

- ✓ What are special educational needs?
- ✓ What can you do for your child with SEN?
- ✓ How to get help for a child with SEN



Help available for children with

special educational needs

AT A GLANCE



How can I help my child who has special educational needs?

- Children with special educational needs (SEN) have learning difficulties or other disabilities that make learning harder for them than it is for most children the same age.
- Children with SEN could have difficulties with all the work in school; reading, writing, number work, understanding information, expressing themselves, understanding what others are saying, making friends or relating to adults.
- Help for children with SEN will usually be in the child's ordinary, mainstream early education setting or school.
- Every child makes progress at a different rate and has different ways in which they learn best.
- You should be consulted about all the decisions that affect your child. If you have concerns or worries, you should share them with your child's teacher or any other professional working with your child.
- If your child is not yet in school or not yet going to a nursery or pre-school, you can talk to your doctor or health visitor who will be able to give you advice.
- If your child is at school or in an early education setting and you think they might have a special need that has not been identified, you should talk to their class teacher or headteacher straightaway.

Did you know?

There are many voluntary organisations that help both children with disabilities or learning difficulties. See the back page of this booklet for more details.

Help is at hand

Being a parent is hard enough. Being a parent of a child with learning difficulties or disabilities can be even harder. Your child may need extra help at school as well as extra help at home. You love and support your child as much as you can but sometimes you need a little more help. Don't worry – you're not alone.

There is plenty of help at hand for children with special educational needs (SEN). You should always be able to talk to someone or ask advice without delay. And your child should be entitled to special help at school.

That's what this booklet is for. It's full of advice about how you can cope better and support a child with SEN. It will help you to:

- **understand what special educational needs mean**
- **know what you can do as a parent of a child with SEN**
- **get help for your child if they have SEN.**

What those terms mean

Early education settings – All pre-school education such as nursery classes and schools, day nurseries and playgroups.

LA – Local authority, which is responsible for education in your area.

Mainstream school – An ordinary school for all children, not just those with SEN.

Special educational needs (SEN) – Children have SEN if they have learning difficulties that need special education.

SENCO – The person responsible for co-ordinating help for children with special educational needs.

SEN – what does it mean?

Children with special educational needs (SEN) have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than it is for most children of the same age. They may need extra or different help from that given to other children.

- Children do not have learning difficulties just because their first language is not English. (Although some of these children may have learning difficulties as well.)
- Children with SEN may need extra help because of a range of difficulties such as those associated with thinking and understanding, moving and hearing, emotions and behaviour, speech and language, or how they relate to other people.
- Many children will have SEN of some kind at some time during their schooling. Schools and other organisations can help most children overcome their difficulties quickly and easily. But a few children will need extra help for some or all of their time in school.

So special educational needs could mean that a child has difficulties with:

- all the work in school
- reading, writing, number work or understanding information
- expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying
- making friends or relating to adults
- behaving properly in school
- organising themselves.

Remember...

...you should be consulted about all the decisions that affect your child. If you have concerns or worries at any time, you should share them with your child's teacher or any other professional working with your child.

Understanding SEN

- Help for children with SEN will usually be given in the child's ordinary, mainstream early education setting or school. Sometimes outside specialists will get involved too.
- The Government has set out what most children should be able to do by the end of the school reception year. This is in the Early Learning Goals of the foundation stage of education for children from 3 to 5 years.
- The National Curriculum for children from 5 to 16 years also sets out what most children will learn at each stage of their education.
- Children make progress at different rates and have different ways in which they learn best. Teachers are expected to look carefully at how they organise their lessons from the classroom to the books and materials they give to each child and the way they teach.
- All teachers will choose the best ways to help each child learn a range of activities.
- Children making slower progress or having particular difficulties in one area may be given extra help or different lessons to help them succeed.

- The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies also help children learn to read, write and understand numbers and mathematics in different ways and at different speeds.

Remember...

...just because your child is making slower progress than you expected, you should not assume that they have special educational needs.



Sign support assistant communicates with child

What can you do as a parent?

Your child's early years are very important for their all-round development. When your health visitor or doctor makes a routine check, they might suggest that there could be a problem. But if you have any worries of your own, you should get advice straightaway.

- If your child is not yet in school or not yet going to a nursery or pre-school, you can talk to your doctor or health visitor who will be able to give you advice about the next steps to take.
- If your child is at school or in an early education setting and you think they might have a special need that has not been identified by the school or pre-school, you should talk to your child's class teacher or headteacher straightaway. You could also talk to the SENCO. This is the person responsible for co-ordinating help for children with special educational needs.
- If your child is in secondary school, you should talk to the child's form teacher, SENCO, head of year or headteacher.
- It is best to start with your child's teacher or the SENCO. You will be able to talk over your concerns and find out what the school thinks. The SENCO will be able to explain what happens next.

Most children's needs will be met by their school but if, after the school has tried different things over a reasonable period of time, your child is not making adequate progress, you, or your child's school, can ask the local authority (LA) if they will consider carrying out a full assessment and issuing a statement of SEN. A statement sets out in detail a child's needs and the help that should be provided. Once a statement is made, the LA must make sure that the educational help described in it is provided.

Work it out

Working together with your child's teachers will often help to sort out worries and problems. The closer you work with your child's teachers, the more successful any help for your child should be.

How else can you get help?

You might like to ask for help if the school thinks your child has difficulties or special educational needs. You can still ask for help even if your child is able to work at the same level as children of their age or already getting some extra help.

Remember...

...you know your child better than anyone and can help them the most.

As well as your child's school and local education authority (LA), other organisations you can get help from are:

- the parent partnership service in your local authority (see the back page of the booklet for more details)
- child health services
- social services
- local voluntary organisations, mainly charities.

Your copy of the code

You can get free copies of the SEN Code of Practice from the Department for Education and Skills through the teachernet website or call DFES Publications on **0845 60 222 60**. (See the back page for more information.)

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice gives guidance to early education settings, state schools, LAs and anybody else that helps provide help for children with special educational needs. It sets out all the processes that all these organisations must follow to meet the needs of children. They must not ignore the code and must take it into account when they write their SEN policies and work with children with SEN.



Child gets support from special needs assistant

Want to find out more?

There are many voluntary organisations that help children with disabilities or learning difficulties, and their parents. You can get more details from your local authority (LA), your local library, the Citizens Advice Bureau or the local Council of Voluntary Service.

For more information on children with special educational needs check out the DfES publication *Special Educational Needs – a guide for parents and carers*. This, and lots of other information, can be found at the following websites:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen

<http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk>

For a guide to the law and your rights, visit

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/sen

You can also get help from the local parent partnership service. Your LA will be able to tell you how to get in touch with them.

Can't get onto the internet at home?

Visit your local library which will have computers and internet access.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from: DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.
Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Fax: 0845 60 333 60 Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com Please quote ref: PKHFM16

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