

*Cognition and Learning Team
West Street House
West Street
Newbury
RG14 1BZ*

**Proposal to Restructure CALT
A Response from the Cognition and Learning Team**

Dear Ian,

The Cognition and Learning Team would like to express their concerns regarding the impact of the proposed restructuring of our service. We would be grateful if this letter could be shared with the Schools Forum at their next meeting on 12th March. As knowledge and understanding of Special Educational Needs, and cognition and learning grow, professionals are better skilled than ever at assessing need and tailoring the learning environment to realise the potential of children and young people experiencing difficulties making progress in school. Current figures (January Census, reported in July 2017) indicate that nationally, 13.5 % of primary age children and 12.4% of secondary age pupils have SEN. Local authority figures are broadly in line and as such, every individual West Berkshire school will have significant numbers of children with SEND, both already identified or in need of identification.

As can be seen from the table below, by far the largest SEN categories are Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SCLN). Together, these categories represent 46.8% of all those children and young people on the Special Needs Register in West Berkshire. It is the Cognition and Learning Team who are best placed to support schools in mainstream SEND provision for pupils with SpLD. Added to this, such is the co-occurrence of speech and language difficulties and poor literacy skills, that we are often called upon to advise and support a considerable proportion of this second largest group of pupils on the SEN register. In fact, it is not unusual to be involved with pupils from any of the other groups; literacy and numeracy is important to everyone. CALT is the only team of experienced primary and secondary classroom teachers with post graduate qualifications in SEN and SpLD. There is no other team with the same level of expertise in supporting pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties within the local authority.

Table to show the composition of SEND in West Berkshire Schools

SpLD	24.1%
MLD	8.6%
SLD	3.7%
PMLD	0%
SEMH	15.3%
SCLN	22.7%
HI	3.7%
VI	0.9%
MSI	0.3%
PD	2.9%
ASD	13.9%
Other	2.9%

The SEND Code of Practice (2014), among other things, sought to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all those who work with pupils with SEND. It sets out the duties of the SENCo as well as those of the class room teacher. This most recent Code of Practice places a duty on the classroom teacher to ensure that SEN provision is fully integrated into classroom practice, is of the highest quality and is implemented, monitored and evaluated in regular cycles. 'Every teacher is a teacher of SEN'. For many settings, this has been and continues to be a significant challenge. CALT is supporting SENCos, ENCos and class teachers in making this important transition, ensuring where ever possible that pupils will benefit from increased class room understanding and expertise. Some may not have developed the confidence or expertise to do this and it is our role as advisors to support and facilitate their continued professional development.

The SENCo role itself is particularly varied in our schools. The national picture sees 34% of SENCos also performing SLT roles combined with significant classroom teaching commitments. In smaller schools, against a backdrop of diminishing resources, Head teachers are likely to also hold the SENCo post. They will often express their concerns and frustrations at not being able to do enough for SEN within the school. Each school has its own challenges and character: We offer a bespoke and personalised service to each individual setting. The objective is to develop the SENCo's skill set so that they can continue to improve and enhance their SEND offering.

Historical evidence indicates that we are a valued service. Feedback from schools, (formal and informal), reflect the high quality service we provide. Committed to continued professional development, with nationally accredited qualifications, we are able to provide schools with up to date relevant and evidenced based information and resources. In the second year of trading we saw an increase in the number of schools choosing to buy back after a year without access to us. We are concerned that if schools cannot access the quality and expertise of our team they will be forced into a position of choosing services with no proven track record. It is vital that schools invest their time, effort and money wisely in order to raise attainment and close the gap for those pupils who are struggling to make adequate progress. The comment below is an example of the informal feedback team members receive.

'As the gates FINALLY close for the last time this year, I am emailing to thank you for all your support and guidance during the year. You remain a much needed and valued lifeline for [us] and we look forward to your productive visits throughout the year.'

WB Primary School

Alongside our commitment to developing the professional role of the SENCo, we are also able to support the strategic management of SEND within the school. We have developed an 'SEND Health check' which aims to work with SLT to identify strengths and areas for development. An Action Plan identifies priorities, and advice and support is given to the SENCo on how best to manage it. The following comment reflects the impact that the process had on this particular school.

(The process) '...helped us to pull together in a clear and concise fashion our strengths and weaknesses. It was then very straightforward to draw out an action plan. Involving governors with this process fully supported their understanding of SEND. The whole process felt supportive and at no point did it feel at all judgemental.'

WB Primary School

We are an able, competent and highly qualified team able to be flexible and adapt to meet the ever changing demands placed on our schools. Given capacity, we have the potential to further enhance our offering, such as our recent introduction of a formal dyslexia diagnosis assessment. Several pupils have already benefitted from this.

In summary, we are concerned about the possible consequences of the proposal to restructure CALT. Here are some examples of our concerns.

- The capacity of the team to maintain the level of involvement and support as outlined above would be seriously compromised.
- The number of pupils whose needs are addressed in a timely fashion at SENS level is likely to decrease. Difficulties may escalate and become more complex over time if not dealt with at an early stage. This in turn may lead to greater numbers of EHC Plan applications and increased costs draining precious resources from the High Needs Block.

- Waiting times for pupil assessments would be longer.
- The likelihood of longer turn round time for reports; therefore the pupil would have to wait longer before support was implemented.
- Fewer school visits.
- Reduced capacity for monitoring the quality of support, intervention and differentiation in the classroom.
- Diminished focus on raising standards and attainment, closing the gap between pupils with SEND and their peers, and the adverse social and emotional effects this would have upon the pupil.
- Loss of close working relationships with individual schools and all of the benefits a personal approach can bring.

The proposal to begin charging schools for placing pupils in LAL would:

- impact upon our service requiring more individual and bespoke programmes to be written with associated pre and post evaluations and modelling
- increase the necessity for additional in-school training in order to deliver bespoke one to one packages of intervention

Chapter 6 of the Code of Practice (2014) describes the actions that mainstream schools should take to meet their duties in relation to identifying and supporting children with SEND, whether they have an EHC Plan or not. It focuses on the right of every child and young person to receive an education that enables them to make progress.

Ultimately, our service plays a vital role in assisting schools to enable pupils with SEND to make a successful transition to adulthood. It is increasingly important that schools meet the needs of a modern society in producing literate, numerate and confident young people who achieve their best and are able to fully participate in and contribute to their community.

Yours sincerely,

Aue Whiting
C. Palmer

Hayley Gittins
/ ven vica

[Signature]

[Signature]

Cognition and Learning Team
21st February 2018