

PORT·REGIS



Learning Support - A Journey through Education

Nikki Nathan

Head of Learning Support (SENDCo)

After completing a PGCE at Bath Spa University, Nikki began her teaching career in the state sector in Wiltshire before moving to All Hallows Prep School in Somerset where she taught children in Years 2-8. She became the SENDCo in 2013, gaining the National SENCo Award, and spent seven years leading the Learning Support department before arriving at Port Regis in 2020. Nikki is also qualified in psychometric testing, assessment, and exams access arrangements. Outside of school, she enjoys life on a military patch and spending

time with her horses and dogs.

An Introduction to SEND

The code of practice identifies four main areas of need for children with SEND:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional
- Mental Health, Sensory and Physical

Here at Port Regis, we are proud to have an incredibly strong Learning Support department, with the experience and expertise to support a range of mild to moderate needs in each of these four areas.

We are also proud to boast a warm and welcoming new department right in the heart of the main school building. It's filled with light, sofas, bean bags - and the odd dog or two!

Learning support at Port Regis isn't just about children coming to work with us on a 1-1 basis; it's about the understanding and support that they receive in the wider school from all staff. Supporting children with SEND is part of a proactive approach and not just an 'add on'. We pride ourselves on our exceptional pastoral care and excellent academic standards for all children, where the whole school body knows and understands each individual child and their needs. We also pride ourselves on excellent SEND provision and it's my job as the SENDCo to identify children with special educational needs in the school, track and monitor their progress, ensure there is high quality teaching and intervention for children with SEND, and develop the SEND provision in the school further. Being part of the Senior Leadership Team ensures that a voice for children with additional needs is always heard and considered at the highest level.

'All staff need to be aware of the children and what makes them 'tick''

A Positive and Supportive Environment

Your child's educational journey and support begins at the very start, during the admissions process. We work hard as a team to ensure that Port Regis is a good fit and can provide the necessary support for your child - not only to be part of our community, but to thrive in it. Alongside entry assessments (verbal and non-verbal reasoning papers), we collate school reports, talk to previous teachers and read detailed specialist assessment reports. We like to see the children in our school environment, to watch them interact with their peers and see them in action in the classroom, sports field or with specialist teachers. Talking to you, as their parents and the people that know them the best,

helps us to be informed and make decisions about the level and type of support they may benefit from and to ensure that Port Regis is the right school for their next educational stage.

Once a place has been offered, the learning journey begins. Working alongside you, we create an individual profile summary which is shared with all staff, and an agreed support package which may include 1-1 lessons, counselling and individual requirements. This summary outlines the child's strengths and areas for development, along with key strategies that staff should utilise in the classroom to enable the children to learn in a way that helps them; all staff need to be aware of the children and what makes them 'tick'.

Strong Relationships with Staff

Learning requires positive relationships and interactions between pupils and teachers, and we strive to consistently achieve this. Most often the strategies are personal and individual to the children, but slight adjustments made in the classroom, such as ensuring presentations are dyslexia friendly – pale backgrounds, sans serif fonts, wider line spacing and uncluttered slides - all help support children with specific learning difficulties. The use of technology is increasingly commonplace. Children use laptops with read aloud technology, scanning pens and audio versions of texts. We use Microsoft Teams where appropriate, to ensure wider access for learning in specific situations.

Each child's Pupil Profile summary also includes a strong pupil voice;



it's crucial that the children themselves can explain what is important to them and how best they feel they learn. A degree of input from the children helps them to view the support they may need in a positive way, and to understand themselves better as learners.

Exceptional Teaching and Learning

Pupils at Port Regis benefit from a range of staff expertise to support them in their learning journey and, indeed, our holistic view sets us apart from many other schools. Our Learning Support team are highly qualified and experienced in a range of areas related to supporting SEND children. They include three staff who have completed the ELSA (emotional literacy) training course and two dyslexia specialists.

Perhaps most importantly, our Learning Support department is seamlessly integrated into the wider school where the importance of quality first teaching is paramount: the most important in-school factor in improving outcomes for all children, including those with SEND, is effective teaching. Port Regis staff have regular opportunities to learn, develop and improve their understanding through regular CPD, whole school INSET training, the sharing of resources, peer observations, the sharing of latest research, and targeted courses. For SEND, we prioritise familiar, yet powerful, strategies like scaffolding (using teaching aids such as story maps, essay plans and word banks) and explicit instruction so that our SEND children are best supported in the classroom. As a SENDCo, I have embraced the current interest in cognitive science and how we

learn Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction' is a helpful summary of this research. Working memory, dual-coding, retrieval practice—these should all be familiar concepts to teachers of children with SEND and form the bedrock of our practice.

Bespoke Support

Their skills and experience are outstanding and extremely valuable in supporting progress. They share planning with the class teachers and regularly attend staff meetings to feed back their observations. Alongside this, they run clubs and form deep, trusting relationships with the children that they work with all the time fostering confidence and strong self-esteem. They supplement, rather than replace, teaching here at Port Regis.

Outside of the more traditional leaning support groupings, we also provide additional help to our military children, recognising that whilst they may not have any traditional learning support requirements, they often have other wellbeing needs which we are fully cognisant of. We have a "Dandelion Club" (named after the military child flower) which is an informal weekly drop-in games club, and a termly hot chocolate meet-up ensuring the children all know who each other are and build friendships across the year groups.

Needs, Diagnosis and a Graduated Approach

The process of identification of SEND begins early, if it hasn't already been identified during the admissions process. Research has shown that early identification is crucial to removing educational



barriers. At Port Regis, termly meetings are used to discuss pupil progress and wellbeing. From Nursery to E form (Year 4), each teacher outlines teacher assessment, standardised data and, through discussion, next steps are mapped out. After E Form we effect the same process through the Heads of Departments. Termly meetings take place with English and Maths Heads of Departments, too. We analyse data, ask questions of it and work to ensure that anomalies are highlighted, and next steps produced. We run the GL PASS survey once a year to identify wellbeing concerns and to take the guess work out of understanding why a child may be reluctant or disengaged from their learning. The guidance means that we can start to address issues immediately via tutors or the pastoral team.

The first step in our graduated approach requires teachers themselves to set targets related to the area of concern and monitor

the progress (we call this first step Wave 1). Often, what may benefit one child, is seen to benefit others and as such, we seek to use strategies that benefit everyone and become good practice. Follow-up meetings will determine how well these targets have been achieved. If the desired progress has not been met, the next steps involve small group work that is time bound (Wave 2). Frequently, we see gaps closed and children make good progress, but there are times when further assessment may be needed. At this stage, and in discussion with parents, we establish what type of assessment may be best. We have strong links with external specialists such as Speech and Language therapists, Occupational Therapists and Educational Psychologists who are all on hand to help, but we are always willing to recommend or work with parents to find other specialists if this is preferred.

‘Pupils with SEND profiles at Port Regis excel in all areas of school life’

Flexible and Individualised Learning

After this assessment, additional support is often recommended. This support varies in nature, from subject specific support and the minutia of learning to read and write, to general curriculum support, help with organisation or social and emotional support. We call this support ‘Wave 3’.

The children come to the Learning Support department for this 1-1 provision (our youngest children have their sessions within the Pre-Prep). As far as is possible, we try to timetable the 1-1 sessions to avoid playtimes and lunchtimes and, where we can, we try to accommodate everyone's timetable. This really is flexible and individualised learning. In order to monitor and track progress, the children have programmes of work that are co-written alongside key teachers and, importantly, all teachers can view the targets that are set for the term ensuring that the learning is being embedded and not just a skill learnt in isolation. These programmes are reviewed termly and sent to parents to view and discuss. We also use standardised data to monitor progress and termly reading, spelling scores and CAT scores are monitored both by the learning support department and by Heads of Departments. Our strong working relationships ensure that the progress of SEND children is always high on the radar.

Success Comes in Different Forms

Your child's journey through school evolves as they grow and progress and our ability to adapt to their needs is part of our provision. It is delightful to read and see the success stories of children who have passed through the department and school – those who have gone on to be scholars, perform on stage, run charity events, compete nationally in sports teams, play in concerts. The list goes on! It shows that pupils with SEND profiles at Port Regis excel in all areas of school life and that our passion and dedication to them as individuals helps them to achieve. Nothing makes us happier or prouder than that.

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