



Kirsty Carr

Independent Special Education Advisor

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Background and experience:

I qualified as a teacher in 1994 and began my career in a mainstream primary school. Over the past 30 years, I have gained extensive experience in teaching and leadership roles across both mainstream and special education settings, in both maintained and non-maintained schools. While teaching I worked with children and young people from age 3 to 11 years and their families. In my second year of teaching, I began a Diploma in Special Educational Needs. This qualification further expanded my knowledge and deepened my understanding, enabling me to better support students in their learning and development.

Over the course of two decades in a mainstream primary school, I worked extensively with children and young people across a broad spectrum of special educational needs and disabilities, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and complex learning and health challenges. My teaching was graded outstanding in multiple Ofsted inspections. This led to my appointment as Deputy Head Teacher, where I was responsible for leading and managing the development of costed provision mapping, as well as overseeing the design and implementation of individual timetables, targeted interventions and managing teachers and support staff. As part of the leadership team, I made a significant contribution to the outstanding grade that the school achieved. I remain a highly motivated classroom practitioner who has a passion to ensure that young people reach their potential, finding creative ways to enable them to overcome their individual barriers to learning.

I was the Headteacher of an Additional Resourced mainstream school for Speech and Language for 8 years from 2013 - 2021. The school, which was also located in an area of significant deprivation, improved significantly as a result of my leadership, gaining an Ofsted grading of Outstanding in all areas. By working closely with the Speech and language team from the health authority, we were able to equip staff with a total communication approach and develop strategies to enhance executive functioning. I possess strong skills in evaluating educational practice and assessing the quality of teaching and learning, enabling me to effectively guide staff in improving their approaches. I managed a substantial budget, oversaw recruitment and training, and led a large team with a consistent focus on raising standards. I am adept at analysing data to

inform and enhance practice, and I am able to provide effective support and guidance to staff at all levels.

I have worked with all range of ages from Early Years through to Post 16 with a range of professionals, chairing meetings, completing reviews, assessments, and reports. Throughout my time in mainstream and specialist organisations, I have developed expertise in the education of children with moderate and severe learning difficulties, autism/ASD, ADHD, speech language and communication difficulties, and social, emotional, and behavioural issues.

After nearly thirty years in mainstream education, I took on the role of Principal at a non-maintained special school catering to pupils aged 4–19 with autism and other forms of neurodivergence. During this time, I created effective educational pathways tailored to each child's individual needs, starting points, and future aspirations. I developed a responsive curriculum designed to meet the diverse needs and ambitions of all pupils. I have high expectations for every child and very much respect the aspirations of parents and families who wish to see their child to succeed and overcome barriers in order to reach their full potential.

I have extensive expertise in assessing a child's individual capabilities, working collaboratively within a multidisciplinary team to identify the most effective interventions that support meaningful progress. I am an effective team player with extensive experience collaborating with multidisciplinary professionals, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, case managers, physiotherapists, psychologists, specialist support assistants, and colleagues with expertise in hearing and visual impairments, sensory processing, and autism.

I have a broad knowledge of a range of communication approaches. This includes understanding very early developmental communicative behaviours and using modes of communication including sign symbol systems (PECS; and programmes such as 'Inprint') AAC – both low-tech and high-tech systems; gesture, body language and vocalisation. I am an advocate of a Total Communication approach - method that utilises all forms of communication—verbal and non-verbal—to support individuals with communication difficulties and have carried out training with teachers and support staff to implement this as part of their day-to-day practice. I have skills in Makaton to support communication with children with speech, language, and communication needs.

I have dealt with referrals from a wide variety of sources and am able to interpret assessment information from many professionals, to determine the most suitable provision. I have across all ages and ability ranges from early years and with moderate and severe learning difficulties to those studying functional skills and ASDAN qualifications. I am familiar with a wide range of pathways from sensory and communication to education and employment routes. I have a good understanding of access arrangements and expectations from the early years' framework to level 2 qualifications.

I am skilled in positive behaviour management approaches and producing positive behaviour support plans helping students to recognise their own difficulties where

appropriate, having been given the language or tools to let staff know they need support. I am able to train staff and families in the use of using positive behaviour support plans including an effect analysis of indicators of well-being and use of proactive strategies to ensure consistency to help a student to learn effectively.

I have extensive experience supporting pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), autism, and high levels of anxiety. I am skilled in identifying behavioural triggers and underlying factors influencing presentation through incident evaluation. I am experienced in working with parents and carers to develop tailored support plans that help re-engage pupils back into education where behaviour has become a barrier to learning.

I am confident in the assessment of students' individual learning styles and completing sensory profiles to ensure integration of regulation strategies and Intensive Interaction. I am able to design and train staff to deliver individual programmes linked to the child's EHCP and ongoing assessments.

I have excellent written and verbal communication skills, and I can work to deadlines, producing high quality written reports. I am skilled in the assessment of educational need and progress of children and young people with complex needs and can advise on appropriate educational provisions required to meet a young person's needs. Within this process I am able to produce risk management documents to ensure all aspects of health and safety are considered plus the safeguarding needs of the child.

I am a skilled trainer who have proven experience at motivating and engage teams to learn new initiatives, approaches or to review their practice in order to consider a child's needs differently. I am a qualified member of the Association of Educational Advisers and have carried out this work on behalf of a number of local authorities working in schools to support staff to ensure children's needs are met. I have coached and mentored a range of staff including newly qualified teachers as well as middle and senior leaders. I strongly believe in partnership working to develop an effective programme of education for children. I am experienced in training support staff to deliver targeted interventions and accurately record observational data to inform future planning and personalised support strategies. My leadership roles have included Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Head teacher and finally Headteacher of both mainstream and specialist provision.

In my role as Independent Special Education Advisor, I use information gathered in initial assessments and ongoing observations of a child carried out by a range of professionals to support and take a lead in the processes involved in applying for Education Health and Care Needs Assessments, writing Education, Health and Care Plans and the review process and working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the plans are appropriate, up to date and detail accurately the strengths, needs and required provisions for a child.

I support parents in making decisions about appropriate school or educational placements for their child. I have experience of successfully helping parents to secure places for their children in the right school and with the right support. I also support parents and multi-disciplinary teams when a decision to home educate a child has been

made, through working collaboratively with parents, MDT and LA colleagues, to identify the resources and provision needed to deliver high quality Elective Home Education and EOTAS packages and where necessary apply for and successfully secure appropriate funding.

I support the recruitment and training of teachers, support workers and teaching assistants to support individual children both in school and for home-based packages and have undertaken ongoing liaison and supervision of people working in those roles where appropriate.

I am passionate about the transformative role of education and the belief that every child deserves the best possible opportunity to succeed. Throughout my career, I have worked closely with children, families, and professional colleagues to improve life chances by initiating, developing, and influencing high-quality education and experiences that lead to positive outcomes for individuals.

Professional Qualifications and Memberships:

- BEd. (Hons) Primary Education (University of Chester) 1994
- Advanced Diploma in Special Educational Needs (Northumbria University) 1996
- Leadership Pathways - National College for School Leaders 2008
- NPQH -National College for School Leadership 2011
- Member of the Association of Education Advisors 2019
- Level 2 Makaton 2022
- Mentoring Level 2 Durham College pass Level 2