

Parent Guide to Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A child or young person may have Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they face challenges in learning or have a disability that means they need special help in their education.

What is a learning difficulty or disability?

A child of school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if:

- learning is much harder for them than for most others their age

or

- they can't use the same school resources as other pupils their age because of a disability that gets in the way.

Special educational provision

Special educational provision means extra or different help with learning compared to what most children their age get in mainstream schools.

SEN support: support ALL pupils can access

Sometimes your child may need extra help in class, but this does not necessarily mean they have SEN.

Most children who are found to have SEN can get the help they need without having to create a formal, legal plan called an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We call this support SEN support.

Teachers in class regularly check how well children are doing and look for anything that might be making it harder for them to learn.

Teachers change how they teach to help each student individually if your child isn't making the progress we expect. This is called High Quality Teaching and this is a 'Teacher Standard' (all teachers do this)

What to expect from School as part of High Quality Teaching...

My child finds school difficult... they have a hard time with learning or social situations in school (or other...)

A teacher might use these strategies:

- Guide sheets for reading and writing
- Working with a partner
- One-to-one or small group help with a clear focus eg reading
- Information presented in different ways, eg with extra pictures or bigger text
- Pen grips
- Task planners and breaking down information into smaller chunks
- Teaching that focuses on your child's next step
- Support from staff or a key adult
- Social stories
- Changes to tasks to make them easier to grasp at first
- Memory games
- A special place to go at lunch or breaktime.
- ELSA sessions
- Coloured plastic sheets (overlays) to go over text so it is not just black and white or the use of different colour paper
- Different options for how to do the work

These strategies may not work straight away. It takes time to learn how to use them successfully.

Most young people identified as having SEN can be supported at SEN support level.

Has the **graduated response been used in the right way?**

If these strategies don't seem to be helping, you can ask the school to check.

The graduated response is a way of making sure that the help and support given to your child are checked regularly to make sure it matches their needs.

What the **graduated response could look like:**

- The school **assesses** your child and works out what they need.
- Then, they make a **plan** to help with that need – this could be in class intervention.
- The school puts the plan into action. They **do** it!
- The school **reviews** how well your child is doing and decides if they need more or different help.

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If your child has actively taken part in several rounds of help and support but still hasn't progressed from where they started, we might need to do a more detailed assessment to understand their needs better and more specific intervention. There are four main areas of need, and the sections below

Social, Emotional and Mental Health	Sensory and Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Boxall Profile • Mindfulness • Restorative approaches • Zones of Regulation • Play therapy • Wellbeing support • Referring to a doctor (GP) and CAMHS • Lego therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory equipment or spaces • Help from outreach services like those for hearing or visual impairment, or physical disability • Referring to a doctor (GP) for physiotherapy and occupational therapy • Using tools and technologies to help them
Communication and Interaction	Cognition and Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological awareness • Playing vocabulary games • Repeating instructions • Teaching listening skills • Using visual timetables • Creating social stories • Pre-teaching concepts • Using Colourful Semantics • Focusing on core vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting teaching • Support from adults • Multi-sensory teaching strategies • Phonics • Working memory • Motor skills • Reasonable adjustments to the classroom • Special equipment - pencil grips, slopes etc • Use of ICT

Schools do not 'fit' a child into a category, but rather provide support based on what the child needs. Most children, identified as having SEN, even with additional intervention, can be supported at SEN support level.

However, some children may need an ongoing high level of support and intervention. You and the school will have asked for advice from other professionals, and it will have been put in place. If this is for a long time and for more than 10 hours a week then a school can consider applying for an EHCP. The school will need to work with you and show everything that has been put in place and the impact of it over a period as well as documenting the advice from other professionals.

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What is an EHCP?

An Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHC plan or EHCP) is an official document that describes a child or young person's strengths and areas to improve in relation to their special educational needs; the help they require and the goals they want to reach.

Legal timeline once an EHC needs assessment is requested:

By 6 weeks: The LA must tell you if they will or will not be assessing your child.

By 16 weeks: The LA must finish the assessment and inform you of their decision.

Between 16-20 weeks: The LA will send you a draft EHC Plan. You have 15 days to comment and suggest a specific school.

By 20 weeks: The LA must issue your child's final EHC Plan and a school will be named

Every 12 months: The LA must review your child's EHC Plan - this is the 'annual review'

EHCP Myths and Legends:

What an EHCP IS NOT...

An EHCP doesn't mean your child gets an adult with them all the time. Instead, it's made to help your child become more independent and make progress on their own.

If extra resources aren't needed, then an EHC plan might not be necessary, and the needs can be met with the regular funding that is assigned to school.

An EHCP is **not** meant to be used to allow your child to change schools repeatedly.

How can I help my child?

- Limit screen time
- Read with your child
- Offer a balanced and varied diet
- Make sure they get enough sleep
- Help them become stronger when facing challenges by praising them for their hard work and for not giving up
- Come to meetings such as parents' evenings, phonics sessions, transitions, and SEN meetings. We get the best results when we work together!
- If you have any worries or if there are changes in your personal circumstances, inform the school so that they can offer support.