

Annex Two

SENCo Career Pathway

1. ASCL believes that the SENCo role should be a senior leadership role.
2. The SENCo has a critical role to play in ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities within a school receive the support they need. The SENCo has an important role to play with the headteacher and governing body in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision and will be most effective if they are part of the school leadership team.
3. The SENCo role has developed since 2014 to be a strategic leadership role rather than an operational one.
4. The role of a SENCo or a specialist teacher in Alternative Provision (AP) or Special Schools should be a job that mainstream teachers aspire to. Working with students who find learning hardest should be a peak professional goal.
5. The SENCo needs to have time to carry out their duties. The Code of Practice states the SENCo should have 'sufficient time and resources to carry out these functions. It's hard to be precise about the amount of time a SENCo will need to carry out their duties as every school is different.
6. There will be varying numbers of children identified as having SEN at each school. What is clear is that anything less than a working day each week in any school setting would be too little for the role to be carried out effectively. In most cases much more time is needed. The SENCo survey 2018 provides useful guidance relating to school size.
7. The progress of SENCo to headship or CEO role needs articulating based on expertise of strategic support for the most vulnerable students in the school.
8. The NPQ for SENCo will go some way to the links being made, but again need to be mindful of unintended consequences; SENCo role is one that needs longevity, sustained practice etc. What about those SENCos who want to stay in the role - how can this be encouraged and rewarded? For example, Senior leaders, including Heads and CEOs who have experienced of strategic leadership of the education and provision for the most vulnerable students as SENCos are well placed to ensure that strategic school improvement and development positively impacts on all pupils. Supporting the career progression and leadership development of SENCos so that they can move onto headship and CEO positions will benefit the wider system.
9. In smaller schools incentivising SENCos to want to stay in the role and develop as senior SENCos, strategic leads, Heads of Inclusion etc. - almost like an 'Advanced Skills Teacher' route for SENCos so that we don't lose all the expertise and from here, this could be a springboard into headship.
10. For families of schools or trusts, we are increasingly seeing the development of inclusion teams. It's important we incorporate specialist roles eg. speech and language therapist or Educational Psychologist. Equally important is that the trust-wide role is senior and strategic, playing an active role in the academic and pastoral leadership role. It should not become a role viewed as line manager of specialists and support staff.
11. ASCL members tell us that in Multi Academy Trusts senior leadership roles such as Director of Inclusion are increasingly being developed. These senior and strategic roles should be part of a clear progress route to CEO positions. Within these new models the SENCos work

alongside strategic leaders, DHTs, Heads and CEOs. These newly emerging organisational structures identify a career pathway where the NPQEL is a relevant professional development route for SENCoS who understand school inclusion as integral and not disconnected from the other pressures and challenges school leaders face.

Questions

- i. How do we ensure that SENCoS on the leadership scale come with time protections?
- ii. Where there is a disproportionate uplift in pay increase for teachers vs leaders how do we incentivise uptake of the SENCo role; if we want people who have the skills to be strategic leaders we need to be able to attract strong candidates.
- iii. How do we ensure pay progression for SENCoS e.g. enough of a range of point scale so that there is uplift as they become more experienced e.g. L6 - L10?

Career pathways could look like this.

In a School:

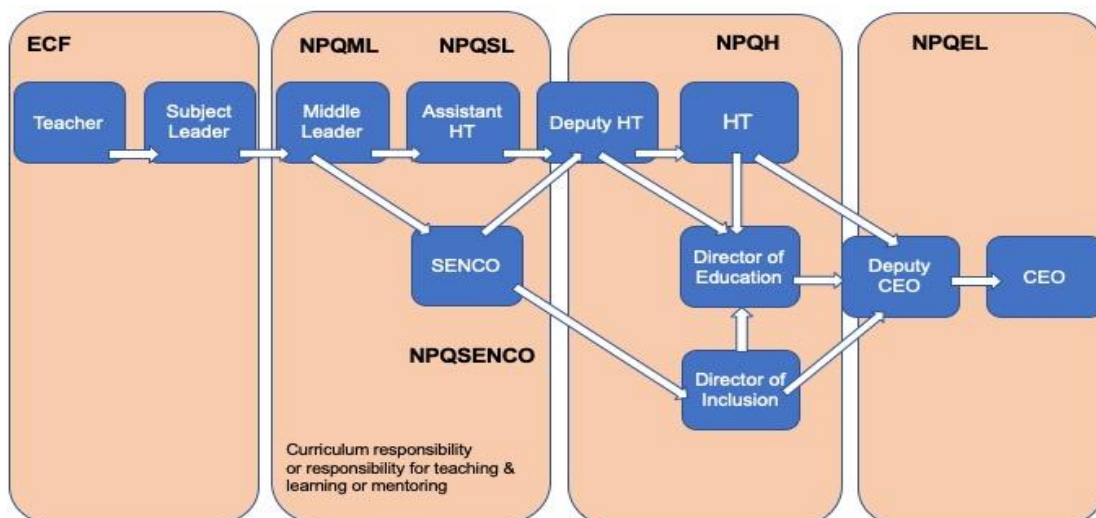


In a Trust/group of schools:



(Above are simplistic representations of multiple pathway options that will be context specific i.e. look different in a small primary to a large secondary to a group of schools)

In a framework with qualifications



Evidence¹

12. The proportion of primary phase SENCOs receiving additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role has increased to 70% of SENCOs. However, the proportion of primary phase SENCOs represented on the senior leadership team (SLT) has decreased to around 2/3 (68%). The proportion of secondary phase SENCOs receiving additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role has increased to almost 78%. This corresponds with an increase in the proportion of secondary phase SENCOs represented on the SLT, which is just over 1/3 (34%). This indicates that a SENCO in a primary school is twice as likely to be part of the SLT than a SENCO in a secondary school, but they are less likely to receive any additional pay for undertaking the role.
13. The proportion of SENCOs citing workload as the main reason for considering leaving the role has reduced significantly between 2018 and 2020 at both the primary phase (52% to 27%) and the secondary phase (54% to 35%). However, progress in this area is too slow, with over a quarter of SENCOs in each of these phases still stating this specific issue as a reason for leaving the role.
14. The proportion of SENCOs completing the National Award for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordination (NA SENCO) is increasing and currently stands at 87% for the primary phase and 91% for the secondary phase.

¹ [NATIONAL SENCO WORKFORCE SURVEY 2020: TIME TO REVIEW 2018-2020](#)