

Valuing SEND | ‘brings clarity to the graduated approach for staff and parents’

St Norbert’s Catholic Voluntary Academy in Spalding Lincolnshire have embedded the Valuing SEND tool into their day to day understanding and response to the needs of their SEND children. Valuing SEND is now the only tool they use for tracking and has been built into individual education plans, all SEND reviews and is routinely used by practitioners on the ground when supporting children in class.

St Norbert’s serves a diverse community with significant numbers of EAL children and families. The simplicity of the tool and its ability to provide a visual representation of need and support is strengthening the engagement of families in the SEND process. The head teacher has written to all parents about VSEND and used it to structure each child’s SEND review, asking parents to contribute in their own time.

“It is straightforward and captures all the information in a succinct, meaningful way. It’s enabled us to sit down with parents and say ‘We’ve tried this, but not explored these areas of support, so we’re not ready to apply for an EHC plan yet.’”

VSEND has contributed to the head teacher’s efforts to continue to promote wellbeing and a positive work/life balance in her staff team.



“It’s a lot less work and simple for the team to complete. Wellbeing is key to our school approaches.”

Making SEND everyone’s business

As the headteacher and SENDco, Jenna Withers has made inclusion a priority. She is building systemic strength in her team by making SEND everyone’s business. She has rolled out whole-staff Valuing SEND training, overhauled the children’s SEND folders to reflect the new VSEND language and offers supervision to all staff using VSEND to ensure high quality practice. She also makes the most of best practice, continually adapting how she is using VSEND depending on what is working. As a result of motivating her team, a teacher volunteered to use VSEND for an individual child with increasingly complex needs as a case study. She then shared the success of this case to engage others in her team, who now share her enthusiasm for VSEND. She gives each member of staff time to complete and evaluate the tools on a regular basis, time which many of them now do not need. She has recently been asked to support other local SENDcos through the Ask SALL mentoring initiative.

“Valuing SEND is simple and strategic. Its scale and statements provide information without jargon and this is crucial for getting parents on board. It really brings clarity to the graduated approach for staff and parents. I’ve only been using it since the start of the pandemic and it’s still been brilliant even though sharing virtually. When we are able to be face to face with families I imagine the benefits will be even better still.”

Valuing SEND | How have St Norbert's embedded the use of Valuing SEND?

Making SEND everyone's business	Making VSEND the 'norm'	Opportunities to be reflective	The strengths-based approach	Wellbeing and workload
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuing SEND is completed by all teachers regularly as part of their day-to-day SEND practice SENDco has oversight over the Valuing SEND tools and review process Time is dedicated to in-depth training in the use of VSEND and ongoing coaching provided by SENDco Staff are given time to complete VSEND tools for all the children with SEND in their care (2.5 hours each half term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Valuing SEND tool is used to structure all SEND review meetings Information about VSEND is on the school website and all SEND parents received a letter about its use in the review process The language used in Individual Education Plans has been changed to match VSEND for continuity with target setting The radar chart is routinely used to support all discussion with parents/carers of SEND children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities to be reflective are offered regularly to teachers using the tool, in the form of supervision Collaborative working on specific cases is encouraged in regular staff meetings Valuing SEND is used to focus discussion on need in order to plan better support Staff take a methodical approach to the tool, using the support prompts one at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting with one case, SENDco and teacher working closely together using VSEND and sharing the impact of that case with the wider team Asking each teacher to try it once, with coaching from the SENDco and discussing the impact Using insight from each new case to influence the overall approach, adapting practice accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuing SEND has replaced all other SEND tracking reducing workload significantly for teachers Providing in depth support and training to ensure teachers feel confident before replacing their usual methods of tracking Focusing on the radar chart to inform discussions about SEND rather than long winded paperwork shifts the conversation and opens up a creative working environment