

A to Z of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Simple explanations of words used by schools and professionals who support children with special educational needs.

Written by parents for parents

What does Special Educational Needs (SEN) mean?

Children with special educational needs all have some difficulty, disability or additional need that makes it harder for them to learn than most children of a similar age.

These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children. The term 'special educational needs' is often shortened to 'SEN'. The term SEND may also be used to incorporate a 'special educational need or disability'.

At some time in their lives about one in five school children will have SEN, some for most or all of their school life and others for shorter periods. Sometimes children need only a little more help but, at other times, they need significantly more help than other children without those difficulties.

If a child makes sufficient progress, they may only need SEN support for a short time, sometimes just a few months.

At first, terms used in SEN can be confusing to parents, which is why we have produced this online guide.

A to Z of SEN Terms

Annual Review

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must carry out a review of every Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) at least once every 12 months.

Base, Special Unit, Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP), Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC)

A base is a unit offering support for specific types of SEN children and is usually attached to a mainstream school. At times it may be referred to as a Special Unit, ARP or ARC. All of these terms mean the same thing.

If a school has a base, this means that quite a few children in the school have a similar type of SEN and the school employs specially trained staff to help these children. There will be other children in the school with SEN who are not attached to the base.

Children attached to a base normally have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and have a flexible programme of teaching either in the base or in mainstream classes with appropriate support. Access to any specific therapy will depend upon the provision specified in the child's EHCP.

Care Act 2014

The Care Act sets out a requirement for the local authority to help a young person or carer to plan for the future by carrying out a transition assessment if they or the child they care for is likely to have needs when they are 18.

Three groups of people therefore have the right to a transition assessment:

- Young people under 18 with care and support needs who are approaching transition to adulthood;
- Young carers under 18 who are preparing for adulthood;
- Adult carers of a young person under 18 who is preparing for adulthood.

NB: Young people do NOT need to be receiving services at the time in order to ask for an assessment.

Case Worker/Officer

The case worker/officer works as part of a team that has responsibility for assessment, placement and review of pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Their work involves close liaison with parents, schools and other agencies. They have knowledge of special educational needs procedures and legislation.

Children and Families Act 2014

This Act, together with the SEND Code of Practice, makes provision about children, families, and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

It aims to provide greater choice and control for both parents and young people over support across education, health and social care services.

The five key areas of change are:

1. A new Assessment Framework for children and young people;
2. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children and young people from birth to 25 years, replacing Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments;
3. A published Local Offer about services available, such as education, health and short breaks, and how to access them;

4. Services to support children and young people in preparing for adulthood;
5. Personal Budgets for children and young people with an EHCP.

Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

CCGs are groups of professionals that work together to commission health services, ensuring there is sufficient capacity contracted to deliver the necessary services to people.

Code of Practice 2014

See 'SEND Code of practice 2014'.

Core Assets Independent Support Service

Core Assets is an independent support service in the London Borough of Merton. It offers free, impartial advice to children and young people with SEND and their families in relation to the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

See also Independent Supporter.

Curriculum / National Curriculum

This is the basic work that children of each age group are expected to be taught in school. Within the National Curriculum, targets are set for each child and progress is measured.

Differentiated Curriculum

Differentiated curriculum means that schoolwork is taught in different ways and at different speeds within each mainstream class in order to make allowance for all ability levels.

A teacher may differentiate work by providing different worksheets and placing children in small groups. SEN implies educational needs above and beyond this.

Direct Payment

A payment made directly to a parent or young person to purchase specific services. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a Direct Payment may be made as part of a Personal Budget so that the parent or young person can buy certain services that are specified in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Direct payments can only be used for provision provided on the school or college premises if the school or college agree.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or

her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Some children with SEN may also have additional disabilities.

Disability Discrimination

Every school has to make sure that a child with a disability is helped to take part in the same activities that are open to everybody else, for example, school trips, preparation for exams, sports, taking part in assembly, school plays and being taught the whole National Curriculum.

The law says that schools must do everything they can to avoid treating disabled children differently or making them feel as if they are not included in school in the same way as others, perhaps even excluded from an aspect of school life.

If a child is treated unfairly in any of these ways, it is called Disability Discrimination.

Disagreement Resolution

Local authorities must provide independent disagreement resolution to help parents and young people resolve disputes with local authorities, schools and other settings about SEND duties and provision.

Early Years Action

Replaced by 'SEN support'.

Early Years Action Plus

Replaced by 'SEN support'.

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Educational psychologists are registered with the Health Professions Council and have experience in teaching or education. Educational psychologists work with individual children, parents, schools and other professionals.

The local authority employs EPs to provide consultation to schools concerning children's special educational needs (SEN). They can assess children and suggest ways to help if they have additional learning needs. There are also independent (private) educational psychologists.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) replaces the Statement of Special Educational Needs. Children and young people who may have special educational needs will undergo an Education Health and Care needs assessment and, if they need extra support, they will receive an EHCP, if this is appropriate.

An EHCP will set out the special educational needs of a child or young person, what support they need, and who should provide it. EHCPs are designed to cover all of the child or young person's needs across education, health *and* social care.

The **Education** section will explain what is needed for the child to achieve the best they can in their learning. It will say which school or college the child will go to.

The **Health** section will set out any health services or health support that the child needs to ensure they can learn and participate fully in the curriculum.

The **Social Care** section will explain any services that the council will provide to support your child and family to live as 'ordinary' a life as possible.

EHCPs are reviewed annually.

EHC Needs Assessment

Local authorities must carry out an EHC needs assessment if a child or young person may need an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The assessment is a detailed look at the special educational needs that the child or young person has and what help he or she may need in order to learn.

It is sometimes called a **statutory assessment**.

You can find out more in the SEND Code of Practice sections 9.45 to 9.52.

Exclusion

If a child behaves in a violent or offensive way or refuses to follow important rules, a school or nursery can insist that he or she must be kept at home for a short time, from one day up to a maximum of 45 days in any school year. This is called 'fixed term exclusion', 'fixed period exclusion' or 'suspension'.

In extreme circumstances, schools or nurseries have the right to insist that a child does not return to the school or nursery but is educated elsewhere. This is called 'permanent exclusion'.

Schools will warn parents that they might permanently exclude the child and must make efforts to resolve the behaviour issues before deciding to permanently exclude.

Pupils with an EHCP or Statement of SEN should only be excluded in the most exceptional circumstances when other options, including calling review meetings, have been exhausted.

The school or nursery will contact parents as soon as they decide to exclude a child and will follow up with a formal letter of explanation.

Parents can appeal against any type of exclusion using the school's or nursery's appeals process.

First-tier Tribunal (SEN and disability)

The First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) is a legal body. The Tribunal hears appeals from parents of children with SEND, and young people with SEND, about EHC needs assessments and EHCPs.

You can find out more at: www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability

Graduated approach

The SEND Code of Practice says that schools should follow a graduated approach when providing SEN Support. This is based on a cycle of: Assess; Plan; Do; Review.

You can find out more in the SEND Code of Practice sections 6.44 to 6.56.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the policy of allowing all children to be taught in a mainstream school with extra support, if necessary.

Every parent has the right to send their child to a mainstream school and have extra help delivered there, with a few exceptions.

For some children, special schools are more appropriate. Parents have the right to express a preference for a special school.

Independent supporter

A person recruited by a voluntary or community sector organisation to help families going through an EHC needs assessment and the process of developing an EHCP. This person is independent of the local authority and will receive training, including legal training, to enable him or her to provide this support.

See also 'Core Assets Independent Support Service', the service for Merton (each local authority will have its own Independent Supporters).

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is an important document for parents and staff. It states those specific things your child should be able to do as a result of receiving extra support. It shows a small number of things your child should achieve and how they should achieve them.

Parents will be asked to approve the IEP. Every IEP target should be **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely/time-bound (SMART)**. It is an important planning, teaching and assessment tool which should identify the staff working with the child, together with the amount of support.

Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS)

By law, every local authority has to have an Information, Advice and Support Service to provide impartial advice to parents about SEN.

Merton's Information and Advice Officer can be contacted on 020 8543 8854. He can visit parents at home, accompany parents to school interviews, attend annual reviews and provide information about SEN and schools.

In addition to having links with both local and national voluntary groups, he advises parents of their right to meet with local authority officers to resolve disagreements and their right to access the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

In Merton, the Information and Advice Officer is employed by the SEN Department within the Borough's Children, School and Families Department but is based in separate offices.

Previously called the Parent Partnership Service.

Keyworker

Someone who provides children, young people and parents with a single point of contact to help make sure the support they receive is co-ordinated. A keyworker could be provided directly by a local authority or local health organisation, a school or college, or from a voluntary or private sector body.

Learning Support Assistant (LSA); Teaching Assistant (TA)

These are names given to classroom support staff; terms will vary between schools. Children with SEN may have extra help from an LSA or TA. There are also higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).

There may be one adult just for your child or an adult looking after a number of SEN children in the same class or school.

LSAs should be sufficiently trained in SEN techniques to help the set of children allocated to them.

These support staff work under the direction of the class teacher. LSAs, TAs and HLTAs receive support, training and guidance from the school SENCO and may develop expertise in certain specific areas such as behaviour or reading support.

Local Authority (LA)

The local authority, also known as 'Merton' or 'the Council', runs our local services. The Children, Schools and Families Department is responsible for schools. The local authority website address is www.merton.gov.uk.

Local Offer

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a statutory duty on local authorities to develop and publish a Local Offer, which sets out what they expect to be available for local children and young people with SEN and disabilities across education, health and social care.

Mainstream School

This is a maintained school (maintained by the local authority) or academy and not a special school.

Mediation

Mediation is a type of disagreement resolution. Every local authority must provide independent mediation to help parents and young people resolve disputes with local authorities about:

- a decision not to carry out an EHC needs assessment;
- a decision not to draw up an EHCP;
- the content of a final EHCP or amended plan;
- a decision not to amend an EHCP;
- a decision to cease to maintain an EHCP.

Mediation must also be provided on the health and social care elements of an EHCP.

You can find more information in the SEND Code of Practice sections 11.13 to 11.38.

Mediation Advice

The purpose of mediation advice is to give information about what mediation involves. Parents or young people who wish to register an appeal with the First-tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability) must first seek mediation advice. The advice must be factual and unbiased. After mediation advice has been given, the parent or young person can choose whether they wish to go to mediation.

However, it is not necessary to seek mediation advice if the appeal is only about the name of the school, or college named on the plan, the type of provision specified in the plan or the fact that no school or other institution is named.

You can find more information in the SEND Code of Practice sections 11.21 to 11.25.

Must

The SEND Code of Practice says in Section i of the Introduction:

...where the text uses the word 'must' it refers to a statutory requirement under primary legislation, regulations or case law.

This means that, wherever the term ‘must’ is used, all the organisations listed in section iv of the Introduction to the Code have a legal duty to do what the Code says.

National Curriculum

See ‘Curriculum/ National Curriculum’.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

Occupational Therapists recommend assistance or special equipment for skills which may be difficult for a child such as co-ordination, balance, walking, dressing and using pencils.

OTs are usually employed by the Health Service or Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). There are also independent (private) occupational therapists.

Outcome

Section 9.66 of the SEND Code of Practice says:

- An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided.

Parent Partnership Service

See ‘Information, Advice and Support Services’.

Personal Budget

A Personal Budget is an amount of money identified by the local authority to deliver provision set out in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision. Personal Budgets are optional for the child’s parent or the young person but local authorities are under a duty to prepare a budget when requested. The child’s parent or the young person has a right to request a Personal Budget when the local authority has completed an EHC needs assessment and confirmed that it will prepare an EHCP. They may also request a Personal Budget during a statutory review of an existing EHCP.

Personal Budgets should reflect the holistic nature of an EHCP and can include funding for special educational, health and social care provision. They should be focused to secure the provision agreed in the EHCP and should be designed to secure the outcomes specified in the EHCP.

Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist can help children with movement problems including walking, running, balancing, muscle and joint problems, and overall body strength. They may suggest exercises, massage, or special equipment to help children to move as well as possible.

They are normally employed by the Health Service or Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and also work in schools. There are also independent (private) physiotherapists.

Policies and other documents

A policy is a document setting out how things will or are meant to be done. Merton has an SEN policy which guides each school's policy, and it makes clear that:

- Parents are to be informed when a child is identified as having special educational needs;
- Parents will be informed of the Information, Advice and Support Service;
- Parents will be given clear information about the support to be provided to the child.

A school policy is a document explaining certain school rules or the way that the school intends to do certain things. Schools must make the following documents available to parents upon request:

- School SEN Policy;
- School Disability Equality Scheme;
- School Complaints Procedure;
- School Prospectus;
- Name and contact details of the school's SEN Governor;
- Name and contact details of the school SENCO.

Preparation for Adulthood

See 'Transition' and 'Care Act 2014'

Provision Map

A provision map shows exactly what extra SEN support is provided to specific groups of children who have similar difficulties.

The document may be broken down by class or school year and it will explain how often specific support is given and for how long. However, it does not contain individual attainment targets, so although children are named on this document, it is more general than an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes schools and other settings are required to make which could include: changes to physical features – for example, creating a ramp so that students can enter a classroom or providing extra support and aids (such as specialist teachers or equipment).

School Action

Replaced by 'SEN support'.

School Action Plus

Replaced by 'SEN support'.

SEN/SEND

SEN means 'special educational needs'. The term SEND may also be used to incorporate a 'special educational need or disability'.

SENCO

See 'Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator'.

SEND Code of Practice 2014

Officially called the 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years'.

It explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (see above).

This statutory code contains details of legal requirements that must be followed, without exception, and also statutory guidance that must be followed by law, unless there's a good reason not to.

This document replaces the 'Special educational needs (SEN): code of practice' 2001. However, the 2001 code still applies for those who have an SEN statement under part 4 of the Education Act 1996, rather than an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) under the Children and Families Act 2014.

SEN Governor

In each school, one member of the Governing Body has special responsibility for overseeing SEN matters.

SEN Information Report

All schools must publish information on their websites about their policy and arrangements for supporting children with SEN. This must be kept up to date.

The information that has to be included can be found in section 6.79 of the SEND Code of Practice.

SEN Support

SEN support replaces School Action/School Action Plus (in schools) and Early Years Action/Early Years Action Plus (in early years settings, such as nurseries and childminders). If pupils were previously receiving support under School Action/School Action Plus, they should continue to do so, unless they no longer need it. All existing statements will still apply until the child is transferred to their new Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Merton publishes a document on SEN Support which can be accessed on the Local Offer website: www.merton.gov.uk/localoffer.htm.

SEND Tribunal

See 'First-tier Tribunal (SEN and disability)'

Should

Should is a word that occurs frequently in the SEND Code of Practice.

Section i of the Introduction to the Code says:

... where the text uses the word 'should' it means that the guidance contained in this Code must be considered and that those who must have regard to it will be expected to explain any departure from it.

This means that wherever the term 'should' is used, all the organisations listed in Section iv of the Introduction to the Code must consider what the Code says. However, they may depart from it.

Signposting

Sometimes a service that provides information, advice and support may be asked for help that it is not able to give directly.

When this happens, the person seeking information, advice or support may be signposted to other service providers. This means that they will be given information, including contact details, about other sources of help.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

This is the member of staff with responsibility for all SEN activities in school. SENCOs are responsible for making sure that SEN children have the best chance of reaching their full potential by providing appropriate support in school.

The SENCO is responsible for ensuring good SEN practice, including appropriate contacts with parents. Their role includes making sure that parents have opportunities to speak about their child and that they are listened to.

From September 2010, all SENCOs will have been trained on a Government-accredited SENCO training course (from September 2009 for all *new* SENCOs).

Special School

A special school is devoted to meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and sometimes specialises in one particular type or complexity of need. Special schools can be mainstream or private.

Special schools have more staff with experience in SEN than mainstream schools. They may also have additional specialist staff working in the school, such as Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

Speech and Language Therapist (SLT or SALT)

This is a specialist who can help children with communication and speech problems including having difficulty in: learning to speak, or speaking clearly; forming sentences; communicating with others, lack of interest in communicating with others or poor play skills; and understanding spoken language.

For children under 5 years old, this help is usually provided in a hospital, clinic or children's centre. For children aged 5 or older, it can be delivered in school. SLTs are usually employed by the Health Service (CCG) but some are employed by schools. There are also independent (private) SLTs.

Statement of Special Educational Needs or Statement

The Statement of Special Educational Needs is now being replaced by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Children and young people who still have a Statement will gradually have this converted into an EHCP through the Annual Review process between September 2014 and July 2018.

Statutory Assessment

See 'EHC Needs Assessment'.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

See 'Learning Support Assistant'.

Transfer Review

A transfer review replaces the annual review in the academic year that the child or young person transfers to the new SEND system.

A transfer review involves an EHC needs assessment to decide what outcomes and provision need to be included in the EHCP. This should include education, health and social care needs.

The parent/carer and their child or young person must be invited to a meeting as part of the transfer review.

A transfer review ends when the local authority sends the parent (or the young person) a copy of the EHCP, or when it informs the parent (or the young person) that an EHCP will not be issued.

Each council publishes a local transition plan to explain how and when transfer reviews for children and young people with Statements of Special Educational Need will happen.

Transition

Post-16 transition refers to the period during which a young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) moves into adult life which is between ages 13 and 25.

A Transition Plan is drawn up to make sure this period of change is as smooth as possible. The transition process begins with the year 9 Annual Review of a child's EHCP.

See also 'Care Act 2014'.

If you are reading this, you may well be a parent or a carer of a child in need of some extra help. The good news is that a lot of expertise can be brought in to assist when a child has issues with learning or other difficulties.

Thank you for reading this document. If you think your child might need some extra help, please speak to the class teacher or someone else mentioned here who will help you.

This list was produced by Kids First, Merton's Forum for Parents of Children and Young People with Disabilities or Special Needs (a project of Merton Mencap) in conjunction with Merton's Information and Advice Officer and Merton's SENDIS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service).

This information aims to be useful to parents but Kids First cannot be responsible for any loss caused by any reliance upon it. If you find anything which you believe to be inaccurate, please contact Kids First as soon as possible (see contact details below).

Further Reading

Merton's Local Offer

www.merton.gov.uk/localoffer.htm

Merton Family Information Service

www.merton.gov.uk/community/familyinfo.htm

Core Assets Independent Support Service

www.coreassets.com/what-we-do/independent-support-service

SEND code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Children and Families Act 2014

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/pdfs/ukpga_20140006_en.pdf

ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)

www.ace-ed.org.uk

IPSEA

www.ipsea.org.uk

Information, Advice and Support Services Network

cyp.iasnetwork.org.uk

Network 81

www.network81.org.uk/

Please note, there are many other useful external contacts listed on the Kids First website (see below).

Contact Kids First:

Telephone: 020 8687 4644

Email: kids.first@swlondonmencap.nhs.uk

Web: www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst