

Special educational needs and disability
training resources for PGCE programmes

**The special educational
needs personalised learning
task: information for school
tutors, including the special
educational needs coordinator**

The special educational needs personalised learning task

This task provides an intensive learning experience about special educational needs (SEN) as one part of the PGCE trainees' learning about special educational provision during their PGCE. It will enable them to gain some practical knowledge and skills that cannot be learnt from whole-class teaching, or from learning in general terms about the range of different areas of learning difficulties and disabilities. It will enable them to learn about individual educational needs, something which is important to being able to promote inclusion in their classroom teaching.

The next section 'Task brief for trainees' details the specific aims of the task and how to start and proceed with it.

To do this task, trainees need to identify a pupil to focus on, and work with, over a period of time (six to eight hours in all), observing others working with the pupil, consulting those who know the pupil including the pupil (when appropriate), reading, planning and recording. Though their focus is an individual pupil, this does not always mean individual tutoring; they will also observe teaching-learning, consult the pupil, plan and follow up with reading (this takes up three to four hours of the total six to eight hours).

If you are the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) then you will support trainees in the following ways:

- to identify a suitable pupil – see task brief for details
- brief the trainee about the selected pupil
- make relevant information available to trainees (eg individual education plan (IEP), provision maps etc), and
- support them to get started and to continue with their assessment, planning and direct teaching.

Trainees are expected to write up their work on this task and to let SENCOs have a copy at the end of the placement.

Trainees have reported that the pupils that they have worked with can benefit from their involvement in the task and that the trainees themselves have learnt much from doing this task. Video resources explaining the task in more detail can be found on the TDA website (www.tda.gov.uk/sen). 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.

Examples of the perceived value of the task for pupils

Primary trainee quotes

"Although I worked with my child for only a short time, clear steps had been achieved. We also bonded well and respect was gained by both me and the child."

"The child definitely progressed after having specific time given to her, especially as I was able to keep adapting my tasks and teaching to better suit her."

Secondary trainee quotes

"The pupil thrived on the additional attention and grew in confidence. He has been able to achieve better in his normal ICT classes because of the intervention."

"The fact that a pupil with SEN received an increased amount of attention to make lessons more enjoyable for, and accessible to, him."

How some trainees felt about teaching pupils with SEN after doing the task

Primary trainee quotes

"I feel much more confident about teaching pupils with SEN than I did previously and have realised that I am more competent than I thought. I have just got a job and there will be a deaf child and a child with Down's Syndrome in my class and although I am slightly nervous as I have no knowledge in these areas I am very interested to find out more."

"I now realise how important personalised learning is. It is vital that the learning matches the needs of the individual."

"I feel more confident and better prepared to teach children with SEN. I feel I will be able to empathise with their difficulties better. It was really worthwhile."

Secondary trainee quotes

"Much more confident – I feel I now have the ability to assess a child's individual needs and put in place personalised learning strategies to help the child to progress. I am now working with a dyslexic pupil and have felt confident to ask him what sorts of activities he likes doing and how best to help him learn."

"I am feeling more confident than before I did this task but the biggest issue is getting to know the students and how they are going to respond to you and how you can personalise learning which is dependent upon your knowledge of them."