

SENCO Briefings

Summer Term 2026

Agenda

1. Curriculum Pathways Project Overview including Toolkit Tracker Implementation Project
2. Preparing the workforce: Exploring the transition from four area of need to five areas of development

Birmingham's Curriculum Pathways Project

Terri Cawser

Team Lead for the Language, Learning and Strategic Support Team (LL&SS)

Terri.cawser@birmingham.gov.uk

Curriculum Pathways Project

Aim: Support schools in Birmingham to plan and deliver inclusive curriculum pathways.

Purpose:

To give schools a consistent city-wide approach to curriculum pathway design, implementation and review, with clearer expectations for pupils who need adapted content, provision and progression routes.

High level actions:

- Develop a clear, city-wide framework around curriculum pathways which promotes transition between and within settings, and between curriculums
- Provide practical workforce development in curriculum design, delivery and monitoring, informed by an audit of staff knowledge and expertise – which includes the Toolkit Tracker Project
- Develop a reflective framework for resource base and enhanced provisions
- Support parental engagement regarding curriculums

Overview of areas in the Curriculum Pathway Plan

Gathering Evidence of What Works through immersive school visits and case studies

Transition - Identification of transition practices in relation to Curriculum Pathways

Parental communications - Curriculum Pathways

Develop a clear-city wide framework around curriculum pathways

Develop a Reflective Framework to support resource base provision and enhanced provision/ inclusion hubs

Implementation of the Birmingham Toolkits (including the Online Toolkit Tracker) to support curriculum pathways

Workforce Development - Identification of skills related to Curriculum Pathways

Workforce Development - Developing Practical CPD to support curriculum pathways

Workforce Development - Developing expertise in leading on curriculum pathways

Leadership Systems - Mapping how subject leaders support curriculum pathways (planning for)

System Leadership - Ensuring that curriculum pathways work is known to all and understood by all partners

Gathering Evidence of What Works through immersive school visits and case studies

Phase 1: visits and case studies are being used to capture effective curriculum pathway practice and turn it into usable examples, implementation insight and toolkit content.

Why?

Phase 1 needs real examples of what strong curriculum pathway practice looks like in different settings. Visits help test the framework in practice and identify what is transferable, scalable and worth sharing across the system.

How?

Reference group members and partners are identifying host settings, agreeing visit questions and capturing case study evidence. Findings are being used to shape the toolkit, practical examples and next-step implementation support.

Progress so far:

Settings are being identified and initial visit/case study activity is underway, with outputs feeding into the wider Phase 1 toolkit and implementation planning.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted highlights first-hand evidence, professional dialogue and honest self-evaluation as the basis for continuous improvement. This work supports SEND reform by using visits and case studies to identify what works in practice and share it more consistently across the system.

Transition - Identification of transition practices in relation to Curriculum Pathways

Phase 1: focusing on transition work on how learners move between curriculum pathways, phases and provision types. The workstream is identifying core principles, practical tools and partner actions so transitions are planned consistently across primary, secondary, resource base and enhanced provision contexts.

Why?

Transition arrangements are variable across settings and often focus on phase transfer only. Phase 1 is testing how transition can better reflect curriculum pathway changes, learner readiness, environment changes and family experience.

How?

Map current practice through visits, reference group discussion and partner feedback; identify effective approaches already in use; and draft a shared set of transition principles, prompts and examples to align with the wider curriculum pathways framework.

Progress so far:

Evidence is being gathered through visits and partner discussion, with themes on pathway transition and planning starting to emerge for the Phase 1 framework.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted highlights the importance of strong transition planning for pupils with SEND, including preparing them well for next steps. SEND reform also stresses earlier planning and smoother movement between phases and types of provision, with clearer support for families and settings.

Parental Communications

Phase 1: workstream to strengthen how schools explain curriculum pathways, provision and support for families through clearer, more consistent communication.

Why?

Families need clearer information about what curriculum pathways mean in practice, what support is ordinarily available, and how decisions are made. Stronger communication should build confidence, reduce misunderstanding and support better partnership with schools.

How?

Use Phase 1 parent engagement and reference group feedback to identify priority messages, review current school-facing materials, and develop concise guidance/templates that schools can adapt for local use. Work will link to the wider curriculum pathways framework and implementation toolkit.

Progress so far:

Parent engagement approach and priority themes are being scoped for Phase 1; communication materials and guidance are still to be developed.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted expects schools to work closely with parents, include their views and explain support clearly for pupils with SEND. This aligns with SEND reform's focus on clearer communication, greater transparency and stronger family confidence in ordinarily available provision and decision-making.

Develop a clear-city wide framework around curriculum pathways

Phase 1: shaping a shared city-wide curriculum pathways framework, drawing together agreed principles, delivery expectations and practical exemplification for schools, resource bases and enhanced provision. Current work is focused on drafting the framework, testing content with partners and aligning it to wider SEND reform priorities.

Why?

To give schools a consistent city-wide approach to curriculum pathway design, implementation and review, with clearer expectations for pupils who need adapted content, provision and progression routes.

How?

Led through the Phase 1 workstream with LL&SS and sector partners, using reference group review, school and resource base visits, case study capture and iterative drafting to agree framework content and implementation tools.

Progress so far:

Draft scope and core principles established through Phase 1 planning.
Reference group engagement and partner feedback are in progress.
Visit evidence and exemplars are being gathered to inform the next draft.
Next milestone: refine and socialise the framework with early adopters.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms:

Ofsted expects an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum with effective adaptations and high expectations for pupils with SEND. SEND reform reinforces clearer ordinarily available provision and more consistent practice across schools, resource bases and enhanced provision.

Develop a Reflective Framework to support resource base provision and enhanced provision and Inclusion Hubs

Phase 1: developing a reflective framework for Birmingham resource bases and enhanced provision, aligned to curriculum pathways, quality assurance and practical improvement planning.

Why?

Schools need a clearer shared benchmark for what strong resource base and enhanced provision looks like. The framework supports more consistent practice, stronger self-review and better planning for pupils with SEND.

How?

Using QA visits, reference group feedback and examples from existing resource bases and enhanced provision, the team is defining key principles, reflective prompts and practical indicators for schools to use.

Progress so far:

- Visit and QA evidence gathered from Birmingham provision.
- Themes and quality indicators are being collated and refined.
- Draft framework content is in progress for testing through Phase 1.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms:

Ofsted highlights inclusive leadership, clear quality assurance and reasonable adjustments, with leaders expected to review the impact of provision for pupils with SEND. SEND reform also points to stronger, more consistent specialist and enhanced provision, linked to local inclusion and evidence-informed improvement.

Workforce Development - Identification of skills related to Curriculum Pathways

Phase 1: mapping the core knowledge, skills and behaviours needed across curriculum pathways roles, with audit tools to help schools identify strengths, gaps and priority development needs.

Why?

Consistent workforce expectations are needed so leaders can plan provision well, target CPD and recruit staff with the right skills for pathway delivery.

How?

Role-based skills sets and self-audit tools are being drafted through the Phase 1 workstream, then tested with schools to inform CPD priorities, workforce planning and future recruitment materials.

Progress so far:

Priority roles and draft skills framework identified; audit approach now being refined with reference group input and school testing.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted expects staff to have the expertise to identify need early, adapt teaching and apply the graduated approach well. SEND reform reinforces the need to define and strengthen the knowledge and skills mainstream staff need so support is more consistent and needs are met earlier.

Workforce Development - Developing Practical CPD to support curriculum pathways

Phase 1: CPD is organising existing Birmingham offers into a practical development pathway linked to curriculum pathways, adapted planning and classroom implementation. Priority strands include the SEND Toolkit, High Quality Teaching, Engagement Model and AET, with sequencing for rollout and gap analysis underway.

Why?

Schools need a clear and consistent development offer so staff can plan, teach and review adapted curriculum pathways with confidence across settings.

How?

Phase 1 uses existing programmes and tools, aligns them to the workplan, confirms lead owners, and identifies any gaps needing new CPD or stronger implementation support.

Progress so far:

NEN and other core offers continue to run.

Phase 1 mapping of CPD to curriculum pathways is in progress.

Owners and sequencing are being confirmed through the workplan.

Gap analysis for additional CPD is underway.

Next step: publish the Phase 1 sequence and milestone dates.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted highlights evidence-informed professional learning that builds staff expertise to deliver an inclusive curriculum with high-quality teaching and effective adaptation for pupils with SEND. SEND reform also expects mainstream settings to be better supported to meet need through stronger workforce capability and more consistent practice.

Workforce Development - Developing expertise in leading on curriculum pathways

Phase 1: strengthening leadership expertise so school and system leaders can apply curriculum pathways with confidence, align practice across settings, and support inclusive decision-making.

Why?

Leaders need shared expertise to make consistent pathway decisions, support staff, and connect curriculum intent with provision, outcomes, and accountability.

How?

Develop leadership input through workstream leads, reference group discussion, practical exemplification, and linked CPD so headteachers, SEND leaders, and subject leaders can test and refine the approach.

Progress so far:

Leadership strand and linked support offer are being scoped through Phase 1 workstreams; early content is emerging, with wider implementation to follow.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted expects leaders and governors to use evidence-informed professional learning to strengthen inclusive provision and improve outcomes for pupils with SEND. SEND reform also expects leaders to build mainstream confidence and greater consistency, so curriculum pathway decisions are well led across schools and services.

System Leadership - Ensuring that curriculum pathways work is known to all and understood by all partners

Phase 1: workstream to align education, health and care partners around a shared curriculum pathways message, clear roles and agreed ways of working.

Why?

Partners need a common narrative on curriculum pathways so schools and families hear consistent advice. This reduces mixed messages and supports clearer decision-making across the system.

How?

Use the reference group and workstream leads to agree key messages, identify system leaders across education, health and care, and test communications through Phase 1 activity and partner feedback.

Progress so far:

Partner mapping and shared messaging are being developed through the reference group; wider rollout and consistent use across agencies are the next Phase 1 steps.

Link to Ofsted and SEND Reforms: Ofsted highlights the importance of strong multi-agency working and partnership to improve outcomes for pupils with SEND. The SEND reforms reinforce the need for joined-up education, health and care systems with shared messages, clear responsibilities and consistent communication about curriculum pathways.

Progress so far...

- Completed 34 QA visits to Resource Bases Schools to feed into the Reflective Framework
- Formed a Reference Group.
- Completed 3 immersive schools visits outside of Birmingham
- Built a HQT offer alongside the EEF
- Created and started delivery of a programme of CPD underpinning the Curriculum Pathways project
- Completed the first part of the Toolkit Tracker implementation project
- Facilitated sessions with settings to understand what settings view as knowledge that informs their curriculum offer.
- Developed consistent understanding of key accountability guidance for schools relating specifically to curriculum design and pupil outcomes (e.g. curriculum, primary and secondary accountability measures, Ofsted framework, Children and Families Act etc)
- Mapped out published ACs with links to age /stage/ development aspects in order to be helpful to guide further developments around successful transition between phases and educational offers (pathways)

Birmingham Toolkit Progress Tracker Implementation Project

Offer to all Birmingham Schools:

- Continue free access to the Birmingham Toolkits
- Provide free access to the online Toolkit Progress Tracker
- Provision of free training to support effective use and implementation

Why now?

- Evidence of impact from DLP projects
- Underpins the Curriculum Pathways Project
- Aligns with New Ofsted Framework

Implementation Plan

Activity	Duration	Audience
Introductory information sharing roadshow	10-15 mins	All Head Teachers
Activity for Identified Consortia	Duration	Audience
Webinar: Key Information about toolkits and project	1 hour	Headteachers & SENCo
Consortia training on effective implementation of toolkits and myth busting	1 day	SENCOs, SLT? Assessment Leads? English/Maths/Curriculum Leads?
Consortia training on use of TPT	½ day	SENCOs, SLT? Assessment Leads? English/Maths/Curriculum Leads?

For more information regarding the Curriculum Pathways Project contact:

Terri Cawser

Terri.cawser@birmingham.gov.uk

For more information regarding the Toolkit Tracker Implementation Project:

Lisa McIntyre

Lisa.mcintyre@birmingham.gov.uk



Preparing the workforce for SEND Reform

- Exploring the transition from **four area of need to five areas of development**
- What this might mean for inclusive practice, workforce development and staff confidence



HM Government

SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

Government Consultation



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST



Birmingham
City Council

Why is this being proposed?

The consultation states that the refreshed areas of development aim to:

“support educators to understand and address barriers to learning and participation”

The proposals also aim to:

- strengthen inclusive practice
- support earlier identification
- **create a shared language across education**
- connect more clearly to classroom strategies

Current and proposed framework

Current 4 Areas of Need

Communication & Interaction

Cognition & Learning

Social, Emotional & Mental Health

Sensory & Physical



Breakout Room Activity

Discussion:

How “areas of development” will support educators to understand and address barriers to learning and participation?

Self-reflection to take away

- What may become the biggest workforce development priority within your own setting?
- What support would help you lead this well?

Birmingham Workforce Development:

- Showcases from schools/settings
- Digital library resources
- Webinars and CPD
- Collaborative etworks
- Experts at Hand support

Thank you and Feedback

SENCO Briefings (Summer 2026)
Feedback Survey

