

## **SEND offer and SEND Annual Report, 2020-2021**

Simon Balle All through School embraces the needs of all students and has a whole-school approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We provide effective opportunities for all students by responding to students' diverse and often complex learning needs, setting suitable learning challenges and overcoming barriers to learning. Simon Balle All through School is an inclusive school that believes strongly that all students, regardless of academic or physical ability, background or ethnicity, have the right to participate fully in the life of the school and be equipped to be successful learners and model citizens.

During this past year, we have spent considerable time and effort on reviewing the "Learning and emotional support" that we give to all of our students, regardless of age or stage. With the departure of our highly experienced SENCO, and in recognition of a school which has substantially expanded, along with an increase in need, we have developed the idea of a strategic SEND board and the creation of a "Learning Support" team. In addition, we have ensured that all staff are trained in understanding key aspects of SEND, and that specialist teachers are deployed effectively.

The pandemic has created both opportunities and challenges. We have created new links and networks within our DSPL and also with specialists within HCC. Our transitional work with those primaries sending us children with SEND, has developed and closer work has ensued. The use of online EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) reviews and a more focused communication with parents has led to better understanding from both sides. We have managed to create a small hub whereby some of our most vulnerable students within the secondary stage have found a safe space and despite complex emotional needs have attended school. This model now needs to be expanded, with specialist staff who can deliver learning where these children are. Online learning has also helped some of our students; others really benefited from the school's approach of delivering specialist support during Lockdown.

However, increased needs and the range of complexities is increasingly difficult to manage, reflected in the growing numbers of both children and young people with EHCPs and also those needing further specialist SEND support. Similar to national data, speech and language development within our youngest children (primarily reception and Y1) has increased due to Lockdown as has the number of students facing mental health issues. Funding is limited; the demands of the EHCP as well as meeting the expectations of some parents are increasingly difficult for a mainstream school, where some of these young people are 5 years behind their peers.

The pandemic and the growing situation has enabled us to read widely and follow the most recent educational research into what constitutes effective provision. From September 2021, we have a new SENCO (Helen Witty), a member of SLT dedicated to inclusion (Adam Quirk) and specialist teachers of literacy (David Harrold, Caroline Robinson-Day and Rosie ??) and Daniella Hall (primary SEND lead) working across phases. Our whole school literacy strategy and subsequent programmes will build upon current best practice and the creation of our "CALM hub" (Centre for Alternative Learning and mentoring) will ensure that some of

our most vulnerable students will access high quality learning, alongside attending the “normal classes”.

The SEND provision will be coordinated and analysed for impact through the SEND board.

Our links with a Hertfordshire SEMH primary school has influenced our policies and practices on restorative practice and will further shape the work in the coming year so that all staff understand what an inclusive classroom will look like, and when specialist and targeted support is needed. We adhere to the “Hertfordshire’s Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour strategy” and are implementing the tiered approach.

### **Key Questions:**

#### **1. How does Simon Balle All through School know if a student needs extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs?**

As part of our transition process, the school liaises closely with parents/carers, the student and their primary school, or pre-school, to ensure that we understand both the social and academic needs of the student. With our youngest children, we believe in early identification and this might mean that we use specific assessments, or we might suggest a period to monitor and then review. We spend considerable time discussing the best and most effective strategies we can use to ensure that students make good progress.

If you think that your child may have learning needs or additional needs, you can talk to the class teacher, Head of Year/ Senior Staff or SENCO, to see how we can investigate this further so that needs are met. We will follow a graduated response (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) when assessing needs. This is in-line with the Code of Practice for SEND and ensures that your concerns are heard, and that the child’s needs are assessed to agree next steps.

#### **2. How will school staff support my child?**

The staff at Simon Balle All through School work very closely with students and their families to ensure that we support their needs together. Staff will ensure that needs and strategies are reviewed, that the student feels happy and safe. In the Primary phase, the class teacher and support staff will address any concerns parents may have while in the Secondary phase the Head of Year and Form Tutor will be involved. The Head of Year and Form Tutor play a key role in pastoral care and can address both social and academic concerns. All teaching staff and any support staff who are involved with the student will not only receive regular updates and training but also work together to ensure that the strategies being used are making the desired difference. It is the responsibility of all teachers to address each student’s need and we are aspirational for all learners. Therefore, teachers will regularly assess the progress of all students and seek to identify those making less than expected progress. Staff may choose to modify or adapt methods to meet individual needs before intervention is put in place.

As a school we place great emphasis upon effective, regular training, learning from educational research and best practice. We know that the most important factor for all children, but in particular for those with SEND, is high quality teaching and learning.

### **3. How will I know how my child is doing?**

Parents at Simon Balle All through School receive regular feedback from staff. Using our “on line” assessment and homework systems, parents are able to see how well their child is doing. If appropriate, meetings between parents/carers and the SEND team will be arranged. Parents can contact the SEND team about any issues throughout the school year. Each year group has at least one parents’ evening and an annual report, whilst within the primary phase there are far more opportunities for contact. It is often easier as the child has contact with one teacher for most of the week.

Simon Balle All through School is well known for the excellent level of pastoral and academic care, alongside outstanding communication with parents/carers. Any interventions that are provided for students involve parental consultation. These are closely monitored and outcomes are shared. Parents are encouraged to use all means of communication virtual and when able, face to face. Staff will regularly make themselves available to meet with parents if needed.

There are various levels of accountability for student progress, through line management and governance.

### **4. How will the learning and development provision be matched to my child’s needs?**

We track and monitor progress to ensure that strategies are timely, relevant and have impact. Intervention may be varied; it may be used in the short term to address specific targets, or longer term as part of an overall plan. We focus on effective teaching and learning and teaching staff implement differentiated resources for all students to access within a class setting. We believe the best place for students to progress is in a classroom, with their peers, led by a subject specialist. However from time to time intervention or catch up is appropriate and the “Assess, Plan, Do, review” model is important in identifying what needs to be in place. Our interventions are directed by educational research and often those recommended by Nasen.

From time to time, our review might indicate that there needs to be a modification and personalisation of the curriculum for a particular child. An example might be that a modern foreign language lesson is replaced by a literacy programme, or that additional study support is given in place of a GCSE option. During the next academic year (2021-2022) we have been invited to join two pilot programmes- NHS cadets (from Year 9) and also MCR Pathways (a mentoring programme- “motivation, commitment , resilience) targeted at the most vulnerable students.

In addition, testing takes place to ensure that those students who “qualify” for access arrangements during the formal examination process, have the correct modifications granted.

### **5. What support will there be for my child’s overall wellbeing?**

The provision for pastoral care is outstanding and parents at Simon Balle All through School regularly praise us for how we deal with each individual child in a holistic way. The school will discuss with you any specific concerns and an agreed approach will be taken. We will explain to you the key staff who will be concerned about your child’s wellbeing and if things are not right, who may contact you. Our Director of Care and Wellbeing works with parents

and professionals to support families. A number of staff are trained as both physical and mental health first aiders, and our Student Support Worker (a professional counsellor) may be available to offer guidance and support. We work closely with and seek advice from a range of professional services and external agencies, including NHS, Rivers ESC , ESMA and other outreach agencies. We want all students to be happy, feel safe and to access the age related curriculum offer. From September 2021, the addition of our "CALM facility (Centre for Alternative Learning and Mentoring) will create a safe hub whereby learning can be more personalised for those students who need an alternative provision and delivery.

#### **6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the school?**

The school is committed to using a range of external services including medical, social, mental health professionals as appropriate. These include Speech and Language Therapy, the Educational Psychology Service, CAMHS, PALMS, Specialist teams (VI, Autism), Youth Connexions, Herts SEND, Families First Assessments, Social Care and the Virtual School.

#### **7. What training have the staff, supporting young people and young people with SEND, had or are having?**

Professional development and training is key to our success at Simon Balle All through School, and as such is a key driver for our continuous improvement. Leaders keep up to date with both educational research alongside pedagogic approaches. Teaching assistants and those with particular responsibility for delivering strategies, regularly attend training and whole school INSET during 2020- 2021, including autism training, behavioral strategies, attachment and trauma training and assessment for students working below age related expectations. SPLD training is planned for the Autumn Term, 2021.

Within our Primary phase, a number of staff are trained in using WellComm and Elklan, to help those children who may have speech, language and communication needs.

#### **8. How will you help me to support my child's learning?**

We believe that students will only be making progress and be successful if we work in close partnership with parents and carers. It is our aim to develop some level of independence so that all of our students, from Reception to Y13, can take appropriate responsibility for themselves. We hold a number of events and meetings for all parents/carers so that they can support and understand their children's learning and sometimes this is specifically aimed at those parents who have children with SEND. Parents/carers will be informed regularly about SEND provision for their child.

Our local SEND hub (DSPL3) frequently organises courses for parents whereby the focus is on a specific issue, for example, autism or speech and language. Specialist staff within school are always on hand to provide both support, guidance and advice.

#### **9. How will I be involved in discussions about and planning for my child's education?**

Either as your child joins the school, or indeed at any point where needs are identified, all parents/carers of SEND students will be expected to work closely with us. We will talk with you and organise an appropriate programme, strategy or simply monitor progress. Your views will always be listened to as we continue to work cooperatively with all parents/carers in making key decisions for your child.

In the primary phase, particularly on entry to Reception, we recognise that parents are a child's first and most important educators. Therefore, we aim to work in partnership with parents - on a daily basis through contact with the class teacher. Where plans are needed, meetings can be arranged with the class teacher, primary SEND lead and/or phase leader as appropriate.

During Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, parents will be involved in a number of ways, both in terms of educational progress but also in terms of future planning. Each parent/carer will meet with a senior member of staff to discuss options and curriculum provision at transition points. We use "Connexions" to help us with this work, particularly as your child moves through KS4. If your child has an EHCP the annual review is a key meeting to review needs.

If a student has SEND and is enrolled on one of our sixth form programmes, Our Sixth Form Manager and Head of Sixth Form are always available to our students and parents to discuss progress, educational concerns and next steps. Specialist staff are available 1:1 to guide students and parents through the UCAS process, apprenticeships and gaining employment.

#### **10. How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom including school trips?**

Simon Balle is an inclusive school and we ensure that all children can access trips and other extra-curricular activities such as our extensive selection of lunchtime and after-school clubs. Some children or young people who have SEND needs may require a "risk assessment" to be made if they are able to attend events off site or residential activities. This would be shared with parents.

#### **11. How accessible is the school environment?**

The school tries to ensure that the campus is accessible to all students. We have a lift to access upper storey classrooms and there are disabled toilet facilities. Key markings feature visibly around the school for visually impaired students and relevant policies are on our website.

The primary building was built in 2014 and thus is light, airy, with wide corridors and a lift. However most of the buildings and rooms on the secondary site are at least 50 years old and at times this can be challenging. We endeavour to ensure that the buildings are accessible; we therefore encourage all parents considering the school for a secondary place, to visit.

#### **12. Who can I contact for further information?**

The SENDCo (From September 2021) is Helen Witty ([wittyh@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:wittyh@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)) and our SEND Manager is Philippa Craik ([craikp@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:craikp@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)) If your child is in the primary phase, in the first instance discuss with the class teacher or Mrs Kirk (Vice Principal-[Kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:Kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)) or Mrs Hall (Primary SEND lead, [Halld@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:Halld@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)), who will signpost you to the appropriate person. All children, including those with SEND thrive when teaching and learning is of the highest

quality, so please contact your child's teacher(s) regarding their academic learning and their Head of Year for more general issues.

If you are not happy with our provision, please contact us at school to sort this out as soon as possible. We usually find that problems and concerns are best discussed face to face. If resolution is not possible, the last resort is the Complaints Policy. We would hope that communication of any issue would be held straight away so that solutions could be found immediately.

### **13. How will the school prepare and support my child to join the school, transfer to a new school or the next stage of education and life?**

We manage all transition phases in consultation with providers and parents/carers. We organise a personalised programme for each SEND child or young person so that you are familiar with the new setting, prior to the official transition. This will include a tour of the school, meeting new key staff and a meeting with parents to discuss needs. The child is usually visited in their prior setting and there is close communication between professionals. Those with SEND moving on from Simon Balle post 14, will be supported by our implementation of 14- 19 Preparing for Adulthood Young Person's Transition Plan led by the 'Connexions' service. Specialist staff are available 1:1 to guide students and parents through the UCAS process, apprenticeships and gaining employment.

### **14. How are the school's resources allocated and matched to young people's special educational needs?**

At each stage of the child's educational journey we review with parents the needs of the young person. Many parents choose Simon Balle All through School because of its ethos- high quality teaching and learning, coupled with a deep sense of caring and dignity for all. Whilst we do from time to time withdraw children and young people from the classroom and we do employ a number of specialised teaching assistants and mentors, most children thrive in the classroom, having access to adults but not being over-directed in their learning. We have high but realistic expectations and aspirations for all of our students and we expect a level of independence from all. We value our teaching assistants, buy specialised resources, allocate time to certain students for personalised programmes and train staff to meet needs.

From September 2020, EHCPs will be moderated and banded centrally in Hertfordshire to determine a level of funding. We will work with parents if additional resource is given to look at the best way to allocate said resource. Those children and young people with complex needs, as identified within an EHCP may receive small group interventions or from time to time, one to one provision, outside of the normal class curriculum. For others, the resources may be used to develop other skills (for example music lessons), attend social opportunities or purchase a specific learning aid.

**15. How is the decision made about how much support my child will receive?**

The decision on how much support is a very serious and important one. This will be discussed with parents/carers. We will use our professional judgements, external advice and also the child's views, alongside those of parents/carers to put together a plan. However we always take a flexible and realistic approach for often high support is initially needed but following a review it may need to be changed.

At Simon Balle we have very high expectations for all students. We believe that all students, regardless of their SEND needs should make good educational progress. We do not believe in a "fixed mind-set" of "I can't do this!" We will academically challenge all students and ensure that they develop those skills of resilience, independence and a "can do" attitude, which will equip them well for the wider world.

**16. How can I find information about the local authority's Local Offer of services and provision for young people with special educational needs and disability?**

Local authorities must publish a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. The Hertfordshire Local Offer can be accessed on the following link:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/the-hertfordshire-local-offer.aspx>