

SPOTLIGHT

on...SENCO



Q&A with Jill Aitken, Deputy Head (Students and Achievement)

Tourettes Action interviewed Jill Atkinson to find out how a SENCo can be of support to someone with Tourette Syndrome.

What is a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)?

The SENCo is a teacher whose role is to oversee and co-ordinate the provision for students with additional needs in a school. They offer support, advice and training to the staff. The majority of SENCos have undertaken additional training and hold a specialist qualification at Master's level. By law, all mainstream schools including Academies, free schools, university technical colleges and maintained nurseries are required to have a SENCo.

Would a SENCo be automatically notified if a child in their school has a diagnosis of TS?

Unfortunately the communication between health and education is sometimes not as effective as it could be. One of the issues is that of confidentiality. In order for parents to be sure that the school is aware they need to tell the clinician that they want them to contact the school. It would be helpful for the parents to provide

the contact details of the SENCo.

What kind of support might a SENCo provide for a child that has TS?

The support offered would be very dependent on the child's needs and wishes. They could provide physical help in terms of exit cards, i.e. an agreed prompt that allows a child to exit the classroom for to get some time out; somewhere quiet to go etc. They may organise emotional support from the pastoral system or ease the way for the child by talking to staff. The key is that the SENCO and parents talk and work together. Involving the child can be extremely helpful.

If parents have concerns about their child's school experience, i.e. lack of support, should they talk directly with the SENCo?

The SENCO is usually a fairly senior member of staff and so is ideally placed to address any issues that parents may have.

How does a parent request to see a SENCo?

The majority of schools would ask you to phone and make an appointment as the SENCO often has a teaching timetable of their own. Leaving a message saying what you would like to discuss will give the SENCO an opportunity to gather some relevant information from other staff.

Schools want the best for their students. Working in partnership is the best way to help all students, no matter what their needs. School children with Tourette Syndrome (TS) have the same IQ range as the population at large, but difficulties associated with TS may present additional challenges at school. Depending on how your child's TS affects them a range of support can be implemented to ensure they get the help they need.

About Jill Atken

Jill's teaching career has spanned from the late seventies until the present date. Her role as SENCO later developed into deputy head for inclusion.

Tourettes Action would like to thank Jill Aitken for her very helpful explanations to our questions

RESOURCES

We have lots of resources for parents and teachers to support children with TS in school. Please visit the Tourettes Action website.

www.tourettes-action.org.uk

Helpdesk phone: 0300 777 8427

Helpdesk email: help@tourettes-action.org.uk