

MY GUIDE TO

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) SUPPORT IN A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL

Information for parents and carers

Q1 What is SEN support?

SEN support is support that is additional to or different from that generally given to other children and young people of the same age. SEN support helps children and young people identified as having special educational needs to make good progress. A child/young person's special educational needs could be related to:

- **communication and interaction** – for example, where children and young people have difficulty making sense of language or understanding how to talk and listen to others.
- **cognition and learning** – for example, a slower pace of learning, difficulties with organisation and memory skills, or a particular difficulty with literacy or numeracy.
- **social, emotional and mental health** – for example, difficulty in managing relationships with other people, or behaviour that affects a child/young person's health and wellbeing, or prevents them from learning.
- **sensory and/or physical skills** – for example, sensory processing, visual or hearing impairments, or a physical need that requires additional support and equipment.

Q2 Who decides that a child/young person should receive SEN support?

For some children SEN support at school will follow on from extra help they have received at their early years setting. For others it will start at school because their need for additional support has become clear as they get older or as the expectations of them change.

All educational settings make regular assessments of pupil progress. These assessments seek to identify any pupils making less than expected progress given their age and individual circumstances. Schools must use their best endeavours to make sure all children/young people with SEN get the support they need.

All schools must have a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) who is responsible for arranging and coordinating extra help for pupils with SEN. The SENCo works with class and subject teachers to plan and deliver support. The SENCo may oversee some planning and may even deliver some support but this is not always the case. Often there are other members of the SEN team that would do this as the SENCo has a strategic role. The class teachers are responsible for planning work for all children including those with SEN.

Q3 How are parents/carers involved in the SEN support for their child?

Schools should involve you as soon as it is felt that your child may have a special educational need and could benefit from additional or different support at school. The school should talk to you about your child's needs and seek your views about those needs.

Sometimes you may be the first to be aware that your child has some special educational needs. If you think your child may need SEN support you should talk to your child's teacher or to the school SENCo.

Q4 How does SEN support work?

How much help and the type of help your child is given will be based on their individual needs, and decided through a process called **Assess, Plan, Do, Review**. (In some schools this same process is known by a variety of names including, the graduated response or provision mapping.)

- **Assess:** This starts the process by assessing and analysing your child's needs and what support they might need.
- **Plan:** A plan is made about what support to give your child, when it should be given and what outcomes the plan should achieve.
- **Do:** This means putting into practice the support that is in the plan.
- **Review:** The school should carry out a review of how things are working and if the outcomes are being achieved. The review will inform and lead on to the next plan and the cycle continues as long as your child needs the extra support.

Q5 What will SEN support look like for my child?

Some pupils may need an SEN support plan, involving you and your child, focusing on the outcomes your child needs and wants to achieve, and detailing how the school will help them to achieve these. The school should give you clear information about the extra help your child is getting. SEN support may look different for each child/young person as support will be tailored to meet individual needs. SEN support can take many forms, including:

- Developing and delivering a learning programme
- Extra help from a teacher or a learning support assistant
- Making or changing materials and equipment
- Working with a child/young person in a small group
- Helping a child/young person to take part in class activities
- Using strategies to make sure a child/young person has understood what they have been asked to do and how this relates to their learning
- Helping a child/young person to play with other children
- Supporting a child/young person with physical or personal care, such as eating, getting around school safely, toileting or dressing

Q6 How is SEN support monitored?

Your child's school will regularly review your child's progress (see assess, plan, do, review above) and should let you know at least three times a year how your child is progressing and what the next steps for their learning will be. The school must also provide a report at least once a year on your child's progress.

If your child does not make the expected progress with the help and support that is in place then the type and in some cases the level of support may be changed. The school may also decide to seek further professional advice about your child's needs.

Q7 What if a parent/carer feels that SEN support isn't working?

If your child has been on SEN support for a while, but they are not making progress at school, you should discuss this with the SENCo at your child's school. If you feel that your child needs help above and beyond what the school can provide from its own resources you (and/or the school) can make a request that the local authority carries out a statutory needs assessment (also known as an EHC needs assessment). Only a small minority of children move onto this higher level of special educational support. If a request is made to the local authority they will look carefully at and consider the SEN support that has been in place for your child and the assess, plan, do, review cycle.

If the local authority agree to carry out an EHC needs assessment, they may decide to issue an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan).

Q8 Where can parents/carers find out more information about SEN support?

The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2014) contains more detailed information about SEN support. Please follow this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

If you think your child may need SEN support you should talk to your child's teachers or the school SENCo. Parents/carers should always approach the class teacher first, if they have concerns, as set out in the identification cycle in Bexley's 'Quality First Teaching Special Educational Needs Support Toolkit'.

If you would like to discuss significant changes to your child/young person's educational needs, provision or placement you can contact:

The statutory assessment service

Email: specialneeds.els@bexley.gov.uk

Telephone: 0208 303 7777

If you would like information and advice about SEN support that is independent of the Local Authority you can contact:

The Independent, Advice and Support Service (IASS)

Email: bexleyIASS@bexley.gov.uk

Telephone: 0203 045 5976

If you would like information and advice about SEN support from the independent parent carer forum Bexley Voice you can contact:

Bexley Voice parent carer forum

Website: www.bexleyvoice.org.uk