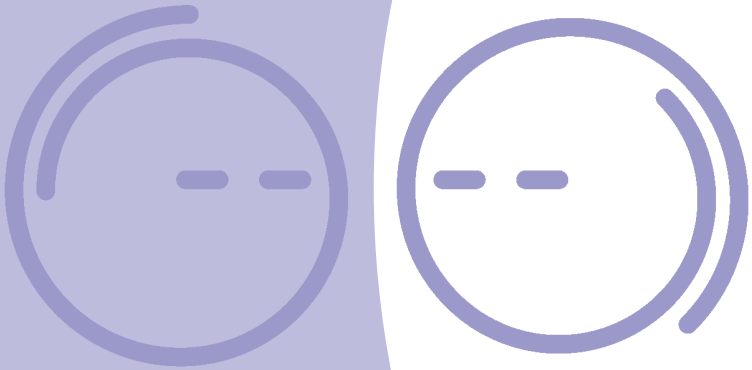


parent partnership

# Special Educational Needs

A parents and carers guide to  
Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus  
School Action and School Action Plus





# working with parents

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## Introduction

This booklet is a brief guide for parents whose child may have special educational needs at some point in their school life.

A child is considered to have learning difficulties (special educational needs) if he/she finds it more difficult to learn than most other children. A child may have difficulties in one area such as reading, or in several areas.

This booklet describes the process of how your child would normally receive help, although it may vary from school to school.

We aim to help you to

- understand what school and other professionals can do to help your child
- know what help is available for your child
- be involved in your child's education and work together with your child's school

It can be very difficult for parents when they realise their child has a learning difficulty and is struggling at school. As a parent, you have the right to be involved in decisions about your child's education at all stages, and it is important that you and the school or early education setting, work together for your child.

This booklet is only a guide. If we do not answer your questions, or you would like further information or support, please ring:



## Help at school

About 1 in 5 children will need extra help at school at some time in their education. Some children have extra help all the time they are at school, while other children need help for a short time.

The government have produced guidance to enable staff in early education settings and schools to provide the best possible help for children with Special Educational Needs. This guidance is known as “*The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.*”

Assessment and extra help for children with learning difficulties is provided using a graduated approach, according to the Code of Practice. School Action and School Action Plus or Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus are put in place by your child’s school or early education setting and are covered in this booklet.

The Code of Practice divides a child’s educational career into three phases:

- Early education settings (3-5 years)
- Primary phase (5-11 years)
- Secondary phase (11-19 years)

All early education settings in receipt of government funding and all schools, are expected to have a Special Educational Needs Policy; which describes how help is given to children with learning difficulties. You can ask for a copy of their policy.

All early education settings in receipt of government funding have a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator): a teacher or practitioner with particular responsibility for special educational needs. You can ask to meet with the SENCO to discuss your child’s learning difficulties.

In both early education settings and schools, careful monitoring of children's progress, using a graduated approach, ensures that any special educational needs are identified as early as possible.

Children whose learning difficulties need the Local Education Authority to decide the additional help they need in school may need a Statement of Special Educational Needs. A separate booklet covers the procedure, which is known as Statutory Assessment, and is available from Parent Partnership.



**Further information:**

Special Educational Needs: A Guide for Parents and Carers and Special Educational Needs Code of Practice available from the DFES on **0845 6022260**

Getting Extra Help: Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) on **020 7354 8318**

## Early Years Action

At Early Years Action your child's teacher or early education practitioner will have identified that your child may need additional support to help them make adequate progress. The code of practice suggests that 'adequate progress can be defined in a number of ways. It might, for instance, be progress which:

- closes the attainment gap between the child and their peers
  - prevents the attainment gap growing wider
  - is similar to that of peers starting from the same baseline, but less than the majority of peers
  - matches or betters the child's previous rate of progress
  - ensures access to the full curriculum
  - demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills
  - demonstrates improvements in the child's behaviour'
- (Code of Practice p34)

Your child's nursery teacher or early education practitioner will make a judgement using this and/or other ways, considering that children progress at different rates and looking at what is reasonable progress for your child. If it is identified that your child is not making adequate progress, this means that your child will need help at Early Years Action that is additional to or different from the strategies provided as part of the settings usual curriculum.' (Code of Practice p35)

At this stage, your child's early education practitioner (this could be a nursery teacher, Special Needs Coordinator or someone else who is involved with your child) will discuss this with you.

The discussion between you and your child's early education practitioner will give you the opportunity to let the setting know if you feel anything else may be affecting your child's education, such as health problems or changes at home.

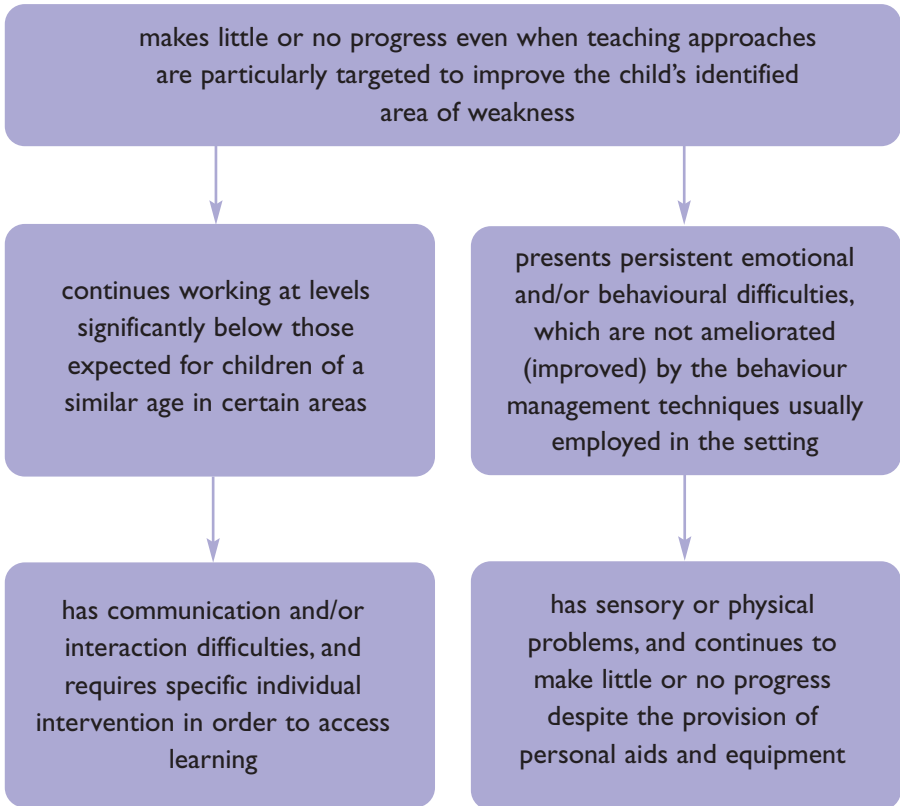
## Individual Education Plan

The extra help your child will receive at Early Years Action will be set out in an *Individual Education Plan* by the early education setting and will include specific targets for your child to achieve. This plan should be discussed with you and your child, where appropriate, and should be reviewed regularly, in consultation with you. This will help inform you of the progress of your child.

In your child's Individual Education Plan you should see:

- The targets for your child to achieve before the review date
- Who will be helping your child and how
- Any particular materials, equipment or activities that will be used
- When the plan is to be reviewed

**Early Years Action** Taken from section 4:21 page 35 of The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice ‘The triggers for intervention through *Early Years Action* could be the practitioner’s or parent’s concern about a child who despite receiving appropriate early education experiences:



## Early Years Action Plus

If you and your child's early education setting agree that your child is not making adequate progress with the additional support offered at Early Years Action, it may be considered by the early education practitioner (e.g. nursery teacher or other adult involved with your child) that your child needs support at Early Years Action Plus.

This means that help will be sought from external support services. This could mean seeking advice from someone like a specialist teacher from the Specialist Teaching Service, a speech and language therapist or perhaps an educational psychologist.

The Special Needs Coordinator will usually be the person to coordinate help for your child and gather any additional advice needed.

This request for further help is likely to follow an Individual Education Plan review meeting, with a Special Needs Coordinator and in consultation with parents. 'The review should consider:

- Has progress been made?
- What are the parents' views?
- Is there a need for more information about the child?

(Code of Practice p37)

To help identify the difficulties your child is having, a specialist may observe your child in their early education setting, may ask them to do particular activities and may discuss your child with the early education practitioner. The practitioner will consult with you about these specialists and ask for your agreement for your child to be seen. The Special Needs Coordinator will then write a new Individual Education Plan for your child and discuss this with you. This will list new targets for your child and a new date for you and the early education setting to discuss your child's progress.

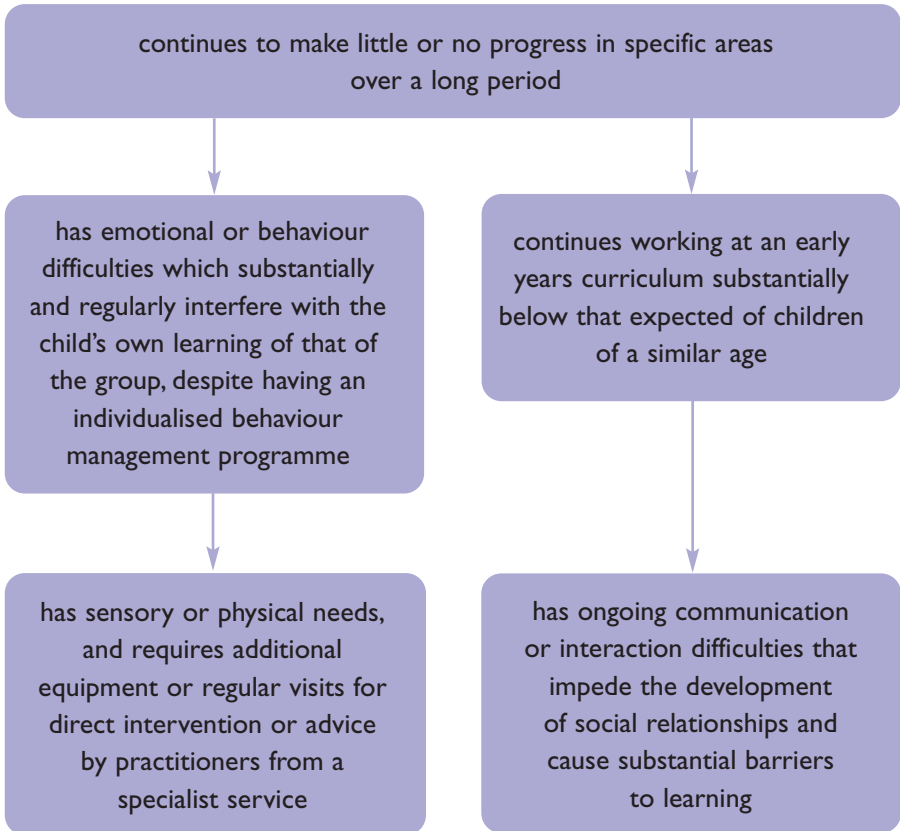
At the next review meeting to discuss your child's progress, the outside specialist may also attend or send a report, and again you and the early education practitioner will decide what to do next for your child.

There is no minimum or maximum amount of time that a child is expected to spend at Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus. However your child's progress should be reviewed regularly and targets revised to reflect progress. Your child's records should be kept up to date.

After some time at Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus it may be felt that your child should be referred to the Local Education Authority (LEA) to carry out a Statutory Assessment of their special educational needs. Any such decisions should be made in full consultation with you. It is at this stage that the LEA will become involved for the first time and the LEA will decide whether to carry out a Statutory Assessment for your child and whether they may need a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Statutory Assessment and Statements are covered in a further booklet available from the Parent Partnership Service.

Only a very small number of pupils (perhaps about 2% of the total school population) will have needs that are complex enough to require a Statement of special educational needs.

**Early Years Action Plus** Taken from section 4:31 pages 37 and 38 of The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 'The triggers for referral for seeking help from outside agencies could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme and/or concentrated support, the child:



## School Action

At School Action your child's teacher will have identified that your child may need additional support to help them make adequate progress and have a duty to inform you. The code of practice suggests that 'adequate progress can be defined in a number of ways. It might, for instance, be progress which:

- closes the attainment gap between the child and their peers
- prevents the attainment gap growing wider
- is similar to that of peers starting from the same baseline, but less than the majority of peers
- matches or betters the child's previous rate of progress
- ensures access to the full curriculum
- demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills
- demonstrates improvements in the child's behaviour (secondary schools only)
- is likely to lead to appropriate accreditation
- is likely to lead to participation in further education, training and/or employment' (Code of Practice pp52, 68)

Your child's teacher will make a judgement using this and/or other ways, considering that children progress at different rates and looking at what is reasonable progress for your child. If it is identified that your child is not making adequate progress, this means that your child will need help at School Action that is additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum.' (Code of Practice pp52, 68)

At this stage, your child's teacher will discuss this with you. The discussion between you and your child's teacher will give you the opportunity to let the school know if you feel anything else may be affecting your child's education, such as health problems or changes at home.

## Individual Education Plan (IEP)

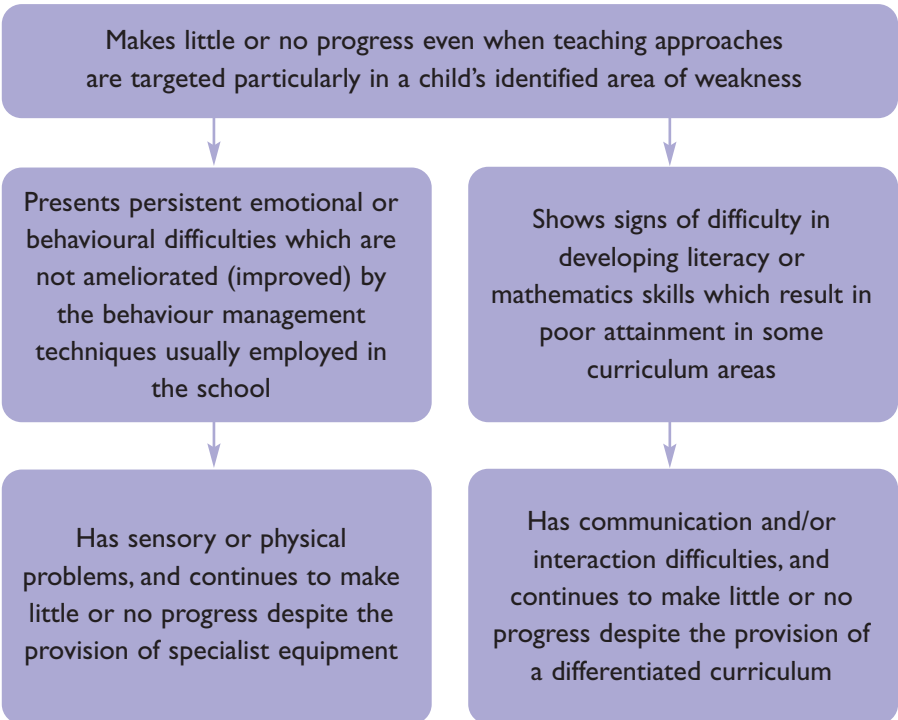
'The IEP should only record that which is additional to or different from the differentiated [(adjusted by breaking down into small steps)] curriculum plan, which is in place as part of provision for all children.' (Code of Practice p54)

The extra help your child will receive at School Action will be set out in an *Individual Education Plan* by the school (the teacher would normally do this with support from the Special Needs Coordinator) and will include specific targets for your child to achieve. This plan should be discussed with you, and your child where appropriate, as research shows that participation by children and young people in having ownership of their learning and targets can help to ensure their success. The IEP should be reviewed regularly, in consultation with you and your child, where appropriate. This will help inform you of the progress of your child.

In your child's Individual Education Plan you should see:

- The short-term targets set for or by your child
- How your child will specifically achieve their targets
- Who will be helping your child and how
- Any particular materials, equipment or activities that will be used
- When the plan is to be reviewed

Taken from section 5:44 pages 52 and 53 of The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 'The triggers for intervention through *School Action* could be the teacher's or other's concern, underpinned by evidence, about a child who despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities:



## School Action Plus

If you and your child's school agree that your child is not making adequate progress with the additional support offered at School Action, it may be considered by the school that your child needs support at School Action Plus.

This means that help will be sought from external support services. This could mean seeking advice from someone like a specialist teacher from the Specialist Teaching Service, a speech and language therapist or perhaps an educational psychologist.

The Special Needs Coordinator will usually be the person to coordinate help for your child and gather any additional advice needed.

This request for further help is likely to follow an Individual Education Plan review meeting, with a Special Needs Coordinator and in consultation with parents. 'The review should consider:

- Has progress been made?
- What are the parents' views?
- Is there a need for more information about the child?'

(Code of Practice p37)

To help identify the difficulties your child is having, a specialist may observe your child in their classroom, may ask them to do particular activities and may discuss your child with your child's class teacher and/or the Special Needs Coordinator. The class teacher or Special Needs Coordinator will consult with you about these specialists and ask for your agreement for your child to be seen. The Special Needs Coordinator will then write a new Individual Education Plan for your child and discuss this with you and with your child, if appropriate. This will list new targets for your child and a new date for you and the school to discuss your child's progress.

At the next review meeting to discuss your child's progress, the outside specialist may also attend or send a report, and again you, the school and your child, if appropriate, will decide what to do next.

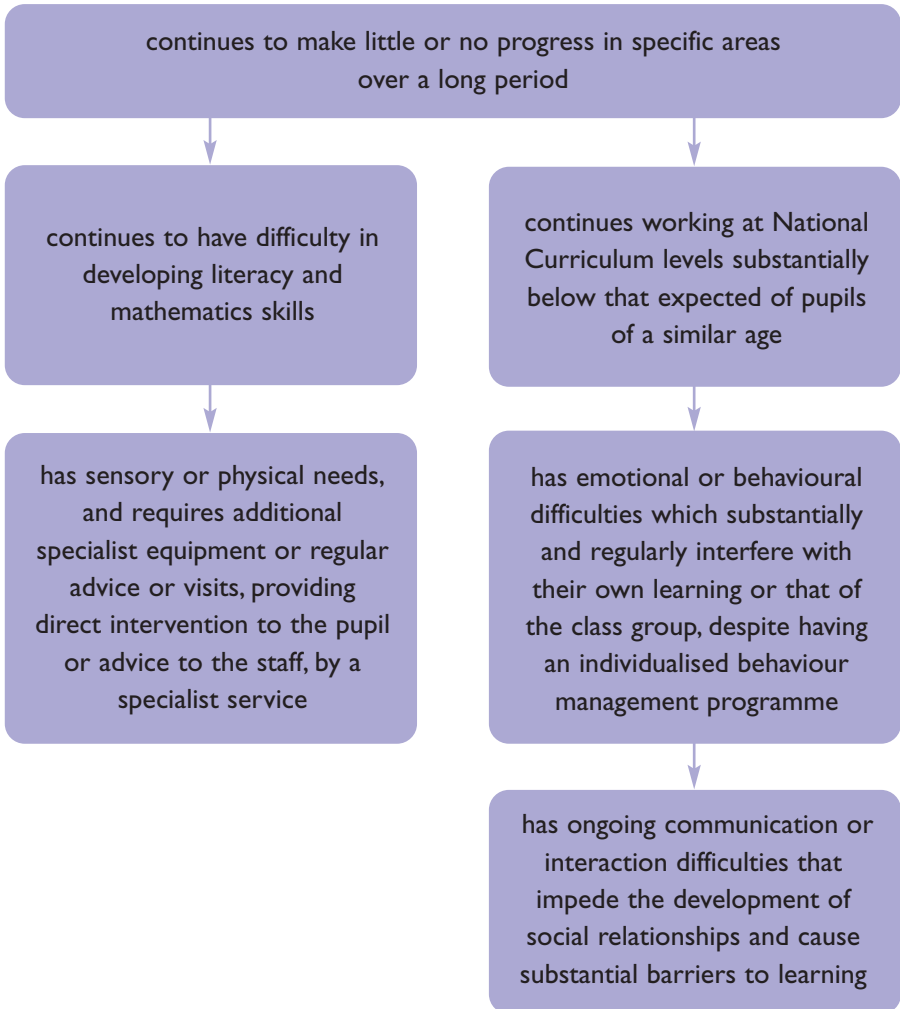
There is no minimum or maximum amount of time that a child is expected to spend at School Action or School Action Plus. However your child's progress should be reviewed regularly at Individual Education Plan review meetings and targets revised to reflect progress. Your child's records should be kept up to date and the Code of Practice recommends that Individual Education Plans should be reviewed 'at least twice a year.' (Code of Practice p54)

After some time at School Action Plus it may be felt that your child should be referred to the Local Education Authority (LEA) to carry out a Statutory Assessment of their special educational needs. Any such decisions should be made in full consultation with you. It is at this stage that the LEA will become involved for the first time and the LEA will decide whether to carry out a Statutory Assessment for your child and whether they may need a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Statutory Assessment and Statements are covered in a further booklet available from the Parent Partnership Service.

Only a very small number of pupils (perhaps about 2% of the total school population) will have needs that are complex enough to require a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

The resources needed to provide support at School Action and School Action Plus are already contained within school budgets.

Taken from section 6:64 page 71 of The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 'The triggers for *School Action Plus* could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme and/or concentrated support, the pupil:



## Working in Partnership

The best results for your child will happen when you, the school and the LEA are working in partnership. However, understanding what the school or early education setting and the LEA, is doing for your child and meeting with teachers and other professionals can be difficult for parents at times.

When you meet with the school, early education setting or the LEA, it may help if you have some idea of the information you want. If you wish to ask questions it may be helpful to let the school have the questions before the meeting so they can give you the answers when you meet. If anything is not clear at the meeting, ask for things to be explained again. Every profession has its own jargon with words that don't mean what you expect!

- It may also be helpful to take someone with you to the meeting, who can provide you with support at the meeting. An **Independent Parent Supporter** can do this. An Independent Parent Supporter can be a friend or relative, or an independent volunteer who has been trained in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, and who understands what the school or early education setting and the LEA, should be doing for your child.

Parent Partnership is in place to provide impartial advice, information and support to parents whose children have special educational needs. We can put parents in touch with a trained volunteer Independent Parent Supporter and we also hold information on local support groups and Voluntary Organisations that can be helpful to parents. Please ring if you would like an Independent Parent Supporter to help you, or if we can be of assistance:



01296 383754 **Parent Partnership**

## Definitions and Abbreviations

You may come across some of these definitions and abbreviations when dealing with your child's special needs.

### Types of Learning Difficulty

The Code of Practice suggests that children 'will have needs and requirements which fall into at least one of four areas, many children will have inter-related needs.

Communication and interaction

Cognition and learning

Behaviour, emotional and social development

Sensory and/or physical'  
(Code of Practice p85)

The Code of Practice recognises that all children are unique and that fixed categories of special educational needs cannot reflect the diversity of need in many young people.

### People You or Your Child Might Meet

#### **Educational Psychologist (EP)**

The Educational Psychologist is a psychologist with expertise in child development and working in the education field. They will consult about effective assessment and strategies to promote the emotional well-being of children in school to promote their learning, behaviour and development.

#### **Education Welfare Officer (EWO):**

Person employed by an LEA to help parents and LEAs meet their obligations in relation to school attendance.

### **Independent Parent Supporter**

Someone independent to give you help, information and advice about the procedures involved in dealing with your child's special educational needs. An IPS can be a friend, relative, someone from a voluntary organisation or a trained volunteer.

### **Learning Support Assistant (LSA)**

A non-teaching assistant who works under the direct supervision of the teacher to provide extra help to your child

### **Learning Support Teacher**

A teacher from the Specialist Teaching Service who is specially trained and offers advice to school on children with special educational needs.

### **Named Officer**

An officer from the LEA who may deal with your child's case. This may be an Education Officer (EO) or an Assistant Education Officer (AEO).

### **Occupational Therapist (OT):**

Occupational Therapists treat and advise on your child's co-ordination and manipulation skills.

### **Physiotherapist (PT):**

Physiotherapists treat and advise on your child's motor functions.

### **Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)**

A teacher at your child's school with particular responsibility for special educational needs.

### **Speech and Language Therapist (SALT):**

Speech and Language Therapists treat and advise on your child's speech and language skills.

### **Other Useful Terms:**

#### **Annual Review**

A meeting held at least every year to review a child's progress, particularly with reference to a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

### **Code of Practice**

A guide to schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) on the help they can give to children with special educational needs. Schools and LEAs must have regard to the Code when they deal with a child with special educational needs.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

A document drawn up by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and your child's teacher(s), detailing your child's particular needs and how the school are going to help your child.

### **Learning Difficulties**

A child has learning difficulties if he/she finds it much harder to learn than most children of the same age.

### **Local Education Authority (LEA)**

Local government body responsible for providing education and for making statutory assessments and maintaining statements.

### **Mainstream School**

An ordinary school

### **Maintained School**

A state school

### **Non-maintained Special School**

A non-profit making special school which charges fees. Charities or charitable trusts run most non-maintained special schools.

### **Note In Lieu of a statement**

A note in lieu is issued when the LEA decides that it is not necessary to write a statement. It will describe the child's special educational needs and the reasons why it was not appropriate to write a statement.

### **Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)**

A Pupil Referral Unit is a local education authority unit that offers pupils support in school, as well as education and help on a short-term basis, away from the mainstream school.

## **Review**

Any review of a child's progress other than the annual review; usually termly for a child on Action or Action Plus

## **School with a Department**

Mainstream schools with specialist departments for children with different kinds of learning difficulty who have Statements of Special Educational Needs.

## **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

A child has special educational needs if he/she has learning difficulties that need special help

## **Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)**

An independent body that hears parent's appeals against decisions made by the LEA.

## **Special School**

A school to help children with special educational needs, normally organised in smaller classes etc.

## **Specialist Teaching Service (STS)**

The Specialist Teaching Service offers assistance to schools through teachers who have qualifications and/or expertise in special educational needs.

## **Statement of Special Educational Needs**

A legal document that sets out a child's needs and all the extra help he/she should get.

## **Statutory Assessment**

A very detailed examination of a child's special educational needs. It may lead to a Statement

## **Transition Plan**

A plan drawn up at the first Annual Review of a statement after a child's 14th birthday, normally Year 9/10. It sets out the steps needed for a child to move from school to adult life.

## Notes

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