

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This purpose of this exercise was to:

- Share best practice in SEND both locally and nationally
- Look at new and creative ways of partnership working
- Understand the range and level of support for City of London (COL) children and young people (CYP) who have an EHCP
- Look at ways that we can identify those CYP who are on SEND Support
- Discuss the current provision for CYP with SEND and possible areas for development

1.2 The visits covered the following settings meeting the needs of CYP with SEND:

- Mainstream schools
- Colleges
- Independent Schools
- Those schools/settings who were receiving COL CYP in September
- Schools who were admitting COL children but had no EHCP at present – COLPAI

1.3 The visits were planned, letters sent, and a selection of resources were sent in advance. Some schools were anxious about the visits as this had not happened before, were concerned about Ofsted judgements and/or were having significant problems with Covid. All of these are fully understandable, but Anne and Kay discussed with the Heads/SENDCOs/ those staff supporting the COL children with EHCP's the rationale behind the visits and allayed their fears. Two schools, The Aldgate School and Stepney All Saints C of E Secondary School (Formally Sir John Cass's Secondary) undertook the London Leadership Strategy Audit for SEND. This gave us invaluable information about the school, and the information provided the school with evidence base for their School Evaluation Form (SEF). Other schools/settings are going to use this audit in the future for their SEF.

1.4 In the main, visits were carried out physically/face to face with the schools; however, in some due to Covid/changed arrangements, the meetings had to take place via Teams. This was equally effective although did not give the team a 'feel' for the school and the environment. This was a very pressurised time for schools with Covid outbreaks, staff absences and pupils having to self-isolate, so Kay and I are extremely grateful for staff giving us the time and facility to discuss COL pupils and their response to inclusion and SEND in their settings.

1.5 The feedback from the schools and settings was extremely positive and they were grateful, despite all the challenges that they faced, to have a professional debate around their provision for SEND and were really grateful for all the resources that were shared prior and post the visits.

1.6 Letters of thanks were sent after the visits with a document with hyperlinks to all the resources.

1.7 The following schools/settings were visited either face to face or via teams:

- The Aldgate School
- Phoenix Special School
- English Martyrs Primary
- Richard Cloudesley
- Stepney All Saints Secondary School
- Stormont House School (Secondary)

- Wapping High Secondary
- Hill House School (Secondary - Residential)
- Prior Weston Primary School
- City of London Primary Academy Islington
- Fairley House (Primary)
- City of London Academy Islington (Secondary)
- Central Foundation Boys School (Secondary)
- City of Westminster College
- New City College
- West London Free School – to be re convened due to Covid shut down
- St Francis Xavier 6th form – lack of response despite numerous calls/emails
- Mossbourne Community Academy – refused entry but will be re convened via Teams

2.0 Findings

2.1 All settings commented on how efficient and good it is to work with the COL SEND team compared to other local authorities (LAs). There were very positive comments on meetings held with the full attendance of professionals from the COL. The support from the Educational Psychologist was highly valued and the parent workshops at The Aldgate School in particular. Comments such as 'they are all over the cases (EHCP) and know their children very well'. This extremely detailed approach ensures that in the vast majority of schools, COL CYP are catered for well, their needs are met effectively, and at least good progress is made. Relationships on the whole with parents were very good. Where there was a discrepancy in any of these areas including the schools EHCP paperwork and lack of specialist knowledge this was raised by Anne with the Headteacher and additional resource was put in place by the school. A follow up Teams call after the visits had finished with the Headteacher and an action plan put in place by the school. The support for COL EHCP children throughout COVID was overall good and outstanding in many and in particular those in those specialist placements. However, for those children who did not access school the lack of specific interventions during the past year will have had a detrimental impact on some.

2.2 Transition between the primary and secondary sector remains problematic for some with, in the view of some primary Headteachers a lack of inclusive/specialist approach to SEND in some of the secondary schools thereby limiting the choice of parents. There are some examples of really effective and outstanding differentiated curriculum pathways and transition arrangements in some secondary schools. More work needs to be done in improving the links between primary and secondary from Year 4 onwards. The transition between secondary and college/work-based training provision needs greater cohesion with more information shared on supported internships and Project Search as examples.

2.3 The two colleges, Westminster College and New City College, pointed out that the most problematic issues they have generally is securing/agreeing the top up funding in advance of students coming in September. However, this was an issue across all the LAs that they work with. It would be helpful if the COL could arrange some further discussions with the colleges when the young people have their last annual review prior to them leaving school which should ideally be in the autumn term when the college is recommended. As the COL has a small cohort of young people coming through, we could set up a best practice system that other LAs could follow.

2.4 Falling roles across London and in particular Islington and Hackney could be having an impact on provisions. In London there has been a 7% drop in the population over the last 2 years. Some primary schools are reducing roles or closing in some boroughs. Recent figures shared with the COL from Hackney indicate that they had 505 vacant reception class places in January 2021, overall in statutory funded schools a 16% surplus against what is recommended which is between 5% and 10%, 52 vacant places in Secondary schools in September 2021 with a peak of surplus of 247 predicted in September 2025. Nationally there has been a rise in the number of EHCP's from 14.4% of all pupils in 2015 to 15.5% in 2020, there has been a considerable rise in the number of EHCP's over the past year and Hackney predict up to an additional 400 per year until 2026. The implications of this for the City are that there will be a greater pressure on specialist places both in the maintained and independent sector, placements in mainstream out of the COL could be affected by the reduction in roles and the efficacy of keeping some schools viable and in the secondary sector the capacity to offer a full broad and balanced curriculum. It is likely therefore that many mainstream schools will be having greater numbers of EHCP's. This could be a positive and/or negative for the COL children with SEND. Close, positive and effective work with all the schools who host COL children who have EHCP's and who are on SEND Support will be crucial in going forward.

2.5 Colleges pointed out the importance of Post 19 provision being available back in communities. New City College has a Post 25 provision in development. It cannot be underestimated the positive impact that the transitions group which has been recently established by the COL can have. It will be of paramount importance to have those pathways to employment, voluntary work, independence, travel, supported living and access to local community provisions and services. Planning for the Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) from the earliest stage will be essential. The PfA guidance that are in the SEND Ranges, copies of which were left on each visit to schools, from Early Years will be essential.

2.6 In most if not all the visits it became evident that both schools and colleges did not know that the COL was so small, had a very small core SEND team and that some of their children were COL as they had not looked at the post codes. In discussion, they all accepted and acknowledged the challenges that this brings and the uniqueness of the COL. All settings referred to the positive way that the COL is going about visiting schools and that other LAs have not done the same. Therefore, we felt that the COL might find it helpful to:

- Send a rationale to current and future placements. This is our rationale, what our vision is, this is our team, and this is how we operate.
- Our paperwork and how we would want it completed – set the standards high from the beginning.
- This could be supported by the SEND Ranges. Each setting received a paper copy of the SEND Ranges and an electronic copy in word and PDF so that they could use the information in their own settings and policies. The SEND Ranges were very well received and welcomed as they were far more comprehensive than any others that they had seen or used. All settings expressed a desire to use them and would welcome the COL having this as their approach to the Graduated Response re the SEND Code of Practice.
- A map of what is available in the COL regarding support across agencies etc would be very useful – Mental Health, therapies, local GP, PCF/Contact and SENDIASS.
- Outline the role of the SEND case worker at Annual Review meetings and other formal and statutory meetings.

2.7 Specialist providers would like to be fully involved with networking and providing training/CPD/support for SENDCO's and other provisions. Fairley House, Hill House, Phoenix and Richard Cloudesley have specific skill sets and expertise that could be very helpful to the COL, enhance provision and in sharing best practice.

2.8 Schools and settings are willing to share the data on SEND Support.

2.9 There is a significant growth in CYP with SLCN and sensory needs. There is an exciting opportunity to work with the main 3 primary schools that this year are taking in COL children at reception to work collaboratively and collectively across the three settings to meet the needs of children with these needs. The three primary schools are The Aldgate School, City of London Primary Academy Islington (COLPAI) and Prior Weston. There could be a therapeutic hub created say in The Aldgate, or any of the other two schools but serving all three. All schools are very keen to explore this idea and feel that it would benefit all children. The schools have early years settings, so The Aldgate School were very keen to establish this kind of resource at the youngest age through effective multi-disciplinary working and interventions. Access to therapeutic services and support can be difficult. The current services for SALT are highly valued. Discussion could be set up between the schools, the COL and Islington in the first instance.

2.10 There are huge opportunities to collaborate and share practice. Tower Hamlets are reducing their SEND services according to a number of schools. The excellent SEND practice/outreach from Phoenix Special School, Fairley House, Richard Cloudesley and Hill House must be harnessed to support mainstream colleagues. There was a variability between the threshold for services between Islington, the City and Hackney CCG which is causing frustration within schools and settings.

2.11 There are opportunities for active supervision (individual and peer group) across the Trusts re SEND issues. This has already started with one primary school in the Family of Schools who has had support from Anne over a couple of complex cases, none of which are COL children, but the senior managers are very appreciative of the support and guidance. This could be a key strength of the newly formed SENDCO network. There could be lesson study walks across and between schools, sharing of case study/action research etc.

2.12 There is an increasing number of CYP with a dual diagnosis of ADHD and ASC – sometimes the label does not define needs. There is a high proportion of CYP coming into schools with undiagnosed needs.

2.13 There is a need to ensure that the SENDCO's have the specific SENDCO qualification as one secondary school although it has a large number of CYP with needs, neither of the two key staff have the qualification. This should be raised at Annual Review and placement times. There is a need across most schools for a succession plan for the SENDCO to be put in place. Some schools have Assistant/Deputy SENDCO's and/or SENDCO's for each Key Stage.

2.14 Some schools reported that the two-year check by Health Visitors was not always detailed enough, and data not shared. Schools, particularly those with Early Years settings, would highly value this information.

2.15 The Aldgate School used to be asked by the SEND Programme Board, as the only COL school to do a report on SEND. This has not been requested recently and the school would be willing and

happy to do this. Both The Aldgate School and Stepney C of E Secondary schools produced excellent audits of their SEND provision using the QA format sent by Anne.

2.16. There is a degree of variability in the amount of time the SENDCO has to carry out their roles. This is a national issue but could be mentioned in the modus operandi of the COL as best practice and recommended by the SEND Code of Practice.

2.17 There is an opportunity to work with children's milestones aged 3,5,7,9 and 12 to get agencies together to share best practice and have a professional debate rather than wait for referrals. This could be a unique feature of the proposed joint therapeutic hub between the three primary schools and the key secondary feeders.

3.0 Schools and settings need support with the following:

3.1 A staffing structure and deployment of TA's, professionalisation of the TA Teams through improved networking, CPD and appraisal using the TA professional standards and looking at specialist area TA responsibilities. In the report by *Ofsted May 2021 'Supporting SEND' (small scale study of 21 pupils from 7 mainstream schools)* highlighted the significant amount of time that pupils with SEND spend with TAs – therefore raising issues on curriculum knowledge, quality of interventions and the need for robust training. The COL in conjunction with COLAT SENDCO group which I chair, to put on some key training for this group of staff and to give guidance on the use of professional standards for TAs and appraisal systems. In our visits and in the resource sheet shared post visit Kay Charles, Executive Head of 2 outstanding special schools in Brent, can deliver some of that support. Schools were very keen that the COL hosted a TA training event. Recent research carried out by Ofsted May 2021 'Supporting SEND' highlighted the training for TAs as a key priority for schools as many CYP with SEND spend a large proportion of their time with them.

3.2 The development of a 'nurture group and bespoke curriculum pathways' using best practice already in place locally and national best practice examples. Support around the various accredited pathways – this to be done in conjunction with colleges and special schools. *The new Ofsted framework – September 2021 will look at the curriculum in depth around intent, implementation and impact and specifically at those CYP who have EHCP's and who are on SEND Support.* Again, training, networking and professional debate/sharing practice is really needed.

3.3 An environment which meets the needs of CYP with Sensory needs and that are suitable and SEND friendly and sharing multi-sensory best practice.

3.4 Highlighting pupil voice at reviews and exploring best practice – Hill House and the City of London Academy Islington have exceptional practice in this area.

3.5 Overall look at the September 2021 Ofsted framework, checking that LA and all its Family of Schools have checked that pupil feel that they have a voice and that they are aware of the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, its implementation and how this will be approached with children and young people with SEND.

3.6 Looking at the best practice in transition 0-25 – needs greater coherence and planning and ensuring that PfA is at the heart of these projections and discussions. Sharing of templates would be useful. Training in the implementation of PfA across the curriculum and the use of the PfA outcomes during the statutory assessment process is requested by schools and settings. There was little discussion of PfA outcomes between secondary and college settings.

3.7 Training required for all levels of staff and managers on SEND and in particular social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and Ofsted sexual abuse in schools and colleges and pupil voice.

3.8 Sharing of resources and practical interventions within the Graduated Approach/Response and clarity over the SEND Ranges. Schools and settings are very appreciative of the SEND Ranges and wish these to become the COL approach.

3.9 The need for a common approach to assessment cross phase. Sharing best practice and exploring the different cohorts and needs of pupils, evidenced based research is high on the Ofsted Agenda because it has proved to access and leaning for those with SEND, and supported better and more accurate assessments, moderation between settings. The moderation between and across the 'Family of Schools' will also help to secure knowledge, understanding and more consistent assessment of progress of groups and individual pupils.

3.10 Schools need and want a consistent approach to provision mapping and costed provision maps. As most of the schools serve different LAs there is a real desire to get some continuity across LAs as the differing formats cause a huge amount of paperwork and time-consuming activities. The independent schools also struggle with the differing formats. This could be something that the Family of Schools from the COL, those schools who have COL EHCP children - both mainstream and special - could work on together.

3.11 Schools would value a comprehensive list of interventions for reference and access.

3.12 Schools would like to see more practice around working with parents shared between themselves so there is greater consistency and not re-inventing of the wheel.

3.11 All schools and colleges, including those in the independent mainstream and specialist sector would like to be part of a SENDCO network and set the agenda to areas of focus that they wish.

3.12 Accessing services across boroughs is really difficult and very time consuming and the SENDCO's do not always know what is available. This is where the rationale, team information and modus operandi would be helpful as well as a one-page map of what is available.

3.13 There is a growth in the number of CYP with emotional and behavioural challenges even with the high and higher attainers – some of this is Covid related where the emotional resilience of some CYP is not as strong as before. Many schools will face this challenge; so, training and support on differing approaches to successful interventions with these needs would be really helpful.

4.0 Conclusion

The outcome of the SEND Review should be out in the autumn term. It is pertinent therefore to review our provision for SEND 0-25 in a creative, innovative and sustainable way. This engagement process with schools, settings and colleges provided an effective forum for extensive professional debate and this report highlights a wide variety of opportunities to establish a sustainable provision in the light of the growing number of CYP with EHCP's and those on SEND Support.

There are a wide range of opportunities to share practice, develop consistency and for the COL to have a strong and articulated vision for inclusion which will be part of its modus operandi as recommended at the beginning of this report.

REPORT ON THE VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS WHERE CITY OF LONDON CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH EHCP'S ARE EDUCATED
JUNE/JULY 2021

The visits are the start of a new engagement process alongside the development of the new SEND forum across the Family of Schools and hopefully including those schools who host the City CYP with EHCP and SEND Support. There is a wealth of networking opportunities and the ability to access specialist SEND expertise through the SEND independent sector and LA specialist sector. Schools are willing to share information on those CYP on SEND Support thereby giving the COL the information on needs coming through and the ability to start future proofing their SEND Services.

It will be important that the COL uses this information during the autumn term and build on the enthusiasm and ideas created by these visits through an action plan linked to the SEND Strategy and implementation plan. Each school/setting, college will receive a one-page bullet pointed visit report that will support them in their self-evaluation and strive for best practice in SEND.

Anne Hayward

August 2021