



Claire Ramsay

Independent Special Education Advisor

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Background and experience:

I graduated from Sheffield Hallam University in 1991 with a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree. My first post was in a mainstream primary school in Gateshead working with children across the primary age phase. During that time, I gained in-depth knowledge of the National Curriculum and an understanding that all children have different learning styles, which helped me to adapt my teaching techniques according to the needs of each child to enable them to make positive progress in all areas.

In January 1995 I was appointed as a class teacher in a non-maintained residential special school in Newcastle where I worked with children and young people between the ages of 3 and 19 with a range of complex needs. These included combinations of sensory loss, complex communication difficulties, ASD, ADHD, Acquired Brain Injury, cerebral palsy, profound physical, learning and health needs, young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs and many young people with syndromes or conditions which require specific approaches to education. I qualified as a Teacher of the Deaf and then as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired whilst progressing through a range of leadership roles including senior teacher, Assistant Head Teacher and then Deputy Head Teacher until August 2021.

As Deputy Head Teacher I was responsible for the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, coordinating the monitoring of teaching to ensure high quality provision, safeguarding lead, and teacher for Looked After Children. I was responsible for ensuring that the curriculum for all pupils was creative, bespoke and fit for purpose in order that all pupils achieved success in all areas of school life. I am very knowledgeable regarding high quality teaching and learning and what this can look like for pupils with complex needs.

I have been involved in assessing the needs of young people and producing detailed reports providing pertinent educational advice for children in order that their needs are fully met. As part of this process, I have had to liaise with Local Authorities regarding their annual review procedures whilst ensuring that the details of a child's needs are accurate and robust within their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) by working collaboratively with a range of Local Authorities in order to request any increases in funding should a young person require additional support or draft amendments to their paperwork. I am knowledgeable regarding the variations in EHCP paperwork between Local Authorities and the timescales around the EHCP process.

I have worked throughout my career in a multi-disciplinary setting alongside a team of professionals including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists. I can therefore interpret information from assessments by colleagues and use the information to ensure that planning and all interventions are appropriate and monitored to achieve the best outcomes.

I am highly skilled and relish delivering training both to staff within a school environment and to others as appropriate. I have lectured at Newcastle University over several years to undergraduate students regarding hearing and visual impairment and have supported trainee teachers to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills when working with those pupils who have specific needs. I have lectured medical students regarding deaf awareness and taught them some basic sign language.

I am skilled in positive behaviour support (PBS) and supporting staff to manage young people who may experience difficulties in managing their behaviour. As part of my own previous leadership role, I was involved with the school PBS team where we would analyse and discuss pupil behaviour to develop detailed understanding regarding individual functions of behaviour, ensure PBS plans were current, and support staff as required. This had a huge impact upon a child's ability to engage, focus and learn if the behaviour was managed appropriately and if the learning environment was suitable to the child's needs.

Throughout my career, I have developed my expertise and knowledge surrounding various modes of communication that support children to express their needs and wants successfully. I am a strong advocate of the Total Communication approach whereby a variety of communication methods (including body language and facial expressions) can be used to help the child to communicate. I am experienced in the use of British Sign Language, on-body signs (such as TaSSELS) and other non-sighted means of communication for example Braille and adapting resources in order that they are tactually meaningful for those pupils who access learning via touch.

I have used single symbols to support communication and PECS at various levels and have worked with young people using a variety of communication aids in order to make simple choices. As a Teacher of the Visually Impaired I have worked with many children and young people to ascertain their functional use of vision which impacts on their ability to successfully access specific modes of communication available to them, and advised on the adaption of resources to ensure curriculum access.

In my role as an independent educational advisor, I provide advice for children who typically have either cerebral palsy or an acquired brain injury and/or sensory loss. Due to my experience and knowledge, I am able to assess each child's individual needs, liaise with those who know the child well including parents, Case Managers, Solicitors and Deputies, evaluate their current provision and package and then offer supportive input to the school or support those who access a home education/EOTAS package. I am able to complete detailed visual assessments and provide advice as required, and I have also been involved in mentoring trainee Teachers of the Visually Impaired.

By working collaboratively, the needs of each child are fully catered for, with open and honest dialogue from all those involved which ultimately ensures the best outcomes for pupils. I am friendly, people orientated, diligent and can produce high quality written reports within specific time frames.

I am proud to work at Education and Case Management Services Limited and believe that the company strives to achieve the best for those children, young people and adults with acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy/sensory loss and spinal injury who may have complex care and rehabilitation needs. I have always had the children, young people and families at the heart of all I have undertaken throughout my career and firmly believe that by working together outcomes can be enhanced or improved greatly for all pupils.

Professional Qualifications and Memberships:

- BEd (Hons) Primary Education (Sheffield Hallam University) – 1991
- Advanced Diploma of Higher Education in the Education of Hearing Impaired Children – 1997
- BSL Level 2 (CACDP) - 1999
- Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education: Visual Impairment with Stage 2 Braille – 2000
- Leadership Pathways - National College for School Leaders - 2010
- National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers 2015
- National College for School Leaders
- British Association for Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) - 2020