



Apprenticeships

For schools, MATs and nursery employers

PE, Health & Wellbeing | Early Years | Teaching Assistants | SENCOs | Leadership

Funded through the Growth and Skills levy



About ESF Apprenticeships

We are driven by a desire to raise the aspirations of individuals and create opportunities for all to learn, train, and upskill through high-quality apprenticeships.

Who we are

ESF Apprenticeships are an innovative Ofsted ‘Outstanding’ apprenticeship training provider, that creates opportunities and raises aspirations through apprenticeship pathways. Founded in 2011, we have deep roots within education and partner with schools, Multi-Academy Trusts and colleges to help build successful and effective teams.

Our work with SEND experts

In collaboration with our sister company, Real Training, we’re able to bring together the very best of our collective expertise, tapping into the latest thinking on child development, SEND, and wellbeing to co-develop programmes.

Founded by teachers

Our experienced team includes headteachers, senior leaders, SENCOs, SEND professionals, PE leaders, primary and secondary school teachers and knowledgeable training experts. They provide invaluable information, advice, and guidance to support headteachers, teachers, administrative staff, and learners alike.

Working with schools we cultivate a robust and skilled workforce, enhancing the educational experiences and outcomes for all students.

Benefit from our experience in delivering apprenticeships to the education sector over 14 years, combined with expertise from Real Training’s Educational Psychologists.



Workforce development through Apprenticeships

Upskill current staff – from TAs to aspiring Senior Leaders

Providing staff with essential knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours for success, our apprenticeships cover early career development through to leadership training. With a focus on SEND, health and wellbeing, and sports, our programmes empower school staff to positively impact the pupils they work with.

Upskill your teaching assistants, aspiring senior leaders, and SENCOs with new knowledge, skills and professional behaviours. Our programmes, tailored to meet the specific needs of your school, offer practical, on-the-job learning to develop staff as well as professional qualifications.

Our unique and effective approach to upskilling staff not only meets the current needs of schools but also prepares them for future challenges, ensuring a thriving and resilient educational community.

School benefits

Offering a professional development pathway for your team to learn and grow helps retain valuable employees, fill skills gaps, and develop a highly-skilled workforce.



Scan to find out more about upskilling opportunities

Hire a new member of staff through an apprentice

With up-to-date training, fresh energy and lots of ideas, hiring an apprentice is an excellent way to bring in additional support for your team.

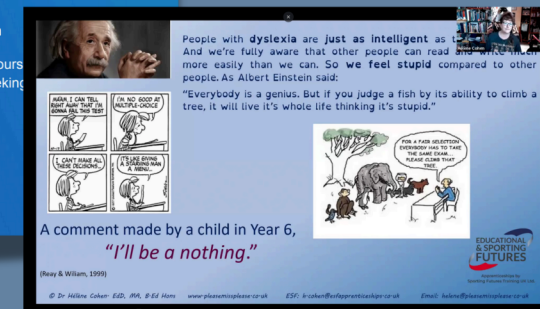
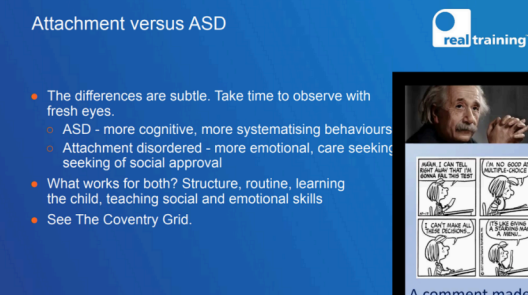
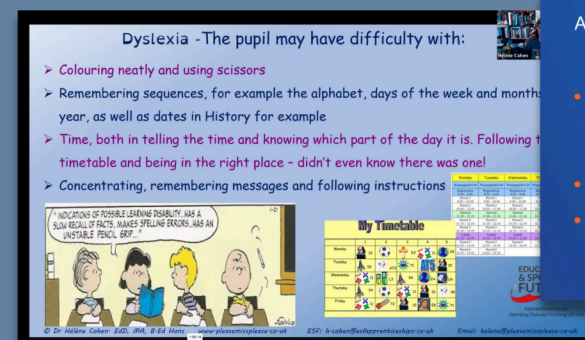
Our apprentices consistently achieve high levels of success, thanks to ESF Apprenticeships’ highly-qualified and dedicated team. Comprising specialist teachers, senior school staff, assessors, and Quality Assurers, the team provides expert support and mentorship throughout the apprentices’ journey.

Benefits for your school

30 hours per week of additional support for you and your colleagues and the opportunity to gain specialist skills. Plus, our apprentices are engaged, enthusiastic, and willing and able to act as positive role models.



Scan to find out more about hiring a new apprentice



The advantages of working with us

With a dedicated focus on education and PE, health and wellbeing, our apprenticeships are designed to strengthen support in school settings where it's needed most.

Strong links with schools and employers

We're proud to be a provider that schools return to year after year – not just because of the quality of our apprenticeships, but because we take the time to understand the school's needs, culture, and ambitions.

Our curriculums and training reflect the latest sector demands.

Supporting SEND and inclusion

In collaboration with our sister company, Real Training, we're able to tap into the latest thinking in child development, SEND, behaviour, and wellbeing.

Backed by Real Training's psychological and SEND expertise, our unique access to Educational Psychologists ensures our apprenticeships go beyond the basics and have the skills to genuinely support every learner.

Mentoring support

We offer exceptional mentor support to both apprentices and placement schools. Schools benefit from regular contact with experienced tutors, ensuring apprentices stay on track and continue to develop the skills your school values most.

97%

of our employer partners rate the impact of their apprentice as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'

Educational psychology expertise

Our programmes equip apprentices with psychologically-informed strategies to:

- Build awareness around neurodiversity and emotional regulation
- Align with inclusive, trauma-informed practice

Free recruitment support

If you're looking to hire an apprentice for a new role, our dedicated Recruitment Lead will be on-hand to support you. We'll advertise vacancies and pre-screen candidates to ensure you have a strong group of applicants to choose from.

"Our apprenticeship programmes are designed to grow talent, equipping new and current support staff with the skills and confidence to thrive, while providing, practical hands-on learning that makes a difference in the classroom. With added professional qualifications our apprenticeships don't just benefit staff, they bring lasting impact to your pupils too."



Jo Pountney , **Apprenticeship Director**

Exclusive invitations to SEND Masterclasses

Available to all ESF apprentices, our online masterclasses will develop knowledge and understanding of supporting children with SEND.

Our SEND Masterclasses are delivered by experts in their field, offering a unique blend of specialist knowledge, practical strategies, and real-world experience.

With a focus on current research and inclusive practices, these masterclasses offer invaluable professional development tailored to the evolving needs of the SEND community. They provide educational professionals with the tools and confidence to support all learners effectively.

Attendance of the SEND Masterclasses is optional, and recordings are made available to those unable to attend the live sessions.

Topics include:

- Autism Spectrum Conditions
- Behaviour and barriers to learning including mental health
- Challenges related to accessing Maths
- Communication needs
- Dyslexia & practical tips to support pupils
- Executive functioning and concentration difficulties (including ADHD)
- Speech and Language delay
- Supporting and understanding attachment disorder
- Trauma
- Understanding and supporting learners with sensory and visual needs



Learn about the experts who deliver our SEND Masterclasses

95%

of learners rate our SEND Masterclasses as 'Excellent' or 'Good'



SEND, Literacy, SEMH and SLCN Apprenticeships

Bring greater SEND expertise to your TA workforce

Level 3 Classroom Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship with a SEND Focus

Duration: 13-15 months

The Level 3 Teaching Assistant apprenticeship equips participants with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to support the teacher and enhance pupils' learning in the classroom.

Our curriculum includes:

- A blended experience of live teaching sessions, online masterclasses, and practical research tasks
- Virtual training days led by qualified teachers and other professionals to develop practical strategies for supporting pupils with SEND in the classroom and through interventions



- Masterclasses in understanding and supporting the high incidence needs of children including Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and ADHD
- Opportunities to share good practice through networking with other apprentices, TA's, teachers, and schools

“Teaching assistant apprenticeships have made such a difference to this school. We've had members of staff who were dinner ladies and cover supervisors and have gone on to complete their Level 3 Teaching Assistant apprenticeship and are now doing the Level 5. That's what we want - to be able to grow our own team. I have an incredibly low staff turnover - and we pride ourselves on developing our staff.

The model that ESF Apprenticeships use for their training has really worked for my Teaching Assistants. The people that develop and run these courses care about my staff individually, go the extra mile for them and I trust them to do a good job.

Helen Smith, Headteacher
Manor Fields Primary School, Bishops Stortford



SEND, Literacy, SEMH and SLCN Apprenticeships

Enable your teaching assistants to specialise in an area of need while helping them develop their career.



Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship

Duration: 18 months

This is an opportunity to develop a more skilled, confident, and collaborative support team. TAs will be empowered to plan effectively, work seamlessly with teachers, and enhance overall classroom practice.



TAs/LSAs and classroom assistants will develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to provide specialist support to learners, including planning, implementing, and adapting activities to advance learning.

In addition to covering a set of core competencies, such as overcoming barriers to learning, planning and assessment, communication, and professionalism, teaching assistants choose from our four specialist options:

1. Social and Emotional Wellbeing specialist: Learn how to positively contribute to learners' social and emotional wellbeing, to support inclusion and advance learning. This specialism includes training to become an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA).



2. SEND specialist: Learn how to provide specialist support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in order to promote inclusion and advance learning and progression.

3. Literacy specialist: Learn how to plan, prepare, deliver and evaluate learning and assessment activities and interventions to support individual, small group and whole class literacy learning.

4. Language and Literacy specialist: *Primary settings only*
Learn how to develop and implement effective literacy lessons and interventions tailored to student needs. Achieve Ekklan's Level 3 Speech & Language Support for 5-11s qualification.



HLTA Status: It is also possible to gain HLTA status through this programme. There will be a small additional cost (in the region of £350)

SEND, Literacy, SEMH and SLCN Apprenticeships

Enhance support for pupils with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) in your setting.

Speech, Language and Communications Leadership Programme (With HLCP qualification)

Duration: 17 months

Created uniquely for schools through the Level 5 Operations Manager apprenticeship standard

Grow your own SLCN practitioner to improve collaboration internally, and with parents and external services. Ensure every pupil receives high-quality provision and support for their speech, language, and communication needs.

This comprehensive programme will equip practitioners with the essential knowledge and skills to support the SENCO in providing and modelling strong practices to support individual learners with SLCN.

Further advantages include:

- Bring high-quality support for students with SLCN into your setting: Benefit from a member of staff trained to deliver effective practices and interventions who can mentor and coach other members of staff to ensure high-quality support is available
- Stronger partnerships: Collaboration is a key element of this programme, enabling your setting to maximise relationships both internally and externally



- Support for the SENCO: A trained SLCN practitioner will take responsibility for key activities, such as referrals to SaLT and SLCN services which can free up the SENCOs time
- Cost-effective training: Utilise the Growth and Skills levy to cover the cost of the programme, making it a budget-friendly option for professional development and an excellent way to upskill staff
- Promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement: By offering your staff the opportunity to gain two nationally recognised qualifications

Participants will receive training from Elklan, a leading provider of training in speech, language and communication needs and will achieve the HLCP Award from OCN London.



SEND, Literacy, SEMH and SLCN Apprenticeships

Build capacity in your SEND team and develop confident, capable leaders to support your SENCO.

Assistant SENCO Programme

Duration: 17 months

Created uniquely for schools through the Level 5 Operations Manager apprenticeship standard

In light of the increasing SEND demands in schools, this programme will equip aspiring or current Assistant SENCOs with the knowledge, confidence and leadership skills to deliver high-quality, inclusive support for pupils with SEND and support the strategic vision of the SENCO.

Participants who complete this programme, will be well prepared to grow in the Assistant SENCO role, helping to create a positive and inclusive learning environment and enabling all pupils to receive the support they need to thrive.

Participants on this programme will:

- Learn to effectively collaborate with the SENCO, teachers, support staff, parents and external agencies to document progress and ensure the individual needs of pupils with SEND are effectively met
- Gain a deep understanding of SEND legislation and inclusive practice, helping the school meet statutory responsibilities and uphold high standards of support
- Gain the skills and confidence to support your SENCO in making data-driven decisions including monitoring and evaluation of activities and interventions for pupils with SEND



Benefits for the school:

- Free up the SENCO's time to focus on strategic leadership, staff training, and EHCPs
- Eases workload pressures, through the delegation of day-to-day tasks, including managing referrals, and coordinating interventions
- Help embed inclusive practice across classrooms, especially with peer coaching or modelling

PE, Health and Wellbeing Apprenticeships

Provide additional opportunities to expand your sports provision and raise the profile of PE in your school.

Level 2 Community Activator

Duration: 13-15 months

Coordinate PE and active lifestyle initiatives and boost pupil confidence

Community Activators bring energy and enthusiasm to schools. They help to promote and deliver fun, inclusive and engaging activities that help schools grow and nurture a positive environment to support pupils by:

- Delivering projects to support the whole-school health and wellbeing agenda
- Working with the wider community to enhance the physical activity offering to pupils

Level 3 PE Teaching Assistant

Duration: 13-15 months

A PE Apprentice offers more than just support in PE lessons, they become a valuable part of your school community

Apprentices have the potential to become future members of your PE workforce. Developing their knowledge, skills, and behaviours will create a legacy and sustainable delivery of increased sporting opportunities for young people within your school.

Benefits of a PE apprentice:

- From leading activities during break and lunchtimes to assisting with whole-school events, their presence increases capacity and creates more opportunities for pupils to stay active and engaged throughout the day



- Increasing opportunities and capacity for extra-curricular and wraparound provision



- Apprentices help break down barriers to young people engaging in PE and sports
- Gain new ideas and strategies for the delivery of Physical Education
- Recruit role models for PE, School Sports, Health, and Wellbeing
- Apprentices support the delivery of high-quality PE by adapting activities to ensure every pupil, including those with SEND can participate and thrive

PE, Health and Wellbeing Apprenticeships

Create your own PE lead with the knowledge and skills to plan and deliver whole-school, high-quality Physical Education.

Level 4 Sports Coach

Duration: 13-15 months

This apprenticeship offers a progression pathway for sports coaches who have substantial experience working in a school setting, supporting or delivering Physical Education and School Sport, and who are looking to take their abilities to the next level.

Our training equips sports coaches with the confidence, capability and skills to lead, deliver, and manage a wide range of physical activity programmes across the school.



Benefits:

- Level 4 coaches are trained with advanced knowledge and skills aligned with the national PE curriculum
- Apprentices at this level will drive the development of the whole-school PE and school sport strategy

“The training and support our apprentices receive is excellent. The administrative support is equally as good and the journey through the programme is smooth. Several of our apprentices have gone on to complete their level 4 with us after a successful level 3 year, demonstrating their aptitude for teaching; a career they are now enjoying.

When dealing with the challenges of staffing, especially thinking about targeted support for pupils with additional needs, for example, two of my current apprentices are also named as 1:1 support for individuals building up an understanding of whole class support as well as the delivery of PE.

Steve Mills, Headteacher
Whitehill Junior School, Stevenage



Early Years Apprenticeships

Level 2 – Early Years Practitioner

Duration: 13-15 months

This programme will, not only deepen individual knowledge and experience, but directly strengthen early years provision within schools. By equipping staff with up-to-date, evidence-based practices, this programme enhances the overall quality of early education and supports improved outcomes for children across the setting.

Learners will gain a wide range of knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to positively impact the setting, including:

- Knowledge of the importance of holistic development including, cognitive, speech, language and communication, physical, emotional and social development

Level 3 – Early Years Educator

Duration: 13-15 months

The Early Years Educator Apprenticeship is a rewarding development pathway for aspiring educators who are already working with young children and are ready to take on more responsibility.

This apprenticeship equips practitioners with the knowledge and confidence to plan, organise, and lead high-quality learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of young children during their early developmental stages.

Strengthen the capability and professionalism of your team by increasing the capacity to plan, organise and lead enriching learning activities.



- An understanding of how to support assessment and planning, and how to provide an enabling environment for babies and young children
- Understanding of safeguarding, child protection and promoting the wellbeing welfare of all babies and young children, including those with additional needs



Benefits of this apprenticeship:

- A Level 3 qualification enables practitioners to be included in the staff-to-child ratios specified in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework
- Training includes content on how to support and manage the needs of those children with complex or challenging emotional or special educational needs including Dyslexia and Autism

Leadership Apprenticeships

Advanced SEND Leader

Duration: 18 months

Supports SENCOs to build strategic skills and to become high-impact SENCOs or SEND leaders.

This programme will enhance SEND expertise in your setting, allowing SENCOs to become high-impact SEND leaders.

SENCOs will gain the knowledge and skills needed to shape and lead a whole-school vision for SEND, develop data-driven financial and resource management strategies, and inspire colleagues through effective leadership.

They will also learn how to foster a culture of innovation, driving continuous improvement in the learning experience for children with SEND.

Our blended learning programme will help SENCOs to:

- Transition from operational duties to strategic leadership, shaping inclusive policies that benefit your entire school community
- Stay ahead with knowledge of the latest research, national trends, and innovative approaches in SEND education
- Develop effective leadership skills through support from a dedicated leadership coach



Who is the course designed for?

- Experienced SENCOs seeking to take their SEND expertise to the next level and develop their leadership skills
- Experienced SENCOs seeking to enhance SEND provision in their setting
- SEND Leaders working across multiple schools
- SENCOs aspiring to a senior leadership role
- Aspiring SENCOs/Leaders are also eligible, with approval from your educational setting

“ It has been transformative, shifting my perspective from simply implementing strategies to rigorously evaluating their impact. I've learned that effective leadership and impactful SEND provision hinge on clear communication, strategic foresight, and a data-driven approach.

- Yasmine Dhillon



N.B. Due to changes in apprenticeship funding for level 7 programmes, our final Advanced SEND Leader cohort will run in November 2025. Please apply early to secure a space and avoid disappointment.



Growth and Skills Levy

How does the funding work?

Schools, nurseries and colleges in England can access the levy to fund apprenticeship training programmes ranging from Level 2 up to Level 7.

Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 and above, there is no upper age limit.

- If your employer (school, nursery, MAT, or local authority) has a salary bill of over £3 million, they will be a levy-paying organisation, which means 100% of the cost of the programme can be funded from the employer's levy pot. Levy-paying employers can access their funds through the central Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).
- **Local Authority schools** contribute to a large levy, known as a shared levy pot. Funding can be accessed even if your school payroll is below the £3 million levy threshold and this can be requested via the Local Authority's Apprenticeship Levy Manager.
- Where a maintained school sits within a Local Authority levy arrangement, ESF Apprenticeships can work with the Local Authority to explore procurement processes.
- **Non-levy paying employers** (i.e. with a salary bill of under £3 million) are required to contribute 5% to the cost of the programme. Where this is the case, ESF Apprenticeships can work with employers to seek support from a levy transfer partner with the aim of alleviating the fees however, this cannot be guaranteed.

Levy-paying employers can access their funds through the central Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).

- Through DAS you can access your training funds, add apprentice details and review payments.
- Employers have 24 months to utilise levy funds before it expires and is returned back to the government.

For further information about apprenticeship funding, please visit our dedicated webpage.



Employer support

For an apprentice to be successful in their programme, support from their employer is essential. There are two key expectations of employers:

Provide adequate support and release time

Off-the-job-training is an essential part of an apprentice's development. It is dedicated time, during normal working hours in which apprentices can focus on learning and applying new skills.

This protected time is required for apprentices to engage fully with their learning and development activities. All of the required learning during the programme count towards off-the-job time however, it can also include activities such as:

- Reading relevant articles or publications and staying up to date on education trends and developments
- Applying new knowledge to real-world projects
- Networking or shadowing
- Setting personal and career objectives and reflecting on progress
- Research and revision
- Coaching and mentoring

Our Apprenticeship tutors will signpost opportunities which count as off-the-job training and during the enrolment meeting we can discuss how this can work alongside busy job roles.

Nominated mentor in school

All apprentices require an in-school mentor. A mentor's role is to support the apprentice, and should be someone who has capacity to provide guidance to help the apprentice grow and develop in the workplace.

Expectations of a mentor:

- Attend the enrolment meeting with the ESF Apprenticeships Enrolment Team
- Be available to attend and provide feedback during the termly progress reviews
- Work in partnership with the apprentice tutor to support the apprentice through to achievement
- Provide feedback to help apprentices scope out impactful projects to complete as part of their programme



Scan to read the full report

"Tutors have developed an extremely well-planned curriculum. Their curriculum design enables apprentices to rapidly become self-assured, knowledgeable and skilled sports coaches and classroom teaching assistants."

Ofsted Report 2021



Apprenticeships

by Sporting Futures Training UK Ltd.

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