

# Early Years Inclusion of children with SEND:

Building high quality inclusion throughout our settings



# Who are Dingley's Promise?

## A charity delivering specialist nursery provision for children with SEND

- Six Centres working with children, families and mainstream providers
- Thousands of children and families supported over 41 years
- 35% to 70% transitions to the mainstream

## A will to drive an inclusion movement

- Working across the UK with LAs, providers, partners & parents
- Training for mainstream providers
- Advice and support for the DfE
- Lobbying for change nationally representing their voices



# Inclusion: the national picture

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- 73% settings say number of children with SEND is rising
- 28% of settings had turned children with SEND away.
- 92% have had to use their own funds to support them. (Early Years Alliance 2022)
- Staffing crisis EYPs and specialists



**Only 6% of local authorities believe they have enough provision for all children with SEND in the early years (Coram, 2024)**

# Impact on families

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- Only 16 per cent of mothers with disabled children work, compared to 61 per cent of other mothers. (Contact)
- 3 in 4 parents have to give up work because of a lack of support for their children. (Disabled Children's Partnership, 2023)
- One in five say that isolation has led to the break up of their family life, and 72% say it has led to mental ill health (Contact 2011)

# Barriers to inclusion

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- Excessive paperwork
- Lack of staff
- Little free, practical training
- Long waits for therapists
- Insufficient funding



# What do settings want?

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- Not to spend their own funds on SEND support
- SEND training for all staff
- Early identification in partnership with health
- Respect from schools when transitioning children



# Is it good inclusive practice?

A setting tells a family they cannot meet the needs of their child and signposts them to another provision.

A child in a setting has one to one adult support at all times.

A child is excused from taking part in the nativity because they will disrupt other children.

A setting works really hard to train their staff and adapt their practice when a child with SEND joins them.

A setting prioritises putting a child on a waiting list for specialist support and then waits.

# Inclusive mindset

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- Parents are experts in their children – but want honesty
- 1:1 support is not always best
- Behaviour is communication
- Some inclusion is better than none
- Good inclusive practice helps everyone – and is everyone's work
- Every child is an individual
- Celebratory approach



# What would you say?

01

ASD

02

Wheelchair  
bound

03

Disabled

04

Normal  
children

05

SEND

# What does effective inclusion look like?

- Early identification – child development knowledge
- Early intervention – graduated approach with specialist support at the right time
- Enabling environment – physical, communication & sensory
- Parent partnership – respect and courage
- High quality transitions – start early, shared expectations, mutual respect
- Inclusive curriculum – differentiation and access



# Enabling environment

- Physical – clutter free, space to move, quiet spaces, promote independence, decision making and exploration.
- Total communication - consistent use of many communication forms such as signing, pictures, objects of reference, timers etc)
- Sensory - reduce visual stimuli (boards, contrasting colours), sound (soft furnishings, quiet spaces) spacial awareness (promote movement, space to move), internal body awareness (rest times, routines, food/ toilet times).



# Parent Partnership

- Home visit to understand family situation
- Joint thinking and target setting
- Regular contact to ensure they feel informed (catch ups start and end of day/ regular progress meetings/ online observations exchange)
- Support and signposting to other services
- Focus on statutory paperwork and meeting deadlines
- Parent as the expert of their child – with challenge
- Recognise your influence on parent feelings



Factual or  
judgemental?

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He was rude to me.

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She kept making excuses.

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He pointed at me each time he said “you”.

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She didn’t care that I was upset.

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He said that I “hadn’t done anything to help his child.”

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She walked away without saying goodbye.

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He thinks we shouldn’t have referred his child.

# High Quality Transitions

- Start as early as possible – what can you do before place confirmed?
- Once confirmed, arrange meeting to share support needs & potential equipment needs
- Transition report highlighting current level and strategies that work
- Offer next setting visit to see child in current setting
- Key person attend settling visit at next setting – reassures parents
- Ask new setting for photos to create social story
- Offer support/ reassurance during summer





# What tools do we have to help us?

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- Universal Provision (Ordinarily Available)
- Graduated Approach
- CDC Early Years toolkit
- EY SEND Partnership (DP EEP)
- Pen Green Celebratory Approach
- Dingley's Promise inclusion training

# Suggested next steps for settings

- Audit yourself - deep reflection rather than tick box
- Identify and collate local resources to support inclusion
- Share positive case studies of inclusion
- Contribute to strategy groups in your LA
- Access DP inclusion training and gain mark of achievement



# Dingley's Promise Inclusion Training

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- 5 live courses
- Free to access locally
- 5 hours study plus 3 hours video each
- Totally flexible learning
- Works best when teams learn together!



# Thank you

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 **Dingley's Promise**  
Transforming the Early Years for children with SEND



Jack's Voice  
A Parent's perspective of  
the Role of the SENCO  
and SEND support



# The Role of the SENCO

- Ensuring all practitioners in a setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN
- Advising and supporting colleagues
- Ensuring parents are closely involved and their views are taken into account
- Liaising with professionals or agencies beyond the setting if appropriate
- Continuously developing CPD

(DFE Role of the SENCo 2022)

# The Local Offer

Every Local Authority must publish, in one place, information about what support is available for children and young people 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families.

It will contain:

information about provision that parents /carers can expect to be available in their area for children and young people from 0-25 who have SEN.

information about education, health and care provision.

As a SENCO you will need to know what is out there gives you more choice and control over what support is right for you or your child.



# Early Intervention and Early Action

‘All those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. In particular, parents know their children best and it is important that all practitioners listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child’s development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by children themselves’.

**DfE and DH (2015) SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years, para 5.5**

# Partnership working

1.12 'Throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree on how to support the child. Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate. (Statutory framework for early years foundation stage, 1.13, page 16 )

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) strengthens a parent's rights to involvement in relation to their child's education



## Early years foundation stage statutory framework

For group and school-based providers

Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five

Published: 8 December 2023

Effective: 4 January 2024



## Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years

Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities

January 2015



Best  
Practice  
Network

# Transition



5.47

‘SEN support should include planning and preparing for transition, before a child moves into another setting or school. This can also include a review of the SEN support being provided or the EHC plan. To support the transition, information should be shared by the current setting with the receiving setting or school. The current setting should agree with parents the information to be shared as part of this planning process’.

Send Code of Practice (2015) 5.47 page 88

