

Adapting the Seven Areas of Effective Practice to Support SEND Children



Introduction

The seven areas of effective practice can be adapted to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). By focusing on strengths-based approaches and responsive teaching, educators can create environments where all children thrive. These adaptations support the development, wellbeing, and learning of every child, ensuring equitable opportunities for success.

1. Relationships and Communication

Strong, trusting relationships are essential for supporting SEND children. Strategies include consistent adult support, the use of visual aids, social stories, and alternative communication systems such as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Makaton. These tools help build emotional safety and trust, enabling children to engage confidently in their learning environment.



2. Curriculum and Pedagogy

Curriculum and pedagogy should be flexible and inclusive. Differentiation, multi-sensory learning experiences, scaffolding, and flexible pacing are key strategies. Valuing the process of learning over the final product encourages creativity and supports diverse learning needs.



3. Assessment and Planning

Effective assessment for SEND learners involves the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle. Holistic assessment methods and collaboration with families and specialists are vital. Tracking developmental progress rather than relying solely on age-based expectations ensures that each child's growth is accurately supported and celebrated.



4. Environment and Resources

Learning environments should be sensory-aware and structured to support SEND learners. This includes the use of visual cues, calm zones for regulation, and accessible, adaptive materials. Examples include textured seating, noise-cancelling headphones, and clearly labeled storage to promote independence and reduce anxiety.



5. Professional Collaboration

Supporting SEND children requires co-production between educators, SENCOs, therapists, and families. Regular multidisciplinary meetings and shared strategies ensure a consistent and unified approach to meeting each child's needs.



6. Wellbeing and Behaviour

A trauma-informed approach to wellbeing and behaviour is essential. Emphasizing emotional literacy, positive reinforcement, and self-regulation strategies helps children feel safe and supported. Sensory integration activities can further assist in managing behaviour and promoting emotional balance.



7. Leadership and Professional Development

Inclusive leadership is key to embedding SEND support across educational settings. Ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) focused on neurodiversity and adaptive teaching, along with modelling inclusive values, fosters a culture of acceptance and continuous improvement.





Summary Table

Area of Practice	Key Adaptation	Benefit for SEND Learners
Relationships & Communication	Visual aids, consistent adults, AAC, Makaton	Emotional safety and engagement
Curriculum & Pedagogy	Differentiation, sensory-rich learning, scaffolding	Access and independence
Assessment & Planning	Holistic, cyclical review, family collaboration	Responsive progress tracking
Environment & Resources	Structured, sensory-aware spaces	Focus and regulation
Professional Collaboration	Co-production with families and specialists	Unified, consistent support
Wellbeing & Behaviour	Trauma-informed, positive reinforcement	Emotional resilience
Leadership & Development	Inclusive CPD and modelling	Sustainable whole-school inclusion

Conclusion

Adapting the seven areas of effective practice ensures that children with SEND are supported in meaningful, inclusive, and empowering ways. By embedding these adaptations into everyday practice, educators foster a culture of belonging, equity, and continuous learning for all children.