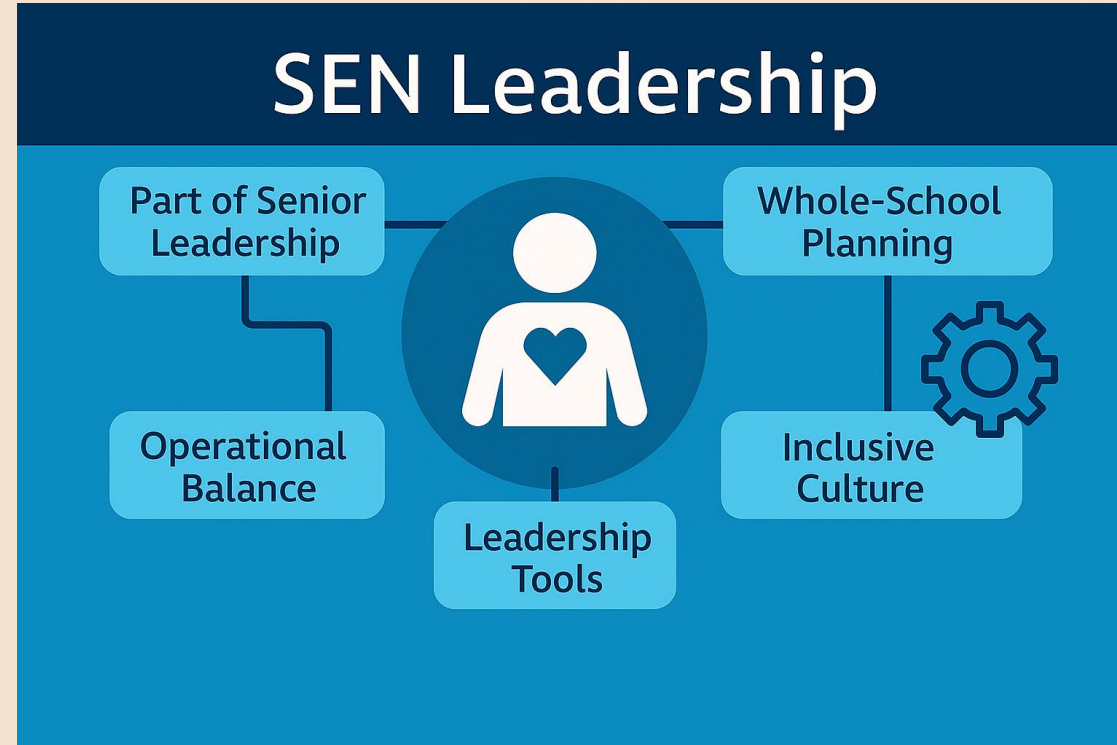


Leading Inclusion Strategically

What every SENCo needs to know this year



Louise Skinner & Russell Martin

Wednesday 30th September at 8.15am

If you have any questions about today or ideas for additional webinars to support you, please put them on the Q&A as we go

Welcome & Who we are

Strategic Leadership Focus

The webinar emphasizes shifting from operational to strategic SENCO responsibilities under statutory and local authority guidance.

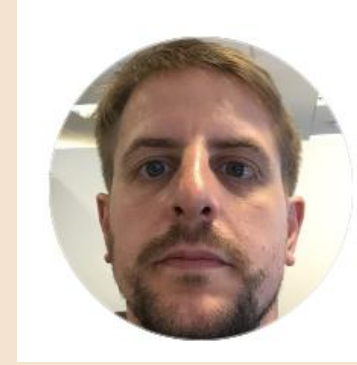
Collaborative Learning Approach

The session promotes active engagement, practical guidance, and reflective practice for building SENCO confidence.



Louise Skinner

- Assistant Headteacher & SENCo at Milton Court Primary Academy, part of Reach2
- Community of Schools Chair
- Inclusion Champion
- 14 years in primary teaching across all year groups



Russell Martin

- SEND Area Co-ordinator
- Line managing SEN IA's & HNF
- Previous Head of School & SENCo across a federation in South Kent

Purpose

"The role of the SENCo has never been more important. Today's session isn't about providing a list of updates. It's about identifying the developments, opportunities and priorities that should shape your strategic leadership this year."

By the end of this session, you will:

- ✓ Understand key national developments
- ✓ Understand Kent priorities and support available
- ✓ Identify strategic actions for your setting
- ✓ Reflect on how inclusion leadership drives whole-school improvement



Reflective question:

"How many of your days are spent firefighting rather than leading strategically?"

The SENCo as a Strategic Leader

Inclusion starts with leadership

Strategic SENCos:

- Influence school vision and culture
- Shape school improvement priorities
- Challenge barriers to inclusion
- Use evidence to drive decisions
- Work alongside SLT, governors and trusts
- Influence resource allocation

Key Question

Are you leading SEND provision, or leading inclusion across the whole school?



The National Picture

Three clear messages

Inclusion

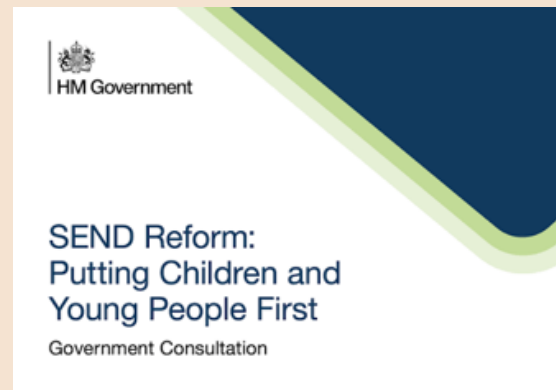
- Mainstream schools expected to meet a broader range of need
- Adaptive teaching at the heart of classroom practice
- Inclusion seen as a measure of school effectiveness

Attendance

- Increased focus on attendance of vulnerable groups
- Understanding barriers rather than monitoring percentages

Outcomes

- Focus moving beyond process towards:
- Progress
- Participation
- Belonging
- Preparation for adulthood



SEND Reform Plans

Key Proposals and Changes

- **New Tiered Support Model:** Replaces current SEN support with a layered structure featuring **Individual Support Plans (ISPs)** managed directly by schools.
- **Tiers of Support:** Includes targeted support (classroom adjustments), targeted plus (access to external specialists), and specialist support.
- **Restriction of EHCPs: Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)** will be scaled back and reserved only for children with the most complex and severe needs. ISPs carry less legal weight and are not appealable to the SEND Tribunal.
- **Mainstream Inclusion:** Backed by a £4 billion investment to improve mainstream school accessibility, staff training, and national inclusion standards.
- **Experts at Hand:** Local areas will provide better access to specialists like speech, occupational, and physiotherapists directly for schools.

Timeline and Implementation

- **Phased Rollout:** Full system implementation and transitions are planned through **2028 to 2030**.
- **Protections:** Current EHCP holders in mainstream settings will not transition to ISPs until at least 2030, and only during natural school phase transitions (e.g., primary to secondary).

What are we seeing across schools?

Common challenges

Leaders tell us they are seeing:

- Increasing complexity of need
- Rising demand on SENCo capacity
- Attendance concerns
- Growing parental expectations
- Pressure around EHCP processes
- Staffing and funding challenges

However...

- Schools making the greatest impact are focusing on inclusion first.



The Kent Perspective

Key priorities

- Delivering Kent's Inclusion Strategy
- Strengthening early intervention
- Graduated Approach implementation
- Building school-to-school collaboration
- Developing inclusive practice before escalation

Support Available

- Area SEND Coordinators
- PRG – STLS (early years, school based and sensory), SEN IA, EP, KPAS, Balance system
- Community of Schools – school to school support
- SEN Hub resources
- Kent strategic SEND leadership programme – webinars, early career support



The Power of Partnership

Nobody leads inclusion alone

Successful inclusion requires:

- School leaders
- Governors
- Teaching staff
- Families
- Health professionals
- Local authority teams - PRG
- Trust colleagues
- Community of school



Key message

- Strong partnerships create stronger outcomes.

Strategic Priorities for 2026-2027

Where should SENCos focus?

1. How can I be more strategic?
 - As a SENCo
 - As a school
2. Build an inclusive culture
3. Strengthen quality first teaching
4. Prioritise attendance and belonging
5. Use data strategically
6. Develop staff confidence and capability



Three actions for tomorrow...



What will you do first?

Action 1

- Review how inclusion features within your school improvement priorities.

Action 2

- Identify one barrier preventing pupils from belonging and thriving.

Action 3

- Schedule a strategic conversation with SLT about inclusion priorities for the year.

Useful resources and next steps

- [Leadership and SENCO toolkit | Whole School SEND](#)
- [SENCO Induction Pack: revised edition | Whole School SEND](#)
- [Inclusion – KELSI](#)
- [Locality Model for School Inclusion – KELSI](#) – CoS, PRG
- [Home page | Nasen](#)
- [Additional guidance on the mandatory requirements for SENCOs and schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Countywide SENCO forums
- [Kent County Council – Kelsi](#) – Director weekly Bulletin



Webinar series

Live at 8.15am
and recorded
(available a few days
after on KELSI)

Date	Title & Registration
30 September 2026	<u>What every SENCo needs to know this year</u>
8 October 2026	<u>Writing your inclusion strategy</u>
4 November 2026	<u>EHCPs: Getting the basics right</u>
24 November 2026	<u>Inclusion Funding</u>
9 December 2026	<u>Who can help? Integrating Experts</u>
14 January 2027	<u>Moving beyond individual interventions</u>
19 January 2027	<u>Making your funding work</u>
3 February 2027	<u>Stronger partnerships with families and wider services</u>
4 March 2027	<u>Consultation Process – what is it? What needs to be considered?</u>
29 April 2027	<u>Inclusion That Works: School Case Studies</u>
6 May 2027	<u>Annual Reviews: Improving Quality and Impact</u>
15 June 2027	<u>Ofsted, Inclusion and Demonstrating Impact</u>
8 July 2027	<u>Leading Inclusion: Planning for the Next Academic Year</u>

Thank you for your participation. The evaluation of this session is key to support further development and monitoring the effectiveness of these webinars.

