

Consultation on Draft Regulations for the Training of Newly Appointed Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in England

A briefing

Background

In 2006, the Education and Skills Committee Third Report proposed that schools should be required to follow the SEN Code of Practice recommendations in regards to SENCOs – that all SENCOs should be qualified teachers, receive appropriate training, and be part of the senior management team. The Government accepted in its response to the report that “the person taking on the lead responsibility [for SEN] should be a teacher and a member of the senior leadership team in the school” and committed “to make regulations relating to the role, responsibilities, experience and training required.¹”

One set of regulations from 2008² has already established that:

- From September 2009, all SENCOs must be a qualified teacher. The only exception to this rule is a SENCO with over six months experience who can be reasonably be expected to become a qualified teacher within two years of September 2009.

The draft regulations currently under consultation can be seen in the context of this commitment to upgrading the role and skills of SENCOs.

The Draft Regulations

The draft regulations currently under consultation address the training requirements for new or very inexperienced SENCOs. They state that:

- From September 2009, any SENCO with less than a year’s experience has three years in which to attain the new SENCO qualification. Any new SENCOs must also attain this qualification.
- The qualification is expected to take one year on a part-time basis. Money has been set aside by the DCSF for schools to pay for training and cover.

Comments

¹ Government Response to the Education and Skills Committee report on Special Educational Needs (October 2006)

² Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008

- The regulations are essentially making Code of Practice recommendations a statutory duty which must be a positive step. The £25 million earmarked by DCSF for the programme over the first two years of its operation is also to be welcomed.
- The Government supports the principle that the SENCO should be in the senior leadership team (SLT) of the school. However, there is no statutory definition of an SLT and the Government has chosen not to strengthen the Code of Practice recommendations in either set of regulations. Is there more that could be done to strengthen the SENCOs position?
- The Code of Practice recommendation is to set the costs of a SENCO against the core or base budget rather than the resources set aside for SEN provision. Perhaps this principle should extend to SENCO training as well, and that this should be made clear as the scheme moves forward.

Consultation questions

- Is the system for training SENCOs clear?
- Is the period of latitude of up to three years for gaining the SENCO qualification reasonable and helpful?
- Any other comments?

Consultation closes: Friday 22 May 2009

To view the regulations go to:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1615&external=no&menu=1>