

What are Special Educational Needs?



Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)



Hampshire
County Council



A guide for parents and carers

A child has special educational needs (SEN) if he/she has learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for him/her to learn than most other children of about the same age.

Some children may have a temporary difficulty with, for example, early skills, reading, number work or behaviour which can, with the help of parents/carers and early education settings/schools, be overcome. Quite a lot of children have difficulties at some time during their education and it is perfectly normal for these difficulties to be sorted out in the early education setting or school.

A child's special educational needs may relate to:

- **learning difficulties** in acquiring basic skills
- **behavioural, emotional and social difficulties** where a child may have difficulty in forming social relationships and concentrating on work
- **specific learning difficulty** with reading, writing and number work, calling for a more structured approach to learning
- **speech and language difficulties** where a child may have a particular reason for not being able to speak or is delayed in the development of speech and language skills
- **communication difficulties** which affect a child's ability to understand social communication, social situations and language
- **physical disability** which may be present from birth or arise from injury or illness
- **medical or health conditions** which may slow down a child's progress and/or involve treatment that affects their education

- **hearing impairment** involving significant hearing loss or deafness which can seriously affect speech and the ability to benefit from normal approaches and engage in conversation with others
- **visual impairment** where a child may have been born partially sighted or blind or have become so through an accident, illness or a deteriorating condition.

How can I find out if my child has special educational needs?

You may be the first to notice your child has difficulties but there are others who can help depending on the age of your child.

- If your child hasn't started at an early education setting or school your first point of contact will probably be your health visitor or doctor. They can help, advise you of the next steps to take and put you in touch with other people such as speech and language therapists. Extra help can be offered at early education settings, through voluntary organisations or through a home visiting service, such as Portage. If your child's needs are severe or complex, your health visitor or doctor may approach the Children's Services Department SEN Service on your behalf or alternatively you may wish to consult the SEN Service directly (see back page for contact details)
- If your child is at an early education setting or school, a member of staff will talk to you if they have concerns about your child's progress.

If you notice any difficulties with your child's ability to learn, you should talk to a member of staff about them first. You will be fully consulted about any special plans and might be involved in helping with your child's learning programmes.



What can early education settings and schools do to help?

Most children's needs can be met in their local early education setting or mainstream school.

Early education settings and schools place great importance on identifying special educational needs early so that they can help children as quickly as possible. Once it has been decided that your child has SEN, staff working with your child should take account of the guidance in the SEN Code of Practice. The Code describes how help for children with special educational needs in early education settings and schools should be made through a step-by-step or 'graduated approach'. At an early stage you should receive information about the local Parent Partnership Service.

Hampshire County Council puts money directly into school budgets so that schools can provide additional support for pupils with special educational needs. Local health trusts, the County Council's Children's Services Department, Social Care and voluntary organisations provide many services directly to children, so referral to the Children's Services Department SEN Service is only necessary for a few children.

In response to early signs that your child has special educational needs, the early education setting or school adopt a graduated approach which may include:

- an individually-designed learning programme
- extra help from a member of staff, such as a teacher or learning support assistant
- receiving support individually or in a small group for regular short periods

- drawing up an individual education plan, including setting targets for improvement and regular review of progress before setting new targets.

At first the key worker, class, subject or year teacher takes overall responsibility for your child's educational programme and will keep you informed. They may also ask the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) for advice and support. All schools and early education settings have an identified SENCo.

The early education setting/school must tell you when they first start giving extra or different help because your child has special educational needs. This is called Early Years Action or School Action.

For more significant needs it may be necessary to involve other people, both within and outside the early education setting or school, and again you will be consulted and kept fully informed. This kind of help is called Early Years Action Plus or School Action Plus. This may involve assessment and advice from an educational psychologist, specialist teacher adviser or therapist.

Within this framework your child's progress will be carefully recorded, monitored and reviewed.

After this 'step by step' approach there should be a clear written record about what the early education setting or school has done to assess and provide for your child's needs. The content of this record will be discussed with you. There will be an education plan for your child with clearly recorded reviews and outcomes, and reference to the involvement of other professionals, where relevant. In this way the level of help will be carefully matched to your child's needs.



How can I help?

You can take an active part in helping your child both at home and by updating your child's early education setting/school on the progress being made.

You may like to:

- play or work with your child at home and help with his or her early skills or reading and writing
- assist teaching staff with any home-based work or activities they may suggest
- discuss progress regularly with your child's key workers or teachers
- ask to see your child's records of work and progress and, where appropriate, the individual programme.

All early education settings and schools have a policy which details how they support children with special educational needs. For schools this also sets out the responsibilities of the school and its governing body. A copy is available on request from the early education setting or school and the supervisor or headteacher will be happy to discuss any aspect of it with you.

What if I still have concerns?


A very small number of children will require further help. They may need a statutory assessment which could lead to a statement of special educational needs.

What can happen for those with the greatest special educational needs?

In most cases the action that early education settings or schools take will ensure that your child gets all the necessary help. For a very small number of children (about two per cent of the total school population) more help may be needed and a statutory assessment suggested. This is only required for children who have the most significant and long-term special educational needs which need very detailed assessment.

If you or your child's supervisor or headteacher believe that a statutory assessment may be necessary this can be requested. You will then receive a letter from the Children's Services Department SEN Service giving full details of the assessment procedures and seeking your views on your child's needs. After consultation with you, your child's early education setting or school and an educational psychologist, the Children's Services Department SEN Service will consider whether or not a statutory assessment is necessary. Following statutory assessment a statement of special educational needs may be produced for your child.

A statement is a legal document which brings together a collection of reports from you, the early education setting or school, educational psychologist, medical officer and, where necessary, others including Social Care and therapists. Your child's views are equally important. The statement provides a detailed guide to your child's special educational needs, the educational provision and other arrangements needed to meet them. Statutory assessment leading to a statement is a lengthy, formal process which can take up to 26 weeks to complete.



Children with statements are those with the most complex, severe and long-term needs. Wherever possible, special arrangements are made to continue their education in a local mainstream school, with whatever individual learning programmes, equipment, facilities, teaching and special assistance they may need.

Some children with statements find it more difficult to cope in a mainstream setting and benefit from the concentration of specialist teaching, expertise, resources, facilities, equipment and adapted buildings found in Hampshire County Council's special schools or resourced provision in mainstream schools. Very exceptionally, where the necessary facilities are not available, 'out county' placements in schools provided by voluntary organisations or specialist independent schools may be sought.

Hampshire County Council has 26 special schools and 50 resourced provisions in mainstream schools catering for a wide range of needs including:

- behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
- hearing impairment
- moderate learning difficulties
- physical disability
- severe learning difficulties
- social communication difficulties (including autistic spectrum disorder)
- specific learning difficulties
- speech, language and communication needs
- visual impairment.

Assistance with travel arrangements is available in certain circumstances. Details are available from the Children's Services Department (see back page for address).

What about further education?

For a child who has a statement, planning for further education usually begins when the child is about 14. It takes place at a review meeting including the child, parents/carers, school, Connexions Service personal adviser, and anyone else who may need to be present, such as the educational psychologist or the child's social worker. A transition plan is produced after the meeting as a guide to future provision.

Further education is provided in school sixth forms, through special school provision for 16-19 year olds, and local colleges. Where suitable local provision is not available students may be placed at special schools elsewhere or in specialist further education colleges on the basis of the Children's Services Department's recommendations to the Learning and Skills Council. Future options are considered in consultation with parents/carers and students.

Where can I get more advice?

- **Your child's early education setting or school**

Your first point of contact is your child's early years setting or school. Begin with the key worker or class teacher but, if you need to, speak to the special needs co-ordinator or supervisor/headteacher. They may put you in touch with others, such as an educational psychologist, an education welfare officer, health services staff or the SEN Service.

- **Parent Partnership Service**

The Parent Partnership Service is based in Winchester (tel: 01962 845870). The Service will be happy to deal with enquiries. A member of the team can help put you in touch with voluntary organisations as well as helping with information for parents whose first language is not English, or who require Braille or tape facilities.

- **Your local doctor (GP) and health trust**

Your local doctor (GP) and health trust can provide a wide range of health services including assessment and treatment for your child. Many of these services, such as therapies, are provided in partnership with the Children's Services Department and may take place in education settings. Your main contacts are your GP, health visitor (for under-fives), school nurse or school doctor.

- **Educational Psychology Service**

Educational psychologists work on behalf of individual children, including pre-school children, at the request of parents or teachers. They offer advice on how to help children learn effectively and to make the most of their education.

Educational Psychology Service

Fleet Team

North Hampshire,
Rushmoor and Hart
Educational
Psychology Service
Fleet Local Office
Birch House
Barley Way
Fleet GU13 8YB
Tel: 01252 812333

Winchester Team

Mid Hampshire,
Eastleigh and Test
Valley, New Forest
Winchester Local
Office
Clarendon House
Romsey Road
Winchester SO22 5PW
Tel: 01962 869611

Havant Team

East Hampshire,
Fareham and
Gosport
Educational
Psychology Service
Havent Local Office
River Way
Havant PO9 2EL
Tel: 023 9249 8200

For further information

SEN Service

Hampshire County
Council
Children's Services
Department
County Office
The Castle
Winchester S023 8UG
Tel: 01962 846452
[www.hants.gov.uk/tc/
inclusion/senhome.
html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/tc/inclusion/senhome.html)

Early Education & Childcare Unit

Hampshire County
Council
Children's Services
Department
County Office
The Castle
Winchester S023 8UG
Tel: 01962 846452
[www.hants.gov.uk/tc/
childcare/eyintro.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/tc/childcare/eyintro.html)

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Department for
Education and Skills
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0870 000 2288
www.dfes.gov.uk/sen

Parent Partnership Service

Hampshire County
Council
Children's Services
Department
County Office
The Castle
Winchester S023 8UG
Tel: 01962 845870
[www.hants.gov.uk/tc/
edpp/pphome.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/tc/edpp/pphome.html)

Hampshire Social Care

Trafalgar House
The Castle
Winchester S023 8UQ
Tel: 01962 847125
[www.hants.gov.uk/
socservs/index.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/socservs/index.html)

Voluntary organisations

A list is included in
the booklet Statutory
Assessment Procedure
- a guide for parents,
available from the
SEN Service or from
the website:
[www.hants.gov.uk/tc/
inclusion/pubpc.html](http://www.hants.gov.uk/tc/inclusion/pubpc.html)



For further information about this leaflet, please phone the SEN Service on 01962 846252 or email enquiries.sen@hants.gov.uk

**For a large print copy please phone
0800 280 0888**

You may also request Braille, audio cassette and other languages:

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Textphone 0808 100 2484

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