**GUIDANCE NOTE**

**Employment of Additional Learning Needs Coordinators**

**(SENCOs/ ALNCOs) in Catholic Schools in Wales**

This Note supplements the CES model contracts of employment for staff employed in a Catholic School or Academy.

The CES has not produced a model contract of employment specifically for a SENCO/ALNCO; the employment arrangements of SENCOs/ALNCOs is a matter for each individual school. We recommend that the CES Model Teacher contract is adapted as necessary through the Appendices and clause 6.3.2 (i.e. additional allowances).

The CES has produced this Note to assist schools/academies in drafting appropriate job descriptions and/or contracts of employment for SENCOs/ALNCOs.

**Outlook**

The Welsh government is in the process of transforming the current system to make it more inclusive. A similar initiative has been adopted in England through the introduction of new regulations.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A major development is the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs & Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (The Act). The Act is expected to come into force in September 2020 with an implementation period continuing until 2023.

The Act replaces the terms *special educational needs* and *learning difficulties* with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Those responsible for coordinating provision for children with ALN are to be referred to as ALNCOs. The terms ALN and ALNCO are increasingly being used in Wales, instead of SEN and SENCO.

Another key development is the creation of a single statutory plan known as the Individual Development Plan, which will replace the current system.

In reforming the current system and ensuring compliance with The Act, new statutory legislation, Code of Practice and guidance is anticipated.

**The Current Position**

Until the Act comes into force, schools should continue to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1996, having regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (The Code)[[2]](#footnote-2).

The Code has been effective since April 2002 and states that schools and early years providers should have regard to it. Although the Code is not binding, schools should take it into account when making decisions in relation to children with special educational needs (SEN).

While the Code emphasises a whole school approach, schools are required to appoint a person with dedicated responsibility for supporting children with SEN. This can be a Headteacher (or equivalent), which is likely to be more achievable in a smaller school.

The term Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is used to refer to the person with responsibility for coordinating the provision of support for all children with SEN. SENCOs have a strategic role within the school and are tasked with ensuring that the school’s SEN policy is properly implemented.

This includes coordinating the school’s approach to intervention through School Action and School Action Plus[[3]](#footnote-3). (This is relevant when a need has been identified for a child to receive further support).

**Appointment of a SENCO/ALNCO**

The Code sets out at length the responsibilities applicable to the SENCO/ALNCO. The Welsh Government has published a useful summary[[4]](#footnote-4) of the key duties in accordance with the Code which are as follows:

* *Overseeing the records of all learners with SEN but ensuring the relevant information about the individual is collected, recorded and updated.*
* *Liaising with and advising colleagues.*
* *Managing the SEN team of teachers and/or learning support assistants.*
* *Contributing to the professional development and training of staff.*
* *Ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of learners with SEN.*
* *Liaising with external agencies including the LA’s support and educational psychology services, health and social services, voluntary bodies and also Careers Wales for school-aged learners approaching post-16.*

Given the increasing challenges for the role of the SENCO/ALNCO, specifically prescribed qualifications are expected to be required when the Act comes into force.

1. See CES Guidance Note: *Employment of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) employed in a Catholic School or Academy.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales is extensive and can be accessed here:* [*http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf*](http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *ss5.43 to 5.73 of* *The Code* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Page 4 of guidance document published by the Welsh Education Directorate ‘*The role of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo)’*  [↑](#footnote-ref-4)