

# Special Educational Needs Policy

## Definition of Special Educational Needs

Children have special educational needs if they have a **learning difficulty** that 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 that 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 definitions 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.

For children of two or over, educational provision is that, 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.

This SEN policy details how this school 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 teachers 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 school 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 school 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. The school 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

Provision for children with special educational needs is a matter for the school as a whole. In addition to the governing body, the school's head teacher, the SENCO and all other members of staff have important day-to-day responsibilities. *All teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs*. Teaching such children is therefore a whole school responsibility.

At the heart of the work of every primary school class is a continuous cycle of planning, teaching and assessing which takes account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of children. The majority of children will learn and progress within these arrangements. Those children whose overall attainments or attainment in specific subjects fall significantly outside the expected range may have special educational needs.

### Provision

The school will assess each child's current levels of attainment on entry in order to ensure that they build upon the pattern of learning and experience already established during the child's pre-school years. If the child already has an identified special educational need, this information may be transferred through *Early Years Action* and *Early Years Action Plus* from the Early Years setting and the SENCO and the child's class teacher will use this information to

- provide starting points for the development of an appropriate curriculum.
- identify and focus attention on action to support the child within the class
- use the assessment processes to identify any learning difficulties
- ensure ongoing observation and assessment provide regular feedback about the child's achievements and experiences to form the basis for planning the next steps of the child's learning
- involve parents in implementing a joint learning approach at home.

The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English, requires particular care. Where there is uncertainty about an individual child teachers will look carefully at all aspects of a child's performance in different subjects to establish whether the problems they have in the classroom are due to limitations in their command of the language that is used there or arise from special educational needs.

In order to help children who have special educational needs, the school will adopt a graduated response that recognises there is a continuum of special educational needs and brings increasing specialist expertise to bear on the difficulties that a child may be experiencing. The school will record the steps taken to meet the needs of individual children. The SENCO will have responsibility for ensuring that the records are kept and available as needed. If schools refer a child for a statutory assessment, they should provide the LEA with a record of their work with the child including the arrangements they have already made.

## The role of the SENCO in mainstream primary schools

The SEN Coordinator (SENCO) responsibilities may include:

- overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy
- coordinating provision for children with special educational needs
- liaising with and advising fellow teachers
- managing learning support assistants
- overseeing the records of all children with special educational needs
- liaising with parents of children with special educational needs
- contributing to the in-service training of staff
- liaising with external agencies including the LEA's support and educational psychology services, health and social services, and voluntary bodies.

## Monitoring children's progress

The school's system for observing and assessing the progress of individual children will provide information about areas where a child is not progressing satisfactorily. Under these circumstances, teachers may need to consult the SENCO to consider what else might be done. This review may lead to the conclusion that the pupil requires help over and above that which is normally available within the particular class or subject. The key test of the need for action is evidence that current rates of progress are inadequate. Adequate progress can be defined in a number of ways. It might be progress which:

- closes the attainment gap between the child and their 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 child's behaviour.

## School Action

When a class teacher or the SENCO identifies a child with special educational needs, the class teacher will provide interventions that are additional to from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum. This will be called **School Action**. The triggers for intervention through **School Action** will be *concern*, underpinned by evidence, about a child who despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities makes

- little or no progress even when teaching approaches are targeted particularly in a child's identified area of weakness
- shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy or mathematics skills which result in poor attainment in some curriculum areas

- presents persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which are not ameliorated by the behaviour management techniques usually employed in the school
- has sensory or physical problems, and continues to make little or no progress despite the provision of specialist equipment
- has communication and/or interaction difficulties, and continues to make little or no progress despite the provision of a differentiated curriculum.

In some cases outside professionals from health or social services may already be involved with the child. Where these professionals have not already been working with the school staff, the SENCO may contact them if the parents agree. The SENCO will support the further assessment of the child, assisting in planning future support for them in discussion with colleagues and monitoring the action taken. The child's class teacher will remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis and for planning and delivering an individualised programme. Parents will always be consulted and kept informed of the action taken to help the child, and of the outcome of this action.

### **Nature of intervention**

The SENCO and the child's class teacher will decide on the action needed to help the child to progress in the light of their earlier assessment. This may include

- different learning materials or special equipment
- some group or individual support;
- extra adult time to devise the nature of the planned intervention and to monitor its effectiveness;
- staff development and training to introduce more effective strategies.
- access to LEA support services for one-off or occasional advice on strategies or equipment

### **Individual Education Plans**

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

- the short-term targets set for the child
- the teaching strategies to be used
- the provision to be put in place
- when the plan is to be reviewed
- outcomes (to be recorded when IEP is reviewed).

The IEP will only record that which is additional to, or different from, the differentiated curriculum and will focus upon three or four individual targets that match the child's needs and have been discussed with the child and the parents. The IEP will be reviewed at least twice a year and parents' views on their child's progress will be sought. Wherever possible, the child will also take part in the review process and be involved in setting the targets.

### **School Action Plus**

A request for support from external services is likely to follow a decision taken by the SENCO and colleagues, in consultation with parents, at a review of the child's IEP. At *School Action Plus* external support services, will usually see the child so that they can advise teachers on new IEPs with fresh targets and accompanying strategies, provide more specialist assessments to inform planning and the measurement of a pupil's progress, give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials, and in some cases provide support for particular activities.

The triggers for *School Action Plus* will be that, despite receiving individualised support under *School Action*, the child:

- continues to make little or no progress in specific areas over a long period
- continues working at National Curriculum levels substantially below that expected of children of a similar age
- continues to have difficulty in developing literacy and mathematics skills
- has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning or that of the class group, despite having an individualised behaviour management programme
- has sensory or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular advice or visits by 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 child'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, or provide additional specialist assessment or be involved in teaching the child directly. The resulting IEP for the child will set out fresh strategies for supporting the child's progress. These will be implemented, at least in part, in the normal classroom setting. The delivery of the interventions recorded in the IEP continues to be the responsibility of the class teacher.

### **School request for a statutory assessment**

Where a request for a statutory assessment is made by the school to an LEA, the child will have demonstrated significant cause for concern. The LEA will need information about the child's progress over time, and will also need documentation in relation to the child's special educational needs and any action taken to deal with those needs, including any resources or special arrangements put in place. The school will provide this evidence through *School Action* and *School Action Plus*. This information may include:

- individual education plans for the pupil
- records of regular reviews and their outcomes
- the pupil's health including the child's medical history where relevant
- National Curriculum levels attainments in literacy and mathematics
- educational and other assessments, for example from an advisory specialist support teacher or an educational psychologist
- views of the parents and of the child

- involvement of other professionals such as health, social services or education welfare service.

### **Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs**

Statutory assessment involves consideration by the LEA, working co-operatively with parents, the child's school and, as appropriate, other agencies, as to whether a statutory assessment of the child's special educational needs is necessary. A child will be brought to the LEA's attention as possibly requiring an assessment through a request by the child's school, from a parent or a referral by another agency. Where the evidence presented to the LEA suggests that the child's learning difficulties have not responded to relevant and purposeful measures taken by the school and external specialists and may call for special educational provision which cannot reasonably be provided within the resources normally available to mainstream schools, 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. **A statement of special education needs** will include:

- 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 classroom setting. The delivery of the interventions recorded in the IEP will continue to be the responsibility of the class teacher.

### **Annual review of a statement of special educational needs**

All statements must be reviewed at least annually with the parents, the pupil, the LEA, the school and professionals 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 annual review should focus on what the child has achieved as well as on any difficulties that need to be resolved.

At the review in year 5, the aim should be to give clear recommendations as to the type of provision the child will require at the secondary stage. It will then be possible for the parents to visit secondary schools and to consider appropriate options within the similar timescales as other parents. The SENCO of the receiving school should be invited to attend the final annual review in primary school of pupils with statements, to allow the receiving school 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. DfEE 581/2001 November 2001 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](http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk) to support colleagues in developing their own school/educational setting SEN 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 your school policy is what actually takes place, so ensure that it is discussed with colleagues and the resulting 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!