

MAKING SENSE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

School Action : This is a category of Special Educational Needs Provision for children who require some additional or different educational provision than what is normally provided for children in mainstream schools.

A child may be put on School Action if there is evidence of a lack of progress or a gap between a child and their peers.

School Action may involve different teaching strategies or learning materials, and targeted small group or individual work to address specific areas of difficulty. The school's Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) will advise the class teacher on ways to support the child's learning.

The school should inform parents when their child is placed on School Action.

School Action Plus : A child may move on to School Action Plus when there is evidence that they are not making adequate progress at School Action. Alternatively a child may be placed directly on School Action Plus if their school considers that they have more significant learning difficulties, sensory/physical difficulties, or emotional/behavioural difficulties which would necessitate the involvement of extra or specialist help.

School Action Plus usually involves some form of support coming in from outside the school for example specialist teaching, therapy (Speech/Language Occupational), specialist equipment, or educational psychologist advice.

The progress of children on School Action and School Action Plus should be monitored regularly (at least twice a year). An Individualised Education Plan (IEP) or equivalent means of target-setting with agreed strategies should be set and shared with the parents.

Statutory Assessment : A statutory assessment is carried out by the local authority if they have reason to believe that a child's special educational needs could not be met solely by the resources available in a typical maintained school. Schools have their own SEN budgets with which they are able to provide a certain amount of extra support and/or specialist resources.

If a pupil will likely require more than this support, or if they are likely to be most appropriately educated in a special school, than a statutory assessment is necessary.

The Statutory Assessment process can be triggered through a (written) parental request or a school request. If you are considering requesting a statutory assessment for your child, it is best to consult with your child's school first. If the school is thinking of making a request for statutory assessment for your child, they should consult with you. If the local authority decides to undertake a statutory assessment then they will inform you of their decision in writing and will arrange for professionals to contribute to the assessment through written reports based on observations and assessments of your child. The local authority will seek a view from a medical professional, an educational psychologist, social services (if your child is known to them), the child's school, and any relevant therapists. **Statutory Assessment may or may not lead to the creation of a statement.**

Statement : A statement is a formal document describing a child's special educational needs and the special educational provision necessary to meet those needs.

Part Two of the statement should be a comprehensive summary of your child's needs, as detailed in the reports gathered during statutory assessment.

Part Three, which is legally binding, describes what type of educational setting and provision should be provided for your child.

Part Four of the statement will name your child's school. This will be left blank when you receive your child's draft statement, in order for you to express a preference for the school of your choice.

The Education Act Schedule 27 (3) (3) gives parents the right to express a preference for a maintained school with which the local authority should comply **unless**:

- ⇒ It is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs (SEN)
- ⇒ The child's placement at the school would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education of others **or** incompatible with the efficient use of resources

A statement is reviewed annually at the Annual Review meeting. When your child has a statement, the process of school application changes and it becomes the local authority's role to approach potential schools for admission.

KEY PEOPLE WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD

Teaching Assistant or Learning Support Assistant : Teaching Assistants (TAs) are employed to provide extra support to children who require this intervention in order to access education and make better progress in their learning.

Most of the time, children who receive individual support from a teaching assistant have a statement which specifies the number of hours of support they should receive each week. Sometimes schools will employ “floating” teaching assistants who provide extra help where needed throughout the school. In the Early Years and Foundation Stage it is more common to see additional teaching assistants employed by the school. The experience and qualifications of teaching assistants varies widely; some will have experience and knowledge of special educational needs, others will not.

It is important to remember that even if your child has a teaching assistant who provides them with individual support, it is ultimately the class teacher and the SENCO who are responsible for planning and differentiating school and home work for your child. It is essential for your child’s school to provide time for your child’s teaching assistant to meet with the class teacher in order to plan and review learning activities and strategies for your child.

Class Teacher : Your child’s class teacher should be your first port of call with any concerns about your child’s learning, progress or behaviour. Class teachers are usually very busy but can make time to meet with parents before or after school.

Speech and Language Therapist : A speech and language therapist will work with children on a variety of aspects of communication including speaking, listening, non-verbal communication, and social skills. Speech and language therapists can also work with children who have difficulties chewing and swallowing.



SENCO : Every school will have a special educational needs coordinator who is responsible for overseeing special educational provision in accordance with the school’s SEN Policy.

The SENCO liaises with teachers about pupil support and teaching strategies. They are responsible for management of SEN teaching assistants. They also liaise with external services including educational psychologists, health and social services. They are responsible for maintaining records of pupils with special education.

In many schools, the SENCO spends much of their time working either individually or in small groups with children who have special needs. He or she will also meet with parents of children with SEN to discuss progress.

Occupational Therapist : Occupational Therapists work with children who have difficulties with everyday activities including writing, using scissors, toileting, washing, etc. Their work with children can help improve coordination, motor planning, and sensory integration issues. They can recommend sensory activities that can help to calm some children who experience sensory integration problems for example a brushing programme or some time spent wearing a weighted blanket or vest.

Physiotherapist : Physiotherapists work with children with physical problems; they will mainly be involved in cases where children have difficulties with movement and/or have specific conditions affecting gross motor skills such as cerebral palsy.

Educational Psychologist : Every school will have an educational psychologist who visits them regularly, but not necessarily frequently. The Ed Psych will usually make observations of pupils who the school have concerns about. They will then make recommendations to the school about strategies they should use to support the pupil to address the difficulties the pupil is experiencing. Educational psychologists are usually happy to meet with parents to discuss their pupil observations and recommendations.

If you are considering requesting statutory assessment you should ask the school if your child has been seen recently by the educational psychologist. If not, you can ask the school if the Ed Psych can observe your child the next time they visit. If your child does get a statutory assessment, an educational psychologist will be asked to observe your child and speak with you about your child. They will compile a report based on this which will contribute to the statutory assessment.