

SEND REPORT 2019-20

At the Bedford Nursery Schools Federation (BNSF) we believe that every child has the right to be educated alongside their peers. We have a positive and enthusiastic approach to welcoming and meeting the needs of every child whose parents wish them to attend one of our settings – Cherry Trees and Peter Pan Nursery Schools.

The SEND Code of Practice identifies four main areas of Special Educational Needs (although, in practice children may have overlapping needs within one or more category):

Communication and Interaction
Cognition and Learning
Social, Mental, Behavioural and Emotional Health
Sensory and/ or Physical

Throughout the academic year 2019-2020 we have worked with children with a variety of additional needs including: ASD; social communication difficulties; global developmental delay; speech and language delay; hearing impairment; and medical needs including spina bifida, myasthenia gravis and cystic fibrosis. We have never turned down a child with additional needs.

We work with the children, their families and external agencies to support children's progress. Covid 19 has had an impact on how we have been able to do this, but we kept in contact with parents by phone while their children weren't attending nursery and provided them with advice and suggestions for activities they could use at home. Risk assessments were carried out to decide whether a specific pupil should attend school in order to meet their needs, or whether they could safely have their needs met at home. We have also had regular contact with key external agencies during this time.

Our Special Educational and Disability Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) is Suzie Hoefkens, who can be contacted either at Cherry Trees (01234 354788) or Peter Pan (01234 350864) Nursery Schools. Parents can also contact Lesley Boyle, Interim Co-Headteacher at Cherry Trees or Julie Smith, Interim Co-Headteacher at Peter Pan if they have any concerns.

Identifying and assessing pupils with SEND

When identifying and assessing special educational needs, our starting point is always the child and their parents. The home visit at the start of a child's time with us is a crucial part of building a positive trusting relationship between home and school. Parents will sometimes share any concerns they have with us as early as the home visit. Their child may have been identified already as having additional needs, or they may have some worries about their child's development that they haven't shared before.

Each child and family has a key person, the staff member whose role is to ensure that the care and education provided by the nursery is tailored to a child's individual needs. The key person supports the child to settle and become familiar with the nursery, and builds a relationship with the child and their parents/carers. Once a child has started with us in nursery, all staff – with the key person taking a central role in sharing information with parents/carers – will carry out observations in order to get to know them as individuals, and to understand what motivates and interests them. We carry out termly assessments of all children, using the Early Years Foundation Stage, Development Matters document as a guide. In the first term of a child's time at nursery, and in particular for the youngest children, we focus in particular on the prime areas – Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), Communication and Language (CL) and Physical Development (PD) – which form the foundation for future learning.

If after a few weeks staff have concerns about a child's development, the key person will talk to the child's parents to get their views and to discuss what the nursery can put in place in order to support the child. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, the key person will fill out a SENDCO referral form in order to describe the concerns – at this point the SENDCO will become involved. She will observe the child in the light of the information given, and meet with parents to discuss the way forward. This could be to put an individual plan in place and/or to make a referral to an outside agency for further specialized support and advice. Parents will be kept informed and will be part of this process.

Our approach to teaching pupils with SEND

We celebrate every child's achievements however big or small. Through getting to know a child well, including through information from the family, we are able to individualise the work we do with all children, and this is particularly important for teaching children with SEND. For children with SEND, we develop individual education plans along with parents, which are based on children's starting points, so we are working from their strengths in a given area. These plans include using the children's interests so that they are motivated to learn and communicate, but also to develop new interests.

Adapting the curriculum and learning environment

Depending on the needs of each child with SEND, they may be allocated a member(s) of staff to work with them for some or all of the hours they are with us. Some children need a high level of support in order to learn, and/or to keep them safe. Others may need a small amount of one-to-one and/or small-group support but are able to move around and use the nursery provision independently the rest of the time. The amount of additional support and structure is monitored according to a child's changing needs. Children need time and space to play and explore independently, and this includes children with SEND, so we always bear this in mind alongside ensuring we are keeping them safe.

The learning environment is monitored and adapted according to children's needs. We carry out learning walks to make sure it is not over-stimulating for children with sensory issues. We monitor how the children respond to the learning environment. We ensure that children with physical needs are able to access all areas of the nursery, for example installing ramps to the outside and adjusting table heights.

We have a team of staff who are experienced in supporting children with SEND, and who share their skills and knowledge with staff new to the role. Planning is differentiated according to children's needs, and a range of small-group work is carried out for children who need additional support in specific areas of learning. These include:

- Lift-off to Language, run by a trained practitioner, to support children's communication and language skills
- Nurture groups, to support children's personal and social development
- Time in the Sensory Room, for children with sensory issues and/or in need of quiet time
- One-to-one Supported Play, run by a trained practitioner.

Enabling pupils with SEND to engage in activities alongside their peers

All children are given the opportunities to engage in all nursery activities, and are supported to do so according to their individual needs. For example, if we are going on a walk in the local area, a child with SEND will be included, accompanied by their one-to-one support if they have one, unless it is thought it would be detrimental to their wellbeing.

We spend time observing, discussing and reflecting as a staff team on the level of support that individual children need to engage with activities alongside their peers, while being aware that this can change over time.

Working with parents

We make every effort to consult and involve parents in their child's education through informal chats at the start and end of each session, when observations and achievements are shared by the key person, and through planned parent consultation meetings and IEP reviews, which may involve the SENDCO. Parents are consulted about how reports from outside agencies can be incorporated into individual plans. Parents are able to take their child's learning journey home to share with other family members.

We have a Family Support Worker, who can help families with a range of issues such as behaviour management, benefits advice, toilet-training and feeding, etc.

We have a number of staff at both nursery schools who can support families with English as an additional language, and we do our best to find ways to communicate as fully as possible with families with home languages not spoken by staff members.

Children's Voice

The children are at the centre of everything we do in the nurseries. We adapt our ways of communication with them according to their needs. For those with social communication difficulties we use Intensive Interaction to teach them the pre-speech fundamentals of communication. Some children may need additional resources such as visuals – objects or pictures of reference, a choose board, etc. – to support their communication. However a child chooses or is able to communicate with us – verbally, through body language, gesture, or facial expression, or through the choices they make – we observe closely and take on board what they are telling us.

Assessing and reviewing progress

Children's progress is monitored on an ongoing basis, with key people using Development Matters, and the Leuven Scales for Wellbeing and Involvement as guides. These provide a picture of their overall progress and development. For children who have additional needs, we break progress down into smaller steps, while maintaining high aspirations. We use individual education plans (IEP), which are written based on discussions between parents, key person and the SENDCO. These IEPs are reviewed every half term, again in consultation between parents, key person and the SENDCO. We adapt individual plans earlier than scheduled if they have met their targets, or if the strategies we have been using to support them need to be adjusted. If this is the case, we will talk to parents to gain their views of what their child is able to do.

Transition to primary school

We hold transition meetings with primary schools and invite the SENDCO and new class teachers to visit the children in the nursery to start to get to know them. We also arrange extra transition visits to their new schools for the children. We share the children's records with their new school, with parental permission.

Preparing for adulthood

Through providing a rich and enabling environment, we instil a love of learning and lay the foundations for children's future progress and development.

Emotional and social development

Children with SEND are taught and supported alongside the other children. By getting to know all the children well through observation and discussions with parents, we get to know what needs they may have in terms of their emotional and social development. Sometimes children need some quiet 'down time' away from the main nursery, or time in the sensory room to explore.

Some children need additional support with interactions with their peers, so they might take part in short sharing and turn-taking groups. Children's ability to express themselves, including their needs and wants, is closely linked to their behaviour, and they may become frustrated if they find communication difficult. We therefore do a lot of work to support children's speech and language skills, including small-group or one-to-one work where this is appropriate.

For children who find sharing, turn-taking and other elements of social interactions difficult, we support them through nurture groups or one-to-one Supported Play.

Staff training

Staff have access to in-house training, for example Inset training by the SENDCO, as well as training at the Child Development Centre, and the advice and modelling of strategies by outside agencies for specific children/groups of children. Over the last year staff have had training in supporting children with sensory issues, speech and language development and Intensive Interaction.

Working with specialists

To ensure we are delivering the right provision for all children, we may sometimes make referrals to outside agencies with expertise in a number of areas: Early Years Support Team; Speech and Language Therapy Service; Paediatrician; Educational Psychologist Service, etc. Advice received from these agencies is discussed with parents and included in Individual Education Plans. The SENDCO attends drop-in consultations with the Early Years Support Team and/or the Educational Psychologist Service along with parents.

Advice from occupational therapy or other agencies working with the children is sought if we need to make adjustments to the physical environment.

Supporting the whole family

Parents are signposted to a number of appropriate organisations to support their needs. These include the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), the Parent Carer Forum, Autism Bedfordshire, the Children's Centres, etc. Our family support worker works alongside the SENDCO to ensure families' needs are met.

Evaluating our SEND provision

Regular learning walks with a SEND perspective are carried out in the nursery to assess how well the physical environment is meeting all children's needs. Observations of the individualised support given to children with SEND are carried out on a regular basis. IEPs are reviewed formally once each half term, but if, for example, a child achieves a target before this, or it becomes clear that a strategy is not working, the plan will be amended earlier.

The termly assessments of all children's progress and attainment are analysed to ensure that children with SEND are making progress along with their peers; this may not be at the same rate within the age bands of Development Matters but the data adds to the picture of children's areas for development.

What if I'm not happy with the school's provision for my child?

We work on the basis that all the adults in a child's life have the child's best interests at heart. We have an open-door policy to ensure parents' views are listened to and acted on in a timely way. We will always listen to parents' concerns and try to reach an agreement of how to move forward. If the key person is unable to reassure a parent, the SENDCO can be brought in. If after the SENDCO's intervention, a parent is still not happy the Co-Head Teacher will arrange a meeting.

As noted above, we signpost parents to SENDIASS who can support parents in disagreements with the school.

Bedford Borough Council's local offer, with information about what is going on in Bedford and how to access services, can be found at: localoffer.bedford.gov.uk