

Special educational needs and disability  
training resources for PGCE programmes

# Guide for PGCE providers on establishing and running the special educational needs personalised learning task

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# Introduction

This guide will help you set up and manage the special educational needs (SEN) personalised learning task. The task is designed to be introduced in the campus part of the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) programme and supervised and tutored in placement schools.

The task was trialled in 2008 and the evaluation identified a number of conditions that need to be in place for the task to be successful. These are reflected in what follows. But you will need to read the framework for the SEN personalised task, the information for school tutors, and the task brief for trainees before you get started. All these resources can be found in the special educational needs section of the TDA website: [www.tda.gov.uk/sen](http://www.tda.gov.uk/sen)

This guide focuses on:

- embedding the SEN personalised learning task in the PGCE programme, and
- putting the SEN personalised learning task into practice.

# Embedding the SEN personalised learning task in the PGCE programme

The SEN personalised learning task is most effective when it is embedded in the PGCE programme. You can do this in the following ways.

**Make the task an integral part of wider professional learning:** to develop trainees' knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes and help them meet the standards for qualified teacher status in relation to teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

**Allocate dedicated time within the PGCE programme for SEN and disability:** to include time for the SEN personalised learning task.

**Ensure that SEN and disability permeate the programme:** including curriculum or subject specialist studies, professional studies and school practice elements.

**Ensure there is effective and consistent communication about the task across all aspects of the PGCE programme:**

- within the campus teams – between SEN specialist tutors (including where appropriate a PGCE SEN coordinator), professional studies tutors, curriculum or subject tutors, university visiting tutors and support/administrative staff in partnership offices
- between campus staff and the placement school – communication should be with school tutors and reach relevant staff in placement schools, including initial teacher training (ITT) coordinators, subject tutors, mentors and SEN coordinators; the task should be covered on any training days organised by the programme for ITT coordinators/school tutors/special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs)
- within placement schools – between relevant staff involved in PGCE programmes, including ITT coordinators, subject tutors, mentors, and SENCOs; ITT coordinators should disseminate information about the task if they are the main contact with the campus; SENCOs need to have details of the task, including frequently asked questions and how to access this website, well in advance of placements, and
- through induction days – where induction days are arranged for trainees in advance of their placement, there should be an opportunity for trainees to meet with SENCOs and subject tutors to discuss the task.

**Appoint a campus-based PGCE SEN coordinator with specialist knowledge and experience of provision for pupils with SEN/disability:** who is part of, and teaches on, the PGCE programme.

This will significantly increase the success of the task and can improve the impact and effectiveness of SEN and disability provision within programmes. The post could be part time (10–20 days a year) and work across primary and secondary courses in the same university, where both are run. The PGCE coordinator should:

- ensure that SEN and disability are included in different parts of the programme and link the learning activities across the programme to the professional standards for qualified teacher status (QTS)
- train, support and brief campus tutors in different parts of the course on SEN/disability, eg supporting subject/module tutors in the design of relevant learning opportunities that link the SEN personalised learning task to other parts of their learning about SEN/disabilities
- support effective communication between the course and partner schools
- help to train, prepare and support school SENCOs, tutors, mentors and ITT coordinators on the SEN personalised learning task, and
- contribute to the training, briefing and support for university visiting tutors regarding supervision and assessment of the SEN personalised learning task.

With the right conditions in place the SEN personalised learning task can be put into practice effectively.

# Putting the SEN personalised learning task into practice

The SEN personalised learning task takes around six to eight hours to complete. It is designed to be undertaken in class or group settings and where appropriate in some one-to-one sessions away from the class or group.

You will need to decide whether your trainees will undertake the task on their first or second placements. This will depend partly on the length of placements, the other activities trainees undertake, and their confidence levels. Some trainees prefer to undertake the task on their second placement when they have had more teaching experience; others prefer their first placement, when they are doing less class teaching.

# Introducing the task

Before you explain the task in detail to the trainee or the placement school, you should:

- provide a clear rationale for the task, emphasising the benefits of intensive work with one pupil and how the task complements other learning, eg differentiation in whole-class teaching and an understanding of the range of SEN and disabilities
- introduce the task by taking them through the material on the TDA website:
  - explain the task; let them know it takes six to eight hours to complete and is designed to be undertaken in class or group settings with some one-to-one sessions away from the class or group
  - explain the SEN personalised learning framework to show how it informs the task and how it should be undertaken, and show the video clips and examples of trainees' reports – let trainees know that copies of the task brief and SEN personalised learning framework are available to download. The video clips show trainees undertaking the task and talking about their experiences, and school staff who have supported trainees speaking about its value and how to manage it. Trainees are shown working one to one with individual pupils for illustrative purposes; the task is designed to be carried out predominantly in whole-class or group settings.

# Arranging support from placement schools for the task

You must brief placement schools on their role and responsibilities well in advance of implementing the task. If several trainees are undertaking the task, joint supervision and reviews could be organised in the placement school.

Ensure placement schools:

- include details of the task in the school staff handbook
- ask their ITT coordinator to establish who will support the trainee in setting up and carrying out the task
- are involved in identifying pupils and deciding how the task is organised and carried out in their school
- ensure their SENCO is briefed in advance about:
  - the benefits of the task for their trainees' professional learning, the pupil involved and the school, and
  - what the task requires and their role in supporting trainees – helping them study school documents (such as the SEN policy and pupil records), attend tutorials and/or seminars, and report on the outcomes of the task.

If the placement school has a part-time SENCO, they should ensure that the trainee has support from others such as a class teacher or ITT coordinator (who will also need to be well briefed about the task).



# Advising trainees on carrying out the task

When you are guiding trainees on carrying out the task, advise them to:

- get started as early in their placement as possible
- familiarise themselves with the specific requirements of the task brief, the SEN personalised learning framework and the resources available on the TDA website
- consult the SENCO in their placement school about matters relating to the task (including which pupil to work with, strategies to consider, and resources and materials that can be used)
- build a good relationship with the pupil, having first read relevant information about them from their school
- observe others working with the pupil (class teacher, teaching assistant, specialist teacher and/or SENCO) as part of the task
- work with the pupil in a class in which they are regularly teaching, preferably in their main subject area, and
- work as much as possible in class, group or less structured settings and, if they withdraw the pupil to work one to one, consult the pupil about this as it offers an opportunity to explore their perspective on 'special provision'.

# Providing campus support

Establish clear arrangements for supporting trainees when they are undertaking the task – ensure that:

- university curriculum and subject tutors brief trainees on working with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in their subject/curriculum area
- curriculum and subject tutors and/or university visiting tutors are available to:
  - support trainees before and during the task
  - provide constructive feedback on trainees' reports of their work during the task, and
  - organise report-back seminars about the task towards the end of the term in which it is undertaken to support wider learning about teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

# Assessing the task

Put arrangements in place for assessing trainees' work on the task; you will need to:

- decide how the task will be assessed (and by whom) and its place in the overall PGCE assessment arrangements
- agree the form of written report trainees should make about their task activities and their professional learning – options include:
  - a summative marked assignment (including a masters-level assignment)
  - a brief report for inclusion in a portfolio of completed activities from the placement – either to be simply recorded as completed or to receive formative feedback; examples of trainee reports can be found in the resources section of the TDA website: [www.tda.gov.uk/sen](http://www.tda.gov.uk/sen)
- include details of the assessment arrangements in any briefing materials on the task.