

Point of view: Six reasons why we need SEN support guides

*We need SEN guide books for parents and teachers more than ever before, argues **Jacqueline Haigh**.*

The world is becoming more inclusive. Our understanding of learning and processing differences is improving, and we recognise neurodiversity and the positives that neurodiverse people can offer to society. But nothing is new—people with learning and processing differences have always existed. Famous and outstanding individuals made their mark on history in many different fields, but the focus was rarely on their genetic differences, but rather on their achievements and accomplishments. Today we need to harness and support these neurological differences, and to celebrate the contribution which people who think and learn differently can offer society, be it as high achievers or for being uniquely themselves.

So we need user-friendly and easy-to-understand books, written by experienced educational professionals, for teachers (especially trainee or newly qualified teachers) and for parents who have children with learning, processing and behavioural differences.

Firstly, such guides can help parents and teaching staff to acquire background information on special educational needs as well as the knowledge to help identify the signs of possible learning differences, which can help with early identification and in securing targeted support and provision.

Secondly, they can assist teachers and parents in knowing not only what support is out there, but also where to go to get it.

Thirdly, they can help to equip teachers and parents with strategies to help them to provide neurodiverse people with positive learning experiences and the opportunity to achieve their individual potentials, whether that be in getting a job, going to university or becoming a happy confident adult who has high self-esteem and is comfortable in their own skin.

Fourthly, they can help to foster understanding, hope and encouragement that different processing styles can be positive by outlining the positive sides of learning and processing differences and in doing so encouraging and supporting inclusivity.

Fifthly, they can play a role in highlighting the importance of getting to the root cause behind unexpected behaviour, disaffection or unfulfilled learning attainment.

Sixthly, they can endorse the message about the importance of joined up communication between parents, children and educational staff and the necessity of working as a partnership to successfully support the whole child (academically,

About the author

Jacqueline Haigh worked as a specialist teacher in special education for many years and continues to provide support to adolescents and young adults with autism and emotional and learning difficulties.

 jacquelinehaigh.co.uk



Sadly, the system of support and funding for SEN in educational establishments is currently in chaos

emotionally and socially) so that positive outcomes can be achieved.

In conjunction with such books, books which celebrate differences and promote role models and people who have used their differences to excel or contribute to society also have their role to play in promoting differences and different ways of thinking and in doing so breaking down social barriers and negative attitudes.

Sadly, we are encountering challenging times and the system to get support and funding for SEN in educational establishments is currently in chaos (some say broken). Not only does it require the injection of more money, but it does not seem to be working efficiently and as a result there are many children who are struggling to get EHCPs, the right school placement or appropriate support and provision. The Government is looking at overhauling the system, and there is a chance that EHCPs may be scrapped altogether. Who knows if this will happen, but let's sincerely hope that if this is the case, a better system will be established, and soon.

So, yes, we need guide books written by educators and professionals who have experienced and successfully supported neurodiverse people to be the best versions of themselves, now more than ever before. **SEN**