

The Role of the Lead Practitioner for Pupils with Autism

Written by Mark Hill, Senior Autism Outreach Teacher, 10 March 2012

A The Lead Practitioner for Autism

A Lead Practitioner will be involved in all aspects of support to those pupils with autism. This will involve aspects of advocacy, assessment, strategic planning, staff/parent liaison and support. The Lead Practitioner will:

- Act as an advocate for the pupils with autism
- Support pupils, families and setting staff
- Retain a secure knowledge of the key areas of difference experienced by those pupils with autism.
- Understand and be able to respond to how autism may act as a barrier in relationships with adults and pupils
- Understand and be able to respond to the ways in which autism may present a barrier to aspects of learning.
- Consistently employ their knowledge of the individual pupil in their decision-making regarding advice on effective strategies.
- Support a systemic approach to the inclusion of pupils with autism.
- Access support from outside agencies, where necessary and to keep up to date with current knowledge.

B Involvement with the Pupils

The Lead Practitioner would create opportunities for key staff to work alongside the pupils with autism and to make detailed observations in both the social and learning settings. In schools where there only a few pupils with autism, the Lead Practitioner might do this work themselves. This would enable the Lead Practitioner to effectively 'know the child' and to lead on the delivery of specific interventions. The Lead Practitioner might work with individual pupils to gain information regarding their strengths and needs along with their views about school and access and support. A profile of the pupil would be developed including this information and key information from parents and other staff. The Lead Practitioner would also take a key role in organising and managing transition arrangements between classes and Key Stages.

C Involvement with Parents and Carers

The Lead Practitioner would be the named person for parents and carers where there was only a few pupils with autism on roll. Where there are many pupils, their role would be to facilitate the effective engagement between key staff and parents. Parents often require a 'listening ear' that understands and responds to the changing daily needs of their child. It is important that parents are aware of the member of staff identified as Lead Practitioner so that contact with staff is ensured. The Lead Practitioner would share relevant information and signpost parents to relevant support groups and networks.

The Lead Practitioner would encourage and support parents to share information on their child with the school on a regular basis.

D Involvement with Teaching Staff

The Lead Practitioner should act as a point of contact for staff who teach the pupils with autism. S/he would be confident and take a key role in discussions with the SENCo and other teaching staff about the key areas of need and make suggestions on support strategies and the training needs of staff. It is important for the Lead Practitioner, in liaison with the SENCo, to map and track the implementation of strategies. On a day to day basis the Lead Practitioner would support the SENCo by attending Individual Education Plan meetings and Annual Reviews for pupils with Statements. A main aim in the work of the Lead Practitioner would be to enhance the skills and knowledge of all key staff in relation to autism so that they grow in confidence and competence.

E Involvement with External Agencies

The Lead Practitioner would act as a point of contact for External Agencies involved with the pupil. It would be beneficial to settings if the Lead Practitioner had regular involvement in, and access to, a network of other Lead Practitioners in their local area.