

Special Educational Needs Policy

Definition of Special Educational Needs

Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty*, which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.

Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age,
- Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority
- Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

Special educational provision means:

- (a) for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the LEA, other than special schools, in the area
- (b) for children under two, educational provision of any kind.

This SEN policy details how this early years setting will do its best to ensure that the necessary provision is made for any pupil who has special educational needs and those needs are made known to all who are likely to teach them. The school will use its best endeavours to ensure that early years practitioners in the school are able to identify and provide for those pupils who have special educational needs to allow pupils with special educational needs join in the activities of the setting together with pupils who do not have special educational needs, so far as is reasonably practical and compatible with the child receiving the special educational provision and the efficient education of the pupils with whom they are educated.

The setting will have regard to the **Special Educational Needs Code of Practice** when carrying out its duties toward all pupils with special educational needs and ensure that parents are notified of a decision by the school that SEN provision is being made for their child.

Partnership with parents plays a key role in enabling children and young people with SEN to achieve their potential. This setting recognises that parents hold key information and have knowledge and experience to contribute to the shared view of a child's needs and the best ways of supporting them. All parents of children with special educational needs will be treated as partners and supported to play an active and valued role in their children's education.

Children and young people with special educational needs often have a unique knowledge of their own needs and their views about what sort of help they would like to help them make the most of their education will be ascertained. They will be

encouraged to participate in all the decision-making processes and contribute to the assessment of their needs, the review and transition processes.

Identification, Assessment and Provision in Early Education Settings

The Government's Early Learning Goals sets out what most children will have achieved by the end of the foundation stage/school reception year. Children will progress at different rates during the foundation stage. By the end of this stage some children may still be working towards the goals. Such children will need differentiated learning opportunities to help them progress and regular monitoring of their progress.

Graduated response

Monitoring of individual children's progress throughout the foundation stage is essential. Where a child appears not to be making progress then it may be necessary to use alternative approaches to learning. Ongoing difficulties may indicate the need for help above that which is normally available for children in the particular early education setting.

The key test for action is evidence that the child's current rate of progress is inadequate.

Adequate progress

Adequate progress can be defined in a number of ways. It might, for instance, be progress that :-

- closes the attainment gap between the child and the child's peers
- prevents the attainment gap growing wider
- is similar to that of peers starting from the same attainment baseline, but less than that of the majority of peers
- matches or betters the child's previous rate of progress
- ensures access to the full curriculum
- demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills
- demonstrates improvements in the pupil's behaviour.

Once practitioners have identified that a child has special educational needs, the setting will intervene through **Early Years Action**. If this intervention does not enable the child to make satisfactory progress the SENCO may need to seek advice and support from external agencies. This form of intervention is referred to as **Early Years Action Plus**. Informing parents to contribute their knowledge and understanding of their child and raise any concerns they may have about their child's needs and the provision that is being made for them, is an essential initial step.

The SENCO

In this Early Years setting the SENCO is
The SENCO will have responsibility for:

- ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of children with special educational needs
- advising and supporting other practitioners in the setting
- ensuring that appropriate Individual Education Plans are in place
- ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special educational needs is collected, recorded and updated.

The SENCO will take the lead in further assessment of the child's particular strengths and weaknesses; in planning future support for the child in discussion with colleagues; and in monitoring and subsequently reviewing the action taken. The SENCO will also ensure that appropriate records are kept including a record of children at *Early Years Action* and *Early Years Action Plus* and those with statements. The teacher/practitioner usually responsible for the child will remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis and for planning and delivering an individualised programme.

Early Years Action

When a child is identified as having a special educational need, interventions should be devised that are addition to those provided as part of the setting's usual curriculum (**Early Years Action**). The triggers for intervention through *Early Years Action* could be concern about a child who despite receiving appropriate early education experiences:

- makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are particularly targeted to improve the child's identified area of weakness
- continues working at levels significantly below those expected for children of a similar age in certain areas
- presents persistent emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, which are not ameliorated by the behaviour management techniques usually employed in the setting
- has sensory or physical problems, and continues to make little or no progress despite the provision of personal aids and equipment
- has communication and/or interaction difficulties, and requires specific individual interventions in order to access learning.

If practitioners in consultation with parents conclude that a child may need further support to help them progress, staff should seek the help of the SENCO. The SENCO and colleagues will collect all known information about the child and seek additional information from the parents. In some cases, outside professionals from health, social services or the education psychology service may already be involved with the child. If external professionals have not already been working with practitioners, the SENCO should contact them if parents agree.

Nature of intervention

The SENCO and the child's teacher, in consultation with parents, will decide on the *Action* needed to help the child to progress in the light of their earlier assessment. This *Action* will comprise of individualised arrangements for learning and teaching. These arrangements may include:-

- Extra adult time in devising the nature of the planned intervention and monitoring its effectiveness
- The provision of different learning materials or special equipment
- Some individual or group support or staff development and training to introduce more effective strategies
- Access to LEA support services for one-off or occasional advice on strategies or equipment
- Staff training to provide effective intervention without the need for regular or ongoing input from external agencies.

Individual Education Plans

Strategies employed to enable the child to progress will be recorded within an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This should include information about

- the short-term targets set for the child,
- the teaching strategies
- the provision to be put in place,
- when the plan is to be reviewed
- the outcome of the action taken.

The IEP will record only that which is additional to, or different from, the differentiated curriculum in place as part of normal provision. The IEP will focus on three or four key targets and will be discussed with parents and the child. The IEPs will be continually kept 'under review,' but are formally reviewed three times a year. Parents' will be consulted as part of the review process.

Early Years Action Plus

Early Years Action Plus is characterised by the involvement of external support services who can provide more specialist assessments, give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials, and in some cases provide support for particular activities.

The triggers for referral for seeking help from outside agencies could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme and/or concentrated support, the child:

- continues to make little or no progress in specific areas.
- continues working at an early years curriculum substantially below that expected of children of a similar age
- has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning or that of the group, despite having an individualized behaviour management programme
- has sensory or physical needs, and requires additional equipment or regular visits for direct intervention or advice by practitioners from a specialist service
- has ongoing communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning.

When school seeks the help of external support services, those services will need to see the pupil's records in order to establish which strategies have already been employed and which targets have been set and achieved.

The external specialist may act in an advisory capacity, provide additional specialist assessment or be involved in teaching the pupil directly. The resulting IEP for the pupil will set out new strategies for supporting the pupil's progress. Delivery of the IEP will remain the responsibility of Early Years practitioner.

Requests for statutory assessment

For a very few children the help given by the early education setting through *Early Years Action Plus* will not be sufficiently effective to enable the child to progress satisfactorily. It will then be necessary for the setting, in consultation with the parents and any external agencies already involved, to consider whether a statutory multi-disciplinary assessment may be appropriate. Where a request for a statutory assessment is made to an LEA, the pupil will have demonstrated significant cause for concern and the setting will provide evidence to the LEA detailing:

- The school's action through *Early Years School Action* and *Early Years School Action Plus*
- Individual education plans for the pupil
- Records of regular reviews and their outcomes
- The pupil's health including the pupil's medical history where relevant
- Educational and other assessments, for example from an advisory specialist support teacher or an educational psychologist
- Views of the parents and of the pupil
- Involvement of other professionals
- Any involvement by the social services or education welfare service.

When the LEA receives a request for a statutory assessment, it will decide within six weeks whether to carry out such an assessment. Statutory assessment involves consideration by the LEA, working co-operatively with parents, the child's educational setting and, as appropriate, other agencies, as to whether a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs is necessary. Where the evidence presented to the LEA suggests that the child's learning difficulties may call for special educational provision which cannot reasonably be provided within the resources normally available to the setting, the LEA will consider the case for a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs. The LEA may decide that the degree of the pupil's learning difficulty and the nature of the provision necessary to meet the child's special educational needs is such as to require the LEA to determine the child's special educational provision through a **statement of special educational need**. This will detail:

- The pupil's name, address and date of birth
- Details of all of the pupils special needs
- Identify the special educational provision necessary to meet the pupil special educational needs
- Identify the type and name of the school where the provision is to be made
- Include relevant non-educational needs of the child
- Include information on non-educational provision

All children with statements of special educational needs will have short-term targets set for them that have been established after consultation with parents, child and include targets identified in the statement of educational need. These targets will be set out in an IEP and be implemented, at least in part and as far as possible, in the

normal early years setting. The delivery of the interventions recorded in the IEP will continue to be the responsibility of the early years practitioner.

Annual review

All early years statements will be reviewed at six monthly with all involved invited to consider whether any amendments need to be made to the description of the pupil's needs or to the special educational provision specified in the statement. The review will focus on what the child has achieved as well as on difficulties that need to be resolved. The SENCO of the receiving primary school will be invited to attend the final review in the early years setting, to allow them to plan an appropriate IEP to start at the beginning of the new school year and enable the pupil and the parents to be reassured that an effective and supportive transfer will occur.

The information in this policy is taken from
Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
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Available from

DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley,
Nottinghamshire, NG15 0DJ 0845 60 222 60

This policy has been written by Carol Smart, editor of Special Needs Information Press www.snip-newsletter.co.uk to support colleagues in developing their own school/educational setting policy. The information on procedure has been taken directly from *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* Revised Nov 2001 but should not be simply printed off and filed. This policy is a framework that SENCOs will need to read through and alter and add to in order to fit their own specific requirements in their educational placement. The Code of Practice remains guidelines and the suggestions regarding action should not therefore be regarded as always appropriate or even correct in all circumstances for all educational situations. It is important that what is stated in the policy is what actually takes place, so ensure that :- **The policy identifies your schools practice.** The new Code suggests that SENCOs should be involved in assessing previous information, assessment, informing staff and parents of action, reviewing and monitoring all pupils with SEN –new entrants to the school school, those on School Action, School Action Plus and those with Statements. In some situations this is neither attainable nor practical due to lack of time. Many may consider it undesirable – class/subject teachers themselves need to be empowered to identify and meet pupils needs. Therefore some SEN policies may state that the SENCO will be involved in providing advice but not until School Action Plus and above will be assessing, setting targets, reviewing, seeing parents etc. **Add details** of any special arrangements you have in schools that may allow support of those pupils with SEN e.g. Nurture groups, Inclusion Units. You may have specific pastoral arrangements that promote inclusion of vulnerable pupils. Detail these. It is also important to **keep the SEN Policy on the word processor** to ensure it is readily available to alter to fit changing situations. Details such as the school/educational settings name should be included, as should the name

of the SENCo and the SEN Governor who should be the person to whom concerns relating to the application of the policy are addressed.
As **Disability and Inclusion** legislation continue to make an impact upon schools, details will also need to be added to ensure the policy is kept up to date.

I hope this has reduced your workload a little!