

A parent's guide to:

**SEN Support in
mainstream schools**



**For more details about
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Funded by Oxfordshire County Council

SEN Support in mainstream schools

What is SEN Support?

All children learn in different ways and make differing rates of progress.

Some children find learning harder than others, perhaps in reading, writing, maths or developing social skills and may need more help and support to make progress.

If it is the case that a child has greater difficulty in learning than most of the children of the same age or needs support that is additional or different to the others in their class, then they are said to have special educational needs (SEN). The legal definition of SEN has not changed.

If the early years setting, school or college your child or young person attends thinks your child may have special educational needs (SEN), they must talk to you about it.

Most children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are educated in their local mainstream school and should be given support with their learning to help them make progress. The support they are given is called SEN Support and is defined as 'help that is additional to or different from the support generally given to most of the other children of the same age.'

The school or setting should always let you know and involve you in decisions before they start giving the extra or different help to your child.

They should also discuss with you any plans to reduce or remove support from your child.

Who decides whether my child needs SEN Support?

All Class and subject teachers should regularly check whether their pupils are making progress. If they think your child is finding it harder than others to make progress, they should consider whether they might have SEN or need additional or different support from the others in the class.

The school should talk to you and your child about this. If a young person is 16 or older, the school should involve them directly.

Sometimes you may be the first to be aware that your child has some special educational needs. If you think your child may need SEN Support, you should talk to your child's teacher or to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of all pupils in their school and must do their best to make sure that any child with SEN gets the support they need.

If you are not happy about the support your child has, you can ask to talk to the SENCO or headteacher. If you feel you need help, advice or support for this meeting at school, you can contact SENDIASS Oxfordshire.

Schools in Oxfordshire use guidance documents [SEN Support](#) to help them decide whether and what type of support your child needs.

These help make sure that all schools and settings in Oxfordshire have a clear and consistent approach to identifying when a child or young person has SEN and how to support them to achieve good outcomes. They set out how parents, children and young people should be involved in decision-making as well as what schools and settings are expected to put in place for pupils with SEN from the funding that they receive.

This guidance is helpful in looking at the individual needs of each child and suggesting a range of approaches to meet their particular need.

The checklists in this guidance are intended to help identify a child's level of need and are not criteria. There is no specific number of ticks required to access SEN Support.

The SEND Code of Practice

The Code tells schools, Local Authorities and a long list of other organisations how to put the changes in SEN and Disability law contained within the Children and Families Act 2014 into practice.

It is statutory guidance and says what they **must** do and also what they **should** do. The difference between must and should is the 'musts' have to be done and 'should' means that they have to consider following the guidance and if they don't, have a good reason for not doing so.

A graduated approach

Because children and young people learn in different ways and can have different kinds or levels of SEN, the SEN Support system uses a graduated approach. This means that increasingly, step-by-step, specialist expertise can be brought in to help the early years setting, school or college with the difficulties that a child or young person may have.

The approach may include:

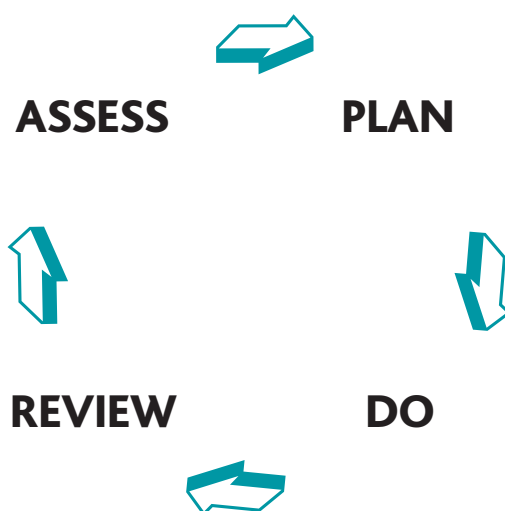
- an individually-designed learning programme
- extra help from a teacher/tutor or teaching assistant (TA)
- being taught individually or in a small group for regular short periods
- making or changing materials and equipment
- drawing up a personal plan, including setting targets for improvement, regular review of progress before setting new targets.
- advice and/or extra help from specialists such as specialist teachers, educational psychologists, and therapists.

The early years setting, school or college should include you in any discussions, and should consider your views, and the views of your son or daughter, in making any decisions about how best to help your child. They should keep you informed about your child's progress.

If your child does not make enough progress, the teacher/tutor or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) should then talk to you about asking for advice from outside professionals, for example, an educational psychologist (EP), a specialist teacher or a speech and language therapist (SALT) or other health professionals.

The [SEND Code of Practice](#) says that a school can ask for this advice at any point but should always involve a specialist where a pupil continues to work at levels substantially below others in their class or make little or no progress despite receiving appropriate support delivered by appropriately trained staff.

The [SEND Code of Practice](#) says that when your child is identified as having SEN, the school should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle:



Assess

Every school has to have a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). The SENCo has day to day responsibility for how children with SEN are supported within a school and to co-ordinate the specific provision for individual pupils. The SENCo must be a qualified teacher and will work with teaching staff to assess your child's needs, so that they receive the right support. They should involve you in this and take your concerns seriously and, where possible, seek your child's views.

Sometimes schools will seek advice from a specialist teacher or a health professional. They should talk to you about this first.

Plan

If the school decides that your child needs SEN Support, it **must** tell you. The school should agree with you the outcomes that will be set, what help will be provided and a date when you can see/check what progress there has been.

Do

Your child's class or subject teacher is responsible for the work that is done with your child, and should work closely with any teaching assistants or specialist staff involved. The school should tell you who is responsible for the support your child receives.

The school should record the outcomes, actions and support agreed with you and your child. These should be shared with all those who work with your child so that they are aware of their needs, the outcomes that were agreed and any teaching strategies and approaches that are needed. These records are a good starting point for discussions about how your child is doing at school.

The Local Authority will also always want to have this information if they are asked to carry out an assessment of your child's needs.

Review

The school should review your child's progress, and the difference that the help your child has been given has made, on the date agreed in the plan. You and your child should be involved in the review and in planning the next steps.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says that schools should meet parents at least three times per year. These meetings should allow sufficient time for you to express your view, to discuss and plan effectively so would be longer than most parent-teacher meetings.

If your child has not made progress in spite of having received extra support, the review should decide what could be done next. This may include more or different help.

You might feel that your child is not making progress in spite of any additional support or that the gap between them and others in their class is widening. If you disagree with the school on what progress has been made, you could ask the class teacher or SENCo to go through the SEN Support guidance with you and discuss any points where there is disagreement about what your child is finding difficult.

If other professionals have not already been involved, you might suggest that it might be helpful to approach them to help get a clearer picture of your child's difficulties or to plan the next steps.

You and the school can look at the **Local Offer** to see what support should be available that could help achieve your child's outcomes.

Sometimes the next step may be to ask the local authority for an **Education Health Care needs assessment**. If the school decides to do this, they must tell you. If you think it is needed, you can ask for it yourself.

How do I find out what the school provides for children who need SEN Support?

Every school must publish an **SEN information report** about the SEN provision the school makes. You can find this on the school's website.

This must include:

- How the school provides for children and young people with a wide range of special educational needs
- The name of the school SENCO and how they can be contacted
- Their SEN/Equality/Accessibility policies
- How the school identifies children and young people with SEN and gives them extra help
- How the school works with parents and children/young people
- How the school adapts the curriculum for children and young people with SEN
- What expertise and training the staff have in SEN
- Which specialist support services the school uses
- How the school checks the provision they make for their pupils with SEN is being effective
- How children and young people with SEN are helped to access activities outside of the classroom
- What the school does to support the wellbeing of children/young people with SEN
- How the school prepares children for joining the school and moving on between schools and into adulthood
- Who to contact if you are concerned about your child or wish to make a complaint

You can also ask your child's teacher or the school's SENCO for information on the SEN provision made by the school.

Where can I get more information, advice or support?

You can find out more about SEN Support by:

- looking at the SEN Information Report on the school website
- talking to your child's teacher or the SENCo
- looking at the Local Offer.

You can also get in touch with SENDIASS Oxfordshire who can give you:

- information about SEN Support
- advice about what to do if you are not happy with the support your school is providing
- support at meetings at your child's school or setting
- information about other organisations, support groups and information services that could help
- information and advice about how to request an EHC needs assessment.

Sendiass Oxfordshire can offer:

- A telephone helpline: **01865 810516**
- Information, advice and support on matters to do with your child's SEN
- Help with communication between you and the Local Authority
- Trained volunteer Independent Parental Supporters and Independent Supporters
- Advice about preventing and resolving disagreements
- Training events for parents and groups – see SENDIASS website
- An informal Drop In SEN Advice session, 'Talking Points', – see website for dates

**Contact us on: 01865 810516 or
text 07786 524294
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Confidentiality Code:

Everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence. We will not disclose our records to, or discuss the case with, a third party outside SENDIASS Oxfordshire without your consent, except if we suspect a child is at risk.