

Solihull Early Years Team

Inclusion Support Base (ISB) Guide for Early Years PVI/ Nursery Settings

A practical guide for developing high-quality inclusive practice for children with SEND (0–5 years).

1. Purpose of an Inclusion Support Base

An Inclusion Support Base (ISB) is a supportive space within a mainstream early year setting that offers targeted interventions, enables personalised support, and builds practitioner confidence in meeting a range of SEND needs. There is not just one way to develop an Inclusion Support Base however, some key principles apply to all.

An effective ISB should:

- Provide focused, developmentally appropriate sessions, not full-time placement.
- Support children to access their universal early years provision, including social interaction and the full curriculum.
- Reduce barriers to participation and support inclusion within the wider setting.
- Provide a base for staff training, observation, modelling, and specialist support.
- Apply inclusion standards in the same way that the core early years space should – thus making transition between both easier [ordinarily available provision]
- Involve practitioners who are trained in, and knowledgeable of, the child's SEND support plan and strategies to support and work closely with the child's key person and the setting SENCo.

2. Key Principles

2.1 Children are not based in the ISB all day

Children should spend some of their time:

- In their **main room/group**, accessing continuous provision.

- With their peers for social interaction and play.
- Participating in the full early year's curriculum.

The ISB should be used for:

- Small-group or 1:1 work
- Therapies or specialist sessions
- Regulation/calming spaces
- Specific intervention programmes

It must not become a separate classroom or long-term segregation

2.2 Inclusion and Universal Entitlement

Every child using the ISB must still have access to:

- Outdoor learning and free-flow play.
- Mealtimes and snack routines.
- Whole-setting events and experiences.
- High-quality continuous provision and learning opportunities.

The ISB enhances—not replaces—access to universal provision.

2.3 Key question to ask before setting up an ISB

1. Why is a separate learning space needed in setting? Nurture/ SEND provision will be v different
2. How many children? Age range? Staffing? Indoor and outdoor space availability?
3. How do parents feel about this arrangement?
4. How is it going to be funded?
5. How will children manage transitions in and out of the space?
additional planning for this need to be done [there will be more transitions for children who need support to manage them]
6. What is the specialist advice for these children where does that overlap ie they need the same thing where is it different and can that still be delivered in the same room.
7. How will strategies and reasonable adjustments in the ISB be applied to mainstream room? [eg objects of reference wherever they are or quiet space in nurture room to be available in mainstream room]
8. How will you train all staff to ensure consistency of experience for these children

In Schools TAs should not be used as an informal teaching resource for low attaining pupils

3. Staffing and Training

3.1 Staff inside and outside the ISB require training

Training should be **mandatory and ongoing**, covering:

- Understanding developmental needs and early child development
- SEND Code of Practice (0–25) expectations
- Early identification and graduated approach (Assess–Plan–Do–Review)
- Communication and interaction (incl. AAC, Makaton, visuals)
- Social, emotional & sensory needs
- Autism, speech & language needs, and early communication approaches
- Behaviour as communication and co-regulation

Staff beyond the ISB must also be trained so children are not dependent on a single room or adult.

3.2 Supervision and reflective practice

Staff should access regular opportunities to reflect on the support offered in the ISB and its impact on the children attending

Regular sessions should support:

- Reflecting on children's needs and progress
- Updating targets and strategies
- Emotional wellbeing of staff
- Problem solving and adapting the environment or routines
- Social engagement with a wider group of peers – staff and children

4. Environment and Resourcing

An effective ISB should include:

4.1 Specialist resources

- Visual supports: such as objects of reference, schedules, choice boards, task steps

- Sensory regulation tools: such as weighted items, fidgets, dark den, sensory lighting sensory circuits
- Low arousal spaces for calm and regulation
- Early communication tools (such as PECs, choice boards, objects of reference)
- Fine and gross motor intervention materials
- Executive function activities to support attention and focus as well as transition.
- Sensory play activities to explore.
- Social communication play materials
- Children with SEND will need more physical space than those without so room size is important especially if doing therapy or if a child needs extra space to move away from others.

4.2 But also:

- Opportunities for interaction with peers
- A space that feels part of the setting, not “another school”

4.3 Health & Therapy Considerations

Rooms may need to support:

- Speech & Language sessions
- OT and physio advice
- Feeding or care plans
- Personal care access (changing areas, hygiene facilities)

5. Thoughtful Planning Around Group Composition

The mix of children in the ISB matters. Consider:

- Compatibility of needs – e.g. children who need quiet regulation vs. children who require active sensory input.
- Risk of one child’s needs overwhelming another’s.
- Developmental stage, not just age.
- Staffing ratios and ability to offer personalised support.
- Potential for a child to imitate peers’ distressed behaviours.
- Ensuring no child is prevented from engaging because another child’s needs dominate the space.

Group size should be small, with sessions short and purposeful.

6. What the ISB is *Not*

An ISB should **not** be:

- A long-term alternative placement
- A separate SEND-only classroom
- A place where children “stay all day”
- A substitute for high-quality inclusive practice across the setting
- A space used for exclusionary behaviour management
- Staffed by untrained or unsupported staff

7. Partnership Working

To operate effectively, the ISB must work closely with and follow advice from:

- Parents and carers
- The early years team, Area SENCo's , SISS
- Educational Psychologists
- SALT, OT, physio
- Health visitors, paediatricians
- Safeguarding and family support services

Regular communication helps ensure a holistic approach. All children in the ISB should be under a specialist service who is giving advice on what specialist support is needed.

8. Monitoring Quality

To maintain high standards:

- Review the purpose and outcomes of the ISB termly
- Gather parent and staff feedback
- Monitor use of the space
- Ensure children continue to access the wider setting
- Track progress toward inclusion goals

9. Key Messages

- **The ISB is a tool for inclusion, not segregation.**
- **Children must spend some of their time in universal provision.**
- **Training for all staff is essential.**
- **Thoughtful planning around group mix protects children's wellbeing.**
- **Resources should meet needs while keeping access to typical provision.**
- **The ISB must align with the SEND Code of Practice and the graduated approach.**

10. Setting up a base

10.1 Questions to Consider Before Establishing an Inclusion Support base.

- **Purpose and vision**
Why are a separate learning space needed? What outcomes are you aiming to achieve, and what is the overall vision or mission for the provision? What you call the provision will need to match this vision and support an inclusive approach
- **Type of provision**
What type of provision do you plan to offer? For example, SEMH needs are very different from Speech and Language needs or Autism. One base cannot effectively meet all SEND needs.
- **Entry criteria**
What will the entry criteria be for accessing the provision (e.g. level of need within the graduated approach)?
- **Capacity and resources**
How many children will the provision support? What is the age range? What staffing will be required? What indoor and outdoor spaces are available?
- **Parental views and consultation**
How do parents feel about this arrangement? What consultation process will you put in place?
- **Triggers and wider practice**
What are the triggers that lead children to need nurture? If these triggers affect

many children, is there a need to consider whole-class adaptations rather than removing children to a separate base?

- **Funding**

How will the additional staffing and resource needs be funded? Will the provision only be available to children who have additional funding?

- **Transitions**

How will children transition in and out of the space? What transition support arrangements will be in place?

- **EHCP and specialist advice**

Considering EHCPs and specialist advice for each child:

- What are the common features and key priorities across children?
- What are the overlaps in EHCP and specialist recommendations?
- What are the unique arrangements required for individual children or groups?

These priorities are statutory “must-dos” within EHCPs.

- **Consistency of approach**

How will you ensure consistency of approach across the inclusion base and all other rooms the children access, so that strategies are used consistently in all environments?

- **Staff training**

What training will be provided, and how will you ensure that all staff are appropriately trained?

- **Access to mainstream provision**

Children identified as needing mainstream provision must have access to mainstream. If an EHCP specifies mainstream placement, an inclusion base cannot replace this. How will this be managed?

- **Role models**

How will you ensure that children benefit from positive peer role models?

- **EYFS curriculum access**

How will children access the full EYFS curriculum? If teachers are planning for this, how will time be allocated to share observations and agree next steps?

- **Planning for increased mainstream inclusion**

How will the setting plan for increasing children's time in mainstream provision? What strategies will be in place to support this progression for all children?