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TASK 3

WRITTEN REPORT

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1. Introduction

Children with any physical, behavioural, or developmental challenges such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, or speech and language delays, not only require additional support in their lives in general, but also in academic settings. In this background, a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Teaching Assistant (TA) plays a crucial part in providing the child with the required support in their learning. A SEN teaching assistant ensures that such children get equal opportunities in learning according to their needs. The TA provides the required emotional, social, and academic support to such children.

This report provides an overview of the SEN Teaching Assistant role. It also identifies three main skills required to perform better in an educational setting, and how to develop these skills. The report uses credible information sources, such as the National Careers Service (2024), Department for Education (DfE, 2022), and Autism Education Trust (2023) for an accurate and evidence-based understanding of the SEN teaching assistant role.

2. SEN Teaching Assistant Role Description

SEN teaching assistants work in the classroom under the supervision of a class teacher to provide support to the children who require additional support because of learning difficulties or disabilities, such as ASD, ADHD, or others (National Careers Service, 2024). The primary aim of a SEN teaching assistant is to promote inclusion and boost confidence among such children by helping them engage in lessons and make their learning experience easier.

According to the National Careers Service ((National Careers Service, 2024), the day-to-day tasks of a SEN teaching assistant are:

- Prepare learning materials
- Adopting teaching support to meet each student's needs
- Support group and classroom activities
- Look after the physical, social, or emotional needs of the children
- Create a safe and interesting learning environment for students
- Update records and attend review meetings
- Work closely with teachers and other

The SEN teaching assistants normally work at a normal school, a special needs school, or a specialist referral unit. They will help SEN children with reading by simplifying the material, using visuals for children with autism, or showing model behaviour to a child with ADHD. At the same

time, the SEN teaching assistant plays an important safeguarding role and reports any concerns about the child's welfare or emotional well-being (DfE, 2022).

Overall, SEN teaching assistants play a crucial role in the education and development of children with special needs. By helping such children, SEN teaching assistants help reduce social inequality, contribute to children's well-being, and align with national goals for inclusive education and safeguarding (Health Education England, 2023).

3. Essential Skills for SEN Teaching Assistant Role

Working as a SEN teaching assistant is challenging. There are several qualities a person should possess to work as a SEN teaching assistant, including strong communication skills, patience, emotional resilience, adaptability, empathy, and effective observation and assessment skills. For this report, I will focus on the following three skills, which are the most important.

3.1 Observation Skills

In my view, the most important skill a SEN teaching assistant should have is their observation skill. Having good observation skills, record, and interpret behaviour objectively will help the SEN teaching assistant to raise an alarm in time to avoid a potential safeguarding issue. For example, observing increased anxiety in an autistic child at an early stage will ensure appropriate intervention in time to help the child. Having good observation skills also helps in developing individual educational plans (IEPs) or progress reports (DfE, 2022).

3.2 Communication Skills

Effective communication skills play an essential role in a SEN teaching assistant job. It not only involves actively listening and conveying the information to the children through different techniques. For example, while working with a child with speech delays, a SEN teaching assistant may use visual aids or sign-supported English for better understanding (Autism Education Trust, 2023). Strong communication skills also help the SEN teaching assistant to clearly communicate with senior colleagues, parents, and therapists to ensure a consistent policy is adopted to suit the child's special needs.

3.3 Patience/Emotional Resilience

Patience and emotional resilience skills are essential for a teaching assistant working with SEN children, as they may have to deal with sudden behavioural or developmental challenges, which can be quite daunting at times. Patience and emotional resilience help a SEN teaching assistant to remain calm without being frustrated or demotivated if a SEN child, for example, an autistic

child, shows very slow progress (National Careers Service, 2024). Similarly, while helping a child with ADHD, these skills help a SEN teaching assistant maintain a positive attitude to continuously support the child calmly.

4. Strategies to Improve These Skills

4.1 Observation Skills

A SEN teaching assistant can improve their observation skills through various methods, but most importantly through continuous professional development (CPD) courses in child development and behavioural analysis. A SEN teaching assistant can self-improve by keeping a diary where they record the child's behavioural patterns, triggers, and responses provided, thus using their experience while dealing with other SEN children. Use of modern technology to observe classroom activities and develop individual educational plans also adds to the SEN teaching assistant's skills to ensure the right interventions when required.

4.2 Communication Skills

Similar to improving observation skills, a SEN teaching assistant can adopt various strategies to improve their communication skills. The most important of these strategies is, depending upon the specific needs of the job, to have specialist communication training, such as training in British Sign Language (BSL). This will help the teaching assistant to support children with speech difficulties (Autism Education Trust, 2023). Peer reviews and observations also help the SEN teaching assistant to improve their communication skills, as peers can identify communication errors and suggest ways to improve. Furthermore, their own diary/reflective journal helps them review previous cases and use the most successful techniques to engage with the SEN children or their therapists.

4.3 Patience/Emotional Resilience

Considering the importance of patience, a SEN teaching assistant can participate in well-being and stress management workshops usually offered by the schools or the local authority (Health Education England, 2023). In addition, a discussion with senior colleagues will enable the teaching assistant to share experiences and get advice to cope with the challenging situations in a day-to-day work or deal better with a sudden change of behaviour by a child with ADHD. Patience and emotional resilience can also be improved by practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

5. Conclusion

The role of a Special Educational Needs teaching assistant is crucial for providing a fair chance of education to SEN children. This report discussed the importance of a SEN teaching assistant in a classroom setting and highlighted its responsibilities. The report also identified three skills that are vital for the role: observation, communication, and patience. The report discussed how these skills help promote a positive learning environment for SEN children. The report also proposed some strategies to improve these skills individually through professional development, reflections, and emotional well-being. It has been argued that SEN teaching assistants need to continuously improve these skills to provide a better learning experience to the SEN children and bring a positive change in their lives.

6. References

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