



**STOKE-ON-TRENT
PARENT PARTNERSHIP**

What are special educational needs?

This leaflet explains what special educational needs are, what support is available within school and what an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is.

What are special educational needs?

Children have special educational needs if they:

- find it significantly harder to learn than others their age, and
- need different or extra help and support to learn than other children their age

Children whose home language is not English must not be classed as having special educational needs unless they are having difficulty in learning.

What types of difficulties does the term SEN include?

The SEN Code of Practice groups special education needs into four main areas of need. These are:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Behaviour, emotional and social development
- Sensory and/or physical

A child may have needs in more than one of these areas.

Communication and interaction includes any difficulty which a child has in communicating and interacting with others. This may include speech and language delays or disorders, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, hearing impairment and autistic spectrum disorders.

Cognition and learning includes children who have difficulties in learning and understanding. This may include moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, physical and sensory difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

Behaviour, emotional and social development includes disruptive or disturbing behaviour, hyperactivity, lack of concentration, immature social skills and emotional difficulties.

Sensory and/or physical difficulties includes hearing and visual impairments (both permanent and temporary) and physical difficulties

What should I do if I think my child has Special Educational Needs?

Every school has a teacher who is responsible for co-ordinating the help that children with special educational needs receive. This teacher is called the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator).

If you feel that your child has special educational needs you should make an appointment to see your child's class/form teacher along with the SENCO. It is helpful to make a list of your concerns before you go to the meeting so that you all of the points that you want to discuss are covered. Ask the teachers if they have noticed any issues with your child's learning at school.

Some difficulties such as ADHD and Autism may need investigating by a doctor. You should make an appointment to see your GP or school nurse to discuss your concerns and ask for a referral to be made to a specialist if appropriate.

Do all children with special educational needs need to go to a special school?

The majority of children with special educational needs attend mainstream schools. All mainstreams schools can support children with special educational needs. Those children with severe or complex needs may attend a special school if it is felt by the parents and the Local Authority that this is necessary.

What help is available at school for my child?

When a child has been identified as having special educational needs they will be placed on the special educational needs register. This is a list of the children within the school that have special educational needs and helps to ensure that they receive the help in school that they require. A teacher from school, usually the SENCO, will discuss this with you before placing your child on the SEN register.

The Local Authority gives every school extra funds to provide children with special educational needs support. This is known as delegated funding. The Local Authority within Stoke-on-Trent says that this funding should provide children with special educational needs **up to** 15 hours of support each week. It is important to remember that this support will not necessarily be on an individual basis.

The help that children with special educational needs receive depends on the level of their needs. This approach is known as the 'graduated response' to special educational needs. The first stage of the graduated response is called '**School Action**'.

What support is provided through School Action?

Children placed at the School Action stage will receive help from the teacher and/or learning support assistant/teaching assistant. This help will be **additional to** or **different from** what is provided for the rest of the children. This will be recorded in an IEP - see [Page 5](#) for more information on IEPs.

This extra help may be on an individual basis or as part of a small group. Your child may receive this help during lessons in the classroom or be withdrawn into a quieter area for more focused support.

The school will record what help each child with special educational needs gets, on a document called a 'Provision Map'. You are entitled to ask school for a copy of this but there may be a delay whilst the school produce a copy that only has your child's information on.

What if my child still doesn't make adequate progress?

If a child has been receiving help and support through School Action but still isn't making adequate progress, the next stage of the special educational needs arrangements is School Action Plus. The SENCO will usually talk to you at your child's IEP review before placing your child at **School Action Plus**.

What is the difference between School Action and School Action Plus?

Children receiving help through School Action Plus will still have an IEP. The main difference is that the school will seek help and advice from external support services such as the Educational Psychology Service, Speech and Language therapists or specialist teachers.

If a child is still not making adequate progress, despite the support provided through School Action Plus, the next stage of the graduated response would be a statutory assessment. More information can be found in our 'Statutory Assessment' leaflet - www.parent-partnership-stoke.co.uk/publications

What is an IEP?

An IEP, or Individual Education Plan, is a document that records the help that children with special educational needs receive in school. It will contain targets for the child to work towards. These targets should be SMART - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound.

The IEP will also contain the strategies that the school will use to help the child meet his/her targets, as well as success criteria and a review date.

School should discuss your child's IEP with you, ask you to sign it and then give you a copy to keep at home.

How often should an IEP be reviewed?

An IEP should be reviewed at least twice a year, although some schools review IEPs more frequently than this.

At least one IEP review should coincide with Parents' Evening, although you can ask for a more private meeting if you'd prefer. School should always seek parents' views when reviewing a child's IEP.

What is a LSA?

LSA stands for Learning Support Assistant. LSAs can also be known as Teaching Assistants (TAs) or Classroom Assistants.

An LSA provides to teachers and pupils in the classroom. They may work with children on a 1-to-1 basis or in small groups. Their duties may include

- helping children in improving literacy and numeracy skills
- checking that children understand tasks and helping when they find something difficult
- delivering therapy programmes
- giving general support to complete classroom work
- work on targets set in a child's IEP
- preparing learning materials and equipment
- Helping children with physical difficulties such as mobility, toileting and getting dressed
- completing assessments under the direction of the teacher

Will the LSA work with my child on a 1-to-1 basis all of the time?

An LSA may work with a child on a 1-to-1 basis for some of the day but they may also support children of similar ability in small groups. Very few children will need constant 1-to-1 support.

There can be disadvantages to a child getting constant 1-to-1 support. Children may become isolated from their peers or may begin to feel 'different'. They may also become too-dependant on having someone there to help.

What can I do to help my child?

Parents should try to keep in regular contact with the school. You should ask the SENCO/class teacher if there is anything that you don't understand. Parents and school working together as partners helps children with special educational needs to fulfil their potential.

Parents should try to attend IEP reviews and parents' evenings wherever possible. This will give you the opportunity to discuss the progress that your child is making or any concerns that you may have. You will also be able to discuss how best to support your child at home, including working on their IEP targets or homework.

Parents have a duty by law to ensure that their child attends school. If there are issues in school you should speak to your child's class teacher/head of year as soon as possible to try to resolve the situation.

Useful Websites

The SEN Code of Practice:

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfes%200581%202001

Advisory Centre for Education information leaflets on SEN:

www.ace-ed.org.uk/advice-about-education-for-parents/Special_Educational_Needs

Direct.gov - information from the government on SEN:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/SpecialEducationalNeeds/index.htm

Special Educational Needs (SEN): A guide for parents and carers booklet, produced by the government

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00639-2008

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