What case studies should you write? Think of a pupil where, through the school’s intervention and personalised provision, a real difference has been made to outcomes relating to learning and behaviour and safety. Then identify a pupil in each of these categories whereby the school has put in place every intervention and support imaginable, but despite this no difference has occurred to outcomes, because of factors beyond the school’s control. It is important to provide evidence not only of successful interventions, but also any instances where progress has been unachievable despite the use of exemplary practice.

Four key components of a case study

Choose a format that meets the purpose of writing the case study. Whatever format is used, the key components are barriers to learning, baseline data, interventions and impact data and observations.
1. Barriers to learning
This explains the problems and difficulties that the pupil was experiencing, including the nature of the special need, disability or vulnerability. It will indicate any external agencies that have been involved.

2. Baseline data
This provides evidence of attainment, progress, attendance, behaviour and well-being prior to the intervention, and will reflect the gap in learning for the pupil in comparison with peers.

3. Intervention
This describes the nature of the intervention, including who delivered it – school staff or other agencies, length of the intervention, funding source etc. The intervention might be personalised, or might be a commercial package or programme or a well-chosen intervention researched by other schools or institutions.

4. Impact data and observations
The data should provide demonstrable improvements in learning or behaviour or attendance. It can include observations by staff, parents/carers and the pupil on how learning or behaviour has changed. It can include identification of next steps in supporting learning or behaviour.

There is no set format to use. Case studies have been produced by schools in other formats, including:

- standard case study format – one side of A4
- descriptive/blog
- PowerPoint presentations on school websites
- research/investigation format
- local authority (LA) formats
- provision map summaries
- multi-agency specialist case studies
- Ofsted-style format of best practice case studies

Since it is usually the SENCO who writes the case study, and especially where the SENCO is new to the role or has a very full teaching commitment, it can be more efficient to use a formal format. Local authorities often provide good models of case studies for their schools to use. Middle leaders are more frequently writing case studies, for example the lead of an autism spectrum disorder designated provision, the outreach workers in a pupil referral unit or the learning mentor responsible for school phobics in a secondary school.

Jan Martin specialises in working with primary and secondary schools, pupil referral units, local authorities and independent school groups on a range of school improvement activities: self-evaluation, primary and secondary curriculum development, strategies for improving learning and teaching, building effective leadership and management at all levels and providing strategic and operational advice on developing inclusion and SEN provision.

Website: www.sensitiveconsultancy.co.uk
Email: jmartin@sensitiveconsultancy.co.uk