and sanctions programme.

Teachers also need to be aware of any social, emotional and mental health needs that a pupil may have. Tiredness, stress, anxiety, neglect can all offer barriers to a pupil's learning. 10% of all pupils will experience a mental health need at some point during their educational life – that could mean at least 3 in every classroom.

Every teacher is responsible and accountable

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 is very clear that teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff. Historically children with SEN have been taught by the least qualified members of staff with many teachers not taking responsibility for learning or progress. High quality, differentiated teaching should be the first response to supporting children and young people with SEN.

Schools are working hard to embed the new processes as laid out in the SEND Code of Practice 2015 When a pupil is identified as having SEN (SEN Support) teachers need to work with the SENCO to try and remove any barriers to learning and put effective SEN provision in place. This takes the form of the four-part cycle – the Graduated Approach. During the



cycle decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised as the teacher gains a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and supports securing good outcomes.

Assess: The teacher has a growing understanding of pupil's needs

Plan: The teacher has a growing understanding of what teaching approaches work

Do: The teacher has a growing understanding of effective support

Review: The teacher has a growing understanding of what approaches secure better outcomes

In order to be identified as SEN Support a pupil must be getting additional and/or different provision. This is provision that is not ordinarily available for most pupils and will support the narrowing of the gap between SEN pupils and their peers.

The greatest challenge for schools is embedding the message that every teacher is responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class and this includes those pupils who access support from teaching assistants and specialist staff.

Schools are beginning to must recognise the importance of high quality professional development for all staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to meet the challenging complex needs that are now being identified within our school population.

In practice this is challenging both in terms of time and resources but a well trained and experienced team will offer outstanding teaching to all pupils and will have long term effect on pupil and school performance.

The education of those aged 18–25

A major theme of the SEND reforms and the SEND Code of Practice is the requirement to prepare young people for adulthood from as early an age as possible. It states that high aspirations are crucial to success

and discussions about long term goals should start early, focussing on the child or young person's strengths and capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve.

In the first year of reforms local authorities concentrated on transferring the statements of pupils moving to Post 16 education. This brought with it some major challenges, firstly because provision for these young people is limited, secondly, it can be very expensive and finally is often only funded for a specified number of hours (3 days per week). This has caused parents and pupils a great deal of anxiety about the next stage in their educational provision.

Extending the SEND system from 0 – 25 is the most positive move of all the reforms but at the moment this is not effective as we do not have appropriate provision to take young people up to age 25.

In conclusion

It has to be remembered that as well as the SEND reforms, schools are also embedding major changes to national curriculum, trying to understand a life beyond assessment levels, introducing a Baseline Assessment for all reception pupils as well as embedding significant changes to testing regimes for Key Stage 1 and 2 and GCSEs for KS4. In addition, schools are getting to grips with a new Ofsted framework, all within a context of reduced support and funding.

We have completed less than a third of the SEND reform journey. In order to embed the changes effectively local authorities and schools must work together with parents and pupils to ensure that all parties feel valued, included and empowered, which in turn will lead to positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Lorraine Peterson OBE, former CEO of nasen

AXCIS NEWSBITES



AXCIS JOINS NASEN SEND GATEWAY AS CONTRIBUTOR

In September, Axcis were proud to become a contributor to the nasen SEND Gateway. The SEND Gateway was launched on May 21 2014 at nasen Live at Bolton's Reebok Stadium, the leading event for SEND training in the United Kingdom. Developed by nasen, the UK's leading professional association for SEND, in association with Axcis Education and other leading VCS organisations, it provides an opportunity for the education workforce to access free resources and training materials. **You can read our latest contributions which provide advice on making the transition from mainstream to special educational needs teaching and support work on the Axcis blog.**



AXCIS ADDS MOVING AND HANDLING TO CPD OFFERINGS

After a successful first Moving and Handling course during the summer holidays, we have now added this training course to our CPD offerings for candidates. This is an important course for many of our schools as Axcis contractors are often expected to use hoists and other specialist equipment, as well as to be able to assist with moving students manually when required.



AXCIS TAKES PART IN TWITTER CHAT ON MOVING FROM MAINSTREAM TO SEND EDUCATION

At Axcis, we have been sponsoring Twitter Chats with The National Autistic Society and Network Autism for some time now. However, the autumn term saw the first time we actually took the reigns as the experts! Ruth Newman, manager for Axcis Essex was on hand to answer questions from those thinking about moving from working in mainstream schools to SEND environments. She gave lots of great answers to thought-provoking questions and encouraged those wanting to make the move to go for it!



LOCAL SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL STUDENTS DESIGN NEW AXCIS GREETINGS CARDS

One of our long-standing clients, Highshore School in London ran a competition among the students to design some greetings cards for Axcis. Students were asked to use Axcis Andy, our loveable teddy-bear mascot as inspiration for their designs. All the entries were fantastic, with three chosen to go into production. Students at the school also designed our Christmas cards as part of their "Handmade at Highshore" project. This is what Cat Rolley at the school had to say about our partnership with them:

"Gary and Axcis have done so much with our students. Relationships like this one teach the students about the whole cycle of business - designing and making products for a client (Axcis) –when you have finished the order you get paid – you can use this money to then buy new materials to make more products and earn more money! Having a client makes it more real for them. Along the way students also learn about things like marketing, profit, customer service skills, organisation, such as stock taking, numeracy and handling money etc. Any profits students make from their enterprise activities goes towards their end of year residential. This is a big incentive for them. "



AXCIS OPENS OFFICE DOWN UNDER

Teachers from overseas have a proven track record with us here at Axcis. Many of our clients over the years have commented on the skills and enthusiasm these candidates can bring to their schools. That's why we are thrilled to announce the opening of an office in New Zealand. Sarah, our lady in the field will be visiting careers fairs at universities across Australia and New Zealand to bring us more of these fantastic staff who can help to make a real difference to the SEND schools we work with.



AXCIS: THE ETHICAL AGENCY

It's no secret that agencies can get bad press from time to time. That's why we decided to take a moment to remind our candidates and clients what makes Axcis different from the rest. Having been shortlisted for a Charity Times Award, we are proud of the work we do alongside our charity and partner organisations. Find the article on our blog or look out for it in our next newsletter.



CANDIDATE OF THE TERM: AUTUMN AWARDS

Each term, schools working with Axcis are offered the opportunity to nominate any staff members who they'd like to be considered for a "Candidate of the Term" award. Many of our contractors go above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference to the lives of the children they work with and we want to show them that we appreciate their hard work. We've had lots of lovely comments from schools, such as:

"From the moment Val entered our building her smile radiated out and I knew she would fit in. She quickly became an integral part of the team and helps us problem solve on a regular basis, often well past her due leaving time. She has high professional standards and true empathy for our youngsters, this is a rare and invaluable blend. She has a can do attitude, I often find that she has already done something that I think about asking her to do as she has such a high level of common sense and understanding of the diverse, ever changing, challenges that working on an on-site ASD base brings. All her work is of a high standard and her paperwork up-to-date and in-depth. She does not present as a 'supply'. Our students are flourishing under her guidance and she is an extremely valued member of staff, we literally couldn't do without her".

For more information, or to find out who the winners of our Autumn Term Awards are, take a look at the Axcis Blog.