

Supporting Students with SEND: The Challenges and Opportunities Facing MATs

New research from NFER sheds light on the approaches adopted by MATs in supporting students with SEND. Matt Walker draws on these findings to outline the challenges and opportunities facing MATs in helping to build a more inclusive system.

The role of MATs in supporting students with special education needs and disabilities

Over 1.5 million students are now recognised as having some form of special educational need or disability (SEND),¹ equating to 17 per cent of all school students. The majority of these students attend mainstream schools, which are increasingly joining or forming multi-academy trusts (MATs).²

Given the growing significance of the role played by MATs in supporting students with SEND, it is surprising that there is limited research on the approaches adopted by MATs in promoting inclusivity within the education system. While the Government's SEND and alternative provision improvement plan calls for a cohesive workforce around each child, it says relatively little about the specific role MATs should play.³

New research from NFER sheds light on these issues.⁴ Between November 2023 and January 2024 we interviewed 49 trust leaders and school special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) across 19 MATs that had been identified as demonstrating the potential for promising practice concerning SEND.

“While school groups have a role in enhancing support for both staff and students regarding

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Challenges

1. Workload

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