

LEYA - A Day in the Life

SENDCO

Hi everyone. I thought I'd introduce myself. I'm Sharon Hargreaves and my job role is SENDCO for Meanwood Valley Preschool and our other site Headingley Preschool. When I'm not at preschool I'm busy being mum to 3 children and Grandma to 2 grandchildren.

The 1st question I'm always asked is what do the letters SENDCO stand for. The answer is Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator.

So what does a SENDCO do? My role is extremely varied and no 2 days are ever the same, which is one of the reasons I love my job. Some of my role is office based as there is a lot of paperwork involved, but I also spend time working directly with the children in the setting. I work closely with children who have additional needs, providing 1-1 support, but I also work with all the children in the setting as well.

As well as working with the children I also work very closely with families and not just families whose children have additional needs. I am there for any family. We all want the best for our children and you may have a concern about your child. Questions I often get asked are :

"Is my child saying enough words, or saying words properly?"

"Why is my child not writing yet?"

"Is my child doing everything they should be for their age?"

Sometimes families just need a little bit of reassurance, or maybe I need to observe and do more in depth observations on a child.

I also have a wonderful team of staff who are also my eyes and ears. I wouldn't be able to do my role without them. A very important part of my role is also working with other professionals. These include Paediatricians, Health Visitors, Portage, Speech and Language Therapists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapist, Teachers plus many more. As well as communicating with all these people I also arrange visits to the setting if needed (COVID safe) and seem to have lots of virtual meetings.

Some children with additional needs require extra support in the setting. In order to do this I have to apply for extra funding and always have to provide lots of evidence!

Any child who has an additional need will have a support plan in place. Some are more complex than others. Your child's keyworker will follow this and record actions/activities from the support plan. This is all evidence. The aim is to see progress.

So what does a typical day look like for me? As I've said it's very varied but here's an example.

My working day begins at preschool at 9am. Before then I've usually checked my emails whilst at home just to give me an idea of what my day entails.

I arrive at preschool and I check support plans and make sure everything is in place for them. I spend some time working with the children. This usually involves some 1-1 support and observing as well as being involved with activities with all the children. I manage to find 30 minutes to make some phone calls, reply to a few emails and update my diary.

After grabbing some lunch my afternoon is spent 1-1 supporting a child. I follow the support plan and do specific activities as agreed with other professionals. These may include sensory activities, physio, speech and language support, intensive interaction strategies all dependant on the individual child. At the end of the session I pass on information either to staff or parents.

Once all the children have gone I record the day's activities on support plans, and catch up on paperwork, emails and phone calls.

I mention the dreaded words "paperwork" lots. Here is an example of paperwork that goes with the role of SENDCO.

Devising and updating support plans, referrals to other professionals, supporting letters for parents, funding applications and evidence gathering, Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) applications, updating individual child development journals, reports for other professionals. These are just a few examples. In order to keep up with all this also work from home 1 day per week.

Thank you for taking time to read this. I hope you find this helpful. You can also see me on our YouTube channel reading and Makaton signing stories.

Sharon Hargreaves
LEYA SENDCO