

How to use ICT to support the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice

The SEN Code of Practice provides a framework for the process of identification and assessment of pupils' special educational needs (SEN). Through the Code schools are required to record details of the pupil's needs, the particular provision that is being made and the pupil's progress. To meet those needs there is likely to be regular communication with parents or carers, LEA support services and other agencies. ICT can be used to support the school in meeting their duties outlined in the Code of Practice in a number of ways. ICT can be used as a tool to:

- assess pupils' abilities
- assist in the administration of the SEN Code
- provide direct support for pupils with special educational needs
- access information, advice and support.

Using ICT to assess pupils' abilities

Regular assessment of pupils throughout their school life provides valuable information to inform teaching strategies. Software is available to assess pupils' strengths and weaknesses in basic skills (literacy and numeracy, and short-term memory) and identify pupils' particular learning modes. The benefit of these ICT-based systems is that the analysis of need is undertaken by the software and then presented in an easy-to-understand form, without the need for the teacher to spend time on detailed analysis.

Increasingly software has assessment and management facilities built in which detail how pupils are progressing with particular areas of the curriculum. Some schools are finding that integrated learning systems (ILS) are having positive results with pupils who have special educational needs. The management tools in these systems are also informing teaching strategies away from the computer.

Tip: Search on [Becta's Educational Software Database \[http://besd.becta.org.uk\]](http://besd.becta.org.uk) for 'Assessment' for the phase of education that you work in.

Using ICT to assist in the administration of the SEN Code

The computerised management information systems (MIS) increasingly used in schools enables them to collect information on a wide range of activities. The majority of these programs have a facility for recording details of pupils with special educational needs and facilities to assist the school,

teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator (Senco) in meeting the requirement of the Code. A number of programs are available to specifically support the Code process, particularly the target setting and monitoring identified in pupils' IEPs (Individual Education Plans).

A particular advantage of systems that work on a computer network is that they encourage all teachers to share responsibility for individual pupils' special needs and IEPs while still providing the Senco with an overview.

Tip: Look at the [management information software](http://www.becta.org.uk/slict/software/index.cfm?cat=3&name=sen) [<http://www.becta.org.uk/slict/software/index.cfm?cat=3&name=sen>] that can support SEN.

Using ICT to provide direct support for pupils

The starting point in deciding how ICT can support pupils in their work must always be the needs of the pupil. Effective assessment needs to be followed up with appropriate provision and the identification of resources and tools to achieve the objectives identified in pupils' IEPs.

Software and hardware can provide access to the computer for pupils with physical and sensory disabilities as well as specific programs to support access to the curriculum.

ICT can not only provide a tool for teachers so they can create individually differentiated learning materials for pupils, it can also, if used sensitively, support the inclusion of pupils with disabilities into everyday classroom activities. The following case studies give examples of ICT supporting both learning and inclusive practice.

[\[http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/sen/resources/casestudies/index.html\]](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/sen/resources/casestudies/index.html)

Using ICT to access information, advice and support

The development of the National Grid for Learning and government funding to provide Internet access to all schools has increased the availability of web sites offering information and advice on how teachers can support pupils with special needs. [The DfES SEN](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/) [<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/>] web site gives access to guidance on how to implement the Code of Practice and related developments. [The Inclusion site](http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/) [<http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/>] provides an on-line catalogue of resources to support inclusive education, many of which are specifically valuable for Sencos. Resources can be searched for by area of special need, curriculum, phase and material type.

The Internet also provides a powerful but easy way for teachers and other educational professionals to share information and advice on how they can meet pupils' special needs. The [senco-forum e-mail list](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/senfor.html) [<http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/senfor.html>], established soon after the original Code of Practice was implemented, is an active community of practitioners focusing on the day-to-day concerns of Sencos. The [SENIT e-mail list](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/bectalists.html) [<http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/bectalists.html>] specifically focuses on practical issues relating to the use of ICT with pupils who have special needs and provides access to those with expertise through working in specialist settings as well as software developers themselves. There is also a [range of disability-specific mailing lists](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/bectalists.html) [<http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/bectalists.html>] that you can join free of charge.

The Teacher Resource Exchange (TRE) [<http://tre.ngfl.gov.uk/>] provides teachers with a means of sharing advice and electronic learning resources. If you search the TRE using the term 'special educational needs' you will find files of use in supporting pupils in the classroom.